

CHAPTER III

MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY IN INDIA

In India, Muslim historiography is indebted for its inception to the Persian speaking peoples, the Iranians or the Persianized Turks and the Afghans, who had inherited the taste for history from the Arabs. These peoples recorded the history of Muslim conquests in India. The historical works of Muslim India may be divided into two classes: historical writings produced during the Sultanate period and those composed during the Mughal period.

Among the eminent historians of the Sultanate period (1206-1526) were Hasan Nizāmi, Minhāj-al-Sirāj, Amīr Khusrāu, Diyā' al-Dīn Barnī, Ibn Battūta, Shams-i-Sirāj Afif, Aīn al-Mulk Multānī, Yahyā b Ahmad b 'Abdullah Sarhindī, Khwāja 'Abdal-Malik 'Isāmī etc.

Hasan Nizāmi wrote Taj al-Ma'āthir. This work contains the details of the chief military events of the years 1192-1228.

From the pen of Minhāj uddīn Abū Umar b Sirājuddīn al-Juzjānī we have "Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri". This work covers the events of the Sultanate period down to the time of Nasiruddīn to whom it is dedicated.

Amīr Khusrāu (1252-1325 A.D.), though primarily a poet, also produced historical works which include Qiran al-Sadayn, Miftāh al-Futūh, Khazāin al-Futūh, Nuh Sipehr, Tughluq Nāma and Dewal Rani Khidr Khān.¹

¹For details see Askari, S. Hasan; Amir Khusrāu As A Historian, in the Khudā Baksh Library Journal (Quarterly), No.47, 1988.

Among the most excellent historians of the period was Diya' al-Din Barni (1286-1359). He is supposed to have written eight works on history. Of these only two have survived. They are Tarikh-i-Firozshahi and Fatawa-i-Jahandari. These works supply valuable information about the early medieval period (the Saltanate period).

Ibn Battuta (1304-1378) was yet another historian of this age. His Rihla (Travels) which he wrote in Morocco, provides a good deal of information about the reign of Muhamad b Tughluq as well as the socio-economic conditions in the 14th Century India.

Shams-i-Siraj Afif (b 1350) was also one of the renowned historians of the Saltanate period. He composed a number of historical works. Among them are Manaqib-i-Alai, Manaqib-i-Sultan, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah, Manaqib-i-Sultan Muhammad, Dhikr-i-Kharab-i-Delhi and Tarikh-i-Ferozshahi.

Ain al-Mulk Multani made valuable contribution to the historiography of the early medieval period through his work "Insha'i-Mahrū" or "Munshat-i-Mahrū". A collection of the documents or letters written by the author for the Sultan or other officials, this work gives us useful information about the reigns of Sultan Muhammad b Tughluq and Sultan Firoz Shah. It also supplies useful information about the religious, social and political conditions of that time.

The fame of Yahya b Ahmad Sarhin rests on his "Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi". The "Tarikh" is an account of the events from the reign of Muhammad Ghorī to the author's own time.

In this context the name of 'Abd al-Malik Isāmī also deserves mention. Though he did not compile any historical work in prose and though he cannot be regarded as a full fledged historian, his "Futūḥ al-Salātīn" (an historical epic) is of historical importance as it describes the deeds of the Muslims in India from the time of Mahmūd of Ghazī to the date of its composition. It is dedicated to 'Ala uddīn Bahman Shāh of whose court it was composed.

A survey of the works of the above historians would reveal that most of the historical works were written by those historians who were either attached to the courts of some particular rulers or enjoyed royal patronage. Consequently the works thus produced, usually deal with wars and campaigns of the patrons of their authors and completely ignore the common people.

The Mughal period (1526-1857) is very rich in history as major historical works were produced during it. The first important historical writing of this period was Bābur nāma or Tuzūk-i-Bāburī. It was originally written in Turkish by Bābur himself and translated into Persian by 'Abd al-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān in 1589-90. It can be divided into three parts : the first beginning with his accession to the throne of Farghāna and ending with his driving out from Samarqand; the second embracing the period from his flight to his last invasion of India; the third describing his transactions in India.

Humāyūnāma was another important historical work. It was composed by Ghiyāsuddīn Muḥammad, popularly known as Khwand Mir. His

other work furnishing valuable information about the period was Qānūn-i-Humāyūn.

Gulbadan (1523-1603), the daughter of Babur, was yet another historian. She wrote another Humāyūnnāma in the time of Akbar. Her "Humāyūnnāma" comprises two sections : one describing the life of Babur and the other giving biographical accounts of Humāyūn.

Mirza Haidar Dughlat (1499-1551) also made valuable contribution to history. His Tārīkh-i-Rashīdī is of paramount importance in historical literature of this period. It is divided into two parts. The first part is an account of the Mughal Khāns of Mughalistan and Kashghar whereas the second deals with the life of the author and the events in which he was a participant.

Jauhar Aftābchi was yet another historian. At the command of Akbar he composed "Tadhkirat al-Wāqīāt", also known as Tārīkh-i-Humāyūn, Humāyūn Shāhī or Jawahir-i-Shāhī. This work depicts true picture of Humāyūn's life as its author had served Humāyūn for more than twenty five years.

Abbās Khān Sarwani was also a historian of renown. At the instance of Akbar he penned Tārīkh-i-Sher Shāhī or Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shāhī in 1579 A.D. The work is a history of the life and reign of Sher Shah Suri and his immediate successors.

Still another historian of the time of Akbar was Khwāja Nizām Uddīn Ahmad (1551-1594). His best known work is Tabaqat-i-Akbarī which he wrote in 1593. This work deals with the history of the

Muslims from their conquest of India down to the time of its compilation.

