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STUDIES
IN
MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY

By the same author

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PREFACE

Studies in Medieval Indian History is a selection from my essays and articles. A few of these were published in historical journals some years ago,—one indeed appeared as far back as twenty years,—but most of them have been written during the last two years and are going in print for the first time.

The first essay on the Meaning and Purpose of History is a long one and there is a story behind its writing. Some time back I received a minor injury. The surgeon, to ascertain whether or not there was a fracture, advised an X-Ray. A doctor in the X-Ray Department entered into a conversation with me and asked me about my field of study. On being told that it was History, he began to shoot out a chain of questions : What is the use of studying history ? Is it not all a thing of the past without any value to us today ? Engineering, Medicine and Physics are of importance, but what is the use of History ?

Before long we parted, but the young doctor had given me sufficient 'provocation' to answer at some length the points raised by him. Besides this, one more reason impelled me to write this dissertation. Not only people of other vocations but even students of history do not generally bother about what History is. They do not usually ask questions like why should we (or do we) study it, how does it help us in our lives, what is the value of this thing of the past etc., etc. There is perhaps a reason for this indifference. Many intellectuals from Herodotus to Toynbee have written on the meaning and importance of history, but discourses of such savants have tended to become so philosophical and abstruse that they are rightly called 'Philosophy of History' and help little the young minds to grasp its significance and value.

Mine, therefore, is the approach of a teacher who was, as it were, thinking aloud and talking to his students. The views expressed in this essay are my own. Occasionally, I have been

tempted to borrow a phrase or a fact, but only to support what I myself have come to think of.

Of the other essays, the old ones have been revised but not substantially altered, so that where the theme is more or less similar an idea or a quotation in one article might find repetition in another. For this I crave the indulgence of the reader.

My thanks are due to my teachers Dr. Tara Chand and Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad for kindly going through the essay on the Meaning and Purpose of History, to Professor Mohammad Habib for bringing to my notice the case of Bashir Sultani for the inquiry on Corruption in the Middle Ages, to Dr. Nurul Hasan for his trenchent criticism of the essay on the Ideas Leading to the Impoverishment of the Indian Peasantry which spurred me to look into it carefully once again, to Dr. U.N. Day for helping me check the proofs, to my children Meenakshi and Rajeev for preparing the Index and to Ranjit Printers and Publishers for readily bringing out the book.

Department of History,
University of Delhi,
15 November, 1966

K. S. Lal

CONTENTS

Preface

History and Historiography

1. Meaning and Purpose of History ... 3
2. Modern Indian Historians of Medieval India ... 82
3. Ziyauddin Barani as an Authority on the Khaljis ... 100

Government and Politics

1. Factors Underlying the Loss of Indian Independence in the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries ... 113
2. Procedure of Succession in the Sultanate of Delhi ... 124
3. Nature of the State in Medieval India ... 132
4. Corruption in the Middle Ages ... 152
5. Haldighati and After ... 169

Religion and Society

1. Changing Pattern of Society in Early Medieval India ... 177
2. Ideas Leading to the Impoverishment of the Indian Peasantry in Medieval Times ... 187
3. Condition of the Hindus under the Khaljis ... 200
4. Hindu-Muslim Rapprochement in Early Medieval India ... 211
5. Babur's Impressions of Hindustan ... 219
6. Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi ... 233

Index ... 249

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

ONE

MEANING AND PURPOSE OF HISTORY

Meaning of History

Let us begin with the innocent looking but the most difficult to answer question : What is History ?

Small boys and girls at the early school stage consider history as a story-book and just that. The stories of Rama and Krishna and Buddha, the adventures of gods and saints mythical and real, the deeds of the legendary and fictitious heroes, are all dished out to them as history. Stories contained in rapid-reading books in languages and books of history have hardly any difference for the young children in schools.

As they grow up they divide into groups offering different combinations of subjects. Those who go over to science and technology never bother about what history is. But for the student of humanities and social sciences the question remains at the back of his mind. He looks up for its meaning in the dictionary and is informed that it is a 'continuous methodical record of public events, study of growth of nations, course of past events, course of human affairs, aggregate of past events,'[1] etc., etc., all rolled up in one. And without worrying much about the meaning and purpose of history, he just reads the prescribed books, listens to the lectures in the class rooms, passes his examinations and walks out of college and into life.

