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# INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND OTHER RELATED PAPERS

حسن و نیکم و منقاد و پشت پیکم زمیں کج الی ہوں ہے ہر ان بستانج زرارہ



اے بعد دعاش حکم جنم حکم ہر ہست وینوا کہ بفریندہ درکار اور آمدہ و شہود معتبر کو اجہ

کتاب  
مکتبہ  
۱۳۳۰

لمی و قائم و قابض و متصرف است بنا بران ادا فرم مذکور تصدق فرق مبارک کہ ان حضرت و

شاہنامہ بشار الیہ مقروض شدہ باید کہ بدستور بنی بشرط قبض و تصرف از محم

بصرف و میر الیہ باز کہ استہ عدلت فالوجہات و اخراجات و جمیع مطالبات و

و مرفوع الشیخہ مع اسم و رسم مزاحم نشوندتا بغیر اسباب بد عای

## K.M. ASHRAF

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# INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND OTHER RELATED PAPERS

**KUNWAR MOHAMMED ASHRAF**

*Foreword by*

**PROF. SATISH CHANDRA**

*Translated from Urdu and prepared for Publication by*

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**SUNRISE  
PUBLICATIONS**

133429

*Published by*

**SUNRISE  
PUBLICATIONS**

B-7, Saraswati Complex, Subhash Chowk,  
Laxmi Nagar, New Delhi 110 092  
Phone: 22025199  
E-mail: sunrisepublications@front.ru

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ISBN 81-87365-35-8

*Laser Typeset at*  
Aadil Printographics  
B-887, Gali No. 4, Kabir Nagar, Delhi 110 094

*Printed in India at*  
Nagri Printers, Delhi 110 032

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my pleasant duty to thank Dr. Balakrishnan, acting Director NMML and the staff of the archive section for assisting me with reprography of the text now in the hands of the reader.

My special thanks are due to Janab Ghayas Makhdumi Saheb, librarian of Zakir Husain Library of Jamia Millia Islamia, and the staff of Muhibul Hasan Research Room for helping me in tracing the Urdu Original of Ashraf the English translation of which is given in the book edited by Horst Kruger. Without their help and the rich and rare collection of Jamia Library it would have been impossible to trace the original of the autobiographical sketch written by Ashraf himself.

I express my thanks to Dr. Tahir Asghar for medieval document from the collection of Professor Azhar Ansari that is used here as dust cover.

My deep thanks are due to Abdullah Khan, Chairman of Mahfuz India Foundation and an old family friend for extending congenial working facilities.

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## FOREWORD

Kunwar Mohammed Ashraf, some of whose unpublished works, including lectures, have been brought together in this book, was a man of many parts—an orthodox student of religion to begin with, who was transformed into a student activist, a nationalist, later an internationalist, a Communist and a historian. Ashraf has explained how from a devout religious person, he was initiated into the revolutionary movement against the British by his teacher, Istafeh Karim, belonging to the *Hizb Allah* movement. Joining the anti-British *Khilafat* movement and the Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhiji, and his subsequent disillusionment and his joining the Communist movement follow almost logically. But before that, he experimented through the *Chilla Kashi* (ascetic penance) to attain spiritual salvation. I am mentioning this because it explains his deep insight into religious and spiritual movements. His perceptiveness was not based on texts alone.

Ashraf was very proud of his *Rajput* ancestry. He mentions that some members of the extended family were Hindu, and that both parts followed many customs and ceremonies, which were common. In fact many members of the family had both Muslim and Hindu names. Thus, his father *Thakur* Murad Ali was also called *Thakur* Murli Singh.

It was only later, when the separatist movement gathered force following the collapse of the Non-cooperation movement, that his father dropped the word *Thakur* from his name. However, to affirm his *Rajput* identity, Ashraf added the word "Kunwar" to his own name.

Thus, for Ashraf, composite culture was not a concept to be discussed in academic circles, but a living reality. This also helps us to understand Ashraf's concept of history and society during the medieval times.

After completing his Ph.D. under the supervision of Sir Wolsely Haig at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Ashraf returned to India in 1933, and joined the Department of History at the Aligarh Muslim University, at the instance of Professor Mohammed Habib. However, he had imbibed radical values in Britain, having joined as a student the London Group of India Communists. Hence, and for organizing workers at Aligarh, under instructions from the British Government, his tenure at the University was terminated.

From 1935 to the British departure from India, Ashraf remained active in politics. He returned to academia only in 1954. History remained his first love till his death in Germany in 1963.

Students of history know Ashraf from his Ph.D thesis, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan (1200-1550 AD)*, first published in 1935. This was a pioneering work because under the influence of Sir Charles Eliot and his eight volumes titled *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, Indian History before the arrival of the British was shown to be a story of the rise and fall of empires, full of wars and violence. Hence, there was no scope for writing a history of social life and institutions. That Ashraf's work has continued to be considered relevant after almost three-quarter of a century from the time it was written, and that is almost a compulsory reading for anyone engaged in the study of social history of medieval India, is no small tribute to Ashraf as a historian.

Looking at the problem of periodisation in Indian history from the view point of social history, it is difficult to disagree with Ashraf's view put forward here that the period from the establishment of Turkish rule in India at the beginning of the 13th century to the middle of the 19th century which he calls the "Muslim Period" had many features in common, and that an integrated study of the period, bringing out the changing perceptions, needs to be considered integral for the study of social history. Laying emphasis on economic, particularly agrarian history, P.J. Marshall, in his recently edited book *"The Eighteenth Century History: Evolution or Revolution,"* sums up by saying: "Periods delineated according to centuries based on European calendar are an entirely artificial construction. ... The eighteenth century was a period of decentralisation and of the rise of the regional polities, Indian and later British. ... By the 1830s, however, centralisation was replacing the wide diffusion of power, Mughal ideals appeared to be irrelevant and outmoded. ... Economically, the long phase of expansion from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century may have lost some of its momentum in mid-century (18th century), but a prolonged and widespread depression does not seem to have set in until the second quarter of the nineteenth century." (p. 35-36)

Thus while the modern period of Indian history may begin in the class rooms from the battle of Plassey, for those engaged in the study of social or economic history such a division has become less and less meaningful. That Ashraf should have seen this half a century earlier is another tribute to his understanding of the historic processes.

For Ashraf, history was a dynamic process. In his study of social or intellectual or religious life, he constantly emphasized the element of change. Ashraf was deeply concerned with religion in the lives of the people. He emphasizes the role of the *Sufis* during the 13th-14th centuries when many of them tried to link themselves with

the life and condition of the people—both Muslims and Hindu, and to keep a distance from the state which was seen as hierarchical, racialist and militaristic. However, the *Sufis* established a relationship with the state, and became the "armies of the night." Meanwhile, the lives of the people remained immersed in magic, ritual, worship of *Peers* and ancestors and other irrational practices. These are what modern French historians call "mentalities." Thus, Ashraf was trying to broaden the scope of historical studies in India by bringing in new concepts and approaches.

Although Ashraf did toy with the idea of the "Asiatic Mode of Production" which envisaged an unchanging rural society till the coming of the British, and their disruption of the "self-sufficient village economy," he admits that he had not gone into the concept in detail. That Marx himself modified to some extent his dictum that absence of private property in land was the great "desideratum" of Asian societies, and was the basis of the self-sufficiency of the village was, perhaps, not as widely known when Ashraf wrote his piece. Penetration of the money economy in the villages, and growing segmentation of village society, brought out in recent studies would, however, have accorded well with Ashraf's vision of society being a dialectical institution.

Ashraf's plea for social history based on the study of all sources such as legal, literary, hagiological, *Akhlaq namas*, *bhagti* poetry etc. in addition to the Chronicles have yet to bear fruit, although some progress in these fields has been made. Ashraf himself labored incessantly to collect the sources for such a study. The collected works of Ashraf including his notes on social history which are being planned to be published well, I am sure, will fill this lacuna in a large measure.

Satish Chandra

## A PILGRIMAGE FROM *HIZB ALLAH* TO MARXISM

KUNWAR MOHAMMED ASHRAF:  
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Two biographical accounts of Ashraf were published during his lifetime; one in Urdu and the other in Hindi. Junaid Ahmed from Bombay published the Urdu account in 1960. It is an account written by Ashraf himself for the edited book by Junaid Ahmed titled *Shaksiyat aur hadasat jinhone mujhe mutassar kiya* (Personalities and Events that influenced me). Rahul Sankrityayan in 1943 had published the Hindi account from Allahabad. It is in a book titled *Naye Bharat ke naya neta* (New leaders of a new India). Rahulji at that time was a member of the Communist Party of India. He was also an old personal friend of Ashraf. This account is based on his personal knowledge of the person, community and the family as well as what he must have got from Ashraf.

After his death Horst Kruger edited and published in 1963 a book from Berlin. It is titled "*Kunwar Mohammed Ashraf.*" PPH, New Delhi, later reprinted it in 1966. In this book, besides a number of writings by different persons and English translation of the above two writings, there is

an Interview by Ashraf given to Nandlal Gupta who was then a colleague of Ashraf in KM College of the University of Delhi. This interview is less about his person but essentially deals with the political events. It is dated 1960 i.e. the year Ashraf left Delhi for joining the Visiting Professorship in Humboldt University, Berlin. This interview in the main fills the gap between early 1930s where Ashraf ends his personal account on reaching London a second time to complete work for his doctoral thesis, and 1954 when Ashraf returned to India from his exile in London (1949-54). Later, after his death, Muqim Farooqi and Nandlal Gupta in 1973 published a biographical sketch of Ashraf and in 1974 Hakeem Abdul-shakoor published a biographical sketch of Ashraf in his *Tarikh Meo Chattri*. This writing is based on some of the accounts given by Kruger as well as on his own personal knowledge of Ashraf and his community and the role Ashraf played in Meo affairs. In this book there are some interesting facts about Ashraf and his long association with the Meos and their problems.

S.M. Tonki, school-fellow of Ashraf from his Moradabad days, writes the most informative account about Ashraf as a person in the book edited by Kruger. Together with Ashraf, in 1920 he had also joined the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements as well as Jamia Millia Islamia. His account is based on personal knowledge. This chronicle gives a number of details that are not in the version given in the books edited by Junaid and Rahulji. In the same book edited by Kruger there is a write-up by Chaudhuri Abdullai giving details of the role Ashraf played in the freedom struggle of Mewat and in the struggle of the Meo against their exploitation by both the Maharaja and the British. This is a first hand account as Chaudhuri Abdulhai was a friend of long standing and a colleague of Ashraf in the *Praja Parishad* movement of the Indian States and had participated in all the events narrated by him. Ashraf and Tonki are virtually silent about Mewat struggles. Hakeem Abdulshakoor in his

*Tarikh* mentions all these events and gives some additional details. In the book edited by Kruger the write-up titled "An Undelivered Letter" by Mulk Raj Anand supplements the account of Sarup Singh stating the desire of Ashraf to collect detailed material on the socio-cultural life of medieval India and the role played by the tribal traditions of central Asia. Sarup Singh in his account mentions that Ashraf collected large volume of material in the libraries of Moscow and Tashkent. All this material is today located in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi., Besides, Sarup Singh is the only account that provides details of the life of Ashraf in London during 1949-1954 and the reminiscences of Iqbal Singh supplement some of these details. In the following write-up, besides personal knowledge, I have based the narrative on the various above accounts and have duly referred to the source in each case.

It is but natural that all aspects of the life, activities and interests of such a multi-faceted personality as Ashraf cannot be squeezed in one sketchy narration. Hence, I have focused on the evolution of this social and political consciousness and what path he traversed before he became a Marxist and joined the Communist movement, first in London and then in India. I have focused on this aspect as striding this path is central for understanding the grasp with which Ashraf has dealt with socio-cultural and political problems of Muslims in India and the amplitude of his understanding of medieval culture reflected in all his writings on socio-cultural history of medieval India. Without knowing about this tortuous and prolonged meandering, beginning with his own belief in superstitions, religious orthodoxy and feelings of intense nationalism as an integral element of his religious belief, it is impossible to fully appreciate his various strong positions on political developments that he lived through for half a turbulent century that totally transformed India.



### Socio-Cultural and Family Background

During the 19th century, under the impact of changes introduced by the British, entire economic life of the Indian villages and of small towns was slowly breaking down. This was especially so with the backward Mewat as this region had taken a prominent part in the anti-British events of 1857. As punishment the returning British not only destroyed prominent villages and towns, everywhere hanged large number of adults, permitted their loyal to exploit without restrictions, but also did not consider Mewat and the adjoining Braj Region for any agricultural or mineralogical developmental proposals.<sup>1</sup> Under the new dispensation many traditional professions were slowly disappearing. In the hope of finding a better life, people in large numbers had started to move out of Mewat.

Hakeem Mueen, also known as *Thakur* Kunwar Singh,<sup>2</sup> grand father of Ashraf, though not a Meo but a *Malkana Rajput*<sup>3</sup>, used to live in a Mewat village called Tasai in Alwar State. He left his ancestral village and permanently settled down in Daryapur, then apparently a small town in the Hathras Tehsil of Aligarh District, that later had degraded into a village,<sup>4</sup> and there continued his earlier practice of Unani medicine. Soon he earned a wide reputation and started to be invited to far off villages.

The family of Hakeem Mueen/*Thakur* Kunwar Singh and the community he belonged to, had certain features that were not very common in the Indian society; Hindu-Muslim marriage relations with both names given to the progeny, and attention paid to the traditional and English education of the boys; girls were either not educated or were taught some elementary reading and writing in schools attached to the village temple or mosque. Due to their tradition of submitting to the victor, large number of Rajput families had by then turned deeply loyal to the British. It was in such a family that *Thakur* Murli Singh, Ashraf's father, was born. As per tradition he was educated in Persian

language. Later at the age of eighteen Murli Singh passed his Entrance Examination and was appointed Stationmaster at Shahadara. However, due to his error two Mail trains coming from opposite direction collided headlong. He was arrested for this negligence and tried. On account of his age the judge let him off but indicted the company for giving so responsible a job to one of such immature age. However, due to his pride Murli Singh did not return home. Later, when Awadh-Rohilkhand railway line was commissioned, he shifted to his Muslim name of *Thakur* Murad Ali Khan and applied. He was selected as a guard and worked in this capacity till his retirement.<sup>5</sup>

Thakur Murad Ali Khan was married to Anchchi of the village Gauhanpur located near the town Mahaban in Mathura district of the Braj region. She gave birth to two children, first a girl<sup>6</sup> and then a boy who was named Ashraf Ali Khan, born in Daryapur on 25th November 1903. She died while Ashraf was an infant. Later, Murad Ali Khan married twice and had one son each from the two wives. They also died quite young, leaving behind two sons of tender age, Haider Ali Khan and Shaukat Ali Khan. However, their father, who very deeply loved his children, brought them up in a way that they, in spite of hard life, did not seriously feel the absence of their mothers. While his father was on the front during the First World War, Ashraf used to look after his two younger brothers; this responsibility included washing their cloths and looking after their school work.<sup>7</sup>

### **Primary Education: Defiance of the British and Interest in Muslim Revivalist Teachings**

When Ashraf was four years old, his father, as was the custom, appointed a *Maulavi* to teach Quran and Islamic divinity to him and to his fast friend and companion Shankar Lal. After this study both of them were sent to the Upper Primary school at Daryapur where Ashraf learnt Hindi. After a year and a half he was sent to Dharma Sabha High

School at Aligarh. Those days Ashraf was very fond of typically Indian games like *Kabaddi*, *gilli-danda* and *kite flying*. His playmates were all local village boys with whom he kept a life-long contact and, while going to Berlin in 1960, distributed his entire land holding among them as they were already cultivating it for long. Ashraf donated his village house to the *Panchayat* for continuing the school and dispensary. On my visit in 1962 I found the school and dispensary to be functioning; these are yet functional and are now named after Ashraf. One of his friends by then had lost the land in gambling while others were continuing with the cultivations.

In 1909 Ashraf was sent to Hewett Muslim School of Moradabad where he joined the 3rd standard. In this school Ashraf learnt Hindi and Sanskrit. He changed to Persian and Urdu from 7th class as there was no provision for Sanskrit from 7th class onwards. However, Ashraf did not like the strained city life of Moradabad but longed to return to the carefree and unrestrained life of his village Daryapur. In 1912, at the age of nine, along with his friend Shankar Lal he ran away to have a happy life in the Himalayan valleys. The weather was biting cold and they had not taken anything warm with them. In cold, according to S.M. Tonki, his lifelong friend from the Moradabad days, they spent the night on Saoni railway station. In the morning biting cold brought them to their senses and they returned home.<sup>8</sup>

Besides education, stay in Moradabad played an important role in the mental development of Ashraf. First World War started while he was studying in Moradabad. His father had to leave for the Dardanelles front. This started an interesting and important phase in the life of Ashraf who records about this phase in the following words. "My father's loyalty to the British may be visualised from the following incident. When his military special train was leaving from Delhi junction and he saw tears in my eyes, instead of comforting me he thrashed me and reminded me of our Rajput pride and gave me a long lecture on loyalty. ...

When the news of the retreat from the Dardanelles came I felt anxious and went to the mosque. Gradually *Chaasht* and *Ashraaq* were also included in the daily observances and I started prayers during the nights of *Ramadan*. Sometimes I also attended the *Shabina*. The religious Musalmans of Moradabad used to take a great interest in the discussions of *Arya Samaj*. They came from long distances to hear the discourses of Ram Chandra and Maulavi Murtaza Husain. .... But I did not develop any interest in these debates. The reason for this was *Hazb Allah* the new party of Istafa Karim and of us. Istafa Karim was a graduate of Aligarh and had recently come to our school. ... He was a real *Maulavi*. That means, he was the first to arrive at the mosque and the last to leave it. So, other students and I started cultivating a particular acquaintance with him. After a short time we started visiting him. Every Sunday we used to gather at his residence at Diwan Bazar. ... The essence of all these teachings was to show that *Jihad* was the duty of every Musalman and that the main enemies of Islam were the English. At last it was also discovered that Istafa Karim was in fact a disciple of Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi and a member of the secret party of *Mujahidin*, which was busy organizing *Jihad* against the English. After a few days we also took the oath of *Jihad* and became members of *Hizb Allah*. In other words our political journey had begun."<sup>9</sup>

### **Ashraf in School**

According to Rahul Sankrityayan "Ashraf was a first rate had boy. He was a very bright student but never paid much heed to studies. Once a teacher was about to cane him when Ashraf caught hold of his hand and went direct to report to the Headmaster. The Headmaster, Zaheeruddin, seized up the young rebel correctly and gave him leave to carry on his studies in any manner he liked, with or without attending classes."<sup>10</sup>

Tonki records an instance that deeply affected Ashraf.

"In the sixth class, Ashraf had taken Arabic as an optional subject. *Maulavi* Rahmatullah Khan taught Arabic in this school. The *Maulavi* had a taste for politics and often used to repeat a proverb, which means 'it is better to finish off your enemy before he strikes you.' His 'enemy,' of course were the British. He was so firm in his conviction that he would tell his pupils that it was a sin to produce children, for any child then born would be a slave of the British. To obtain freedom for him was an act of redemption. To attain this high ideal, the *Maulavi* needed an organisation whose members were courageous, fearless and honest; who would neither be afraid of the British might, or susceptible to mundane temptations that could compromise their resolve. Ashraf was so much impressed by *Maulavi* Rahmatullah that he formed a deep attachment for the Arabic language."<sup>11</sup> In 1918 Ashraf passed his Matriculation in second division with Persian as one of the subjects.

#### **Ashraf in M.A.O. College, Aligarh**

For FA course Ashraf was sent to MAO College at Aligarh where he had Arabic, Logic and History as his optional subjects. He passed the exams in 1920 in second division. Tonki records an instance from this period.

In spite of the fame of the staff of the MAO College, "the state of affairs was such that every imaginable discrimination between the Europeans, particularly the British, and the Indians was practiced in order to demonstrate the superiority of the former. .... On one occasion a British teacher by the name of Ganes asked his students what they would do if they were travelling in a train and a Britisher entered. One after another they respectfully stood up to answer that they would salute the gentleman and vacate their seat. When Ashraf's turn came, he said he would do nothing, but just keep sitting. Ganes was infuriated. "Why," he shouted, "you are expected to salute him and offer him your seat." "Not me" Ashraf

shouted back, I wouldn't do it" For this he was expelled from the class and fined."<sup>12</sup>

### **M.A.O. College, Khilafat and Jamia Millia Islamia**

By the time First World War ended the *Hijrat* movement had already started. Ashraf had enrolled himself in the first batch of the *Muhajirin* going to Kabul on their way to west Asia. However, by chance the week their caravan was to start from Peshawar his father safely returned from the war. So Ashraf could not joint the caravan of the *Mohajirs*. As he had passed his FA exams, his father sent Ashraf in 1920 to MAO College at Aligarh for continuing his BA.

1920 was a crucial year for Ashraf. It was in this year, while he was yet in MAO College, that the *Khilafat* and Non-Cooperation movement started. Maulana Mohammad Ali came to Aligarh and, along with Gandhiji, appealed to the students of the MAO College to give up their studies and participate in the *Satyagraha*. As Ashraf mentions, even before this appeal he had already started to work for *Satyagraha*. When the English Principal invited parents to influence the students and dissuade them from participation in *Satyagraha* and *Khilafat*, Ashraf asked a *Hizb Allah* friend from Moradabad, declaring him to be his father. This friend started delivering speeches in the mosque of the MAO College. "Now our demand was that the College should stop taking aid from the government. Since the College belonged to the nation, we seized its buildings. In a few days Maulana Mahmudul Hasan declared the foundation of Jamia Milia Islamia in the College mosque. In other words, two separate camps were formed within the boundaries of the MAO College. ... At last the College authorities called in the police to help remove us. ... One day, early in the morning, we were all thrown out of the College. We started living in camps situated just across the street at a short distance from the College. In other words, a new chapter of Jamia life had now opened for me. .... The atmosphere of Jamia had a

particular attraction that could be called spiritual. My short story "Anand" published, I think, in an issue of *Adabi Duniya* (Allahabad) in 1940, recalls it."<sup>13</sup>

Life during the Jamia phase strongly influenced Ashraf. I remember seeing a photograph in which Ashraf was standing wearing the long cloak with a shoulder bag prominently displaying the *Khilafat* emblem of crescent with a star. In this attire he would go preaching Islam to different villages of Aligarh and to teach Islamic religious practices to the villagers. With such groups he also toured villages of western UP for this very purpose. Later, while I was a student in Jamia, I recall Ashraf coming to Jamia every year during the *Qaumi Hafta* (National Week) to participate in physical work and in cleaning the Jamia campus. For the whole of his life Ashraf felt a deep attachment with Jamia and recalled the Jamia days with profound nostalgia.

Nandlal Gupta,<sup>14</sup> who very closely worked with Ashraf during his stay in K.M. College of the University of Delhi, is the only one reporting that in 1928 Ashraf for a short period worked as a teacher in Jamia Millia Islamia where he was earlier also a student. This aspect is not recalled by anybody else.

### **Failure of *Khilafat* and non-cooperation: Ashraf seeks Solace in Religious Penance and gets out of it**

Sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement by Gandhiji played a decisive role in the academic and political life of Ashraf. "On the one hand Gandhiji had suddenly stopped the *Satyagraha* movement.... and on the other the Turkish *Khilafat* had died at the hands of Mustafa Kamal; and we were all drifting without any goal like a kite being blown away in the wind. Where were the hopes that we would win freedom in one year?"

Once again Ashraf started drifting into religion and some other practices traditionally linked to it to find solace in this moment of spiritual crisis. As he himself continues

the description of the times. "The day to day situation was like this: sometimes Hindu-Muslim riot took place in one district, and sometimes news of killing and massacre came from another. After a few days the organised anti-national movements of *shuddhi* and *tabligh* were added to these spontaneous disturbances. In other words, a tenacious political and social trend in the country had emerged by now.

I already had the habit of saying prayers and keeping fast, but now my interest in such practices gradually increased to such an extent that my teacher of *diniyat* (Islamic divinity) became my *murshid* (spiritual guide). In addition to his prayers five times a day, he used to perform the prayer of *tahajjud*. So I also joined in. At last it was decided that I should also practice *chilla kashi* (ascetic penance). Certain conditions were required, such as to give up eating meat and observe complete purity. A particular prayer had to be repeated twenty-six thousand times during *chilla* (the forty-day penance with fast). I might perhaps have stopped when these conditions started telling on my nerves, but the benefits of *chilla* were such that I did not like to give it up. I became convinced that in the course of time I would be able to perceive the holy light of God; I would be able to see my spiritual progress through my dreams. In my school days I had already seen (in my dreams) Hazrat Ali and the Prophet, and there was no reason why this spiritual development should not continue in the future. Anyhow, I started *chilla* with full confidence and total attention to the rules. For the sake of complete purity I started myself cooking my food. Whatever I saw in my dreams at night, or whatever came to my heart during the day, I told to my *Murshid*. As a matter of fact during the first twelve days there was nothing particular to be told. I had gained a full sense of inner satisfaction and sometimes I felt that I had entered a greater existence. But these images were so dim and unclear that it was difficult to explain them to my *murshid*. At last at the end of the thirteenth night and on the morning of the



fourteenth, I had a somewhat clear dream. I dreamt that I was sitting with my dear friend, Shankar Lal, in the shop of Kulal in our village, drinking cheap wine, and we were becoming tipsy. In the end we were so drunk that we fell down on the ground and slept. This was all I saw in my dream and told it to my *murshid*. After hearing the dream, my *murshid* was silent for a while and then asked a number of questions. For example, "What did you eat in the night?" "Didn't you have night dreams?" "Where you in love with someone before you started *chilla*?" "Wasn't bribery included in your father's income?" Fortunately the reply to all these questions was in the negative. The *murshid* was silent again for a while and then, with a deep sigh, he began, "Spiritual development is not your destiny. You should give up the thought of *chilla* and *tahajjud*. Stolidity is written in your fortune for ever."

"You can imagine what my feelings were after this declaration. I slept less than four hours a day. The rest of the time I spent reading the Quran and offering various kinds of prayers etc. However, after a few day when I realised my situation I gradually turned away from praying and fasting. But it took me several years, as it is more difficult to leave a habit than to develop one. Of course certain social realities helped me."<sup>15</sup>

### **Nationalist Ashraf is not Attracted to Socialism**

"Ashraf had a deep-seated love for his country's freedom." Rahul Sankrityayan recalls, "He was much interested in Congress politics for the sake of which he had once already given up his studies. In 1922 Ashraf was introduced to Shaukat Usmani who talked to him about socialism. But the nationalist Ashraf could feel no attraction to it. Rather he was repelled by such talk. The works of M.N. Roy further accentuated his dislike of socialism. He began to regard such talk as anti-nationalist. Immediately after the Gaya Congress session he met Muzaffar Ahmed

and Qutubuddin in 1923. But these meetings could not abet his dissatisfaction with socialism. He returned from Calcutta an anti-Communist. Later in life when he became a Communist, Ashraf often used to reproach his old friends saying that as Communism was the staunchest supporter of national freedom, had they related it to his nationalist ideas he might have reached the right path much earlier. Ashraf began losing faith in Gandhism after the Chaura Chauri incident in 1922. While studying at the University, he began to turn towards socialism, but his knowledge thereof was still very hazy.<sup>16</sup>

### **Return to Aligarh, M.A.O. College Jubilee Celebrations and his Meeting with Maharaja of Alwar**

In 1923, after graduating from Jamia Millia, Ashraf returned to Aligarh as by now the MAO College had become the Aligarh Muslim University. He joined the AMU in the BA (Hon.) course in History.

After a fierce election campaign in 1924 Ashraf was elected as the Vice-President of the AMU Students' Union. It was under his Vice-Presidency that Diwan Chaman Lal and Goswami of the Swaraj Party were invited to speak in the Union.<sup>17</sup> It was also in this period, as Ashraf once recalled, that Saklatvala, the first and only elected Communist MP of the British House of Commons who was then visiting India, was invited to address the Union. Being a British MP, Ashraf persuaded the University to give him a mounted Guard of Honor. The University, not being aware of his politics, agreed and the University Riders' Club gave him Guard of Honor. Later the Governor of UP reprimanded the University of this act.

During this period Jubilee was celebrated. Such well-known personalities as Maulana Mohammed Ali, Mian Mohammed Shafi and Mr. Jinnah came to Aligarh to participate in the celebration activities. Maharaja of Alwar was also invited to participate in the celebrations. University

wanted Ashraf to resign before the celebrations; he refused. According to tradition the Maharaja was welcomed by the Students' Union and on this occasion "welcoming the Maharaja Ashraf delivered a very balanced and sophisticated speech. He talked of the secular traditions of Aligarh and also told the audience that the first person to graduate from Aligarh had been a Hindu. In his speech he also referred to the fact that his ancestors had been the subjects of the Maharaja at one time. The Maharaja was flattered to learn that his outstanding student and impressive speaker was, through his ancestors, connected with the state of Alwar. The aide-de camp of the Maharaja contacted Ashraf and Ashraf met the Maharaja who invited him to come to Alwar after completing his studies at Aligarh and also hinted at a scholarship for further studies in England."<sup>18</sup>

"On this slight acquaintance" Ashraf recalls, "the Maharaja invited me to come to Alwar during the summer vacations to join him in tiger hunting. You should not make the mistake of thinking that I have any interest in tiger hunting, or that I have ever used a gun because I mention this. However, I stayed with the Maharaja in his palaces of Vijaya Mandir and Sarska for two or three months during the summer of 1926."<sup>19</sup>

In his first meetings Ashraf rather liked the Maharaja. "I should admit frankly that Maharaja Jai Singh pleased me very much at our first meeting. I was opposed to the rivalry of Hindus and Muslims, while he supported Hindu-Muslim unity and his practical aim was complete reconciliation. I was tired of religious practices; he liked *tasawwuf* and *vedanta*. I hated the British government. He tended a little in favour of independence and had supported the demand of the medical treatment of Maulana Mohammed Ali during his illness. I felt as if my ancestral homeland, Alwar, and its ruler were the spokesmen of my own patriotic feelings and urge for freedom. And if this judgement was in anyway defective, Maulana Mohammed Ali's praise and admiration

compensated. Anyhow, when after passing M.A. and L.L.B I again came to Alwar, the Maharaja insisted that I should now accept a job in his State. Finally it was decided that I should study for two years in England."<sup>20</sup> In 1927 Ashraf left Bombay by ship for England for doctoral studies on a scholarship provided by the Maharaja of Alwar. In London Ashraf joined two courses. He joined Lincoln's Inn for Bar-at-Law and the School of Oriental Studies for his Ph. D. under the supervision of Sir Wolseley Hague who was a friend and admirer of the Maharaja of Alwar.

### **First Visit to London, Return to India for the Jubilee of the Maharaja, Quitting the Alwar Job, Return to London with a Completely Changed Intellectual and Material Life**

"The Maharaja, conscious of his status, provided Ashraf with sufficient means for a luxurious and comfortable life.<sup>21</sup> But this kind of life could neither mar his simplicity nor diminish the intensity of his patriotism or his humane attitude. In his second or third letter Ashraf asked me to write my letters to him in Urdu so that in the alien atmosphere of England he could at least enjoy the pleasure of correspondence in his own language."<sup>22</sup>

"I had hardly been a year or a little more in London, when the personal advisor of the Maharaja, Rao Raja Amar Singh, arrived in order to invite the guests to the jubilee celebrations. Maulana Mohammed Ali and I went to Alwar on this occasion. In those days the Maulana had been living with me in London. The Maharaja was kind to both of us. We therefore lived for some time together in the royal palace. When the jubilee approached, the Maharaja put me in charge of the Indian guests who were mostly Rajas and Nawabs." From the details of conversation with some guests it turned out that they wanted virgins for the night. After polite refusal, Ashraf turns to the expenditure incurred and states, "You can imagine the expenditure from the fact that we spent *thirty lakhs* in three days, which was scarcely less

than the annual income of the state. I, of course, for the first time experienced the feudal system and its rulers, whom I, no less than the Congress leaders, used to consider the spokesmen of national independence and dignity."<sup>23</sup>

Ashraf narrates the following incident that decided the future. "Perhaps it was on the third day of the jubilee. The Maharaja and I drove in his new Spanish car from Vijay Mandir in the direction of the city. The Maharaja himself was driving the car. .... Just after leaving the palace the Maharaja pressed the accelerator and the car was running at a speed of eighty miles per hour. The Maharaja usually drove the car at that speed. The road was straight and clear. On both sides the clay walls of the garden were to be seen. A long distance off a constable in uniform was standing in the middle of the road and signaling to us that we could pass. The situation was like this: if the Maharaja tried to avoid the constable then there was the danger that the mud guard of the car would be damaged by striking the mud wall; and if he avoided the wall of the garden then the life of the constable would be in danger. I was not accustomed to fast driving. My eyes were fixed on the road. I only saw that suddenly we were driving on after crashing into the constable at a speed of eighty miles per hour. The Maharaja just turned his head once and threw a glance at the dead body. On our return he ordered a pension of five rupees to be given to the widow. The matter was settled, and, of course, the pious people of the city praised the kindness and humanity of the Maharaja."<sup>24</sup>

Ashraf himself narrates of the last days in the service of the Alwar State. "Two weeks after the jubilee I was appointed personal advisor to the Maharaja and made incharge of the official guest house, the palace and the godowns and had a staff of about five hundred under me. ... A few days latter, of course, wen the Maharaja left for Sarska for tiger hunting, after arranging for his stay, I excused

myself on the plea of illness. When the Maharaja had left, I returned to Aligarh."<sup>25</sup>

"Seth Ahmedullah of Sikandarabad (Hyderabad State) used to give scholarships of six pound per month for education in England. Ashraf secured a scholarship."<sup>26</sup> About this second visit to London Ashraf himself narrates with happiness. "At the end of 1929 I again came to London. Probably these were the happiest days of my life because now the entire story of Alwar was a closed chapter. And I had passed through the stages of *Tarasheedam*, *Parasteedam*, *Shakastam* (I crafted, worshiped and smashed). It is true that when I came as protégé of the Maharaja I had more money than I needed. Now my monthly income was 100 rupees, which was in no way sufficient, and I had sometimes to do without one meal a day. But the wealth, which I received in the form of social and mental gains, was worth more than a thousand rupees per month. I had earlier taken part with Srinivas Ayyangar, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Saklatvala in the formation of the London Congress Committee. Now after my return to London I met those friends who were living in poverty like myself and who had long before me had gone through these heartbreaking and enlightening experiences. The next Sunday we all first met at the house of Shapurji Saklatvala, and on return from there we went to Highgate Cemetery. Here we took an oath at the grave of a new *murshid* who is still alive. I entered a new period of my life which was in every respect different from the past."<sup>27</sup>

#### **Ashraf in India: 1933-1949**

On his return from London on an invitation from his teacher Professor Mohammed Habib Ashraf joined Aligarh Muslim University as a lecturer in History. There he used to live in the house of his friend Dr. Azhar Qidwai who also had just returned from England after getting a degree in pediatrics. The house was called Neeli Chatri. While working in the University, Ashraf tried to organize a Union of the

lock-workers of Aligarh. The British objected to this activity and the University also did not like the idea of its teacher mixing up with the workers of the city. On instructions from the British government Sir Ziyuddin, the then vice-chancellor who otherwise was a friend of some nationalist leaders, in 1935 prematurely terminated the two year probation period and removed him from the University.

In 1935 Ashraf was elected to the National Executive of the Congress Socialist Party along with Jayaprakash Narain, Acharya Narendra Dev, E.M.S. Nambudripad, Dr. Z.A. Ahmed, Sajjad Zaheer, Asoka Mehta, Ram Manohar Lohiya and others.

In 1935 itself, Jawaharlal Nehru, then President of the Congress, invited Ashraf to join the AICC staff, look after the Mass Contact Cell and the unit dealing with Youth Affairs.<sup>28</sup> Ashraf joined the AICC Head Quarters in Swaraj Bhawan and this very year was for the first time elected to the AICC. He continued to head the Mass Contact Cell till 1937 when during a visit of Nehru to Europe for treatment of Kamala, Acharya Kriplani, the General Secretary of the AICC summarily abolished it.<sup>29</sup> It was never restored.<sup>30</sup> However, Ashraf continued to remain in the AICC as elected member. From 1935 to 1945 Ashraf continuously remained the elected member of the AICC and practically acted as the leader of the 10 member Communist group in the AICC. Communist Reply to Congress charges including CPI Support to Muslim League demand of Pakistan was presented by Ashraf to the 1945 Working Committee session at Bombay. During the tenure of Pandit Nehru, Subhash Bose, and Maulana Azad as Presidents of Congress Ashraf acted as political advisor to these Congress Presidents. When the CPI was thrown out of the Congress in Calcutta AICC Session of 1945, along with other CPI members of the AICC, Ashraf also came out of the congress.

Ashraf had joined the London Group of Indian Communists while he was there as a student. In fact he was

one of the founding members of this group. A glimpse of this life in London can be had from *London ki ek Rat*, an Urdu novelette written by Sayyed Sajjad Zaheer in which all the personages are given fictitious names though their characters yet clearly emerge.

On returning to India in 1933 Ashraf joined the then illegal CPI and started working in various areas including the *Praja Prashad*, an organisation leading the struggle of the people of the Princely States, and in the Indian National Congress.

When Second World War broke out and the Communist movement the world over characterised it as a war for imperialist re-division of the world and opposed the war, in 1941 Ashraf, along with a very large number of other Communist leaders from all over India was arrested from Agra and sent to Deoli Detention Camp located in the Rajasthan dessert.<sup>31</sup> Nazi attack on the USSR led to a change in the war policy of the CPI and the Communist detainees were released. From 1943 to 1947 Ashraf joined the CPI Head Quarters in Bombay and worked in the CPI Urdu weekly *Qaumi Jang*. During Crips Mission Ashraf was asked to cover the visit on behalf of the CPI press. Similarly, he was deputed to cover the first Asian Relations Conference held at Delhi in 1946. In 1946 Ashraf shifted to Delhi to edit the CPI Urdu daily *Naya Zamana*. Hansraj Rahbar, Chaudhuri Abdul Hai and Tikaram Sukhan were working with him.

Ashraf visiting the villages of Mathura and Agra was a sight. This London returned Doctor of Philosophy would get up early in the morning and exercise with a *Mugdar* weighing one *mond* in each hand that very few in the village could do, and then go and wash on the well and dress up in a *Dhoti* like all others. He used to speak chaste *Braj Bhasha*, the normall dialect of the villagers, and would sit on the *Chopal* to talk to the villagers about their affairs. When in such discussions, none could distinguish him from other villagers. It was the same during his visit to Mewat region



where he would speak to the villagers in their dialect. I have not seen many that have shifted to urban centers getting so easily and so deeply mix up with the village people and become one of them.

Ashraf experienced the communal holocaust of 1947 in Delhi where he was staying in the Commune at 4-Daryaganj; the house of Y.D. Sharma, located in a predominantly Hindu locality. Hindu and Sikh comrades safely shifted Ashraf to Jama Masjid Area. The blood-letting of Delhi had a very deep and lasting effect on Ashraf. Though Sajjad Zaheer thinks that Ashraf died due to health problems acquired at Deoli, Muqim Farooqi, one of those few who were with Ashraf during this period, recalls this shifting. "As we were leaving the Commune escorted by comrades, tears rolled down our cheeks that we who had lived in this area for years should be forced to go simply because of our Muslim names. Dr. Ashraf was particularly moved because he had fought for Hindu-Muslim unity much longer. When we reached the safety of Jama Masjid area Ashraf broke down and remarked, "Muqim, this is the most tragic moment of my life."... "One could feel and see that Ashraf was completely upset during those days—a very sensitive soul that he was. He had been in the freedom movement since almost the age of 15. And he had not fought the many battles in his life to witness this tragedy."<sup>32</sup> I have a strong suspicion that what really broke him down was the personal experience of seeing murders and arson in the riot-torn Delhi and seeing the refugees in the Old Fort Camp. In 1948 Ashraf was already in bad health during the Calcutta Congress of the CPI. When in the Second Congress the CPI decided to depute large number of Muslims to Pakistan to help organize the Party there, Ashraf left Calcutta for Karachi by ship. In Karachi he was hospitalised. Later he was arrested and his condition worsened in Karachi jail.

At this juncture it is a must to recall that Ashraf never agreed with the CPI policy of support to Muslim League

demand of Pakistan and of asking Muslim Comrades to join Muslim League. As a matter of fact in 1946 he submitted a document titled "*Hindu Muslim Question and Our Freedom Movement: 1857-1943*" to the CPI that deals with his position of Pakistan question (It has been published). However, when the Congress Working Committee in its 1945 Bombay Session charged the CPI, the Communist members of the AICC led by Ashraf defended the CPI position and Ashraf spoke for the CPI position and presented the document that was published by the PPH. Unlike some other Muslim leaders, when the Second Congress continued with the Pakistan policy and asked the Muslim leaders to go to Pakistan Ashraf accepted the Second Congress decision and went to Pakistan. This was his understanding of discipline of the organisation to which he belonged.

Very few know that Ashraf used to faint on seeing blood; even information about it would cause him to feel giddy. So much so that my mother and other Rajput relatives consciously tried during my childhood that I should not take to that trait of Ashraf! Ashraf used to camouflage this fact. He was mighty afraid even of injection. So much so that in Bombay PHQ it was a real sight during routine cholera immunisation to see Lila Sundraya, who then was in charge of a small sick-room facility, hunting Ashraf for an injection and finding him sitting in dingy corner and pretending to seriously reading something. Though with time he recovered, it was the Delhi bloodbath of 1947 that, even when it could not break him down completely, caused permanent damage to his health and restrained his spirit.

Ashraf died suddenly. In fact Kunjanandan Nair, New Age Correspondent in Berlin who had come to Moscow on his way to Delhi to attend a scheduled National Council meeting, conveyed an oral message to me from Ashraf. Ashraf had told him at 4:30 in the morning (Berlin time) that he has received my letter. It seems that just before going for his morning walk at 5:30 in the morning he felt

uneasy and lied down on the sofa. When he died, is not known. At 9:30 Phyllis tried to wake him up so that he may go to his class in time. He was already dead. As Kruger in his write up points out, a day before his death his ECG report had come. It did not detect anything wrong. Postmortem showed that he died of the infraction of the meocord or the artry that supplies blood to the heart itself. In Berlin he was buried in the graveyard where participants of anti-fascist struggle were buried.

I got the news late in the night when I returned to hostel. It was a telegram. Next day, I informed Joshi and Dange who were in Moscow. Joshi, member of the National Council of the CPI, wanted to attend the funeral but Dange, then General Secretary of the CPI, refused him permission. He in fact declined to help me buy the air ticket to go to Berlin. It was the Academy where I was studying and the GDR government who arranged for the ticket etc. for me to go to Berlin the next day, which was the day of the funeral. I went and attended. Dange did not even ask Masood Ali Khan, New Age Correspondent in Moscow, to represent CPI. Thus CPI was not at all represented in the funeral.

The CPI, had not split till then though straws in the wind were all indicating an impending division. Why did Dange behave like this? I do not know. What I know is that, besides some of his political positions, Dange was mightly unhappy about critical comments that Ashraf had made about his book—*India from Primitive Communism to Slavery* that official Party was acclaiming as the acme of Marxist analysis of ancient India. What Ashraf had to say about this book may be seen in the Sixth Lecture. These comments indicate the direction of his criticism. However, this incident in a nutshell reveals the lower depths to which one could go even with persons of such long standing in freedom struggle, in CPI, academics, and in personal relations as Ashraf. Passage of time has made the consequences of such behaviour of Dange for the CPI obvious.

**Ashraf Ali Khan, Mohammed Ashraf, K.M. Ashraf**

There is an aspect about which all accounts, including that of Ashraf himself, are silent. It concerns his name. I came across this aspect by accident. Once in the Jamia Milia library I came across an Arabic text on chemistry published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1926. This book was signed "Mohammed Ashraf" in English and was dated 1927. Handwriting was familiar but I had not earlier seen this signature. For me it was always K.M. Ashraf and the various autographs that I had seen were all prefixed with K.M. I asked the librarian. He laughed and told me that while going to London in 1929 Ashraf had donated all his books to the Jamia library, by then yet in Aligarh. This book was from his collection. From his other two brothers and other sources mentioned earlier I had come to know that his father had given him the name Ashraf Ali Khan; his brothers for their whole life continued with their original names; Haider Ali Khan and Shaukat Ali Khan. When and why this change in case of Ashraf?