One of the most prominent historians of Akbar's time was Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī (1540-1615). He has a number of works to his credit. Of all his works "Muntakhabu al-Tawārīkh" is the most illustrious. It is made up of three parts : the first covering the period from Subuktagīn to Humāyūn's death; the second dealing with the first forty years of Akbar's regime; the third containing the lives of the prominent saints, poets, and men of learning of Akbar's court. Since this work consisted of hostile criticism of Akbar, it could not see the light of day during Akbar's regime. Its publication became possible in the time of Jahāngīr.

Among the historians of Akbar's emperorship the name of Abū al-Fadl (1551-1602) stands supreme. He contributed a great deal to historiography through his Akbarnāma and 'Āīn-i-Akbarī. Written at the command of Akbar, Akbarnāma is divided into three volumes. The first volume is an history of the House of Timur upto the death of Humāyūn. The second volume covers the reign of Akbar from 1556 to 1604. And the third volume popularly known as 'Āīn-i-Akbarī provides a good deal of information about the then prevailing socio-economic conditions of the empire. 'Āīn-i-Akbarī is actually the third volume of his Akbarnāma. It comprises five books, each dealing with one particular aspect.

Works on purely Islamic history were also produced in the reign of Akbar. They include Maghāzī al-Nabī by Shaykh Yaqūb Sarfi

Kashmīrī, Jadhbal-Qulūb ilā Dayār al-Mahbūb and Madariy al-Nubūway by 'Abdal-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith of Delhi and Maṭālī' al-Anwār by 'Afif Nūr Kāshānī.²

Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī variantly known as Jahāngīrnāma, Tarīkh-i-Salīm Shāhī, Kārnāma-i-Jahāngīrī is also of historical importance. The portion of this work covering the period from 1605 to 1617 was written by Jahāngīr (1569-1627) himself while the rest was penned by Muṭamad Khān under the supervision of the Emperor.

Other historians of the time of Jahāngīr were Ahmad Yādgar, Nīamat ullāh, 'Abdullāh and Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī was one of the outstanding historians of the regime of Shāhjahān. Modelled on Abū al-Faḍl's Akbarnāma, his Pādshāhnāma contains the details of the reign of Shāhjahān. This work consists of three volumes. The first two volumes were written by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd himself whereas composed after his death by his pupil, Muḥammad Warīth.

'Ināyat Khān was another renowned historian of Shāhjahān's time. His work "Shāhjahānnāma" deals with the regime of the Emperor, Shāhjahān as is evident from its title.

Another important work produced in the reign of Shāhjahān was Māāthir-i-Jahāngīrī. And among the works on Islamic history are Mirāt al-Aṣṣār by Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī, Paighambar Nāmāh

²For further details, see Asghar, Dr. Aftab; Persian Historiography in Indo-Pakistan (932-1118 A.H.), Lahore, 1985, pp 196-7.

by Mulla Saḍullah Masīḥa and Manāqib-i-Murtadawī by Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Tirmizī, the last two being versified accounts of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and 'Alī (R.A.).³

To the reign of Aurangzēb belong 'Ālamgīrnāma by Mīrzā Muḥammad Kāzim, Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgīrī by Muḥammad Saqi Mustaid Khān and others like Futūḥāt-i-'Ālamgīrī by Ishwar Dās, Lubbal-Tawārīkh-i-Hind by Bendrayan, Khulāsat al-Tawārīkh by Sujān Rai Bhandārī etc. The 'Ālamgīrnāmah which was written in 1688 A.D. covers first eleven years of the regime of Aurangzēb. Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgīrī which was compiled in 1710 A.D. embraces the history of 51 years of the reign of Aurangzēb in a sketchy manner.

No less important is Muntakhab al-Lubab or Tarīkh-i-Khafi Khān by Khafi Khān. This work consists of three volumes. The first volume covers the period from the Muhammadan conquest to the end of Lodhī dynasty. The second volume is an account of the Mughals from Babar to Muḥammad Shāh. The third volume is devoted to the reign of Aurangzēb.

Islamic historical writings produced in the time of Aurangzēb include Dhikr al-Husayn by 'Abd al-Shakūr, Riyād al-Awliyā' by Bakhtawar Khān, Aḥsan al-Siyar by Muḥammad Kāzim.⁴

Ghulam Husain Tabatabai was the last great historian of Muslim India. His "Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin" enjoys high reputation. It is

³For details, see Persian Historiography in Indo-Pakistan pp.366-7

⁴Ibid pp.502-3.

also divided into three volumes. In the first volume the author has briefly described, among the other things, the Muslim conquest of India and Muslim rule therein upto Aurangzēb. Volume II is devoted to reigns of Aurangzēb's successors while the third volume discusses the affairs of Nizām of Haydarābād, Haider 'Alī, the Nawābs of Qudh, Ahmad Shāh Abdālī's invasion, his defeat and death at the hands of the English and the English affairs till 1781.

Two other works which contributed a lot to medieval historiography are Gulshan-i-Ibrāhīmī, better known as Tarikh Farishta by Muhammad Qāsim Farishta (1552-1623) and Riyād al-Salātīn by Ghulām Husain Salīm. The former was written at the instance of Ibrāhīm 'Adil Shāh of Ahmadnagar. Beginning with the Ghaznavids and ending with 1609, it is a general history of Muslim power in India. The latter is a standard history of Bangal till 1788.

The historical works produced during the Mughal period mainly concentrate on political history. They throw scanty light on cultural, religious and social aspects. None the less they are of utmost historical importance. One of the significant changes in history writing was the secularization of history. In the historical literature of this period the humanistic aspect is more prominent than the divine element.