The English word History is said to derive its name from the Greek word istoria (*ἱστορία*), meaning 'learning', but it does not represent all that the dictionary-meaning of the word, quoted above, conveys. The Sanskrit word for history, Itihasa, also explains only partially its true sense and meaning. In the Oxford Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Monier Williams defines Itihasa (iti-ha-sa or 'so indeed it was') as 'talk, legend, traditional accounts of former events'.[2] The German word for

1. *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1934 edition.
2. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Oxford, 1960).

history—Geschichte—means 'that which has happened', and more or less conveys the same sense as the Sanskrit Itihasa. This mixture of fiction and fact can hardly pass for history. Similarly when the Arabs called history by the name of Tarikh or Tawarikh (meaning, literally, dates), they also missed much. Time factor, chronology, and sequence of events are important and integral part of history, but these by themselves do not constitute history.

Apart from the meaning of the word in the dictionaries, many ancient and medieval savants have also defined history, or more correctly, discussed its meaning and purpose and the advantages and benefits one derives from its pursuit. According to Cicero, history is the teacher of life (*historia magistra vitae*). Thucydides says the same thing when he declares that it is an acquisition for ever. And Bacon confirms the view by saying that 'history maketh a man wise'. In the ultimate analysis, according to all these, history is knowledge.

In a way to define history as knowledge is correct. The writers of the *Vedas*, the philosophers of ancient Greece and the inventors of the compass, are all men of history. Their achievements are historical achievements. We learn from them and from their contribution to knowledge. The engineer, the doctor, the economist, the chemist, the strategist, the statesman—indeed all workers in their respective fields have to learn from the achievements and experience of their predecessors. Not only that : they have to delve deep into complementary and supplementary branches of study to gain comprehensive knowledge if they want to work further and add to knowledge. Indeed, according to Lord Acton, Professor Broughman used to advise his students of Law to begin with Dante.[1] This advice is all the more applicable to the student of history. He has to cover the study of almost everything—political and social life and behaviour, economic, religious and sociological aspects of the times. He has to study geography, look into literary sources, art and architecture, painting and sculpture, scientific and technological developments etc., etc. History is thus all comprehensive, covering all branches of knowledge.

1. Acton, *The Study of History*, Macmillan & Co. (London, 1905), pp. 53-54.

And yet what we learn in history is not quite the knowledge of things. History has little to do with Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Engineering, Medicine, Logic, Mathematics, Political Science or the other dozens of branches of knowledge as such, but only as the achievement of man in any of these fields. History deals primarily with the achievement of man and his exploits through the ages. This achievement may be in any field whatsoever. What is of concern to history is the achievement of man and not quite the knowledge of things. To make the point clear let us note that a great conqueror like Julius Caesar, a great jurist like Solon and a great physicist like Copernicus are personages of history ; but a detailed study of the laws of Solon or of the methods employed by Copernicus in determining the diameter and circumference of the globe do not form part of history. The chief interest of history lies in man. History does not deal with knowledge for its own sake, but only as man's achievement. Achievement of man is the basis of history.

Now if history deals with the achievements of man, it should just be, as Carlyle declared, a compendium of innumerable biographies. But that is not so. Although history deals with the exploits and achievements of man, men who have no accomplishments to their credit are not necessarily excluded from its purview. 'But, by and large, the historian is concerned with those who, whether victorious or defeated, achieve something'.[1] The achievements of an individual in the long run may benefit a certain section of people or the whole of human race, and may rightly be called the achievements of that particular people or of humanity as a whole. Roman Law and steam engine have benefited the whole world, but history studies not only their originators, Solon and George Stephenson, but also evaluates the impact of their contribution on humanity at large. Similarly when we read about the exploits of Napoleon, we have in mind the millions of unnamed Frenchmen, or for that matter the people of the whole of Europe, who gained or suffered during his meteoric career. However, and in spite of it, it must be remembered that history primarily deals with

1. E.H. Carr, *What is History* ? Pelican, (London, 1964) p. 126.

those who 'post o'er land and ocean without rest' rather than those who 'only stand and wait'.

The above discussion has not been there to find fault with any of the definitions of history attempted by great thinkers in the past, or even with the dictionary meaning of the word. But it has probably helped to clarify certain points.

Before attempting a simple definition of history, let us see how the writing of history originated. Let us try to conjecture how historical writings came into being. Probably great men, especially kings and conquerors, in their desire to seek immortality, saw to it that their achievements or deeds were recorded. The ancient-most evidence of this is found in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. The Pharaohs built Pyramids to seek immortality, not just to lie buried but to lie in a state of perennial existence. Similarly they got their achievements recorded on the then writing material—stone. To them their achievements appeared to be so important that they would not let them be forgotten. Such probably was the beginning of historical writing.