I have not seen any of his MAO College or AMU documents. However, the list of the Vice-Presidents of the Union mentions him as Mohammed Ashraf, not either Ashraf Ali Khan or K.M. Ashraf. In other words, by about 1924 his name had already underwent a change and, unlike the case with his other two brothers, he had dropped the "Ali Khan" for the prefix of "Mohammed", making the name simpler and unostentatious.

As recalled earlier, by this time, after his dream episode, Ashraf "gradually turned away from praying and fasting." It was in this period, as he himself recalls, that, "the leaders of the Arya Samaj all of a sudden decided that the neo-Muslim population should be taught the merits of their old religion. I am not only a Rajput Muslim but some of my near relatives are still Hindu, and those who are Muslims respect the old traditions of *Chatri* religion. ... Not only the Arya Samaj but also Islamic preaching organisations were

now attracted to this unknown community. Hindu and Muslim preachers began to appear everywhere. In the middle of 1924, through some of my relatives at Agra, I came to know that a great fair and a *tablighi* conference were to be held at the same time in the village of Sandhan, in which about 500 Hindu and 500 Muslim preachers would participate and after the session they would preach Islam and Vedic religion in the Malkana village. Up till now I had never imagined that religion was also a kind of business, and that when religious myths were concocted these were supported by the forces of reaction."<sup>33</sup> Ashraf continues to narrate how such ideas were influencing even his father who had studied Persian and Arabic and was now living in a town. He had even stopped using the prefix *Thakur*. These activities were initiating tensions even between his father and his Hindu relatives. It, in all probability, was this atmosphere of increasing communal inroads into the *Malkana* community that enflamed the *Rajput* pride of Ashraf. Hence, adoption of the prefix of *Kunwar*.

As we have mentioned, by the time Ashraf was elected as Vice-President of the AMU Students' Union his name had already undergone a change. His British Museum Reading Room Card dated 1929 records his name as "K.M. Ashraf" and his Ph.D. thesis was also submitted under this name. Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal that first published his Ph.D. thesis, also mentioned this name. Ashraf joined the AICC in 1935. The AICC records and publications invariably mention him as K.M. Ashraf. His report against Kirpliani closing the Mass Contact Cell, submitted to Nehru, the Congress President, now in AICC records located in NMML is also signed as K.M. Ashraf. His Urdu translation of Koropotkin's biography of Lenin published in 1934, also bears the same name. In other words, by the time Ashraf left for London the second time in 1929 he had already decided upon the name by which we all know him today. Why?

As mentioned earlier, Ashraf was deeply disturbed by the spread of tensions among the *Malkana* Rajputs. Hindu relatives were all using the standard prefix of *Thakur* (*Thakur* Pratap Singh, *Thakur* Bhuri Singh, *Thakur* Dhan Singh, brothers of his wife Kulsoom whose Hindu name was Kusum; earlier his father also used the prefix *Thakur* to identify his *Rajput* background). We may also recall that the *Lalkhani* Muslim *Rajputs* were already for long using the prefix of *Kunwar* to underline their *Rajput* affiliations. However, the Muslim *Malkana* *Rajputs*, though some were using *Thakur*, were yet as a rule not prefixing their names with anything underlining their *Rajput* affiliations. In all probability it was in 1928 after his first return from London and seeing further accentuation of communal feelings spreading from cities and towns to the villages with mixed populations that otherwise were joined in blood relations, that he started prefixing Mohammed Ashraf with *Kunwar* which seems to sound better than *Thakur*. I know of a similar practice that his other Muslim relatives like husband of my mother's sister, Mohammed Usman belonging to Sandhan village mentioned by Ashraf in his account, also started using *Kunwar* before his name. His name in the 1941-1943 records of Teacher's Training Institute of Jamia Millia mentions him as *Kunwar* Mohammed Usman. Even after his conversion to Christianity and taking up of the profession of a preacher his name continued to be the same. All his Muslim relations living in Sandhan and Achnera whom I knew, also prefix their names with *Kunwar*. The village persons and some sociologists whom I know do not remember Muslim *Malkana* *Rajputs* using *Kunwar* (instead of *Thakur*) before the late 1920s. However, their children, such as those of K.M. Usman, by now Christian, who in any case had both Hindu and Muslim names, registered their Hindu names in their school records to avoid rampant communal discrimination that by now had become endemic in the Hindi belt. It is understandable that Ashraf signed

his personal letters, depending upon the degree of informality of relations, either as just Ashraf or Mohammed / M. Ashraf. However, all his published articles in such papers as *People's War*, *Qaumi jang*, *Naya Daur*, and some literary writings in Urdu, all invariably mention the prefix *Kunwar* to his name.

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3. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 340. Rahul Sankritayayan, in Kruger, p. 3409-50. Hakeem Abdulshakoor, *ibid*. p. 415, mentions Ashraf performing the Hindu marriage rite of circumambulating seven times round fire. It is a common practice among the *Malkana* Rajputs to perform the marriage ceremony according to the "religion" of the girl at her place and then, if the boy is Muslim, to have the *Nikah* at his place with Hindu and Muslim relatives participating in both the ceremonies.
4. Rahul Sankritayayan, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 350 mentions, "The small village of Daryapur has given birth to many famous personalities. Pandit Nattha Ram, the *Swang* Maestro, belongs to this place. Munshi Nawalkishore, the founder of Mawalkishore Press, was born here." From such instances it is obvious that those days Daryapur was not a village but

a small town with cultural influence of Kol (Aligarh). Kol was already a city with a Jama Masjid and a small fort. With Hathras as a railway node and the railway line by passing, Daryapur lost its nodal position and degenerated into a small village.

5. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 340.
6. Hakeem Abdulshakoor, *ibid*. p. 412. No account except Abdulshakoor mentions that Ashraf had an elder sister. Obviously her name is not to be had from any account. In 1956 while in Aligarh, my mother wanted to take me to her but she died at the age of 82 on the very day we left Aligarh to see her. Her son, Iqbal, works in Bombay. I do not remember her name.
7. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 345.
8. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 341.
9. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 390.
10. Rahul Sankrityayan, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 351.
11. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 342.
12. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 342-343.
13. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 392. Hansraj Rahbar, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 362 also mentions this instance.
14. Muqim Farooqi and Nandlal Gupta, 1973 *Life and Work of K.M. Ashraf*, CPI Publication. p. 25.
15. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid*, p. 393-394.
16. Rahul Sankrityayan, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 352-353, See Ashraf, in Kruger, p. 419 for M.N. Roy and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (Chatto) of Barlin Committee. Chatto papers that I had taken from Moscow to Berlin for Dimitroff Museum of League Against Imperialism, were earlier located in the Museum in Leipzig, Germany. These are still in Leipzig though the Museum has been closed. Details of Lenin-Roy controversy on Colonial Question in general and on India and the Congress in particular are recorded in the Proceedings of the Second Congress of Comintern, held in Moscow in 1924 and a large number of articles published in Russian journals from Moscow and Leningrad. Joshi Papers in JNU have the English translations of official and other documents that I did on request from Joshi. The typed English texts cover about two thousand pages.
17. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 344-345.



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18. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 346, Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 394.
19. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 396.
20. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 396. Also see Abdulshakoor, *ibid.* p. 478. He mentions that, "In comparison with other Princes, Sawai Jai Singh was a progressive personality. Many of the Princes and Indian leaders like Hakeem Ajmal Khan and Maulana Mohammed Ali used to be state guests and they were treated according to both eastern and western norms. He wanted a modern society in India. However, in practical terms he only considered the Princes as the just heirs to the British Government. He also believed in communal superiority and had been President of various *Sabhas*."
21. Shaukatullah Ansari, a friend and a political colleague whom Ashraf knew through Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari and his association with Jamia, was then a student of medicine in Paris. He used to narrate to me about Ashraf visiting him for a week in Paris, with six servants each holding a suit and a team of three other servants handling same number of his suitcases full of dresses that were required for a week. In the beginning I could not imagine Ashraf in such life. Later, after reading some accounts and talking to friends who were with him in London I realized that his interregnum did occur and it helped Ashraf to react the way he did during the visit to Alwar for the Jubilee of the Maharaja. During my student days at Aligarh I was greatly surprised by the respect the royalty of the big states of Rajasthan used to show to Ashraf whom they knew from his Alwar days.
22. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 346.
23. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 397.
24. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 397.
25. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 398.
26. Tonki, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 348.
27. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid.* p. 398.
28. In 1935 Pandit Nehru created a number of cells/ Departments in the AICC to look after specific areas. Ashraf was given the charge of the *Mass Contact and Economic Affairs Cell*. There is an opinion that this Cell was for *Muslim Mass Contact*. This is not correct. AICC records show that AICC in the name of this cell published a book in 1936 on

educated unemployed in India written by Ashraf. A copy of it is in the Ashraf Papers. Mass contact with the Muslims was part of this cell. AICC records have a number of reports on problems specific to Muslims and work done among them. Interestingly, At a number of places Ashraf in his "Overview of Muslim Politics in India" himself mentions this cell as "Muslim Mass Contact Cell."

29. K.M. Ashraf, 2001, *Hindustani Muslim Siyasat par ek Tairana Nazar* (Tr. *An Overview of Muslim Politics in India (1924-1947)*), Manak Publications, New Delhi, p. 104-105 gives the details of how the Cell was disbanded. The report submitted by Ashraf to the Congress President on the closure is in the AICC records. The files containing the letters that the Cell received, that were thrown out of the office room by Acharya Kriplani, are today in the Ashraf Papers located in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
30. K.M. Ashraf, (1966): Interview recorded by Nand Lal Gupta, in Kruger (Ed.) p. 417. In response to the question, "What were the relations between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the CPI?" Ashraf replied, "No different from other Congress leaders. At every decisive moment he was with the right and belonged to them. He issued circulars against the Kisan Sabha. My Department was abolished."
31. Deoli Detention Camp was originally created for keeping the adolescent royal who could not be killed but were arrested after the defeat of the 1857 rebellion. None of them was to leave the Camp alive. During my visit in 1941-42, I remember it as located in the middle of a desert with neither trees nor settlement around. It was a military controlled Camp during the British rule. After the death of the last Mughal prisoner, the Camp was closed but not abolished. During the Second World War the Camp was used for detention of the citizens of the Axis Powers in India who after their arrest from various places were transferred to Deoli from all over India. In 1941 when Communists were arrested *en mass*, most of them were brought here from all over India for detention. With my mother I visited Deoli twice (1941 and 1942). From a small station that I do not remember a single train used to go to Deoli in the morning taking the few passengers permitted by the Camp as visitors,

daily supply of water, food, fuel and post etc. for the camp. This was the only source of water for all purposes. There was a small private arrangement for the stay of those who came to Deoli for more than a day. This train used to go back in the afternoon. The 21 day hunger strike of the Communist detainees of Deoli for betterment of conditions is well known.

32. Muqim Farooqi & Nandlal Gupta, *ibid*, p. 5-7. Compare Ashraf going to Pakistan on the directive of the Party with what Dr. Z.A. Ahmed has written in his autobiography in Hindi about his going to Pakistan as if it was a "personal visit" from which he returned on advice from "friends and relations." Role of the "Editors" of the autobiography apart, Dr. Ahmed does not talk about the CPI policy about Pakistan. His account of the visit of Saklatwala to AMU is far from the account given in his interview to NL Gupta as given in Kruger.
33. Ashraf, in Kruger, *ibid*. p. 394-396.

## ABOUT THE TEXTS

Urdu original of the manuscripts on historiography and of the two radio features in Ashraf's handwriting are now among his papers located in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. We have included these radio features as well as his Presidential address to 23rd Session of Indian History Congress (1960) on the same topic as these also deal with the information regarding Indo-European cultural interaction during the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century. Presidential Address is originally written in English. Its cyclostyled copy is located in Ashraf papers in the NMML.

The manuscript on historiography consists of six lectures that were delivered in a special lecture series organized by the Srinagar Campus of the Kashmir University in 1956. These lectures were open to general public. In other words, the text caters alike to the students and teachers of history as well as to the enlightened general public.

The manuscript of this text on historiography as it is now available in the Ashraf papers shows some editorial changes made after the delivery of the lectures that are in the handwriting of the author. Moreover, Ashraf after delivering the lectures seems to have liked to change the sequence of lectures, which fact is indicated by a line over the lecture number and its replacement by Roman numerals. Since the change did not fit the text reference to the earlier

lectures, we have followed the original lecture sequence in translation. Notes penned in the margins are given at the end of the concerned paragraph / lecture. It is not known if these notes were for oral addition to information given in the text or were to be used as indicators of what was to be added later to make these lectures more comprehensive for probable publication at a latter date.

It is interesting to note that these lectures are the only one where more or less complete text is written down before delivery which, as is well known, was neither in the academic tradition of India nor was a norm with Ashraf. Among his papers in the NMML there are large number of jottings on slips that were prepared by Ashraf for delivering various lectures including those delivered in the Universities of Kashmir and Delhi, where he worked for some time. In hand English translation of the lectures is without any changes. Hindi translation of it directly done from the Urdu text is also being published. Urdu original is also under publication.

It may be noted that among his unpublished material now in NMML there is considerable volume that deals with historiography *per se*. However, these are detailed jottings discussing individual sources or typology of sources but this in hand apparently is the only fully written manuscript on the topic.

From Kashmir University, Srinagar, Ashraf came to join K. M. College of the University of Delhi. From Delhi Ashraf went in 1960 to Humboldt University of Berlin where he died in 1962. Obviously, all this while the text was with him. From the manuscript it is apparent that he did not elaborate the text any further. It is interesting to note that his notes on primary sources and selection of passages from a large volume of primary sources spanning about eight thousand copy—book sized pages is classified and arranged in virtually the same sequence in which the various typologies and specific examples are discussed in this text.

Since 1956 when the lectures were delivered to date quite a few of the unpublished sources referred to by Ashraf have been published and much discussion has taken place on the various problems hinted at by Ashraf in this text. However, such details do not make the text and the discussion therein outdated. It is hoped that the readers shall find the text interesting and the translation at least readable.

Jaweed Ashraf



## FIRST LECTURE

### SUBJECT OF HISTORY AND OUR HISTORIOGRAPHY

Respected Chairman and Friends!

In a broad sense if we take the beginning of history from the Egyptian epigraphic remains then its age comes to more than five thousand years. If we count it from the Greek historians even then the tradition of history has been in vogue for more than two and a half thousand years. In this long period, after taking birth in mythologies and stories, gradually history has reached a stage where, to quote Marx, only it may be given the status of enlightenment and be considered as a subject as all other subjects are its extension. Even then we should bear it in mind that if history is gradually acquiring the status of knowledge, and it has some generalizations and basic postulates, then, in spite of local and national characteristics, our social history should remain subject to those basic scholastic premises and follow the basic principles.

In fact I felt the need to deliver this lecture only because any outline of social history, however sketchy or unsatisfactory it may be, can not be presented unless we recollect the general principles of history and some



perception of selected historians. This is also necessary because the traditions of historical criticism have remained relatively weak in India and we, while taking an over view of our cultural history, often get into serious confusion. This contention I will deal with in some detail in my last lecture. At this juncture I deem it sufficient to point out that for the ancient period we, technically speaking, only have one, *Raj Tarangini*, that may be assigned the status of a reliable history. The taste of history then was so restricted that much after Kalhana such a well known scholar as Shankar Acharya had postulated that the only task of history is to present the events of the past in the light of the words and deeds of the kings (*Sakranti*, Allahabad, p.155). It is true that during the Muslim period there is abundance of histories and for almost every period we get written records of the conditions. However, historical material that may help us in judging about the life and thoughts of the ordinary people is very rare. Under such circumstances it was the duty of the social historian to, refraining from prejudices, look for other evidences, comparatively study similar societies and learn from them, and if even this could not be done, at least adhere to historical truths and stick to the standards of criticism. Unfortunately, this happened very rarely. More often our historians got influenced by imperialism, modern nationalism or even from the unhistorical and importunate ideas of the West that, besides being reactionary and un-academic, have become redundant by now. Because of such indulgence prejudices and flights of imagination seriously impinge upon our historical literature. Even then one should remember that if history gradually attains the status of a sphere of knowledge and it has some generalizations and basic postulates, then, in spite of local and national specifics, our social history shall be subject to such academic ideas and shall have to follow these principles.

After this introductory remarks I come to the subject itself.

I

## **The Origin of History**

Origin of history is identically enlightening and enchanting. While man was yet in the stage of semi-barbarism and had not advanced from tribal stage of culture, he started to think of saving the gallant deeds of his ancestors and of celebrated personages. These could have been those leaders of the tribes who physically and mentally were distinguished among them and must have played exemplary role in providing for the means of living and in organizing their society. In any case, those who followed them considered it their sacred duty to preserve their memory; nay, they assigned them the status of gods. The best way to do so could only be epical songs and poetic stories so that these could be quickly memorized and people may remember them. In Greece this literature is designated as *Epos*. This initial tradition of narrating history continued to flourish in human society not for hundreds but for thousands of years. In our own country we may find even today on the Himalayan foothills, Kathiawar, Rajputana, Mewat, Assam and Orissa such tribal people who sing such myths and others listen to these with great interest.

The epical stories of this period have this characteristic that the poet-historian is totally free in his creation. He is not concerned that his story telling fits the standards of history or not. He is addressing his listeners and is receiving appreciation from their imagination and enthusiasm. It is also an aspect of this literature that these traditions and songs are not a monopoly of any group or class. These are property of all the people and who so ever wanted, composed songs and whoever felt like singing them before others, sang these hymns. Every body listened to these odes and appreciated them.

It is this period that the immortal poetry of Homer has kept alive.

This historical literature has its own temperament and worldview. Their attitude is clear and straightforward, consisting in the reality that for the people of this period outstanding humans had the status of gods and were embodiment of human characteristics and honest disposition. Hence, they started believing that humans gradually, generation after generation, started declining both spiritually and physically. During this period the universe is the reflection of the activities of some external, unknown and secret force before whom man is answerable for all his acts and which rewards good deeds and punishes for wicked actions.

Universal aspect of this literature is manifest in the fact that because of these traditions the old and the new generations continue to maintain their connection and a harmonious linkage is established in morals and behavior. It is also obvious that in such social atmosphere our poet-historian is supplanting of the older generations and is a protector of the common traditions of the collective.

### **Script and historiography**

Later, in some areas a type of script was invented. Initial forms of it are those hieroglyphics, ideograms and epigraphic remains that we get first in Egypt and then in Babylon. In fact this is that period when along with increased economic production, division into classes had also taken place. Now, instead of leadership of the tribal celebrities, civil government and its adjunct religious institutions wherein the reigns of power were in the hands of the king and his nobles, had taken its place. Unlike the tribal leaders earlier, the leadership of the nobles and of the king was not dependent upon the personal capabilities and bravery. They used to emphasize the rights of inheritance and on rules and regulations. Those leading the civil government and religion used to inscribe all their orders and instructions. Separating national traditions from the realities of life, they

used to dress these new messages in the garb of religion. We may say that now a special group of selected few had come into being for the purpose of putting the thoughts of the people into a system and order. These people knew the new script and were educated while ordinary people were reduced to the status of subjects and slaves. This is why during this period our historical literature also became differentiated.

### **"Triumph Song": Tradition of Descriptive History**

The people in this stage were not composing new songs and myths but were in the know of the old traditions. In the second category are those songs of adulation that were written in appreciation of the adventures and victories of the kings. These may be counted among the very initial examples of descriptive history. We find the best examples of it in Egypt during the reign of Remises II and King Meren Ptah (fourteenth century BC). This is how the admirer of Remises II in his *Triumph Song* describes the scene of a battle.

"Then, like Men Tu, the king rose and lifted his bow and arrows. In his warrior's glory he resembled Baal. When he glanced behind, he saw that war chariots had encircled his path and Kheta, Kadesh and Arvad in thousands had surrounded him."

Now Remises II, the object of his praise, says,

"After hearing my laments god hastily came to me. He put his hands into mine and bestowed strength to me. So much so that my strength equalled the strength of one million men. Then, as a brightly burning flame, I destroyed their formations after formations. As an eagle hunts by tearing at big clusters of birds, I killed and went on killing.

"Senselessly they ran and took shelter on the water bank. They dived like a crocodile. As they tasted the strength

of my arms, with fear their bile turned into water and in their distraught state they cried, "This is not a man but a Sritekh filled with anger. It is Baal himself."

Or take the unknown admirer poet of Mer-en Ptah, the successor of Remises, who in the following manner describes the land after the retreat of the aggressors.

"There is unbounded joy in Egypt today and the cities of Ta-mery (another name for Egypt) are resounding with joy. Everywhere in the houses there is discussion about that victory of Mer-en Ptah, the king, which he has achieved on the Tehemu. How popular is our victorious ruler. How exalted is his place among the gods. How tremendously propitious is our regent.

"Now, comfortably sit at home and gossip if you so desire, or stroll for long on the roads, as there is no fear in the heart of the people. Gone are the days of entrenchment. Convoys are moving again and to take shelter from the sun, the runners are snugly lying under the ramparts. Soldiers snugly sleep. Even the scouts on the borders stroll and amuse themselves in the fields. Now, even while crossing the streams the shepherds are not required for the herds. Gone are the days when there were shouts in the night, "Silence! Someone is coming. Someone is coming talking in a strange tongue". Now all those who come arrive humming some song. The painful groans of the people are altogether silenced. Now the suburban towns are again getting populated and the peasant himself harvests the crop he had sown. Merciful glance of god is again towards Egypt because Mer-en Ptah had taken birth for the very purpose of leading Egypt."

(Margaret Murky, *Egypt*, p. 305-306, London, 1951)

### **Descriptive and Universal History**

Besides large scale maritime trade, a regular script got established among the Phoenicians. Because of these developments the new chapter of Narrative History was

opened. Beginning with the Phoenicians, descriptive history got currency in Palestine, Greece and Babylon; under these influences it also reached Syria. The Jews took another step ahead by composing the "Book of Days". Even when the sequence of years and ages is absent from it, this is the first example of history being written under a central idea. For chronology we will have to wait for long as it was initiated by the scholars of Alexandria and it developed in the hands of the Arabs.

However, during this ancient period the perception of a universal history had come into being. In the list of Sumerian kings compiled in 2000 BC, the bringing forth of the world and the recounting of kings is separately written in the style of before and after the Flood of Noah.

### **Father of History**

Herodotus is correctly given the designation of the Father of History as before him we get only scattered bits and pieces; we do not get a systematic historical account. Herodotus belonged to Asia Minor. Like his predecessors, he collects disconnected stories (*Logos*) in his book but does not employ the term 'history' for it. It was Plato who first used the term history in connection with nature. However, the *logos* of Herodotus are unified. This is why on the whole we can designate it as history.

This is the first imprint of history. Hence, you should not expect scholarly perceptions from the author. The mind of Herodotus, forget about the laws of historical actions, is unacquainted even with the perception of causality. He even recognizes the possibility that external and unimaginable forces may affect the acts of men. Herodotus died in the fifth century BC.

### **First scholarly history**

Shortly after Herodotus, Thucydides compensated the scholarly shortcomings of Herodotus. Thucydides was born

either at the end or beginning of the fourth century BC. His incomplete history of the Peloponnesian war inaugurated our literature of scholarly history writing. Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides openly condemns the old style fable histories or *Logographs* and, while presenting his history, very humbly says that, as there is no brilliance of story telling in my book, my book may not be attractive for the people. However, it will benefit those who, while keeping the past before them, want to assess the future with the help of human intellect and consciousness. In other words, he for the first time visualizes the sequence of cause and effect and notices a link between past and future and is also not ignorant of thought and action.

It is true that Thucydides did not explicitly determine the laws of history. However, he does not present the episodes of the war between Athens and Sparta, as was then the norm, as either due to personal character of leading warriors or as the will of gods. While depicting he has the background of the Greek social life and the difference between the old and the new era of Greece, and he constantly emphasizes the universal laws of history and the corresponding historical acts. For him these laws are uniformly applicable to all countries and in accordance with these laws the society constantly undergoes a change.

### **Polybius**

Innumerable revolutions took place between Thucydides and the second century BC. City-states of Greece disappeared and Macedonia ascended. Then Rome was established and in order to unite and consolidate the old civilization the percept of "citizenship" was introduced which further widened and consolidated the earlier vision as the human personality got liberated from the limited vision of 'nationality' and its consequent social limitations. This is the period in which Stoic Philosophy and the concept of the "Laws of Nature" got currency and a belief became

widespread that, like human beings, the states are also subordinate to the laws of nature and, like human body, are on the declining path.

Polybius is the helmsman of the reasoning of this historical phase. He was born in the second century BC. His ideas are much clearer and defined than those of Thucydides. On the contrary, as against 'descriptive history' it inaugurates 'pragmatic history'. By *Pragma* Polybius means truths and events as well as their natural and real causes. In other words, for him it is imperative for the historian to narrate events under the category of causes. In principle Polybius was opposed to assign any space to gods or their progeny. According to him, the only task of the historian is to answer the question as to why, how, where and due to what causes the events transpired. In other words he has to look for the reasons, effects and consequences of the events. Professionally, he emphasizes critical discussion regarding both oral and written evidences. Concerning stories and fables, he is of the opinion that these should be tested on the touchstone of reason.

With regards to the state Polybius agrees with the Platonic division i.e. autocracy, monarchy and democracy. He also agrees that in accordance with the laws of nature these stages gradually exhibit declivity.

### **Summing up**

Classical history reached its maximum accomplishment in the second century BC. Those succeeding, either followed them or after sacrificing the principles of history, got enamored by the enjoyment of elaborate language. All the historians of Rome were admirers of Greece. It is true that during this period such a famous historian as Tacitus was born whose style of narration is favoured by all. However, his work cannot be given a place in scholarly histories. It also cannot be denied that Diodorus not only emphasized the unity of the world during the reign of Augustus, but



also declared the whole world as a city. However, the mutual linkage between nations was absent from his vision. In some Roman histories you may get scattered pointers to changes in the system of states, division of labour, consequences of an unequal division of land, efficacy of the rate of exchange on the wealth and other social questions though these isolated episodes are neither connected by any generalization nor any generalization is made so that from it social history can be deduced.

However, chronology was brought into validity during the Roman period, which considerably helped history.

## II

### Islamic Period

Second phase of historiography takes its start from Islam. There can be no doubt that in the field of history Muslims established high traditions regarding correctness of authority, collation of events and chronology that enlivened history and developed the capacity in history to develop into a sector of knowledge.

For their knowledge and philosophical thoughts the Muslims were considerably indebted to the Greeks. This is why during the modern times the treasures of Greek knowledge and philosophy have reached the world through Arabic translations and due to the efforts of the Arabs. However, it is amazing that where as the vision of the Arab scholars extended to the translations of Greek philosophy, spiritualism, physics, medicine and geology, they entirely ignored Greek and Roman history along with their drama. So much so that whatever particulars they have given about the history of Greece and Rome, these are all entirely been borrowed from Ptolemy or Bazentian and Syrian sources. Consequently, the scholarly traditions of Greek historiography did not influence them. In the field of

historiography either they grooved their own path or to some extent utilized the ancient traditions of Arabia and Iran. With the exception of Ibn Khaldun, the style of narration in the histories of the Muslims is limited to descriptive history.

The commencement of history in Islam, as you may know, takes place from *Maghadi* or the description of battles in which the prophet or his close associates (*sahaba*) personally participated. Biography of the prophet is a part of it and takes its start from the *Sirat* written by Ibn Ishaq (d. 833 AD). It was followed by Ibn Hashsham (d. 833 AD), Ibn Sa'd (d. 845 AD) and Al-Waqidi (d. 832 AD) who placed biography writing on strong foundations.

The credit of systematizing the *Maghadi* goes to Arwat bin Zubair (d. 94 AH 712 AD) for whose authority it is enough to state that he was the son of Asma, the daughter of Abubakr and had himself participated in most of these battles. As a rule he cites A'isha for evidence. After Arwat, his student Al-Zahri continued this tradition which led to the establishment of the tradition of writings histories.

After this, the traditions of the reliability of sources and of the manner of writing, besides *Maghadi* and *Sirat*, became current in the field of *Hadith* or the sayings of the prophet, and in the sphere of genealogy, and the area of sources became a permanent chapter in the principles of *Hadith*. In normal histories also it became a tradition that the historian would not accept any event without the authority of a reliable source. As regards chronology it is enough to hint that after the decision on the year of the *Hijra*, there has been no event that the Muslims have not recorded in correct sequence of year and month.

There yet remained the aspect concerning the attitude of history and the general principles of its implementation. In this sphere they had two antithetical ideas before them between which they tried to create some agreement. On the one hand they were compelled to admit that god is

omnipotent and can create the entire system of the universe from *kun, fayakun* (be, and it became) which also partially includes the actions and feelings of man. On the other hand, they admitted the cause and its effect and the action and its consequence. Hence, they developed this disposition towards history that god performs all actions but within the limits of laws of his own making. Thus, this sacred *Ayah* of the holy Quran, *Wa lan tajd lasunnat allah tabdila* (and no change with thou find in the practice of Allah.)<sup>(1)</sup> was on the whole held among the Muslim historians as the evidence of it. It is also a consequence that, instead of historical explanation or determination of the principles of history, they only confined themselves to moral and religious discourses, blessings, and talking about the future. It is obvious that from such ideas and explanations no help was forthcoming for taking history to a higher level of scholarship.

This does not mean that in the field of descriptive history the achievements of the Muslim historians do not occupy an important position or whatever work they have done in the field of chronology of events may be comfortably forgotten. Review of Islamic history is beyond my subject matter at the moment. However, I am obliged to say that some of the histories of the Islamic period including the *Jawama' At-Tawarikh* of Syed Fazlullah, *Trikh-I-Jahankusha* of Ata Malik Juaini, *Fahrist* of Haji Khalifa, *Al-Alal o An-Nahal*, *Tarikh Al-Hukama* and our own *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Akbar Nama* shall always occupy a distinguished place in the world literature of history.

### **Ibn Khaldun**

Assuredly, in the fourteenth century Ibn Khaldun revived the earlier traditions of scholarly historiography. He is justifiably designated as the founder of modern realm of history. He is a unique phenomenon whose historical thought is not altogether devoid of the Greek traditions but who has left Thucydides and Polybius much behind. In his *Muqaddama* he does not confine himself to changes in the

system of governance and transformation of its nature but determines the stages of social history, describes their characteristics and mutual linkages and evolutionary stages, and also acclaimed some principles in which he emphasized the unity between autocracy and religion. Ibn Khaldun ingeniously spans the stages from the level of nomadic life to agriculture, from village economy to urban life and discusses the spheres of arts and knowledge, the collective motivations behind autocracy and religion; in a word all aspects of life and that too within the bounds of the stages of history and he discusses in a scholarly manner such modern outlooks as those of class struggle and surplus value.

Unfortunately, there was no impact of Ibn Khaldun on Islamic historiography. However, when during the modern times the historians started to search for trends and principles of investigations, Ibn Khaldun was again revived in 1726 AD by Vico. Today Ibn Khaldun is being translated into different languages and historians are busy in writing scholarly papers about him. However, this is a confirmation that we have now crossed the medieval period of historiography and have entered its modern period.

### III

#### **Modern period**

With the emulation of Greece modern period of history begins in Europe during the eighteenth century. However, very soon the Western thinkers went much ahead of Greece as machine making and the use of machines had created an upheaval in the impenetrable and apparently stationary medieval atmosphere. Just as modern science and its various branches felt the need for new ideas for knowing nature, the historian was also compelled to formulate new principles of criticism for the study of history that were to correspond

to the new society. In the words of Henry Maine, after the Darwinian ideas regarding evolution,

"It was felt that the present has been nurtured and developed by the past and in every thing, and in all institutions, the trend of evolution is slowly continuing. Hence, to understand the present we have to study the past.

"It is now being admitted, though it was also felt before this admission, that if there is some thing like historical truth, then it cannot be apart from the general erudition of knowledge. For example, there cannot be a glaring variance between the basic truths of astronomy or morphology and the basic generalizations of the historian. The general principle of the study of material universe, that everywhere one finds correspondence in nature, should also be applicable to human nature and human society as these are manifestations of human nature... If history is based on knowledge then it should also teach what is taught by all sciences i.e. an unending sequence of causes and effects, strong design and order, and eternal laws."

### **Mechanical interpretation of history**

However, unlike the objects of physical sciences, the solidified objects are not the mission of a historian. Hence, the same laws that are used by the physical sciences can not as such be brought into use for a conscious human being. Hence, the chapter of differentiation opened up from this stage itself. In the initial stages the logic of mechanics was used for the materialist interpretation of history and, in spite of agreeing to the materialist ideas of history, no reasonable interpretation could be put forward for the problems of human societies and for human mental consciousness. Even the evolutionary process going on in the physical sciences could not be grasped on the basis of the static logic. It was needed that a new mode of thought

and new logic need to be given birth to, to understand not only the dynamic nature but also to comprehend the yet more swiftly moving human society. Ultimately success in this direction could only be achieved in the nineteenth century.

### **The Predecessors**

Among the predecessor historians who were born in this new period we find in the first rank Vico (1811), Niebuhr (1824), Randle and Comte. Their hard labour has put the domain of history on a new foundations. Comte is especially worth discussion not only because he, using a wide vision for the study of human society, presented the perception of sociology for such study, but also because he invented the term 'sociology'. In other words, all those fields of study were incorporated into history that had fashioned the study of human society as an object of their study.

### **Intellectual limitations of bourgeois thinkers**

However, it has to be admitted that so far no bourgeois thinker has succeeded in presenting sociology as a well-rounded sphere of knowledge in the contemporary capitalist stage though the ideas of Herder and Hegel have opened the gates. The reasons for this shortcoming are very clear.

Present capitalist system having lost all capacity to further develop social production, is the most important reason for sociology not emerging as a collated sphere of knowledge, and after acquiring imperialist characteristics (that have gradually reached the stage of Fascism and Militarism i.e. the completely reactionary stage) is a hindrance for all scholarly progress and revolutionary thinking.

Another reason for the failure of sociology, according to Barthold, is that the European thinkers construct their *universal* ideas on the basis of the *limited* social history of the European society. In their vision they have no outline of the

history of the Asian people. This is why their intellect is incapable of defining a systematic philosophy or a healthy outlook for social progress.

Yet another and decisive reason is the following. The aim of history and sociology can only be not only to sustain the civilized and active life of the human society but also to further develop it. However, the bourgeois perception divorces knowledge from practice. Consequently, if there is no correspondence between the thoughts and action there can be no healthy and flourishing vision of sociology. Karl Marx has explained this point by saying that philosophers have till now only explained life and have given their own explanations and interpretations. However, the question is not of interpretations but of changing life.

If a basic contradiction emerges between thought and action then it is obvious that the interpretations of history shall also be affected by this disagreement. This is why eighteenth and nineteenth century, or for that matter the compositions of very many historians even when full of information, do not give any insight to the students. At this moment I do not want to discuss that group of historians whose all efforts are focused on hero-worship and who have declared the traditions of Plutarch and Carlyle as an equivalent of history. I want to review only those schools of thought that have importance from the theoretical point of view.

### (1) Geographical Determinism

The first group among these historians consists of those who offer geographical interpretation. Buckle is the outstanding representative of this group. Apparently these historians believe in materialism though geographical environment is exclusively in the center of their attention and the structures of human thoughts and actions, social institutions, customs and laws are all considered as derivatives of the geographical surroundings. In their

writings human consciousness is entirely secondary and marginal. For example *A Geographical Introduction to History* by Lucien Febvre, London, 1950. (Marginal Note: Human geography to study the relations between natural environment and the activities of its occupants. Geography does not deal with man but with the associations or societies in their historical evolution. Industry of society outstrips nature.)

Though there is an element of truth in the statement that man gets influenced by his material environment and utilizes it, it is entirely misleading not to emphasize that man changes and develops his geographical environment and ultimately overpowers its drawbacks. Instead of taking examples from here and there, I would like to remind you that couplet of Iqbal, which embodies the dialogue between god and man. In this poem god ends his discourse by charging man that he has defiled his garden-earth and has caged the chirping birds. Now, man addresses god and says:

*Tu shab afridi, chiragh afridam  
Sifal afridi, ayagh afridam  
Bayaban o kohsar o zagh afridi  
Khayaban o gulzar o bagh afridam  
Man anam ki az sang aaina sazam  
Man anam ki az zehr noshina sazam*

(Created thou the night, I contrived lamp,  
Created thou dust, I produced glass  
Thou created wildernesses, and desserts  
I designed gardens, orchards and flowery dales  
I am the one who makes mirrors from stone  
I am the one who makes antidote out of poison.)

It is the best argument in favours of aesthetic, ingenious and creative capacity of man that he has changed nature and in this process has also changed himself.



**(2) Positivist interpretation**

Second group is of the Positivist historians. Their approach is that the reality is confined only to the senses. Hence, we cannot reach the undermost of things for the simple reason that we have no means to identify what lies beyond senses. Consequently, these historians altogether deny that history can be assigned the status of a *bona fide* area of knowledge, or generalizations can be deduced from history, or with its help any assessment can be made about the future. According to them the only task that a historian has is to collect those individual events about which we can say with full confidence that their authenticity is absolutely justified. This trend is so widespread and universal that it has become synonymous with historical research. With the positivist British traditions it has also entered India. Oftener than not you will notice that majority of papers published in our journals of history are entirely devoted to fractional research. This is the reason why there is no central theme or link between essays published in such well-known books like the *Cambridge History of India*. Ultimately the search for fragmentary events reaches a point that discussing minute details and splitting hairs by itself becomes the topic of history and the purpose of the life of the historian.

I do not deny that a historian should entirely depend upon accurate evidence of real events. However, exclusively getting entangled in individual events and not looking at the picture of the collective life of man would be like counting trees and considering it to be a jungle. Through this approach neither can history reach the stage of knowledge nor be able to formulate any generalizations of its own. It is amazing that when we sit down to study human history, we endorse that from savagery to civilization human thinking has created such social institutions as state, family, refinement, law, customs and many others to facilitate collective life. However, when we start studying a living society then we do not see any pattern in the direction or consciousness in the actions of men.

### (3) Idealist interpretation

Third and most influential group is that of the idealists who totally deny the material motives for action and consider ideas as the decisive factor in the thinking and action of the collective human effort in society. Established traditions of religion and of spiritualism support them and the interests of the ruling classes usually uphold them.

Why reorganization takes place in human society? This question, as well as its answers both are dated to be thousands of years old. There have also been some that overlook this question by saying as Hafiz put it,

*Kas nakashud o nakushayed ba hikmat iyn moamma ra*

“None has solved or be able to unravel by knowledge this mystery”

However, such persons are out of our discussion.

As I have already said, in second century BC, during the time of Polybius, we had reached a stage wherein it was said that the motive for social change lies in some historical causes which are beyond national and local peculiarities, and these affect every society. In the fourteenth century AD some generalizations were formulated even by Ibn Khaldun who pointed to class struggle and considered surplus value as the basis of civilization. However, when during the eighteenth and nineteenth century once again history came into vogue, the furious discussion regarding the primary motive force of social change was initiated again. Mater or spirit? Both sides could have repeated the earlier answers. Nonetheless, this basic difference had by then emanated that the vision of universe now was neither static nor fixed. At this time no problem of the modern world could be solved on the basis of such academic perceptions as the movement of seven skies, action of four elements, moderate temperament etc. As I have pointed out earlier, now there was a living and moving universe. There was search for a new philosophy and of a new logic to explain this incessant

motion. It is that stage in historical thought when even idealism had to leave its eternal values behind and accept motion and revolution. Motion and revolution in their turn based their materialist philosophy on scientific foundations.

### Hegel

The above recalled neoteric era began with Hegel who primed a comprehensive outlook of history in order to understand it. For formulating this outlook he devised a new logic called dialectical logic. His outlook on history has the characteristic that, according to it, humanity continuously moves from lower to higher. At this juncture I will not go into the details of Hegelian logic. Most important aspect of his logical sequence, thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, consists in that his logical action is a movement and is not an abstract or absolute existence but a universal whole that in diverse forms continuously remains busy in expressing itself. In the words of Iqbal

*Javedan, peham ravan, Hardam javan hai zindagi*

(Life is eternal, perpetually moving, and always young.)

This new vision of Hegel created a furor in the idealist circles. Just as mutual competition of modern capitalism had shaken the very foundations of all honored social institutions like religion, church, family etc., in the wake of this dialectical materialism now there was no eternal truth; eternity and immobility had left the vision of the universe for ever. Forget about others, even our poets of the feudal society also began feeling that:

*Sukun mahal hai qudrat ke karkhane main  
Thabat ek taghaiur ko hai zamane main*

(Immobility is difficult to be had in the workshop of nature. Only movement is exclusively eternal in continuance)

Even after accepting all the movement, change, revolution and unending alteration, the question yet remains

as to what is the motive force behind it all? In order to answer this question, Hegel wrote the history of human thinking. In sum and substance his answer was that the last stage in human consciousness was German Empire and the German Nation. This perception ultimately got exposed in the form of Hitler or in the past could have taken the form of a Napoleon, Chengez Khan or Etella.

### **Karl Marx**

This answer of Hegel could not satisfy ordinary human beings. Hence, Karl Marx presented the second answer to this problem. After agreeing with the Hegelian dialectics, Marx introduced only this amendment that this perpetual motion of dialectics does not take place in traditional thought but arises in a real and material world; the mental and conceptual motion is a reflection of this material motion. Along with this Marx emphasized the fact that we can only understand this dialectical motion of matter through the unity of thought and action. You may visualize this transformation, as Marx himself had said, that the Hegelian logic that was standing on its head, he put it on its feet.

With the elucidation of this simple reality a new and healthy chapter was opened in historical thinking and in the light of this transformation big and difficult problems of sociology and social philosophy could be solved. In the past Ibn Khaldun had also tried. However, firstly, he did not had an intellectual vision and logic of the universe to solve the problem of systematizing human thought, and secondly, the vision of Ibn Khaldun was limited by that stage in human progress where man by stages had reached from nomadic life to autocracy after passing through kingship. The activities and influences of capitalism and of international human democracy were hidden from his eyes.

### **Marxist vision of history**

Now let us have a cursory glance at the Marxist vision

of history. In the formulation of this perception Marx first discusses the structure of society, then the causes of social transformations and in the end the revolutionary actions of the society. As a corollary he also explains the apparition of ideology.

Abundance of the means for sustaining life lies at the base and is the background of the Marxist view of history; the process that has kept man busy and engaged from the cradle of culture till now for the simple reason that without the means of sustenance no society can survive. During the acquisition of the means of sustenance or production some defined and concrete sectors of mutual human interaction gradually and stage by stage come into being in the appearance of which his will or desire plays no part. Economic structure of the given society may be imagined as the sum total of these aspects. This is the real foundation of human society on which the legal and the specific configuration of political and social consciousness emerges. In other words, in real life the definitive social, political and intellectual performance depends on what is the mode of production of the material resources of life. It means that for judging human consciousness it is not sufficient to know what the people think about themselves. Their perception is determined by what status they occupy in social life.

Gradually, a stage is reached when the material forces grow to such an extent that a conflict starts emerging in the existing relations of production. In legal terminology we may so comprehend it that those relations of ownership that were existing till now become a burden on the various aspects of production; these relations become a hindrance for their further development. This is why, as a consequence of this transformation the contest for social change begins. Along with changes in the economic foundations social, intellectual and in the political edifice, the outer wrapping also more or less rapidly undergo a change. We should make a distinction between two aspects when we review

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these changes. Firstly, changes in the base of the economic foundations of production that, like the physical spheres of knowledge, can be measured with much accuracy and, Secondly, the legal, political, religious, philosophical and aesthetic domains, or changes in the mental manifestations of the basic change through which men experience these basic changes and then start struggling for their realization.

Marx has also emphasized this reality that no superstructure of the society undergoes a change till it has exhausted the physical capacity for production because new and better relations of production do not come into being till the corporeal or the material basis for them is not born in the womb of the old society. This is why on the whole we may say that humanity does not raise a question for the solution of which it does not have the capability. As a matter of fact the question is posed only at a time when the material basis for its solution are born or at least their outline begins to be seen.

In the light of this outlook Marx has determined four broad and general periods of social production. One, Asiatic; second, Classical slavery; third, Feudal and lastly the modern capitalism about which Marx thought that this is the last stage in social struggle and conflicts after which man would be able to breath comfortably to say that the ages of darkness and ignorance have ended and now I will be able to live a conscious life of peace. (*Marginal Note: Toyanbee, Carole, and Irwin in the light of Marxism.*)

In the light of his ideas Marx eruditely analyzed the modern period of Europe and reviewed some important aspects of medieval Europe. This fact is a witness for the correctness of Marx and Marxism that in the crisis period of capitalism, since the Russian revolution there have continuously been revolutions for the fulfilment of democracy and the socialist system has already taken a practical shape over considerable part of the world.

