CHAPTER IV

IDEALS, METHODOLOGY AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MEDIEVAL INDO-MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHERS

SECTION 1: MEDIEVAL INDO-MUSLIM HISTORIANS’ CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

Is it possible to deduce certain basic principles or ideas of history from the above mentioned works? What was the conception of history of these medieval historians writing in Persian?

Needless to say, we cannot reasonably expect to find modern ideas of history in them. Any attempt to judge these histories with the yardstick of modern historiography is bound to lead to disappointment and perhaps, unreasonable criticism, as by Peter Hardy. Brilliant in analysis, exposition and expression, his work is somewhat unsympathetic in conclusions. Here he has scathingly condemned the Indo-Muslim historians of the Turko-Afghan period and criticized the standpoint of some distinguished modern Indian writers of this period for depending on them as sources. While there is great deal of force in what he says about them, absolutely speaking, it must be admitted that some of their characteristics and defects, pointed out by him, were also to be found in Christian and medieval historiography of contemporary Europe.

(a) Universal History:

In Europe Christian writers familiarised the idea of universal history, going back to the origin of man, dealing with the rise and fall of civilizations and powers and adopting a single chronological framework for all historical events. The medieval historian also treated his material from a universalistic point of view.

The idea of Universal History since the creation was quite well known to the Arabic and Muslim historiographers. But about the middle of the third century A.H. (9th century A.D.)
it was used as a prelude to Islamic history proper, a concept which goes back to Jewish-Christian tradition. Hence universal history ceased to be world history in the truest sense as ‘from the moment of the rise of Islam, the history of other nations has no farther interest for the writer.”

(b) **The General History of the Muslim World:**

The General History of the Muslim World flowered between the 9th and 11th centuries A.D. in the works of al-Yaqubi, al-Dinawari and al-Tabari, covering the period from pre-Islamic times (in Arabia, Persia and Rum) to the Abbasid Caliphate, the central theme being the Prophet. While Yaqubi and Tabari followed the chronological method, Dinawari adopted the topical method (i.e. according to ‘akhbar’ or groups of events). Their range of evidence was wide and approach critical.

One of the categories of medieval Indian historical writings was a general history of the Muslim world. The general histories of Islam written during the Turko-Afghan period by Minhaj ud din us Siraj (Tabaqat i Nasiri, 1259-60) and Muhammad Bihamand Khani (Tarikh i Muhammadi, 1438-39) were in line with al-Yaqubi al Dinawari, and al Tabari. But they wrote from authority without critical evaluation.

To this category in the Mughal age belonged Tarikh-i-Ibrahim or Tawarikh-i-Humayuni or Tarikh-i-Humayun by Ibrahim bin Hariri (c. 1528). It is a general history of the world since the creation and comes up to the reign of Humayun (but incomplete). The Labb ut Tawarikh (wr. 1541) by Yahya bin Abdul Latif and Nuskha i Jahanara by Qazi Ahmad (d. 1567) are also general histories of the Muslim world. Much more famous is Abdul Qadir Badauni’s Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, a general history of the Muslim world from the time of the Ghaznavides up to 1596.

(c) **General histories of India:**

Apart from the conception of the general history of the Muslim world, there was also the conception of regional or local dynastic history developing gradually among the medieval Muslim historians. H. A. R. Gibb writes:
"After the middle of the fourth century (10th century A.D.) the distinction between general history and provincial history becomes difficult to maintain. Henceforward the main type of strictly historical composition is contemporary annalistic, frequently prefaced by summary of universal history. In such annals the interest and information of the writer can no longer be universal; each is limited by the boundaries of the political structure within which he lives, and is rarely able to deal with events in distant regions."

Thus we have, as distinct from the general history of the Moslem world, several regional and dynastic histories of Islam. For example, Gardizi (Zain al Akhbar) dealt mainly with Khorasan in the period before the Ghorid conquests in N. India. Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi (Tarikh i Mubarak Shahi, between 1428-34) supplies the only example of this type in the Turko Afghan period in India.4

In Mughal India the two best and definite examples of the new tradition growing up are the works of Nizam ud din Ahmad and Ferishta. (i) Tabaqat i Akbari by Nizamuddin Ahmad Bakhshi is a general history of Muslim India which becomes fuller as it approaches the Mughal period and (ii) Tarikh i Ferishta by Mulla Muhammad Kasim Hindu Shah surnamed Ferishta (wr. 1599-1609) is a general history of Muslim India, with special reference to the states of the Deccan. It was written in Bijapur and styled Gulshan i Ibrahimi and Naurasnama (from Nauras, new capital of Ibrahim Adil Shah, who suggested that there was no general history of Muhammadans in India except that of Nizamuddin.6

Muhammad Hashim or Hashim Ali Khan, better known as Khafi Khan, wrote his Muntakhab ul Lubab or Tarikh i Khafi Khan, a complete history of the House of Timur, from Babur (1519) to the 14th year of the reign of Muhammad Shah (1733). Its chief value lay in the fact that it gives a full account of the reign of Aurangzeb of which a connected history was difficult to get on account of the imperial prohibition of history-writing.7

(d) Regional or Local Histories:

Apart from the history of Islam, and universal histories the Muslim writers also wrote on sectional works, including sects,
regions and towns. The earliest example of regional history in Muhammadan annals in India is the historical romance of the Chachnama in Sind (12th century A.D.). According to H.A.R. Gibb, Sind had 'an indigenous tradition going back to the period of the Arab conquest' of the 8th century A.D. Several histories relating to Sind were written during the Mughal period. Gibb also holds that 'in Gujrat and the South the local historiography is apparently to be connected rather with that of Fars.'

Gujarat, as mentioned earlier, is the richest province in India as regards the number and variety of its historical records. One such is the Mirat-i-Ahmadi by Mirza Muhammad Hasan, better known as Ali Muhammad Khan, written during 1750-60, a history of Gujrat (1000-1760). About its value Sir J. N. Sarkar writes as follows: 'From the reign of Akbar onwards, his book is unique among the Persian histories of India, as the author has incorporated in it the full texts of a very large number of official letters and orders of the Imperial Government, e.g., farman, parwanah, and dastur ul amils. Thus the best raw materials of social and administrative history have been preserved by him for us. This is specially the case with Aurangzeb's strenuously active reign of half a century. For the half century following the death of Aurangzeb (1707), the Mirat gives the fullest history of the civil wars among the Mughal generals, the Maratha incursions, and the natural calamities and popular disorders which attended the fall of the Mughal empire in that province. In fact we have no such complete, graphic and systematic record of that decline and fall in any of our provinces....'

Bengal, as noted before, is without any 'continuous history' in Persian before the end of the eighteenth century. There are, however, a few histories dealing with Bengal and Assam covering limited periods only: Baharistan-i-Ghaibi of Mirza Nathan (entitled Shitab Khan); Fathiyya-i-libriyya, the diary of Shihabuddin Talish; and its Continuation by the same author.

For the history of the Deccan kingdoms also there were separate histories, as detailed in the previous chapter. The Basatin us Salatin by Mirza Ibrahim Zubairi (1824) is a history of Bijapur, which is "valuable and accurate in spite of its being a later compilation."
H. A. R. Gibb has given an unfavourable view of the historical works of this period in Persia and India, criticising them as monotonous and lacking in originality and proportion. He writes: 'A general view of the historical output of this period in Persia and India thus offers a monotonous succession of general histories and local or dynastic chronicles, with periods of more intensive quasi-biographical compilation, usually stimulated by royal patrons and sometimes of considerable value, but marked by an inveterate tendency to treat history as a branch of belles lettres'.

'The majority of the general histories, whether composed in Persia or in India, show little originality or proportion, and are of value only for the history of their own times. The most frequent arrangement is by dynasties: some, however, devote a volume or a section to biography and occasionally a geographical supplement is added.'

It is difficult to wholly agree with this view so far as India at least is concerned. In the first place, the instances he gives are not quite typical or representative of the best historical works produced in India during this period. In the second place, there were certainly other categories of historical writings to which no reference has been made by him.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE

To understand the ideals and achievements of the medieval Muslim historians of India we have to take into account several factors, among which may be mentioned the nature of history, the general attitude of the medieval historians, the influence of the author's personal history, his methodology, technique and style, and the extent of his success in fulfilling the mission of the historian. But we should not, like H. A. R. Gibb and Peter Hardy, judge the medieval histories with modern standards.

(a) The nature of history:

History, admittedly, has a double aspect. It is both a science and an art. So the historian has to be both a scientist and artist. History the science is 'impartial, almost unhuman in its cold impartiality, weighing documents, accumulating evidence, sorting
out the false wherever detected no matter what venerable belief goes with it, it is piecing together with infinite care the broken mosaic of the past—not to teach us lessons nor to entertain, but simply to fulfil the imperative demand of the scientific spirit—to find the truth and set it forth’. Again, ‘History the art, flourishes with the arts. It is mainly the creature of imagination and literary style. It depends upon expression, upon vivid painting, sympathy, grace and elegance, elevated sentiments or compelling power.’

Herodotus combined ‘geography and history, narrative with criticism and literature’ and so ‘won for history a distinct place in the arts and sciences of mankind for all time.’ About the mastery of the material and mental power of Thucydides ‘the greatest historian of antiquity’, it has been said: ‘Never has a historian succeeded better in creating the impression of complete mastery of his materials—a century of hair-splitting criticism has not appreciably impaired his reputation for amazing accuracy. Equally characteristic of Thucydides is his high impartiality: he favours neither side in the great war; he shows good and bad qualities in both Athenians and Spartans . . . he champions none of the rival parties in Athens . . . In no place does he argue or defend; yet by sheer intellectual power he imposes his views upon the reader . . . The history might perhaps be compared to a Greek statue, stately and serious, restrained and sober, accurate in detail and impressive in composition, yet lacking the vivid colouring and varied background of a modern painting or of Herodotus’ history . . .’ (Swain). Polybios was ‘the historian’s historian of antiquity’, essentially pragmatic and utilitarian in his conception of history,—a practical politician. He prescribes two qualifications as indispensable for the historian—to be a man of affairs, of wide knowledge of the world; learning and judicial temper. Livy was the national historian of Rome but was frankly medieval and uncritical. While Thucydides was a magistrate in the tribunal of history, Tacitus was an advocate of Rome. While Thucydides sought to establish truth alone, Tacitus sought to maintain that truth which would be of service to the world. Tacitus was a mere annalist. But he ranks in the forefront of the world’s historians because of his genius as a word painter, his insight into character and to his exalted idea of history, viz. ‘history’s highest function (is) to let no worthy action be uncom-
memorated, and to hold the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds', and this is to be done without bitterness or favour. To Kalhana also History was a science as well as an art,—scientific in method and artistic in presentation. His ideal of history was a vivid representation of the past with its great role as an instructor for future generation.18

(b) The attitudes of medieval historians:

The medieval historians had fairly high ideas of impartiality, independence and accuracy. The early Arab historians showed great independence by not depending on Greek literature, Syriac or Persian histories. They were very rarely official historians who recorded 'His master's voice'. Tabari was a landed proprietor of wide travels. Both Dinawari and Tanukhi were judges. The second Buwaihid Sultan, Adud al daulah, Izzal daulah Bakhtiyar could not restrain his anger when his Secretary of State, Ibrahim the Sabian, authorised to write a history, frankly said that he was 'compiling packs of lies'. Generally speaking, the Arab historians wrote not as court chroniclers but as persons with noble tastes, for the instruction of their countrymen and though they at times are influenced by religious or patriotic bias, 'their general impartiality is a striking feature of their works.' Miskawaihi, though an employee of the Buwaihid wazirs, never showed any trace of partiality. The work of Tabari (more a collector of traditions than an historian) is also non-partisan. History writing, like education, was left to private enterprise till the time of the Seljuk Wazir, Nizam ul Mulk. Historians were 'professors of history', undertaking to provide information, on the subject, not persons specially engaged to provide it... they were primarily teachers, and writers afterwards.19

(c) Influence of the author's personal history—

The Personal factor.

The author's personal history (e.g. his family background, training, education, equipment, official connections, character, idiosyncracies and temperament) usually exercises a great influence on his outlook and the nature of his performance. It affects his attitude to history and helps us to understand his ideas, attitude and outlook, and to know whether he is a detached or interested observer.20
(d) Social status and class of the medieval historians:

It is rather difficult to group the medieval Muslim historians according to social status and class. For one thing our knowledge of the personal history of many historians is very limited, and secondly because the social organisation of the times is also imperfectly known. Both Ashraf and Moreland have spoken of the upper, middle and lower classes. But the exact connotation of these is not specifically known. The difficulty arises especially in the Turko-Afghan period. Ashraf has referred to certain social classes among the Muslims but how to place our historians among them is not very clear. Career in the court or army was the passport to social status, but to say that an historian belonged to the courtier class meant nothing in effect. Many rose to be courtiers and officers from comparatively obscure origins and they cannot very well be regarded as belonging to the aristocratic or upper classes. Some historians, however, were highly educated and belonged to what may be called the intellectual class and middle class. Among historians and memoir-writers who may be grouped under royal family were Firuz Tughluq, Timur, Babur, Jahangir, Gulbadan Begum and Mirza Haidar Dughlat. Among aristocratic class we may perhaps include Minhajuddin and Amir Khusru. The Maasir ul Umara has given notices of Abul Fazl, Md. Saqi Mustaid Khan, Khwajah Nizamuddin and Md. Hashim Ali Khan (Khafi Khan), among others and from that we may be tempted to include them among the peerage. But perhaps, socially speaking, the majority of the historians of the Mughal age were members of the educated, middle class intelligentsia and not members of the aristocracy as such. Most of the medieval historians or writers were either immigrants themselves e.g., Al Biruni (from Khwarizm), Hasan Nizami (from Naishapur), or descendants of foreign immigrant families, e.g. Minhaj (from Juzjan, between Merv and Balkh), Shaikh Abul Fazl (Hijazi family), Khwajah Nizamuddin (Herat family), Mirza Aminai Qazvini (Qazvin), Ferishta (from Astarabad), Mirza Md. Hasan (Persian emigrant family), Khafi Khan (Khursani emigrant family). Many were definitely of Indian origin i.e., Hindusthanis, e.g., Ziauddin Barani, Amir Khusrau, Yahya, Abdul Qadir Badauni and Abdul Hamid Lahori, Jauhar, Humayun’s aftabchi, was a menial, who rose to be an officer.21


(c) Methodology, technique and style—
History the Science and History the Art.

The writing of history involves two principal operations,—to establish facts and to work them up. This is a complicated process. Facts are not necessarily events, are not always given, but have to be selected and established by patient research. Selection seems to run counter to the principle of impartial or honest history. But all history is selective. Selection is scientific. The task of the historian consists of several process e.g.: (i) Search for and discovery of necessary documents, (ii) Criticism and sifting of these, (iii) explanation, (iv) correlation, (v) reciprocal relations of facts and (vi) their interaction.21

The Arab historians adopted certain methods to ensure accuracy in their narratives viz., dating events and maintaining the chain of authorities. (isnad).

(i) Chronology:

Time is the corner-stone of history, space of geography and matter of the physical sciences. Without chronology the data of history becomes like an uncharted land or unanalysed substance. Hence adherence to a detailed and accurate chronology is most essential to understanding history. To ensure accuracy in their narratives the Arabic historians (within 150 years A.H.) used to insist on dating events by the year and month and even the day. This speaks volubly of their historical sense when we consider that ‘neither the Greek nor the Roman historians nor the Biblical writers keep quite clear dates and the Roman historians have a fixed era which is less clumsy than the Greek system.’ According to Buckle, the practice of dating events did not start in Europe before A.D. 1597. The standards of accuracy and conscientiousness of Arabic historiography were thus, ‘astoundingly high.’22

In this respect the Indo-Moslem historians excelled the Hindus. The Ahom and Maratha chroniclers lacked sound chronological arrangement. Their narration was devoid of chronology. Their idea of a historian’s work was to narrate legends and facts compiled from traditions, hearsay and state papers, without any attempt at ascertaining the date of any event. Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes: “The chronological sense was very imperfectly
developed among the Hindus, who are apt to despise this world and its ephemeral occurrences. Before the Islamic conquest the Hindus produced no true history at all. On the other hand the Arab intellect is dry, methodical and matter of fact. All their records contain a chronological framework. The historical literature of the Muhammedans in all countries has been vast and varied and well furnished with dates. We therein get a solid basis for historical study.24

Within this general observation there are, however, certain exceptions.

In the Mughal period chronology received its due share of importance from the official histories. 'In all these works or Namahs proper, the events are built upon a rigid skeleton of dates chronologically arranged; there is an accurate but tiresome assemblage of minute names of persons and places in the course of every month's narrative of occurrences, and the mechanical division of the book into a chapter for each regnal year is followed.' Non-official histories, however, were sometimes deficient in dates. The chronology of Nizamuddin is defective especially from the 22nd year (1578), when the author made a blunder in equating the regnal with the Hegira years (Smith). The chronology of Badauni is less precise than that of the Akbarnamah.25

(ii) Verification of the Chain of authorities:

The second device of the Arab historians to develop exactitude was to trace the event to its ultimate source. By applying the stereotyped technique of 'isnad', as used in 'hadis' (Tradition), to History, each event was narrated in the words of the original eye-witnesses or contemporaries and transmitted through a chain of mediate reporters to the final narrator (the author). Thus the links in the chain of authorities were tested. The weakness of the system was that the fact itself was not critically examined. As P. K. Hitti puts it: 'But the authenticity of the fact generally depended on the continuity of the chain ('isnad') and the confidence in the integrity of each reporter rather upon a critical examination of the fact itself. Aside from the use of personal judgment in the choice of the series of authorities and the arrangement of the data the historian exer-
cised very little power of analysis, criticism, comparison or inference. Al Tabari gives expression to this principle in the introduction to his *Ta'rikh* 'We only transmit to others as has been transmitted to us'.

It is in this background and judged by these tests that we shall examine the ideals and achievements, technique and style of the medieval Indo-Moslem historians.

(f) Extent of the historian's success in the fulfilment of his mission

How far were the historians of medieval India successful in realising their own professed ideals. Let us confine our attention to a few selected writers.

Kalhana possessed 'a highly developed, almost modern, conception of the proper data or sources of history'. With a detached and critical mind, and conscious of the mission of a historian he endeavoured hard to attain the noble ideals of truth and impartiality comparable to that of a judge, of keeping his speech or writing 'beyond love or hatred', of insight and imagination, making the pictures of a bygone age vivid before one's eyes.