In course of time, it was not only kings who felt the importance of their work, some writers too felt that their kings or their times were very important and wrote about time. Probably not to begin in a vacuum, they took up the thread of their narrative from earlier times. Herodotus wrote because of this urge. In the preface to his *History of the East and West* he writes, "Herodotus of Halicarnassus presents the results of his researches in the following work, with the twofold object of saving the past of mankind from oblivion and ensuring that the extraordinary achievements of the Hellenic and the Oriental worlds shall enjoy their just renown. ..."[1] Indeed it became a fashion with medieval chroniclers to begin their narrative with the supposed beginning of the world. This may be said to be the second stage of historical writing. In this, the first stage provided source material for the second. However, in both these, fiction was mixed up with fact, theology with politics.

This process went on developing. Churchmen wrote

1. A. J. Toynbee, *Greek Historical Thought*, A Mentor Book, (1953) p. 29.

about the church, poets, dramatists, philosophers, artists working in their respective fields, unconsciously left an indelible impress of their times on their writings. Thus developed early historical writings. Some wanted to be known and left their records. Others felt the achievements of their times to be important and worth writing about. Some others unintentionally left information about their age in their religious and literary works. This aroused the craving of later generations to know more about them as well as even those about whom no records were available. The more the knowledge about them increased, the more the thirst for knowlege. Historians began to cull facts from all available materials and sources about the past, so that today the historian taps every possible source to obtain information. The archaeologist is busy with his tools unearthing knowlege about the past. Literary sources are read and reread to contribute whatever they can about their times. Church and temple records are rummaged as source-material for history. Even works on Astronomy and Mathematics and Philosophy are not left out.

Why does the historian do this? How is he concerned so much with the past? If a king wanted his achievements to be recorded, it is understandable. The dialogues of Plato were considered important by those who came in contact with him or belonged to his time and they recorded them. But why do we, in our time, think of rerecording and reassessing the achievements of those who were there thousands of years ago? It is because, as Burckhardt says, history is 'the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another'.[1] Worthy of record for many reasons—for the lesson it teaches, for the inspiration it provides, for the guidance it gives in facing problems in our own times. 'The past is intelligible to us,' says Professor E.H. Carr, 'only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of history.'[2] History, therefore, is, says Professor Carr, 'a

1. Burckhardt, *Judgements on History and Historians*, (1959) p. 158.
2. E. H. Carr, *What is History*? p. 55.

continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.'[1]

On the basis of the above discussion it may be said that history is not just the knowledge of things abstract, it is not a record of mere dates, and it is not concerned with those who only stand and wait and achieve nothing. It is a record of the achievement of man and it gives us guidance and inspiration and wisdom. It helps us to know why we are what we are today and how we can help ourselves for tomorrow. Quite a few definitions of history have been cited above, but my object is to give a much simpler definition. For this I should like to borrow, or rather twist, the words of the great Economist, Alfred Marshall. Marshall defines Political Economy or Economics as 'a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life ; it examines that part of individual or social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of well-being'.[2] History on the other hand may be defined as the study of mankind in the extraordinary business of life. It comprises the great and extraordinary achievements of man and of mankind.

Carlyle said, 'History is the biography of great men.' Many may not now agree with this assertion, still less with the declaration of ex-President of the United States Harry S. Truman that 'It takes men to make history ; or there would be no history.'[3] And yet there is a lot of truth in what these—a historian and a politician—have said. What one age finds worthy of note in another is its achievement. The credit for this achievement goes to the leaders of men, in any case to their guidance and inspiration. No progress has been made and no revolutions have taken place without people's efforts, and yet the work of their leaders is more prominent. Kings have determined the destinies of millions of men in ages gone by. Similar has been the case with the impact of the work of religious reformers, philosophers and thinkers in other fields. Their exploits and accomplishments have determined the course of history.

1. Ibid., p. 30.
2. A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, (London), p. 1.
3. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, (New York, 1955), I, p. 120.

Garden of Humanity

Now why do some people do extraordinary things ? The Marxists claim that all urge for exertion has an economic basis. The Freudians advocate that human activities are motivated by sex instinct. Similarly anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists or medical men may have their own explanations to offer. The historian, however, knows that the real causation of all extraordinary achievements lies in the nature of man's restless soul. With some it is the ambition to achieve something extraordinary that prompts them to hazard all dangers, to do anything and everything to achieve their aim. To be known, to be remembered, 'is the last infirmity of the noble mind'. Some others may not be egoistic ; their aim may not be just to be known, but to serve mankind. Ideas of Religion, Honour, Liberty, and Truth may inspire still others to action. Some others may sway humanity by their philosophy and thought, others by literary compositions or artistic accomplishments, and still others by their scientific and technological achievements. But it is all the work of great men and great minds. The common people exert too, but perhaps just to follow their leaders. But strong characters have an aim and an ambition to fulfil that aim. Historical personalities, persons known to history, always had some kind of mission to accomplish.