Asian mode of production and Asian autocracy yet

remains to be analyzed from the Marxist point of view. I do not suffer from this misunderstanding that in my lectures I will be able to formulate this perception. Wider study and much time is needed for this determination. In the second lecture, after discussing sources, I will try to analyze some important aspects of social life in medieval India. For my satisfaction it is enough that these aspects of medieval Indian society are a bit elucidated.

### Closing of the talk

I am sure that you may have got tired of this talk. By this lecture I only wanted to summarily review the stages through which historiography has passed; beginning as a craft, to a sphere of knowledge and the different schools of thought and broad ideas that have been formed about history. I am fully conscious that this review is insufficient and defective from every point of view and I have not even hinted at some important problems of history, for example what is the historical status of individuals and of outstanding personalities? How does materialist interpretation of history occasion a correspondence between material basis and mental changes in its diverse manifestations like art, poetry, morality etc.? To what extent human will may determine the economic causes? Mutual relationship between convictions and action for the explanation of the understanding of historical reality etc. I will atone by only saying that it is better to have a dim sketch of historiography than to have nothing at all.

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(1) *Surah Al-Akhzab, Ayah 62*. I am thankful to Dr. Khalid Saifullah,  
● Retired Principal of Jamia School for help in identifying the  
*Surah and Ayah* in Quran. Ed.)

## SECOND LECTURE

### SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA

#### **The medieval period**

Respected Chairman and Friends!

In today's gathering I want to talk about the sources for the study of medieval India. Let me explain that by medieval period in India I mean the period of Muslim rule that begins from the thirteenth century and conventionally ends with the establishment of British rule in 1857. I am not ignorant of the fact that some historians have defined the limits of medieval period that are different from it. However, as my purpose is to discuss the dominant and determining *cultural* forces, I prefer these boundaries. In all probability none will deny the long lasting and decisive influence of the Muslim period. In order to understand the reaction it shall be of help if we begin the Muslim period with the establishment of the rule of the Turkish slaves i.e. from the rule of Qutabuddin Aibak (1206 AD). Only 1857 AD can be the proper period for its end as the British cultural and political influence had by then fully embraced our society.

I will review the historical literature of the last century



in my last lecture. However, before initiating the debate on the sources for the medieval period I would like to ask you that till now what sketch you have modelled in your mind about the medieval period from reading the history books? Only this that this period on the whole is a display of ferocious battles, of luxury of the ruling class, of extravagancy in expenses and of aggressive religious display. Some of the rulers of this period are simultaneously considered as extremely intelligent and have been examined to be mad (Mōhammed bin Tughlaq). One is fond of digging canals (Firuz Tughlaq) while the other is suffering from the derangement of constructing buildings (Shahjahan). One is so much obsessed with religion that, after sacrificing the basic interests of the state, he imposes *Jiziya* (religious tax on non-Muslims), demolishes temples and ultimately himself wrecks the foundations of his own empire (Alamgir). In other words, it seems that there is neither political perception nor traditions of a system of governance or the equipage and elements of culture during the Muslim period.

I do not want to deny that some elements of this assessment are correct though exaggeration has distorted the picture and we are unable to imagine that the period of the Turks and of the Mughals is systematic and civilized, having its own philosophy, its own system of governance and its own social and moral values on the basis of which the Indian society expanded and flourished for more than six hundred years. Policy of British imperialism that I will deal in my last lecture, is the most significant reason for this widespread misunderstanding. This fact has consummated in the actuality that the historians, after parting with all aspects of social and cultural life, have taken up only the ferocious wars as their topic. When you remove the basic perceptions of any culture from the subject then as a matter of compulsion a tradition of anarchy emerges in history. Every Indian historian of the British imperialist times and all those writing on Indian history suffer from this draw

back. Everyone wrote whatever he wanted to; and even now this is going on and is counted as our history. For example Thomas has written a book of high standard only on coins. Howell and V. A. Smith took fine arts as their topic and undoubtedly wrote very good books. Moreland by himself laid open all the economic problems of medieval times. The volumes of the *Cambridge History of India* compensated for whatever yet remained. However, after reading all these books you shall not get patterned in your mind any picture of the social life of the medieval times. It will certainly eventuate that all the blessings of the British rule shall get engraved in your mind. Freedom movement of India did react to this and we tried to eliminate these influences. However, if during the British rule the medieval period was a dark age, it now turned into an embodiment of culture and light (*The Concept of Culture State*, Beni Prasad and Dr. Topa) and if the British historians had put the charges of treason and betrayal on some rulers of our feudal period, now some princes and rulers of this very feudal period were turned into national heroes and valiant warriors. Or there emerged those saintly historians who in the garb of *Sufis* and *Bhagti* recount all the secrets of composite culture and national unity.

### **Court histories**

I carefully thought about deliberately indicating to you some of the tendencies in Indian historical literature so that you may understand some important points. Firstly, to present any society in a sentimental manner or partial study of its life in the style of the positivist historians in fact is making a caricature of its conceptual and practical life. This is also a consequence of such a study that we then limit the historical sources of study to only those histories that were written in the courts to gratify the rulers and limit observation and inquisitiveness to the masterpieces of architecture or painting. In other words the society and its

manifestations disappear from our sight.

You should not conclude from all this that I am either an opponent of these court histories or do not recognize their professional efforts. Among such histories are the ones that are as outstanding as *Akbar Nama* and *Ain-I-Akbari* about which I had admitted that these could remain eternally alive in the world historical literature. The complaint I have towards such historians is that they have not studied these books *from the social point of view* and did not use these books while writing histories of *social institutions*.

## I

At this juncture I will indulge in a cursory review of some selected documents from this literature.

Islamic period begins with *Taj-al-Ma'thir* that in the style or narration is singular; meager on meanings and intricate on artistic prose. Just like *Maqamat-i-Hamdani* it is an example of a deficiency in history but fertility in elaborate and stylized language. This is why historians have ignored it. During this period Fakhruddin Mubarakshah wrote a grand book on genealogy. Its *Muqaddama* is heavy from any point of view. It has been published.

Later we meet a grand historian—Mihaj Siraj, for whose greatness this argument is enough that he selected for his book *Tabaqat-I-Nasri* not the realm of Islamic rule in India or the exploits of Balban or Nasiruddin Mahmood, but the history of the whole Islamic world. We know about the Ghaznavi and Ghauri-period and concerning the Turkish tribes from this book.

Then comes Ziyauddin Barni who takes the events to the death of Mohammed bin Tughlaq. His status and level is in no way lesser than that of Minhaj Siraj. In the beginning he wanted to write a world history but gave it up only because he thought that Minhaj Siraj has preceded him in

this respect. The *Muqaddama* of his history deserves to be read again and again and be applauded for his way of narrating events and praise his historical truthfulness. From him we also know that the traditions of history writing in Iran had attained a very high level and this is proven by the recent publication of *Khuda-I-Namak*. At many places Barni narrates the conceptual principles and practical political traditions.

*Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* of Afif is satisfactory and sufficient from all points of views for the period of Firuz Tughlaq. Besides construction activities of Firuz Tughlaq, he gives full details of the system of imperial slaves.

### ***Tarikh-I-Mohammadi***

Provincial histories are important for the period of anarchy that succeeded Firuz Tughlaq. In the book of Ahmed Yahya Sarhindi you will get the account up to the Syeds. This period is followed by the times of the Pathans about whom we get detailed information in Mughal histories or in the histories that were ordered to be written about the Pathans during the Mughal times. *Waqiat-I-Mushtaqi* and *Tarikh-I-Daudi* are interesting from the point of view that these were written to explain the Pathan point of view. Besides, these also narrate about the religious superstitions in detail.

Mughal period is the prime time for court histories. For general details during the reign of Akbar you may see Nizamuddin Bakhshi and Abulfazl and for the reign of Jahangir, *Ma'thir-I-Jahangiri*. For the period of Shahjahan you may read the books of Abdul Hamid Lahori and Mohammad Saleh Khamboh, and for the reign of A'lamgir the books of Naimat Khan A'li, Aqil Razi and Kazim should suffice.

### ***Tuzak and Ma'thir***

More important than the histories of the rulers are

those books written by the kings themselves or by their very close relatives. In this category I will stress on *Waqia't-I-Babri*, the *Waqa'i* of Gulbadan Begum and of Jauhar Aftabchi. *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri*, *Chahar Chaman Brhaman* and the letters of Alamgir for a social historian are full of all sorts of information. If you add to these the diaries of Jesuit priests or the account of Saddi Ali Rais, and for the period of Akbar the *Waqiyat-I-Asad Beg* and the letters of Faizi, and for the study of the social life of the ruling class add *Ma'thir-I-Rahimi*, then you may get the chronicle of the majority of the poets, astronomers, medics and the nobles. *Tatimma Ma'thir al-Ikram* is also a link in this chain from which you get the account of the learned men of the end period. The history of Badayuni occupies an important place in the histories of the period of Akbar as he has reviewed the period from the religious point of view.

After Alamgir we again encounter anarchy due to which provincial histories got ascendancy and almost the history of every ruling family was compiled in Persian. At this juncture among the general histories I consider it necessary to mention *Sair-al-Mutakharin* as its writer is fully conversant with the manners of history writing and the demands of historical criticism. He compares the characteristics of the period of the British rule with those of the traditions of the Mughal period in a very illuminating manner.

Some comprehensive histories or historical reviews were also written during the Muslim rule. By chance the best examples of such literature we get from, for example, *Tarikh-I-Farishta* and that written by Khafi Khan about the Deccan.

### Provincial histories

This gathering is not the place for reviewing provincial and regional histories in detail. I consider it sufficient to itemize some histories in this category. Among the provincial

histories that were compiled after the reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, *Tarikh-I-Mohammadi* for Jaunpur and for the Deccan *Futuh-as-Salateen* (written in the style of *Shahnama*) are significant, and for Gujarat *Zafar-al-Waleh* in Arabic is absolutely necessary. Besides, *Tarikh-I-Farishta* has given the details of provincial histories.

I give considerable importance to three histories for the anarchical period that followed the reign of Alamgir. First is *Mirat-I-Ahmadi* that comprises the history and details of Gujarat. Second is *Riyaz-as-Salateen* that is a very short account confined to the rulers of Bengal. Third is the History written by Hasan dealing with Kashmir though *Tarikh Kirpa Ram* (composed on the pattern of *Ain-I-Akbari*) is a much better example of history writing during the olden times. Among all these the standard of *Mirat-I-Ahmadi* is very high. It is a pleasure for us all that it has been published under the patronage of the Gaikawad of Baroda.

### Rajputana

The history of Rajputana in a sense is another chapter of our history and the remarkable book by Todd instead of making it easy, has further complicated this study. The history of Rajputana in fact is the study of an a-central feudal system and its consequences to the Mughal centralization. I am glad that due to the efforts of late Mr. Ojha this aspect is somewhat illuminated. It is incumbent on every historian of medieval period to study *Pirthviraj Raso* and *Hamir Raso*.

### Himalayan region

Besides Rajputana, the states of the Himalayan region are worth studying as in this region all the characteristics of Mughal centralism, ancient feudal system and religious orthodoxy were attempted to be affiliated with autocracy. Till now no significant work has been done on this aspect. For a general and cursory study the famous book *The History*

*of the Hill States* by Hutchinson and Vogel is sufficient.

We may assume that for more or less a century the above mentioned sources have been the entire dependency of the historian of the medieval period. As I have mentioned earlier, the extremely rich treasure of this court literature of history, in spite of its abundance and richness of information, is not only insufficient for the study of social and cultural history but it is also defective. It is defective because the writers wrote these histories from the point of view of the ruling class, for getting favours from the kings and for pleasing the *Nawabs*. I want that my contemporary historians should study the Islamic period from this point of view that the Turkish and Mughal governments are representatives of a systematized and formulated civilization that was stronger and longer lasting than Baghdad and Samarqand. One does not find many examples of such long lasting cultures during the medieval period. Hence, the first condition for the systematic study of this period is that we first of all look at the conceptual principles of this system of civilization and culture because this civilization was basically centralized and secular. In this context I will stress certain category of sources.

### **Political perception**

(*Marginal Note: significance of autocracy and its harmony with religion*)

Though, to comprehend the political perception the study of *Siyasat Nama* of Nizamulmulk Tusi and *Ikhlaq-I-Nasri* would also be useful because the Saljuq and the Mughal rulers had an identical angle of vision. *Chahar Maqala* and *Qabus Nama* are helpful in the sense that in them one gets the civilizational tendencies and perception of the universe of those days. For the Mughal period, among the foreign books *Adab-as-Siyasat* is also pertinent though it was written in Iran of nineteenth century. However, among the theoretical books of India the study of *Adab al-Muluk* and

*Fatawa-I-Jahandari* is a must. *Adab al-Muluk* (one copy of which is also entered as *Adab al-harb*) is a composition of Fakhr Mudabar and, after being written, was presented to Al-Titmush. One may assess the significance of this book from the fact that this book was under the study of Tipu Sultan and the only example of it was procured by India Office Library from his library.

*Fatawa-I-Jahandari* is the composition of Ziyauddin Barni who does not need any introduction. Unfortunately the only copy of it is in the safe custody of the India Office Library where it has been mistakenly entered under *Fatawa*. So far none among the historians has paid attention to it. If you study *Adab al-Muluk* and *Fatawa-I-Jahandari* together then you will secure a clear outline of the basic political perceptions and of the system of governance of that period. Their study shall also clarify the fact that the discernment of the Turkish kings was absolutely secular and was based on certain traditions of the Iranian monarchy. Its practical contour has been borrowed from the enduring traditions of the Turkish centralism of Mahmud of Ghazni and other Saljuq rulers. If this primary reality remains in the vision of the historians then it is not difficult to understand the mutual relationship between religion and state during the medieval times.

### Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)

*Fiqh* is one of the categories of religious literature. The study of it is not only useful for the social historian but is also necessary as the *Faqha* or those giving such judgements discuss a large number of aspects of social and economic life and formulate the laws of *Shariya* or Muslim jurisprudence for such sectors. For example, inheritance, monopoly, right of *Sha'kh*, *Bai'* and *Shara'* etc. This also is an interesting aspect of the *Hanafi* school of *Fiqh* that was practiced in India that the chapter of politics and the section dealing with the selection of *Imamat* are deleted from it and



all the rest of the subordinate laws of *Fiqh* are formulated under the assumption of a centralized state as the basis. At some places *Baghat* or rebellion has also been discussed but this is done purely from the point of view of the ruling class. For the first time one meets clandestine support to rebellion against the state in the *Fiqh* of the *Ismailis*, for example in the writings of Qadi Nauman, or again in the writings of Hazrat Ismaeel Shaheed (*The Question of Imamah*) where this vague principle is admitted that *la ta't al-makhluq fi ma'siyat al-khaliq* (subordinates may not comply in the bad deeds of the rulers) but it is not clarified as to what is meant by *ta't* (obedience) and *ma'siyat al-khaliq* (bad deeds of the creator). I will further deal with this aspect when I dwell upon religious writings.

(*Marginal Note: Not against the state. On the other hand collection of maximal land revenue in the name of Islam*)

*Fiqh Firuzshahi* is the first book of *Hanafi fiqh* and I have glanced through it. It is the official composition of the reign of Firuzshah Tughlaq though from its sources we find that such books as *Fatawa-I-Tatarkhani* and other books on *Fiqh* had already been written. Later *Fiqh* attained so much currency that a number of books in this category were composed in Hindustan and Deccan. It was in this tradition that such comprehensive and authoritative books as *Fiqh Babri* and ultimately *Fatawa-I-A'lamgiri* were composed in India.

Besides *Fiqh* the collections of *Fatawa* of the scholars of Islam were published among which from the collections of the later period like *Fatawa-I-A'ziziya*, the *Fatawa* of Maulana Abdulhai of Farangi Mahal and the *Fatawa* of other respected elders may be known to you. For a social historian most important point is that *Fatawa* from the earliest times delivered by Hazrat Jalal Thanesari deal with land tax and revenue. It goes to prove the support given by him to the point of view of the government.

### System of governance

*Ain-I-Akbari* shall always remain a monument for the study of the details of the system of governance. In his pursuance Divan Kirparam wrote a book regarding the laws of Kashmir that I have earlier referred to. Besides, there is the category of official instructions that were then called *Yasaqnama*. This category provides province by province details of land and wealth tax (*Lagan* and *Malguzari*) under different headings. The *Zawabit-I-Sultani* of Sultan Tipu also belongs to this category.

The special craft of *Inshapardazi* was invented for conducting official work and for writing official documents that included orders, recording of the events, requests, letters, deeds; in one word it contained examples for all types of official compositions. Though Amir Khusrao had initiated it by writing *Aijaz-I-Khusrawi* and in the Deccan Khwaja Mahmud Gawan had catalogued the rules for official writings, however, it really had its full development during the Mughal period. This is totally an applied literature just as today manuals are written. *Insha-Harkiran* is the early example of it and is followed by *Insha'-I-Madhuram* that remained in use in our houses till 1857 or even latter.

It is regrettable that in India such comprehensive book as *Subh-al-Asha* was not composed that simultaneously comprehends the office *Insha*, manuals and allied arts.

### Political morality

In the category of books dealing with morality some such books were written that combined the writing style of Ghazali and Tusi. Among these, the pride place of writing the first book on morality goes to Kashmir. By this I mean the *Dakhirat-al-Muluk* of Shah Hamdani. Latter, during the Mughal period we come across *Ikhlāq-I-Jahangiri*, *Moa'dat-I-Jahangiri* and other compilations in this category that throw light on political morality, philosophy, system of governance and all other aspects. This category of literature got currency

to such an extent that the famous Padre Jerome Xavior also wrote of book in Persian on the topic of the manners of politics to gain nearness to the king. It was later presented to Jahangir.

### Travelogues

Study of foreign travellers is also essential for a social historian because, besides the court, these accounts often throw light on the manners, customs and ordinary life of the people. In this context you may be knowing Ibn Battuta (for Delhi of the Sultanate) and Abdurrazaq for Vijyanagar. For the Mughal court you may be familiar with the travelogues of Thomas Roe, Bernier, Tevernier, Manuchi, Mundi and many others. I have already referred to Siddi Ali Rais. There are also some Turkish travellers the copies of whose travelogues have been found in the libraries of Istanbul but have not been published as yet. At this juncture I would like to mention some other unknown travellers whose study shall be useful for us. Among these there is a Chinese Naval Officer called Mehnan who belonged to fourteenth century and had come to Bengal with his fleet. His written observations are not in the form of a book but have been published in the journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal. Next is the travelogue of the Russian traveller Afanasi Nikitin that, in an unsatisfactory manner, has been published in the book of Major titled "*India in the Sixteenth Century*". However a better and corrected edition of it has been recently published in Russia. In fact there are a number of Russian travellers about whom the British rulers had kept us in the dark. Their travelogues are useful and necessary for us because they had studied our society by remaining away from the royal court. One of them was Minaev who got so much impressed by the teachings of Buddhism that ultimately he got converted to it and devoted the last part of his life in the service of this religion. Lebedev is another among them who established the Bengali Theatre

and, besides identifying *Hindustani* as a full-fledged language, wrote the first grammar of Bengali language that has not yet been published. For these references I am indebted to Phyllis Ashraf who is engaged in the editing of these travelogues.

In the series of travelogues the account of Salarjang The First of his travel to Delhi is also important because the depiction of the declining phase of Delhi and the descent of its culture you may hardly find anywhere else. The first observations of our travellers to England are also educative because, in spite of the recognition of academic and industrial superiority of Britain, they manifest in the extreme a sense of self-respect and a feeling of hatred of the British rulers. In this context *Shagarfnama-I-Wilayat*, the author of which went to London carrying a letter of Shah Alam on behalf of Lord Clive, and the travelogue of Mirza Abutalib Asfahani are worth reading. The later author, in spite of having a romantic temperament, returns to Calcutta with a deep-seated hatred for the British rulers.

### **Social history and literature**

I would like to draw your attention to that sector of literature, which in the technical sense does not belong to historical literature though its study is not only useful but also necessary for the cogitation of social life. First let us take the Persian literature of the Muslim period. It is so voluminous and wide in span that it is hard to encompass it. In this category, leaving aside one or two historical *Mathnavis* of Amir Khusrao, historians have not used the works of Persian poets. I do not mean that I demand the study of every *Qasida* and *Ghazal* of Mir Hasan, Badar Chach, Urfi or Naziri, though these also illumine some of the societal aspects. At least for the study of the history of Kashmir all those *Qasaid* are necessary which were written in praise and admiration of the beauty of this land for the Mughal kings. My hint is for such social documents as *Matla al-Anwar* of

Amir Khusrao in which you will see the amazing picture of the depravity of the ruling class of the times. Or the *Saqinama* of Anwari that, in spite of its traditional style, is full of information. Or the humorous letters of Namat Khan Aali (which in fact are obscene). There can be no better analysis of the social descent and academic disgrace of the society than what may be seen in this literature. In any case, we must try to detect historical material in the category of poetry and prose. You may find it interesting that the *Shahr-ashob*, the reading of which moistens our eyes even today, were for the first time instated by Namat Khan Aali and, in spite of the decorative and heavy language, Bedil shrouds the arrows and lancets of social criticism.

### Sayings of the Sufi saints

Due to the hard labour of my respected teacher Professor Habib the sayings of the *Sufi* saints are given a place in the category of historical literature and his critical paper on the *Malfuzat* (sayings of the saints) literature is very rewarding for us from every point of view. I will discuss the *Sufi*-saints in detail in my discussion of people's movements. At this juncture it is necessary to underline that the *Sufi* literature, and especially the letters and the sayings of Amir Khusrao, Chiragh Dehli, Khwaja Gesudaraz, Hazrat Ashraf Jahangir Samani and Hazrat Munairi are full of societal information. As a rule this category of literature from the Mughal period is lifeless and traditional though Darashikoh, Sarmad or the *Sufi* poetry and folk literature in Punjabi language is interesting and important from every angle. In the wide circle of the *Sufis* Shah Madar or Baba Nuruddin Kashmiri occupy a decisive position because these respected persons presented a composite and united angle of vision by combining *Bhagti* and *Tasawuf* though it did not get mass popular approval due to their association with the government and being part of the organized *Silsila* (sequence) of the *Sufi*-saints.

### **Movement for the revival of religion**

It may not be improper to recall some tendencies for religious revival and their literature in this context.

#### ***Ismaili literature***

You may not grant the *Ismaili* movement an authorized status of Islamic revival, but who can deny that the *Qaramata* and *Ismaili* sects claiming themselves to be Muslims, for the first time not only led organized and persistent rebellions against the Muslim kingdoms but also provided for such rebellions an ideological philosophy and postulated for the Fatimid kingdom of Egypt a detailed system of rules. India had been their center since the beginning. This is why the bulk of their literature is now being provided for from here. For the publication of some part of this literature we are indebted to the Islamic Research Association of Bombay, and to Messieurs Faizi and Ivanov. Because of this association the *Haft Bab Saiyedana* and a new book of Nasir Khusrao have been published and Mr. Faizi has published the *Fiqh* of Qazi Na'man the study of which is interesting from every point of view. I will again point to the *Ismailis* in the discussion on people's movements. Here it is necessary to say that some of the unorthodox and deviationist outlooks of some of our *Sufis* or even very distinguished *Mashaikh* are the consequence of the *Indian Ismaili* influence.

In its conventional definition the movement for revival and revitalization of Islam continuously persists during the medieval times. In an organized form it begins with Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri and ends in the beginning of the nineteenth century (1820) with Alamgir or eventually with Syed Ahmed Barailwi. During this period you will encounter the letters of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani, the ponderous Arabic and Persian writings of Hazrat Shah Waliullah, the *Fatawa* of Shah Abdulaziz and the learned writings of Hazrat Ismail Shaheed, Abdulhaq Dehlavi and others which are a must for grasping and understanding

this trend. In this short discussion I will refer to only two important documents out of which one is altogether rare and the other could be had with considerable difficulty. Those of the discourses, letters and orders of Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi, that he in his capacity of the *Amir-I-Jamat* ordained from the territory of Satana, are altogether rare of the rare. This circumstance is due to the fact that for a long time under the British rule possession of any of his sayings was considered proof of legal crime and open defiance of the British. The collection of letters, which Jafar Thanasari has published, does not include this category. The other is the *Risala-I-Imamat* of Hazrat Ismail Shaheed that recounts the basic politics and ideas of this school. By chance I could lay my hands on a complete and correct collection of the letters of Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi by which one can determine the aims of the movement and its limitations. For the *Haliya* movement I will refer to the collection of articles by Mohammed Ali (Cantb?) published by *Anjuman Taraqi-I-Urdu*, Pakistan.

### Encounter with the West

In this context it may not be without interest to mention some of those books that were written during the medieval times for getting rid of the British rule. In a sense we may treat them as the first evidences of our national struggle for freedom. As you know our first encounter happened with the Portuguese and the contingents of the freedom struggles were formed in Malabar. In this context the study of *Fatah al-Mujahideen* of Zainal-Abideen and some Arabic *Qasaid* is full of lessons and they fully illuminate the barbarism and conspiracies of the Portuguese. In fact this is a milestone in the development of the same struggle that later matured in the form of naval piracy. For the stories of valour during such encounters with European navies you may see under the title of *Malabares* in the account of European voyages.

The exploits of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan are the

second link in the chain of our defensive wars and you may not be unaware of this literature. Recently my friend Muhibbul Hasan has published the biography of Tipu for which he has used these sources. However, the diary written by Tipu himself and the *Khwabnama*, the original of which is now in the library of India Office, are yet bereft of their publication and we have altogether not used the French sources on Tipu Sultan in whose light Tipu appears as a freedom loving revolutionary. The *Zawabit-I-Sultani*, of Tipu that I have referred to earlier, yet begs of its re-translation and publication.

### 1857

In the context of this literature I deem it proper to refer to some sources concerning 1857. There is considerable published literature regarding 1857 in English and recently my friend Satinder Singh has thrown some new light on this movement with the help of Imperial Records. In connection with 1857 I would like to remind you of the Arabic writings of Maulana Fazl-I-Haq Khairabadi that the respected elder wrote during the period of his exile in the Andaman Islands. Recently these have been published from Aligarh under the title of *Nuqrat-al-Hind*. In the context of 1857 it is necessary to mention the historical *Fatwa* published in Delhi, and in which for the first time Hindus were designated as partners and *Haleef* (friend) of the Muslims. A copy of this *Fatwa* is with Janab Agha Haider Saheb in Hyderabad. Some of the *Fatawa* of 1857, especially the *Fatwa* of Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi is also worth mentioning though locally it can be procured only in Deoband. In order to understand the all-comprehensive influences of this movement the Testament of the founder of Jamia Deoband, Moulana Mohammed Qasim is also worth study. The *Fatwa* of Shah Azizur Rahman Ludhianwi is interesting because in here the new outlook of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is condemned. Most important are those



writings that were later published by the *Wahabi* Center of Bankipur on behalf of Shah Ahmedullah and other respected elders. These may be locally procured.

### **Patriotism of the Muslims**

In this context I may also hint at that historical literature which contains the allegory of love for the country and even patriotism. This begins from Amir Khusrao himself who in *Dawalrani* and in a number of his other *Mathnavis* preferred India to Baghdad and Bukhara and has praised everything of his motherland. *Mathnavi Nuhsaphr* is entirely devoted to the praise and adulation of Hindustan and I am confident that a more attractive portrait of India one shall not find in any other language. After Amir Khusrao, Asami employs the same patriotism in singing the praise of India in his *Futuh-as-Salateen*. During the Mughal period one complete volume of *Ain-I-Akbari* was devoted to the philosophy, ideas and Hindu culture and during the reign of Akbar by the translations from Sanskrit not only the Muslim but also the Hindu nobles got acquainted with the greatness of Hindu culture and civilization. As you know, Darashikoh by composing his *Majama' al-Bahrain* on *Vedanta* philosophy united the Hindu and Muslim point of views. In all probability you will be surprised that as prejudiced a Muslim as Alamgir got a book composed on Hindu knowledge and culture titled *Tuhfat-al-Hind* for the education of his princes in which, besides other spheres, there is a detailed discussion on drama, music and sex. During the reign of Shah A'lam a book was written under the name of *Jama- al-Ulum Mirat-I-Aftabnuma* in which you will find the complete history of the experts and exponents of Indian music. Later this patriotism reached such an extent that Hazrat Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlawi wrote a *Qasida* in Arabic and Hasanullah Bilgrami dedicated one of his collection of Arabic poetry titled *Sajlat-al-Marjan* entirely to the characteristics of India.

### Translation of Sanskrit books

You may be familiar with the medieval translation of Sanskrit books into Persian. This chain starting with Firuz Tughlaq continued till the reign of Alamgir and even later. This category beginning with astronomy, encompasses theology and fine arts to stories, jokes and even *Kamashastra*. There remained no masterpiece that had not been translated. This is why *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* (that includes both Walmiki and Tulsidas), *Panch Garat*, *Katha Sarat Sagar*, and *Upanishad* are all available in their Persian translations. At this moment I will not make any comment on these translations. In the context of social and cultural history I must say that the study of the *Muqaddama* (Preface) of Abul Fazl on the volumes of *Mahabharata* shall be beneficial from all points of views. In this composition Alami Abul Fazl has stressed the confluence in the Hindu and Muslim political perceptions and gives the arguments in support of the central empire that he has unearthed in the Hindu *Artha Shastra*.

### Legend and stories

For the legends and stories that portray the social values of this period we may start from the *Jama-al-Hikayat* of Aufo that was written for a minister of Nasiruddin Qabacha but was later dedicated to a minister of Al-tatmush. Like the *Katha Sarat Sagar* this collection of stories is very comprehensive and monumental though the format of it has been entirely borrowed from the foreign Muslim culture of central Asia.

After Aufo the Indian blush started getting layered on story writing and during the reign of Firuz Tughlaq, under the influence of Indian traditions Ziya Bakhshi wrote his *Gulraiz* and *Tutinama* in a new style. Later, gradually we reach the *Nal-Daman* of Faizi, which apparently is a translation from Sanskrit though by itself it is a complete creation. Besides, that apparel of *Hat Updesh* that under the garb of *Kalaila o Damna* was current since the time of

Nausherwan, was studied at many places in the form of *Anwar Saheli* and Abul Fazl presented it in simple language under the name of *Ayar-I-Danish*. It is that confluence of Hindu and Islamic traditions of storytelling which during the period of decline gave birth to such remarkable masterpieces as *Talim-I-Hoshruha*, *Bostan-I-khayal* and *Fasana-I-Azad* through which compositions storytelling emerged as a permanent art and profession.

### **Religious beliefs, customs and manners**

For the history of religious beliefs Shahrastani and *Al-malal wa An-nahal* of Ibn Kharm have established some great traditions. Consequently, in step with them Mohsin Fani (about whom general belief is that he was a Kashmiri by descent) during the reign of Shahjahan composed books of such high standard as *Dabistan-I-Madhahib*. Such tradition of writing books on the customs and manners of different people led to an illustrated volume in Persian on common professions and casts, which in the nineteenth century James Skinner prepared. However, it has not been published till date. This book is important because the author has for the first time modelled ordinary people and the populace of low casts as the topic of his history.

During the last phase of the Mughal rule Qateel wrote *Muft Tamasha* on the manners and customs of the Muslims that from any standard is among the best compositions. The book of Ja'far Shareef titled *Qanun-I-Islam* that dealt with the same among the Muslims of Deccan, has been translated into English and published.

(*Marginal Notes: Sadasukh Niyaz, Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali.*)

### **The Hindu society**

The upper echelon of the Hindu society had merged with the ruling Muslim strata. However, in those remote areas where it did not systematically do so, the values and

manners of Delhi and of provincial courts had started being practiced. Examples of such cases you may see among the Marhatta *Peshwas*, Sikh princes, in the far off courts of the Himalayan states and amid the rulers of the Deccan, in a word in all the Hindu society. This does not mean that the Hindu nobles and *Subadars* had also acquired the religious outlook of the Muslims. Turkish and Mughal imperialism was not in conflict with the religious beliefs of the people. This is why each held his own beliefs but both became servants in the exalted court of the Sultan and used to entertain all those values of politics and morality on which this imperialism was established. This is why, besides the religious books of the Hindus, you will find all types of Hindu religious literature in Persian and notice the flourishing of religious teaching in Sanskrit everywhere. This is why *Vaishnu Puran*, *Sakranti*, *Bhagwat*, *Yaknavalak*, commentaries of the *Puranas* and the *Vedas* and other high standard religious books in Sanskrit were written in this period. Besides, the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas is a memorial of this period that even today is everywhere popular among the people.

To understand the Hindu point of view of this period we must study the books of Chandrabhan, including his letters, religious *Mathnavis*, poetry etc. In a letter to his son he tries to attract him to Persian poetry and prose writing and recommends that his son should study at least two hundred and fifty old masters and contemporary poets of Persian. In the same manner Chandrabhan insists that his son must study *Ikhlāq-I-Nasri* and other Persian books on morality. This is the reason why some of the historians and admirers of Alamgir were Hindus and *Lub-at-Tawarikh* of Sujjanrai is a witness of this fact. He also admits that when Shahjahan captured the fort of Udaipur and ordered that it should be raised to the ground, he sent Chandrabhan himself to supervise this work. The letter of Chandrabhan in this regard is worth reading. For understanding the Hindu

outlook of the times it would be useful to study the *Muqaddama* of *Zich-I-Mohammadshahi*. In this book Raja Jaisingh, the founder of Jaipur, informs us that he has laid the foundations of his astronomy on *Zich-I-Ailkhani* and other *Zich* of the Muslim astronomers and records his innovations and remarkable achievements with self-satisfaction. This book has been written in a very chaste and scholarly Persian language. It was presented to Mohammad Shah.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is the last link in this chain. He wrote his *Risâla* on *Tauheed* (belief in one god) in Arabic and brought out his weekly newspaper in Persian.

### Erudition and dexterity

The chapter on erudition and crafts of the period is a long one. It starts with interpretation of dreams, cookery, narration about the prophet, alchemy and magic to comprehend medicine, astronomy, techniques of making various things, dictionaries, natural sciences, encyclopaedic compositions, logic, philosophy, in a word one finds literature dealing with almost all sphere of erudition and dexterity. To avoid lengthy discussion I shall not want to go into details. However, I would like to mention that among the dictionaries, *Farhang-I-Jahangiri* and *Haft Qulzum*, in medicine *Tibb-I-Sikandarshahi*, in logic and philosophy the writings of Mulla Abdulhakeem Siyalkoti, Yaqub Sarfi or Muhibbullah Bihari, in sociology the *Hajjatallah al-Balagha*, for natural sciences the writings of Fazl Haq Khairabadi and in the field of encyclopaedia *Sirat-I-Firuzshahi*, *Shahid Sadiq* and *Mirat-I-Aftabnuma* may be counted as the acme compositions for any period anywhere. Besides, the compositions on construction of bows and arrows, making of swords or translations of *Ilm-al-Furs* or *Shalihotra* are of such standard that these may yet be used today.

(Marginal Note: Limitations. No work on architecture or engraving; Translations from Hindu astronomy and

medicine. *Mirat-I-Ahmedi* and the feast given to Jahangir by the daughter of Khan-I-Khanan; artificial garden.)

### Folk Literature

Now, while coming to the end, I would make some remarks to end this discussion. In the beginning I had said that the scholarly learning of this period was mostly the enlightenment of the ruling class and to a considerable extent we are bereft of the literature of the ordinary people. You may get some dim sketch of the situation concerning ordinary populace in the collections of the leaders of the *Bhagti* like Ramanuj, Kabir, Nanak, Sadu, Chaitaniya, Namdev and other *Sants* and elders that have been published in considerable numbers. Dr. Tarachand gives a comprehensive list of these in the reference section of his famous book "*Influence of Muslims on Indian Culture*". Besides, while dealing with the history of Sikh religion, he has given selected quotations from such writings. Branikov in his Introduction to the Russian translation of *Ramayana* has done a scholarly review of this literature. Besides these, you could see *Padmavat* of Malik Mohammed Jaisi and *Akhravat* or in Punjabi language study *Heer Ranjha* and what is cited in *Legends of Punjab* written by R. C. Temple. For Bengali and Maithli language you may look at the poetry of Chandi Das. (*Marginal Note*: For a long time only the religious institutions were criticized in politics. This was the beginning of all criticism. Later hatred of the Turks. However, helplessness.)

As a matter of fact the literature of the people is scattered and requires collection. I will dwell further on this facet in my last lecture.

## THIRD LECTURE

### ATTRIBUTES OF MEDIEVAL MUSLIM SOCIAL LIFE

Respected Mr. President and friends!

The topic of discussion today may not be arduous for you because in this gathering today I would be discussing something regarding the social life of the Muslims during the medieval period and many of you either know about it or are familiar with its manifestations. It may also not be unexpected that some of the social and moral values of that period are still innate in your own behavior. However, I would present those attributes in the background of the historical perspective of medieval times so that such presentation may assist us in determining their social station and worth.

#### **The Fulcrum of Kingship**

An autocratic and all comprehensive kingship was the fulcrum and center of the medieval society. On this occasion it is not possible for us to discuss the indispensability, the reasons for its institutionalization and historical evolution of it. However, it is important to discern that during this span of time the status of the Sultan or the king was many

times greater than humanity itself. If not god, he was positively counted as his shadow or *Zilillah*. This is why while explaining kingship and morality it is said in the books of this period that in the beginning kingship was combined with prophethood in the person of the prophet. However, after the termination of prophethood with the last prophet of Islam, the Sultans inherited the duties of *Imamat* (leadership). In other words, the kingship by itself has the disposition of prophethood. Hence, along with boundless political rights, the entire land and wealth was considered, like the Pharos of Egypt, the property of the king. Everyone else was counted among the servants of the establishment.

If the king, and that too a despotic Sultan, be considered the fulcrum and center of the entire social and political system, it is then obvious that his personal power shall always be relatively more than that of the nobles and other elements of the system and society. This is why every medieval king had his personal staff and his army with its armaments, equipment and numbers, which was the most significant element of the organized strength of the state. The royal establishments of the Turkish and Mughal kings had the status of a permanent city in which there used to be tens of thousands of slaves and servants. Among these born-slaves (*khanazad*) were some civil officers, officers of the royal army, governors of some provinces and regions who used to always be in attendance on the king. If you want to study this establishment of the slaves then you may examine, besides *Siyasatnama* and the history of Usmani Khan Nashtaru, even *Tarikh-I-Firuzshahi* itself that gives the details of this facet. In other words, the force that protected the society and guaranteed stability to the central government was essentially this militarized group of either traditional servants or purchased or home-born slaves of the king amidst whom there was no consideration of caste or descent. In the words of Sa'di—



*Man o tu har do khwaja tashanim  
Banda-I-bargah-I sultanim*

(Both the two of us are brought up by the sovereign  
We are the servants of the household of the Sultan)

Their obedience was proverbial. You can see the shining examples of such loyalty of these slaves not only in the accounts of the *Uthmani* or *Safavi* kings but also in the history of India itself. When Ghalib in his exaggerated poetic style says

*Khanazad-I-zulf hain zanjeer se bhagain ge kiyun*

We are the born slaves of the tresses, why run away from chains, he in fact meant to highlighten the characteristics of the born slaves. In other words, if you deliberate upon the legal rights of the Sultan, his wealth and the level of his military organization, you will feel that the perception of the shadow of god does not at all appears to be an uncalled for perception. Consequently, as an audacious poet of the time has said

*Yarab cha khush ast padshahi kardan  
Dar surat-I-bandgi khudai kardan*

(Oh god, how pleasant it is to be a king  
Being god in the garb of subservience)

(*Marginal Note:* People in relation to the Sasanian courts. *Sajda* in the early manners of the court and later *Kornish* and *Tasleem*; *Ulema* being the only exception. Literature only discusses whether it is permissible or not.)

### **Mughal and Turk Traditions of governance**

From my above statement you should not be misled like the Western historians that autocratic kingship represents absolute barbarism or the uncivilized and savage period. By autocratic kingship I mean that state system which was first established in central Asia and then in

medieval India and subsequently, after Chingez Khan and Timur during the medieval times, got confederated with a compact and organized military system. This system is fundamentally different from the perceptions regarding medieval European monarchies because this centralized kingship does not tolerate middle classes and gets directly linked up with the peasants. In this characteristic system a peasant is not an agricultural slave but becomes a type of *Ajeer* or free worker. The founders of this system were the nomadic tribes of central Asia who, like the Persians, had no concept of hereditary nobility or authority. The leaders of these tribes entirely depended upon their personal valour and capacity for organization. They were also unenlightened of this rule and tradition that the eldest son should be the heir to the throne. Besides some superstitions and in terms of religion too the Turkish and Mughal tribes, unlike the Persians, were not constrained by any special religious belief or organized system of religion. Consequently, it remained the characteristic of the Turks and Mughals that they always practiced forbearance between religions and communities and never used the influence and power of the state for promoting any specific belief.

### **Islamic society**

Among the Muslims this combination of centralized military structure and autocracy was a natural occurrence. It is a fact that without this combination one does not find any basis of organization and political stability in the Abasid kingdom or in the later Islamic empires. The traditions of hereditary rule were neither there among the Arabs nor these could have emerged. Ultimately Ibn Khaldun had to say that the Arabs are entirely bereft of any capacity to establish a monarchy. At the most in their society piety and soundness of belief was considered to be the standard of virtuosity during the reign of Hazrat Omar (the second Caliph) though after Maavia the armed might and mutual

rivalry destroyed even this basis. The vision of such a far sighted thinker as Ibn al-Matagh got immediately focused on the basic weakness of the Islamic society that it is deprived of the wealth of hereditary grandeur and ancestral leadership so that under these circumstances it was a hard task to install a long lasting rule. Ultimately, the slave system of the Turks and military organization of the Mughals satisfactorily solved this problem.

### **The myth of Sikandar and what it connotes**

To hide the above historical reality the medieval Muslim thinkers generally take refuge behind the old traditions of Iran and want to be the descendents of Jamshed and Faridon. Even Firadusi himself had pointed to the triviality of this attitude. Later, as a justification of the monarchy the Arabs coined the myth of Sikandar Zulqarnain. Due to many reasons it acquired wide acceptance and achieved success. Among the Muslim writers of this period not only Amir Khusrao composed his *Sikandarnama* in the imitation of Nizami, but in the circles of the *Sufis* and the *Ulema* this debate perpetually continued whether Sikandar Zulqarnain was a *Wali* or not. The *Walayat* of Sikandar is well established among all circles. The doubt that is sometimes raised only concerns his prophethood. (*Marginal Note: Portrait of Sikandar in the hilly states of Badakhshan and Amir Hunza. Investigation of Sikandar by (Maulana) Azad. The god Amon in Egypt. Al-biruni.*)

### **Sahibqaran Masud Saad Salman Thani**

Actually, in the eyes of the Turkish and Mughal rulers Sikandar is the embodiment of the most exalted ideals of monarchy. Among his dispositions two characteristics are very prominent. Firstly, he not only pursues toleration between communities and religions, but also respects the manners, customs and traditions of every community and of all sacred places of worship of every religion. Secondly,

justice and evenhandedness. As a consequence, the Islamic historical literature has greatly emphasized the temporal characteristics of justice and with the help of citations from Quran, confederated it with the Balance of Justice. In accordance with this perception those sayings of the prophet are often repeated in which it is said that even one moment of justice of the Sultan is equal to sixty years of worship of the pure and on the day of judgement a just king shall be under the protection of the most exalted prophet himself. From all this you should not be led into misunderstanding that the justice loving Muslim rulers or Sikander had come to obliterate class divisions of inequality from the world. Justice intended that, while maintaining the specific divisions of the society, the rulers should display respect for the religious beliefs of every subordinate and conquered people and save the subject classes from the transgressions of each other. Consequently, following this very perception, Akbar ultimately formulated his policy of "*Sulh kul*" (All embracing peace) and in the circle of the *Sufis*

*Har qaum rast rahe, dine o qiblagah*

(Every people have a riotous path, religion and focus of worship). Became the focal tradition.

(*Marginal Note*: Justice; punishment to those against the rule; different law for the slaves viz. The torch-bearer of Akbar, minister of Firuz; Humayun and Mirza Kamran and nobles; chain of justice of Jahangir and personal presence of the king and later of Chief Justice; answerability of Mohammed bin Tughlaq.)