The position with regard to the Muslim historians during the Sultanate and Mughal periods will be discussed in the following two sections.

Section 3: Pre-Mughal Period

Let us consider the influence of the personal history of the writer on the history he wrote in certain representative instances only.

1. *Al Biruni*

We do not know much about the personal history of Abu Raihan Muhammad bin Ahmad Al Biruni al Khwarizmi, known in Europe as Ali Boron (born A.D. 970-1; died 1038-39). He was essentially an intellectual of intellectuals. This famous encyclopaedic scholar, well-versed in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, geography, medicine, logic, theology and religion, is
justly regarded as the first and greatest Muslim Indologist. What is the basis of his interest in India and Hindu Sciences? Was it due to his love of scholarship or anything else?

His earliest biographer, Shamsuddin Muhammad Shahrazuri, testifies to his studious habits and asks us to believe that he left his book and pen only on two days in the year, the Nauroz, New Year's day at the vernal equinox, and the Mihrjan, the autumnal equinox, "when he was occupied, according to the command of the Prophet, in procuring the necessaries of life on such a moderate scale as to afford him bare sustenance and clothing." It is not clear whether this is a hint at his indigent conditions during his student life. But we know that having distinguished himself in science and literature he rose to be the councillor of the Khwarizm ruler of the M'amuni family. In that capacity he became an antagonist of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and his chancellor, Ahmad ibn Hassan Maimandi (1007-25), because the Sultan wanted to interfere in the affairs of independent Khwarizm. Subsequently after the conquest of Khwarizm by Sultan Mahmud, he was carried as a hostage to Ghazna along with other hostages and prisoners of war (1017). He travelled extensively in India in the train of Mahmud and studied the language, sciences and philosophy of the Hindus extensively and embodied his observations on the religious condition and social institutions of the Hindus in his times (1017-30). But he received neither any official encouragement or inducement nor any hope of reward from Sultan Mahmud. According to Rashiduddin, Al Biruni "entered the service of Mahmud bin Sabuktigin, and in the course of his service he spent a long time in Hindustan and learned the language of the country." But Sachau mentions that "there is nothing to tell us that Alberuni was ever in the service of the State or Court in Ghazna", and that 'perhaps' it was due to his 'reputation as a great munajjim i.e., astrologer—astronomer' that he 'had relations to the Court and its head'. The way in which he mentions Sultan Mahmud does not tend to show that he was in the latter's service or that he regarded the latter as his benefactor. 'Mahmud ,utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus, became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people.'
On the other hand Al Biruni spoke very highly of Sultan Masud and dedicated his Canon Masudicus (Alkanum Al Masudi) to him because by conferring on him a special benefit (pension?), Masud enabled the author (then 61 years old) to devote himself to the pursuit of Science. So he exultingly wrote of the favours shown and support given to him and his studies by Masud. This would show that even a man of the type of Al Biruni was swayed by personal considerations in his outlook.

Al Biruni’s interest in India, the Hindus and their world of thought was largely motivated by what Dr. Sachau calls ‘a community of mishap’. This may be an exaggeration. But there is no doubt that Al Biruni and his native countrymen were as much the victim of Mahmud’s oppression as the Hindus of India and this might have inspired Al Biruni with sympathy for them. If to Mahmud the Hindus were infidels fit to be slain for resisting plunder, to Al Biruni they were ‘excellent philosophers, good mathematicians and astronomers...’. He also throws a ‘hint to the Muslim reader not to be too haughty towards the poor bewildered Hindu, trodden down by the savage hordes of King Mahmud...’

The idea of writing his book on India suggested itself to Al Biruni during his discussion with a friend on contemporary religious and philosophical literature. He wrote it to fill up a gap in the then Arab literature which contained only ‘second hand and thoroughly uncritical account of the beliefs of the Hindus.’

2. Al ’Utbi

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Jabbarul ’Utbi, belonged to the family of ’Utba. Many members of the family were important office-holders under the Samanid rulers. Being Secretary of Sultan Mahmud himself, ’Utbi became thoroughly acquainted with his activities, but he did not accompany his master in his expeditions. His book Tarikh Yamini or Kitab ul Yamini—which covers the whole reign of Sabuktigin and a part of the reign of Mahmud (up to 1020 A.D.), is an original source of information of Mahmud’s expeditions. But as he did not accompany him it is deficient in accurate topographical knowledge of India. His attitude is that of an orthodox writer who
sees the order of God in the actions of Sabuktigin and Mahmud: e.g., 'often times a small army overcomes a large one by the order of God'; 'The friends of God advancing against the masters of lies and idolatry . . .'; 'friends of God committed slaughter in every hill and valley'; 'God bestows honour on his own religion and degrades infidelity', etc.\textsuperscript{11}

3. \textit{Al Baihaqi}

Khwaja Abul Fazl bin al Hasan al Baihaqi (c. 996-1077 A.D.) wrote 'a comprehensive history' of the Ghaznavides in thirty volumes—\textit{Tarikh i Baihaqi} or \textit{Mujalladat-i-Baihaqi}, its various component volumes being severally known as \textit{Tarikh us Sabuktigin} or \textit{Tarikh i Ali-i-Sabuktigin} or \textit{Tarikh-i-Nasiri}; \textit{Taj ul Futuh} (for Mahmud); \textit{Tarikh-i-Masudi} (for Masud) etc.

Baihaqi was closely associated with the Court and the aristocratic classes of his age. He constantly alludes not only to himself, his own intimacies, actions and experiences, but also gives a graphic account of many contemporary nobles as well as the pursuits and habits of the emperor Masud bin Mahmud; viz., 'his dictations to his secretaries; his addiction to wine; and his repentance on the occasion of one of his visits to Hindustan, when he forswore liquor and threw the wine and drinking vessels into the river Jailam; which strongly reminds us of a later but identical freak of Babar's.' It is detailed, verbose and hence tedious. It is more a gossiping memoir than an elaborate history. But it is also highly original. Its chief merit lies in the minute details which throw light on the contemporary age,—court life, manner of conducting business including the nature of the agenda of the Council at Ghazni and the administrative personnel. The appellation 'an Oriental Mr. Pepys applied to him is not inapt.\textsuperscript{22}

4. \textit{Hasan Nizami}

We do not know much about Hasan Nizami, the author of \textit{Taj ul Maasir} (Crown of Exploits) except from his own references therein. He describes himself as 'Hasan Nizami, the slave and the son of the slave', and names as his patrons 'Abul Muzaffar Muhammad Bin Sam Bin Hussain' (i.e., Md. Ghuri)
and 'Qutbuddunya Waddin Abul Haris Aibak'. Born at Nai-shapur, Hasan Nizami is also known as Sadrudin Muhammad bin Hasan Nizami. According to Prof. Askari, his father was most probably Abul Hasan Nizami Aruzi of Samarqand. Though Lahore was neither his birth place nor chief residence he is associated with this city by Hammer. He had to leave his native place and come via Ghazni to Delhi on account of the political distractions in Khorasan, where merit was neither appreciated nor rewarded. He wrote with a deep sense of frustration. This immigrant Khorasani came to be fairly well connected with high social circles. From his connections and acquaintances (the Sufi Md. Shirazi and Chief Justice Majdul Mulk of Ghazni, Chief Justice Sharf ul mulk of Delhi) it may be inferred that Hasan Nizami was not only a very learned man, among other intellectuals, but also stood fairly high in the social ladder. He began (602/1205) this work in Persian not so much at the request of his friends at Delhi (where knowledge of Arabic was evidently at a discount) as in obedience to the royal mandate to detail the events of the conquering dynasty (name of ruler not given). It deals with his patrons,—partly with Muhammad Ghuri (from 1191 A.D.) but mainly with the history of Qutbuddin Aibak and Ilutmish. The author makes a parade of his learning at every step by using a florid and verbose style, in prose and verse, metaphors, similies, etc. But he does not give evidence of his being a witness or a participator in the exploits of the rulers. 'Beyond the praise which the author bestows upon his heroes, there is nothing to indicate that he was contemporary with the events which he describes, and the absence of all particulars, as well as a certain confusion and indistinctness about some of the dates, show that he was no active participator in any of his patrons' campaigns. It is singularly strange that he says nothing of the transactions of Qutbuddin's actual reign, for the same short chapter records his accession and his death.' Hasan Nizami was a panegyrist, like many other historians and suffered from prejudices. He slurs over Muhammad Ghuri's defeat at the first battle of Tarain but refers to restoration of lost prestige at the second. However, he hints at the virtual defeat of the Ghurid ruler by Bhimdeva II of Anhilwara earlier. 'Hasan Nizami would have us believe that the early Muslim conquerors were good Muslims and religious zealots whose primary aims and
motives in their wars and conquests, government and administration were religious rather than political or economical, and that in all the cities and places they conquered, hardly any idol temple or religious sanctuary was left intact and was not converted into Muslim institutions.' (as at Ajmer f.48a).\textsuperscript{35}

5. \textit{Minhaj ud din us Siraj}

Minhajuddin us Siraj of Juzjan (between Merv and Balkh) belonged to the aristocratic class by birth and marriage. He had a distinguished ancestry. His family had long been in the service of the house of Ghor. His great-great grandfather, Imam Abdul Khalik of Juzjan married the daughter of Sultan Ibrahim of Ghazni. His father was Qazi of the army of Hindustan under Muhammad Ghuri (1186). Minhaj himself was a learned man and an educationist. He was appointed head of the Firozi College of Uch (1227), 'law officer and director of the preaching and of all religious, moral and judicial affairs' (1232), Qazi of Delhi (1241), Principal of Nasiriya College, Delhi and Superintendent of its endowments, Qazi of Gwalior and preacher in the metropolitan mosque (1244-5), Sadr i Jahan, Qazi of the State and magistrate of the Capital underl Nasiruddin (1246). His stay at Lakhnauti, capital of Bengal for nearly 3 years (1241-2 to 1243-44), enabled him to get accurate information about outlying Muhammadan territory.

He wrote congratulatory verses on the accession of Bahram Shah, a congratulatory ode on the accession of Nasiruddin and got a prize. Both the Sultan and Ulugh Khan heaped honours on him, including a village in ‘inam’ (gift).

All this influenced his work, \textit{Tabaqat i Nasiri}, which was erudite but eulogistic. He named his work in honour of his patron Nasiruddin and adopted an eulogistic manner in writing it. It contains some ejaculatory prayers for the continuance of his reign. Nevertheless, competent critics think that he “rarely indulges in highflown eulogy”. Written in a plain, unaffected style and correct language, his narrative is straightforward and accurate.\textsuperscript{36} His judicial profession and academic outlook determined his methodology. In methodology he took great pains in collecting information from ‘trustworthy chronicles’, testimony of persons, hearsay, and even unspecified sources.\textsuperscript{37} But he is brief
to a fault. He is so very meagre in details, that sometimes it is ‘too concise to be of much use’ (Morley).^{38}

6. **Zia uddin Barani (A.D. 1285-1359)**

Born at Baran (modern Bulandshahr), Zia ud din Barani (b. 1285), the first Indian Muslim to compose a history of India, was well connected with the ruling circles of Delhi. As an eye-witness of some events and with easy access to the court he had ample opportunity of knowing the accurate details. A boon companion of Muhammad Tughluq, he did not criticise him in his lifetime. Banished from the court and feeling the stings of evil fortune, he wrote under a sense of being wronged and disappointment. But for his rescue by Firuz, he would have, as he himself says, ‘slept in the lap of mother Earth’. An introvert, his conscience was pricked and he attributed his misfortune to his moral failure. So his book had a practical objective; it was intended to be a double offering;—to God, to gain His forgiveness and atone for his sin;—to the Sultan, to secure his patronage and thereby freedom from want and protection from calumny of his enemies. Thus it was named after Firuz Shah. Son of a Sheikh father and Sayyid mother, fast friend of Sheikh Nizam ud din Auliya, Barani was deeply influenced by religion and mysticism. He hated aesthetic learning. This enables us to understand his religious view of history.\(^{39}\)

It is very surprising that Barani, who had ample opportunities of knowing details accurately, was ‘very sparing and inaccurate’ in dates. Nor did he always arrange the events in chronological order. His work was also wanting in method and arrangement.

Barani originally intended to write a universal history from Adam. But subsequently he changed his mind. In *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* (written, 1358) he deals with eight kings only during the period from Balban to the first six years of Firuz Tughluq, taking up the thread of the narrative almost from the point where Minhaj had left it. It is indeed a ‘continuation of Minhaj’s chronicle’. His reason for not covering the previous ground was perhaps sentimental weakness, not befitting a true historian, but it throws light on the mentality of the historians of the age. ‘If I copy what this venerable and illustrious author has written,
those who have read his history will derive no advantage from mine; and if I state anything contrary of that master’s writings or abridge or amplify his statement, it will be considered disrespectful and rash. In addition to which I should raise doubts and difficulties in the mind of his readers’. This reminds one of the fallacy of the logic alleged to have been attributed to Caliph Umar about the burning of the famous Alexandrian library. For to the discerning critical student of history there are many things besides agreement or repetition and disagreement or doubt.

Though Barani did not employ the technique of ‘isnad’, he believed in received truth. Facts of history were ascertained not by critical doubts and inquiry but, from the testimony of religious or virtuous men. He would not disagree with Minhaj, a religious man, he would rely on his relatives, on Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan though he did not always trust his own memory, which was prodigious. Nevertheless he wrote like a story teller, irrespective of all authorities. Thus he lacked ‘deep research, great discrimination and sustained effort.’

On his own admission Barani based his work partly on his hearsay statements, and partly on personal observations. He learnt his account of Balban from his own father and grandfather and Balban’s officers, and of Kaikobad’s reign from ‘his father and from his preceptors who were men of note at the time.’ He supplemented this by his own observations: ‘the events and affairs of Jalaluddin’s reign up to the end of this work, all occurred under his own eyes’. Without going deep into individual details, he looks at the compact whole. As he writes: ‘In this book I have recorded all the diplomatic and administrative affairs of the State and, in the description of conquests I have not mentioned every event or happening, nor have I mentioned privileges granted to the people since wise people will (have) well known these things from a study of administrative affairs.’ He is selective. Barani’s age was one of literary brilliance, and his style has been described as ‘simple, clear and crisp’. Shorn of ornamental verbiage, it is often ‘vivid, imaginative and racy, sometimes soaring high in poetic ecstasy’. He often uses Hindi phrases. This work on political history is an encyclopaedia of culture as well, containing lists of historians, philosophers, poets, physicians, saints and religious divines.
Whatever may be his limitations as a historian from the modern point of view, it must be admitted that Barani had a high conception of the function of a historian, viz. to record impartially and honestly the whole truth without fear or favour. By so doing the historian would show his piety and right belief. He believed that the historian would be accountable to God on the day of judgment for what he wrote; his function was to teach ‘the lessons of history’. He intended his *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi* to fulfil this conception of the duty of the historian. According to him the primary duty of a historian is impartiality and delineating the truth and so everybody is not qualified for history-writing. Let Barani speak himself.

"The compiler of history must be a man of trust, veracity and impartiality, so that the belief of the reader may be strengthened, and people may easily believe him. And since a historian must be wise and knowing, conscience and religion are also a condition precedent to the writing of books of history. And one of the necessary conditions of the writing of history is that for reasons of conscience it is so incumbent upon the historian that, if he records the virtues, goodness, impartiality, benevolence of a king, or a celebrated personality he should not hide vices and weaknesses. He should not feel shy of such statement but should write it plainly if expediency allows, or else he should inform the wise and the learned readers of these things by hints. And if through fear he cannot record the weakness of his contemporaries, he is helpless. But so far as his predecessors are concerned he should write the exact truth. And if the historian has been offended either by a king or a minister or an eminent person, or if he has been favoured by them, he should not in the course of writing the history make any mention of these things, so that he may not record a greatness or a virtue or an event which does not belong to the person in question. But the historian must, on the basis of religion, belief, truth and conscience, be a recorder of truth and truth alone. And it is incumbent upon historians to refrain from the ways of liars, flatterers, exaggerators, poets and romancers, because they call a shell by the name of ruby and, goaded by their avarice, they will call a pebble a gem, and most of their inventions are forgeries and lies; on the Day of Judgment the fraudulent author will suffer worst pangs."
After referring to his own difficulties in writing this history and to the varied contents thereof, Barani claims that his work is ‘worthy of credence’: "I have experienced much difficulty in writing this history and expect to receive justice from fair minded people. This work is a collection of many meanings. If it is read as history, people will find in it the annals of sultans and kings. If rules, regulations and healing prescriptions are sought therein it will not be found wanting. If in this history are sought the advice and precepts of wordly rules, they will find more and better here than by the study of other books. Whatever I have written I have written truthfully and honestly and this history is worthy of credence. As I have set down an epitome of many pregnant meanings, this history ought as a matter of duty to be followed as an example".

He feels pride in his own work: "I, Ziya Barani, ... have done wonders in writing this book and people who know history (who have become as rare as the Phoenix and the Philosopher's stone) know that no one has produced a work like the Tarikh i Firoz Shahi which is a collection of annals and principles of temporal government ... If this history is weighed and compared against others and my trouble judged fairly it will be seen that in every line, indeed in every word, I have recorded the frivolities and strangeness of the established rules contained in the annals and traditions of sultans, together with the benefits and injuries brought about by the rule of temporal monarchs, whether openly or by implication, whether by overt or covert expressions."

How far was Barani successful in discharging his duty of honestly recording the truth? Opinions have differed about his honesty and truthfulness. Ferishta even blames Barani for withholding the truth; hence Barani’s denunciation of a ruler becomes very important. According to Elliot, Barani was an unfair narrator, because he omitted altogether or slurred over, as of no consequence, some of the most important events, for fear of incurring the displeasure of his patron.