These historical personalities can be, by and large, divided into two categories. One set comprises of those who are selfish and want to grab everything for themselves. Great conquerors like Caligula, Chingiz Khan and Timur and a host of others like them fall under this category. To possess the best of everything for themselves was their aim. They must possess as much territory as possible—conquest of the whole world has been the ambition of quite a few. To possess all the riches, all the best beauty in human form or artistic achievement, was their aim. They cared not how much misery their selfish ambition brought to the world. Besides, as Gibbon has aptly remarked "So long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst for military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters." All the same the above-mentioned

conquerors had an aim, an ambition, even if it brought misery to mankind. Men like Napoleon were perhaps a shade better. They wanted the best not particularly for themselves, but for the people of their community and country. They aspired

> To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read their history in a nation's eye.

The other category consists of those whose ambition is not to grab power and riches for themselves but to make this world happy for all. Personal comforts and earthly pleasures they do not care for. On the contrary they are even prepared to lay down their lives for their cause. To this category belong the prophets, religious reformers, arists, philosophers etc., etc. Jesus Christ gladly courted death at the cross and Gautama Buddha renounced the comforts of a princely life and underwent tremendous sacrifices to alleviate the suffering of mankind. Their aim was to make this world a happy place to live in. Although their names are known to us, their aim was not to be known but to serve mankind. There are scores of others whose work remains but whose names are not known. The builders of the Pyramids, the writers of the *Vedas*, the painters of Ajanta and hundreds of others like them only wanted to serve humanity by their talents and spirit of service. Kalidas wrote wonderful works, but never cared to tell about himself. Abul Fazl, the Edward Gibbon of Mughal India, was all humility when, in the introduction to his monumental treatise he wrote : "My words are lame, my tongue is stonytied." These selfless men believed in what the following poem aptly depicts :

> A pilgrim, going a lone highway
> Came at evening, cold and gray
> To a chasm, deep and vast and wide.
> The old man crossed in the twilight dim.
> The chasm held no fears for him
> But he paused when he reached the other side
> And built a bridge to span the tide.
>
> "Old man", said a fellow pilgrim near,
> "Why waste your time in building here ?

Your journey ends with the close of day
You never again will pass this way.
You've crossed the chasm deep and wide
Why build ye here at eventide ?"

The pilgrim raised his old gray head,
"My friend, in the path I've come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A fair haired youth who must pass this way.
The chasm which held no fears for me
To the fair haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim.
My friend, I am building this bridge for him."[1]

Thus it is not for their own sake, but to help others that they worked. They aimed at creating a world in which everybody could be happy. They exerted their best to create such a world and hoped that

Then 'twixt lips of loved and lover,
Solemn thoughts of us shall rise.
We who once were fools and dreamers
Then shall be the brave and wise.
There, amidst the world new-builded,
Shall our earthly deeds abide,
Though our names be all forgotten
And the tale of how we died.

Curiously enough the exertions of the selfish-ambitious and the selfless benefactors of mankind have ultimately resulted in the same thing, the coming closer of man to man, or as Toynbee has put it 'the oneness of mankind.' The conquerors marched with their armies from one country to another and subjugated the people of the other country. Though in an unhappy way, still contact between these two peoples was established. It is an undeniable fact that contact between various countries and peoples has been established through the process

1. Will A. Dromgool, 'Building the Bridge', cited in *Something to Live By* by Dorothea S. Kopplin, A Panama Book.

of conquest. Inter-marriages between the conquerors and the conquered have promoted cultural intercourse. Captive craftsmen built for their masters and under their supervision, edifices combining indigenous motifs and foreign elements. Some of the best buildings of Alhambra, Granada, Seville, Delhi, Agra and Ahmedabad are the result of this contact. Peace-loving scholars attached to the armies of the conquering heroes or following in their wake, exchanged views on art and religion and science with the scholars of the subjugated countries and the process of cultural exchange was set afoot.

Ironically enough, the supreme conquests of society are won more often by violence than by lenient arts. Chingiz Khan overran the whole of Asia up to the confines of Moscow. He killed mercilessly and destoryed recklessly. In the museum of Leningrad is preserved his standard, full of human hair, one hair each of his victims. Yet the exploits of even this 'Scourage of God' brought the peoples of the vast Asian regions close to one another. Napoleon subjugated most of the continental countries, but then he also carried the message of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" to every nook and corner of the European continent and even united it under a uniform system of law—Code Napoleon.