### **Warmongering**

From justice and tolerance you should not acquire the notion that these states were based either on non-violence or, after recognition of exclusive superiority, the Muslim rulers and conquerors of the period, like the Hindu *Chakravarti*, could tolerate secondary nobles and rulers. In

fact belligerency is the biggest characteristic of the medieval Turkish and Mughal monarchies. For the religious justification of it the literature of the times repeatedly cites that passage from Quran where steel is recalled along with *Qastas*. During the later period this saying of the prophet was also coined that the heaven lies in the shadow of swords. In the words of Iqbal, following was the clear imprint of the times

*Jazb o istila shua-i-quwat ast  
Fath-raz-i-ashkar-i-quwat ast*

(Devotion and determination is the manifestation of strength Victory is the secret of the Materialization of strength.)

This is the period wherein the society was asunder between battle and indulgence. In other words, the job of the rulers was to use the sword and organize assemblages of enjoyment. They had nothing to do with labour, production, trade or agriculture. In this period every individual of the ruling class is outfitted with arms and ruling is the right of the one who had mastered the sword, joining the battles and is distinguished for leadership of the armies. Just as on one occasion Napoleon on being asked his genealogy referred to Manate sword, every claimant of medieval India shows his expertise of the sword as his answer and says

*Urus-I-bakht base dar kinar girad chast  
Ki bosa bar sar-I-shamshir-I-abdar dahad*

(The damsel of fate receives on her side the one Who gives a kiss to the tip of the sharp sword.)

### Status of ordinary people

You may deduce the status of ordinary people from the fact that in the popular and current terminology of the Greek philosophy they were considered to be quadrupeds. In medieval literature the saying *Al-Awam kal anam* (common people are like animals) has been repeatedly recalled.

Peoples' struggle is the topic of my another lecture. At this juncture it is necessary only to show that, due to the caste division in the Hindu society, kingship and adoration of the king of the Hindu period, which in the beginning was an aspect of the *Bhagti*, the people acknowledged the Muslim king also in the same manner as they used to consider the Hindu *Rajas*, as *Prabhu* and *Pati*. Consequently, Akbar was designated as *Jagat Guru*. It is since then that the tradition of *Jharoka* was established i.e. the king used to reveal himself to the commoners early in the morning and they used to either prostrate themselves before him or shout

### The Sultan and the commoners

(Be agreeable to the subjects and be at peace with the equals. Because for every just king the subjects are like an army.)

*Ba raiyat sulha kun o az bim-l-khasam aiman bayashi  
Zan ki har sultan-l-aadil ra raiyat laskkar ast*

Sadi

General contempt for ordinary people becomes yet easier in a society wherein for thousands of years a section of the untouchables, even in a society wherein tens of thousands of untouchables had got them converted to Islam and had got emotionally associated with the ruling strata. Hindu thinkers (for example the author of *Vishnu Purana*) used to dream that Krishna would be reborn and restore *ab initio* the *Varna Ashram* system on the old foundations. In such a society weavers, bird-catchers, butchers etc. were looked upon with considerable contempt. At least those days this was also a fact that the alien monarchy always remained afraid of the people and, besides the over all religious tolerance, always took care that the movements of the army should not harm the crops of the peasants. During famines, the peasants got the *Tagavi* loans and had their rents annulled; hungry were fed, and the expert sword fighters were always alert that the subjects should not get angry. In the words of

rallying cries for his long life. Ultimately this led to the emergence of a caste of *Darshaniya* who would not take food unless they had seen the king.

Open hatred of the king is the characteristic of the post-Mughal times. We meet it in the observations of Mundi regarding the Allahabad event when in the nineteenth century decoits encountered the royal *Dola* near Agra.

(Marginal Note: Babur and cheap labourers and craftsmen; Timur and Samarqand; definition of caste and admiration of *Artha Shashtra* of India in *Anwar Saheli*; the preface of *Mahabharata* by Abul Fazl; praise of *Sati* by Amir Khusrao; hatred of the "Turk" but recognition of the needs). After these general remarks I will present to you some specific features. The chapter of combat is out of my topic at this juncture. I only want to focus your attention on enjoyment or even on "the narratives of affection and loyalty".

## I

After clarifying your understanding of the central and crucial position of kingship it would be easier for you to comprehend the thinkers of the times generally and those who frequently explained the characteristics of the age by saying that *An-nas ala din al-malukahum* or the people follow the manners of the rulers.

The biggest characteristic of the times is that, besides central autocracy, the Muslim society is the paragon of urban culture and its values are shaped and cast by the hands of an urban environment and armed strata. Consequently, in Islamic literature the term of culture (*tamadun*) is derived from the word urban (*Madaniyat*). The most well known centers of this culture are the capitals of Delhi and Agra, and the centers of the provinces like Lahore, Lucknow, Patna, Dhaka and Murshidabad.

All these groups had their own living localities. These localities often had their own surrounding wall and bazaars. In a way the localities had a type of self-sufficiency. The *Kotwal* (police chief of the city) appointed a *Meer Mohalla* (chief of the locality) for each locality that kept an eye on everyone, specially on the strangers entering or leaving the locality. He was answerable to the Police chief for all happenings in his locality.

Besides mosques, temples, and markets the city had a

### Functional structure of the city localities

citizens. localities of ordinary professional workers and of ordinary among the *karkhandars* of Delhi. After these came the artifacts of diverse types. Their vestiges you may still meet their thousands worked in the royal factories and produced nobles and men of wealth were. As a matter of norm they in professional craftsmen and artisans whose protector these of the ruling class were the *Mohalla* (living sectors) of those also had their houses in this sector. Attached to the palaces those who got reasonable stipend and lived with grandeur and medic, astronomers, poets, astrologers etc. of the court and their big *Havelis* constructed and where they lived with all their subordinates and tribesmen. Besides these, the scholars, Next comes that sector of the city where the nobles got time required.

gardens and canals or in one word, all that the ruler of the imperial horse and elephant-stables, army barracks, bazaars, servants of the palace, other servants. Here located are the this area constituted a separate city by itself. Here live the imperial palaces are built and, as I have already mentioned, and prominent sector of the city is where the main fort and have a number of common features, viz. the most beautiful when these cities were founded. However, all these cities I will not go into the interesting discussion regarding

### Organizational structure of the metropolitan cities



central market, beautiful roads, ground for military exercises, a grand *Jama Masjid*, a number of *madrassas*, and in some cases also a royal hunting ground. The localities were not divided into sectors on the basis of religion but were sectored according to social status. This is why often you may see the *Mughal* and *Rajput* or *Pathan* and Iranian *Havelis*, mosques and temples adjacent and juxtaposing each other. A little away from the cities used to be the *Khanqah* (hospices) of the *Sufis*, mausoleums of those who had renounced the world or the *Math* and huts of the *Sadhu Mahatmas* who during the last days of the kingship were the owners of huge wealth and *anqaf* (consecrated property) and their inheritors, either sons or clansmen, began to be counted among the upper classes of the society.

### The mercantile classes

Professional traders also lived in the cities. Their business was spread all over the land. Since the time of the Tughlaqs their *Hundis* (promissory notes) were perpetually in vogue. These very persons were honoured during the *Mughal* times by the titles of *Saith*, *Jagat Seth* or *Malik-at-tajjar* and they often loaned huge amounts of money to the rulers and nobles on interest. Not only this. One of them became the governor of a trading center in *Surat* and was called the *Shah Bandar* (chief of the port). However, in spite of wealth and influence in the court, we cannot say that in this militarized autocracy he had any definitive status. From the point of view of social and economic status it certainly can be seen that their standard of life was very high and they put to use foreign decorative merchandise from Europe and other places.

(*Marginal Notes*: During the later period they were also attached to the court and to the nobles. Communal riots.)

### Personal status of the nobles

The status of the primary *Iqta* holders, and later day

*Mansabdars* and other persons getting grant from the king, was not hereditary but only for the given individual. After his death the ruler of the time became the owner of all his wealth even if during his lifetime he had huge treasures. For instance Khanjahan Maqbool, a minister of Feroz Tughlaq, at his death left ten million *Tanka* cash and jewelry worth millions of rupees. Jahan Ara had a *Jagir* of an annual income of ten million rupees. On top of it, they got millions of rupees as presents and gifts. The practice of *Haq-I-Khidmat* (right of service; another name for bribes) was common and the king himself would never try to stop it. Asad Beg in his *Maqalat* has mentioned how Akbar deliberately provided him opportunities for taking bribes and to accumulate wealth; he earned millions from the inquiries of the Royal Commission and ambassadorship to Deccan.

In one word, the nobles in their lifetime owned hundreds of thousands or even millions, but after their death their children and their family used to turn absolute poppers and entirely dependent upon the court. You may assess from these facts as to how much and why this ruling strata, instead of learning thrift, was acquiring the habit of wastefulness; instead of becoming miserly, they were turning to grandiose spending. Hence, the second fundamental apportionment of life viz. Enjoyment begins from this moment. (*Marginal Note*: "One morning of the garden is better than the whole world".)

### Indulgence in delectation

Enjoyment in fact is a permanent chapter of the erudition of medieval morality and belongs to the division on manners that is called *Mirzama* i.e those manners, customs and attitudes that a *Mirza*, or person of noble descent, should practice. There are innumerable details concerning the mannerism of the *Mirza*. According to some authorities it is also essential that the *Mirza* must consider Delhi and Lahore as the most civilized cities of the world;

should drink only Portuguese wines and should always have not less than ten to twelve heralds and arm bearers in his company.

In the *Mirzama* you will get all the details of how to prepare a celebration and the etiquette one should observe in such gatherings or on the occasion of death; how to decorate the *Diwankhana* on such occasions; how many bouquets, rose-water sprinklers, chandlers, small spread-sheets (*sozni*), large white spread-sheets (*chandi*), leg-rests (*pa-andaz*), pillows and elevated sitting facilities (*Masad*) should be there. All the details pertaining to the manners of sitting and dispersal, wines, sherbet, flowers and fruits are entered in it. It is also mentioned in such texts as to which dress should be worn in which season; what food should be eaten and in which sequence these should be served and what manners should be practiced at the time of sending off the guests. During this period many books were written exclusively about victuals, scents, pan, sherbet etc. However, I have to ignore these books because of the long time it would require to discuss them.

### Wine drinking

Wine drinking occupies a distinctive position in the gatherings of the delectation and the best traditions of our medieval period are associated with it. I am confident that, if ever history of drinking is written, in such histories jamshed and Khusrav Parvez may turn out to be only anecdotes in comparison with Masood bin Mahmud Ghaznavi and Babur, while Jhangir would certainly get the status of *Imam* (leader) and *Mujtahid* (innovator) in this field. None can ever know how many nobles, *Rajas* and *Pezzadas* lost their life in order to attain the status of a 'martyr' in the way of Daniaal, the son of Akbar or Mirza Airaj, the son of Abdurrahem Khan-I-Khanan. Medieval Delhi has also seen such scenes when on the return of the victorious army from Deccan there were placed on the

roadside vessels filled with wine, and the entire populace was given an open invitation to drink. There were many rulers who in the way of Mohammed Shah Piya considered the matters of state as "meaningless piles" when compared with drinking. Drinking in fact was included in the etiquette of Kingship. Consequently Jahangir himself had to teach the manners of drinking to Shahjahan after first serving him with various drinks and the author of *Qaboosnama* considered it necessary to detail these manners for his son. Poets of all ages have forwarded this or the other argument in favour of drinking *per se*. However, it is more interesting that it was during the commencement of the thirteenth century, in other words in the beginning of the Islamic period, when arguments were being forwarded for and against drinking and our first historian Hasan Nizami, who himself was a religious scholar, gave this opinion in this regard

*Haram bud ba fatwa-I-shara bar alimaaq  
Halal gashit ba fatwa-I-aql bar aaqil*

(For idiots it was declared impermissible by religious edict  
Became permissible for the wise by the edict of reason)

### Dance and Music

While consumption of alcoholic drinks was a must for the gatherings of enjoyment, dance and music was also an integral element of it. It is a fact that generally the Sultans of Delhi were competent to comprehend music and some of the provincial rulers, especially the rulers of Jaunpur, Gujarat and Deccan were considered to be in the vanguard of music appreciation. It was the same with dancing and rhythmic movements. You will be surprised to know that such books as *Tuhfat-al-Hind* and *Mirat-I-Aftabnuma*, sequentially written on the mandate of Alamgeer and Shah Alam, recount the complete history of the art of dancing and singing and list the names of those famous and outstanding in these fields.

Moreover, in the very beginning of the fifteenth century the composition *Ghuniyat-al-Muniya* of Gujarat furnishes a

summary of the *Natyashastra*.

Hence, in every principal city or town there were companies of musicians and dancers and the court of the Sultan employed the most proficient amongst them. On the occasion of *Nuroz*, *Diwali* and of victories, or on the birth of princes or princesses in the royal seraglio these artists, together with the court poets, used to display their art and in return received gifts and rewards. It was the same in the courts of the nobles. Ultimately, the tradition of dance and music also got currency in the houses of the *Ulema*. So much so, that even the ménage of Shah Waliullah could not stop it. The *Sama* got credibility in the congregations of the *Sufis* and *Qawwali* became a regular feature in the annual *Urs* of the saints. In one word, just like the Hindu society, dance and music emanated as the distinguishing characteristic of the Muslim society as well. So much so that the musicians Gopal and Tansen are considered as worthy of veneration even today.

#### Adulation and benefaction

It was also a rule for the gathering of entertainment that the king and the nobles used to demonstrate their laudation and bequeathed rewards on such occasions. On innumerable occasions Mohammed bin Tughlaq showered gold on poets to the extent that they went entirely under it. On uncountable occasions he got the poets weighted in gold as the expression of his appreciation of individual stanzas. Even the ordinary nobles used to gift a whole stable to poets and musicians, fill the mouth of the poets with diamonds and present to the dancers even the last of the garments on their person. One poet of this age has aptly said: Faridun Farakh was not an angel; he got eternal fame only due to his bestowing and valuation. Therefore,

*Tu dad o dahish kun Faridun tui*

(You practice bestowing and appreciation; you are

Faridun.)

### The steeplechase

Besides the congregations of celebrations and of dance

and music there was great currency of hunting in this militarized nobility. Whatever be the traditions of Behram Gaur, its mass popularity in fact started with Chingez Khan and the Mughals. The status of *Mir Shikar* (Head Huntsman) was considered to be so elevated a post among the Turks and the Mughals that during the reign of Chingez the task of preparing for a hunt was assigned only to the nearest and closest relatives and most trusted servants. The Sultans of Delhi brought this tradition to India.

Hunts were of different types. Some time large hunting

grounds were specified for this purpose. Hunting the lion was designated as exclusive for the king. After encirclement, the king used to stand on the ground and frontally kill the lion by sword. Usually, the king would go for a hunt riding on an elephant. Some of the best paintings of the Mughal period depict hunting scenes. Sometimes birds were hunted with the help of either a hawk or a falcon. Babur was very fond of hunting wild ass and rhinoceros. Akbar was well experienced in getting the wild elephants caught. For this end they used to build elevated platforms; later the wild elephants were herded in pre-constructed enclosures where these were brought under control by the domesticated elephants. In the manner of *Anqa* the white elephant was also rare. Whenever there was any information of its find, all the possible tricks and means were used to obtain it so that it may be used for royal riding. There have even been wars for getting some of the famous male or female white elephants.

The well-known *Qamargha* type of hunt got instituted under the Mughals. In this type the entire army used to completely encircle tens of *Kos* of territory and slowly collect

the animals together in a small space. Then the king sitting in the middle, used to hunt the animals over many days. Later the nobles followed the king. In the end all the commoners were also given the chance to hunt. Details of the *Qamargha* hunts are amply given in the Mughal histories and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri* even recalls the details of the hunts for each year.

### Family life

Organizing gatherings of enjoyment and the hunt pertain to the life of the nobles that is lived outside the house. Now let us have a look at their family life. Just as you see today in the Muslim family houses or in the *Havelis* of the *Rajputs* and in their *Garhis*, the house had two sections. One was for men (*mardan khana*) and the other for the women (*zanan khana*) or *Nivas*. In the *zanankhana* or the *haramsara*, besides a number of wives, there used to live a number of female-slaves (*kanezain*), old lady servants (*mmas*), and ladies looking after kids (*angas*) and other types of female attendants. The *Khwayasars* (eunuchs) sitting in the forecourt of the house kept an eye on them. One notices that during the Turkish and Mughal period, in spite of polygamy, woman had a high social status and, besides *Razia*, *Chandibi*, *Jahan Ara* and *Zaibunisa* you find hundreds of the daughters of the nobles who were standard bearers of the cultural and academic traditions of the times. In order to glimpse the personal life of the Mughals it is interesting and educative to read the autobiography of *Gulbadan Begum*. About *Jahan Ara* it is enough to state that any period or country could be proud of this embodiment of piety. (*Marginal Note*: Later they started suspecting women; pictures of *Alif-laila*; women were consulted only for not putting their opinion into practice; considered to be devoid of intelligence; Hindu philosophy (in this regard).)

### **Sexual vivacity**

Sexual predilection and indulgences of the nobles are the glaring characteristics of the entire period. Primary reason for it is that there always was an abundance of female slaves and congregation of the dancers. Besides, in almost every city and town there were areas of professional prostitutes. This is why, among other purchasable commodities, Alauddin Khilji also fixed the rates of the prostitutes and Akbar, after designating such localities as "Shaitanpura" (locality of the devil) took these localities fully under the scrutiny of the government. Such localities of the female dancers and of the prostitutes exist even today. Till the nineteenth century it was a practice of the noble families to consign their sons for upbringing to their favorite prostitutes.

It was also a consequence of the marital life of the period and the practice of procuring slaves that romance with eunuchs became a custom. Such love stories concerning some of the kings and the anomalous sexual vivaciousness of some of the nobles are mentioned in standard books of the times themselves. Ultimately not only this tradition affected our poetry but also led in the Sufi circles to the creation of sections on the "secrets of real love (*Ishq-I-haqiqi*) and the illusory love (*Ishq-I-majazi*)" to cover up these bizarre sexual tendencies. (*Marginal Notes: Influence on literature; Amir Khusrao, Namat Khan Aali*).

### **Moral traditions**

It was also among the obligation of the given social structure and of the medieval militaristic traditions that one was required to inculcate and augment the manifestation of friendship to his equals. On the other hand it was also an imperative that he must manifest benevolence, looking after and charity towards those who were lower down in the social status. This was expressed as *Haq-I-namak* (right of the salt) and *ghurba parwari* (looking after the poor). In the



This very same ethical value was also manifest in loyalty that we meet in the subordinates, tribesmen and military followers. In common parlance it is recalled as *namak-halali* (justifying the salt). In fact this feeling is more resolutely manifest as it is wedded to the tribal psyche. Ultimately the central traditions of the government are harmed by such feelings. As I have mentioned, every noble and *mansabdar* had a group of his own which used to be component of the royal army, though the central government did not directly look after them. This group was dependent upon the given noble whose personal strength, and of his army, and the abundance of his tribesmen and their psyche of loyalty and

### "Eating the salt"

On the other hand we also meet such examples of friendship and loyalty which may be counted as among the best examples of the world. One may recall the friends of Humayun during his exile; friendship and loyalty of the wife and some friends with Mirza Kamran after he was blinded and exiled; the love of Bazbahadur and Rupamati or that of Khizr Khan and Dawlatrani; the affections of Darashikoh and Jahanara; Medieval history is brimming with such instances. For example, you must have read about the friendship of Bairam Khan and Abul Qasim, which is a unique example of gallantry and camaraderie.

(world)

He said, refrain from this desire as it is unattainable in this one face and of one heart  
(Desire I from the dignified and adept a friend who is of

*Dost yak rui o yak dil khaastam az pir-I-khiraad  
Gust bugzar ancha mi khwahi ba alam yast neest*

literature of these times one notices instances of mutual rivalries and selfishness among the nobles and it seems to be a common complaint that one does not come across friendship. In the words of Saadi the prudent of all periods,

support to him decided his political significance. I may be able to clarify my understanding by only two illustrations. During the reign of Alauddin Khilji, some rebellious Mughals sought refuge in the Rajput ruled fort of Ranthanbor. After capturing Ranthanbor fort when he arrested the leader of the Mughals, he found him laden with wounds. Though breathing his last, when Alauddin promised him protection on condition that he will turn loyal and obedient to the Sultan of Delhi, he refused and was killed. However, after his murder Alauddin himself got a splendid mausoleum built for this executed rebel Mughal leader so that the world may learn from him the lesson of loyalty to the salt.

After Humayun conquered Gujarat, as you know, Rumi Khan joined the Mughals after betraying the kings of Gujarat. When at the moment of leaving Gujarat Rumi Khan summoned from his *Hawaii* his favorite parrot, the parrot promptly scolded him by saying, "Away sinner Rumi Khan *Namak haram*". That these traditions had reached even to the pet birds show how universal and widespread was this feeling of loyalty to the salt.

### Providing sanctuary

To this very context also belongs the heritage of providing sanctuary to the unacquainted. The Rajput traditions are proverbial on this count. Later these traditions turned into a custom of the Muslim nobles. You will often encounter such examples during the Mughal period. The exemplification of Sulaiman Shikoh can yet be observed in the hill tracts. By giving sanctuary to many Mughal rebels like Daulat Khan Lohi they had contracted the vengeance of the Mughal emperor. The most grandiose example of it is the instance when Akbar, the son of Alamgir, ran away to seek sanctuary in Iran as he had joined the rebel Rajputs and Devidas, who was a sectarian in his religion and an enemy of the Mughal *par excellence*. However, he brought

*Man o tu har do khwaja tashanim  
Banda-I-bargah-I sultanim*

(Both the two of us are brought up by the sovereign  
We are the servants of the household of the Sultan)

Their obedience was proverbial. You can see the shining examples of such loyalty of these slaves not only in the accounts of the *Uthmani* or *Safavi* kings but also in the history of India itself. When Ghalib in his exaggerated poetic style says

*Khanazad-I-zulf hain zanjeer se bhagain ge kiyun*

We are the born slaves of the tresses, why run away from chains, he in fact meant to highlighten the characteristics of the born slaves. In other words, if you deliberate upon the legal rights of the Sultan, his wealth and the level of his military organization, you will feel that the perception of the shadow of god does not at all appears to be an uncalled for perception. Consequently, as an audacious poet of the time has said

*Yarab cha khush ast padshahi kardan  
Dar surat-I-bandgi khudai kardan*

(Oh god, how pleasant it is to be a king  
Being god in the garb of subservience)

(*Marginal Note:* People in relation to the Sasanian courts. *Sajda* in the early manners of the court and later *Kornish* and *Tasleem*; *Ulema* being the only exception. Literature only discusses whether it is permissible or not.)

### **Mughal and Turk Traditions of governance**

From my above statement you should not be misled like the Western historians that autocratic kingship represents absolute barbarism or the uncivilized and savage period. By autocratic kingship I mean that state system which was first established in central Asia and then in

medieval India and subsequently, after Chingez Khan and Timur during the medieval times, got confederated with a compact and organized military system. This system is fundamentally different from the perceptions regarding medieval European monarchies because this centralized kingship does not tolerate middle classes and gets directly linked up with the peasants. In this characteristic system a peasant is not an agricultural slave but becomes a type of *Ajeer* or free worker. The founders of this system were the nomadic tribes of central Asia who, like the Persians, had no concept of hereditary nobility or authority. The leaders of these tribes entirely depended upon their personal valour and capacity for organization. They were also unenlightened of this rule and tradition that the eldest son should be the heir to the throne. Besides some superstitions and in terms of religion too the Turkish and Mughal tribes, unlike the Persians, were not constrained by any special religious belief or organized system of religion. Consequently, it remained the characteristic of the Turks and Mughals that they always practiced forbearance between religions and communities and never used the influence and power of the state for promoting any specific belief.

### **Islamic society**

Among the Muslims this combination of centralized military structure and autocracy was a natural occurrence. It is a fact that without this combination one does not find any basis of organization and political stability in the Abasid kingdom or in the later Islamic empires. The traditions of hereditary rule were neither there among the Arabs nor these could have emerged. Ultimately Ibn Khaldun had to say that the Arabs are entirely bereft of any capacity to establish a monarchy. At the most in their society piety and soundness of belief was considered to be the standard of virtuosity during the reign of Hazrat Omar (the second Caliph) though after Maavia the armed might and mutual

rivalry destroyed even this basis. The vision of such a far sighted thinker as Ibn al-Matagh got immediately focused on the basic weakness of the Islamic society that it is deprived of the wealth of hereditary grandeur and ancestral leadership so that under these circumstances it was a hard task to install a long lasting rule. Ultimately, the slave system of the Turks and military organization of the Mughals satisfactorily solved this problem.

### **The myth of Sikandar and what it connotes**

To hide the above historical reality the medieval Muslim thinkers generally take refuge behind the old traditions of Iran and want to be the descendents of Jamshed and Faridon. Even Firadusi himself had pointed to the triviality of this attitude. Later, as a justification of the monarchy the Arabs coined the myth of Sikandar Zulqarnain. Due to many reasons it acquired wide acceptance and achieved success. Among the Muslim writers of this period not only Amir Khusrao composed his *Sikandarnama* in the imitation of Nizami, but in the circles of the *Sufis* and the *Ulema* this debate perpetually continued whether Sikandar Zulqarnain was a *Wali* or not. The *Walayat* of Sikandar is well established among all circles. The doubt that is sometimes raised only concerns his prophethood. (*Marginal Note: Portrait of Sikandar in the hilly states of Badakhshan and Amir Hunza. Investigation of Sikandar by (Maulana) Azad. The god Amon in Egypt. Al-biruni.*)

### ***Sahibqaran* Masud Saad Salman Thani**

Actually, in the eyes of the Turkish and Mughal rulers Sikandar is the embodiment of the most exalted ideals of monarchy. Among his dispositions two characteristics are very prominent. Firstly, he not only pursues toleration between communities and religions, but also respects the manners, customs and traditions of every community and of all sacred places of worship of every religion. Secondly,

justice and evenhandedness. As a consequence, the Islamic historical literature has greatly emphasized the temporal characteristics of justice and with the help of citations from Quran, confederated it with the Balance of Justice. In accordance with this perception those sayings of the prophet are often repeated in which it is said that even one moment of justice of the Sultan is equal to sixty years of worship of the pure and on the day of judgement a just king shall be under the protection of the most exalted prophet himself. From all this you should not be led into misunderstanding that the justice loving Muslim rulers or Sikander had come to obliterate class divisions of inequality from the world. Justice intended that, while maintaining the specific divisions of the society, the rulers should display respect for the religious beliefs of every subordinate and conquered people and save the subject classes from the transgressions of each other. Consequently, following this very perception, Akbar ultimately formulated his policy of "*Sulh kul*" (All embracing peace) and in the circle of the *Sufis*

*Har qaum rast rahe, dine o qiblagah*

(Every people have a riotous path, religion and focus of worship). Became the focal tradition.

(*Marginal Note: Justice; punishment to those against the rule; different law for the slaves viz. The torch-bearer of Akbar, minister of Firuz; Humayun and Mirza Kamran and nobles; chain of justice of Jahangir and personal presence of the king and later of Chief Justice; answerability of Mohammed bin Tughlaq.*)

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fact belligerency is the biggest characteristic of the medieval Turkish and Mughal monarchies. For the religious justification of it the literature of the times repeatedly cites that passage from Quran where steel is recalled along with *Qastas*. During the later period this saying of the prophet was also coined that the heaven lies in the shadow of swords. In the words of Iqbal, following was the clear imprint of the times

*Jazb o istila shua-I-quwat ast*  
*Fath-raʒ-i-ashkar-I-quwat ast*

(Devotion and determination is the manifestation of strength Victory is the secret of the Materialization of strength.)

This is the period wherein the society was asunder between battle and indulgence. In other words, the job of the rulers was to use the sword and organize assemblages of enjoyment. They had nothing to do with labour, production, trade or agriculture. In this period every individual of the ruling class is outfitted with arms and ruling is the right of the one who had mastered the sword, joining the battles and is distinguished for leadership of the armies. Just as on one occasion Napoleon on being asked his genealogy referred to Manate sword, every claimant of medieval India shows his expertise of the sword as his answer and says

*Urus-I-bakht base dar kinar girad chast*  
*Ki bosa bar sar-I-shamshir-I-abdar dahad*

(The damsel of fate receives on her side the one  
Who gives a kiss to the tip of the sharp sword.)

### **Status of ordinary people**

You may deduce the status of ordinary people from the fact that in the popular and current terminology of the Greek philosophy they were considered to be quadrupeds. In medieval literature the saying *Al-Awam kal anam* (common people are like animals) has been repeatedly recalled.

General contempt for ordinary people becomes yet easier in a society wherein for thousands of years a section of the toilers had been given the formal status of *Shudra* and the untouchables, even in a society wherein tens of thousands of untouchables had got them converted to Islam and had got emotionally associated with the ruling strata. Hindu thinkers (for example the author of *Vishnu Purana*) used to dream that Krishna would be reborn and restore *ab initio* the *Varna Ashram* system on the old foundations. In such a society weavers, bird-catchers, butchers etc. were looked upon with considerable contempt. At least those days this was also a fact that the alien monarchy always remained afraid of the people and, besides the over all religious tolerance, always took care that the movements of the army should not harm the crops of the peasants. During famines the peasants got the *Taqavi* loans and had their rents annulled; hungry were fed, and the expert sword fighters were always alert that the subjects should not get angry. In the words of Sadi

*Ba raiyat sulha kun o az bim-I-khasam aiman bayash  
Zan ki har sultan-I-aadil ra raiyat laskkar ast*

(Be agreeable to the subjects and be at peace with the equals. Because for every just king the subjects are like an army.)

### **The Sultan and the commoners**

Peoples' struggle is the topic of my another lecture. At this juncture it is necessary only to show that, due to the caste division in the Hindu society, kingship and adoration of the king of the Hindu period, which in the beginning was an aspect of the *Bhagti*, the people acknowledged the Muslim king also in the same manner as they used to consider the Hindu *Rajas*; as *Prabhu* and *Pati*. Consequently, Akbar was designated as *Jagat Guru*. It is since then that the tradition of *Jharoka* was established i.e. the king used to reveal himself to the commoners early in the morning and they used to either prostrate themselves before him or shout



rallying cries for his long life. Ultimately this led to the emergence of a caste of *Darshaniya* who would not take food unless they had seen the king.

Open hatred of the king is the characteristic of the post-Mughal times. We meet it in the observations of Mundi regarding the Allahabad event when in the nineteenth century decoits encountered the royal *Dola* near Agra.

(*Marginal Note*: Babur and cheap labourers and craftsmen; Timur and Samarqand; definition of caste and admiration of *Artha Shastra* of India in *Anwar Saheli*; the preface of *Mahabharata* by Abul Fazl; praise of *Sati* by Amir Khusrao; hatred of the "Turk" but recognition of the needs).

After these general remarks I will present to you some specific features. The chapter of combat is out of my topic at this juncture. I only want to focus your attention on enjoyment or even on "the narratives of affection and loyalty".

## I

After clarifying your understanding of the central and crucial position of kingship it would be easier for you to comprehend the thinkers of the times generally and those who frequently explained the characteristics of the age by saying that *An-nas ala din al-malukahum* or the people follow the manners of the rulers.

The biggest characteristic of the times is that, besides central autocracy, the Muslim society is the paragon of urban culture and its values are shaped and cast by the hands of an urban environment and armed strata. Consequently, in Islamic literature the term of culture (*tamaddun*) is derived from the word urban (*Madaniyat*). The most well known centers of this culture are the capitals of Delhi and Agra, and the centers of the provinces like Lahore, Lucknow, Patna, Dhaka and Murshidabad.

### **Organizational structure of the metropolitan cities**

I will not go into the interesting discussion regarding when these cities were founded. However, all these cities have a number of common features, viz. the most beautiful and prominent sector of the city is where the main fort and imperial palaces are built and, as I have already mentioned, this area constituted a separate city by itself. Here live the servants of the palace, other servants. Here located are the imperial horse and elephant-stables, army barracks, bazaars, gardens and canals or in one word, all that the ruler of the time required.

Next comes that sector of the city where the nobles got their big *Havelis* constructed and where they lived with all their subordinates and tribesmen. Besides these, the scholars, medics, astronomers, poets, astrologers etc. of the court and those who got reasonable stipend and lived with grandeur also had their houses in this sector. Attached to the palaces of the ruling class were the *Mohalla* (living sectors) of those professional craftsmen and artisans whose protector these nobles and men of wealth were. As a matter of norm they in their thousands worked in the royal factories and produced artifacts of diverse types. Their vestiges you may still meet among the *karkhandars* of Delhi. After these came the localities of ordinary professional workers and of ordinary citizens.

### **Functional structure of the city localities**

All these groups had their own living localities. These localities often had their own surrounding wall and bazaars. In a way the localities had a type of self-sufficiency. The *Kotwal* (police chief of the city) appointed a *Meer Mohalla* (chief of the locality) for each locality that kept an eye on everyone, specially on the strangers entering or leaving the locality. He was answerable to the Police chief for all happenings in his locality.

Besides mosques, temples, and markets the city had a

central market, beautiful roads, ground for military exercises, a grand *Jama Masjid*, a number of *madrasas*, and in some cases also a royal hunting ground. The localities were not divided into sectors on the basis of religion but were sectorized according to social status. This is why often you may see the *Mughal* and *Rajput* or *Pathan* and Iranian *Havelis*, mosques and temples adjacent and juxtaposing each other. A little away from the cities used to be the *Khanqah* (hospices) of the *Sufis*, mausoleums of those who had renounced the world or the *Math* and huts of the *Sadhu Mahatmas* who during the last days of the kingship were the owners of huge wealth and *auqaf* (consecrated property) and their inheritors, either sons or clansmen, began to be counted among the upper classes of the society.

### **The mercantile classes**

Professional traders also lived in the cities. Their business was spread all over the land. Since the time of the Tughlaqs their *Hundis* (promissory notes) were perpetually in vogue. These very persons were honoured during the Mughal times by the titles of *Saith*, *Jagat Seth* or *Malik-at-tajjar* and they often loaned huge amounts of money to the rulers and nobles on interest. Not only this. One of them became the governor of a trading center in Surat and was called the *Shah Bandar* (chief of the port). However, in spite of wealth and influence in the court, we cannot say that in this militarized autocracy he had any definitive status. From the point of view of social and economic status it certainly can be seen that their standard of life was very high and they put to use foreign decorative merchandise from Europe and other places.

(*Marginal Notes:* During the later period they were also attached to the court and to the nobles. Communal riots.)

### **Personal status of the nobles**

The status of the primary *Iqta* holders, and later day

*Mansabdars* and other persons getting grant from the king, was not hereditary but only for the given individual. After his death the ruler of the time became the owner of all his wealth even if during his lifetime he had huge treasures. For instance Khanjahan Maqbool, a minister of Firuz Tughlaq, at his death left ten million *Tanka* cash and jewellery worth millions of rupees. Jahan Ara had a *Jagir* of an annual income of ten million rupees. On top of it, they got millions of rupees as presents and gifts. The practice of *Haq-I-Khidmat* (right of service; another name for bribes) was common and the king himself would never try to stop it. Asad Beg in his *Waqayat* has mentioned how Akbar deliberately provided him opportunities for taking bribes and to accumulate wealth; he earned millions from the inquiries of the Royal Commission and ambassadorship to Deccan.

In one word, the nobles in their lifetime owned hundreds of thousands or even millions, but after their death their children and their family used to turn absolute poppers and entirely dependent upon the court. You may assess from these facts as to how much and why this ruling strata, instead of learning thrift, was acquiring the habit of wastefulness; instead of becoming miserly, they were turning to grandiose spending. Hence, the second fundamental apportionment of life viz. Enjoyment begins from this moment. (*Marginal Note: "One morning of the garden is better than the whole world".*)

### **Indulgence in delectation**

Enjoyment in fact is a permanent chapter of the erudition of medieval morality and belongs to the division on manners that is called *Mirzanama* i.e those manners, customs and attitudes that a *Mirza*, or person of noble descent, should practice. There are innumerable details concerning the mannerism of the *Mirza*. According to some authorities it is also essential that the *Mirza* must consider Delhi and Lahore as the most civilized cities of the world;

should drink only Portuguese wines and should always have not less than ten to twelve heralds and arm bearers in his company.

In the *Mirzanama* you will get all the details of how to prepare a celebration and the etiquette one should observe in such gatherings or on the occasion of death; how to decorate the *Diwankhana* on such occasions; how many bouquets, rose-water sprinklers, chandlers, small spread-sheets (*sozni*), large white spread-sheets (*chandni*), leg-rests (*pa-andaz*), pillows and elevated sitting facilities (*Masnad*) should be there. All the details pertaining to the manners of sitting and dispersal, wines, sherbet, flowers and fruits are entered in it. It is also mentioned in such texts as to which dress should be worn in which season; what food should be eaten and in which sequence these should be served and what manners should be practiced at the time of sending off the guests. During this period many books were written exclusively about victuals, scents, pan, sherbet etc. However, I have to ignore these books because of the long time it would require to discuss them.

### Wine drinking

Wine drinking occupies a distinctive position in the gatherings of the delectation and the best traditions of our medieval period are associated with it. I am confident that, if ever history of drinking is written, in such histories Jamshed and Khusrao Parvez may turn out to be only anecdotes in comparison with Masood bin Mahmud Ghaznavi and Babur, while Jhangir would certainly get the status of *Imam* (leader) and *Mujtahid* (innovator) in this field. None can ever know how many nobles, *Rajas* and *Peerzadas* lost their life in order to attain the status of a 'martyr' in the way of Danial, the son of Akbar or Mirza Airaj, the son of Abdurraheem Khan-I-Khanan. Medieval Delhi has also seen such scenes when on the return of the victorious army from Deccan there were placed on the

roadside vessels filled with wine, and the entire populace was given an open invitation to drink. There were many rulers who in the way of Mohammed Shah Piya considered the matters of state as "meaningless piles" when compared with drinking. Drinking in fact was included in the etiquette of Kingship. Consequently Jahangir himself had to teach the manners of drinking to Shahjahan after first serving him with various drinks and the author of *Qaboosnama* considered it necessary to detail these manners for his son.

Poets of all ages have forwarded this or the other argument in favour of drinking *per se*. However, it is more interesting that it was during the commencement of the thirteenth century, in other words in the beginning of the Islamic period, when arguments were being forwarded for and against drinking and our first historian Hasan Nizami, who himself was a religious scholar, gave this opinion in this regard

*Haram bud ba fatwa-I-shara bar ahmaq  
Halal gasht ba fatwa-I-aql bar aaqil*

(For idiots it was declared impermissible by religious edict  
Became permissible for the wise by the edict of reason)

### **Dance and Music**

While consumption of alcoholic drinks was a must for the gatherings of enjoyment, dance and music was also an integral element of it. It is a fact that generally the Sultans of Delhi were competent to comprehend music and some of the provincial rulers, especially the rulers of Jaunpur, Gujarat and Deccan were considered to be in the vanguard of music appreciation. It was the same with dancing and rhythmic movements. You will be surprised to know that such books as *Tuhfat-al-Hind* and *Mirat-I-Aftabnuma*, sequentially written on the mandate of Alamgeer and Shah Alam, recount the complete history of the art of dancing and singing and list the names of those famous and outstanding in these fields.

Moreover, in the very beginning of the fifteenth century the composition *Ghunyat-al-Muniya* of Gujarat furnishes a summary of the *Natyashastra*.

Hence, in every principal city or town there were companies of musicians and dancers and the court of the Sultan employed the most proficient amongst them. On the occasion of *Nuroz*, *Diwali* and of victories, or on the birth of princes or princesses in the royal seraglio these artists, together with the court poets, used to display their art and in return received gifts and rewards. It was the same in the courts of the nobles. Ultimately, the tradition of dance and music also got currency in the houses of the *Ulema*. So much so, that even the ménage of Shah Waliullah could not stop it. The *Sama* got credibility in the congregations of the *Sufis* and *Qawwali* became a regular feature in the annual *Urs* of the saints. In one word, just like the Hindu society, dance and music emanated as the distinguishing characteristic of the Muslim society as well. So much so that the musicians Gopal and Tansen are considered as worthy of veneration even today.

### **Adulation and benefaction**

It was also a rule for the gathering of entertainment that the king and the nobles used to demonstrate their laudation and bequeathed rewards on such occasions. On innumerable occasions Mohammed bin Tughlaq showered gold on poets to the extent that they went entirely under it. On uncountable occasions he got the poets weighted in gold as the expression of his appreciation of individual stanzas. Even the ordinary nobles used to gift a whole stable to poets and musicians, fill the mouth of the poets with diamonds and present to the dancers even the last of the garments on their person. One poet of this age has aptly said: Faridun Farakh was not an angel; he got eternal fame only due to his bestowing and valuation. Therefore,

*Tu dad o dahish kun Faridun tui*

(You practice bestowing and appreciation; you are Faridun.)

### **The steeplechase**

Besides the congregations of celebrations and of dance and music there was great currency of hunting in this militarized nobility. Whatever be the traditions of Behram Gaur, its mass popularity in fact started with Chingez Khan and the Mughals. The status of *Mir Shikar* (Head Huntsman) was considered to be so elevated a post among the Turks and the Mughals that during the reign of Chingez the task of preparing for a hunt was assigned only to the nearest and closest relatives and most trusted servants. The Sultans of Delhi brought this tradition to India.

Hunts were of different types. Sometime large hunting grounds were specified for this purpose. Hunting the lion was designated as exclusive for the king. After encirclement, the king used to stand on the ground and frontally kill the lion by sword. Usually, the king would go for a hunt riding on an elephant. Some of the best paintings of the Mughal period depict hunting scenes. Sometimes birds were hunted with the help of either a hawk or a falcon. Babur was very fond of hunting wild ass and rhinoceros. Akbar was well experienced in getting the wild elephants caught. For this end they used to build elevated platforms; later the wild elephants were herded in pre-constructed enclosures where these were brought under control by the domesticated elephants. In the manner of *Anqa* the white elephant was also rare. Whenever there was any information of its find, all the possible tricks and means were used to obtain it so that it may be used for royal riding. There have even been wars for getting some of the famous male or female white elephants.

The well-known *Qamargha* type of hunt got instituted under the Mughals. In this type the entire army used to completely encircle tens of Kos of territory and slowly collect



the animals together in a small space. Then the king sitting in the middle, used to hunt the animals over many days. Later the nobles followed the king. In the end all the commoners were also given the chance to hunt. Details of the *Qamargha* hunts are amply given in the Mughal histories and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri* even recalls the details of the hunts for each year.

### Family life

Organizing gatherings of enjoyment and the hunt pertain to the life of the nobles that is lived outside the house. Now let us have a look at their family life. Just as you see today in the Muslim family houses or in the *Havelis* of the *Rajputs* and in their *Garhis*, the house had two sections. One was for men (*mardan khana*) and the other for the women (*zanan khana*) or *Niwas*. In the *zanankhana* or the *haramsara*, besides a number of wives, there used to live a number of female-slaves (*kaneezain*), old lady servants (*mamas*), and ladies looking after kids (*anqas*) and other types of female attendants. The *Khwajasaras* (eunuchs) sitting in the forecourt of the house kept an eye on them. One notices that during the Turkish and Mughal period, in spite of polygamy, woman had a high social status and, besides Razia, Chandbibi, Jahan Ara and Zaibunnisa you find hundreds of the daughters of the nobles who were standard bearers of the cultural and academic traditions of the times. In order to glimpse the personal life of the Mughals it is interesting and educative to read the autobiography of Gulbadan Begum. About Jahan Ara it is enough to state that any period or country could be proud of this embodiment of piety. (*Marginal Note: Later they started suspecting women; pictures of Alif-laila; women were consulted only for not putting their opinion into practice; considered to be devoid of intelligence; Hindu philosophy (in this regard).*)

### **Sexual vivacity**

Sexual predilection and indulgences of the nobles are the glaring characteristics of the entire period. Primary reason for it is that there always was an abundance of female slaves and congregation of the dancers. Besides, in almost every city and town there were areas of professional prostitutes. This is why, among other purchasable commodities, Alauddin Khilji also fixed the rates of the prostitutes and Akbar, after designating such localities as "*Shaitanpura*" (locality of the devil) took these localities fully under the scrutiny of the government. Such localities of the female dancers and of the prostitutes exist even today. Till the nineteenth century it was a practice of the noble families to consign their sons for upbringing to their favorite prostitutes.

It was also a consequence of the marital life of the period and the practice of procuring slaves that romance with eunuchs became a custom. Such love stories concerning some of the kings and the anomalous sexual vivaciousness of some of the nobles are mentioned in standard books of the times themselves. Ultimately not only this tradition affected our poetry but also led in the *Sufi* circles to the creation of sections on the "secrets of real love (*Ishq-I-haqiqi*) and the illusory love (*Ishq-I-majazi*)" to cover up these bizarre sexual tendencies. (*Marginal Notes: Influence on literature; Amir Khusrao, Nemat Khan Aali*).