Dr. A. B. M. Habibullah and Dr. Peter Hardy have picked the bubble of his bonafides as an authoritative historian. It was Habibullah who first cast doubts on Barani. His chief defect was mis-representation, though he was not deliberately dishonest. His undue emphasis on characterisation and neglect
of faithful chronicling of events was mainly due to his conception of history and plan of writing. A more serious danger was his mental bias, springing not from any motive or personal reasons but from his politico-religious conviction. His reactionary outlook affected his selection of events and judgments of men and affairs. Sometimes it even led him to make interpolations in his narrative. He did not regard the past as it was but as it ought to have been, according to some ideals of his own. Either condemning or approving, he could not take an objective view. Yet he honestly believed that history was faithful. This made it difficult to detect this tendency of his. Habibullah's thesis is that Barani has projected his own mind and not the actual past in his Tarikh and that by 'foisting his own ideas on the past' he has produced an unreal picture. Like Thucydides Barani has included reports of conversations between various persons, viz.,

(a) Sultan Balban and his sons Muhammad and Nasiruddin Bughra Khan
(b) Bughra Khan and Sultan Kaiqubad
(c) Fakhruddin, Kotwal of Delhi, and his nephew Nizam ud din
(d) Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji and Malik Ahmad Chap
(e) Sultan Alauddin Khalji and Malik Ala ul mulk, Kotwal of Delhi, and Qazi Mughisuddin
(f) Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq and Barani himself (c. 1347).

But he has put his own ideas in the mouths of the above personages, i.e. to suit the particular character in which he wants to reveal the eight Sultans. In this connection Habibullah has been supported by Hardy. The main ground against Barani is the time lag between the alleged conversations and the date of the composition of the Tarikh (1357), forty to seventy years after the death of the Sultans concerned. Nevertheless these were valuable in throwing light on the spirit of polity and moral and social evils of the age. Thus in spite of above criticisms modern historians have generally regarded Barani as undoubtedly 'the most important historian' of the Turko-Afghan period.

Barani's subsequent work, Fatawa i Jahandari, containing his counsels to rulers on administration, state policy and army, is an important contribution to political and military thinking of the period.
7. **Shamsuddin Siraj Afif**

Though born (1342) in an official family, Shamsuddin Siraj Afif did not hold any official post. But unlike Barani and Isami he did not indicate that he wrote with any sense of disappointed ambition or neglected merit. He wrote for the edification of his readers. His *Tarikh i Firuz Shahi* was a part of a large historical work dwelling on good qualities (*manaqib*) of three Tughluq rulers (Ghiyasuddin, Mumammad and Firuz) and destruction of Delhi by Timur. It was an example of biography. As *manaqib* applies to holy men, not Sultans, there was a Sufi undercurrent in it.46

The treatment of Shams i Siraj Afif is topical, not chronological. Though he follows a very general chronological sequence of events, he does not place them in a strict chronological sequence. He is more concerned with presenting his account in a literary garb than in making the sequence intelligible.

Afif wrote from authorities, accepting the evidence of reliable informants, but he did not argue from his evidence to decide upon disputed points. Like Barani, Afif uses religious criteria for ascertaining historical truth. When he does not give common report or precise authority of others for the statements in his work, he depended on eye-witnesses.47

8. **Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi**

Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi was not a courtier at Delhi but expected to become one. He expected to win royal patronage by presenting his book to Sultan Sayyid Mubarak Shah (1421-34).48

In *Tarikh i Mubarak Shahi* (wr. 1434) Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi borrows from previous writers for events up to 1351. But he was not a mere copyist. He had his own principles of selection, i.e., to record deeds of Sultans, nobles and soldiers, arranged reignwise, in chronological order, e.g., accessions, appointments, battles and military movements, rebellions etc. After 1351 he relied on memory, personal observation, the evidence of trustworthy narrators, and not on written materials. But throughout his idiom was the same. He was a mere chronicler of the external actions only. His work was, in fact, a regional chronicle. History is depicted as a succession of military
and political events only, as for example he omits Alauddin's economic measures.  


Khwaja Abul Hasan Yaminuddin Amir Khusrau or Mir Khusrau (1253-1325) was a member of the aristocracy of his time and occupied, by dint of parentage and his own official career, a very prominent place in Delhi court circles. His father was a Turkish noble in the time of Ilutmish. His mother was an Indian lady, the daughter of Imad ul mulk, a high officer under Balban. He himself served under six Sultans. His close association with them and the aristocracy of blood, military oligarchy and the saint Nizamuddin Auliya gave him an unique opportunity of knowing the truth about the political events and social conditions of the time. But he did not make a good use of his knowledge. Some 'pieces d'occasions' he wrote on requests from Sultans and princes, others in hope of reward or out of gratitude or to achieve literary fame. Amir Khusrau wrote much about the past but he was more a poet than an historian, more a panegyrist than an impartial writer. All this affected his literary and semi-historical compositions. He did not show much attention to chronology even in his only prose history (*Khazain ul Futuh*). He wrote to please rather than to understand, preach or instruct. Out of the 92 works ascribed to him, the majority have been lost. His historical works were written during 35 years (1289-1325) but these were occasional works not parts of an integrated historical whole. Thus the *Qiran us Sadain* (Conjunction of Two planets, 1289), consisted of several descriptive poems, climaxed by the interview of father (Bughra Khan, ruler of Lakhnauti) and son (Sultan Muizzuddin Kaiqubad). His *Nuh Sipihr* throws light on the final subjugation of Devagiri in 1318. The *Khazain ul Futuh* or *Tarikh i Alai*, written in prose, 'the only history extant' during the reign of Alauddin, the most reliable and accurate history of the first sixteen years of this reign (conquest of Deogiri to that of Warangal) is divided into several sections and is not strictly chronological. It bears the impress of the author's poetic nature, literary skill, his political opportunism and fondness for India and everything Indian. It consists of paragraphs, based
on a ‘nisbat’ (metaphors, similes or allusions, derived from an object), makes frequent use of Quranic verses (to add force and dignity) and of chronograms, and of Hindi words. As Mohammad Wahid Mirza writes: ‘Khusrau’s concern has been not only to write the annals of his royal patron’s reign, but to produce a masterpiece of literature.’ He looks at events from aesthetic point of view; action is subordinated to effect. He not only describes the military victories of Alauddin (i.e., seizing the world) but also his administrative achievements,—in consolidating his dominion, establishment of law and order and adoption of several measures in order to promote the welfare of the people, (i.e., keeping of the world). But Amir Khusrau’s opportunism makes him pass over his treachery towards his uncle in gaining his throne. Without referring to the assassination of Alauddin’s uncle, Amir Khusrau ascribes his accession to God’s will.

Amir Khusrau’s Afzal ul Fawaid throws valuable light on the saintly character of Nizamuddin Aulia, and the poet’s intimate association with him. The Tughluqnamah, the last historical poem of Amir Khusrau, telling the story of the seizure of Delhi by Ghiyasuddin Tughluq has a religious and moral colour. The Sultan was an exemplar of virtue, fighting against the forces of darkness typified by Khusrau Khan (the infidel) for the cause of Islam.

He does not use evidence of events systematically and critically, indicate the sources of information (except in Diwal Rani), or quote orthodox men as Barani and Asif (to some extent) do. The reader has to accept his word as true. It is also couched in a religious and moral idiom. In final analysis history is unintelligible except as outcome of divine will or fate.

According to Cowell his style is full of exaggerations and metaphorical descriptions; the facts of history are tolerably dependable. Khusrau’s works which describe social and cultural conditions of the age compensate the absence of ‘political historicity’ to a large extent.

10. Isami

Abdul Malik Isami (born at Delhi, A.D. 1311) wrote his historical epic, Futuh us Salatin (written during 1349-1350) as a
disappointed man in search of a patron. He fell a victim to the tyranny of Muhammad bin Tughluq. He was forced to move from Delhi to Deogiri (Daulatabad) with his 90 year-old grandfather who died on the way. Without a wife, without children, without friends and without relatives, he looked around for a friend or patron. He complained bitterly of low literary standards in Hindustan and of the sad plight of good authors in an unfriendly world at the mercy of malignant critics. In disgust he wanted to leave Hindustan and go to Mecca. His dream patron appeared in the person of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah. He settled at Daulatabad and wrote under his patronage to become a Firdausi to the Bahmani Sultan. His Fatuh us Salatin would be Shahnamah and it was dedicated to him to win his patronage and get lasting literary fame. His sufferings partly account for his strong condemnation of Muhammad Tughluq. As a historian of the Tughluq period Isami occupied a unique position, being the only writer above fear or favour of the Sultan.52

But the work lacks accurate chronology so essential to intelligibility. His treatment is episodic, the episodes being unconnected and undated. The use of terms like 3 or 4 days, a week, sometime, a day is not helpful. The only date given in Alauddin’s reign is that of his death.53

Isami gave an epic conspectus of the deeds of the Muslims in Hindustan from the Ghaznavides to mid-14th century. Though he relied on older sources he did not follow authority slavishly. He was not a mere slavish copyist of received report and tradition. By imposing his own ideas of form and content on his data, he wrote a selective but somewhat uncritical account of the past, using stories, legends, anecdotes and common reports gleaned from friends and associates (hearsay evidence). Without specifying their exact source, he merely says ‘I have heard’. Materials were selected on aesthetic consideration and not on critical and factual criteria. At best he offers not critical history but merely historical evidence. An eye-witness of many developments leading to disintegration of the Tughlaq empire in the Deccan, he refers to court ceremonial of the Bahmani kingdom. His style is clear and the narrative vivid.54 Both Nizamuddin Ahmad and Ferishta depended on Isami’s work.
(a) Royal autobiographers:

The Timurides were themselves highly educated or patrons of education and literature. The memoirs, introduced by them and differing from formal chronicles, constituted a most novel feature. These were written by members of royal family as well as by private persons. The Malfuzat i Timuri or Tuzuk i Timuri was an autobiographical memoir of Timur written in Chaghtai Turki and dealing with fortyone years of his life. The authenticity of the work, once suspect, is now accepted, thanks to Major Davy. The method by which the accounts and descriptions of the events of Timur’s life were recorded has thus been described only thirty years after his death by Sharfuddin Yazdi, author of Zafar-nama, which is a reproduction of the Malfuzat: ‘Men of the highest character for learning and knowledge and goodness, Aighur officers and Persian secretaries, were in attendance at the Court of Timur, and a staff of them under the orders of the Emperor wrote down an account of everything that occurred. The movements, actions and sayings of Timur, the various incidents and affairs of state, of religion, and the ministers were all recorded and written down with the greatest care. The most stringent commands were given that every event should be recorded exactly as it occurred, without any modification either in excess or diminution. This rule was to be particularly observed in matters of personal bearing and courage, without fear or favour of any one, and most especially in respect of the valour and prowess of the Emperor himself. The learned and eloquent writers having recorded the facts, their compositions were polished and finished off in verse and prose. From time to time these writings were brought into the royal presence and were read to the Emperor, so as to insure confidence by the impress of his approval. In this way the records of the various incidents and actions of the life of Timur, whether recounted in Turki verse or Persian prose, were revised and finally recorded in prose and verse. Besides this, some of the officers of the Court wrote down the incidents of the reign of Timur, and took the greatest pains to ascertain the truth of what they recorded. Accomplished writers then moulded these productions into Turki
verse and Persian prose.\textsuperscript{55} This method, as we will see later, largely influenced and was similar to that used by Abul Fazl in writing his ‘magnus opus’.

The motives of Timur in undertaking the invasion of India have been described by him in his own autobiography from which it would appear that religious, economic or material and political factors were at work. In one place Timur refers to two objects, religious and political: ‘My principal object in coming to Hindustan, and in undergoing all this toil and hardship, has been to accomplish two things. The first was to war with the infidels, the enemies of the Muhammadan religion; and by this religious warfare to acquire some claim to reward in the life to come. The other was a worldly object; that the army of Islam might gain something by plundering the wealth and valuables of the infidels; plunder in war is as lawful as their mothers’ milk to Musulmans who war for their faith, and the consuming of that which is lawful is a means of grace.’\textsuperscript{56}

(i) Religious:

(a) “... the desire to lead an expedition against the infidels, and to become a ‘ghazi’; for it had reached my ears that the slayer of infidels is a ‘ghazi’, and if he is slain, he becomes a martyr. It was on this account that I formed this resolution but I was undetermined in my mind whether I should direct my expedition against the infidels of China or against the infidels and polytheists of India. In this matter I sought an omen from the Kuran, and the verse I opened upon this: ‘O Prophet, make war upon infidels and unbelievers, and treat them with severity.’\textsuperscript{57}

(b) “My great object in invading Hindustan had been to wage a religious war against the infidel Hindus, ...”\textsuperscript{58}

(c) When Timur arrived in Afghanistan, the Muslim inhabitants (of Indarab), both ‘nobles and people, high and low’, complained in a body, seeking justice and protection against oppression. “The infidel Kators and the Siyah-poshes exact tribute and blackmail every year from us who are true believers, and if we fail in the least of out settled amount, they slay our men and carry our women and children into slavery, so that we helpless Musulmans fly for protection to the presence of the great king that he may grant to us oppressed ones our hearts’ desire upon
these infidels. On hearing these words the flame of my zeal for Islam, and my affection for my religion, began to blaze."

(ii) Economic:

The wealth of Hindustan tempted Timur. 'Prince Muhammad Sultan said, "The whole country of India is full of gold and jewels, and in it there are seventeen mines of gold and silver, diamond and ruby and emerald and tin and iron and steel and copper and quicksilver, etc., and of the plants which grow there are those fit for making wearing apparel, and aromatic plants, and the sugarcane, and it is a country which is always green and verdant, and the whole aspect of the country is pleasant and delightful." But it was not merely the wealth of Hindustan but the wealth of the infidels and idolaters which gave the invader a special justification. "Now, since the inhabitants are chiefly polytheists and infidels and idolaters and worshippers of the sun, by the order of God and his prophet, it is right for us to conquer them."*

(iii) Political:

Besides the religious and economic factors there was also a political motive. Timur's invasion was an attempt to re-assert the old domination of Persia and Central Asia over India.

(a) "At this time the prince Shah Rukh said: 'India is an extensive country; whatever Sultan conquers it becomes supreme over the four quarters of the globe; if under the conduct of our amir, we conquer India, we shall become rulers over the seven climes.' He then said: 'I have seen in the history of Persia that, in the time of the Persian Sultans, the King of India was called Darai, with all honour and glory. On account of his dignity he bore no other name; and the Emperor of Rome was called Caesar, and the Sultan of Persia was called Kisra, and the Sultan or the Tatars, Khakan, and the Emperor of China, Faghfur; but the King of Iran and Turan bore the title of Shahinsjah of Iran and Turan and it would be a pity that we should not be supreme over the country of Hindustan.' I was excessively pleased with these words of Prince Shah Rukh."**
(b) Amir Timur was in no way inferior to Sultan Mahmud, rather superior to him; the former had conquered Hindustan with 30,000 horse, whereas Timur had 100,000 valiant Tatar horsemen: "... if he determines upon this expedition Almighty God will give him victory, and he will become a 'ghazi' and 'mujahid' before God and we shall be attendants on an amir who is a 'ghazi', and the army will be contented and the treasury rich and well filled, and with the gold of Hindustan our amir will become a conqueror of the world and famous among the kings of earth."63

(c) Timur also wanted to establish peace and internal security by protecting the travellers from the Jats. "They were Musulmans only in name and had not their equals in theft and highway robbery. They plundered caravans upon the road, and were a terror to Musulmans and travellers. They had now abandoned the village and had fled to the sugar-cane fields, the valleys, and the jungles. When these facts reached my ears I prepared a force which I placed under the direction of Tokal Bahadur, son of the Hindu Karkarra, and sent it against the Jats."64 "... these turbulent Jats were as numerous as ants or locusts, and that no traveller or merchant passed unscathed from their hands."65 All this motivation is in striking contrast to divine ordination and indicates the pre-eminence of secular over religious factors, though the latter were not altogether absent.

During the preliminary discussions before launching the expedition, some opposed the idea of permanent conquest but Timur overbore their objections. 'Some of the nobles said, "By the favour of Almighty God we may conquer India, but if we establish ourselves permanently therein, our race will degenerate and our children will become like the natives of those regions, and in a few generations their strength and valour will diminish." The amirs of regiments ('kushunat') were disturbed at these words, but I said to them, "My object in the invasion of Hindusthan is to lead an expedition against the infidels that, according to the law of Muhammad ..., we may convert to the true faith the people of that country, and purify the land itself from the filth of infidelity and polytheism; and that we may overthrow their temples and idols and become ghazis and mujahids before God."66
Babur was very well qualified by his experience and attainments to write his invaluable Tuzuk which holds a very high place in historical literature. He was not only a great general but a profound politician. However, he was more a soldier of fortune than an architect of empire. He was also an educated and accomplished man of letters (both prose and poetry), proficient, besides his native Turki, in Arabic, Persian and Hindi. He was ‘essentially the historian of his own times’. At the same time he was a keen and quick but an exact observer of nature, with a trained eye for beauty and a discerning judge of human character. Hence his autobiography is not merely the diary of a soldier, describing marches and counter-marches, or a political record, portraying his life in camp and court, but a naturalist’s journal as well. It also contains his ‘personal impressions and acute reflections’ as well as minute, detailed and life-like descriptions of the persons referred to in the memoirs. Hence it is unique among eastern biographies. Utterly frank, he portrayed his own virtues and vices and faults and spoke out even unpleasant truth at times. He has given a graphic description of Hindusthan,—its physical features, social and economic conditions, flora and fauna, besides political condition. Scholars like Lane-poole, Beveridge, Elliot and Dowson, have unanimously praised him for his accuracy and truthfulness. But he is not always accurate: his army at Panipat did not number, as he writes,—to magnify his victory,—12,000 men only but double that number (as against Ibrahim’s one lakh). Some of his judgments were the product of passing fancy or the foreign invader’s inborn prejudice viz., sweeping condemnation of India, her people and civilization. Yet, when all is said, his autobiography forms one of the most charming and valuable records, alike for its historical material and literary merit. In particular, as a source of Indian history during the twenties of the 16th century the value of the third volume of the Tuzuk is rated very high.67

Jahangir, desirous of improving upon his father’s practice of having an official history written by a historiographer, wrote his own memoirs. The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, which constitutes the main source of his reign and personality, not only bears the impress of his character, scholarship and vicissitudes but also proves him to have been a man of no common ability. It was essentially ‘a human document’ in which he records his weaknesses, and
confesses his faults, with candour, and a perusal of this work alone would leave a favourable impression both of his character and talents. Like his father, he was fond of jewels, and estimated their value as a true connoisseur. He was a lover of nature, both animate and inanimate, and viewed it with a shrewd and observant eye. He mentions the peculiarities of many animals and birds, and shows that he watched their habits with diligence and perseverance. Trees and fruits and flowers also come under his observation, and he gives his opinions upon architectures and gardening like one who had bestowel time and thought upon them. The memoirs were discontinued in the 17th year of his reign (1622) on account of misfortune, ill health and sorrow. These were resumed by Mutamad Khan Bakhshi till the beginning of the 19th year (1624) in the name of the Emperor but under his supervision and thereafter continued as a part of his own work, the Iqbalnamah-i-Jahangiri and then by Muhammad Hadi till the Emperor’s death.