All this through blood-shed ; but the result of the exploits of Chingiz and Napoleon was akin to the work of peace-loving altruistic men like the Buddha and Christ. Gautama Buddha's message was carried to the Far East, Ceylon, China and West Asia through the efforts of one of the most enlightened monarchs the world has ever known, Asoka. Asoka believed in Dhamma-Vijaya or conquest through religion. Buddha's message carried by Asoka's messengers to the various countries of Asia brought them nearer to one another and united the peoples of Asia under the banner of the Buddhist religion. Many scholars from as far-off countries as China came to India to learn about Buddhism and many scholars from India visited China and the other countries of Asia. Just as the blood-thirsty Chingiz so the peace-loving Asoka ; they brought the peoples of Asia nearer to one another.

Christ was a saviour, and in course of time his message, carried over all the five continents, brought the people of his

faith together. The message of Muhammad was carried by his followers to wherever Muslim conquerors, missionaries and emigrants went. The work of the artists and craftsmen of Asia was appreciated in Europe and *vice versa*. The knowledge of arithmetic carried from Asia to Europe benefited the scientists of that Continent. The scientific achievements of Europe have equally benefited the people of the East. The work of men of peace and of war, in the ultimate analysis, has brought the people of the world closer together as flowers in a garden.

This world, this garden of humanity, has been built up through the efforts of great men, both destroyers and benefactors. Just as winds and storms carry seeds and transplant them in many places, and fresh flowers and flowers of new patterns bloom, even so that rapid marches of the conquerors in the long run give rise to newer contacts, fresh ideas and new types of art and culture. The peace-loving benefactors, like gardeners, tend the beds, transplant seeds and again new patterns of flora bloom and new ideas emerge.

Let us continue the simile. There are some who enter the garden, sack the beds, pluck the best blooms to bedeck themselves with. When the storm subsides, the gardener cleanse the place, replaces the beds, arranges the flowers and peace prevails again. The first set is of conquerors and scourages of humanity who bring misery to mankind because of their selfish ends. The gardeners are the artists, philosophers, scientists, teachers, scholars and reformers who bring happiness. The work of the two goes on, simultaneously.

In this process two things stand out prominent. The one is that it is the big beautiful flowers and some small but full of fragrance that form the glory of the garden. In the garden of humanity too it is the great men, men of action and of thought, that alone are prominent. Mankind takes pride in them. Their memory alone is cherised. These historical personages alone are remembered.

The other thing is that all flowers at one time or the other must wither away. The large ones may stay afresh a little longer than the others. The fragrance of a few others may linger awhile more. But large or small, all must stale and decay. Their place is taken by new ones. Similarly in this

world, this garden of humanity, all men must pass away howsoever great or prominent, and others come into being and into prominence.

This continuous process of the exit of the old, stale and decayed, and entry of the newcomers, fresh and vigorous, is the law of nature. But this process does not mean much to the existence of the garden which is always full of varied pattern of flowers and flowerbeds. Even so, in the garden of humanity men come and men go, but the garden remains. History is the study of this Garden of Humanity.

In this Section I have rather repeatedly mentioned about conquerors, philosophers and saints. That was just to bring the point home. History is not a record of the work of conquerors and philosophers only ; numerous others—peoples and situations, both known and unknown—are involved. History takes into account not only men of action like Julius Caesar and Alexander, or men of peace like Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha but also great thinkers like Kautilya and Aristotle, great artists like Michelangelo and Raphael, great builders of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Pyramids of Egypt. We know nothing about the makers of the Vedic hymns, writers of the *Upnishads*, *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana*, the builders of Ajanta, Ellora and the South Indian temples, but they are all important as their work had great impact on mankind. And lest all this may sound as 'the great men theory of history,' it should be borne in mind that under the guidance of leaders there are activities involving large masses. These all form part of history. A garden comprises of all kinds of flowers.

Past—Present – Future

A garden comprises of flowers that are there, that are gone, and that are yet to come. History as the garden of humanity, too, has past, present and future. It is not merely a study of things gone by, but of things that vitally affected people before us, affect us now and may affect posterity in future. History is thus a study of the past in the present for the future.

Now it is truism to say that we learn from the

experience of the past, and the future generations will gain by our experience in the present. In the study of any 'present' problem, idea or institution, the mind of the historian invariably swings in the direction of the past, seeking origins, relationships and comparisons. A few examples will help us know that what we sometimes think to be of the past, is of great interest to us today. And lest the 'great man theory' should receive too much emphasis, these examples may be so chosen as not to involve any great men.