### **Moral traditions**

It was also among the obligation of the given social structure and of the medieval militaristic traditions that one was required to inculcate and augment the manifestation of friendship to his equals. On the other hand it was also an imperative that he must manifest benevolence, looking after and charity towards those who were lower down in the social status. This was expressed as *Haq-I-namak* (right of the salt) and *ghurba parwari* (looking after the poor). In the

literature of these times one notices instances of mutual rivalries and selfishness among the nobles and it seems to be a common complaint that one does not come across friendship. In the words of Saadi the prudent of all periods

*Dost yak rui o yak dil khastam az pir-I-khirad  
Guft bugzar ancha mi khwahi ba alam yaft neest*

(Desire I from the dignified and adept a friend who is of one face and of one heart

He said, refrain from this desire as it is unattainable in this world)

On the other hand we also meet such examples of friendship and loyalty which may be counted as among the best examples of the world. One may recall the friends of Humayun during his exile; friendship and loyalty of the wife and some friends with Mirza Kamran after he was blinded and exiled; the love of Bazbahadur and Rupamati or that of Khizr Khan and Dawalrani; the affections of Darashikoh and Jahanara. Medieval history is brimming with such instances. For example, you must have read about the friendship of Bairam Khan and Abul Qasim, which is a unique example of gallantry and camaraderie.

### "Eating the salt"

This very same ethical value was also manifest in loyalty that we meet in the subordinates, tribesmen and military followers. In common parlance it is recalled as *namak-halali* (justifying the salt). In fact this feeling is more resolutely manifest as it is wedded to the tribal psyche. Ultimately the central traditions of the government are harmed by such feelings. As I have mentioned, every noble and *mansabdar* had a group of his own which used to be component of the royal army, though the central government did not directly look after them. This group was dependent upon the given noble whose personal strength, and of his army, and the abundance of his tribesmen and their psyche of loyalty and

support to him decided his political significance. I may be able to clarify my understanding by only two illustrations.

During the reign of Alauddin Khilji, some rebellious Mughals sought refuge in the Rajput ruled fort of Ranthanbor. After capturing Ranthanbor fort when he arrested the leader of the Mughals, he found him laden with wounds. Though breathing his last, when Alauddin promised him protection on condition that he will turn loyal and obedient to the Sultan of Delhi, he refused and was killed. However, after his murder Alauddin himself got a splendid mausoleum built for this executed rebel Mughal leader so that the world may learn from him the lesson of loyalty to the salt.

After Humayun conquered Gujarat, as you know, Rumi Khan joined the Mughals after betraying the kings of Gujarat. When at the moment of leaving Gujarat Rumi Khan summoned from his *Hawaili* his favorite parrot, the parrot promptly scolded him by saying, "Away sinner Rumi Khan *Namak haram*". That these traditions had reached even to the pet birds show how universal and widespread was this feeling of loyalty to the salt.

### Providing sanctuary

To this very context also belongs the heritage of providing sanctuary to the unacquainted. The Rajput traditions are proverbial on this count. Later these traditions turned into a custom of the Muslim nobles. You will often encounter such examples during the Mughal period. The exemplification of Sulaiman Shikoh can yet be observed in the hill tracts. By giving sanctuary to many Mughal rebels like Daulat Khan Lodhi they had contracted the vengeance of the Mughal emperor. The most grandiose example of it is the instance when Akbar, the son of Alamgir, ran away to seek sanctuary in Iran as he had joined the rebel Rajputs and Devidas, who was a sectarian in his religion and an enemy of the Mughal *par excellence*. However, he brought

up the young daughter of Akbar even while living in such an uncivilized region as Rajputana, in such an Islamic convention that when at a mature age she appeared before Alamgir, she knew Quran by rote, was a scholar of Arabic and Persian and had a meticulous knowledge of her Muslim religion. Due to such a tradition the mothers in Rajputana used to pray that god may also grant them also a son like Devidas.

### Enlightenment and education

Usually the individuals from the ruling class were provided with good upbringing and were bequeathed traditional education of a high standard. These traditions of education were so strong even till the nineteenth century that Major Sleeman had to admit that the British officers were scared of speaking to the Muslims of exalted families. Their only reason being that they were deficient and the Muslims in every matter referred to Socrates, Aristotle and Gallen.

The foundation of the education of the given period in India, just like in other Muslim and medieval European countries, in fact rested on Greek philosophy, logic, theology, medicine and astronomy. In due course poetry, calligraphy, biography, history and morality of the times were joined to it. This is why during the medieval times you will frequently encounter such encyclopaedic personalities who in all respects were the leaders of theoretical and practical spheres. In this period you find the emergence of such personages as Amir Khusrao, Mir Fatehulla Shirazi, Abul Fazl Alami, Abdurrahim Kha-I-Khanan, Sadullah and Jai Singh who would be a pride for any country and any period. You will meet the author of *Subha Sadiq* whose whole life was spent in a quest for knowledge and in getting satiated from the treasures of his teachers. This is the reason why Shaikh Ali Hazin after leaving Iran did not chose Turkey or Egypt as his home but favoured India and lies buried in this very land.

### **Primary education**

Normally, in Muslim families the process of education was initiated at the age of four years and four months. This learning was limited to reading of some sections from Quran, practice of good handwriting and elementary reading and writing.

### **The Munshi**

Later, in accordance with the social distinctions and status of wealth, the children got educated in special sectors. For service in the department of revenue it was essential to acquire mathematics, composing texts (*inshapardazi*), calligraphy or the study of *Yasaq Namas*.

### **The Ulema**

In any institution that teaches according to *Dars-I-Nizamiya* you may even today examine the course of study for the *Ulema*. More interesting is the fact that the course for the *Ulema* sometimes included, beside theology, such subjects as medicine, astronomy, natural sciences or even the principles of music. It was due to the comprehensive nature of education that India could produce such eminent scholars like Abdulhaq Moaddith Dehlavi, Shah Waliulla *Behr-al-Ulum*, Maulana Abdul Ali and Maulana Fazl Haq Khairabadi. (*Marginal Note: Saadi*):

*Badshahe sapar ba maktab dad  
Lauh-I-samtash dar kinar nahad  
Bar sar-I-loh yu navishta badar  
Khor-I-ustad beh za mehr-I-pidar*

(The king laid down his sword before the school; Put his iron helmet on a side; On the tablet he got it written; Anger of the teacher is better than the affection of the father.) (The story of the son of Nasiruddin Mahmud; education of the people: Barni and Akbar.)

**The nobles**

Besides the above subjects, education of the nobles also included some crafts. For example, every son of the noble, besides physical exercises and wrestling, was required to learn archery, horse riding, sword fighting, swimming etc. Furthermore, the Sultan and the ministers of the government learnt the history of religions, poetry, astronomy, astrology and music. It was the consequence of this environment of general awareness that India could produce an answer to Shahrastani. My reference is to *Dabistan-i-Madahib*, the book of Mohsin Fani, which is a very comprehensive review of Indian religions and beliefs. Jai Singh composed his *Zich-I-jadid Mohammadshahi* which shall ever occupy a very high status in the field of astronomy.

In order to understand the intellectual and cultural perspective of the ruling class of the medieval period it will be appropriate that you read that communication of Abul Fazl in which he demands from all the executives and the *mansabdars* of the government that they in their leisure and spare time should read *Akhlaq-I-Nasri*, *Shahnama*, *Rumi* and other literary masterpieces so that they may comprehend the basic principles of the political morality and world outlook of the times. The other text that should be read is that letter of Chandrabhan in which he, besides the above masterpieces in the realm of poetics and poetry, recommends the study of more or less two hundred and fifty compendiums and collections of various poets. In this letter he also emphasizes that his son should become a Munshi. (*Marginal Note: Abstracts of Shahnama in prose*)

**Privy Councilor (*Nadeem*)**

In the cultural traditions of the period the academic status of the Privy Councilor is quite high. Browsing through the demands of the times that were put on his training, we observe that every sphere of theoretical knowledge and craft was included in the course designed for him. As he

was either a courtier or an advisor to the king or noble, he was also required to understand the temperament of the noble or of the king. For this end it was necessary that, besides the subjects and crafts, he should be appropriately dressed, have a commendable nature, could talk humorously, crack jokes, and, if not the full knowledge, at least be familiar with poetry, hunting, archery, chess, *ganjafa*, in one word every thing. It is regrettable that I have not seen any comprehensive composition on this topic. However, with the help of the encyclopaedias of the period we can deduce some of his capabilities.

### **Expression of originality**

Exploration of knowledge and search for new and exceptional things is among the prominent characteristics of the period. The nobles used to go to any extent in procuring rare and unfamiliar entities. You will find that from Babur to Akbar there was an imperial interest in constructing a house under water. During the reign of Akbar, Meer Fathulla Shirazi was successful in contriving machines and instruments. However, these machines were designed only to satisfy an inquisitive nature; these were not used to develop any industry. The hobby of collecting gems and precious stones had started even with Babur. *Koh-I-Noor* and other precious gems are a consequence of such interest.

Writers also desire uniqueness. Just as Amir Khusrao had composed *Aijaz-I-Khusravi*, Faizi also wrote a dot-less *Tafseer* (interpretation) of Quran.

During the reign of Akbar there was so much interest in knowledge and investigations that in order to know about human nature he confined some newborn infants in a house so that their in-born characteristics could be studied. Ultimately they all turned deaf and dumb. Asad Beg has written about Akbar smoking tobacco. From the dialogue between Akbar and the medics we may infer that during that period all those features of inquisitiveness and scholarly



investigations had already emerged that could, as in the case of Europe, have laid down the foundations of Renaissance in India. However, the economic characteristics of a centralized system of governance and of autocratic subjugation did not permit us to close in upon this revolution.

In sum and substance you may conceive that there was no meeting ground between knowledge and mental training of the nobles on the one hand and labour and production on the other. The disposition of unhindered living at the charge of the labour of others did not permit the expansion of the frontiers of originality in the crafts and theoretical knowledge beyond the inquisitiveness of the nobles and of the rich.

### Conclusion

Ultimately the division of life into warring and enjoyment created that mental environment in which craving for being outstanding and hallucination of fame emerged as the greatest aim of life; luxurious living and perfunctory piety became the most prominent aspects of personal life. In one word, the ruling class used to spend its life in a drab and uncreative existence. Youth was spent either in luxury or in battles. With the advent of old age the anxiety of the other world would drag them into the nooks of penance, worship, prayers or to the mausoleums of saints and of other holy men. Some would enter the old age vacillatingly saying

*Chun peer shudi Hafiz, az maikada bairun sho  
Rindi o kharabati dar ahd-I-shabab ula*

(Having aged, Hafiz, vanish from the wine-house  
Drinking and sacrilegious acts are for the young)

(*Marginal Note:* An insipid bureaucratic culture: Jai Singh, Man Singh, Chandrabhan and in Kashmir Rai Gopichand.)

Ultimately, during the last stages of being alive became so

insipid and meaningless a task for the nobles that this decadent ruling class started to envision its end and was overwhelmed by depression. You can see a glimpse of this admonishing depression and hopelessness in the poetry of Bahadurshah Zafar, Tishna, Ghalib and Meer as well as in the writings of all thinkers of the times.

*(Marginal Note: A basis of modern nationalism. Administrative quality.)*

## FOURTH LECTURE

### · PEOPLES' MOVEMENTS

#### Removal of a misunderstanding

Respected Mr. President and friends!

On this occasion I will discourse about peoples' movements during the medieval period. Besides historical interest, this topic is also of significance as the people of India are today engaged in a grand democratic struggle the completion of which is yet in the future. Taking advantage of some yet lingering medieval trends some reactionary elements want to weaken the democratic movement and to strengthen their own activities. I do not deny that the feeling of patriotism is met with in all epochs. On the contrary, everywhere in some historical stage or the other the peasants and the workers have been lining up against the oppressive system. However, besides the incentives and motives for their action, their progressive strata and their other tendencies have been fundamentally different during the medieval and the modern times. In this context we should try to be open minded in understanding the demands of the medieval times and see these in the light of history. In the present epoch the grip of imperialism or of the national capital is fundamentally different from the centralized medieval empire or from the interference of the feudal

elements. Hence, first of all we shall have to identify the progressive elements during the medieval times.

(*Marginal Note:* Insert here; the difference between autocracy and the modern times.)

You may have known that before the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate there was no astutely central government in India. Nor was there any active perception of it in the country. The concepts of the state that we are familiar with through the *Arth Shastras* were entirely feudal. The Rajput rule had sent these roots deeper and had further strengthened them. One characteristic of the Indian feudalism was that it was embedded in the cast division and had turned our society putrescent to such an extent that no healthy perception of either national unity or of the central government could endure in India. Consequently, the Turks and the Mughals or even Arab aggression before them, never faced people organized for either overcoming the rulers or trying to establish their own rule. On the contrary, a section of the people for quite some time glanced at the centralized Sultanate of Delhi with approving eyes. The anti-monarchic trends among the people emerged only when the rulers had become bereft of the healthy attributes of autocracy and the burden of land taxes had become unbearable. In the opinion of Jadunath Sarkar, for the vision of our national unity we are indebted to this centralism. Consequently, for determining the historical status of the peoples' movements of the times it is essential to evaluate the specifics of the social organization and its contradictions during the period. In other words, first we have to comprehend whom the Hindu and Muslim masses or the feudal leaders wanted to fight and why and how they organized themselves.

### **Demands of the centralized system**

In my earlier lecture I had mentioned that centralized system of governance is the most glaring characteristic of

the Turkish and Mughal State. Ultimately, during the Mughal imperialism the universal and suffocating system of bureaucracy and *mansabdari* came into being for the maintenance of it. All those belonging to the affluent of the cities, from the the feudal of Rajputana to the peasant in the village or even the subordinate states of far off Assam and those of the Himalayas, were shackled in its iron chains. This centralization demanded that the government should directly deal with the peasant and the middle strata, which for thousands of years had established its status in the name of collecting the agricultural taxes, was to be abolished. Not only this. During the Hindu decentralized feudal period these Rajputs and the *khatris* had attained the status of a type of autonomous rulers and were dispersed all over the country. Their biggest assemblages were in Rajputana, Kathiawar, Deccan and in the Himalayan region. The Rajput system of governance meant that the country got divided among the rulers who in their respective territories used to keep their own army. Their relationship with the peasants was that between master and serf or agricultural slaves. It meant that there was no fixed rate of land tax and the peasants had to perform diverse types of work under duress and without being paid any remuneration for it. Amongst these, someone who could bring such rulers under his control would become *Maharaja* and demand their subordination. However, the expression of such recognition was confined to small tributes and military help. These rulers were all-powerful in their own fief and did not tolerate central intervention in their affairs. In contrast to them the Turkish Sultan from the very beginning claimed that the entire land of the state was his property and all the peasants were his workers and servants. Under certain circumstances they may become his partners through division of the produce. As a matter of prudence in the beginning the Turkish Sultans continued the earlier system of agricultural taxation though these were subordinated to *Iqta* or military land bestowal.

However, as they started feeling stronger the Turkish Sultans started to eliminate these feudal elements.

### Resistance of feudal elements

Many medieval battles and military expeditions were initiated at this juncture. However, in their ignorance some historians have designated the resistance of these feudal elements as evidence of peoples' struggle. For example, during the reign of Alauddin Khilji the *Khot* and *Muqaddam* become the target of this central policy. Some important rulers of Rajputana also came under attack and even the rate of agricultural taxes was increased from one-third to one-half because earlier the difference between one-third and one-half was going into the pockets of these *Khots* and *Muqaddams*. After halving the agricultural tax rate, he fixed the rates for the sale of edible commodities for Delhi and other urban centers. These codexes were implemented with substantial harshness. The state was greatly concerned that its servants and the officers of the taxation department should not put any other burden on the peasants. In this context during the *Pathan* period the government decided to maintain the records of taxation department in both *Hindi* and *Persian*. Ultimately, during the reign of Akbar this practice was altered to *Persian* only so that the king and the Turkish or Mughal nobles could themselves look into the revenue collection. I also want to emphasize that the feudal rebellions of those days did not get the support of the people because the people were happy and satisfied with these steps. During the reign of Shershah and Akbar the rate of agricultural taxation was fixed at one-third and the peasants were content with it.

Saleem Suri had also thought of it. However, during the reign of Akbar centralism took yet another step forward. After the introduction of the rule of *Dagh* (branding) and inclusion of all *Jagirs* into *Khalsa* (imperial domain), the nobles and the feudal chiefs were left with no choice. They

either had to accept the status of a servant in the *mansabdari* system and become a dependent of the government or starve. The *jagirs* of the *mansabdars* as you know, was no *jagir* in any sense. It was a mode of salary payment and was supervised by the governmental treasury. (*Marginal Note: Initial concession to Muslim Jagirdars. The struggle between the Pathans and the Jagirdars after Firuzshah. Saleem and Khalsa*).

After the promulgation of this law the imprints of large-scale rebellions of the Turks and Mughals started surfacing. This movement under the garb of revival of religion in fact acquired the guise of an organized encounter. I will deal with this aspect in my next lecture. The point to ponder at this juncture is that these early rebellions were all a failure due to the lack of support of the Hindu and Muslim masses.

### Rajputana

The feudal center of Rajputana in fact had special significance as the Mughal emperors had declared the region as the fountainhead of their military recruitment. Hence, Akbar gave various concessions to the rulers of Rajputana and left them alone in their internal affairs. However, like all other *mansabdars* they were also servants of the Mughal government and in case of suspicion of rebellion or fortification, as happened after the rebellion of Udai, their forts were also raised to the ground. (*Marginal Note: Nomination of the successor.*)

Maharana Partap certainly is the glistening example of the Rajput armed might and self-respect. However, the inherent divisions in the feudal system and mutual rivalry of the rulers ultimately resulted in the victory of Akbar. This fact is also worth pondering about that the conquest of Udaipur and other Rajput kingdoms, and even the triumph over Kangra and other sacred places, was achieved through the hands of the Rajputs themselves. Ultimately, on the one hand the Rajputs unfurled the Mughal flag for the Empire

over Kabul, Qandhar, Balkh and Badakhshan. On the other hand they, after shedding their blood, seized the regions of Bengal and Orissa from the *Pathans* and conquered all the regions of Bijapur, Golkunda, Ahmednagar and Khandesh from the rulers of the Deccan. From the very beginning the Mughals had such confidence in the Rajputs that even while in Iran, Humayun used to keep them with him and the residential fort and the personal palace of the king were all placed under their custody. This is why with the decline of the Mughal government the legends of the Rajput bravery also took leave and went into oblivion. So much so that no Rajput could raise his head against the intervention of either the Marhattas or of the British.

### **The Deccan**

Initially the Mughal applied the same policy in the Deccan that they had imposed on the rulers of Rajputana. However, there they faced elements that were inclined towards the same centralization and militarization as the Mughals themselves. Amber, with the limitless strength of the gorilla warfare, for the first time badly defeated the Mughals due to which the Mughals could not firmly put their feet in the Deccan for the coming hundred years. In the end Alamgir had to capture Golkunda and Bijapur after which from the Himalayas to Lanka and from Assam to Kabul every bit of land became subordinate and loyal to the Mughals. However, their decline also started from this very point. This debate is beyond the portals of my discussion today.

### **Acknowledgement of centralism**

In fact I want to emphasize the actuality that the Turkish and Mughal tendency towards centralism is a progressive aspect of our social history. Admiring the feudal rebellions against this basic progressive aspect only because such admiration is useful for the present communal tendencies is



to ignore historical research and the progressive social demands. This is the reason why during the period of Mughal decline when Marhatta rule covered the whole of India and such consultations were held that, instead of the nominal Mughal king, some *Peshwa* should be put on the throne of Delhi, such statesmen as Puranmal Jat and Madhoji Sindhya unanimously decided that for the unity of India and her progress Mughal monarchy is indispensable. This feeling was so strong that in 1857 Nana Sahib issued all his orders as a subordinate of the king. Even the rebel government of 1857 that was established in Delhi, was in the name of the Mughal king. Moreover, for a long time the British rulers continued to complain that the nobles and the *rais* valued the titles given to them by Akbar and Bahadurshah more than those given by the British.

After clarifying this historical reality I would respectfully like to submit that to present the Sikh or Marhatta rebellions or the character of Maharana Pratap, Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh in the exaggerated democratic fashion is not correct from the point of view of history. This does not mean that there were no repeated rebellions of the peasants or that these famous personages did not have any thing to do with the struggles of the masses. The fact is that the peasant movement continuously grew to the extent that at one stage it took up the apparel of *Bhagti* and ultimately got armed to give rise to the movements of the Marhattas and the Sikhs. Let me explain this point a bit further.

### **The peasant movements**

Under the Turkish Sultanate the peasants were all the time dissatisfied. For some time they remained emotionally attached to the Hindu feudal elements. This is the reason why we find in many places like Uthaka, Kahera (Rohilkhand), Itawa, Mewat, Bundelkhand etc. the feudal elements using their moral support, rebelled. At the time of

the death of Mohammed bin Tughlaq these feudal were so influential, and the peasants so dissatisfied, that for Firuz Tughlaq it was arduous to travel from Sindh to Delhi with the army and the treasury. Babur in his *Tuzak* admits that in the environs of Agra the people used to hate the Mughals and were supporters of Ahmed Khan Mewati and Sanga. However, there is difference between widespread dissatisfaction, momentary disturbance and an organized movement. We find the growth of old feudal influence side by side with the discontent of the peasants. Where there were no rulers even there the people wanted to organize on the pattern of feudal system. For example, when during the reign of Shahjahan Peter Mundi went from Allahabad to Patna, at many places he noticed anti-monarchic gatherings where people all the time uttered frankly vulgar abuses for the king. However, even before establishing a system of governance, they created toll posts and collected taxes. In the end the royal army dispersed them. During the Mughal times you meet such demonstrations everywhere on the roads of Rajputana, Gujarat and Kathiawar. The other form of this manifestation is loot and organized expression of discontent of the peasants that happened during the interval between the death of the king and coronation of his successor. However, this discontent used to disappear with the new king taking over the command. (*Marginal Note: The Pindaris; later they ran away leaving the royal dola behind, Kafan (Prem Chand). No class provides leadership.*)

In fact the elements of political organization of the workers and peasants emerged with the *Bhagti* movement in the same proportion in which the burden of revenue and land taxes on the people increased or in other words, as the system of governance became intolerable. Firstly, *Bhagti* taught the lesson of human brotherhood for which, besides the formal teachings of Islam, the centralized imperialism had levelled the path. During the disturbances of the Pathan period Baba Nanak gave currency to the system of *Langar* or

of eating together. During the reign of Alamgir when the tax became fifty per cent and turned unbearable, *Bhagti* took up arms and in the Deccan, taking advantage of the long lasting tradition of Anbar, they made the Mughal armies feel helpless. Traditions of the peasant and worker elements of the Sikh movement were more democratic and better organized. Their system of *Mithl* and *Panth* was utterly democratic. The Jat peasants led armed rebellions in the environs of Delhi and Mewat, the center of *Bhagti*, and gave birth to the *Satnamis*. In other words, by the time of Alamgir the symptoms of an all India armed insurrection of the peasants had come to the fore.

However, instead of making use of the healthy elements of centralism, under the influence of the Hindu feudal tendencies these engagements took place in the form of diffused struggles. Ultimately all these ended as feudal principalities and unorganized federations or even as temporary autocratic militarism and they, in a historical sense, could not take India forward. Their sequential examples are the Jat State of Bharatpur, Marhatta Federation and the armed might of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. During the British period the Marhatta Federation gave rise to the *Pindari* movement in which case it is hard to separate it from barbaric loot. The elements of Sikh and Jat movements are even today a cause of uneasiness for the country. In my next lecture I will deal with their fundamentalist and revivalist aspects along with the same among the Muslims. However, it will not be out of place here to repeat this historical reality that in the new epoch the foundations of a democratic movement are being laid at a time when the conduct of the British capital and of British imperialism has for ever raised to the ground the self-sufficient village system. In other words, they destroyed those very foundations on which Rajput feudalism and Mughal centralism were established. This discussion is not within the bounds of my topic.

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### Muslim movements

I have deliberately kept the peoples' movements of the Muslim society distant from the other Indian movements because their perceptual realm of vision and action does not go beyond the four walls of the *Muslim kingship* and the basic outlook of the *Muslim ruling class*. However, the study of such movements is also quite interesting.

In the beginning the settlements of the Muslim army used to be on the tribal pattern. As I had mentioned in my earlier lecture, the leader of every tribe used to live with his armed men, supporters, relatives, his servants and slaves. On his military might depended his status and *mansab*. This is why Barni mentions Fakhruddin the *Kotwal* of Delhi and other members of the government. Along with the power of the chief of the tribe, his hangers on also used to monopolize big state jobs and enjoy large wealth. Ultimately, the government jobs and *Iqta* lands gradually got reduced and the number of these servants i.e. the number of born-slaves got so much increased that providence of the abundance of wealth and prosperity for all became an impossibility. Hence, at this point rebellions started materializing in the Sultanate of Delhi.

### Slave rebellions

In the early such rebellions one notices the influence of the *Ismaili Daais* because it were they who had an ideology of democratic rebellions and also had some organizational principles for this end. To this end they also had the capabilities to use both religion and class divisions. This is why during the time of Razia Sultan there happened a rebellion in Delhi under the leadership of the *Isma'ilis* which was suppressed. During the period of Alauddin these people were called *Abahama* or those who, without any distinction of permissibility or im-permissibility, considered everything permissible and admissible. They were hunted out everywhere and killed. There also was a Mughal rebellion

during this time and it was also suppressed. During the reign of Jalaluddin Khilji the slave rebels got a leader like Siddi Maula whose influence went beyond the slaves into the general Muslim masses. Ultimately he was hanged. About the related events it is written that his followers wanted to overthrow the government with the help of some nobles. During the reign of Mohammed bin Tughlaq such nobles as Ainul Mulk and others rebelled. In the end Hasan Gango attained success and established the Bahmani kingdom. The rebellion of the nobles of Sada was also widespread. Mohammad bin Tughlaq spent the last period of his life in suppressing these rebellions of the slave nobles. Besides the Turkish slaves, the Hindu slaves were also engaged in making their groups. Ultimately they killed the last Khilji king and put Khusrao Khan Parhar on the throne. After the death of Firuz Tughlaq the power and influence of the slaves increased so much that after getting the traditions of centralism cancelled, they forced the acceptance of hereditary services and hereditary *Jagirs*. During this period the Negro slaves attained political power in Gujarat and established their kingship in Bengal.

### *Mehdavi movement*

The biggest period of discontent among the Muslims of northern India was that in interval between the arrival of the Mughals and during the early times of the Pathans when the feudal pattern had entrenched itself and India and was experiencing something like a sentiment of anarchy. It was a chance that the millennium of Islam was also to be completed and according to the common belief there was a possibility that the *Mahdi* would appear and a spiritual government shall be established. This is why Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri proclaimed himself *Mahdi* and gradually this movement spread out of Jaunpur to Gujarat and the Deccan.

What were the ideas of Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri?

We come to know of these ideas from the historians of the time of Akbar, especially Badaiuni. More than Syed Mohammed, these histories record details about his successor Shaikh Alai and about Shaikh Niyazi, the leader of the Niyazi tribe of the Pathans. In connection with Shaikh Niyazi it is important to remember that during the reign of Shershah Suri the annulment of *Jagirs* was proclaimed though this could not be put into practice. Due to some special conditions Saleem Suri used to hate the Niyazi Pathans.

Away from habitations, Shaikh Alai along with his organized supporters used to live near Bayana and spent his life in remembering god. Usually the group consisted of laboring and poor Muslims whose number was counted in thousands. It was a principle with this group that none had any personal property and every one used to give his earnings to the leader of the group who used this fund for the entire community. It is obvious that in a place like Bayana it was not possible to provide job to thousands whose purpose in life was only to remember god. This is why they often used to go hungry. It was also their principle that they should eat only permissible i.e which they had earned with the labour of their own hands. However, these were armed people and, like Abu Zar and Abu Khadifa, believed that either you stop the wrong with your hands or condemn it with your tongue. They were of the opinion that the highest stage of religious belief is that one must consider wickedness as base from the bottom of his heart. Whenever these people heard about any tyranny, they would come into the settlement and punish the police officers. Sometimes they used to take the governance in their hands. Obviously, no government would allow such interference.

Consequently, Saleemshah got Alai arrested and his beliefs were systematically debated and discussed by the *Ulema*. In these discussions the *Ulema* got tired of the arguments of the Shaikh. For some time the Shaikh was

exiled to central India. However, due to the rebellion of the Niyazi the disturbances had spread very wide. Ultimately the king called the Shaikh and offered him the post of *Sadr* and on his refusal to accept it the king got him beaten with a hunter from which beating he died. Ultimately the Niyazis were defeated and were brutally killed.

The followers of the *Mehadivi* beliefs are yet met with in Gujarat and Deccan. Even such a distinguished Muslim League leader as late Bahadur Yar Jang was a *Mehadivi*. It was because of him that I could get an opportunity to study *Mehadivi* literature. By now nothing of the social or revolutionary aspects remains in their tenets and just like the *Satnami* movement or *Yaghistani Wahabi* monarchy, their literature only contains narration about the miracles of Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri.

### ***Roshniya* movement**

*Roshniya* movement of the frontier province in reality is the most powerful and definitely anti monarchic movement of the times that, leaving Islam aside, got constructed its propositions on the basis of Sufist religion and presented *Al-Bayan* before the people as a revealed book. Hazrat Bayazid Ansari was the founder of this movement. Though he was born in frontier, all his education was done at Ludhiyana. We come to know about him from the writings of his contemporary Mulla Akhundzada who was an open opponent of this movement and was in principle against it. He calls the founder instead of *Peer Roshniya* (Saint of light) as *Peer Tarik* (Saint of Darkness).

We come to know from his book *Tazkirt-al-Abrar* that during the period of anarchy that followed Firuzshah Tughlaq, the working class of the borderlands manifested heretic elements on a large-scale. Among the ironsmiths and traders were born such persons who claimed revelations and prophethood. Bayazid Ansari is a link in this chain. However, he systematized these scattered tendencies and

started to organize the Pathan tribes in a systematic manner.

In his teachings of the philosophy of the universe he shows Pythagorean style i.e. he sees his god getting dissolved in to light. However, the more important aspect of his teaching is that these are presented in the language of the people i.e. in a mixture of Pushto, Persian and Hindustani. In these teachings also not only private property is openly condemned but one is instructed to rob the wealthy, specially the royal caravans, and this act is considered as permissible under religion.

Though by the time of Akbar Bayazid Ansari had died but his son and successors used to lead the attacks on royal caravans. Ultimately the border passages became unsafe. Finally the Mughals appointed such an experienced military commander as Zafar Khan and Man Singh to supervise this expedition and Beerbal died in one of such battles. The Mughals could not get the expected success. Ultimately these battles continued till the period of Jahangir and Shahjahan. During the reign of Shahjahan the successors of Bayazid became the *mansabdars* and leaders of the government.

However, it will be a mistake to conclude that after a compromise by these successors the anti-monarchic movement died down. During the reign of Aurangzeb the land of frontier ultimately produced such a mighty leader like Khushhal Khan Khatak who spent his whole life fighting the Mughals. In his dying declaration he told that his dead body should be buried at a place where the dust from the hoofs of the Mughal horses should not be able to defile it. Pushto poetry is so alive because such an anti-monarchy person had given it the start. He is recognized as the biggest Pushto poet.

It is also a characteristic of these movements that in the end such a king as Ahmed Shah Dani rose to represent the Afghan pride. Even the movement of Jamaluddin Afghani for the revival of Islam wants to use the Islamic monarchism



and Turkish imperialism as an instrument for Islamic renaissance.

### Respected *Sufis*

In the realm of peoples' movement the teachings of the respected *Sufis* is the most dominating trend of the medieval period though its inclusion in the category of organized movements or in political organizations shall be an exaggeration. Here I am not concerned with the spiritual teachings or poetry of the respected *Sufis*. My review is limited to their over all political status for which Jahangir had compared them with "an army of prayers". However, from this discussion it should not be inferred that the *Sufis* in their initial stage had unconditionally compromised with the ruling class and the Islamic State.

### Initial outlook

Just like the *Mahdawi* movement, political criticism of Sufiism also starts from the same moral stature trying to know what is *akl-I-halal* (permissible consumption) and whether it is possible to have such consumption after getting attached to the state. In the light of the traditions of the primordial days of Islam, the answer of our Shaikhs was also clear. It was in negative. They used to consider all the channels and the income from these as religiously unlawful and morally prohibited. In the collected poems of Amir Khusrao it is clearly mentioned that the red ruby in the crown of the king in fact is that blood which has been sucked from the peasants. *Aijaz-I-Khusravi* ridicules the perception that the Sultan is the Shadow of God because, according to Khusrao, where is the evidence for god that he be his shadow? In the same book we find mention of such *Sufis* who used to consider the royal coin as filthy. They used to think that just as a drop of urine dirties a whole tank full of water; one royal *Tanka* is enough to pollute the entire wealth of permissible consumption. This is why in the very

early phase we find such a reverend personality as that of Hamiduddin Nagori who for his own food used to himself plough the land, sow and harvest it. He either used to weave cloth for himself or his wife used to spin the thread for it and weave.

(Marginal Note: Sa'di.

*Badast ayak naqsha kardan khamir  
Beh az dast bar sina pesh-I-amir)*

(The hand that stirs fermented broth  
Is better than the hand lying on the chest  
in front of the ruler)

However, ultimately the question was raised as to how can thousands of men living under Islamic autocracy obtain permissible provisions? This is why whatever be the acknowledged strict perceptions of permissible consumables, immediately after establishing the organizations and chains (*silsila*) the Sufis felt the need for a compromise with the ruling class. It all started with gifts and largesse of the rich that used to maintain the hospices. Ultimately the Sufis belonging to the Soharvardi chain and the elders of Pak Patan gradually formulated this principle that privation in fact is that of the heart and does not depend on the visible symptoms. As a poet has said,

*Hajat ba kulah-I-barki dastanat neest  
Darvesh sifat bash, kulah-I-tatari dar*

(There is no need to wear a torn cap  
Be a saintly character and wear the cap of a Tatar)

### Reconciliation with the Sultanate

This reconciliation was also necessary because in the ultimate analysis the government was that of the Muslims and whole of the land was against it. Open dissension of the Sufis could easily become an effective weapon in the hands of those inimical to Islam and in those times there

was no system better than monarchy had been visualized. Hence an antithetical practice started with Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya i.e. the Sufis used to spend their life remembering god while living in the hospices outside the cities and used to be unconcerned about the needs of this world. However, they used to keep an eye on the court and their circle of devotees also included a section of the nobles. In such a situation, for example, when Alauddin Khilji sent an army to Deccan and after some time people felt restless as to what happened to the royal force, the king sent gifts to the *Sultan-al-Mashaikh* and begged for prayer and the Shaikh prayed for the victory and success of the army of Islam. Gradually each one felt the need for the other and it was decided that the Muslim society has two columns i.e. the imperial palace and the hospices of the Sufis. You abundantly notice this mutual cooperation and assistance in the provincial dynasties of Gujarat, Bengal and the Deccan.

In the pivotal locate of Delhi the groupings of the nobles and their eternal conspiracies and conflicts among them to attain central power was the biggest hindrance in the progress of such cooperation and assistance. The Sufis had to face considerable difficulty in deciding whom to support. This is why when Khusrao Khan ascended the throne, he sent a substantial amount of money to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya as gift. However, when Ghayasuddin Tughlaq dethroned him, he demanded return of that amount of the royal treasury. This demand and the discussion about it was yet continuing when Ghayasuddin Tughlaq while on his way back from Deccan died near Delhi. This is the same conflict to which the revelations of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya are related, and his proverbial saying, "Yet Delhi is far away" (*Hunuz Dilli door ast*) was coined.

We also notice that this mutual friction between monarchy and Sufis in fact is met with immediately after Alauddin Khilji. His successor is desirous that Shaikh Nizamuddin should comply with the manners of the court.

However, *Sultan-al-Mashaikh* is insistent on maintaining his preeminence. Ultimately, Mohammed bin Tughlaq started suppressing the Sufis one after the other. Some were hanged, others were exiled and, due to this reason Hazrat Naseeruddin Chiragh Dehli closed down the Delhi center forever and the *Chishtiya Mashaikh* got scattered.

When Delhi glanced at the *Sufi* circles during the Mughal period, by then these had everywhere acquired, both in the center and in the provinces, the status of an "army of prayer" resembling the modern "*Mukti*" (rescuing) army and some, for example Hazrat Ghaus Gawaliari, had helped in the victorious campaigns of Babur and Humayun as an undercover informer. This is why even during the reign of Firuz Tughlaq the state started benevolently viewing the Sufis organized in a chain (*silsila*) but deemed those out of the various chains as dangerous. In other words, the *Sufi* organizations were staunch cooperators and helpers of the government. Now you notice that all the wealth, grandeur, authority and munificence and much besides coming to them. Just like the nobles, you also notice that the *Sajjadanashins* (heirs) and *Peers* (leaders) of various *Sufi* dynasties in the higher echelons of the ruling class where instead of "permissible comestibles," the enigmas of the realm of divinity and of the domain of human nature, the framework of real love and the elements of spirituality are now discoursed upon.

This is the reason why the Muslim Sufis, in spite of their love for the people, religious tolerance and universal concordance, always remained distant and detached from the democratic tendencies of the *Bhagti* movement and in all the stages when the populace of the *Bhagti* movement took up arms against autocracy then either the reverend Sufis were seen accompanying the armies of their enemy as a "detachment of prayers" or sitting in their hospices and remained engaged in secret or visible remembrance (*zikr*), *sama'* and *qawwali*.

### Spiritual authority

From the imaginary stories of humble life, secluded penance and of disagreement with the state, the naïve people certainly got this general impression that when the *Sufi* movement was suppressed and either the untutored people started constructing outlines of a parallel spiritual system or the Sufis themselves started impressing these on their psyche in which system all the responsibilities of this world and of its affairs was assigned to an organized chain of *mardan-I-ghaib* (invisible beings) who, just like the monarchs, nobles and *mānsabdars* of this world, deal with this business. I will discuss this aspect in the discussion regarding the religious life. Here only this reality requires to be pointed out that during the reign of the Sultans of Delhi just as the case was with the nobles, the Sufis also had their defined territories. Conflicts between them erupted only when the Sufis and *Shaikhs* would interfere in the regions of each other. You may specially notice such instances in the *Malfuzat* (Discourses of the saints) and, in the letters of Hazrat Ashraf Jahangir. In one word, after the *Sufi* movement, instead of getting them relieved of the Sultanate, the Muslim people along with the chains of enslavement of this world also got tied up in the chains of spiritual enslavement.

### Encountering the West

Probably the most robust and promising aspect of the peoples' movement is that one in which the Muslims got arrayed against the invasion of the West. It started in defensive form against Portuguese barbarism in Malabar. I may not be able to go into the details of this movement at this juncture. However, the most telling aspect of it is that in the south the Arabs of Malabar for the first time organized the united configurations of Hindus and Muslims in support of their king Zamoran and thanks to the militant tradition of fighting against the Western imperialism continued for centuries. In this context I want to draw your attention to

the Arabic elegies of Zain-ul-'abidin, especially to his book *Fath-al-Mujahideen* which should be given primacy in the history of our struggle for independence. (*Marginal Notes: Thomas Roe was conscious of it, Jesuits could guess; this is why no attention to industry.*)

### The maritime pirates

When in spite of strong resistance the Portuguese, and gradually the other European powers also got dominance, then this anti-imperialist tradition acquired the form of maritime piracy which, in the light of the improper and disorganized state and of the naval strength of the Mughal rule, is a glorious chapter of our history. Our historians have so far paid no attention to it. In the writings of Western travellers they are recalled with extreme fear as *Mallabares*. Their sphere of action is not confined to Malabar but stretches to the Arab sea and Persian Gulf. Later the maritime pirates of Kathiyawar, Sindh, Makran and of the Arabian coast also unite with them.

### Tipu Sultan

These were the traditions of anti-imperialism on the foundation of which ultimately the illuminated mind and farsighted personality of Tipu Sultan built his system of thought and action in which in contrariety to the Sikh and Marhatta movements, he, while retaining the basis of the unifying centrality of the armed forces, gave a locale to science and technology. Just like Peter The Great of Russia Tipu is the first thinker of our modern era. This is the reason why the British politicians retained the Sikh and Marhatta princes in one form or the other but obliterated all the imprints of Tipu. Studying the sources one realizes that in private circles he was addressed as Comrade Tipu and, following the French Revolution, had burnt all the symbols of monarchy. On the other hand by the study of the regulations of his government we learn that he wanted to

develop a type of state capitalism. He had built *Kothis* for commercial purposes in his own country as well as in Sindh, Africa and in other foreign centers and had used steam and machines for casting of cannons and guns. (*Marginal Notes: Unconcerned with family ties and ancestry, conscious of Mughal weaknesses.*)

I still think that for the declining period of India Tipu is the greatest thinker and regret that in this context the recent writings published by my dear friend Muhibul Hasan does not fully highlight his political personality.

### **The traditions of enmity towards the British**

After Tipu the first rebellion in British Indian army happened in the south when the Srirangapatnam formation revolted. Just like those of the 1857 rebellion, these rebels were also mercilessly blown up on canon-mouths. In any case, anti-British feelings had become widespread in India. The biggest demonstration of it was seen in the 1857 struggle for independence.

### **Rebellion 1857**

The British historians as well as Sir Syed have described the upheaval of 1857 as a limited outbreak and revolt of the army. The only reason for this outbreak given is that some elements of disruption had given currency to the story in the army that pig and cow fat is being used in the cartridges given to the Hindus and the Muslims. As those days the cartridges were to be opened by teeth, the soldiers got angry and rebelled.

I do not want to enter the controversy whether the fat of the pig and of the cow was used in the cartridges or not even though the contemporary British officers of the army provide evidence for its use. It also is not of significance whether in Barakpur Pande started it or in Meerut the Muslims initiated it. The decisive fact is that the moment the Meerut unit of the army rose up in rebellion, the flames

engulfed the whole country. Detailed account of the rebellion in northern India, besides Kay and Malison, William Moire has dealt with it in his book. The details of Kanpur, Lucknow, Faizabad, even the Bihar rebellion of Kunwar Singh and the account of Bahadur Khan in Baraily can be had from all these books. However, it is yet been thought that there was no influence of 1857 in Sindh, Punjab, and NWFP and in the south. My friend Nizami in his History of Sindh gives the account of rebellion in Sindh. The history of NWFP yet begs for our attention. However, even in Abotabad there yet are remainders of those martyrs whom the British blew up by cannons. In every center of Punjab people rose in revolt but were suppressed. Details regarding these events are available in some families like that of Maulana Habibur Rahman Ludhiyanvi. The information regarding Saharanpur you will know by reading about the elders of Deobandh. You will find Maulana Qasim himself participating in the happenings. You will even find those Arabic stanzas wherein he has expressed his desire to participate in the *Jihad* along with the Turks and fight in the Crimean war and has expressed regret that due to limitations he himself cannot fight side by side with the Turks. You may know that Shah Abdur Raheem migrated from India after the failure of the 1857 rebellion. Among the Sikhs of Punjab there was an anti-British element that later rebelled. This rebellion is called Kukka Rebellion and their leaders were also blown up by cannons.

In the south the banners of rebellion were raised against the British army and in this connection a number of Muslim leaders were hanged. It was only due to the betrayal of Salarjang that this rebellion could not spread to a wider scale.

Among the Muslim leaders Mauluvi Ahmedulla of Faizabad, Azimulla the Prime Minister of Nana Saheb, Shahzada Firuz and a number of Delhi *Ulema* were in the fore front. Though I have no written proof, I can, along with others, guess from their activities that the military uprising



was being prepared for quite some time. This is why Azimulla travelled to London and met the army experts of the Russian Tzar near Crimea. It is also worth noting that Azimulla and Shahzada Firuz were not arrested after the failure of the 1857 rebellion. They went underground.

I will not go into the details of Marhatta activities. However, you may know that the feelings of rebellion were so common among the Marhattas that Maharaja Sindhya had to leave Gawaliar and flames of rebellion broke out in almost all Marhatta centers of Bombay Presidency.