His memoirs are not inferior in interest to those of Babur. He comes very near Babur in truthfulness and candour recording his own weaknesses and faults, power of observation and portrayal of nature. If Babur reveals his private debauches, Jahangir calmly describes how he had Abul Fazl murdered. He is, however, discreetly silent or glosses over such events as his rebellion against Akbar, the circumstances of the death of Khusrau and his marriage with Nur Jahan. Nevertheless it is indispensable for his reign. 68

(b) Memoir-writers:

Gulbadan Begum, the well-educated daughter of Babur (c. 1523-1603) and married to a Chaghtai Mughal, Khwajah Khizr Khan, at the age of seventeen, wrote the Humayunnamah (1587) in Persian at Akbar’s order. Her account of Babur, who died when she was eight, is necessarily very brief, mainly based on reports received from others. Humayun treated her well after 1530. After 1540 she remained in Kabul. The narrative of Humayun’s life,—victories, defeats and difficulties and hardships (at treacherous Kamran’s hands) was mostly that of an eye-witness. Where she lacked personal observation she had to depend on reports of others, especially senior ladies of the harem, e.g.
Khazadah, Muham and Hamidah Banu Begums, whom she respected and whose confidence she enjoyed. Occasionally her book is faulty in sequence. But it naturally throws more light on the domestic or family relations of Babur and Humayun and on social and cultural aspects of the Mughals than military details (e.g. Chausa and Kanouj). It was remarkable for its style and content.69

Mirza Haidar Doghat (b. 1499-1500 d. 1551), the accomplished and learned author of Tarikh-i-Rashidi (wr. 1551), had a very distinguished ancestry. He was the son of Muhammad Husain Mirza (son of the Amir of Kashgar) and the sister of Babur’s mother, and hence the first cousin of Babur. Thus he inherited great vigour and ability. It was Babur’s ‘parental observance and affection’ which compensated for the loss, of his father who was put to death by Shaibani Khan of Herat (1508). He praises Babur for his gifts and expresses his gratitude to him. Like Babur again, he was bold and adventurous and showed remarkable military activity at different places. Possessing considerable literary talents and keen power of observation like his cousin, he recorded what he saw and learnt after enquiry. The two latter parts of the book, in particular, were the productions of ‘a contemporary intimately acquainted with the men and events he describes’ viz., Babur’s struggles, Humayun’s conflict with Sher Shah. Dedicated to Sultan Said of Kashgar, the work is valuable for the history of Khans of the Mughals and the Amirs of Kashgar and fills up a gap in Babur’s memoirs (1508-19). But notices of India are fragmentary and are mainly confined to events in which he himself participated, e.g., his governorship of Lahore under Kamran and his offer of help to Humayun and the conquest of Kashmir (1540) and rule over it till his death in 1551 at the hands of conspirators. His account of the battle of Qanauj shows his power of observation as an eye witness as he was the Wing Commander of Humayun’s army. He was devoted to Humayun and asked him to use Kashmir as a spring board for recovery of the empire. His chronology is, however, weak. He shows a strong anti-Shiite spirit during Babur’s occupation of Samarqand and subsequent events.70

Being Humayun’s ‘aftabchi’ or ewer-bearer for more than twenty years Jauhar, the author of Tazkirat ul Waqiat (wr. 1586-7), was his constant attendant and intimate confidant.
Hence he was a contemporary historian. It is not known what his actual position was when he wrote his work. Jauhar himself says that Humayun assigned to him the collection of the revenues of the pargana of Haibatpur. Abul Fazl also mentions him as collector in the district of Haibatpur and later as 'Mihtar' Jauhar, treasurer of the Punjab. So it is clear that he was a man of some distinction. But he did not hold any important office under Akbar.

The book aims at giving a 'faithful and true representation' of the career of Humayun. Being a menial, Jauhar was not a learned person and the work is written in a simple style, without any claim to erudition. The greatest merit of the book is that it was the work of an 'eye-witness', authentic and written with sincerity and naivete. Jauhar owed his official position to Humayun and so Elphinstone considers him to be anxious to give a favourable version to all his actions. But he is largely free from exaggerations and conventional eulogistic approach of panegyrists. It gives a 'vivid and lifelike portrait' of the Emperor in his public affairs—e.g., his escape, difficulties in Persia, as well as virtues of 'courage, fortitude, forbearance, and clemency, kindness, humility, piety and resignation'. In the words of Dr. S. Ray "No other historian gives so detailed an account of Humayun in Iran as Jauhar. No other historian, writing from the Mughal standpoint, reveals the sufferings and indignities to which Humayun was subjected at the Safavid Court". Jauhar gives a fairly good idea of the atmosphere of the Mughal court, showing how it pulsated with his fleeting fortunes.

Jauhar's wrote it (1587) evidently in obedience to Akbar's order to supply materials for the Akbarnamah, i.e., more than thirty years after Humayun's death. (But the author's preface does not refer to it). Hence his undoubted honesty and truthfulness must have been diluted, in effect by failing memory. The 'long choosing and beginning late' performance stood in the way of accurate delineation of the incidents and exact narration. V. Smith, of course, thinks that Jauhar 'must have made use of notes recorded at the time of the events described'. But some other scholars do not agree with him. Dowson writes: 'They are not contemporary records of the events as they occurred, but reminiscences of more than 30 years' standing, so that whatever the sincerity and candour of the writer time must have
toned down his impressions and memory had doubtless given a favourable colour to the recollections he retained of a well-beloved master. The conversations attributed to the various personages who figure in his Memoirs must, therefore, contain quite as much of what the author thought they might or ought to have said as of what really was uttered. S. Banerji has referred to some silly mistakes due to failing memory. But H. Mukhia has shown that Jauhar used some official documents.

Secondly, the memoirs lack in one vital respect. They do not, unlike the memoirs of Babur and Jahangir, throw any light on personal traits and anecdotes which enable the reader to form an estimate of Humayun as a man. Thirdly, it is completely silent on Humayun's early life and life as a prince (23 years). Fourthly, Jauhar is deficient in chronology, giving not only very few dates but also wrong dates at times. But he gives the correct date of Akbar's birth. Fifthly, his knowledge of topography of the Deccan was very poor,—locating the encounter between Humayun and Bahadur in the Burhanpur district. Sixthly, he lacks in sense of proportion, the capacity to 'distinguish the trivial from the important'. At times, however, Jauhar rises to the level of a true historian.71

(c) *Mughal official historians: The namahs*:

The Mughal period was pre-eminently an age of official histories or 'namahs'. These constituted another novel feature of this age. This new type of history was inspired by Persian influence and stimulated by the influence of Persians in a cosmopolitan court. It was Akbar who introduced the practice of having the official history of the empire written by the Royal Historiographer and it continued down to the reign of Aurangzeb, who stopped it in his eleventh year. With the recording of events by experienced officials and courtiers, practised clerks and secretaries, a change came over history in 'form, content and spirit alike'. History tended to become a running chronicle. These official histories or 'namahs' were based on an accumulated mass of contemporary records,—official records ('Waqai') of provinces and the *akhbarat i darbar i mu'ala* or court bulletins or news letters and corrected under royal direction. Hence there was no necessity to make a detailed reference to the long chain of 'isnād'. On the other hand the presentation of history inevitably tended to reflect the bias and outlook of the Court,—social,
political and religious. Naturally the official historians (e.g., Abul Fazl, Abul Hamid Lahori, Muhammad Kazim and Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan) could not afford to be independent in their attitude or critical of the actions of the rulers or ministers. They wisely refrained from detailing the career of Humayun in Persia and Afghanistan because of the humiliating treatment accorded to him by Shah Tahmasp. Hence they 'deemed it politic to slur over the temporary eclipse of their royal house'. By discarding the former theological conception, history now inevitably tended to concentrate increasingly on the activities of the king and the court. The court chroniclers tended to indulge in 'nauseating flattery' of their patrons as well as in verbosity.

But this flattery was 'more a defect of manner than one of fact'. In these official histories, no fact has been really falsified, though 'credit is often given to the Emperor where he did not deserve it'. For example, the Ain i Akbari does not mention Todar Mal's name even once in dealing with the revenue reforms during Akbar's reign and makes the Emperor the inventor of the 'Ain i Dahsala'. But even the Stuart Kings were styled "His Gracious and Sacred Majesty" and Napoleon's Moniteurs were not models of factual veracity. On the other hand these 'namahs' supplied generally trustworthy information, true basis for a narrative, of events of a king's reign, from which we can form our own judgment of the characters and political forces. History came to be secularised. Historians now pleaded for the moral value of its study in place of the earlier theological justification."

Akbar's minister and friend, writer, statesman, diplomat and military commander, Shaikh Abul Fazl (b. 14 Jan., 1550-1602) belonged to a Hejazi Arab family migrating to Sind and then permanently settled at Nagor, n.w. of Ajmer. He inherited the traditions of mysticism, universal learning and cosmopolitanism from his father and grandfather, while he learnt the lesson of toleration in the school of misfortune and persecution to which his father, a Sufi scholar, Shaikh Mubarak, was subjected for his Mahdawi leanings. He gave signs of his remarkable mental precocity and extensive reading when at the age of fifteen he mastered different branches of science and became a teacher even before the age of twenty. The admonitions of his relatives led him to forsake the seclusion of the academic recluse. Since his introduction to the Emperor in 1573 through his elder brother,
Faizi, his promotion due to his erudition and devoted loyalty, was quick and excited the jealousy of his rivals and enemies. His position, administrative training, and personal contact with every important affair, his access to official papers, his scholarship, and acquaintance with important Arabic and Persian histories, industry and marvellous literary style made both his works invaluable.

Abul Fazl takes his readers to the laboratory of his history and explains his methods in the Akbarnamah and the Ain i Akbari which remind us of those used for Timur's autobiography. From these we get a clear picture of how he secured his raw materials and worked them up for writing his history, as commissioned by Akbar.

(i) Laborious collection of records and events: 'Assuredly, I spent much labour and research in collecting the records and narrative of his Majesty's actions'. (AN). 'My first care was to collect by the aid of heaven, all the transactions of his enduring reign, and I used exceptional and unprecedented diligence in order to record the chief events of my own time. In many of these occurrences I bore a personal share, and I had a perfect knowledge of the under-currents and secret intrigues of state, to say nothing of the ordinary drift of public affairs.' ('Ain).

(ii) Accumulation of evidence: 'And since the insinuations of rumour had prejudiced me and I was not sure of my own memory I made various inquiries of the principal officers of State and of the grandees and other well-informed dignitaries, and not content with numerous oral statements, I asked permission to put them into writing, and for each event I took the written testimony of more than twenty intelligent and cautious persons.' ('Ain).

'I was a long time interrogating the servants of the State and the old members of the illustrious family. I examined both prudent, truth-speaking old men and active minded, right actioned young ones and reduced their statements to writing.' (AN).

(iii) Imperial search for evidence: 'The royal commands were issued to the provinces, that those who from old service remembered, with certainty or with adminicle of doubt, the events of the past, should copy out their notes and memoranda and transmit them to Court. Inasmuchas this suspicious invitation was not fully responded to nor my wish fully accomplished.'
a second command shone forth from the holy presence-chamber; to wit—that the materials which had been collected should be fairied out and recited in the royal hearing and that whatever might have to be written down afterwards should be introduced into the noble volume as a supplement and that such details as, on account of the minuteness of the enquiries and the minutes of affairs, could not then be brought to an end, should be inserted afterwards at my leisure. Being relieved by this royal order—the interpreter of the Divine ordinance—from the secret anxiety of my heart, I proceeded to reduce into writing the rough drafts which were void of the graces of arrangement and style.' (AN).

(iv) Materials obtained from the Imperial Record Office: 'I obtained the chronicle of events beginning with the nineteenth year of the Divine Era (i.e. 1574-75), when the Record Office was established by the enlightened intellect of his Majesty, and from its rich pages I gathered the accounts of many events. Great pains too were taken to procure originals or copies of most of the orders which had been issued to the provinces from the accession up to the present day which is the dawn of Fortune's morning. Their sacred contents yielded much material for the sublime volume.' (AN).

(v) Reports of Ministers and Officers: 'I also took much trouble to incorporate many of the reports which ministers and high officials had submitted, about the affairs of the empire and the events of foreign countries.' (AN).

(vi) Testing of evidence: 'And my labour-loving soul was satisfied by the apparatus of inquiry and research. I also exerted myself energetically to collect the rough notes and memoranda of sagacious well informed men. By these means, I constructed a reservoir of irrigating and moistening the rose garden of fortune. But inasmuchas, notwithstanding all this apparatus and these rich treasures of information, the House of History has become decayed from lapse of time, and there were contradictions and imperfections in the accounts and no sufficient means of clearing up difficulties—I begged the correction of what I had heard from his Majesty who, by virtue of his perfect memory, recollects every occurrence in gross and in detail, from the time he was one year old—when the material reason came into action—till the present day when he is by his wisdom the cynosure of penetrating truth-seekers. By repeated interviews I arrived at
correctness and erased doubts and difficulties with the knife of investigation and ascertainmet. When peace had possessed my soul, I made honesty and lavish labour conductors of the lofty undertaking.' (AN).

'The flagrant contradictory statements of eye-witnesses had reached my ears and amazed me, and my difficulties increased. Here was date of an event not far distant—the actors in the scenes and transactions actually present—their directing spirit exalted on the throne of actual experience—and I with my eyes open observing these manifold discrepancies—... I determined to remedy this, and set my mind to work out a solution. The perplexity disentangled itself and my bewildered state of mind began to grow calm. By deep reflection and a careful scrutiny, taking up the principal points in which there was general agreement, my satisfaction increased, and where the narrators differed from each other I based my presentation of facts on a footing of discriminate investigation of exact and cautious statements, and this somewhat set my mind at ease. Where an event had equal weight of testimony on both sides, or anything reached me opposed to my own view of the question, I submitted it to His Majesty and freed myself from responsibility. By the blessing of the rising fortunes of the State and the sublimity of the royal wisdom, together with the perfect sincerity of the inquirer and his wakeful destiny, I was completely successful and arrived at the summit of my wishes' (Ain).

(vii) Marshalling of facts: 'When I had safely traversed these difficult defiles, a work of considerable magnitude was the result. But since at this formidable stage, in the arrangement of these events no minute regard to details had taken place, and their chronological sequence had not been satisfactorily adjusted, I commenced the methodizing of my materials anew, and began to rewrite the whole, and I took infinite pains especially bestowing much attention on the chronology of the Divine Era. And since I had the assistance of the highest scientific experts, this task also was with facility completed and a separate table was drawn out..." (Ain).

(viii) Repeated revision: Abul Fazl repeatedly revised his composition to give it literary grace. Even during the fourth revision his efforts were 'directed to remove all superfluous repetitions and give continuity to the easy flow of my exposition'.

But perceiving 'the incomplete arrangement of my fresh material' he undertook the fifth revision for its 'due ordering'. Abul Fazl was conscious of the truth 'that men close their eyes in regard to their own faults and their own offspring' and so 'made it a practice to be critical of self and indulgent towards others'. He decided on a sixth revision 'to exercise the most minute and fastidious criticism'. But he found no time because of frequent calls made by Akbar. So he was compelled to submit his fifth revision to the Emperor. Thus he laboured hard for seven years in completing the Akbarnamah (1597-98).

Abul Fazl was perhaps the most gifted of all the Muslim historians of India. His approach to history has been termed 'Romantic'. His ideas of history can be culled from his Akbarnamah and the Ain i Akbari.

(i) Value of History: History was defined as 'the events of the world recorded in a chronological order', and the historian as one proficient in history. History is a 'unique pearl of science which quiets perturbations, physical and spiritual, and gives light to darkness, external and internal.'

(ii) Scope of History: Abul Fazl indited 'the history of the Lord of Time and the terrene (Zamin u Zaman) and Crown-jewel of monarchs, and praise to God will come into the writing .... What a strange mystery it is that in historical writings, praise of the pure Giver is introduced as an adornment to the book, whereas here, the book is adorned in order to the praise of the Creator.... My predecessors relied on speech for God's praise; in this exordium of rare writing, recourse is had to the perfect man who is a God-worshipping king.... I made myself ready, so that....I might reduce to writing the auspicious description of the King of manifestation and reality,—the leader of religion and realm (din u dunya) and might bring together with his beautiful and awful attributes and the praises of his majesty and perfection; to wit,—the marvellous festivals, wondrous wars, exalted devotions, and pleasant ways of this chosen one of God...so that I might acquit myself of the duties of (1) worship, (2) loyalty, (3) gratitude....'

(iii) Object of writing history: Abul Fazl intended that his work should occupy a permanent place in world literature and perpetuate his own and his patron's memory. (a) Abul Fazl wanted to compose a history 'suitable to the temperament of
the mortal’ with a ‘cryptic tongue’. He writes in the preface to the Ain: ‘My sole object in writing this work was, first to impart to all that takes an interest in this auspicious century, a knowledge of the wisdom, magnanimity, and energy of him who understands the minutest indications of all things, created and divine, striding as he does over the field of knowledge; and to leave future generations a noble legacy. The payment of a debt of gratitude is an ornament of life and a provision for man’s last journey. There may be some in this world of ambitious strife, where natures are so different, desires so numerous, equity so rare, and guidance so scarce, who, by making use of this source of wisdom, will escape from the perplexities of the endless chaos of knowledge and deeds. It is with this aim that I describe some of the regulations of the great King, thus leaving for far and near, a standard work of wisdom.…” (c) He writes in the conclusion of the Ain about Akbar’s unrivalled greatness as a ruler and he felt it to be his duty to record his great acts and rules for the benefit of posterity. History does a memorial service according to Abul Fazl. “It is evident that of mighty monarchs of old there is no memorial except in the works of the historians of their age, and no trace of them but in the chronicles of eloquent and judicious annalists, yet the ravages of time obliterates them not.”