Let us take the first example from the remotest past and see its impact on the present. Let us recapitulate, or rather rebuild the story of the use of fire for domestic purposes. The early savage ate only raw flesh. Perhaps one day in search of food he struck at an animal with a stone, but the missile struck another stone. Through the impact of the friction some sparks were produced and dry grass and twigs nearby caught fire. Perhaps the animal, already wounded in the process, got burnt. The man, dazed at the phenomenon, and tired after the day's hunt, decided to eat the 'burnt' animal in place of the raw meat he was accustomed to eating.

But to! the flesh of the burnt animal (or rather the roasted meat) tasted better. The man had eaten cooked meat ; he had also come to know of the utility of fire and the trick of producing it. But three problems confronted him : (1) fire once produced could not be permitted to die out since it was not easy to reproduce it at will ; for this (ii) it had to be constantly fed, and (iii) it had to be constantly watched lest it should spread and destroy his hut or his little property in the cave. As an answer to all these problems the man needed a constant companion and he took one. The man was to hunt and bring the animal. His companion was to stay in the hut and feed the fire. In the evening the cooked meat was to be shared between the two.

The 'domestication' of fire, so insignificant in the beginning, almost revolutionized human life. It helped to bring man and woman together to live permanently as man and wife. It confirmed the custom of marriage, if it did not actually introduce it. Fire discovered long, long ago has been responsible for keeping man and woman together under one roof through

the ages. There can be no home without fire in the kitchen at any time—past, present and future.

Yes, even in future. This has been affirmed by the great humorist Stephen Leacock in his enchanting story entitled 'The Man in Asbestos'. When, in the world to come, there would be no cooking at home (according to Leacock), there won't also be the kind of family life to which man has been accustomed in the past and in which he is living today. Ever since the first man invited a woman to his cave to look after the fire, she began to be indispensable to him. The same reason impels man to give his earnings to his wife today. There are great men and busy men, administrators, scientists and scholars who work all day and work hard. But when they return home they cannot fix a toast for themselves or boil a pot of coffee. Is it not strange that the man who works so hard outside the home, cannot even prepare a square meal for himself at home ? No, this is due to centuries of dependence of man on woman for cooked food.

And once woman stops cooking for man there will perhaps be no need for a home. The phenomenon is not entirely absent even today. Where women take up jobs and earn their living independently and do not cook at home, family life often breaks up. At least it is not so happy as we envisage it. In the future world as visualized by Stephen Leacock the institution of marriage and home will be gone for good because there will be no cooking at home and food in the form of tablets will be available at all times everywhere.

It will be clear from the above how the use of fire for domestic purposes in pre-historic times has played a very important role in our socio-economic life through the ages. No wonder that amongst the Hindus, during marriage, there is the very interesting custom of the bridegroom holding the skirt of the bride and both going round the sacred fire seven times, the bride *leading*. Indeed this is the most important part of the ceremony. Without this no marriage is considered to be legal. It is symbolic of the fact that fire unites man and wife. They will stay together so long as there is fire in the kitchen. Once cooking at home is given up, perhaps the institution of home itself is liable to break up. (It cannot be argued that it is mainly

sex-attraction or biological urge that brings man and woman near to each other. True, the importance of sex is there, but in the earliest period it was necessity rather than sex-attraction alone that encouraged the institution of marriage. Woman's beauty is a later day 'invention' of poets and painters. The earliest women were as beautiful or as ugly as men, a position that is perhaps again to come in the Age of Asbestos as envisaged by Leacock).

Now, the 'domestication' of fire is a thing of the past, ancient past. It is an occurrence of the remotest times. And yet it influences our lives today as vitally as it did the life of the pre-historic cave-man. How can we then say that history is just a thing of the past ?

(Like the invention of fire, the invention of agriculture too has a history which has no beginning and no end.) It also has affected our lives through the ages and will go on doing so in times to come. Throughout the course of history it has been the ambition of man to produce more and better items of food. The achievements of today in this field include the manufacture of fertilizers and compost-manures as well as the use of tractors and a dozen other appliances. To produce a good crop and then a still better crop was the ambition of the earliest man too. The story of the effort of the early people in this regard is an engrossing study.

The earliest efforts at agriculture were, naturally, naive and haphazard. The idea of agriculture perhaps nature itself gave to man. Seeds dropped by trees near his cave sprouted into eatable products. Or, perhaps, winds brought some seeds to the patch of land in front of the primitive man's cave or hut, rain drenched the land, the seed got stuck up in the earth, and later on grain sprouted. The man tasted it and found it satisfactory and satisfying. After some time he did not wait for the wind to bring the seed ; but cleared a patch of ground, scratched it a little, put the seed in, the rain did the miracle and the man collected his harvest. This harvest, supplemented by hunting, was enough for his needs.