### Reasons for failure

In conclusion we may designate the 1857 rebellion as freedom struggle. However, this freedom struggle, including the capabilities of its leaders and their outlooks were as weak as the background of our freedom struggle wherein, leaving Tipu aside, none had a democratic programme before him, nor these people knew how to use modern knowledge and science. At the maximum the *Fatwa* issued by the *Ulema* of Delhi during 1857 admits that the Hindus in this struggle were friends of the Muslims. In other words there did not exist any common vision or anti-imperialist facet in this national struggle. The proclamation issued by Bahadurshah only mentioned this concession to the traders that no taxes shall be collected on trading commodities transported by waterways. It provides for no concessions for workers and peasants. In other words the leaders of 1857 rebellion wanted to keep the feudal system intact even though the foundation of the British rule, as in Bengal, could be kept on these very anti-people elements.

Hence, as my dear friend Satinder Singh has shown in his review of 1857, that when during the freedom struggle the committees of peasants and democratic organizations of the soldiers started emerging and the demand for the dispersion of the *Jagirs* was put forward, these very elements started to compromise with the British usurpers and

gradually all the Marhatta and Muslim leaders ran away from the field. The British historians do not tell this abominating story so that those professional traitorous Hindu and Muslim *Jagirdars* are not exposed who were later appointed to lead the communal movements. Nationalists did not pay attention to this analysis because those leaders of Indian National Congress itself, who were then considered to be very liberal or even progressive, had openly opposed the struggle of 1857. The leaders of Indian Association had collected signatures against the rebellion of 1857 and in support of the British on a large scale and had presented before the Viceroy a declaration of loyalty.

The second shortcoming of the leaders of the 1857 movement lies in the low level of the feudal system concerning the realms of industrial and intellectual development that is inescapable for those admiring feudalism. On the one hand the feudal beliefs were a chain in their feet and they did not use the new machines and steam power for industry. Those days only the Marhatta ruler of Indore had used steam in the manufacture of guns that the Britishers had stopped. There is no doubt that the ruler of Oudh did train his army according to modern methods, taught them the use of new arms and build on the whole a good army. This could happen because after successive defeats at Buxer and in Bengal the Muslim nobles had learnt the lesson and they in this respect were greatly helped by the French concessions. Hence, besides Oudh, almost every Marhatta ruler had French experts in his service. Amongst these only the names of De Borgne and Peron have become well known on account of their being in the vicinity of Delhi. Or, in connection with Shah Alam we find the name of Madok. Immediately after compromising with the British the Muslim and Marhatta nobles, some of whom had also encouraged the rebellion of 1857, dismissed these French advisors and abandoned the idea of industrialization and manufacturing of new arms.

This is why in the nineteenth century we encounter a contradictory tendency, which ultimately destroyed the moral foundations of the organized movement of 1857. On the one hand we notice a wide spread feeling of hatred towards the British and on the other it is admitted on every step that the British government represents a better organization and higher principles of civilization which principles it also practices. This tendency you will also notice in Dabeer and Ghalib. Eventually Sir Syed differed with Ghalib because Sir Syed used to appreciate *Ain-I-Akbari* and Ghalib would not consider it as more than forgotten heap of papers and a story of the past. You will notice the appreciation of the greatness of the British system even in the higher circles of the *Wahabi* movement and notice it in the top ranking leaders of Delhi who had the modern principles of British life before their eyes but they could not learn any lesson from it.

In this context I remembered the *Mathnavi* of Abdulhaq Dhlavi Mahajir that he had written on the events related to the battles of Malaka and Satana. He has praised the exploits of the *Mujahideen* in those battles that they fought against the British armies. However, Abdulhaq has admitted in clear words that the British governance is based on better principles.

You will meet this reaction also in that *Fatwa* that Maulana Azizur Rahman Ludhiyanvi wrote against Sir Syed because Sir Syed believed in rationality and considered English education as necessary.

After knowing this tendency you shall be able to easily understand the reasons for the failure of the freedom movement.

## FIFTH LECTURE

### STATUS OF RELIGION IN MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

Respected Mr. President and friends !

Today I want to speak about the status of religion during the medieval times because in imitation of the European historians it is also emerging as our belief that religious feelings are the most glaring characteristic and decisive incentive for action during this period. In support of this trend we can easily cite the hospices, mosques, temples and *maths* of the times as well as steps of some kings when on the one hand they got built the *Jama Masjid* of Agra and Delhi or got the mosques of Ahmedabad and Gaur constructed. On the other hand some kings got some famous temples and places of worship razed to the ground. I do not deny the activity of this feeling but only refuse to accept the decisive position and dominant status of this incitement during the times.

The glaring position of religion and of religious beliefs that one meets in the Hindu history or in the Rajput period is obvious to all. However, the nature of the Muslim monarchy was a bit different.

### Muslim monarchy

Islam confronted the stage of mutual battles between the Church and monarchy that one meets in the West, in its very early stage of development. Because of such conflict, not half a century had passed after the death of the prophet that in comparison with religion the state and monarchy emerged as a decisive force. In short you may visualize it as follows. When even during the time of *Khilafat-I-Rashida* the width of the Muslim empire expanded beyond Arabia to reach into Egypt, Syria and Iran, and proportionately their wealth and affluence also increased, then naturally the question arose as to what should be the basis of governance in these new conditions because the system dependent on tribal chiefs and the vague traditions of the tribal system were incapable of shouldering the new responsibilities. Hence, after studying the imperial traditions of Iran, Rome and Egypt even during the time of Hazrat Maawia and Yazid the *Fuqha* (scholars of Muslim law) and leaders of the community came to a unanimous conclusion that without appropriation of monarchy the Muslim system of governance cannot be maintained. In Muslim legal terminology this point of view was presented as follows. *La bad min imam bar yu fajir* (there is no escape from leader even if he is impure). Later, stage by stage till the age of the Abbasids the Islamic politics emerged in the form of those monarchies that in the words of Mamoona-ar-Rasheed claimed, "We are the times. We overthrow whomsoever we want and raise whomsoever we desire."

I do not deny that, besides the *Khawarij*, such distinguished friends of the prophet as Abuzar Ghaffari himself opposed monarchism during the time of Hazrat Usman and Hazrat Maawia. The attacks of these *Khawarij* continued till the times of Banu Abbas. However, in comparison with the progressive demands of the monarchy their activities were purely anarchist and destructive. This is why the stream of history went ahead leaving behind

such attractive but misleading tendencies. Today we read about these tendencies not to act upon them but only for entertainment. This is why Hazrat Usman punished Hazrat Abuzar and exiled him and, besides other friends of the prophet, Hazrat Ali himself fought against the *Khawarijis*.

As I have mentioned, during the time of the Abases the organization of Turkish slaves strengthened the Islamic state and ultimately the Turks and the Mughals, due to their traditions of centralization and militarization, prepared that steeled broth of the Islamic rule that Karl Marx has designated as Asian autocracy and mode of production.

### **Imam Ghazali**

Ghazali is the most distinguished thinker of this period, who has looked at the experiences of the surroundings and at the happenings in the Muslim society itself from purely religious point of view. He has admitted the fact that it is already out of consideration to construct for the Muslim society a legal system like that of *Khilafat-I-Rashida*. Hence, instead of feeling dejected, we should, while yet remaining within Muslim monarchism, reconstruct our social and personal life in accordance with the Muslim law. In other words, Imam Ghazali recognized that religion is not associated with the state structure but with the contriving of the goals. After this, majority of the community not only supported monarchism but also by declaring the Sultan as *zillallah* (shadow of god) patterned all those religious-legal arguments that I have discussed in my earlier lecture.

### **Religion and governance in India**

Ultimately, when the Turkish slaves established their rule in India there was no visible conflict between religion and governance in the milieu that they had created. Only some circles of the Sufis were not satisfied with the monarchy. However, their perimeters of action were also limited to their personal life and purification of the inner

self. Outside these circles basic vision of politics was based on unconditional support to the autocratic kingship. Hence there are two sayings that one meets in the literature of this period. Due to their mass acceptance Mohammed bin Tughlaq got these engraved on his coins. One saying is: *Lo la as-Sultan la kul annas ba'dahum ba'da* (If there is no Sultan, some humans will eat others) which resembles the theory of state proposed by Hobbs the British thinker. Second saying in fact is elaboration of the blessed *ayah* from the Holy Quran—*Atiyu allah wa atiyar rasul o ul al-amr minkum* (Obey Allah and his prophet and those who are your leaders). The saying is *Man ata as-Sultan faqad ata ar-Rahman* or obedience of Sultan is the same as obedience of god himself. No religious thinking can go farther than this in support of autocracy and at least I do not know of any scholar or religious text that had contradicted this current perception. Only in the *Ismaili* literature and in the writings of Hazrat Ismail Shaheed it has been said that *La ta't al-makhlooq fi ma'isiyat al-khaliq* (the creation may not obey the creator in his misdeeds). I am sure you will agree with me that this criticism is vague and of only moral nature.

In any case when the Islamic state was satisfied that in the name of religion there would be no resistance, only then the state started to patronize Islam. This was also necessary because while living among the non-Muslim majority of the conquered territories only Islamic sentiments could stimulate mutual unity and organization among those who had in their deepest composition the contradictory elements of race and community. However, the important aspect of the Muslim state in India is that, as the Sultans started coming closer to the Indian people and the social foundations of the state went deeper and emerged stronger, they started to weaken the Islamic limitations. So much so that by the time of Akbar such activity reached its zenith. For the time being I am focused on the religious patronage of the Sultans of Delhi.

### **Patronage to religion**

It was a tradition of the monarchy that, following the *Khulafa-I-Rashida* and like all other Muslim territories, at the time of coronation they used to take an oath and the king himself used to deliver the *Khutba* (speech) in the *Jama Masjid* of Delhi. That *Khutba* of Akbar is very famous in which he had said that god has bestowed him with an empire and two strong arms. He ended this *Khutba* by saying *yad ta'ala shana Allah Akbar* from which one can also deduce the aspect of Akbar proclaiming himself to be Allah.

In the beginning till the Abbasids lasted, it was a norm that the Sultans of Delhi used to ask for a certificate of confirmation from the *Khalifa*, and if you want to notice the exaggerated and caricature status of this ceremony then have a look at the period of Mohammed bin Tughlaq during which time the Abbasid Caliph in fact was a minor stipend holder and unknown person under the Mamluk kings of Egypt. However, for impressing the people his servants were received by Sultan Mohammed bin Tughlaq with such grandeur as if they were ambassadors from some universal monarch much higher than Haroon and Mamoon. However, when the sacred relics of *Khilafat* came into the house of Usman then the Mughals considering this practice to be insulting for them, stopped it forever.

Practicing the various elements of Islam depended upon the personal inclination of the ruler of the time. Some used to openly discard fasting or not offer prayer while others like Balban, Jalaluddin Firuz or Shahjahan and Alamgir were not only punctual in fasting and prayers but used to offer the prayers of the two *Ids* in the royal *Jama Masjid* with great pomp and show. However, going for *Haj* was out of question for the Sultans. In this connection that commentary of Abul Fazl is very interesting which he made in order to stop Akbar going for *Haj* to Mecca. In fact those princes and nobles about whom it was felt that they should be exiled were compelled to go for *Haj*. In this context the *Haj* and



exile of Mulla Sultanpuri and Shaikh Abdunnabi, both towering religious personalities, is not only very interesting but also very abominating. However, from the times of Akbar it became a practice that every year someone was appointed as *Amir-I-Haj* by Akbar who would lead the caravan of the *Hajis* and gifts were sent through him to the religious personalities of Hijaz and he was given large sum of money for distribution as alms. The ladies of the imperial seraglio and distinguished nobles often accompanied these caravans.

It is also a characteristic of the Sultanate policy that it did not tolerate either open condemnation of Islam or explicit forms of moral turpitude. Hence during the reign of Firuz Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodhi death sentences were also given for such violations and during the latter times Sarmad was also killed for the same crime. However, when Mulla Sultanpuri, against the desire of Akbar, sentenced a Brahman to death for blasphemy against Islam it led to such reaction on the part of Akbar that ultimately became obvious in the form of a *Mahzar* (authorization). Finally it was decided that settlement of religious problem depends on Akbar and not on the *Ulema* of Islam. In this sense Akbar ranks as innovator (*Mujtahid*) and leader (*Imam*).

The Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal kings also felt the political need that, after defeating the Rajputs, they should also raise some temples to the ground especially if these rulers instead of agreeing to obedience had resolutely fought the emperor of Delhi. The temples of Ranthambor, Chittor, Kangra, and Benaras as well as at some other localities come under this category. However, as I have mentioned, such was not the prevalent religious policy but was a manifestation of their political concerns.

There were religious people also among the occupants of position in the court. Among these the most important and extensive was the Department of Justice (*Qazat*) and its position holders as well as the position of *Qazi-al-Qazat*

(Chief of the *Qazis*). During the Mughal times the government appointed *Qazi* and *Mufti* (giver of religious decisions) for every district who used to decide the disputes. Besides, there was the Department of *Sadr* that spent huge amounts of money and looked after charity, religious education and maintenance of the *Ulema* as well as other social purposes and used to distribute *Siverghal* or grants in aid and *jagirs*. Burial of un-cared for Muslims, maintenance of widows and religious education was also brought under this department. Earlier there was a separate department of *Mohtasib* but later this duty was assigned to the *Kotwal* (police chief) of the city. In Turkish courts there used to be a *Mushaf bardar* (carrier of the book) and during the reign of Balban Amir Khusrao was assigned this status. However, later the *Darogha-I-Kutubkhana* (chief of the library) took over the custody of all books. Even otherwise the *Ulema* were greatly respected. During the Turkish period often Balban and Sultan Jalaluddin Firuz used to personally attend the religious discourses of famous discussants. During the Mughals Shahjahan greatly admired them. During the reign of Alamgir when *Fatawa-I-Alamgiri* was compiled, for the satisfaction of the *Ulema* a measure of punishment was fixed for insulting any of the *Ulema* as their insult was considered equivalent to the insult of Islam itself.

However, on account of this policy and display of religion the autocratic kingship not only displaced religion from politics but procured such renown in the hearts of the Muslim masses that the life of Nasiruddin Mahmud and Alamgir was so presented as if they, just like *Khulafa-I-Rashidain*, used to sustain themselves by penmanship of Quran or stitching caps and used to spend their lives as hermits and mendicants. In the collection of the sayings of some Sufis Alauddin Khilji is also presented in the image of a warrior of Islam just like Mahmud of Ghazni, and it is said that the prophet of Islam was himself restless to see him. These are those stories of Islam on the basis of which in the

end Iqbal painted the picture of the famous Muslim leaders in which some speak the language of the brave Tariq:

*Har mulk mulk-i-mast ki mulk-I-khuda-I-mast*

(Every territory is mine as it is the territory of my god)

And some ruler is praised in the following manner.

*Hukmarane bud, samane nadasht  
Dast-I-yu juz tegh o Qurane nadasht*

(He was a king but had no possessions  
His hands held nothing but sword and Quran)

And the entire Muslim rule has been so romantically depicted

*An Muslamanan ki miri karda and  
Dar shahanshahi faqiri karda and*

(Those Muslims who have ruled  
In the garb of monarchy they practiced asceticism)

To grasp the decisive significance of the Muslim rule as represented by the Turkish and Mughal periods it is enough to recall this historical fact that the king not only encompassed the Islamic norms but was also competent to invent a new religion and also to negate Islam. Such competence and power is the natural consequence of the logical culmination of autocracy. Much before *Din-I-Ilahi* of Akbar Alauddin had thought of crafting a new religion but hesitated because of this advice of Fakhruddin, the Chief of Delhi police, that before acting so it is necessary to completely conquer India. In any case he clearly explained to Mughisuddin, the *Qadi* of Bayana, that the government does not depend on *Shariyat* (Islamic law) but entirely rests on the volition of the king.

We are cognizant of the *Din-I-Ilahi* of Akbar. It is not definitive that *Din-I-Ilahi* failed. Its educative aspect is that

the monarch of the medieval period, instead of compromising with religion, could contrive his own religion and even after such unsheathed deviation none had the guts to raise his head. Before he died Akbar reigned for quite some time after such religious innovation.

### **Revival of Islam**

Movement for the revival of Islam, its nature and characteristics can only be clarified after an explanation of the mutual compromise between religion and the state. Whatever the formal claims and philosophical semblance of these movements their biggest aim is only that the political power and might should remain confined not only to the Muslim ruling class, but remain safe in the hands of their dominant elements and the followers of their religious convictions. Hence, from this moment while it gets organized, this also becomes the ground of their disagreements. This reality can also be spelled out that majority of the elements from the ruling class in the initial stage were confined to the Turks who by their belief were *Sunni* Muslims. Hence, the important object of the revivalist movement is that only the *Sunnis* should share political power and those who are not *Sunni* be kept out of it. Obviously, whereas this trend becomes the basis for the unity of the ruling elements, it also develops as an impediment in the path of governance because the government wants to arrive at a balance by incorporating other elements so that it does not become dependent only on a particular group.

*(Marginal Note: Safavis in Iran and Shah Abbas.)*

During the early days this attitude of the government is best manifested by Mohammed bin Tughlaq who, after getting tired of the intemperance of the Turkish nobles, first assigned positions to invited foreigners and then incorporated Mughal nobles with positions in the army. When the task is not achieved, then, in the words of Barni,

he started to enroll every spinner, weaver, butcher, and gardener, in other words those of lower pedigree (*Aslaf*), in his service. We can see that during the medieval times to save the government from the dominance of a particular assemblage he established the principle of a bureaucracy. Ultimately this bureaucracy reaches its perfection during the reign of Akbar. However, the demands of bureaucracy are above religion; these are secular. As a consequence, the movement for the revival of Islam starts during this process.

### Shaikh Alai

In my earlier lecture I have discussed the *Mehdavi* movement. At this moment I want to refurbish only this aspect of the movement that Saleem Shah, before punishing him, had offered the supervision of the Department of *Ahtesab* (account taking) to him so that his aggressive reformism, psyche of preaching and the programme of reform becomes harmless and lifeless in the iron milieu of the bureaucracy. However, Shaikh Alai rejected the offer and was sentenced.

### Mujaddid Sarhindi

Second and most splendid chapter of the movement for the revival of Islam starts from Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani Syed Ahmed Sarhindi, which in fact is the reaction to the reforms of Akbar. Akbar, as you know, besides the Mughal nobles, also incorporated the Iranians and the Rajputs in large numbers in the responsibilities of governance and enunciated that policy which Abul Fazl designates as *Sulha kul* or agreement with all elements of the subjects and treating them all equally. In other words, irrespective of religion or race, using every one in the interest of the monarchy. Consequently, in accordance with this point of view the philosophical vision of Akbar could only be manifested in the framework of *Wahdat al-wajud* (singularity of all existence).

## **The reign of Akbar**

During the reign of Akbar, and much before Mujaddid Sarhindi, when the king, after annulling *Jagirs* incorporated the land in *Khalsa* (imperial land) and introduced the compulsory rule of *Dagh* (branding), it led to a great rebellion. In order to visualize the significance of *Khalsa* and *Dagh* it is necessary to state that earlier the nobles used to manage their own *Jagirs* and were a sort of ruler over the territory. Imperial army also consisted of their tribesmen and relatives. There was no rule or law of the state for them. When in six months or an year there was royal inspection then the nobles would dress every ordinary man in the uniform of the royal army, mount them on horses and present these for inspection. After inspection all of these would get dispersed. By the incorporation of these *Jagirs* in the *Khalsa* Akbar desired that instead of in the hands of the owners of *Jagirs* the management should directly be in the hands of the government and the *Jagirdars* are removed from authority. According to the rule of *Dagh* and *Kaifiyat* (description) the details of every soldier was to be entered in a register and every horse was to be branded with official number and then the salary of the soldiers and the fodder of the horses shall become the concern of the royal treasury. In other words, after these steps of Akbar the *Mansabdars* were turned into state servants and become bound to the king. For the seasoned *Jagirdars* this was reason enough for rebellion. Hence, after the promulgation of these changes such a trusted person and part of the ruling class as Mirza Aziz Koka disassociated himself from the management of Gujarat and the Mughal rulers of Qaqshal declared open rebellion. Later gradually the old *Jagirdars* secretly started participating in this conspiracy while its visible guise was not only religious, but also revivalist. The *Fatwas* against Akbar that he is godless and irreligious started to be distributed among the ordinary people and by announcing not only the religiosity but also underlining the strong *Sunni* faith of Prince Murad,

they invited him to attack Lahore and take over the throne. Ultimately, this movement receded when Shah Mansoor was hanged and Akbar attacked Kabul after the exposure of this conspiracy. My purpose for narrating this event is to prove the mutual relationship between the feudal and revivalist elements.

### After Akbar

After Akbar these elements opened the chapter of enmity towards Rajputs and against the *Shias* and incited communal feelings in the name of revival of religion. *Wahdat ash-Shahood* (unity of all appearances) is the ideological philosophy of this movement and is deeply linked to the person of Hazrat Mujaddid Sarhindi. At this moment I will not go into the philosophical exposition of *Wahdat al-wajud* or *Wahdat ash-shahood*. I only want to explain that the royal and the feudal trends had their two different philosophical and spiritual visions. Judgment does not depend upon as to what in itself is the actuality of *Wahdat* (unity) but historically rests on what is the progressive philosophy of the society even if it is *Ainiyat*.

### The teachings of Sarhindi

During the reign of Jahangeer Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani started his exhortations. In the letters of Hazrat Syed Ahmed Sarhindi you may notice that he is deeply impassioned by that depravity that Islam suffered at the hands of Akbar. He notably hates the Hindus. He is loathing towards the Iranians. In other words, he is unable to tolerate anybody other than the *Sunnis*. Most of these letters are addressed to Farid Khan who was among the big nobles of the times and, consequently, was a special confidant of Jahangeer. The purpose is to some how disengage Jahangeer from the path of Akbar and secure him to the earlier practices from which Muslim rule had started in India and when in conformity with *wa a'tu al-jaziyata min yaduhum saizon* every

Hindu idolater was to be contemptuously subjected to the payment of *Jizya* and the only merit the *Shiyya* possessed was to be killed. You may be aware that much before Akbar such ideas were also propounded before Alauddin Khilji by Qadi Mughis but, as I have mentioned, history had advanced much further from that stage and the reply given by the king was based on realities i.e. *Shariyat* (Muslim law) has nothing to do with the functioning of the state.

All these efforts to influence Jahangeer failed. In his *Tuzak* Jahangeer himself at three places recollects Syed Ahmed Sarhindi. First time he states that Syed Ahmed has spread a crafty trap to mislead the people and to expand his own shop which trap he camouflages under big curtains of complicated philosophy. Later he writes that it seems his head is sizzling so I have put him in jail. Ultimately, after releasing him he bestows on the Syed one thousand rupees out of the amount that was meant for distribution as charity. These references of Jahangeer in fact reflect the reactions of Hazrat Mujaddad Alf Thani himself. In the first phase he very violently hated the government. Then he becomes a bit softer even when not comprehending the tactics of the state policies. In the end he appears to be so entranced with monarchy that he writes a commendatory letter to a noble requesting him for a job for his son. However, as a staunch *Sunni* his hatred for the Hindus and for the *Shiyyas* yet continues and he consistently hangs on to the coat tails of governance according to the Islamic laws and the philosophy of *Wahdat ash-shahud*.

In spite of temporary reversals, due to this movement racial prejudices continuously went on flaring up on the one hand between the Persian and the Mughal nobles and on the other between the Muslim and the Rajput nobles. And an atmosphere of lack of confidence started to spread that ultimately showed its full effect during the reign of Alamgeer. In this ambience the structure of the Mughal Empire got completely shattered.



**Shah Waliulla**

Last stage of the revivalist movement is linked with the family of Shah Waliulla. While on the one hand this movement faced the big question as how to overcome the Mughal, Persian and increasing *Shiya* and *Sunni* tendencies, on the other there was search for a new principle for the organization of the Mughal state as it was getting weaker and weaker. Shah Waliulla seems to be engaged in solving these questions. He tries to bring concord between *Khilafat* and *Imamat* by writing his book *Azlat-al-Khafa*. By elucidating Sufiism he lays down the foundations of a common perception among the different sects of the Muslims. The Shah is also thoughtful of the domination of the Hindus, especially of the Marhattas. At one place he points directly while at other places in hints he expresses the hope that instead of the Marhattas, the Rajputs will dominate and these Rajputs shall get converted to Islam. Regarding the system of governance he is of the firm opinion that this system deserves to be wiped out (*Fad haza nizam*). Moreover, in *Hujjatalla* he also expresses this opinion that in this system there is great injustice done to the workers and other toiling classes. However, he has no alternate except that the Muslim rule should be re-established on pure grounds which should be based on the *Sunnah* of the prophet of Allah and this could only be based on his saying (*hadith*). Hence, the tradition of *hadith* on a large scale starts with him and the *ahl-I-hadith* followers establish a separate organization of their own which is linked with the *Wahabi* movement and their revivalist politics.

In practice when the danger of the Marhatta increased and engulfed Delhi and northern India, then Shah Waliullah through the intermediary Najibuddaulah invites Ahmedshah Abdali and bestows on both these personages the certificate of *Jihad fi sabil allah* (holy war in the service of god). In other words, the aim of this Muslim revivalist movement was to somehow inculcate a unity of vision

among the Muslims and to anyhow keep the Muslim State in existence.

### **Shah Abdul Aziz**

Because of the increase in British interventions, during this while the conditions after Shah Waliulla turned yet more complicated and Shah Abdul Aziz became the successor of Shah Waliullah. During the times of Shah Abdul Aziz most of the parts of northern India had been incorporated in the rule of the British Company and in some other places like Bhopal, Tonk, Bahawalpur, Khairpur Hindu and Muslim Princeloms were yet surviving. Hence, the *Ulema* started debating whether India was *Dar-al-Harb* (territory of the enemy where war is to be waged) or *Dar-al-Islam* (territory of Islam) because if India was to be counted as *Dar-al-Harb* then the Muslims either should wage a holy war (*Jihad*) or have to migrate (*Hijrat*). The answer of Shah Abdul Aziz regarding the British territories was clear and categorical i.e. due only to the superficial freedom of prayer, fasting and observing the other pillars of Islam this territory could not be called *Dar-al-Islam*; for the designation of *Dar-al-Islam* political dominance of the Muslims is essential. In the same manner Shah Abdul Aziz is also against service in the British army and permits the learning of English language only because through it one may know the condition of the enemy i.e. the British. However, in his opinion the Muslim and Hindu native Principalities were not *Dar-al-Harb* and while living there the Muslims can fulfil the demands entailed by Muslim *Shariyat*.

### **Syed Ahmed Barailwi**

The ideas and preachings of Shah Waliulla and Shah Abdul Aziz ultimately gave rise to that movement, which in popular parlance is called the *Wahabi* movement and in Bengal it is called the *Faraizi* movement. In north India Syed Ahmed Barailwi and Shah Ismail Shaheed led it. At this

moment I will not discuss the religious ideas of this movement. For this purpose you may please read *Taqwiyat-al-Iman*. My review is limited to its social and political status and from this point of view the perception of state of this movement is very important. Details regarding this facet one gets from the *Risala-I-Imamat* of Shah Abdul Aziz and from the orders and writs of the government of Malaka and Satana.

### **The concept of State**

In his *Risala-I-Imamat* Shah Ismail has discussed the Islamic perception of leadership (*Imamat*). He has used all sorts of bombast in its classification. In the end in the light of the real situation he has accepted the existence of the State and that of the rulers with all its paraphernalia and has reached this ultimate conclusion that until and unless the ruler of the time does not indulge in open broadcasting of defiance of religion and god and its laws, as was done by Akbar, the Muslims are duty bound to obey him. In case of open defiance, however, the principle of *la ta't al-makhlug fi ma'siyat al-khaliq* starts operating. In other words, the revivalist movement essentially is neither aware of the demands of modern democracy nor does it negate the autocratic monarchy. After the decline of the central Mughal government when feudalism raised its head, this revivalist movement also incorporates them. For the study of this facet the scrutiny of the orders and directives of the governments of Malaka and Satana are extremely enlightening.

### **Governments of Malaka and Satana**

Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi, as you know, was the *Amir-I-Jama't* (head of the organization) of the governments of Satana and Malaka and this organized and collective overture of Islamic revivalism is considered by some modern Muslim thinkers as resembling the rule of the *Khulafa-I-*

*Rashideen*. Unfortunately the documents that the victorious British got after capturing Malaka and Satana have till date been kept secret. Generally the historians do not know anything about them. We know only that following the *Khulafa-I-Rashida*, Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi was simultaneously the leader (*Imam*) and commander of the army. During this while *Zakat* (income tax at the end of the year) was demanded from all and in the *Bait-al-mal* (treasury) of the state all the *Mohajirin* (migrants) and *Ansar* (those sheltering the migrants) had their share. Moreover, following the example of Medina, the migrants were also married to Pathan women which led to the eruption of disturbances.

However, the study of state documents brings to fore the other and more important aspect of this government. This government, as is popularly believed, is at war with the Sikhs but is not their enemy. It considers the growing strength of the British as its only enemy and is well aware of the British danger. On the other hand it compromises with feudalism and wants to gain the support and sympathy of the nobles by distributing large *Jagirs* to them. I have seen *Farman* (orders); *Rubkar* (instructions) and *Hasb-al-Hukm* issued by Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi as well as those documents of diverse nature that were the hallmark of the Mughal office. There are innumerable authority letters of *Jagirs*. *Nazr*, *Nuzul*, *Tuhfa*, *Khiraj*, in one word all the practices of monarchy were current there with the only difference that, in contrast with the Mughals, they also show decentralization and feudalism and due to this consideration its level is considered to be very low.

### *Yaghastan*

Some remnants of this movement are yet to be found in Yaghistan and on a small territory there yet is the rule of *Ameer* of the *Mujahideen*. I will place before you the manifestation of an admonishing low level and moral degradation shown in the writings of a famous *Ahl-I-Hadees*

scholar and an emigrant and warrior for the community, Maulavi Mohammed Ali Hassawi. It has been serially published last year as an essay in the journal of *Anjuman Taraqi-I-Urdu* Pakistan, from which you will be able to know that a form of rape, sex with adolescent boys, bribery, terror etc. was current there. In one word, there seems to be nothing with which this society and government is not well acquainted.

### *The Faraizi*

In the wider sense one of the forms of this revivalist movement was that which donned the apparel of *Faraizi* peasant movement in Bengal. It has relatively more healthy elements. The principle that the land belongs to god and it is owned by the one who tills it was their motto. Unfortunately, due to untimely clash with the British this movement died early and did not reach maturity.

### 1857

Ultimately the *Wahabi* trend made its last effective demonstration in the freedom struggle of 1857 when in connection with the rebellion Fazl-I-Haq Khairabadi was deported to Andaman and Sahbai and other seniors were hanged. In spite of the defeat of the rebellion of 1857 the *Wahabis* continued with their anti-British activities and in the Conspiracy Case of 1864 Ahmedulla, the *Amir-I-Jama't* was sentenced. Later in 1870 Haji Amir Ahmed was also sentenced. Ultimately, due to this tendency Nawab Sidiq Hasan Khan was removed from (the potentate of) Bhopal.

### And recently

Ultimately after the end of the First World War these elements participated in the non-cooperation movement. However, in spite of adapting to the ideology of nationalism their perceptions of *Imamat* continued as usual. So much so, that this point of view led to the partition of India and

appeared in the guise of Pakistan. The vision of establishing a state practicing Islamic laws is alive even today. Maulana Abulkalam (Azad) is among the earlier thinkers of this trend and Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi is very prominent for the new era.

### **Hindu revivalist movements**

It was but natural that the Hindu society responded to the Muslim revivalist feelings and to these religious movements. This was easier because for a long time the Hindu *Jagirdars* and religious sections were having a dominant influence on the Hindu society. In any case, to oppose the Muslim invaders the Hindu feelings could always be invoked. This aspect is more engaging than before the British no organized movement could be instituted on this basis.

### **Vijyanagar**

Its first manifestation occurred in the form of the establishment of Vijyanagar rule in Deccan. However, due to its response to the demands of feudalism this government failed before the Turkish elements of the Bahamani rule and after the battle of Tailikota even the existence of Vijyanagar itself went into oblivion. The performance and organization of this rule as well as of the Hindu society seen through the pages of Abdurrazaq does not lead one to visualize any healthy and new system emerging at the hands of the Hindu revivalism. There one finds the same old demonstrations of pleasure and luxurious living and of the ancient methods of rule. We see the same picture of the superiority of the *Brahmans* and the *Chatris* and the low level of the ordinary people with which we are familiar due to the valuation of *Raj Tarangini*.

### **The Rajputs**

I have already referred to the Rajput rebellions during

the Mughal period. No revivalist feeling was associated with these revolts. As I have mentioned, Rajput *mansabdars* themselves suppressed majority of these rebellions.

However, the revivalist tinge is the characteristic of the last phase of the Sikh and Marhatta movements. The British rulers later wanted to use this sentiment by putting after Tipu a Hindu ruler on the throne of Mysore.

### **The Marhattas**

Accentuation of revivalist trends in the Marhatta movements to some extent is the achievement of the historians of the new period and some aspects of which Jadunath Sarkar has also condemned. It is obvious that the *Peshwas* succeeding Shivaji must have used all sorts of feelings to overcome the Mughals. However, in the organization of the *Peshwa* himself the currency of Persian, of Mughal norms and traditions, names of different offices and the title of *Peshwa* itself and the rules framed by the Marhatta rulers and those of the later states are an explicit proof that these rulers and nobles knew the significance and importance of the Mughal ruler and used to practice the norms of religious tolerance. This is why among them we do not meet any organized revivalist movement before the establishment of the East India Company.

### **The Sikhs**

However, the Sikh movement is somewhat different from the other movements. Firstly, the Sikh movement was near Delhi and it had to continuously face the military activities of the Mughal administrators due to which the Sikhs included military training and principles of organization in their religious beliefs. Later, it was a logical consequence of the harsh punishments meted out to Guru Gobind Singh and other Sikh leaders during the reign of Farukhsyer. It was assumed that the organised Sikh militarism would answer it. Hence, after Golughara those

soul-chilling scenes occurred when Muslims were killed in mosques and were force-fed with pork. Both sides indulged in what can only be termed as barbarism. However, when Ranjeet Singh occupied the throne, the established principles of kingship were again practiced in the same manner that was characteristic of secular monarchies and was the tradition in case of the Turkish rulers.

In other words, it may be said with confidence that, although Hindu feudalism utilized the feelings of religious revivalism from time to time and incited the Hindu, Sikh or Marhatta people against the Turkish and Mughal rulers, however, the secular traditions and bureaucratic system of management had become so strong in these six centuries that in case of their successes, it was hard to distinguish the manners and functioning of these rulers and those of the Muslim kings.

### **Hindu-Muslim riots**

Nonetheless, during the period of anarchy there also were a few examples of communalism and Hindu-Muslim riots that are quite entertaining. Tabatabai, writing about Kashmir, has mentioned an incident about a respected person who after having the Mughal chief executive encircled, took up the title of Deendar Khan and imposed on the Hindus all those restrictions that were related to the Islamic traditions during the primordial times i.e. imposed *jiziya*, prohibited them to ride on horses, and impelled them to wear a distinguishing dress. After a month or two the people ultimately got fed up with this aggressive religiosity and the earlier chief executive was reinstated to his old position.

The details about the first Hindu-Muslim riot are given in *Mirat-I-Ahmadi* in the context of the last interim of Gujarat when for the collection of the revenue of Surat and for the post of *Shah Bandar* there was rivalry between the *Marwari* opulent persons and the *Bohra* traders. Consequently, the



*Bohras* organized their armed groups in the name of Islam and the *Marwaris* did the same in the name of *Hindu Dharama*. For quite some time a situation like civil war prevailed. In the end the Rajput chief executive of the Province used a strong force and crushed this communal strife. Leaders of both sides were killed in conspiracies.

Both these instances prove that the public opinion, especially the executive and other responsible officers of state, usually remained entirely ignorant of those real reasons of communalism that in the new stage has become an integral element of our national and communal politics. This is why in 1857 Sikh, Marhatta and Muslim religious revivalists got mutually unified.

In this context it will not be out of place to give a short sketch of the prevalent religious life of the medieval society.

### Religious life

In the medieval religious life two contradictory aspects appear to simultaneously permeate each other and had generally characterized our religious life till the nineteenth century. On the one hand people were not only extremely tolerant towards each other's religion but also respected the basic tenets for the illustration of which I have already cited the instance of Devdas and the daughter of Prince Akbar. On the other hand both the rich and the poor Hindus and Muslims were extremely inflexible in their religious beliefs. To illustrate this aspect I would like to draw your attention to some famous instances.

### Todarmal

You are aware of the fame and greatness of *Raja Todarmal*. I have no hesitation in saying that this personality has made unusual contribution towards the endurance of the Mughal Empire. Reaching old age, Todarmal thought that now he should go to Benaras, abandon all state responsibilities and spend the remaining days in

remembering god. The moment Akbar came to know this, he became completely stupefied, tried to appease the *Raja* and supplicated him. Ultimately, the *Raja* had to abandon the various stages of *Sanyas* (renunciation) and spend the rest of his life in the service of the Mughal Empire.

Abul Fazl has also mentioned another instance stating that once *Raja* Todarmal was accompanying the royal army to Kabul when by chance the camel loaded with his idol was lost and for three days he was deprived of either worshiping or beholding the *Thakur*. Due to this sorrow the *Raja* neither took any food nor travelled; because of it the entire caravan of Akbar had to remain put on the spot. Now, more than the *Raja* Akbar was burdened with sorrow for the loss of the icon. He repeatedly tried to make the *Raja* understand that god can be worshiped even without an idol; but the *Raja* did not at all heed him. Consequently the journey of both the *Raja* and of Akbar had to be postponed. Fortunately third day both the camel and the idol of the *Raja* were located and the whole episode ended.

### **Brahman**

During the reign of Shahjahan Muslim religious fervor had somewhat heightened. Some times even in the court itself there were polemics regarding the superiority of Islam over the religion of the Hindus. Once in presence of Shahjahan someone teasingly said to Chandrabhan Brahman why he does not become a Muslim. Chandrabhan extempore recited this couplet which was admired by Shahjahan himself.

*Mara dilist ba kufr ashna ki chandin bar  
Ba kaba baravam o bazsh Brahman avardam*

(My heart is so much erudite in *kufr* that often  
I go to Kaba and return from there a Brahman)

(Marginal Note: Condemnation of idol smashing. Iqbal.)

*Brahmane ba Ghaznavi guft garatam nagar*

However, eminence of idol worship during the times.

*Babin karamat-I-butkhana ra ai shekh*

*Ke chun kharab shavad khana-I-khuda garda*

(O righteous, look at the marvel of the idol house  
When damaged, it turns into the house of god)

### **Man Singh**

In fact during those days it was accepted that India has two different religions and two contrary persuasions of community status i.e. the religion of the Hindus and Islam. Their separate status was admitted and they were respected for it. Hence, when Akbar created his *Deen-I-Ilahi* and entreated his dearest friends, while Birbal and Abul Fazl acknowledged it, *Raja Man Singh*, in spite of intimacy, frankly refused to embrace *Deen-I-Ilahi*. In response to the suggestion of Akbar *Raja Man Singh* stated that, Sir, if the objective of *Deen-I-Ilahi* is to gauge my love and whole-hearted loyalty, then you are aware that my life unceasingly remains at your disposal. But if you are inviting me to a new religion, then this humble servant believes only in two religions; *Hindu Dharma* and Islam and does not recognize any third religion.

### **Mutual amalgamation**

However, this does not mean that both the Hindus and the Muslims were not influenced by the religious traditions of each other. These influences are very deep and have affected their outlook both consciously and unconsciously. You may prominently notice the intellectual manifestations of it in the case of Amir Khusrao, Chiragh Dehli, Faizi, Akbar, and Jahangir, in one word, in all the strata of the Muslims. On the other hand, among the Hindus its manifestation is visible in all their movements. Dr. Tarachand has written an enlightening paper on this aspect in which

he has made a scholarly analysis of such influences on all the movements of northern and southern India and especially on the *Bhagti* movement. We may notice the deep influence of it in the beliefs and practices of the *Lingayat* sect. My submission is that you must read this paper of Dr. Tarachand.

At this juncture I will confine my self to one couplet of Brahman from which you will be able to fathom how the basic and vital perceptions of the Hindus were getting modified by this amalgamation. You know that according to the Hindu beliefs every one has to pass through the proscenium of *Brhamcharya* (celibacy), *Grhast* (ménage) and *Vanaprasth* (anchorite) and then move into *Sanyas* (reclusive existence) and live an ascetic life. This is how Brahman criticizes it.

*Jamiyat-I-hawas talab kun na ganj-I-fuqr  
Ma darmayan-I-tafraqa bisyar manda aim.*

(Desire poised intellect, not a corner of destitution  
I have become extremely tired betwixt the disputes)

I also want to submit before you that during this period the Hindu thinkers have predominantly written their religious books in Persian language and most of them knew the religious perceptions of the Muslims.

### **Religious beliefs of the people**

Apparently the beliefs of the people, especially of the village folks had not changed. Just as seen in the book of Crooks, in the villages of northern India those days you encountered the worship of local deities. The same ubiquity for bathing in the *Ganga* that is seen today was prevalent those days. However, during the medieval times we notice an upsurge of two cults. One is the devotion to Ram Chandraji that spread on a large scale after Tulsi Das. Next to it is the devotion to Krishna. You may be aware of the Hindi classics in this regard.

**Idol worship**

I have just referred to idol worship of *Raja Todarmal*. Due to this devotion the worship of Krishna idol, called *Thakurji* was widely indulged in at home. It is yet very popular in *Braj* region. In the south it was a norm to hang a small *lingam* round one's neck. Due to this disposition the practice of large-scale sojourn to sacred places or *tiraths* got initiated during the medieval times.

**Ahimsa (Non-killing)**

Gujarat of the medieval times had an exaggerated influence of *Ahimsa*. Not only in different cities the opulent *Seth* used to open hospitals for birds and animals, and during the morning walk fed the ants with sugar, but sometimes used to feed the mice and rats with milk. Western travellers have also written about such devotees of *Ahimsa* who did not had their hair cut so that the lice may not go hungry. This is the same feeling due to which even today killing of monkeys and snakes is disliked and the monkeys can spoil the tillage of the peasants with complete impunity. You may not be surprised in the light of this *Ahimsa* that the Muslim ruffians of Gujarat used to openly collect money from the shopkeepers by extending the threat of killing birds and animals. Travellers have often mentioned such instances.

**Suicide**

Besides *Ahimsa*, there was another practice of suicide which is related to the Jainist philosophy of liquidation of the inner self which also had a mixing of some old beliefs. In central India, jumping from some peak and dying was considered by some as worship. Sometimes people used to die in front of the idol by piercing an iron hook in their throat and hanging from it. People used to consider it an act of big spiritual reward to get crushed and die under the *rath* (cart) of the Lord at Jagannath at Puri. In other words, we

see the psyche of the destruction of the inner self welling up as suicide.

### **Sati**

The practice of *Sati* was, besides among the Rajputs, current in other higher echelons of the society not only in northern India but also in the Deccan. By reading travelogues one realizes that the women used to be *Sati* predominantly not because of their desire to be so, but they often committed *Sati* due to the pressures of the Hindu society, considerations of family dignity and admiration and passion of the Brahmans for it. As the descriptions of *Sati* is very tormenting, I do not want to go into this aspect here. In this context it may not be inappropriate to refer to the reform introduced by Akbar. Considering the public opinion and Hindu feelings, it was not possible for Akbar or for that matter for any Muslim ruler to completely interdict the custom. Owing to the efforts of such a reformer as Raja Ram Mohan Roy this could only happen during the time of Lord Bentinck and that too with great difficulties. However, Akbar formulated the law that no widow could be burnt against her wish. Hence every *Sati*, before being burnt, had to present herself before the chief of the police of the city or before the chief executive of the Province who used to try in all possible manner to dissuade her from doing so. However, if in spite of this she insisted on willingly and gladly to be a *Sati*, then the permission was given. The incident when once Akbar personally stopped *Sati* in Rajputana is very famous.

### **Muslim beliefs**

In the Muslim society, thanks to the efforts of the *Sufis*, some worships, penance and even doctrines were supplemented to the usual Islamic beliefs. For example, in the category of worship one meets such practices as *zikr*, *azkar*, *chilla*, *Muraqba* on the mausoleums of saints, *urs*, lighting lamps, dances, gathering of *sama*, of which the

details are quite lengthy and considerable literature has been generated for and against the *sama*. You may be well aware of the famous linkages (*silsila*) of the *Sufis*. Every *silsila* has its own fashion of *zikr* and *azkar*.