(iv) Regard for truth: Abul Fazl had a high regard for truth in writing his works. He acknowledges to have received from Emperor Akbar the “sublime mandate” to “write with the pen of sincerity the account of the glorious events and of our dominion—increasing victories”. He claims that he wrote out of disinterested motives. As distinct from Firdausi who wrote his Shahnama in 30 years and earned obloquy by demanding gold from his master, Abul Fazl wrote the Akbarnamah in 7 years out of pure gratitude to his master without any expectation of monetary gain or worldly advancement. “I have not set my heart upon the composition of this work with a view to approbation or to listen to my own praises, into which pitfall of the imagination so many have sunk, nor suffered my natural constitution to be trodden under foot by ambition…” Unlike other “men who close their eyes in regard to their own faults and their own offspring..., I have made it a practice to be critical of self and indulgent towards others…” Indeed Abul
Fazl's writings are free from personal rancour and marked by sobriety and dispassionate attitude even towards his enemies.  

Historian Abul Fazl's monumental works are two, the Akbarnama and the 'Ain i Akbari. These two books are complimentary and have to be used as companion volumes. While the Ain enlightens us about Akbar's experiments and institutions, Akbarnama enables us to understand the spirit behind those institutions, the difficulties faced and their solution. "Neither tells us all we want to know, but nearly all is contained in one or other..." (Moreland).

In fact the role of Abul Fazl as an historian has been the subject of a controversy among scholars, some accusing, others praising him and his works.

European writers e.g., Elliot, Elphinstone and Morely have accused Abul Fazl not only of flattery but even of willful concealment of facts damaging to the reputation of his patron. ("He was...a most assiduous courtier eager to extol the virtues, to gloss over the crimes and to preserve the dignity of his master and those in whom he was interested..."). Smith dubs him 'as an unblushing flatterer of Akbar'. But according to Blochmann, "a study, though perhaps not a hasty perusal, of the Akbarnama will show that the charge is absolutely unfounded.... His love of truth and his correctness of information are apparent in every page of the book."

Let us come to some details. The charges of flattery and deliberate perversion of truth are made as regards (i) the date of Akbar's birth, and the story of his naming, (ii) the capitulation of Asirgarh. But when compared with other Eastern historians, Abul Fazl's praises are dignified; and though sometime his adulation is jarring he was following the example of many other contemporaries. We know that Maham Anaga put to death two girls in possession of her son Adham Khan in Malwa for fear of their disclosing the true facts to Akbar. Akbar overlooked the offence. How would Abul Fazl put this on record? He could not openly criticize the Emperor. Abul Fazl certainly disapproved of the killing and recorded it by praising Akbar's forgiveness. Again, when Hussain Mirza was put to death in Gujarat at Akbar's orders, Abul Fazl records that this was done at the suggestion of Bhagwan (Bhagwant, to be exact) Das who was not justified in giving it. This is Abul Fazl's way of avow-
ing that 'the king can do no wrong'. Abul Fazl criticized Munim Khan (Vakil), Raja Todar Mal and Muzaffar Khan, and the provincial officials. He also criticizes Jahangir for his conduct towards the end of Akbar's reign.

In fine Abul Fazl displayed his sound historical imagination in the Akbarnamah. It is "not only the most authentic history of Akbar's reign but it is an accurate record of the varied activities of the State, in which its every phase is accurately and vividly brought out." 

The concluding part of the Akbarnamah is the Ain i Akbari. It starts with the avowed object of describing the country, the manners and customs of the people, and it gives an idea of the political institutions, imperial regulations as well as popular beliefs. It may well be described as the Administrative Report and Statistical Return of Akbar's government about 1590 A.D., roughly comparable to modern administrative reports and statistical compilations. Briefly this administrative manual was the first official gazetteer of India and it set a model for the future. Blochmann described its nature as follows: "In the Ain we have a picture of Akbar's government in its several departments and of its relations to the different ranks and mixed races of his subjects, as distinct from the records of wars and dynastic changes in most Muhammadan histories. We have in the Ain the governed classes brought to the foreground: men live, and move before us, and the great questions of the time, axioms then believed in and principles then followed, phantoms then chased after, ideas then prevailing, and successes then obtained, are placed before our eyes in truthful and therefore vivid colours." (Intro. v.).

To early British administrators it appeared as an indispensable and first-rate source book of pre-British administrative system and it was laid under contribution by Tiefentaller (1776), Chief Sheristadar Grant and Francis Gladwin (1783). Hence it became the best known original source and most easily accessible to English-knowing readers.

But a closer study of the Ain removes the illusion that it is socio-economic history. It has many defects. Everything centres round the Emperor and his court, and there is no attempt at comparing the conditions under Akbar with those before. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar it was the first work of its
kind in India written when the Mughal governmental structure was still in a half-fluid condition. Abul Fazl 'draws an ideal picture instead of giving us a faithful description of the administration in its actual working.' But this view is not always correct. For example, many duties ascribed by Abul Fazl to the kotwal are corroborated by Akbar's relevant 'farman' and also by Manucci. His verbose and rhetorical style buried his grain of fact. So it is not of much real help in drawing a correct and detailed picture of the administrative machinery. As a statistician no detail escapes Abul Fazl's microscopic investigation. But there are difficulties of interpretation and the picture is vague and unreal.

Notwithstanding these limitations, 'the Ain is invaluable as an account of Akbar's administrative system' (Smith). The merit and the only merit of the Ain is in what it tells, and not in the manner of its telling; it is a unique compilation of the administrative system and the most complete and authoritative history of Akbar's reign. It has been described as 'the greatest work in the whole series of Muhammadan histories of India.' (Blochmann)

Abul Fazl has been regarded in India as the 'Great Munshi', a master of style and unexcelled in the epistolary art. His pen was feared more by Abdullah king of Bokhara than Akbar's arrow. According to the Maasir ul Umara 'As a writer Abul Fazl stands unrivalled. His style is grand and is free from the technicalities and flimsy pettiness of other munshis; and the force of his words, the structure of his sentences, the suitableness of his compounds, and the elegance of his periods are such that it would be difficult for anyone to imitate him.' But in reality his style was ornate and verbose. Inaytullah says that the later volumes of Abul Fazl were more laboured and abstruse than the first. Beveridge did not find Abul Fazl's language to be picturesque; he was neither as charming as Herodotus, nor as racy as Badauni. To Jarrett Abul Fazl was 'quaint', 'stiff' 'obscure' and even monotonous. Elliot, Elphinstone and Morcley have condemned his style and even cast doubts on the 'fairness of the account.' Though he was a man of enlarged views and extraordinary talents', yet, as Elphinstone remarks, 'he was a professed rhetorician and is still the model of the unnatural style which is so much admired in India . . . . His narrative is florid, fickle,
and indistinct, overloaded with commonplace reflections and pious effusions, generally ending in a compliment to his patron’. Beveridge, however, has vindicated Abul Fazl’s general accuracy.  

But in spite of his learning and liberal education and outlook, training in different state departments, high official position, exhaustive research based on access to official records and facilities, and his command over language, Abul Fazl could not rise to the level of the scientific, objective historian. For he wrote as ‘an advocate and apologist’ of Akbar. 

Perhaps Shahjahan’s reign is richest in contemporary historical or biographical material, for there were successive experimentations in history-writing. Like his grandfather Shahjahan had the official history of his reign compiled, first by Muhammad Amin Qazvini or Mirza Aminai Qazvini and then Jalaluddin Tabatabai and later still by Abdul Hamid Lahori. Qazvini, a protegé of Afzal Khan, wrote of Shahjahan’s princely life and the first ten years of his reign (1627-36) but he could not come up to the level of Abul Fazl. Shahjahan, therefore, replaced him and commissioned Abul Hamid (d. 1654), patronised by Sadulla Khan, and then living a retired life at Patna, to write the history. With Abul Fazl as his model he wrote a detailed account of Shahjahan, first as a prince and then as emperor for the first 20 years, which is regarded as ‘the final official history’ of the reign. It has, however, to be stated that after his death in 1065/1653 on account of his old age, the work was entrusted to his pupil and assistant, Muhammad Waris. The latter modelled the first 20 years of the reign on his master but wrote an independent work for the remaining period (21st to 30th year of the reign). There is no official account of the rest of the reign. Both Qazvini and Lahori were critical of Nur Jahan, when dealing with Khurram’s rebellion. All the four authors had access to the official records of the period and supply fulsome contemporary detailed accounts of all important events, including military disasters. About this work of Lahori it has been said: “It enters into most minute details of all the transactions in which the Emperor was engaged, the pensions and dignities conferred upon the various members of the royal family, the titles granted to the noble, their change of office, the augmentations of their mansabs, and it gives lists of all the various presents given and received on public occasions,
such as the vernal equinox, the royal birthday, the royal accession, etc. Thus the work contains a great amount of matter of no interest to any one but the nobles and courtiers of the time. But it would not be fair to say that it is filled with these trifles; there is far too much of them but still there is a solid substratum of historical matter, from which the history of the reign has been drawn by later writers.

Aurangzeb at first continued the tradition of his predecessors, Akbar and Shahjahan. He directed Mirza Muhammad Kazim, son of Muhammad Amin Munshi, to write his history, the *Alamgirnamah*. It is the most detailed of all its counterparts. 'His style being approved by the King, he was ordered to collect information about all the extraordinary events in which the King had been concerned, and accounts of the bright conquests which he had effected, into a book; and accordingly an order was given to the officers in charge of the Royal Records to make over to the author all such papers as were received from the news-writers and other high functionaries of the different countries concerning the great events, the monthly and yearly registers of all kinds of accidents and marvels, and the descriptions of the different subas and countries.' The *Alamgirnamah* is a courtly panegyric, 'fulsome in its flattery, abusive in its censure. Laudatory epithets are heaped one upon another in praise of Aurangzeb; while his unfortunate brothers are not only sneered at and abused, but their very names are perverted. Dara Shukoh is repeatedly called Be-Shukoh, "the undignified"; and Shuja is called Na-Shuja, "the unvaliant". But history writing was banned after the eleventh year by the Emperor. This prohibition is sometimes ascribed to financial reasons. Perhaps it was due to his moral scruples, viz., "the cultivation of inward piety was preferable to the ostentatious display of his achievement." It was Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan (munshi of Inayatullah Khan, wazir of Bahadur Shah) who had been in imperial service for forty years, and an eyewitness of many events, who compiled the full official history of Aurangzeb's reign at the request of his patron, three years after his death (1710) from state papers, documents and personal recollections. The first ten years is an abridgement of *Alamgirnamah* but the remainder was original. On account of Aurangzeb's prohibition he 'secretly wrote an abridged account' of the
Deccan campaign, 'simply detailing the conquests of the countries and forts without alluding to the misfortunes of the campaign.' The Maasir is very brief as compared with Alamgir-namah. The official history of the first two years (1707-9) of Bahadur Shah's reign, Bahadurshahnamah, was written by Danishmand Khan (Nimat Khan 'Ali).

(d) Non-official or private histories (or biographies):

Stimulated by the imperial patronage of literature, these helped to supplement and at times, correct the information derived from the eulogistic official annals of the period. Strictly speaking the term 'non-official' history or biography is a misnomer, for anybody, who was somebody was either in imperial service or in the personal staff of some officer. But it only means that none of such authors wrote to imperial order.

We know very little of (Mirza or Khwajah) Nizam ud din Ahmad (d. 1594), author of Tabaqat-i-Akbari (also called Tabaqat-i-Akbar Shahi). Belonging to an influential family he was son of Ahmad Khwaja Mukim Harawi (i.e., of Herat) who served under Babur, Humayun and Akbar,—under the first as diwan-i-buyutat, diwan of the household, under the second as Wazir to 'Askari in Gujrat (1535) and under the third in some government work (1567). He also played a decisive part in terminating the intrigue to oust Humayun from the throne after Babur's death and accompanied Humayun to Agra and in his defeat by Sher Khan at Chausa (1534). Khwaja Nizamuddin was a pupil of Mulla Mulla Sher, a learned man, the father of Shaikh Illahadad Faizi Sirhindi (the author of Akbarnamah).

A well-educated and well-read man, Nizamuddin was a student of history and literature. He learnt from his father the 'worth of historical writing', followed his instructions in studying historical works and received his father's recollections also. In writing his Tabaqat, he had Mir Masum of Bhakkar, a learned man and historian, as well as Shaikh Muhammad Ishaq Taghai as his associates. Nizamuddin was one of the seven authors commissioned by Akbar to compile the Tarikh-i-Asli (1582). A polished courtier he was equally friendly with the orthodox and liberal Muslims and liked both by Badauni and Abul Fazl. Badauni describes him as 'a kind and complaisant man of wealth,
orthodox and religiously disposed'. In fact he had associations with 'Sufis, Shaikhs and religious people in general'.

But Nizamuddin knew the art of dissimulation well enough, because it was through it that this pious Muslim kept his religious views to himself and could manage to ascend the ladder of imperial favours. In 1589 he was recalled from Gujrat to the Court, where his orthodoxy came to be diluted by its atmosphere. Thus Nizamuddin found it politic not to protest against Akbar's religious innovations. As Dr. Baini Prashad notes: 'Nizamuddin's ruse in mentioning Shaikh Hussain's name when some of the orthodox leaders were summoned to the Imperial Court, also indicates the skilful way in which he managed to keep himself safe from his own religious beliefs being questioned.'

Nizamuddin was also a soldier and administrator. He was scrupulously upright and excelled his contemporaries in administrative knowledge. For long he was the bakhshi of Gujrat for which province his work was highly important. Later on his good record of service led to his recall to Court and he held the high office of the Mir or First Bakhshi (1591-92) as well. Of him Badauni has left this tribute: 'Khwaja Nizamuddin left a good name behind him ... There was not a dry eye at his death and there was no person who did not on the day of his funeral call to mind his excellent qualities.'

Nizamuddin wrote this history in 1592-3 with additions in 1594. His object, as he himself wrote, was to supply the lack of a single history of the whole of India, after the Tabaqat i Nasiri of Minhaj and Tarikh i Firuz Shabi of Barani; for he found provincial histories and a few detached and incomplete compilations, but 'not a single work containing a complete compendium of this entire division of the world has yet been written'; 'neither have the events connected with the centre of Hindustan, the seat of government of this empire the capital Delhi, been collected in one book.' Thus he intended his work to be a history of Mughal India as it was under Akbar unifying its different regions. Dealing with nine regions (tabqa), viz., Delhi, Kashmir, Multan, Sind, Jaunpur, Bengai, Malwa, Gujrat and the Deccan, the Tabaqat has a regional framework. Within it, however, there is a dynastic and chronological approach, a continuation of the method of writing history according to regnal
years as in the Turko-Afghan period. However, instead of following the earlier tradition and even contemporary emphasis on personalities, he came to dwell more on events, though selected arbitrarily. The Introduction narrates the history of the Ghaznavides, while the concluding portion gives a survey of Akbar’s empire. Apart from the thirty two works, which Nizamuddin not only summarized but virtually pirated, he derived his materials from the testimony of individuals, his own observation and even hearsay without any critical sifting as was done by Abul Fazl. The Tabaqat is essentially political history with a mere narration of facts, without any attempt at explanation of the historical process. It is, however, one of the most celebrated histories of medieval India. It came to be regarded by all contemporary historians as a standard history and has been the quarry of subsequent writers, both Indian and European. Smith describes it as ‘a dry, colourless chronicle of external events’, without any reflections or criticisms of events and actions, i.e., without any value judgments. But though monotonous it is a careful and dispassionate study.55

Mulla Abdul Qadir better known as Badauni (1540-1615) was born at Badaun in Rohilkhand (Fyzabad). His father, Shaikh Muluk Shah, was a pupil of Saint Bachu of Sambhali. Badauni himself studied under Shaikh Hatim Sambhali and then, along with Faizi and Abul Fazl, under Shaikh Mubarak. Having studied many sciences under the most renowned and pious men of the age, he became a very learned man and excelled in music, history and astronomy. He cherished a great love of history from his childhood and spent his hours in reading or writing some history, as he himself wrote. In 1573 or 1574 he was introduced to Akbar, who was deeply impressed by the extent of his theological learning and ability to humble the Mullahs, and appointed him Court Imam for his voice and gave him a madad i ma’ash of 1000 bighas of land. He was frequently employed by Akbar to translate Arabic and Sanskrit works (e.g. Mahabharata) into Persian. But he grew to be a hostile critic of Akbar, envious of Faizi and Abul Fazl (who threw him into the background) and dissatisfied with Akbar for his free thinking and eclectic religious views, administrative reforms and for his patronage of non-Muslims (to the disadvantage of the Muslims’ claim of monopoly of office and rewards).
Unable to get the expected preferment and advancement in imperial service and with his mind sore against the Emperor, he wrote his book in a spirit of frustration and expressed his glee at Akbar's troubles. Badauni attributed the political troubles of Akbar's reign i.e., the rebellions of Bihar and Bengal Afghans, the rebellion of Mirza Hakim etc. to divine wrath at Akbar's administrative policy in curbing the Sadr's power in granting lands. ('The king disturbed our madad i ma'ash lands and God has now disturbed his country'). The second volume of his book, solely devoted to Akbar's reign, is a check on the turgid panegyric of Abul Fazl. Though it was really an interesting work, it contained so much hostile criticism of Akbar that it was kept concealed during his life time and could not be published till after the accession of Jahangir. It provided an index to the mind of the orthodox Sunni Muslims of Akbar's days. According to Prof. S. R. Sharma it is not very valuable except for the account of events in which Badauni himself took part. Moreland describes the work as reminiscences of journalism rather than history. Topics were selected less for their intrinsic importance than for their interest to the author, who presented the facts so selected coloured by his personal feelings and prejudices in bitter epigrammatic language, which has to be discounted. The author not only uses some uncommon words but indulges in religious controversies, invectives, eulogiums, dreams, biographies and details of personal and family history which interrupt the unity of the narrative... Yet these digressions are the most interesting portions of the work... His own extensive knowledge of contemporary history also induces him very often to presume that his reader could not be ignorant of it. So he often slurs over many facts, or indicates them obscurely.

Badauni wrote his work to supplement the Tabaqat i Akbari and he acknowledged his indebtedness to it by describing his own work as an abridgment of it. He was also indebted to the Tarikh i Mubarak Shahi. Nevertheless there is much original matter in the Muntakhab ut Tawarikh. The third or concluding portion of the work, dealing with lives of Muslim saints, philosophers, physicians and poets of Akbar's reign, is very useful and corrects the author's fulminations against Akbar. The chronology and sequence of events are defective at times.