Now agriculture is a peaceful vocation. Hunting is full of exertion and hazards. The primitive man naturally began to be inclined more and more towards the peaceful vocation of agriculture. He began to think of stepping up agricultural

production. About then a phenomenon gave him a curious idea.

This idea has been elaborated in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Here a summary of the same will do. The primitive man buried the dead of his family not very far from his cave or hut, presumably in the field he had cleared and enclosed for producing his crop. There was every reason for doing so ; for the early man believed in the continuation of life after death. In the belief that after some time the deceased would need his food, foodgrains, pots and pans and other necessaries were also put with him in the grave. Archaeological finds confirm this.

The rain came. Some of the soil from the upper layers of the grave was washed away, the lower layers were miostened. And lo ! The grain buried with the dead sprouted large and thick. The savage was struck by this phenomenon. He thought that it was the burial of the dead in the field that had resulted in a rich crop, 'and the dull mind of the savage at first imagined that a dead body was essential to the production of grain, whereupon a tribesman, and later a captive, would be slain, to make sure that the field would be fertile.'[1]

As time passed, or should we say as civilization advanced, the sowing of the seed, the cutting of the crop and the collection of harvest began to be done with all kinds of rituals and fanfare. So many gods began to be worshipped, so many festivals were introduced. Human (and later animal) sacrifice, associated with fertility, became a part of many such ceremonies. From then to now experiments over experiments have been made to produce more and more food. From human sacrifice to fertilizers is a long, continuous, enchanting story. Similarly stories of the wheel, the horse, horse-power, steam-power, internal combustion engine, atomic energy etc., etc., too have no beginning and no end, only space forbids their detailed study here.

Having seen the impact and importance of the ideas and events of the remote pre-historic times on the present, let us take a few examples from 'historic times' (lest it should be argued

1. Clement Wood, *Outline of Man's Knowledge*, (New York, 1930) pp. ١٨-15.

that the details of the examples given above are not based on records) and see again that what is usually thought to be a thing merely of the past, is of vital importance to mankind at all times.

Gautam Buddha is a historical personage. He preached the message of non-violence, amity and goodwill. He even founded a new religion—Buddhism. This Buddha lived and died about 2,500 years ago. But his message and his religion are not only living but are gathering strength day after day. Human body has its limitations. Flesh is weak ; it is bound to decay. And, therefore, as all men must die, Buddha died too. But the Buddha of flesh and blood, when he ceased to be, produced the historical Buddha. The Buddha of flesh and blood lived only for about eighty years. But the Buddha of history lives, even more mature, of the age of 2,500 years. When he was living in flesh he preached to only a few thousand people ; let us say a million people at the most. The historical Buddha today has many more million listeners of his message and followers of his faith. In future years many more will benefit by his message. Thus he is not really dead. Historical existence is a kind of continuous life.

It is because of his influence (and the Jain master Mahavira) that Indians by and large are vegetarians. It is also averred that Mahatma Gandhi's message of non-violence has an impress of Buddha's teachings, if it is not actually a continuation of it. And when Mahatma Gandhi died Jawaharlal Nehru made the prophetic declaration : The light has gone out, but it will continue to burn for thousands of years and guide our path for years and years to come. Thus the message of the Buddha has enlightened mankind through the ages. It has inspired and given solace to millions in the past and the present and will go on doing so in the future. Buddha is therefore not just a thing of the past.

Six hundered years after Gautma Buddha came Jesus Christ. He also preached a religion of amity, goodwill and love. Throughout the last two thousand years, the number of Christ's followers has been swelling. Thousands fold their hands every morning and seek guidance from him. Now who can say that Buddha and Jesus belong to the past. They are

ever alive in history guiding and inspiring very many more men than when they were actually living in flesh and blood.

It may be argued that while it is true that we seek inspiration and guidance from the lives of men like Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha, what do we learn from cruel tyrants like Caligula, Chingiz Khan and Timur? How do tlfey, as historical personalities, guide us or have an impact on our lives? Well, they also do.