### *Aurad*

However, on account of a practice in the ruling circles as well as generally among the people, especially after prayers, or even otherwise, with prayer-beads in hand they would recite special prayers in which some times the lore of conquest (*Ilm-I-taskhir*) and *Ism-I-A'zam* (the great name) were included. It was a common belief that through such recitation one could achieve mastery over the jinni and there was no problem of the world which could not be overcome with the *Ism-I-A'zam*. You may study these *Aurad* and prayers even today in the famous book of Hazrat Ghaus Gawaliari titled *Jawahir-I-Khamsa*.

### The Preceptor or *Murshid*

Due to the wide influence of the *Sufis* the belief in the *Peer* and *Murshid* dominated the Muslim society which in fact is the counterfeit of *Guru puja* (worship of the teacher). Ultimately the *Peer* and *Murshid* were given a status equal to that of god and acting against the desire of the *Murshid* was considered to be prohibited (*haram*). This is the reason why in some regions like that of Sindh, not having a *Peer* is considered to be an abuse and it is a common belief that one who has no *Peer*, Devil is his preceptor. Hence, during the medieval times it had also become a necessity to acquire a *Peer* or a *Murshid* for the fulfilment of the belief (*Iman*). Sometimes the number of the devotees became so large that the *Peer* used to spread his head-sheet and whosoever could touch it their commitment was considered to be complete. In the Bengal travels of Hazrat Syed Ahmed Barailwi one often notices huge gatherings of this type and this method of allegiance. In the circle of the aligned it also become a

norm that the followers of one preceptor used to practice great brotherhood amongst themselves. To be a brother-in-preceptor (*peer bhai*) was considered as not less than blood relationship.

### ***Rajal al-Ghaib* or the invisible dignitaries**

By virtue of the *Sufis*, as I have hinted at in this lecture itself, the perception of a parallel spiritual government had also come into being. In this vision the *Qutab* had the status analogous to that of the Emperor. Under him were *Ghaus*, *Abdal*, *Adtad*, *Abrar*, *Akhiyar* etc. who were status-wise like ministers, administrators, army commanders, etc. Day and night they remained preoccupied and engaged in looking after the world. However, a visible difference between the monarchic system and this system was that, in contrast with the autocracy, the spiritual system had its rules of succession. For example, in the whole world there could simultaneously be 360 to 365 *Adtad* or one for each day of the year. Whenever an *Abdal* would either be promoted to a higher level or died, in his place the senior most of the group of *Abrar* would be appointed. Other posts were also filled according to this rule.

### **Worship of famous ancestors**

During this period the deeds of some assumed famous persons got wide currency and the people used to worship their mausoleums which practice is yet continuing at some places. In this category Masud Salar *Ghazi* is the most distinguished personage of the medieval times. He was declared to be a very close relative of Mahmud of Ghazni and was acknowledged to be a *Ghazi* in the path of the spread of Islam. By the time of Firuz Tughlaq this belief had become so entrenched that Firuz Tughlaq himself sojourned to his mausoleum and during the reign of Jahangir the biography of this famous personage was compiled.



**Mausoleums of the Auliya**

Notwithstanding the postulated famous persons, the mausoleums and the burial places of the *Sufi Shaikhs* were from the beginning a place of more than respect. These had become places of pilgrimage. Among these, Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer, Baba Farid Ganj Shakar in Pak Patan, Bahauddin Auliya in Multan and Qutb-I-Alam in Gujarat are yet considered by the respective regions as a place of attraction for the gratification of their needs. The devotion of Akbar towards Saleem Chishti and his annual pilgrimage to Ajmer would be known to you. In later days it had become a norm that for the authority of any agreement it was sufficient that this agreement should be entered into in these sacred mausoleums.

**Murshid or the Preceptor**

In this connection it shall not be out of place to mention that after seeing the trend of the times ultimately even kings started claiming to be Preceptors. In the close circle not only Akbar but also Bahadurshah were titled by this designation. In his time Akbar was called not only *Murshid* but also *Jagat Guru* (Teacher of the world) and his Nine Gems are remembered even today in the manner of Jesus and his Apostles. Among them Beerbal and Mulla DoPyaza emerge not as pranksters but like Plato an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge and spring out as a model for the perfection of men.

**Khizr**

Most charming of the spiritual stories of this period is the personality of *Khizr* who after reaching India started to be designated as *Khwaja Khizr* and his activities may be noticed in all epochs. Apparently his primary birth took place in Egypt during the time of the Pharos when his designated duty was to show the way to those who had lost

it. This status is also discerned in Quran wherein he led Zulqarnain to the spring of eternal life and revealed to him the secrets of life. Ilyas is the other reciprocal of him whose job is to show the way to the mariners on the sea. The apparitions of Ilyas we meet in the History of Gujarat and in the narratives of the mariners though he also has authority in the traditions and rituals of Oudh.

Among the sayings of the *Sufis* of India Khwaja Khizr occupies a more distinguished and discernible status. Here he slightly expands his designated work to become the leader showing the way to the new entrants of the stony immensity of *Riyazat* (spiritual practices). Not only this. He distributes sweets to children, joins the lover to the beloved. Sometimes he also indulges in frolics. Even recitation of poetry is also attributed to him. Once it also happened that some melancholy *Sufi* hit him with a stone and injured him because of which his heart turned disinclined towards him. Once he formally died. Though, as you know, he never dies. He always remains unseen because of which Ghalib got the opportunity to taunt him saying

*Wo zinda ham hain ke hain rushanas-I-khalq ai khizr  
Na tum ke chor bane umr-I-jaweedan ke liye*

(We are those living who know the humankind  
Not you, to become a thief for an eternal life)

### **Magic**

Besides the *Rajal-I-ghaib*, Khizr and Ilyas we also rendezvous in this period with some other forces that narrate to the lower-world. In other words, you may consider them to be jinni and *Masan* (ghosts) who are recalled in the Quran itself. In comparison with the benevolent creation their influence is squalid and they employ magic. This is why during this period many books were written to enchant them, and through the intervention of Hazrat Sulaiman, turn them subordinate. The performance of arduous propitiation

and recounting of *Awrad* are designated to attain this end. To counter the effects of the jinni and of magic, besides the erudition of conquest (*Ilm-I-taskhir*) amulets, charms, good-luck charms and crotches are used even now. In this respect the Muslims very large heartedly use the traditions of Syria, Egypt, India, in one word, from every where. If you are interested in this aspect, you may read the English translation of the book *Qanun-I-Islam* (Islamic jurisprudence) describing the Islamic traditions of the Deccan.

In a nutshell, the belief in magic is so universal that it is mentioned in the writings of Shah Waliulla and Shah Abdul Aziz. Even an account of the details of the impact of magic on Shah Abdul Aziz is also given as to how son of a magician contrived his effigy and after piercing it with needles hid it in the grave of his father. Due to this practice the Shah fell ill. However, he was ultimately cured after the effigy was taken out of the grave. As the needles were removed, the Shah started recovering till the removal of the entire lot of the needles completely cured him.

### **Heirloom veneration**

Venerating the mementos of the elders and getting fulfilment from it is one more distinguishing characteristic of the age. This is why ultimately the gown, prayer mat, shoes and cap of the preceptor, all turned into items bringing in good luck. It was considered sufficient evidence of succession of a preceptor that the *Sajjada* (successor) had his prayer mat or the gown.

### **The auspicious hair**

In the beginning such relics were restricted to the prophet. During the early times the Arab travellers and navigators customarily used to visit the feet impression of Adam in Lanka. Later somehow India procured the holy hair of the prophet and its auspicious view started in the *Jama Masjid* of Delhi. We notice the mention of this holy hair

during the reign of the Turkish Sultans. The sentiment of veneration of the forefathers had got currency to the extent that Mohammed bin Tughlaq got a regular mausoleum constructed for himself.

### **The auspicious footprint**

During the early period some elder from Gujarat went to Hijaz and brought back with him the auspicious footprint engraved on a stone. Akbar himself went to ceremonially receive it and, along with the nobles, brought it on his shoulders. Abul Fazl was certain that it was a fake. However, he has admitted this certitude that the people believed in its authenticity. Hence, Akbar considered it appropriate to respect the feelings of the people. Later this holy footprint returned to Gujarat along with the elder. Details about it are given in *Mirat-I-Ahmedi*.

### **The hoofs of the donkey of Jesus**

More charming than the story about the holy footprint is the legend concerning the hoofs of the donkey of Jesus. The first-one some elder brought from Arabia. Khilji Sultans of central India rewarded him for this deed. Now a chain of such hoofs started emerging and three more hoofs were presented and were considered commendable for rewards. In the end someone with demonstration of extreme reverence and veneration presented a fifth-one. This presentation started a discussion among the ministers of Sultan Ghayasuddin Khilji. Ultimately it was resolved that every hoof of the donkey of Jesus deserves homage; it may not be a marvel that the donkeys of the prophets had five legs and five hoofs.

### **The interpretation of dreams**

In this overall atmosphere of superstition interpretation of dreams occupied a special position. Copying Ibn Sirin, in India books were written on this topic. I have myself seen

the *Khwabnama* (regarding dreams) of Tipu Sultan. The methods of the divination of the future from the dreams were more consequential than the books on divination. Under the term *Istakhara* the *Shiyas* yet practice these methods.

### Divination and foretelling

Though among the ordinary Muslims divination was practiced according to Arab and Turkish traditions by burning either a bone or hair, the *Divan* of Hafiz was the most popular means for this purpose. Almost all the Mughal rulers have utilized it for this end. It is of no use to say that the *Lisan al-Ghaib* (Mystic Tongue) on every occasion truly predicted the outcome through his couplets. It was also a practice that the preceptor may come in the dream and forewarn of the future dangers or give the good tidings of some joyous occasion or victory.

### Hasan Rasulnuma

It was this ambience in which during the reign of Farrukh Siyar, ultimately Hasan *Rasulnuma* invented a religion in Delhi and compiled a regular revealed Book. Not only this. He formulated all the special methods of worship, decided the *Haj* site, prayers, fasting etc. Even the king himself appeared before him. It is more fascinating that the inventor died a natural death and spent his life with much comfort and reverence. However, after his death when altercation developed among his followers, one of them presented the proofs of forgery and showed those drafts in which after mutual consultation revelations were written.

### The emperor of the jinni

With reference to the jinni that anecdote of Wajid Ali Shah is also worth noting wherein, after a consultation among the entourage of his very close confidants, the Emperor of the jinni met the king. One night this Emperor of the jinni emanated as suspended in the sleeping room of

Wajid Ali Shah and collected a couple of millions as gifts and presentations. This Emperor of the jinni in fact was a rascalion who had obtained from his confidants all the information regarding the superstitious nature of Wajid Ali Shah and then he created this successful pretence with their help.

I would advise you that if you desire to see the living picture of superstitions during its last stages then please read *Fasana-I-Azad* of Ratan Nath Sarshar which reflects not only the higher echelons of Oudh but exemplifies the life of the Muslims of north India. Next comes the travelogue of Salar Jang the First from which you may estimate the superstitions of Delhi and the level of the decline of the *Sufis* and of the *Mashaikh*.

## SIXTH LECTURE

### FUTURE OF HISTORIOGRAPHY IN INDIA

Respected Mr. Chairman and Friends !

In my earlier lectures I have sequentially discussed the principles on which the scholarly histories were written, sources for the study of the medieval period and then some of the perceptible social aspects i.e. characteristics of Muslim social life, people's movements of the times and in the end I dwelt upon the historical position of religion in the medieval society. In spite of the shortcomings of my delivery you may have perceived that for the new era of the emerging democracy in India these writings are insufficient and faulty and in the words of Engels, we need to study the whole of our history from the beginning.

#### **Old stipulations**

I have deliberately mentioned the emerging democratic era because the demands of this stage are entirely different from those of the earlier stages and also because in the earlier periods both the Hindu feudalistic and the Muslim autocratic rulers were basically enemies of democracy. We have to evaluate the entire literature and scholarship of this era from the point of view of democracy so that while rejuvenating the best traditions of the earlier times and dumping the reactionary aspects of it as tattered cloths, we

may perform the historical obligation of completing the democratic revolution. Study of history shall help us in this endeavour. I need not emphasize this actuality that the ruling class of every period formulates its own historical literature and brings up people according to its own point of view. This is why during the ancient period the Hindu sovereigns did not at all feel the necessity of history. They used to keep the people under their awe and subjected them to their faith through the stories of the *Puranas* or by *Arthshastras* and *Dharmshastras*. And, as I have mentioned earlier, in spite of the Muslim rule the Hindu rulers wanted a re-birth of Krishna so that the disappearing system of *Warn Ashrama* not only could be sustained but also get strengthened. This is the reason why during the Hindu period the tradition of history started in Kashmir with the advent of a confederated monarchy and with the influence of the Muslims. However, later during the Rajput feudalism it could not go beyond *Prithviraj Raso*. This is why due to this reality even today such persons as Dr. Bhagwandas and Sampurnanand are desirous to build a new India on the ancient Hindu social traditions and we can also hear today the voices declaring Sanskrit as the national language.

There is no doubt that the tradition of factual narration and of court histories started with the Muslims. As I have mentioned, those days regularly dozens of histories were written because of which for this entire period from beginning to end, when it is compared with the Hindu period, we do not face any difficulty in sequence of events. Moreover, during this period narration of the events got such currency that to hide a fact was considered as not only a moral villainy but also a sin. In the early period you would notice this consciousness in Ziyauddin Barni. The history of Badaiyuni itself is a living example of this truthful reporting. The history of Khafi Khan could be placed as a model for the reign of Alamgir. However, ultimately there are limitations in the milieu of the ruling class even for such



reporting of events. A very narrow environment circumscribes the observations and criticism of the historian. Hence, they, with great difficulty, could visualize the world outside it. If you want to understand the life of the slaves, details of *Sati*, reactions of the lower classes etc. then in this quest you will not get any help from these court historians. You will find help from the foreign travellers. Even then this chapter of our history shall yet remain shrivelled.

In substance you may visualize that the ruling class in the ancient Hindu period did not feel the need for history. Hence, they designated imaginary fables as history. During the Muslim rule history did nominally exist but did not go beyond the standpoint of the ruling class. Such propensity kept history in chains for quite some time. Hence, after the rebellion of 1857 when Sir Syed sat down to write, he edited *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri* and wrote *Athar-as-Sanadeed* which from all standards is an admirable service to history. It however, does not widen the perimeters of history. Or later Mohammed Husain Azad wrote *Darbar-I-Akbari* the literary refinement of which shall live forever, but it does not substantially adds to our knowledge of the times or to its criticism. Maulavi Zakauulla was the last monument of such reporting of the events.

You will be surprised that James Skinner was the first to recognize the undemocratic status of our historical literature. To compensate for this situation he wrote about the conditions of the lower classes. However, he depended on the *Puranas*, which from the standards of history is not weighty at all. Or, Sadasukh Niyaz and Qateel wrote short stories on manners and customs that I have mentioned earlier. During the new stage the book by Jafar Sharif discussing the Muslims of Oudh has recently been published. It is obvious that only writing *about* the lower classes or discussing their manners and customs is not sufficient for either our democratic needs or for a peoples' history.

In any case, these emerging trends were so much

distorted by British imperialism that for more than half a century we are engaged in removing the poisonous effects of the British policy but have not succeeded as yet. In order to understand this British policy one needs to go into some details.

### **The British Policy**

It is one of the actualities of history that the possibility of a democratic revolution emerged in India only when the conduct of the British capital and the policies of the British government started to completely destroy the self-sufficient system of the villages and started to link it to the world market of capitalism. These self-sufficient villages were the economic foundations in which the Rajput feudalism and the Muslim system of militarized autocracy remained rooted for about a millennium. Along with this destruction when trains started moving and the British system was forced to use machines and establish factories in India, then as a consequence of it the industrial working class was slowly born in Bombay, Madras, Ahmedabad, Kanpur and other centers where under the new conditions they could organize and strengthen the progressive and revolutionary social forces. However, as a matter of course British imperialism adopted the policy of creating divisions among the Indians. Instead of unity of the people this policy led to the spread of communalism. In the realm of history writing this led to the tradition of prejudices and of organizational groups. The history of this trend itself is very instructive and entertaining because Indian historiography has not yet been able to get itself unencumbered of this inheritance. (*Marginal Note: Early histories: Elphenston, M. A. Molson, Du Bois – anti-India. Buchanan*)

### **Eliot: a contribution**

About the outbreak of 1857 rebellion Mr. Charles Eliot was Secretary in the foreign department of the governor-

general. His book on medieval India titled *Bibliographical Index* was published in 1856. This was the first outline of the history of the Muslim period. Later in 1871 his eight volume *Historian's History of India* was published from London. These books had been, and yet are, the basis of writing Indian history both in India and abroad. British foreign office was directly involved in getting these volumes written. I have seen many letters that were exchanged in this regard between Mr. Elliot, the government officials and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. This history in this sense is a great compilation that, more than the author, his Persian knowing assistants have compiled all those quotations from our chronicles that were needed by the British government at that moment. All these are gathered at one point and can serve the historians as their source material. In the eight volumes of this book you will find the resume of all those histories that were written from thirteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. As the style of court histories involved exaggerated praise of the king and his victories, and their purpose was to inculcate awe of the Islamic state in the minds of the ordinary people and presenting an imposing picture of the Islamic government before them, it was not hard to magnify this aspect of communalism and anti-Hindu feelings in such collections of material. Hence, Mr. Eliot fulfilled this purpose very cunningly. As Persian language by that time had been dislodged by the British from government offices and from the department of education, and as for the new generation it was impossible to compare the extraction of historical material with the original, the British government and Mr. Eliot remarkably succeeded in their efforts.

I felt the need to discuss Charles Eliot and his books because in its Preface the British policy regarding historiography is presented in clear and in no uncertain terms. The sum and substance of it is that in the Islamic period there is nothing except sensuality and oppression;

during this period the Hindus were suppressed everywhere; their temples and sacred places were ruthlessly destroyed; they were mercilessly killed. In the end it was told to the "Bengali Babus" i.e. to the youth of Bengal who under the influence of democratic ideas were demanding freedom from the British rule and were repeatedly preferring the Mughal rule over the British one, to them it was said that after reading this history (that itself comprised of selections from the histories of the Mughal times) their eyes shall be opened and they will realize how blissful is the British period in comparison with the Muslims in which, instead of being beheaded and hanged, they have the freedom to demand more freedom. Moreover, the British rulers reminded the Bengali youth their sacred duties and were prompted of the munificent status of the British government.

After this remarkable achievement of Eliot it became easier for the British rulers to get tens of histories written. Even till now our textbooks are based and are rooted in the material Eliot compiled. It is true that earlier than that Professor Sudiwala and later Professor Habib by writing a Preface to this book have exposed the mistakes. However, negative criticism and partial reforms do not lay down the healthy foundations of historiography. As someone has said

*Khisht-I-awal chun nahad ma'mar kaj  
Ta suraiya mi ravad divar, kaj*

(As the bricklayer laid the first brick awry  
Even if the wall goes unto heavens, it remains awry)

This "first brick" yet exists and recently has elegantly been yet more strengthened. By this I mean that trend in historiography which has recently been established in England and because of which the reactionary traditions of Indian historiography have been further strengthened.

#### **And now a collapse**

As you know in 1947 India attained independence

under conditions in which, besides the division of the country, the roots of British capital got further strengthened in both India and Pakistan and the British political influence has also been enhanced in both the countries. Now, instead of enmity towards the British imperialism, our leaders, on the one hand sing peens in praises of the British Commonwealth and admire the peacefully achieved freedom, while on the other hand the British politicians are singing in favour of our political insight, parliamentary traditions and so called industrial progress. The new British historiography is the standard bearer and reflection of this compromise and unity. These days British histories do not assert that the Indians were not competent for *Swaraj* (self-rule) and the leaders of the Congress and of the Muslim League were the spokesmen of a small middle class. No. These days these persons are considered as the spokesmen of the best British democratic traditions and are the best scions of the British period. In other words, the foundations of our new civilization are being put on the reactionary aspects of the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and the British heritage and the elements propagating such views are getting resolutely organized.

Some times back Thompson initiated this trend even though the early elements of it can also be seen in Elphinston and Hunter etc. You may recall that Thomson had written a small book about 1857 under the title *The Other Side of The Medal* by which he had won the hearts of the nationalist circles because he had chronicled those crimes of the British which they had perpetrated on the Indians in 1857. In 1935 Thomson and Gilbert published a voluminous book from the title of which you will be able to determine the new outlook of the authors—*The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*. Later Ralston published a small book on the cultural history of India. These days after independence a number of histories have been published from London. For example you may take *The British Impact on India* by Percival

Griffith. The author has been a representative of the British capitalist circles in the old Central Assembly. This book reviews both the ancient and the medieval periods and brings the British period to 1947. You may read every page of it from beginning to end to realize that we got our freedom not by struggle but through the goodwill of the British who were looking after us as an affectionate nurse and maid. Hence, the outpost of 1947 was the culmination and logical consequence of this upbringing. This is also an interesting aspect of this book that it does not recall any name of those movements that wanted to surpass Congress. Along with independence of India this book considers the division and establishment of Pakistan as beneficial and necessary.

As a matter of fact the British imperialism is yet not forgetful of our history and historiography. Because of this interest for about a century Indian historiography has remained a pray to appeasement of imperialism, communalism, romanticism, in one word, of various unscholarly and sentimental tendencies.

If an Indian historian in the beginning depended on Eliot and now depends on historians like Griffiths, then you may realize to what unconscious diseases the best minds and most honest historian will eventuate.

#### **Dutt and his contribution**

*History of Hindu Civilization* is the best example of this trend. I have selected the early period of Romesh Chandra Dutt because in a sense he is the creator of our freedom movement and an ancestor of the new phase of Indian historiography and his books are even now referred to and even today act as authority. I am not competent to review the old Hindu civilization. However, in this domain the book by Mr. Dutt is considered to be of a high standard and in terms of the sequence of events it encompasses the entire ancient period i.e. tells the details of the Hindu history till the arrival of the Muslims. His pen suddenly stops at the

arrival of the Muslims and he ends his history in the following manner. 'As now the dark period of our history begins, I conclude my history at this juncture'.

### **Later Hindu revivalism and its *raison d'être***

If a man like Dutt with such an enlightened mind was bereft of the direct study of the sources of the medieval times reaches this surprising conclusion because of his dependence on such imperialists as Eliot, then you may easily imagine the difficulties of other nationalist historians of lesser caliber. Gradually we have now reached that stage wherein in case of some Hindu nationalist historians this sentiment has penetrated to their very marrow that Muslims have thrown to dust the glorious traditions of Hindu civilization and that the Muslim period represents darkness and destruction. Hence in the name of Hindu superiority a history has been published. The history of Mr. C. V. Vaidya manifests this trend. Mr. K.M. Munshi and some of his other nationalist friends have established a regular school of thought for the propagation of this idea.

### **Philosophy**

Thanks to Lokmanya Tilak, during the freedom struggle those ideas turned more popular in which Aryans were termed as the ancestors of world civilization and Sanskrit was considered to be the most glorious and oldest heritage of world literature. Later, on this basis Mrs. Anibesent, Aurovindo Ghosh and Vivekananda admired the theosophical philosophy. Consequently, this civilization, Sanskrit language and Hindu philosophy turned into intellectual foundation stones of our national movement. Generic effect of it may yet be seen on our cultural life.

The legend of Aryan civilization was greatly defiled by linguistic researches. Besides, the discoveries of Mohanjodaro and Harappa made the actuality clear that Indian civilization is much older than the arrival of the Aryans. However,

nationalism very quickly provided space for it in its comprehensive perspective. However, this did not change their over all historical and philosophical sagacity. The books of Dr. Radhakrishnan and other philosophers are a proof of this inclination.

### **Worshipping the celebrated**

If we stop practicing criticism, relinquish analysis and assume Hindu civilization to be the same from Mohanjo Daro to Rama Krishna Mission and Gandhiji, then the biggest task that remains for the historian is to only search for the biographies of the distinguished at different stages of this civilization. In other words, to visualize the remarkable achievements of Gautam Buddha, Mahavir and Shankar Acharya as a substitute of social movements. Hence this tendency of worshipping the eminent. It first started during the ancient period and then overtook the medieval times. It is this background wherein it was considered necessary for the study of Hindu civilization that not the impact of the Islamic period but the exploits of Maharana Pratap, Guru Govind Singh and especially those of Shivaji be patterned as the topic of history. The interest and enthusiasm for this end grew to such an extent that the historians did not waver from using unreliable or even forged documents. Ultimately, Jadunath Sarkar had to expose the secrets of Marhatta history in this regard. Continuing this worship of the celebrated, now in independent India we want to turn Gandhiji into this mould and want to write the history of our freedom movement in the light of these new trends which history shall in fact represent only the middle class. For common usage Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has written the *Discovery of India* on this pattern.

### **Beneficence: its raison d'être**

Either due to good or bad luck, modern Indian capitalism flagrantly used some historians and trends of



history writing for its own interest. For example Mr. Radhakamal wrote the *History of Indian Navigation* for the Sindhya Company that *per se* is a good book full of information, but is also a vindication of the capitalist interests which fact reduces its academic standards. Or Mr. Birla himself got the biography of Gandhiji published under the title of *Bapu*. It needs no emphasizing that from the biographical writing of Mr. Birla neither Gandhiji gains in distinction nor the field of biography gets any further development. After independence these interests are more domineering than these were earlier and they have established their monopoly on the instrumentality of publication and sale of books and newspaper writings.

### Muslim reaction

As I have mentioned that though the Muslims did not possess the philosophical traditions of history, however narration was continuing. Moreover, six hundred years of rule had also generated the feelings of worshiping the past and of supporting the Muslim rule. Hence, during the British rule, while on the one hand Sir Syed publicized the texts of *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri* and wrote such a book on the remains of Delhi as *Athar-as-Sanadeed*, he, on the other, in reply to the British Padre and in support of Islam published his *Khutabat-I-Ahmadiya*. When the British, on the basis of their share in the rebellion of 1857 accused the Muslims of religious fanaticism and of their gratification in *Jihad* (holy war), Sir Syed and his supporters like Maulavi Chiragh Ali disapproved the preaching of *Jihad*. It is also worth noting that Sir Syed greatly helped Eliot in writing his history. As a matter of fact support for Islam and of the Muslim rule is that aspect which in the later stages becomes an integral element of Muslim historiography. Consequently, deviating from the oration of the events, as was the case with Maulavi Zakauulla and Tabatabai, they turn into supporters of the absolute Islamic rule. One of the reason

for such transformation was that in contrast with the British and Hindu nationalist historians the Muslim historians of the times had to take recourse to partisanship and intellectual aspects. It was difficult for that strata of the Muslims who like Sir Syed were attached to the Muslim rulers till the rebellion of 1857 and then after the defeat had turned into admirers of the British Empire.

### **Amir Ali and Shibli**

Among the Muslim historians two names are worth mentioning. One is Syed Amir Ali whose *History of the Saracens* is even today counted among those of high standard. Next is Shibli whose literary and historical exploits are even today popular among the Muslims. Both these historians were scholars of a high order, masters of a style of writing that is their own and are brimming up with the feelings of support for the Muslims. Hence, both very tightly hold the feelings of this supplication for their renown to perfection. Where they differ concerns the demands of their times. Amir Ali used to write prior to our mass movements and was far removed from our freedom struggle. Hence, in his history one finds the point of view of the bourgeois and of the nobility for which there is ample space in the Islamic period of the Abbacies and of Spain. Shibli on the other hand is the product of those times when the Muslims of India were getting awakened and were joining the ranks of the anti-imperialist forces. Hence, while he presents Islam as the bearer of the best examples of monarchy, for Shibli Islam is also representative of a democratic system and of human equivalency and is a perfect picture of religious tolerance and justice during the period of their monarchy. This is the reason why among the writings of Shibli *Al-Faruq* attained more popularity than *Sh'r-al-A'jam* and his writings "*A'lamgir par ek nazar*" (A glance at A'lamgir) written in support of A'lamgir became a means of argumentation and support for the enthusiastic Muslims. Later, when the

world witnessed the Soviet revolution, then in support of it Musheer Husain Qidwai published a book underlining the concurrence between Islam and Bolshevism. At the moment the fact of the matter is that every public minded Muslim discovers socialism, democracy, revolution etc. in Islam. In one word, they locate in Islam all that with which historically Islam had nothing to do. Iqbal represents this trend in poetry.

### **Now Collapse in Pakistan**

Now, after the formation of Pakistan, Muslims are not concerned at all with the authenticity of history. They are bothered only about every opportunity for the justification and support of Muslim rule. In this effort, depending upon the need and occasion, religion, history, philosophy, in one word everything, is used. Consequently, instead of serious study of history, Iqbal Academy has been established and under the supervision of Leupoldwanz, a Polish neo-convert to Islam, an institution has been established to translate Bokhari Sharif. Writing the biography of Qaid-I-Azam Jinnah has been assigned to a British professional biographer and, like India, they have also established an institution to write the history of their movement for freedom. Not only this. In the Hitler style a book titled *My Leader* has already been published in Pakistan. In such a situation you may not be at all surprised if you find in Pakistan a book on medieval history under the title "*Tarikh-I-Kishwarkushai*" (History of world conquest) written by Syed Hashmi Faridabadi. Now, the blunt question before Pakistan is not that of history but of religious preaching. In the background of the communal political ideology leading to the division of India one may at least comprehend this incurable madness and mental suicide.

### **The liberal tendencies**

In this anti-Islamic and pro-Islam poisonous atmosphere ultimately a group has emerged that, though

not following the academic principles in historiography, has shown consideration and using the moral principle of

*A'ib ha yash hama gufti hunerash neez bugo*

(Having talked about his faults, also tell of his good stuff)

have started to narrate about the good aspects of the Muslim period and during that stage of freedom struggle which started with the mass movement of 1920, this turned into a school of thought. Among the distinguished representatives of this school of thought we can count Pandit Sunderlal, Dr. Tarachand and Bains Prasad and may reckon Allahabad as its center. Pandit Sunderlal is a person of *Sufi* temperament and possesses many other good qualities. From childhood he has devoted his life for freedom struggle and is today a distinguished leader of the Peace Movement. Following his traditions he published his book *Bharat main Angrezi raj*, brought out a journal called *Vishvawani* for the propagation of the composite Hindu-Muslim culture and is yet continuing to work for propagating *Hindustani* in both the *Urdu* and *Devnagri* scripts. In fact his most outstanding contribution is the book that he has published under the title of *Hindustani kalchar par Musalmanon ka Asar*. Through this book he has made a great research contribution. The book on Jahangir written by Bains Prasad has already been re-published and has acquired acclaim. In this book he has designated the Mughal government as a "cultured state".

*Khazma' sifad o a'dma kadam* or eclecticism is characteristic of both the three dignitaries which, however useful may be for political exigencies, or however attractive may be from the moral point of view, this moral point of view is not beneficial for historical criticism and in academics. I do not deny that the exhausting efforts of these elders have made extraordinary addition to the sphere of narration of events.

### **The *Jamia* group**

Besides the above school of thought there are also other schools that were not at all influenced by communalism

though in their philosophy of history they turned unconcerned with the historical atmosphere of India. Among these there is a small group of Jamia historians whose writings are considerably influenced by the German traditions (meaning thereby old identity and new *Weltanschauung*). They analyze history from such philosophical point of view as if history is the shop of an *Attar* (scent seller). In their work importance is given not to Indian history but to abstract ideas and in their work these abstract ideas colas into the history of concrete humans. In this context *Tamaddun-I-Hind* (Indian civilization of Mohammed Mujeeb) is worth reading.

### *The Chaudhury*

As you are aware, after the First World War the history of Spengler and his defeatist philosophy got currency in Europe; it ultimately nurtured the elements of Fascism. However, on the whole it did not significantly influence Indian historiography even though its influence and tendency is discernible in the Indian middle class. Recently, Mr. Chaudhuri published a book titled *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. It has an interesting chapter on history wherein this sentiment has very powerfully emerged. After an analysis of Indian history the author comes to the conclusion that our civilization has different and conflicting envelopes that got gradually amassed beginning from before the Aryan invasion and continued after it. *Draver, Aryan, Hun, Saka, Turk, Mughal* are all included among such envelops. Though they got accumulated layer by layer, these could not fuse. Ultimately, during the British time an association started to take shape and the equipage of Indian progress and deliverance started to be provided. Unfortunately, however, by the departure of the British and independence of India this possibility of progress too got terminated and now future holds nothing but dejection and darkness. Though there is considerable truth in the analysis

of Mr. Chaudhuri, he however is entirely ignorant of the dialectics of history and is incapable of understanding the medieval poet who even then had said,

*Tafawat ast mayan-l-shunidan-l-man o tu  
Tu bistan dr o man fath bab mi shunoem*

(There is discord in the listening of you and me  
You hear the closure and I hear the door opening)

At this moment I cannot discuss the historical accomplishment and the dialectics of the British period. However, associating the entire progress with British imperialism and not noticing in the present crisis of capitalist world, the revolutions of eastern Europe and in China, as well as not noticing the democratic struggle in our neighbouring countries is not only subjectivism in history but indicates an ailing mentality that exposes the superficiality of reaction of the followers of Spengler.

### **Marxist historians**

With the emerging working class struggles historians started looking at Marxism and the Communist leaders started viewing history. In last few years the first visions of this endeavor have also come into sight. However, these are first imprints wherein the seriousness of study and maturity of outlook is not their impressive aspect. These may be deemed only as attempts at using Marxist outlook even when the Marxist literature of this succession has not yet fixed those milestones for the study of Asian societies that a pilgrim may use as guides.

### **Smith**

A young Padre Mr. Cantwell Smith initiated this attempt through his articles and by his book *Modern Islam in India*. He was the first to emphasize the study of the medieval peoples' struggles. He even pointed out that like Europe in

India too a capitalist class had emerged and that it was preparing for a capitalist revolution during the last stage of the Mughal period. Learned scholar, while reviewing the modern Muslim culture, has critically assessed Muslim League, Iqbal, Aligarh and other movements. He designated Muslim politics as essentially reactionary and communal. In the tendencies of Iqbal he could clearly notice the difference between progressive and communal trends and has discussed this dichotomy. He has also reviewed the last phase of post-1947 Muslim League. Because of this study of Islam he was appointed a Professor of Comparative Religions in McGill University of Canada and is now appointed by the American capitalists as Director of Islamic Research. It needs no remarking as to how much he regrets his immature Marxism on the basis of which he got popularity in some Indian circles and ultimately gained position in a university in Canada and in the American capitalist circles. The reason being that after Pakistan joining the American formations it is against the American considerations to either carve out a progressive aspect in the Indian capital or to designate Muslim League or Pakistani politics as reactionary. The learned scholar has decided that his book *Modern Islam in India* may never be reprinted.

### S. A. Dange

Recently Mr. Dange has published his book on ancient period of India and it has been widely welcomed in Communist academic circles, as the first book on Marxist interpretation of ancient India. Obviously this book was written by Mr. Dange in jail and had destined the famous book by Engels, "Origin of the Family" as his sacred text of which in his book he has done an exposition. This is why it cannot be given a high status in historiography though its introduction on the universality of historiography is useful and interesting.

### **Professor Habib and his services**

Some months past my respected teacher and a Professor of History published, with his introduction, the second volume of the History written by Eliot. In this introduction for the first time he adopted the Marxist angle of vision. However, in his special eclectic style he mixed it up with Gandhism and Islam i.e. with idealism and spirituality. The honoured author came to the conclusion that it is possible to have a moral transformation even if material forces of production do not undergo a revolution. In other words, Professor Habib is of the opinion that the intellectual superstructure can be changed without changing the material basis. In accordance with this outlook the respected author mentions that we notice the traces of a workers' revolution during the Turkish period when after being impressed by Islamic teachings the Turkish rulers and the workers of the Islamic cities got united and then with the revolutionary fever the feudal elements were wiped out. It need not be said that this is not a correct interpretation of Marxism or of the Marxist point of view but a sentimental originality of the estimable author. However, from the Introduction of Professor Habib it certainly emerges very clearly that Marxism has now gained entrance into the ranks of established historians and this proposition shall be debated seriously.

### **Academic services**

Besides the world of writing and editing a more important service was rendered by some of the early institutions through publication of original sources and documents. Amongst these the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which for about a century is engaged in publishing and broadcasting of manuscripts, occupies the foremost position. For most of the medieval history sources we are indebted to this academic institution. This series of publications is titled as *Bibliotheca Indica* and includes *Tabaqat-I-Nasri*, *Tarikh-I-*



*Firuzshahi* (Barni and Afif), *Akbarnama*, *Ain-I-Akbari*, *Bakhshi*, *Bdaiyuni*, *Lahori*, *Kamboh*, *Ma'athir-I-Rahimi*, *Ma'athir-al-Umara*; in other words, all our best historical works have been published by this organization.

In the publication of historical material, especially in case of epigraphy, the government of India has also extended a strong helping hand. For quite some time the journal *Epigraphica Indica* has been coming out. Later under the editorship of Ghulam Yazdani *Epigraphica Indo-Musalmanica* started being published which especially deals with the Muslim period in India. Recently the government has brought out a new edition of the travel accounts of Thevenot and Carreri. Besides, the Historical Records Commission of the government of India has acquired some very valuable documents. Furthermore, Imperial Records Department (Now National Archives of India) has obtained very precious documents of the British period in which the material concerning 1857 is especially worth mentioning.

Besides the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Government of India the scholastic contributions of some other academic institutions are also worth admiration. Among these Aligarh University and the Islamic Research Association of Bombay are especially commendable. The academic and research traditions of Aligarh were conceived during the time of Sir Syed. The founder of the institution had edited the *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri*. Later during the time of Nawab Ishaq Khan special attention was paid to the publication of the works of Amir Khusrao and some *Mathnavis* and *Khaliq Bari* were published during the College phase itself. Due to special attention of Professor Habib yet one more *Mathnavi* of Amir Khusrao was published after the establishment of the Aligarh Muslim University. And now the History of Aurangzeb by Aqil Razi and Letters of Mahro on the Tughlaq period has been published under the supervision of Shaikh Abdur Rasheed; publication of *Fatawa-I-Jahandari* is under consideration.

Recently a separate section of medieval research has been established in Aligarh and it is expected that this section shall lead to some systematic work about the medieval period.

Besides Aligarh, the Calcutta and Allahabad Universities, the journals and other publications of Hindustani Academy, Jamia Osmania, Patna University, Deccan Research Institute, Gaikawad Series of Baroda University and Nadvat-al-Musannifin are institutions in India that need being singled out for their contributions while in England the School of Oriental Studies and Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain are worth recalling.

### **Journals**

Though articles on medieval India are published in almost all the journals, among the journals on Indian history the *Journals of the Indian History Congress* and *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, and the journal from Aligarh titled *Medieval India* are worth mentioning. In this connection the reports and articles published by the Indian Historical Records Commission are creditable. The students so far have not paid due attention to this material.

In sum and substance we may say that we have sufficient material regarding the sources of medieval India. As I had mentioned in my second lecture some weighty books are also available on certain aspects of medieval social life. In spite of all this material I may venture to say that in this new democratic period of our society this heritage does not provide us with the foundation of a healthy historical tradition and if today we want to write a social history of medieval India then in spite of this abundance of books and other primary material, we cannot fulfil this task. This is why some of the basic problems of our social history yet remain unsolved. For example, as it happened in Europe, why during the medieval times our capitalist class did not take any step towards democratic revolution? Or, what is

the standing of our various languages in the building of our modern national tendencies? Or, the evolution of *Bhagti* and its place in the peoples' struggles of the nineteenth-century? Etc.

I would like to remind you again that the basic cause of such shortcomings has been the misuse of our historical material by the British imperialists and also by our own nationalists. Hence, we have to start from this point and on this premise lay the foundations of our new historiography. Our first task is that we should re-read the court histories and other historical material and then select from them material for our social history and publish it according to our need both in Urdu and Hindi. Along with this it is also necessary that we should publish a critical review of our historical sources so that the reader may become fully aware of the status of the source material and the faults and achievements of the author there of. Besides these two points, all those rare copies of histories and of historical literature that I have dealt with in my second lecture should be attractively published again with new critical notes. I am glad that this is being initiated at Aligarh.

As I had mentioned earlier, in the study of our history we shall be helped by the study of the history of the countries in our neighbourhood, especially by the history of Turkistan on which very serious work is going on in the Soviet Union. In Turkey itself very thought provoking and solid studies of Ahmed Zaki Walid have been published that deal with the Turkish tribes. In this context I think it necessary to refer to Soviet scholars, especially to the books of Yakubovsky, Tolstov, Reisner and Baranikov. For the study of Oriental history the famous work of Bertholdt titled *History of Oriental Research in Europe and in Russia* is also necessary because it gives us the full background of historical research on the European continent. The papers of the famous scholar Minosky are also useful because he has done unparalleled research in the area of the history of Turkistan. It is quite

possible, though I do not know about them, that some of the sources of medieval Indian history we may uncover in China. However, study of some of the manuscripts in Turkish libraries shall be definitely useful for us.

Then, as I had hinted at, we have to systematically collect *Lok Sahitya* in a methodical manner. For this end the historians shall feel the need of Ethnographers at every step.

In the end I would like to mention that it is necessary for the nativity of a healthy historical mind that in the Indian universities arrangements should be made for the teaching of Persian and Arabic for the medieval period and of Sanskrit and Pali for the ancient period because as long as the students of history do not develop the capacity to read the primary sources in the original language they cannot do any serious work on history. Just as we became dependent on the British due to the translations of Eliot, we shall also become dependent on Urdu and Hindi translations.

These in my opinion are the minimum tasks that we have to fulfil in order to establish a healthy historical tradition in this new stage of our social and intellectual development.

XXIII<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF INDIAN HISTORY  
CONGRESS, ALIGARH 1960

SECTION II: MEDIEVAL INDIA

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

**DELIVERED BY Dr. K. M. ASHRAF**

(of Delhi University) Now Visiting Professor,  
Humboldt University, Berlin (GDR)

Friends,

I was greatly moved by the unexpected honor when Dr. George Moraes, our General Secretary, informed me that last session of the Indian History Congress, held at Gauhati, had elected me to preside over the deliberations of this section of the congress here. I am somewhat of a stranger to this august body and, in spite of my own gray hairs, I cannot avoid feeling like an immature student in the presence of my respected *Guru*, Professor Mohammed Habib, before whom I could only sit to learn, as we did in the twenties, and not to expound. Let me therefore crave your indulgence if, instead of displaying the limitations of my knowledge before my teacher and colleges, I attempt to formulate some of the questions which have been increasingly occupying my thoughts and on which this distinguished gathering may be able to throw the light of its collective scholarship. I may assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that they are no rhetorical or leading questions for the sake of controversy but problems to which I least of all, claim to know the answers at present.

Of course, you may if you choose dismiss these questions by saying, with good reasons, that "for the present

generalization, interpretation or integration in Indian history can seldom claim more than a speculative value. It is at the very best a hypothesis, and at the worst, an intellectual gymnastic—but nothing more.”<sup>1</sup> It naturally follows from this that the principal task of historians, particularly in India, is to occupy themselves exclusively with the collection of factual data and that everything else is to be regarded as of secondary importance. My only objection to such advice and warning would be that it is neither possible or desirable to collect data without some perspective, particularly where our social history is concerned. In fact, every student of social history starts, wrongly or rightly, with a generalized concept and perspective; and at least from the distinguished editor of the “History and Culture of the Indian People” we might have expected greater moderation in his total rejection of such a viewpoint. A generalized concept or image, however, is something like a distant landmark, which we keep in sight at the outset and which becomes more distinct as our collection of factual data advances. Only when we have made an exhaustive study of all available materials can an historical problem or period be grasped in its concrete reality. But this method of work should not be confused with the adoption of preconceived notions or some dogmatic assumption around which to elaborate supporting evidence. We must be prepared for the outlines of our landmark to change as we approach and view it from a fresh angle. This landmark, as I conceive it, is itself a question that emerges from the overall knowledge which we already possess. In the case of medieval Indian historical studies in particular, it is not so much any lack of facts or data which stands in our way as certain preconceived notions about the course of our historical social development. Hence the present perspective assumed in medieval Indian history is, to say

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1. Dr. R.C. Majumdar on “Study of Indian history” in Sardha—Satabdi special volume of Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay. June 1959, p. 152.

the least, not a little confusing and even misleading.

Let me explain my point by quoting some illustrative details.