Badauni's ideas of History were as follows:
(i) Value of History:

'The science of History is essentially a lofty science and an elegant branch of learning, because it is the fountain-head of the learning of the experienced and the source of the experience of the learned and discrimination, and the writers of stories and biographies from the time of Adam to this present time in which we live have completed reliable compositions and comprehensive works, and have proved the excellence thereof by proofs and demonstrations, but it must not be supposed that the reading and study of this science—as certain lukewarm religionists, and the party of doubt and dissent shortsighted as they are (i.e. Shias), are wont to affirm—has been or will be a cause of wandering from the straight path of the illustrious law of Muhammad...’ Badauni’s appeal is thus to a limited class of people.

(ii) Object of writing his history:

He wrote the work with an anti-Akbar psychology to record 'his sorrow for the faith and heart burning for the deceased' religion of Islam at the unprecedented and 'complete revolution both in legislation and manners.' Let him speak out: 'I shall now explain what it was that originally led me to collect these fragments. Since a complete revolution, both in legislation and in manners, greater than any of which there is any record for the past thousand years, has taken place in these days, and every writer who has had the ability to record events and to write two connected sentences has, for the sake of flattering the people of this age, or for fear of them, or by reason of his ignorance of matters of faith, or of his distance from court, or for his own selfish ends, concealed the truth, and, having bartered his faith for worldly profit, and right guidance for error, has adorned falsehood with the semblance of truth, and distorted and embellished infidelity and pernicious trash until they have appeared to be laudable... I have made bold to chronicle these events, a course very far removed from that of prudence and circumspection. But God (He is glorious and honoured !) is my witness, and sufficient is God as a witness, that my inducement to write this has been nothing but sorrow for the faith, and heart-burning for the deceased Religion of Islam, which ‘Anqa-like
turning its face to the Qaf of exile, and withdrawing the shadow of its wings from the dwellers in the dust of this lower world, thenceforth became a nonentity, and still is so.'

In practice Badauni's work was an index to the mind of orthodox Muslims of his day. His open satire on Abul Fazl, Faizi and Akbar is revealing. His whole outlook was anti-Akbar. He selected facts not for their intrinsic worth but for their special interest to suit his point of view and he presented them after colouring them with his personal idiosyncrasies in caustic language which gave him inward satisfaction. His history was, from this point of view, essentially psychological.®

Mulla Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah surnamed Ferishta (1570-1623) born at Astarabad in Iran near Caspian Sea, was the author of a monumental work, Gulshan-i-Ibrahimī or Nauras Nama, better known as Tarikh-i-Ferishta (wr. 1619-20). He was the son of Ghulam Ali Hindu Shah, tutor of Prince Miran Hussain, son of Murtaza Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar. Leaving Ahmadnagar on the murder of the parricide Miran (1589) Ferishta migrated to Bijapur (1591), then under Ibrahim Adil Shah II. Ferishta writes about practically every medieval Muslim Deccani Kingdom. He claims that it is based on 35 earlier histories (including Nizamuddin's Tabaqat), some of which have been lost. Thus it is a compilation but he was an eye-witness of several events in the Deccan. Hence it sometimes gives new information and has come to be regarded as a classic, unapproached for completeness of detail,—facts, figures and dates,—independence and general accuracy, and devoid of religious or political prejudice, written with the golden pen of truth. He does not even flatter the prince, his patron (Ibrahim Adil Shah). But he was not entirely free from sectarian bitterness (with reference to the Sayyids) and bigotry (speaking of wholesale massacre of defenceless Hindus). But he was a mere chronicler and did not profess to be a philosophical historian, by probing into the causes of the events. The account of the Qutb Shahis is, according to Professor Sherwani, both sketchy and incorrect in several respects. His account of Mughal administration is misleading and not of much help.®

Muhammad Hashim or Hashim Ali Khan, better known as Khafi Khan, belonged to a good family migrating from Khwaf (in Khurasan district) and settling at Delhi. His father, Khwaja
Mir, also an historian and a high officer under Murad Bakhsh, passed over after his tragic end to Aurangzeb’s service and on the latter’s death he was appointed diwan by the Nizam. Hashim Ali also grew up in Aurangzeb’s service and engaged in various political and military offices. Most probably he was connected with some of his countrymen (of Khwaf), who were collectors of customs at Surat. He was deputed by the Viceroy of Gujarat, —because of his good acquaintance with Western India, on a mission to the English at Bombay. He was appointed Diwan by Nizam ul mulk of Hyderabad during the reign of Farrukhisiyar and hence called Nizam ul mulki.

The Muntakhab ut Lubab or Tarikh-i-Khafi Khan is a complete history of the House of Timur, a history of the Mughals from Babur (1519 A.D.) to the fourteenth year of Muhammad Shah’s reign (1733). It was composed 53 years after Shivaji’s death. The introduction traces, in outline, the history of the Mughals and Tartars from Noah to Babur. The first part dealing with the period from Babur to Akbar is brief but clear. The major part is concerned with the period from 1605-1733. ‘It is chiefly valuable for containing an entire account of the reign of Aurangzeb, of which, in consequence of that Emperor’s well-known prohibition, it is very difficult to obtain a full and connected history. It is, however, to this very prohibition that we are indebted for one of the best and most impartial histories of Modern India’. The period (1680-1733) was written, as he himself says, from ‘personal observations and verbal accounts of men who had watched the occurrences of the time’. He ‘privately compiled a minute register of all the events’ of Aurangzeb’s reign.

(c) Khafi Khan held a high ideal of the duty of an historian. His Ideas of History may be considered from what he himself writes:

‘I have already said in my Preface that it is the duty of an historian to be faithful, to have no hope of profit, no fear of injury, to show no partiality on one side or animosity on the other, to know no difference between friend and stranger, and to write nothing but with sincerity. But in these changeful and wonderful times of Farrukh Siyar Badshah... men have shown a partiality or an animosity to one side or the other exceeding all bounds. They have looked to their own profit and loss,
and turned the reins of their imagination accordingly. The virtues of one side they have turned into faults, while they have shut their eyes to the faults of the other, passing all the bounds of moderation. The writer of these leaves, who, following his own inclination, has wasted his days in authorship has not been partial either to friends or strangers, and has flattered neither nobles nor wazirs in the hope of reward. What he himself saw, what he heard from the tongues of men who from time to time were the associates of ... Farrukh Siyar and from the Saiyids who were his companions at the banquet table and in battle, that he has honestly committed to writing, after endeavouring to arrive at the truth when statements varied. But as notes of various occurrences and transactions did not reach the author, and as, through distress and the unfriendliness of fortune, he was unable to procure paper for his rough drafts, and as discrepancies in the various statements became greater, if it should appear that in any place the author differs in any particulars from other histories and writers, who themselves may not be free from partiality, and as variations will appear in the most trustworthy histories, he begs that his stories being excused, they may not be made a target for the arrows of censure, but that the pen of kindness may be drawn over his hasty statements.

He used the information derived from official records (open to few but to which he had access) admirably. But he wrote from the official point of view. He describes Shivaji as a rebel against the empire and as the murderer of Afzal Khan Bijapuri. The chronogram of Shivaji’s death was ‘Kafir ba-jahannam raft’. Nevertheless he praised Shivaji’s chivalry very highly and observed that the Maratha leader strictly prohibited harm to ‘Mosques, the Book of God, or Women’. This has been acknowledged to be ‘one of the best and most impartial histories’ of the period. Sri Ram Sharma has, however, shown that Khafi Khan was guilty of plagiarism and dubs him as a ‘Prince of Plagyrists.’

Mirza Muhammad Hasan, alias Ali Muhammad Khan Bahadur, the author of the celebrated Mirat i Ahmadi belonged to a family of Persian emigrants. Born in 1700 at Burhanpur where his father was a civil official in Aurangzeb’s Deccan army, he accompanied him to Gujrat in 1708 when it was bestowed in jagir on Prince Jahandar Shah. He was educated at Ahmadabad where his father was appointed waqainigar or chief
reporter of the Prince's minister, Sayyid Aqil Khan. After his father's death he was appointed Superintendent of the cloth market and ultimately became the Diwan of the province of Gujrat from 1747 to 1755, when it was annexed by the Marathas (hence called the 'Khatim ud diwan'). Unusually intelligent and active, Mirza Muhammad was trained in the school of adversity. As Diwan he found the administration utterly disorganised in the anarchical condition of the empire's dissolution, civil wars and Maratha raids. He has described the anarchy and the information of the province collected after a diligent search. In writing this History of Gujrat (1000-1760) which took ten years to compile (1750-60), he was assisted by a Hindu assistant, Mithalal Kayeth, the hereditary 'subahnavis' of Gujrat.

The Mirat i Ahmadi falls into two parts, marked by separate treatment. The period up to Aurangzeb is brief and derivative, being based on previous works like the Mirat i Sikandari, Akbarnamah, Padshahnamah etc. But the latter part (and the supplement) are original, based on the author's own experience of the provincial administration and observations of the contemporary events, in many of which he himself took part. The 'Khatima' or the Supplement is valuable for the detailed topographical description of Gujrat, lives of saints, the official classes, statistical details and the administrative system in general. The work contains some 'farmans' of Aurangzeb which throw valuable light on agrarian administration.83

Section 5: Performance lagging behind precept

Representative historians of all ages in widely scattered parts of the world placed a high value on impartial and truthful delineation of history. In practice, however, this ideal was not always realised. Herodotus, it is true, began, in the anti-historical background of Greek thought a new art of basing a genuine epos upon search for truth, but he was not conscious of the boundary line between fact and fiction. He believed in a providential scheme. Even Thucydides 'seemed to himself to stand on the very threshold of history. He was generally unable to grapple with the past, failed to give adequate picture of Greek politics, lacked the sense of socio-economic forces, and permitted himself the use of the unhistorical convention of putting the poli-
tical and diplomatic elements of the narrative in the form of speeches by principal characters'. Tacitus may be a gigantic contributor to historical literature but it is doubtful if he was an historian at all. Kalhana failed to apply his high ideals in his own history. The Arab historians were generally reputed for their high standard of truthfulness notwithstanding some adverse factors. But even Ibn Khaldun, 'the greatest figure in the Social Sciences between the time of Aristotle and that of Machiavelli', failed to follow his own philosophical principles in his own Universal History. It is not, therefore, surprising that the medieval Muslim historians of India also could not come up to their professed ideals in practice.  

What were the causes why the performance of a writer far lagged behind the profession of the ideals, the conception of history? What were the sources of error? With penetrating analysis Ibn Khaldun makes the pregnant observation that 'All records, by their very nature, are liable to error—nay, they contain factors which make for error'. These may be summarised as follows:

(i) Partisanship towards a creed or opinion. It acts as a blinker to the mind, preventing it from investigating and criticising and inclining it to the reception and transmission of error.

(ii) Over-confidence in one's sources.

(iii) Failure to understand what is intended.

(iv) Mistaken belief in the truth.

(v) Inability to place an event rightly in its real context, owing to the obscurity and complexity of the situation.

(vi) Very common desire to gain the favour of those of high rank by praising them, by spreading their fame, by flattering them, by embellishing their doings and by interpreting in the most favourable way of all their actions. This gives a distorted version of historical events.

(vii) Most important of all, the ignorance of the laws governing the transformations of human society. For every single thing, whether it be an object or an action, is subject to a law governing its nature and any changes that may take place in it.
(viii) Exaggeration: most of our contemporaries give free rein to their imagination, follow the whisperings of exaggeration, and transgress the limitations of customary experience . . . The real cause of this error is that men's minds are fond of all that is strange and unusual . . .

(ix) Another hidden source of error in historical writing is the ignoring of the transformations that occur in the condition of epochs and peoples with the passage of time and the changes of periods.

The causes of frustration of accuracy and the common limitations of the early Muslim writers may be analysed, as being due, among others, to the following factors: (i) exaggeration as a legitimate practice. Many find it difficult to distinguish between fact and the product of imagination. This might be due either to imagination, literary tricks to create an effect, or poetical eulogies or rhapsodic eulogies and praise of rulers and nobles, e.g., Hasan Nizami's description of sending thousands of Hindus to hell in Ajmer and Amir Khusrau's epithet of overlord of Gujrat, Devagiri, Telingana, Bengal and Malwa applied to Kikobad, (ii) willful misrepresentation and distortion, due to prejudices, personal, class or otherwise, expectation of gain and fear of punishment, personal antagonism or dislike of particular actions. The vilifications of Muhammad Tughluq by Isami, Ibn Batuta, and Barani and of Akbar by Badauni belong to this category. This aspect becomes specially dangerous when the author is the only authority available. (iii) misunderstanding: Sometimes careless and improper use of unconventional phrases and idioms by the author may lead to wrong conclusions. (iv) Untrustworthiness of human memory: Even a person of retentive memory may be betrayed. This accounts for much of the unreliability of Jauhar's Tazkirat ul Waqiat. (v) Sometimes the truthfulness of a writer is affected when he thinks that what ought to have happened actually happened. This tendency is seen among writers like Barani and Jauhar. (vi) Many unscrupulous persons also deliberately perverted or fabricated history.

In fine it must be admitted that it is easy enough to speak of being or becoming an impartial and accurate historian. In practice it is difficult if not impossible. The first stage in history writing is to ascertain the facts or factors. This by itself is quite
a difficult job. Next these have to be understood and finally an
intelligible and readable account is to be given. The historian
must be guided to some extent, if not by prejudice or predilection
at any rate, by his point of view and intention, determined by
the delimitation implied in his subject. 'He must use his mate-
rial by choosing from it, ordering it and interpreting it. He is
bound to introduce an element of subjectivity—tamper with or
detract from the absolute, unchanging truth. Behind the facts,
behind the goddess History, there is a historian. Clio may be
in possession of the truth, but to the historian she will at best,
in exchange for his labour and devotion, vouchsafe a glimpse.
Never will she surrender the whole of her treasure. The most
that we can hope for is a partial rendering, an approximation, of
the real truth about the past.'

Section 6: Intelligibility in history

The role of history in achieving knowledge is undeniable.
The growth of the idea of synthesis of history ('synthesis of re-
constitution') was characterised by the struggle between two atti-
tudes—political history and cultural history. Now a days 'Politi-
cal history, direct descendant of that pragmatic history—so
brilliantly represented by Thucydides, Polybius, Tacitus and
Machiavelli . . . concerned with affairs, with motives of states-
men, and . . . orientated towards political action has lost some
of its prestige. History tends to embrace life in the entirety of
its aspect and thus to unite all the special disciplines and all
the so-called historical sciences which have sprung from analy-
sis.' Attempts at historical synthesis took the form of 'philoso-
phy of history'. This tendency was represented in Europe by
two schools, the Christian and the German idealist. Since the
time of Augustine (De Civitas Dei) the Christian school attributed
events to divine will. According to this theological interpreta-
tion history was the working of God's providence. Then arose
the conception that human affairs were shaped by human factors.
Gradually there grew up the concept of an organic unity of
man's entire social life, depending on the slow working of forces
beyond the control of human will or reason. This led to the
growth of the historical method in the 19th century. As off-
shoots of the historical stream flowed Hegelian rationalism, de-
riving the sequence of events from the Idea by dialectic. This in turn produced the economic interpretation or materialistic conception of history which was opposed to both the Christian and the German idealist schools. Marx emphasized the dominating influence of economic relationships. But the main stream of thought from the middle of the 19th century was influenced more by Comte, father of Positivism, Buckle and Taine. Then comes scientific history, represented by bands of scholars in England (e.g. Bradley, Bury, Oakeshott and Toynbee) Germany, France and Italy.

Up to the close of the 19th century, philosophy was generally assumed to be the queen of the sciences; history was a humble subject, living on the periphery of her realm. But the Italian, Benedetto Croce, held finally that philosophy was only a constituent element within history, that there is only one kind of judgment, the individual judgment of history i.e., all reality is history and all knowledge is historical knowledge. He vindicated the autonomy of history i.e. its right to conduct its own business in its own way, both against philosophy and against science... Croce (1912-3) defined philosophy as the methodology of history.55

How did the medieval Muslim historians treat and interpret History? How did they make History intelligible? Their conception of articulations of causality in History was different from the modern. In modern times three categories or orders of facts,—contingency or chance or individuality; necessity or institutional or social elements, having certain laws; and logic or traditions and ideas,—constitute 'the warp and woof of history'. These have made historical causation so extremely complex that the threads cannot be disentangled even by science.56 The medievalists attributed causality in history not to human action but to divine intervention. They interpreted history in terms of conventional religio-ethical background. History became subservient to religion and theology, a vehicle of didacticism. In other words, the emphasis on divine action relegated the element of chance to the background; religion overbore all institutional or social needs and logic, and a moral formed a fitting finale. 'To all Arabic chroniclers political history was history par excellence; the economic and social aspects of life were touched upon only incidentally. Historical causation was mainly provi-
dential because of Allah's constant interference.' (Hitti). The medieval Muslim historians of India toed the line.

(a) *The play of Divine intervention or Free Will:*

History, to moderners, is humanistic. Modern historians conceive men as acting in or being acted upon by historical situations. But the treatment of medieval Muslim historians and biographers was different. History was regarded not as the story of human beings with free wills or volitions of their own, or the story of a developing, changing human nature in action but as providential, a spectacle of Divine ordination, a story of divine action in which human beings were mere agents. They were less interested in facts in their manifold variety and detail but more interested in those which satisfied their religious suppositions. They did not find intelligibility in history in the historical process itself. Men were mere puppets in an inscrutable drama whose meaning was known only to God. The divine decree being the final determinant of events, it was futile to interpret events with reference to complex economic and social forces. The individual was depersonalized.

Minhaj refers to human will at times but he clings to divine pre-destination. God made Islam victorious at the second battle of Tarain but He was absent in the first.7

To Barani history is theology—the study of God, His attributes and decrees, not of man. The past is a commentary upon Divine purpose for men and History is a vehicle for Revelation of God's purpose. At times, however, he analyses the Sultan's character to explain the events during the reigns of Balban, Alauddin, Ghiasuddin Tughlaq and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. However he does not write all he knew of the last named Sultan, only what was necessary to understand the 'true inwardness of his reign'.8

Afif seeks intelligibility in history in extra-historical facts,—by looking beyond history itself to the whole order of divine creation, which is inscrutable at times. Unlike Barani, Afif does not offer a coherent interpretation of how and why things happen in history. He does not interpret the past in such a way as to teach specific ethical principles and causes of action. The past is a spectacle of virtue, not a school of true religion. Firuz
Tughluq was an ideal king, but his mild policies led to gradual weakening of the state and military inefficiency.\textsuperscript{99}

Yahya's approach to historical writing is casual and indifferent. However he refers to divine interpretation in History. At the end of his account of each reign he usually invoked the Arabic formulae ('God alone knows the truth' or 'God alone knows'). Narration of the mistakes of the great (e.g., Muhammad bin Tughlaq) he considers improper. Men should take heed from such narration though he does not indicate how. Setting his work in an essentially typically Islamic framework (praise of God, Prophet, Pious Caliphs, and Ali’s two sons), he sees the will of God in the fortunes of Islam in Hindustan from the time of Muhammad Ghuri. The fatal fall of Qutb Shah, the victory ofiltutmish etc. were all decreed by God. But divine will was capricious, and Yahya had no deep conviction of divine governance of the world. At times he attributes events to human actions and decisions e.g. his analysis of causes of Md. Tughluq’s difficulties). But this was merely incidental. Events first, causes are dragged in afterwards.\textsuperscript{100}

Amir Khusrau also seeks to set his \textit{Khazain ul Futuh} in the Islamic framework (praise of God, Prophet and Sultan, the Quran). Without referring to the assassination of Alauddin’s uncle, he ascribes his accession to the ‘Will of God’, who ‘ordained that this Moslem Moses was to seize...powerful swords from all infidel Pharaohs’. Amir Khusrau offers a spectacle of divine ordination. The \textit{Tughluqnamah} was also couched in the idiom of a religious and moral melodrama. In final analysis history (i.e. actual events of the past) is unintelligible except on the assumption that God wills everything. Events do not happen through some process of human decision (e.g., \textit{Qiran us Sadain}, \textit{Khazain ul Futuh} and \textit{Diwal Rani}) but due to Fate or God. But his idea of divine causation is arbitrary.\textsuperscript{101}

Isami’s \textit{Futuh us Salatin} follows the usual conventions of medieval Muslim writers in emphasizing divine intervention. It is also full of ethical stock in trade of medieval Muslim authors, viz., mystery of divine ordination and incomprehensibility of Fate. He assumes divine ordination as the cause of everything in general and many things in particular though sometimes he ascribes events to human motives and decision: Kaikhusrau, son
of Prince Muhammad, was set aside for Kaikubad, son of Bughra, due to decision of nobles.

To Amir Khusrau and 'Isami, the past is a drama of the clash of God and devils, hardly of men.\textsuperscript{132}

This trait of early medieval Indo-Moslem historians has been adversely criticised by some modern writers, who have accused the former of dehumanising history. But this is a characteristic of medieval history in Europe also. Is not Christian history providential history? Christian thought ascribes events not to man's wisdom but to the dictates of Providence preordaining them. Man is not the wise (or foolish) architect of his own destiny, as he is to the scientific historian. The historical process is the working out not of man's purpose but God's. Similarly, to the medieval European historian also, history is not a mere play of human purposes but an illustration of a benevolent and constructive divine purpose.\textsuperscript{133} He also endeavoured to find out the objective of divine plan in a theocratic world. The end of history is foreordained by God. It is foreknown to man through revelation. As the historian's task is to know the past, not to know the future, medieval historiography contained an element of eschatology, which is regarded as an intrusive element in History. Medieval history thus became not only theocratic but also transcendentual. Hence it was weak in critical method. The medieval historian neglected the prime duty of the historian. His desideratum was not a scientific and accurate study of the facts of history but of divine attributes. He searched for the essence of history outside history in a theology, based on faith and reason. To the critical historian early medieval historiography had wrong aim (or direction) and was unsatisfactory and repulsive.\textsuperscript{134}

The same attitude of divine ordination in history is noticeable in the Mughal period as well. Babur ascribes his victory at Panipat in 1526 to divine grace and mercy. Passages from Abul Fazl's preface to \textit{Ain i Akbari} clearly prove this. Akbar is 'an ornament to God's noble creation'; 'No dignity is higher in the eyes of God than royalty; 'Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, illuminator of the universe, the argument of the book of perfection, the receptacle of all virtues.' One of the 'Happy sayings' of Akbar was about the existence of a 'bond between the Creator and the creature which
is not expressible in language": 'The very sight of kings has been held to be a part of divine worship. They have been styled conventionally the shadow of God, and indeed to behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator, and suggests the protection of the Almighty'. Logically any thought or act of disloyalty towards the emperor would evoke divine anger and retribution.\textsuperscript{105}

But it is remarkable that during the Mughal period the humanistic and secular aspects of history tended to be more marked and the divine or supernatural causation less prominent than in the Turko-Afghan period. Abul Fazl often seeks historical causation in human nature which accounts for behaviour of ordinary individuals. True, Akbar's actions are explained, if at all, with references to supernatural or divine forces. But Abul Fazl hastens to point out that even the emperor must depend, besides divine assistance, on 'right design, just thinking and suitable action'.\textsuperscript{105a} Further examples of humanistic causation in history may be seen in \textit{Tazkirmat ul Waqiat} of Jauhar, \textit{Humayum-namah} of Gulbadan Begum, the \textit{Tabaqat i Akbari} of Nizamuddin Ahmad, a colourless chronicle of external events and \textit{Tarikh i Firishta} containing an introduction, treating of the progress of Muhammadanism and is divided into 12 chapters, the headings of which contrast strikingly with Amir Khusrau's allusions. A perusal of Aurangzeb's last letters to Azam and Kān Bakhsh and his two wills will bring home this growing humanistic attitude to life and diminishing references to divine causation, though references to God continue therein. The religiously devout, orthodox, puritanical Emperor realises the futility of life's toil at long last. 'I came alone and am going away alone. I know not who I am and what I have been doing. The days that have been spent except in austerities have left only regret behind them. I have not at all done any (truc) government of the realm or cherising of the peasantry . . . Though I have strong hopes of His grace and kindness, yet in view of my acts anxiety does not leave me . . . ' (to 'Azam). ' . . . Although in the days of my power, I gave advice for submission to the will of God and exerted myself beyond the limits of possibility,—God having willed it otherwise, none listened to me. Now that I am dying, it will do no good...I shall carry away with myself the fruits of all the punishments and sins that I have done . . . Although God will undertake the protection of His people, yet it is also obligatory
on Muslims and my sons. When I was full of strength, I could not at all protect them; and now I am unable to take care of myself . . . ’ (to Kam Bakhsh). ‘I was helpless (in life) and I am departing helpless.”

(b) Conventional religio-ethical background: history as propaganda:

According to Turner ‘History is the natural propaganda of a social order’; for this reason the oft quoted words ‘History is past politics’ ought to read ‘History is present politics’. History has been used to buttress certain definite situations, regimes, and ideas in recent times. The medieval Muslim historians of India interpreted History or tried to make History intelligible in terms of conventional religious and ethical expectations of orthodox Muslim readers. They tried to satisfy those who wanted a popular (religious) moral, avoidance of vanities of a wicked world. This was a common recurring burthen in the histories of this period (cf. ’Isami anl Yahya). Yahya’s history warns his readers of the snares and delusions of worldly success. ’Isami made the past intelligible in terms of the conventional religious and ethical expectations of orthodox Muslim readers and men of affairs in 14th century India. His heroes act in accordance with certain moral stereotypes, rules of conduct and stock of responses in similar situations, i.e., were heroes or villains.

The age of Akbar, one of political, religious and social ferment, required stability, political and social security. Mere military might was considered to be too inadequate a foundation for Akbar’s conception of national monarchy. It required an academic justification or intellectual propaganda. Abul Fazl used the Akbarnamah to buttress Akbar’s claim to supreme temporal and spiritual authority as a means of ensuring stability in that age. He wrote more as a literary artist than as a scientific historian, more as an advocate than as a judge. The Akbarnamah was in the nature of an academic justification or intellectual propaganda in favour of Akbar. Similarly Badauni’s history was also an orthodox Sunni propaganda seeking to strengthen the prevailing background of contemporary orthodox circles as against Akbar’s liberalism. From this point of view both Abul Fazl and Badauni used history, but did not write it.
(c) History at the service of religion:

The rise of Christianity and the growth of the Church in Europe ushered a revolution in the history of history. History became subservient to religion. Unlike providential history which treats History as a play written by God for whom no character is favourite, theocratic history deals with events of a particular society under a God for whom it is a chosen people.\(^9\)

In medieval India, too, history was theocratic i.e., made to serve the cause of Islam, the true religion, i.e., to glorify Islam. The Indo-Moslem historians accepted the Muslim world order and almost exclusively concentrated on the deeds of the Muslims in India, regarding the non-Muslims as passive instruments on whom to impose their will and practice virtue, as hewers of wood and drawers of water,—as victims of the sword, as converts or jizya-payers. From this point of view they were historians of a religious group, not of the whole people. They have been dubbed 'the first Muslim communalists of India' (Peter Hardy). Even Amir Khusrau, who gloried in being a Hindusthani, and was considerably interested in the language, music and sciences of the Hindu (e.g. in Nuh Sipih, pointed out that Hindus live metaphysically in error and ignorance of truth.

This attitude of glorification of Islam helps to explain the contemporary accounts of Hindu-Moslem relations (Wars, battles, etc.) and much of the exaggerations therein made become intelligible. To the early medieval Indo-Moslem historians, History was 'theocratic, not humanistic' (Hardy).\(^10\)

(d) Didacticism

The didactic element in history has been acclaimed by all earnest thinkers of antiquity. The Hellenistic age regarded history largely as a collection of exemples. Tacitus also held that 'history's highest function (is) to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds.' The Judaeo-Christian or Biblical tradition was essentially didactic. Miskawaihi (d. 1030) and Taubidi (d. 1023) held that the present generation might learn from the lessons of the past. This attitude continued to the end of the Middle Ages, to Tajuddin Sabki (d. 1370) and Ibn
Khaldun (d. 1406). But Firdausi differed. To Kalhana, the
great objective of his work is didactic, to teach healthy lessons.
‘This saga which is properly made up should be useful for kings
as a stimulant or as a sedative, like a physic according to time
and place.’

To the early medieval writers like Barani, Yahya and Amir
Khusrau, history was a vehicle of didacticism, a branch of ethics.
Facts were twisted for moral reasons by Barani. History was
an element of divine truth, to be written only by orthodox Sunni
Traditionists. This was his religious philosophy of History. To
Barani history is an emporium of moral virtues and sermons, of
lofty thoughts and emotions. He teaches true religion and mora-
ality by examples in his Tarikh. It is an indispensable study for
a good life. It warns readers to avoid the base and the con-
temptible.

Yahya beautifies his chronicle with a few morals, according
to contemporary literary canons. The study of history imparts
the lesson that there should be no more human history. His
comments on the murder of Mubarak Shah, his hoped-for-
patron (1428), indicates this attitude to life: ‘this cruel world
breaks the knot of friendship and sincerity, and discordant
time fails to redeem its pledge of sympathy . . . ’ He repeats
and amplifies these warnings.

Amir Khusrau gives moral advice to his heroes,—Sultan
Alauddin (in Dewal Rani) and Quib Mubarak Shah (in Nuh
Sipihr), but these are formal abstract judgments of value; he
does not prove them from history.

To Abul Fazl history is ‘a unique pearl of science which
quiets perturbations, physical and spiritual, and gives light to
darkness, external and internal’. Again, ‘Chronicles unfold the
feasts and fights (‘bazm-razm’), the strivings and sports, the
glooms, and the glories and other things relating to the knowl-
dedge of mankind and civilisation, the prespicacies of the wise,
the mistakes of the learned, the various vicissitudes of the world,
the simplicities of the great of the earth, the vain knockings at
the door of inaccessible Fortune, the empty satisfactions of many
members of the households of Reason and Testimony, and other
singularities of the wonderful world. They also record many
experiments and lessons in a pleasing and impressive manner.
If enlightenment be brought to the task (of chronicle writing)
and regard be had to what is proper, a second life is bestowed
on the inquiring and the laborious, such as they died wishing
for, and the materials of eternal existence are gathered . . . .
Moreover, in the spicery of varied traditions there are remedies
for melancholy, and medicines for sorrow. Such agreeable elec-
tuaries are indispensably necessary in the social state (‘nishah i-
t’alluq’).

Nizamuddin says that from his youth, according to the ad-
vice of his father, ‘I devoted myself to the study of works of
history, which are the means of strengthening the understanding
of men of education, and of affording instruction by examples
to men of observation; and by continually enquiring into the
affairs of the travellers on the high road of life, which is to
make the tour of realities: I thus removed the rust from inert
disposition’.

The didactic element in history diminishes in the Mughal
period. This may be illustrated from the contents of such works
as Ferishta, Md. Salih Kambu, Khafi Khan, Iswardas Nagor and
Bhimsen Burhanpuri. There are more of events, of actions and
measures taken, political, administrative or military,—of their
causes and effects than morals or vague warnings.

(c) Lack of critical acumen

The medieval Indian historians were undoubtedly deficient
in critical acumen. The Indo-Moslem historians have been ac-
cused of being recorder first, researchers afterwards. Their
methods of studying history were comparable to those of study-
ing ‘hadis’ (tradition), written from authority. History was a
repetition of ‘authoritative’ known material, not a discovery of
unknown data. The historian became a conduit, not a creator;
he accepted without question; he transmitted information but
did not transmute it in his own mind.

The tradition of transmission of information continued
through the Mughal period and influenced early British historio-
ography on medieval India. Abul Fazl freely borrowed from his
authorities without acknowledgment. Nizamuddin borrowed
from al Utbi, Minhaj and Barani. Again, both Badauni and
Ferishta were indebted to Nizamuddin. British historians also
borrowed from these writers.
But it must be stated that lack of critical acumen characterised the medieval European counterparts of medieval Indian writers also equally. The medieval European historian depended for his facts, among others, on tradition and had no effective means to criticize it. Criticism, if any, was 'a personal, unscientific and unsystematic criticism.'

(f) Absence of Sociological Aspects

According to Grunebaum 'Historiography (in medieval Islam) did not set out to tell the saga of the evolution of society, nor did it wish to judge and interpret. Rather it meant to collect the accounts or the witnesses, marshalling them with the greatest possible completeness and with no concern for their contradictions. The reader was left to draw his own conclusions. The historian merely furnished the material. He took great pains to obtain reliable information and strictly accounted, in the style of the traditionists, for his authorities... The weakness of Arabic historiography is its concentration on personalities and on military incidents and court cables. The works of war attract incomparably more attention than those of peace. For the most part happenings are explained as results of intrigues and ambitions of kings, generals, or politicians. The forces which these leaders represent frequently go unnoticed. The public came to be interested in the lesson history taught. But the lesson learned was merely one of morality, insight into human character, and the vagaries of fate... One can hardly expect to find an independent political theory of study of the social forces of the age where everything was conceived as depending on God and His decrees. Yet the fourteenth century North African Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) could not only propound a theory of the power-state, transcending his age but conceived of society as an organic unit. To him the state was not only 'an end in itself with a life of its own, governed by the law of causality, a natural and necessary human institution; but also the political and social unit which made human civilization possible'. He took human civilization as the subject of his enquiry in his 'new science of history'.

But history came to be regarded by medieval Muslim historians in India as something from divine inspiration or
divine decree or royal fiat, flowing from the throne. The historian presented a succession of events and acts of and about the great and the high (sultans, officers, saints) but not of 'the base and the lowly'. To the Indo-Moslem historian society was not organic but atomistic, or individualistic, the individuals living together but unrelated, clashing but not interacting. God, who is responsible for historical events, works through individuals, not classes.—There was no room for the 'social forces' or 'spirit of uthe age'. The present succeeded the past, but did not grow out of the past.21

A natural corollary of this was the absence of sociological aspects of history in the professedly historical works. Society takes a secondary place. In commenting on the trait of medieval writers to write on the activities of the rulers, Elliot observes that these historians recorded the deeds of 'grandees and ministers, thrones and imperial powers' and that society was 'never contemplated either in the conventional usages or recognized privileges; its constituent elements or mutual relations; its established classes or popular institutions; in its private recesses or habitual intercourses'. A fact, an anecdote, a speech, a remark, which would illustrate the condition of the common people, or of any ranks subordinate to the highest, is considered too insignificant to be suffered to intrude upon a relation which concerns only Grandees and Ministers, 'Thrones and Imperial Powers'. The horizon of the Indo-Moslem historians was limited to the deeds of the politically great and powerful. History was treated more as a biographical or political history material than as a sociological factor or social science. Further, the complete silence of Mughal official histories about the social conditions of the people disqualified them from being histories in the modern sense of the term.22
CHAPTER V

NEW SPIRIT

Distinct from the theocratic, didactic or and official histories of medieval India, the objects of which were either the glorification of Islam or the exaltation of the great, rulers, ministers and nobles, there are some other types of works or some unusual features in the works already discussed, which strike a somewhat different note, and where we breathe a new spirit. Al Biruni’s work has a deep sociological import. Barani offers his philosophy of the uses of history. Notwithstanding his propagandist use of history, Abul Fazl, as already explained earlier, not only displays his capacity for deep and advanced type of historical research, which was unique in that age, but, what is very striking, also formulates a philosophical basis for secularism in state policy. His secular approach in history is perhaps his most remarkable contribution to historiography in medieval India. Badauni strikes, surprisingly enough, a rare note of secularisation amidst his grotesquely pervading orthodoxy. Bhimsen Burhanpuri displays in a striking manner some of the characteristics of a social historian.

Al Biruni

Though not purely historical in the narrow sense of the term, Al Biruni’s work has to be included in a discussion on historical literature. Abu Rayhan Muhammad al Biruni, known in Europe as Aliboron (born 970-1; died 1038-9), was a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni. A native of Khwarizm, the oldest part of ancient Persia, he applied the true spirit of historical criticism in his study of the antiquities of the Ancient East. His ‘Chronology of Ancient Nations’ (al-Athar ul baqiya), is a work on comparative chronology, factual in arrangement but valuable. Besides dealing with the history of ancient Persia, it gives specimens of the old dialects of Sughd and Khwarizm.