Indology, as we all know, began with the study of Sanskrit, later of Pali and other Indian languages, and is still essentially confined to the study of our linguistics. It is true that the study of ancient Indian history was also included in Indology at a certain stage, but mainly as an aid to the study of Indian antiquities. History came in, one might say, by the back door. This indulgence, however, could not be extended to medieval India, which continued to be neglected if not actually despised until the beginning of this century. This may be seen from the outset in the attitude of the pioneering Indologist, William Jones, who considered the scholarship of the Mughal period to be a clear symptom of cultural decadence and thus unworthy of the attention of a serious Indologist. It now delved on the British administrator to step in and study the records of this period for his own ends and with the characteristic outlook of the bureaucrat. He began with a search for an administrative manual of the Mughal Empire for guidance in his own work, and with this in view Gladwin published the first translation of the *Ain-I-Akbari* in 1800. This was followed by a demand for a summarized version of medieval Indian history and Briggs published his text of *Ferishta* in 1832. It is mainly on the basis of this meager source material that Elphinstone compiled his history of the period, which appeared in 1841. For the study of the Hindu legal system William Jones had already made a beginning with his translation of the "*Institutes of Manu*" and a portion of *Fatawa-I-Alamgiri* was now rendered into English. The Christian missionary also from an early date extended his helping hand to supplement the work of the administrator and the study of our social and religious life fell to the share of people like Du Bois, followed by Bishop Heber, Herklot and several other observers of that type. There are, of course,

notable exceptions; for instance the information on our system of education and learning gathered by Buchanan and Adam; the history of the Sikhs by Cunningham and of the Rajputs by Tod and Forbes; the history of Lahore by Latif and a monograph on the domestic life of the Muslims of Oudh.

This phase of comparatively liberal views and intellectual curiosity, however, came to an abrupt end when, after the experience of the 1857 Rebellion, the British government took direct charge of Indian administration. The details of imperialist policy were now carefully worked out for various spheres of Indian political and cultural life and no less a person than Sir. H. M. Elliot, then the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was entrusted with the task of applying it to the field of historical studies. It was with the clear objectives, so boldly stated in his preface to the first volume, that Elliot began in 1867 the publication of his famous series of the "Historian's History of India" which, curiously enough, still forms the basis of most of our writings on medieval Indian history. I am far from denying the value of Elliot's translation and collection of extracts and other historical writings now embodied in these volumes. I only object to his choice in making the selection, which carefully excludes all records of social and cultural significance necessary for forming a clear picture of medieval Indian life. The technical deficiencies of Elliot's work have been partly corrected by Hodaiwala and by Professor Habib; but the problem of a proper documentation for a social and cultural history of the period still remains unsolved. On this occasion I am only interested in underlining the fact that with the entry of a foreign imperialism in the field of our politics and our cultural life, our historical studies ceased to be "an intellectual gymnastic" and after 1857 were systematically subjected to wilful distortion.

The effect of this carefully thought out political manoeuvre on the part of our British rulers was disastrous





for indigenous historiography, for most Indian historians failed to evaluate its political implications in the context of our developing struggle against British imperialism. Some of us hardly realized that by accepting the perspective of medieval history as laid down by Elliot's work, we were being unwittingly diverted into the rival political camps of Hindu and Muslim chauvinists who, under imperialist guidance and inspiration were now busy disrupting our national struggle.

In the eighties and nineties of the last century the situation was not so bad, and R. C. Dutt, the great pioneer in the field of historiography, even while regarding medieval India as a "Dark Age" and confining himself to ancient Indian history, abstained from commenting on its medieval political, social or cultural life. In course of time, however, a distinctly Hindu and communal view of our history began to find favour, especially in the more politically advanced provinces of India, and the earlier achievements of European Sanskrit studies and Indian linguistics were now exploited to strengthen this position. This process was hastened by the growing neglect of the study of Persian and Arabic—the only languages in which the bulk of source materials were available for a proper and balanced study of medieval history and culture.

In some respects the Muslim historians of medieval India, because of their firm and old tradition of narrative history and their first-hand knowledge of source materials, were better situated. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Zakaullah both refused to be provoked by the work of Elliot. Sir Syed laid the foundation of new research technique by editing the texts of *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Tuzak-I-Jahangiri* and by writing *Asar-us-Sanadid* on the antiquities of Delhi; he even assisted Elliot in the collection of materials for his "History". It was, however, different with his successors who diverted the course of narrative and objective history into one of apologetics for the defence of the old Muslim empires, and

in course of time, identified themselves with the communal and separatist trend of Muslim politics in India. It was Professor Habib who disabused our minds of much of this Muslim Chauvinism by writing his history of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, and by courageously fighting the growing trend of Muslim separatism even during the worst days of aggressive communal politics. I am afraid that this trend still survives and has recently acquired a religious-revivalist camouflage; it now parades a pseudo-scientific phraseology of the Spengler type and the young Aligarh historians have to be on their guard against such distractions.

Many of us lived through the experience of communal riots and mutual Hindu-Muslim killings during the period of our political struggle for freedom, which was accompanied by the massacres of the Partition days. I am not here discussing the political background of the events, but you will perhaps permit me to observe that a distorted view of, or misplaced emphasis on, certain aspects of our medieval Indian history has been partly responsible for fostering these communal political trends and thus indirectly helped to prepare the ground for such conflicts. I take this opportunity to pay my sincere homage to the worthy band of our historians who adopted a progressive and national outlook on politics and fought the reactionary communal trends in our midst, in particular to the group of Allahabad historians who made positive and valuable contributions to the solution of the problem by their study of the development of a common and composite culture in medieval India. Eventually the efforts of scholars like Dr. Tara Chand persuaded Gandhiji to include such studies in his syllabus for Basic Education. I submit, however, that any orientation of our medieval history which emphasizes one particular aspect, even though it may be a progressive one, to the exclusion of others must, in the final analysis, fail to give us an all-sided view of our life or a correct understanding of our social dynamics.

Friends, I have now placed before you my estimate of the dominant trends in our study of our medieval Indian history and I must confess that they do not help me in forming a clear perspective of our social development during this decisive period of our history. I therefore submit that we should review the data and re-evaluate them in order to gain a more integrated and comprehensive image of medieval society and of its laws of motion. A fresh start in this direction is even warranted by the advances made in our investigations of the materials since the days of Briggs and Elliot.

Thanks to the publications of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, supplemented by those from Baroda, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Rampur, Srinagar, Bombay and other institutions, as well as individual efforts on the part of certain scholars, the series of our political chronicles and biographical writings are now almost complete. One should perhaps add to these the histories of Qandhari and Bhimsen, the *Waqiyat* of Asadbeg, a few more *Inshas*, *Dastur-ul-Amals* and collection of medieval *Fatwas*, *Nafais-ul-Maasir* and a selection from certain archives like Hyderabad, Jaipur, Patiala and Satara. But there is ample material for fresh study of political events and I am happy to observe that Aligarh is now publishing fresh documentation of medieval India in Hindi. As regards original sources for provincial history, a good beginning has already been made with the publication of such standard texts as the *Mirat-I-Ahmedi* and *Zafar-ul-Waleh* for Gujarat, the *Futuh-us-Salateen* for the early period of Deccan and the *Tarikh-I-Hasan* for Kashmir. Much good work is being done in collecting and publishing manuscript materials on Rajput history and scholars have now access to the rich *bhandaras* of the Jains and the libraries of the various princes of Rajasthan and Bundelkhand. Add to this the Hindi, Urdu and other language texts of historical value and we may say that there are now available substantial source materials for our regional histories of the

period. In fact, in the case of Bengal, Dr. R. C. Majumdar started working on a comprehensive history of the region as long ago as 1935. Now almost every state is planning to write its own history and some have completed their work. A thorough and well-documented history of the Deccan is still a desideratum but distinguished scholars like K.A.N. Shastri are there to frame and carry out such plans; in fact his own work on Deccan history has already gone a long way to meet the demand. Valuable work has already been done on Marhattha history; the history of the Jats will be given a fresh stimulus with the foundation of the new Krukshetra University. It may be noted in this connection that the Sindh government in West Pakistan has taken great pains to collect source materials on their regional history and Sindhi scholars are now busy writing a history of their region's social and cultural development.

There are, of course, other sources of information and the epigraphical and numismatic data of the period are now available in much greater volume; we have now even a monograph on medieval Indian seals. I may here refer to the fact that all the historical poems of Amir Khusraw are now available in good printed editions and a selection of the *Diwan* of Mutakhar has appeared in the Oriental College Magazine of Lahore. The *Ghazals* of Amir Hasan and the *Qasida* of Badar Chach are already included in our syllabus for the study of Persian language. However, the *Shahjahan Namas* of Kalim and Qudsi, the *Kulliyat* of Sauda and a properly edited text of *Bostan-I-Khayal* and *Fasana-I-Azad* still awaits publication.

It would not be out of place in this connection to mention that a new prospect is now opening for the study of Indology not only in the socialist world but also among the new independent states of Asia. Eventually Africa and South America, when conditions exist, will turn their attention to the history of India whose independence struggle encouraged their own. There is already a search for

a new orientation in institutions for Oriental Studies in England, West Germany, the United States and Japan. It appears that Indology, instead of being confined to Indian linguistics or antiquities, is henceforward to comprise our history, ethnography, politics and economics—in a word, the whole course of Indian social development. This would naturally affect the study of medieval Indian history and extend both the range of our historical studies and our methods of approach. It is not perhaps sufficiently realized that the traditions of Indology in the socialist countries are both old, healthy and well established. In Russia, for instance, they go back to the foundation of the Academy of Sciences at the end of the seventeenth century; in Czechoslovakia to the comparative philologist Dobrovsky in the eighteenth. We of course, know the Hungarian contribution to Indology. We are also acquainted with the fine contribution of the older generation of German scholars to Indian linguistics and antiquities, as well as to the study of Islamic and Iranian cultures. In the German Democratic Republic, although these old disciplines still occupy a pride of place, a course of Indian history, including the study of medieval India, has already been introduced at Berlin and at the Oriental Institutes of Leipzig and Halle, with their richer collections of oriental texts and printed books, are soon going to make similar arrangements. It will be helpful for our work if we follow the researches of socialist, particularly of Soviet scholars, in the field of medieval Indian history. The late Professor Rysner and Baranikov, for instance, had already done extremely valuable work on social movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the researches of Professor Dyakov and his pupils have carried these investigations still further. You will perhaps be surprised to learn that a study of the *Raushiniya* movement, which we have neglected, has already appeared in the Soviet Union and it would do us all good to read the presentation of Akbar by Antonova.

It must be known to you that the British government has already budgeted a handsome grant for extending oriental studies and a Congress of South-East Asian historians, which met in London not long ago, has given a fresh stimulus to British scholars for the study of Indian history. This is reflected in the revised edition of Smith's "Oxford History of India" and it plans to publish the second volume of "The Cambridge History of India" at an early date. I need not emphasize that a number of new text books of Indian history have lately appeared in England and Mr. Peter Hardy has only recently published his monograph on the historians of medieval India.

This new enthusiasm for the study of Indian history is also reflected in the USA. The Columbia University Press brought out this year a thick volume on the "Sources of Indian Traditions", including medieval India. Like Elliot, the compilers of this book have collected and translated extracts from original documents for the whole range of Indian history, duly emphasized our 'spiritual heritage', but added nothing appreciable to our information.

This apparently widespread interest in our subject and the facilities and documentation that are now available, should be a challenge to our further efforts and it is our responsibility that our country's history should be correctly interpreted. It is from reasons such as these that my questions arise and with your permission, I shall now put them to you for your consideration.

First, let us consider the basic problem of periodisation and attempt to define where the medieval period of India begins and where it ends. We all know that there was a medieval India as distinct from ancient India and, in their own way, all scholars of Indian history have not only taken this for granted, but have also drawn their own arbitrary lines of demarcation. I am not suggesting that a scientific solution of this problem is by any means easy. One may observe a big break in production relations with the

disintegration of the Gupta Empire, when new feudal relations begin to emerge; but before a fully developed feudal society has matured, a fresh wave of tribal invasions—second perhaps only to the Aryan immigration at a very early stage—set in and dragged us down to a lower and illdeveloped stage of tribal feudalism. I am referring to the Rajput phase of medieval India, when the great economic and social advancement of the Gupta period was probably interrupted by the inroads of the Rajput clans, which now occupied the political stage, assisted by the Brahman priesthood. Some scholars of this period have further observed that our comparatively self-sufficient village communities began to crystallize during this phase of disintegration of the Gupta Empire. However, I do not want to speculate any further on this point or even to suggest the acceptance of the Rajput period as a starting point of our Middle Ages and that it satisfactorily solves the problem of periodization. In any case, even if we begin with the invasion of the Turks and the establishment of a Turkish state, our perspective of medieval India is by no means very distinct. We are now confronted with a new social formation—the military-patriarchal feudalism of the Turks and the Mughals—which soon imposes itself on the backward economy of Rajput tribal society thanks to its superior military strategy and tactics and its clear concept of a unified and centralized government based on the organized and armed support of its retainers and slaves. In due course the Mughals also built up a regular and elaborate bureaucracy for the administration of their government, which helped to stabilize their Empire in spite of the absence of a law of succession. By its policy of uprooting the old feudal structure of the Rajputs, which had chained the peasantry to serfdom, the new order for a while appears to be somewhat progressive. For the old relationship of utter subjection it offers to the peasantry the bait of *Qabuliyat* and *Patta*, in other words, a new form of pseudo-contractual relationship

and even scrupulously protects them from the depredation of its own army. For the day to day administration of the government the new regime organized a 'service nobility', comprising the *Iqta*-holders (in the case of Turkish Sultans) and the *Mansabdars* (in case of the Mughal emperors) and tries to rescue the peasant from the tyranny of the old feudal hierarchy. In course of time, this new form of feudalism, fortified by the 'steel frame' of the *Mansabdars* and administrative machinery of the government, developed into a far more effective and ruthless instrument of oppression and exploitation than the old Rajput order and drove the producing classes to destitution and desperation. Meanwhile the policy of state control of economy dictated by the huge war expenditure of the Mughals, hindered the development of a big internal market and suppressed the growth of healthy middle class, except perhaps in the coastal towns of western India. In their turn these rulers failed to develop an adequate organization or a proper form of state capitalism. As a result the Turkish and Mughal empires disintegrated just when they had succeeded in uniting the whole land under a centralized government, and the very elements of administrative unity and of a common culture gradually turned into symptoms of social parasitism and decay. No wonder if the young European capitalism soon discovered the clay feet of the Mughal giant and overpowered him without much effort.

I hope you will help us to evaluate correctly the role of the Turkish and Mughal empires in medieval Indian history.

I would finally ask you to evaluate the popular movements of peasants and mass resistance against the growing tyranny and exaction of the new ruling class and place them in a correct perspective. It sometimes puzzles a student of medieval India to find that there is little evidence of any open and organized resistance on the part of the common people during the early phase of the Turkish Sultanate, even when the central structure of the government



breaks down after the invasion of Timur in 1398. What one observes among the broad masses of the people is more or less a sense of despair, as reflected in the messianic trend of the *Mehdavi* teachings in the fifteenth century and in the passive attitude towards politics among the early saints of the *Bhakti* movement. This atmosphere of comparative inaction, however, changes under Shahjahan and Aurangzeb and there is ample evidence of the growing spirit of revolt among the peasantry all over the country. It is also noticeable that the early *Bhakti* philosophy of the peace-loving saints had in the meanwhile changed its content, and the new *Gurus* in some regions were openly preaching the doctrine of armed and massed revolt. All this is very much in evidence not only among the *Jats* of Mathura and Agra and the *Sanatanis* of Haryana, but on a much bigger scale in Maharashtra and the Punjab, where the peasantry adopts the guerrilla tactics and carries on a regular "peoples' war", until the Mughal empire is undermined by the pressure of these revolts. This, however, is the tragic fact that these organized and widespread armed struggles of the common people utterly failed to throw up any democratic political organization or a progressive leadership, and only led to the rise of the backward empires of the *Peshwas* or Ranjit Singh which were no improvement on the Mughal regime. In their turn these new empires either broke up into plundering gangs of the *Pindaris* and *Thugs* or just faded away before the British conquerors.

In fact, if you permit me to speculate and to generalize a little further, I would say that the total picture of medieval India is one of interrupted and stunted growth, with occasionally just the faint beginnings of something resembling the great milestones of Reform and Renaissance. But there should be no mistaking the fact that what we notice are only the tiny seeds of a revolutionary process of social change but never their fruition.

You will kindly help us to solve this great puzzle.

Friends,

These three major problems which I have raised here—namely the question of periodization; the role of the Turks and of the Mughals; and the character of the mass movements of resistance are by no means the only major problems that must eventually be tackled if our history is to remain intelligible in the ever-growing wealth of factual evidence. I do not hold the view that any single worker in the field can adequately digest the whole of this vast scientific apparatus into an inspired generalization. From each of the major problems a host of others, often involving highly specialized knowledge, branch out and demand solution. But so long as we ignore the broader issues we must either tacitly perpetuate the outgrown assumption of our predecessors or accept the new ones that are being devised by others, which, even when they are flattering to our national pride, cannot in the nature of things replace a specifically Indian interpretation of Indian culture. I would also remind you of the forthcoming international Congress of world orientalists, which is going to meet in Delhi in 1963, and I would like to suggest that in preparation for this event we should consider some of these leading problems and ensure that some solid contribution to their solution is presented there on behalf of Indian historical science.

Friends, in concluding this address permit me to thank you once again for the honour you have done to me by attending this session of the Congress and for the indulgence you have shown in patiently listening to my address on this occasion.

## TWO RADIO FEATURE BROADCASTS FROM BBC (LONDON)

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### EUROPEANS IN INDIA

#### I

**Narrator:** May god bless trade and commerce. In the olden days, till the mutiny of 1857, there was no period when foreigners had not come to India in search of cotton textiles, silk, indigo, spices and items of many other kind. They included Chinese, Italians, Arabs, Greek, French, Portuguese, in one word all sorts of people. Many among these got married in India and settled down here. After the new discovery of Vasco de Gamma this chain got further extended after fifteenth century. Now, besides the traders, military experts, doctors and craftsmen of various types too started to come here and try their luck. Even as early as the sixteenth century management of artillery started to be assigned to the Italians and other foreigners. After the decline of the Mughals and during the days of anarchy it reached a point that, in the words of Bishop Heber, in the Marhatta army there were hundreds of such Europeans who were born in India and did not know any language other than Hindustani.

If there was so much intimacy, then it is obvious that the Western aloofness and their tendency to remain separate

could not last long. Hence, mutual familiarity augmented to such an extent that when in the end of the eighteenth century Mirza Abutalib reached London from Calcutta he met, besides the Muslim wife of General Boigne, a number of Indian women who had married Europeans and had by now got intimately mixed in the European circles here. On the other hand Padre Heber met a number of French and British who had taken to oriental culture to such an extent that they used to regularly keep their wives in *Harem* and on every possible occasion would cite *Gulistan* and *Bostan* of Saadi and *Shahnama* of Firdausi.

Immediately after settling down at Surat they had realized that it was much better to get into the Indian style rather than to become a laughing stalk in their special European dress. According to a contemporary writer, in their appearance the British very soon turned into pure Indians and nothing but their socks and shoes remained to attract the suspicion of their being British. Also, they adapted some items from the point of view of the climate like the use of big fans and of *Khas* curtains during the summers, taking their food on large open platforms, or even in small backyard gardens, or even once in a while getting themselves a body massage or a massage of the hairs. However, this was just the beginning. Gradually their dress, life-style, food and all else also became fully Indian.

In this atmosphere, when the East India Company stepped into India they faced an extraordinary problem. The British employees of the Company were the products of a modern industrial society. Hence, they were all the time worried that lest falling into the luxurious atmosphere of India they may not lose their national distinctions and especially their commercial interests. This is why the East India Company not only formulated a diversity of rules and regulations to keep their servants under strict control but also took upon themselves to look after their lifestyle and everyday manner of living. Central office of the Company

was located in Surat. The President and his Council from there used to supervise the offices and staff all over India. They used to keep a sharp eye even on the smallest detail of the life and activities of their servants.

It was trade, and that too with the Mughal Empire, and competition with the Portuguese who had taken to all the luxuries and grandeur of the monarchy. Gradually the British too started to get into the Indian mould. In the end such transformation reached the extent that, like Father Xavier, their leaders also started writing books in Persian and in other Indian languages. Some even composed sufficient poetry to compile a respectable collection. It all started with the small norms of Indian culture. This is what the famous British trader and navigator Peter Mundy has to say about their life in Surat.

**Peter Mundy:** "Though we eat English food and those who cook these foods are also Englishmen, however, the use of *Dopyaza*, *Khichri*, rice and of mango pickle has become very common. In alcoholic drinks *Arak*, drinks made out of jagary and other tasty intoxicating drinks have replaced the English drinks. Sometimes we make a mixture of *Arak*, sugar, lemon and water that is called *Char Bakhra*."

**Narrator:** Not even twenty to twenty-two years had passed since the British had settled down in Surat that an Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle passed through this city. In Surat he was the guest of the President of the Company. He was amazed to see that,

**Pietro Della Valle:** "Both the Dutch Commander and the President of the East India Company live like Nabobs and have turned into *Raises*. Whenever they step out of their houses a great crowd of servants accompanies them. Sometimes persons of their own nation accompany them on horses. However, mostly a company of Indian foot soldiers escort them. When their procession comes out, a man having a big and high flag walks with him and another

one accompanies him with a fully decorated and ready horse."

**Narrator:** In other words the President of the Company was in fact a big Nabob. When about fifteen years later the German traveller Mendelslo became his guest in 1638 there were, besides fruits and sweets, at least fifteen or sixteen types of food on the table. Similarly, when Mendelslo reached Ahmedabad as the guest of the Company, among the other necessities of welcome and honour of the guest it was considered essential that at least half a dozen most beautiful prostitutes should dance before him. Mendelslo writes that when the President of the Company was to return to England after completing his term, he was given a farewell party in which, besides the English band, there also were Hindu and Muslim musicians and a dance of prostitutes was included among the various items of the party.

It is obvious that when those staying in far off Surat had such high considerations for their status, then those British staying in Agra, the center of the government and culture of the Mughals, must have had more serious considerations for their upkeep, manners and customs. Hence, when Peter Mundy reached Agra in connection with Company work during 1632 he wrote that,

**Peter Mundy:** "We used to live in the locality called *Phalti*. And, as it is customary in the city, would not take a step out but riding a horse. Whenever we would go out in the city our distinguished attire would be a tall cap (*Dastar*) on our heads, a *Doshala* on our shoulders, dressed in *Shalwar* and shoes and on top of it the *Jama* and *kamar band* (waist wrap), with a dagger on the waist. If we had to go out then there used to be a *Tarkash* (quiver for arrows) on the shoulder and a bow with an arrow lying in front on the mount of the horse".

**Narrator:** In any case it was all right till this stage. However, now started the process of getting introduced to the Mughal court and this mingling reached such a point

that the representatives of the Company, ignoring the trade interests and service norms, started to settle down and get married in India. The first ambassador of England himself inaugurated this phase.

In 1608 William Hawkins brought a letter from the king of England to the court of Jahangir who was remarkably fond of foreigners and especially esteemed the Europeans. He was deeply interested in music and painting and very highly appreciated rarities. Hence he eagerly embraced Hawkins and not only gave him a place in his court but also bestowed upon him the title of the *English Khan* with the entitlement of four hundred mounted soldiers. On the other hand Hawkins too got so much tinged with the Mughal culture that, to quote Jourdain "In his own house he (Hawkins) used to live in the Mughal style. His life-style, food and dress were purely that of the Muslims. Not only this. He used to become angry on anyone who would not live in the way of the Muslims". Relations between Hawkins and Jahangir continued to flourish. Ultimately a point was reached when he got married to a woman in the *Mahalsara* of Jahangir. However, it would be much better if we hear the details in his own words.

**Hawkins:** "Emperor Jahangir used to deal with me with great affection and besides the court, he used to honour me with private meetings. Jahangir used to say that your stay in my court shall be beneficial for your own people and I will make all arrangements for your comfort. Besides, whenever the Englishmen shall have any problem, your stay could instantly remove it. Moreover, whenever you will make any suggestion in their regard, instantly I will bestow my approval to it. In order to confirm and further strengthen his commitment the emperor referred to the pious soul of his late father and said that if you agree to remain in my court, I will then, according to your own desire, issue you the permission to open your factory. There shall not be any violation of my promises in this regard."

Not only this;

"The Emperor of high dignity insisted that I should get rid of my loneliness and get married to a European born woman of his *Mahalsara*. "I not only promise that I will provide the dowry and other necessities, servants and slaves, but also take the responsibility that your life-partner shall get converted to the Christian religion." He said.

**Narrator:** What would a blind man want; just two eyes. When Hawkins saw that he not only could get honor and status but also the permission to further trade interests and establish a factory, he instantly agreed to marry. The lady was the daughter of an Armenian Christian. Jahangir got her married to Hawkins and when in 1613 he returned to England after completing the term of his embassy, this lady went to England with him.

However, the high ups in the East India Company were very much perturbed by this marriage because they felt that such events obtruded with their trade interests and they could not visualize where this sequence shall stop. It was clear that the British had not come here to settle down; they had come purely for their profit. In any case they showed patience in the case of Hawkins and assumed that with his return this shall become something of the bygone days. As bad luck would have it, this time something flowered in Surat itself when a regular employee of the Company called Mr. Leachland instead of marrying, kept a low status woman named Manna in his house and, in spite of all pressures, started to openly live with her. Listen to the details of this incident from the servants of the Company themselves. This is how Peter Mundy introduces Leachland.

**Peter Mundy:** Mr. John Leachland was an old servant of the Company and had a distinguished service record to his credit. However, when time came for him to return home after completing the period of service, then, in violation of the agreement, he categorically refused to go back. He did so only because he had fallen in love with an



Indian woman. Now he had nothing to do with the Company. On the contrary, he used to now live with this woman from whom he had a number of issues. Sometimes other Englishmen used to visit his house to meet him and get themselves entertained there".

**Narrator:** This was a cursory statement of Peter Mundy. However, you may get an idea of the attitude of the Company from the Resolution passed in this regard by the President-in-Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1625. In this Resolution it is complained that,

**Resolution:** "Leachland is in no way prepared to leave that wretched Manna. Now he is continuously living with her and has a daughter from her. The President and the Council repeatedly tried to some how dissuade him but he is so adamant that he is prepared to give up the job but not to talk about leaving her; he is not prepared to get away from her even for a moment. Even then the Council hopes that Leachland, who otherwise is a very decent and reasonable person and a competent and intelligent servant and has no dues towards the Company, shall someday get into senses and would get inclined to remedy the situation."

**Narrator:** Even though the Company after admonishing him had removed Leachland from service, when there was a famine in 1630 and many of the servants in the Surat office had died, then, willy-nilly the Company not only recalled Leachland and under his supervision sent their goods to Agra but in the letter of recall while thanking him admitted that his knowledge of the language, manners and customs of India has very much eased the work of the Company, and in the matters related to the travel to Agra such a wise and experienced person as Leachland does not require either advise or instructions.

However, after the incidents like those of Hawkins and Leachland the British government realized that the management of the East India Company affairs requires strict supervision so that small trading interests do not cause

harm to political interests. Hence, in 1615 they sent such a notable and widely awakened mind as Thomas Roe as their formal ambassador who had nothing to do with the daily routine problems of trade and commerce of the Company and who used to keep an eye, besides India, on affairs of Iran, Persian Gulf, in one word, on the affairs of the entire eastern region.

Nevertheless, it was necessary for the ambassador to stay in the court, and staying in the court of the Mughal Emperor meant that his life style should not only be like that of the rich, but that of the nobles. In other words, he should be able to bestow millions on the smallest matter and in presentation of the gifts he should have the courage of the kings. Poor Thomas Roe all the time had one complaint to the Company; 'the gifts you send for Jahangir turn me into a laughing stalk, as these are not worth even a *Kauri*'. However, such a mannerly Emperor as Jahangir could not allow that an ambassador to his court should have a feeling of insignificance. When Thomas Roe presented an English sword and an English coach to Jahangir, the king kept the sword tied to his waist for a couple of days and went on a ride on that coach during darkness of the night. However, he did ask the Portuguese in the court whether the king of England was really be so great and send such lowly gifts. On the other hand Jahagir was so much conscious of how to entertain Thomas Roe that he would place him near his seat, and not only used to drink in his company in seclusion, but also used to treat him in an explicitly friendly manner. Jahangir got his portrait done and presented it to Roe and when Roe showed him the portrait of his beloved and was prepared to give it to Jahangir, the emperor refused to take it. Similarly, whenever Jahangir would go on a hunt, he would hunt a bore and send it to Thomas Roe. When Roe fell ill the emperor repeatedly personally went to his house to ask about his health and sent to him very high quality wine from the imperial kitchen. In the ceremony of his own

birthday Jahangir offered him drinks with his own hand and presented to him a golden cup and a plate that was inlaid with diamonds. Sometimes there also were pranks in their meetings. Both were interested in painting. In this context sometimes there were betting between Thomas Roe and Jahangir. Listen about such an instance from Thomas Roe himself. He writes,

**Thomas Roe:** "I had a portrait of a dear friend of mine. I was fully confident that Jahangir had never seen something like this. Asaf Khan took this portrait from me and showed it to Jahangir. Jahangir called his masters of the art. I admit that I was surprised on the ingenuity of the artists. The portrait that they had made was in fact unequalled and much beyond my expectations. However, I recognized my portrait and explained to the artists the difference between the two. However, there is no doubt that an ordinary person could not have distinguished between the two portraits. This is why in the beginning I also could not make the distinction."

**Narrator:** In one word even the embassy of Thomas Roe ended not on formal relations but on a note of friendship and nearness. When the time came for the British ambassador to go back, Jahangir repeatedly tried to somehow hold him back. Ultimately the time came when Thomas Roe had to take leave of Jahangir.

**Thomas Roe:** "Emperor Jahangir spent a whole evening with me and complaining said,

**Jahangir:** "The King of England did send you to the court of my Royal Highness but the gifts he sent with you are not equal to Our Royal Status. However, this does not mean that We do not respect you as an ambassador. No. We have always respected you. You have the manners and customs of a person of high and noble pedigree. We are a bit surprised that the British government did not fully respect your status. In any case it has nothing to do with any negligence on your part. We shall send you off with such

respect and honour that would be befitting to your status and shall send with you such gifts that are worth the status of kings."

**Narrator:** By 1619 when Thomas Roe took his leave of India, East India Company had entrenched its feet and the Portuguese were on the decline. It is also true that the Dutch were hovering here and there but ultimately they also turned towards Java and Sumatra. Now the field was clear for the British trade and commerce and the Embassy of Thomas Roe had very eminently contributed to this smoothening of the path. Roe not only established the prestige of British trade but, after taking into account the entire atmosphere all around, he came to the conclusion that the British should open a new chapter of Eastern conquests and that it be based on our own naval strength. He had also assessed the weaknesses of the Mughal armed forces. Hence, in the coming period Warren Hastings and Lord Clive, while taking benefits from the earlier observations and experiences, laid down the foundations of their victories in India to establish the British government. However, the demands of conquest and of governance on the one hand got the British introduced to Indian culture and civilization, and on the other made the Indians get acquainted with Western culture and enlightenment.

## II

(Background music with stanzas from Derozio)

*Teri jabin pe chamakta tha noor-I-rabbani  
Mere watan tujhe hasil tha jab maqam-I-kamal  
Tere huzur parastish main sar jhuke rahte  
Kahan wo sitwat o izzat kahan wo jah o kamal*

*Muheet waqt ki gahraiyan main ghota zanan  
Main leke aonga tufan bard-i-dauran se  
Us aabdar khazane ka aik juzw-I-qaleel*

*Chupa rahega jo shayad nigah-I-insan se*

Your forehead sparkled with divine light  
 My Motherland! When you were on the heights of  
 perfection  
 In veneration heads remained bowed down before you  
 Where is that grandeur and honor, where is that power  
 and glory.

Diving in the depth of the all encompassing Time  
 I will bring storms from the horizons of space  
 A small piece of that brilliant treasure  
 That may otherwise remain hidden from the eyes of man.

**Narrator:** Could you guess who composed these stanzas that are bursting with love for the motherland? Some twentieth century Hindu or Muslim? Some Congressman? No. These were composed by a sixteen-year-old Bengali youth who was neither Hindu nor Muslim, but was the offspring of a Portuguese father and an English mother and these lines were composed in 1825. You may be remembering that when we bid farewell to Sir Thomas Roe in 1619 and while he was leaving, his heart was full of dejection and anger and he was thinking that some day Britain should conquer India by her naval supremacy. The plan drawn by Sir Thomas Roe was not inappropriate. In the eighteenth century East India Company had acquired the management and revenue rights of Bengal and by 1803 they were the rulers of the entire northern India. However, this period of victories led to very big changes in the manners and customs of the British as well as in the functioning of the East India Company. Calcutta started to be populated in 1685. Gradually Calcutta emerged as the biggest center of British imperialism, second only to London.

It was also characteristic of Calcutta that this city was established not by Indians but by Europeans and Portuguese, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, in one word all sorts of people used to live there. It had nothing to do with Indians.

However, their life style and manners were all Indian, just as these were in the case of the prosperous Englishmen of Surat. Consequently, as a result of the life style of Calcutta, the term "White Nabob" entered the English language. Here is how a famous English Padre described the early life of Calcutta.

**Rev. James Long:** " How vexatious was to pass time and how perplexing was our life. We could finish all the office work in three hours between nine and twelve in the morning. It was our routine that immediately after getting up we would smoke the *Huqqa* and quickly finish our breakfast. We would return home after finishing the office work and had our lunch at two o'clock. After lunch the servant readied the silver gilded *Pechwan* and put it before us and we started to smoke the *Huqqa*. Some time later all the family members, after changing into light dress, went to bed. We used to get up after two hours and then go out for an afternoon stroll. Some dashing one would go for a tiger or wild boar hunt. We usually strolled in the park. To pass time some would indulge in fishing. Some fashionable ones would ride a palanquin and move on the roads."

**Narrator:** However, such dull life did not last long. Later acquisition of the *Divani* rights of Bengal by the Company opened the doors of conquest of the whole of India. Now the governor-general in Calcutta was not looking after the trade interests in the way of the President at Surat. He was now supervising military ventures at many places. Moreover, the real contest was not with the Naizam, Marhattas or with Tipu Sultan, but with the French who were providing training to the Indian soldiers and were masters of all the tricks of the trade to become popular among the soldiers. Hence, the British generals also acquired the dress and life style of the Indians and surpassed the French in their admiration of the Orient. Leave Europeans aside; even an Indian who had not lived in Calcutta could hardly believe it all.

Let us take the example of Sir David Ochterlony whom the soldiers knew as Akhtar Lony. For quite some time he was an agent of the governor-general and in this capacity had met Shah Alam and Ranjeet Singh. The famous British Indian Padre Heber in his diary has narrated an interesting meeting with him as Heber was accompanying him on a journey. When they were approaching Bharatpur they encountered the group travelling with Sir David and there he had a long discussion with him.

**Heber:** "Dr. Smith told me that when I met David Ochterlony he was the agent of the governor-general. However, his life style was that of a king. All told, his monthly income was about fifteen thousand rupees. He was saving nothing; all the money he used to spend. When I passed his camp I saw that, though the *Big Saheb* was going with his family and servants from Delhi to Ajmer, his procession however was worth seeing. There was a big crowd showing off authority and might. There were Indian and British ADCs, long lines of elephants, horses, camels, and rows after rows of tents and *Sarapardah* with the top of red i.e. imperial color. Great care was taken so that no unrelated person could see the ladies of the *Harem*. His servants were so much pampered that his *Munshi* managed to get in his name a stipend of one thousand rupees from the Mughal emperor which he used to collect himself without David having any inkling of it".

**Narrator:** In the meanwhile the caravan of Ochterlony passed nearby. This is how Heber writes of what he had seen.

**Heber:** "Undoubtedly a great crowd accompanied him. There were decorated horses, elephants, palanquins and covered vehicles wherein sat, besides his own ladies, the wives of his servants. Two companies of foot soldiers and one picket of mounted soldiers accompanied this demonstration and, as I feel, forty or fifty armed guards having all types of spears and guns were also in the group.

The line of camels could be seen stretching far in the distance. If he had travelled like this in Europe the people would have thought that some oriental king is moving on. Sir David was entirely covered with shawls and other wrappers made of *Kamkhwab* to the extent that his face could hardly be seen. When I had met him he was then about seventy years old. During our meeting I asked him

**Heber:** "Would you or would you not return to England?"

**Ochterlony:** "My dear, I have been living in India for last fifty-four years. I have become accustomed to the Oriental culture. In my old age I would not at all feel at home in any other country. Now India is my country and ultimately I shall mingle in this dust."

**Narrator:** Now let us take another English general of this period named James Skinner. It is yet better to have his own words regarding his mother. His house in old Delhi called Skinner's House is well known.

**Skinner:** "I was born in 1778. My father was from Scotland and was a servant of the Company. My mother was a *Rajputni* and daughter of a *Zamindar*. When we fought a battle with Ranjeet Singh near Benaras, my mother then was a fourteen-year-old girl and had come to us as a prisoner. In 1790 my mother took leave of this transient world. One of the big reasons for her death was that she could not bear that her two daughters be separated from her and sent to a school for studies. She was of the firm conviction that if the daughters were removed from her sight then their veil shall also disappear; if veil disappeared then the high *Rajput* dignity shall also go to dogs. In one word, after seeing such insult to the *Rajput* traditions she committed suicide."

**Narrator:** Not only that James Skinner was son of an Indian mother. He was an Indian in his temperament and in his upbringing. His seal had this title engraved on it; *Nasir-ud-Daula Col. James Skinner Bahadur Ghalib Jang*. He was a scholar of Persian and could write in Persian without any



hitch. He has written two books of high standard in Persian. One is titled *Tashrih al-Aqwam* (Discussion regarding people) in which various religions and their sects are discussed. Second book deals with the Indian nobles and contains the details of some Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, *Jaat* and especially, of the *Rajput* families. This book titled *Tazkirat-al-Umara* he dedicated to General Malcolm. Here is an illustration from it.

**Skinner:**

*In nigarin raqam ke tazkira ist  
Mi kunad har shabih-I-u be shubah  
Chun za karnel James Skinner  
Pas ba Gerrail Malcum sahib  
Az pai yadgar-I-sidq o niyaz*

*Az amiran-I-hind batasweer  
Surat-I-hal har yake taqreer  
Jaguzin shud ba safha-I-tahreer  
Kust ba fard danish o tadbeer  
Shudah mursil bajan mohr pazeer*

"This artistic writing which is a remembrance  
Illustrated, of the nobles of Hindustan  
Each illustration of it undoubtedly  
Articulates the reality of each  
As by Colonel James Skinner  
It got penned on the pages  
So also to the General Malcolm *Saheb*  
Who is a person with tact and wisdom  
As a momento of truthful servitude  
Is dedicated and sealed with all my life in it."

**Narrator:** In any case by 1803 with the defeat of the Marhattas the tempo of war had considerably gone down and at least Bengal was experiencing peace and prosperity for some considerable time. When Calcutta was first established the Portuguese, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks etc. lived there. In one word only foreigners used to live there. In the beginning the Portuguese and then English language became current there. However, slowly Indian population also started to reside in Calcutta. However, the great difficulty was that there was no link between the English and the Bengali languages. Till 1765 there were hardly a dozen Bengalis who were living in Calcutta and all these were

washermen. Now listen to this story in the words of the famous Bengali scholar Ram Kumud Sen who in his Preface to the dictionary writes,

**Ram Kumud Sen:** "It was a little before 1680 that an English war ship anchored in the Botanical Garden. Captain of the ship sent a few of the *Bhasakh* family, with whom they had long standing business relations, with the message that he needed one *Do Bhashi* person. This was the term that was used by the British on the Madras coast and it meant a person who knew two languages. It was a chance that the *Bhasakh* family had a number of washermen employed in the household. The message was discussed in the family and there were consultations. After a detailed discussion the oldest and the most learned of the family opined that the Commander of the ship needs a *Dhobi* or washerman, for getting his clothes washed. Ultimately a washerman with gifts for the Commander, appeared before the Commander of the ship. He was duly and ceremoniously received with a gun salute, and the Commander in return presented him with gifts and *Ashrafis* and he entered the service and gradually learnt English. In one word, we can say that this washerman was the dignified forefather of the English knowing Indians of Calcutta".

**Narrator:** However, there was another trend in this very Calcutta. It was developing gradually. Newspapers and freedom of opinion were also born in Calcutta. Intermingling of the Europeans and the Indians created a new atmosphere in which, on the one hand, was born the *Brahmo Samaj* and its struggle to stop the tradition of *Sati*, and on the other was born the British Indian Union that ultimately gave birth to the Indian National Congress.

Our poet Derozio, who offered the first sacrifices for freedom of thought and love of the motherland, died young. He was the product of this atmosphere. By the age of eighteen years he had established his reputation in the academic circles of Calcutta as a poet and as a scholar. He was hardly

nineteen years when he was appointed as Professor of English literature and history in the first English College, the Hindu College, in Calcutta. His famous poem *Sonnet to the Pupils of Hindu College* belongs to this period. He was very popular among his students. He also established an Academic Association of Freethinkers in which both students and scholars participated. The Association conducted debates and discussions on different topics. These activities created a great commotion among the conservative circles. They pressurized the management of the College to dismiss Derozio. In the first instance the College management issued a circular to stop the students from participating in such activities. However, this was of no avail. Then they decided to dismiss Derozio. The question before the management was as to what charge should be levelled against him. There were no complaints against him. Ultimately it was decided that Dr. Wilson should convince Derozio to submit his resignation so that this issue could be quietly dispensed with. However, Derozio was not the one to agree. Along with his resignation he also wrote a letter to Dr. Wilson.

**Derozio:** "My resignation is attached to this letter. However, I am helpless to say that in this matter I cannot accept your advice and I do not want to take upon my self the charge of something that I have not done. The fact is that if I could have even imagine that because of me the College should suffer, I would have had no hesitation in leaving the College. However, I cannot bow my head before prejudices and I am compelled to say that I am being forced to resign."

**Narrator:** In his resignation Derozio had clearly mentioned that (1) No charges have been levelled against him. (2) If there was any ground for dissatisfaction he was not informed of it. (3) he was not given any opportunity to defend himself. (4) No witnesses were brought forward from any quarters. (5) There were attacks on his character

and his life style was criticized, but he was given no opportunity to clarify or defend himself. (6) Majority considered him to be unworthy of this lofty job. In the end he had written that these are facts and I do not want to add a single critical word to it. Dr. Wilson replied:

**Dr. Wilson:** "I think you are justified, though I would have liked you to be a bit more polite towards the management because they were discreetly under pressure from the public opinion. They had not decided on the basis of facts concerning these charges. They certainly did not meant that your character and the way of life should be investigated or charges are made on this count. The fact is that this is the widespread opinion about you, and no denial or counter argument could influence it. There were three charges. It was entirely your choice to answer or not to answer these charges. The charges were (1) you do not believe in god. (2) You do not believe in respecting the parents. (3) You consider marriage between brothers and sisters permissible. Did you spread these ideas among the students?"

**Narrator:** In reply Derozio wrote,

**Derozio:** "(1) I have not denied god before any of his creation though I had narrated the doubts and arguments put forward by philosophers. It was not my job, like the orthodox, to put before the students only one side of the puzzle. (2) It is for the first time that I am hearing that such shameful, unnatural and debasing ideas are being attributed to me. (3) In this regard my answer is in the negative. I did not publicize such lowly and silly ideas and want to unconditionally deny such charges. In the end I express regret that I was unable to appreciate the tactfulness of bowing before the general prejudices especially in a situation when by dismissing me these prejudices shall get yet more entrenched and gain strength."

**Narrator:** After getting dissociated from the College Derozio brought out a newspaper. However, only a few

months had passed when he fell victim to cholera and after being ill for a few hours died on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1831. He was 23 years old when he died. Derozio is no more but his stanzas from the poem *To My Motherland* yet resonate in our ears.

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"It was only in the thirties that K.M. Ashraf, K. R. Tripathi and Ashraf broke away from the old ways and set up new fields of investigation."

"This idealistic notion of synthesis however was not to stand on its feet" and after 1930 more and more studies were examined to account for political changes. This changed outlook was first evinced by the young generation of Marxists in India, and K.M. Ashraf was among them."

"A scholar like Ashraf, who was at the same time close to his people and ached constantly to place his knowledge in service, felt this poignantly throughout his life. His outlook was such that it had enabled him to know the needs of the masses and the Hindu element in our Indian history."

"That Ashraf's work has continued to be considered one of the almost seventy-five years after it was written and is still a compulsory reading for anyone engaged in the study of the history of medieval India is no small tribute to Ashraf as a historian."



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B-7, IIIrd Floor, Saraswati Complex,  
Subhash Chowk, Laxmi Nagar,  
Delhi 110092

Phone : 22025199

E-mail : sunrisepublications@gmail.com

ISBN 81-87365-35-8



9 788187 365358