He was essentially an intellectual of intellectuals. This famous encyclopaedic scholar, well versed in philosophy, mathe-
matics, astronomy, geography, medicine, logic, theology and religion, is justly regarded as the first and greatest Muslim Indologist. If he learnt Sanskrit and translated several Sanskrit works into Arabic, he also rendered some Arabic translations of Greek works into Sanskrit. He travelled extensively in India in the train of Mahmud and studied the language, sciences and philosophy of the Hindus extensively and embodied his observations on the religious condition and social institutions of the Hindus in his times. His book entitled Tāhbik i Hind or Tarikh ul Hind (History of India) written in Arabic in unique in subject and scientific method. It was later translated into Persian. It is not a professed history. It is a deep sociological study, characterised by a rare spirit of enquiry, modern scientific attitude and sympathetic insight. Al Biruni himself describes the spirit animating him as follows: “This book is not a polemical one. I shall not produce the arguments in order to refute such of them as I believe to be in the wrong. My book is nothing but a simple historic record of facts. I shall place before my readers the theories of the Hindus exactly as they are, and I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show the relationship existing between them . . .” Of him Max Muller said: “The world owes to him the first accurate and comprehensive account of Indian literature and religion”. Al Biruni exhibited the rare spirit of impartiality and detachment. “The work of Alberuni is unique in Muslim literature as an earnest attempt to study an idolatrous world of thought not proceeding from the intention of attacking or refuting it but uniformly showing the desire to be just and impartial even when the opponents’ views are declared to be inadmissible”. Further Al Biruni’s treatment of his sources reveals his scientific mind. “The Sanskrit sources of his chapters are almost always given, and Sachau’s preface has a list of the many authors quoted by him on astronomy, chronology, geography and astrology. He was also acquainted with Greek literature through Arabic translations, and in comparing its language and thought and those of Hindu metaphysics, selects his quotations from the Timaeus and its commentator the Neo-Platonist Proclus, with judgment and rare ability. And he rarely fails to record his authorities . . . Al Biruni quotes freely from his authorities, and where these seem to exaggerate or to be inaccurate, his citations are followed
by some sharp brief commentary which gives a ceaseless interest to his pages. His treatment of these topics is throughout scholarly, showing extensive reading and precision of thought acquired by a study of the exact sciences.” His “masterly criticisms” give him a “unique position among Eastern writers”. His work, in fact, was “like a magic world of quiet, impartial research in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns and plundered temples” — a spiritual retort to Mahmud’s oppression and iconoclasm.¹

*Barani’s philosophy of History*

Making due allowance for the religious outlook and for the defects of Barani according to modern criteria of a historian, there is no doubt that his *Tarikh i Firoz Shahi* (1359) was “the vigorous and trenchant expression of a conscious philosophy of history which lifts Barani right out of the ranks of more compilers of chroniclers and annals.” ⁷³ (a) Firstly Barani’s passion lay in History and he regards it as a science: “My life has been spent in a minute examination of books; and in every science, I have studied many literary works both ancient and modern, and after the science of Quranic commentary, the study of tradition (‘hadis’), jurisprudence (‘fiqh’) and the mystic path (‘tariqa’) of the (Sufi) Shaykhs, I have not seen as many benefits in any other form of learning or practical activity as I have in the science of history” (TFS. 9).

(b) Secondly, to Barani History is not only a science, but the queen of the sciences:

“In this history I have written of the affairs of government and of the important imperial enterprises of Muhammad bin Tughluq (but) I have not concerned myself with the arrangement in the order of every victory, or every event or every revolt and uprising, because wise men are innately capable of considering carefully and taking due warning from a study of the affairs of government and the enterprises of rulers, and the ignorant and senseless, who have no desire or inclination to study circumstances of good and evil and who do not know that history is ‘The queen of the sciences’, through their own innate disposition and lack of understanding, even if they read the volumes containing the story of Abu Musaylima and repeated them, would
not be able to gain any benefit from them or take heed from them”. (TFS 468). Barani then is writing for those who see the same truths in life as he sees. Explicitly he mentions that the Tarikh i Firoz Shahi has been so composed as to teach right conclusions (e.g., Md. Tughluq).

Thirdly, Barani mentions some advantages of studying History, which are of a limited nature, consistent with his limited view of History.

Modern thinkers may not wholly agree with Barani in all points, but some do find confirmation even now.

(i) According to Barani History acquaints men with the accounts of the deeds of Prophets, caliphs and sultans, political and religious leaders. Its true objective is moral edification. It is both an art and science, and supplies numerous examples. It is a record of the qualities and virtues of leaders but not of the evil deeds of the mean-minded people. (TFS, 9-10).

According to Peter Geyl “History provides perspective . . . tries to fulfil certain of our permanent and profound needs as civilized and social beings . . . The earliest monuments of history . . . were intended to glorify kings or priests or warriors . . . . to shed luster on the dynasty, the church or the state . . . constituted a knowledge usefully for the stability of society and its institutions”. Another modern writer acutely remarks: “History is the reservoir not of argument but of proof and the proof is mathematical.”

(ii) Barani thinks that the connexion between Tradition (‘hadis’) and History is as close as between twins. Knowledge of these subjects is complementary. A traditionist needs be a historian to have better knowledge of ‘hadis’, to prove and explain it. History helps the faithful in understanding facts about the Prophet and his Companions.

(iii) Barani says that history by studying other’s experience teaches commonsense, and strengthens the power of reasoning and judgment.

(iv) Barani asserts that history imparts lessons to rulers,—Sultans, nobles and wazirs,—during emergencies, crises and calamities. The experience of others in parallel cases helps them to adopt solutions and avoid worry about hypothetical dangers. Hence history acts as a source of comfort, strength and warning.
This may well be compared with what some modern writers have observed. Lord Acton passionately believed that 'knowledge of the past' is 'an instrument of action' and eminently practical'. A. F. Pollard writes: 'Knowledge of public action in the past provides the best means of understanding public action in the present, and the safest guide for the exercise of political power. Through the proper study of history we can join the wisdom of Solomon to the counsel of Socrates by trying to get understanding and learning to know ourselves.' Many historians have now retreated from this position and given up the doctrine of the practical 'use' of history. As every event is unique, the potentialities of every situation become unsurveyable and it becomes impossible to derive lessons or guidance from the past. But the essential value of history has been emphasized by several other historians. 'History is an aid to statesmen and orators, furnishing examples of actions to emulate or avoid or illustrations for speeches, which the user—if not the historian himself—may improve to suit the needs of an idea or a phrase.'

A modern writer has summed up the purposes of history as being three: first, 'the enrichment of civilization by the re-examination of old modes of existence and thought'; second, 'the cultivation of the historical attitude of mind'; third, 'the elucidation of the present and its problems by showing them in perspective'. In dilating on the last point, he remarks: 'the present is not elucidated merely by connecting it with trends in the immediately preceding period, from which it may be seen to issue. The whole of history will help us to understand the world as we live in. A mind that has established contact with forms of life remote and unfamiliar, that has come to know great events and personalities of some particular period, pondering motives and evidence, watching the ever surprising shapes in which greatness and character appear, or studying the curious changes of social habits and the impact of economic factors—such a mind is likely to see more deeply into contemporary phenomena and movements, be it of culture and politics. This is what Burchardt meant when he said that history will make us wise; for although Bacon had said the same thing three centuries before, the great Swiss historian gave to the word a somewhat different connotation by adding, 'wise for always; not clever for another time.' He meant, of course, that 'history is not to be searched for prac-
tical lessons, the applicability of which will always be doubtful in view of the inexhaustible novelty of circumstances and combination of causes, but just this, that the mind will acquire a sensi-
tiveness, an imaginative range . . . . We historians cannot give to anyone the knowledge required in capsules nicely dosed, effect guaranteed’.

‘Yet undoubtedly the history of the recent past of one’s own country or the group of countries belonging to the same sphere of civilization and power politics offers, for the purpose of understanding the present, a special and irreplacable interest. There is here by universal consent an immediate and practical use of history for any one trying to find his way through the politics of his own or of a foreign country, or, of course, through international politics. The same might certainly be said of virtually every field of cultural or social or economic activity, but let me here limit the discussion to political history.’

(v) Barani opines that through study of the lives of Prophets, their deeds and vicissitudes, history teaches patience, re-
signation and contentment and prevents despair in misfortune and distress.

The moral function of history as a store-house of elevating example has been acknowledged even by modern writers.

(vi) Through historical knowledge, (a) the character of the saints, the just and the virtuous become firmly fixed in readers’ hearts’; (b) The evil, the base, the rebellious and the tyrannical and the havoc wreaked by them became known to sultans, minis-
ters and kings of Islam; (c) History proves the fruits of good conduct and the results of bad. The sultans and rulers are in-
duced to follow good courses of action and not indulge in tyran-
ny and oppression and not escape the obligations of the servan-
thood of God. The people also realise the benefits of their right action. Thus the study of history enables us to adopt the virtu-
tues of the good and shun the vices of the evil doers.

(vii) According to Barani history is a necessary founda-
tion of truth. It is a true narration of good and evil, justice and injustice (oppression), obedience and rebellion, virtue and vice, so that readers may take warning and understand the benefits and injuries of worldly rule and follow virtuous paths and avoid evil. Thus history teaches us the moral lesson of ideal justice that vice is punished and virtue triumphs. (TFS, 11-13). Here Barani
widens the connotation of history and includes good and evil within its scope. But his view that religious orthodoxy guaranteed the historian's truthfulness (TFS. 13-14) indicates that his 'conception of truth is religious and ethical, not historical'.

Geyl observes (p. 81): 'The discipline of history, the historical spirit, is a force for truth and against myth'.

(viii) To Barani the historian immortalises all those of whom he writes. Similarly to Kalhana History is more potent than the mythical ambrosia: The latter immortalises a single individual but a true history immortalises a number of great men as well as the historian.

*Abul Fazl advocates secularism in state policy.*

Abul Fazl offers a strikingly secular approach in his outlook and histriography which not only reflected the liberal tone of 16th century Mughal India under Akbar but also inspired it. In his conception of an ideal king ('Insan i Kamil') he pronounced that the king must be above religious differences and must not be a mother to some and a step-mother to others, so that universal peace and toleration ('Sulh i Kul') was established. Instead of beginning the Akbarnamah with homage to God, the Prophet and the Caliphs Abul Fazl, gives a secular genealogy of Akbar from Central Asian Kings. The book is singularly free from religious fanaticism or communalism and conventional encomia for the saints. To Abul Fazl, trained in Arabi's system, as to al Biruni, the Hindus, notwithstanding their image-worship, were monotheists and not idolatrous. All this appears not only highly significant, but also extremely striking when we recall that Akbar's reign witnessed the completion of the Islamic millennium (alif). Again, Abul Fazl's analysis of the causes of tension and misunderstanding, religious and communal disensions possesses an eternal significance, irrespective of time and space, viz.,

(i) 'diversity of tongues and the mísapprehension of mutual purposes'.

(ii) distance preventing contact between 'the learned of Hindusthan from scientific men of other nationalities' and the scarcity of an 'accomplished linguist' i.e., interpreter.
(iii) man’s addiction to physical delights and lack of interest ‘in accounts of foreign peoples’.
(iv) Indolence and averseness to ‘assiduous research’.
(v) ‘Inflexible customs’, restricting inquiry and adherence to traditional beliefs.
(vi) Religious persecution of rulers discouraging ‘earnest enquirers’ from ‘meeting on a common platform of study and discussion which helps correct understanding.
(vii) supremacy of unprincipled ‘wretches’ which obscures truths ‘through unrecognition.’

_Badauni mixes secularism with orthodoxy._

Badauni is reputed for his orthodoxy and criticism of Akbar. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that Badauni possessed an original mind. This is reflected in his notice of Islam Shah’s administration which is highly significant. It does not seem to be satirical. Indeed it breathes a secular spirit. According to Abbas, the biographer of Sher Shah, his laws were made “both from his own ideas and extracting them from the books of the learned”. This phase of substantive legislation developed further under Islam Shah. Badauni refers to a code of regulations extending to approximately 80 sections of paper containing directions for every case of difficulty and which all were obliged to follow rigidly. Further Islam Shah sent ‘written orders to all the ‘sarkars’ containing comprehensive instructions on all important points of religion and all political and civil questions entering into the minute and essential details and dealing with all regulations which might be of service to the soldiery and civil population, to the merchants and other various classes and which the authorities were bound to follow in their jurisdiction.’ He further significantly observes, ‘All these points were written in these documents, whether agreeable to the religious law or not, so that there was no necessity to refer any such matter to the Qazi or Mufti, nor was it proper to do so.’ What is this if not secularisation at least in a limited field?

Again, he declared his professed aim to be to write correctly. He writes in his preface: ‘Since the object of my ambition is to write correctly, if I should by accident let fall from
my pen, the instrument of my thoughts or commit in my thoughts, which are the motive agents of my pen, any slip or error, I hope that He, in accordance with His universal mercy which is of old, will overlook and pardon it."

*Bhimsen as a social historian.*

Bhimsen Burhanpuri, a kayastha hereditary civil officer of Mughal government (b. 1649)—and author of *Nuskha i Dilkusha* (c. 1708-9), looked at Aurangzeb's reign through the eyes of a contemporary Hindu. Living 'near enough to the Mughal officers to learn the events accurately but not near enough to the throne to by lying flatterers', he 'knew the truth, and could afford to tell the truth.' He was free from the worst defects of official historians. He has supplied many things which are lacking in the complete official history of Aurangzeb's reign, viz. (1) causes and effects of events, (2) state of the country, (3) condition of the people, their amusements, (4) prices of food, (5) condition of roads, (6) social life of the official class and (7) incidents in Mughal warfare in the Deccan. The following passages are revealing and show Bhimsen to be a social historian of the times.

'Ever since His Majesty had come to the throne he had not lived in a city but elected all these wars and hard marching, so that the inmates of his camp, sick of long separation summoned their families to the camp and lived there. A new generation was thus born (under canvass)...only knew that in this world there is no other shelter than a tent...All administration has disappeared..."

"There is no hope of a jagir being left with the same officer next year...the collector does not hesitate to collect the rent with every oppression. The ryots have given up cultivation; the jagirdars do not get a penny."

"One kingdom has to maintain two sets of jagirdars.... The peasants subjected to this double exaction have collected arms and horses and joined the Marathas."

Bhimsen refers to Maratha risings being due to administrative exploitation and oppression on peasantry in areas near Maharashtra lands and the cultivators joined the Maratha deshmukhs and senapatis."
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The problem of historical objectivity

The problem of historical objectivity is of primary significance for philosophy of history. It is generally admitted that there is a subjective element in historical thinking, which changes or limits the nature of expected objectivity. The impersonality of physics cannot be expected in history, which is sometimes described as a science of men, or science of the mind. The question arises whether and in what sense medieval Indian historians were objective. The foregoing brief study of some representative medieval Indian historians and their writings would indicate their outlook and attitude. In the first place there is the question of personal bias. It would appear that there are some definite instances of how their ideas and viewpoints were coloured by their affairs, their likes and dislikes. Some historians of the Turko-Afghan period and Mughal official historians have admired great men. In such cases history centred round ideas and actions of the hero. In those days it was difficult for majority of the writers to openly express antipathy to great men. But there were some notable exceptions, e.g. Al Biruni and Isami in Turko-Afghan period. During the Mughal period, Badauni’s history had to be kept concealed during Akbar’s time, because of his invectives against Akbar. Bhimsen has, in a way, criticised Aurangzeb’s prolonged warfare in the Deccan against the Marathas and he could afford to do so.

In the second place, there is the question of group prejudice. This covers prejudices or assumptions of historians belonging to a certain group, nation, race or social class or religion. Such assumptions are more subtle or widespread in their operation than mere bias and less amenable to detection or correction than personal likes or dislikes. Religious beliefs may be a matter of rational conviction and may not be a product of irrational prejudice. So its influence on the historians’ thinking may be regarded as being inevitable or perfectly proper. In those days religion was the determining basis of thinking of
historians and, as explained before (Ch. IV), they placed history at the service of religion. The early Indo-Moslem historians accepted the Muslim world order and used history to serve the cause of religion and theology, to glorify Islam,—exclusively concentrating on the deeds of Muslims and regarding the Hindus as passive instruments. They acted as historians of a religious group, not of the whole people.

More subtle than personal ideas or group prejudices were underlying philosophical, moral or metaphysical beliefs, ultimate judgments of value in understanding the past; conception of nature of man and his place in universe. Medieval historians of India approached the past with their own philosophical ideas which decisively affected their way of interpretation of history. Their theories of historical interpretation differed from the modern. In the first place to medievalists history was not due to human action but divine intervention. If divine decree decided the course of events, there was no need to interpret history with reference to complex social or economic forces. Barani, Afif, Yahya, Amir Khusrau, Isami, all believed in divine intervention in history. In Mughal period also the attitude of divine ordination was not ceable but now the humanistic aspect of history became more marked and the divine causation less prominent than in Turko-Afghan age.

The Indo-Muslim historians of the medieval period could not offer proper or objective interpretation of the facts they collected with reference to causes and effects of events. History, to them, was a means to learn virtue, and to distinguish good from evil as explained in the Quran. By honesty and arduous labour Abul Fazl wrote the history of Akbar, who by his wisdom, was the ‘cynosure of penetrating truth-seekers’. Badauni wrote his Muntakhab ut out of grief and heart burning for ‘the deceased religion of Islam’. Abdul Hamid Lahori emphasized the role of the King as the defender of Islam and upholder of the ‘Shariat’ as a means of salvation.

Again, history was interpreted in terms of conventional religio-ethical background. Historians like Isami and Yahya tried to satisfy their readers who wanted a popular religious moral, avoidance of vanities of a wicked world. Abul Fazl used the Akbarnamah to support Akbar’s claim to supreme temporal and spiritual authority. He tried to give an academic
justification and an intellectual propaganda to Abul Fazl’s and Akbar’s ideas of kingship. Badaoni reflected the orthodox Sunni point of view.

Thirdly, Indo-Muslim historians like Barani, Yahya, Amir Khusrau, emphasized the didactic element in history. In the Mughal period, however, it diminished, though some historians like Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin referred to the moral value of history.

In such an atmosphere historical objectivity would appear to be a game of hide and seek, as elusive as an eel. But it is doubtful if personal bias or group prejudice, divine causation, religious or moral interpretation of the historical process of the kind discussed above is a serious obstacle to attaining objectivity in history, because such bias or prejudice and such an interpretation can easily be corrected or at any rate allowed or guarded against. The author of the chronicle on which the historian relies, might have an axe to grind and so the particular source will contain only facts that fit in with a pre-conceived theory. A Barani or a Badauni might be so selective in facts as to highlight his dissatisfaction or grievances against Muhammad Tughluq or Akbar. But the critical historian of today need not depend on such partisan propaganda, as he has other means to check such accounts and can also apply the test of plausibility. The extent of the success of the modern historian in thus checking and using the medieval historians will be measured in the next volume.