Today we stand in awe of the Atom bomb. We have also preached, if not quite practised, disarmament. Why? Why do we detest violence? Why are we afraid of war? It may be said that the devastation wrought by the last two World Wars has filled us with abhorrence of bloodshed and war. But so many of us have seen nothing of this devastation. Countries like Sweden and Switzerland had nothing much to lose in these wars. Even to us, in India, the last two World Wars have meant only a few incoveniences in the form of rationing and controls, a little high prices and some difficulty in railway travel. Getting a little less cloth or a little less sugar than usual was perhaps all that these wars have meant to us. Then, why should we hate war as any others? Why should even a young boy or girl who was born after the Second World War and has never seen the horrors of war, detest war? The answer is that abhorrence of war is not as recent a phenomenon as the last two Great Wars. Even a young school boy or girl, who is very well looked after, is cared for and is loved and has not experienced any kind violence whatsoever, detests war and violence. Why? It is because of the acts of men like Caligula, Chingiz and Timur and the host of them. Many may not have even heard of them and yet the totality of experience gained directly or even through inheritance in the form of historical knowledge has an impact on our life and character. An intelligent mind has no need to burn cities or impale new born babies in order to understand hate, fear and suffering. It is because of the historical experience of decades and centuries that rich and poor, old and young, all detest violence and war.

This historical experience is ever growing in volume as water in the river. As in the river the beginning and the end are inseparably interconnected, so is the past, present and

future. Lord Acton has put this idea in his inimitable style. "History," says he, "is a subject to which neither beginning nor end can be assigned. No beginning, because the dense web of the fortunes of man is woven without a void ; because in society as in nature, the structure is continuous, and we can trace things back, uninterruptedly ..... No end, because on the same principle, history made and history making are scientifically inseparable and separately unmeaning."[1] Dr. Tara Chand elaborates this idea in a simpler way. "The end is potentially present in the beginning ; the future is in some degree but the unravelment of the past. Which was or that which is cannot be severed from that which is to be .. The tiny seed, not bigger than a pin's head, carries within itself the potentialities of the mighty tree which takes under its umbrageous foliage whole armies of men. And when the tree blossoms it bears the seed from which it springs ... ...When, for example, Schliemann's pick and shovel opened the buried palaces of Tiryns, Mycenae, and Troy, he raised to life the dead heroic legends of Homer's epics. The past had became present. What Schliemann did for Homeric Greece, his successors have done and are doing all the world over. Discoveries in Egypt, Sumer, Elam, Babylon, Mohenjo Daro, Harappa, and Susa have added new dimensions to our knowledge."[2]

In a word, in the infinity of time, past, present and future represent only a point. The present is the future of the past and the past of the future. The future is, in its turn, the past of some other time. It is interesting to note that the Hindus have the same word for the past yesterday and the future tomorrow—*kal*. The past, the present and the future all stand together as one before history. Each age is a living present. At every stage the actors in the human drama are absorbingly occupied in achieveing their best and guiding and inspiring others. Our living present is the extension of a past which in innumerable ways is still with us. Most of our problems, and some times their solutions, originated in former decades and centuries. We have inherited problems as well as wisdom from

1. Acton, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
2. Radio Broadcast, published in the *Hitavada*, November, 1962.

earlier ages. The present is simply a cross-section of the whole story which dates back to the remote beginnings of humanity and which will be projected into the future.

And what about what we call 'modern' age or 'present' times ? We are all living in the past, present and future at the same time. It is never the 'dead past' as they say. If one wishes to see the agrarian methods of 'medieval Europe', he can still find them in some areas of Europe ; ancient methods are still practised in India. If one wants to see the Arabia of the days of Prophet Muhammad, he will find it in most parts of central Arabia even today. In the Egypt of the present day there are many farms similar to those existing in the days of the Pharaohs. If in Bombay and Delhi live modern Indians, there are tribals of the ancient past in Assam, Madhya Pradesh and many others States of the country. If hydro-electric projects are springing up at many places, if an Atomic Energy plant has been set up at Trombay, in many large areas of the country cow-dung still remains the chief source of energy. Wherever we go to seek the modern, we ever find survivals of the past. "The largest part of that history which we commonly call ancient," says Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby, "is practically modern, as it describes society in a stage analogous to that in which it now is, while on the other hand most of what is called modern history is practically ancient, as it dates to a state of things that has passed away."[1]

History, therefore, cannot be correctly studied or appreciated when seen through the slides of past and present or medieval and modern, but only as a running film. The division of history into periods is not a fact, but a tool of thought. The division of history into geographical sectors is equally not a fact, but a hypothesis. History is a continuous chain of experience. No wonder that the Italian philosopher Croce has declared that all history is contemporary.

Personalities—Events—Ideas

As a contemporary social science, history is learnt (and taught) through a process of progression. This process has

1. Translation of Thucydides (Oxford, 1920-35), Vol. I, p. 635.

three categories or stages. These may be termed as study of Personalities, of Events and of Ideas.

In the early stages history perhaps can only be learnt through reference to Personalities. 'Once upon a time there was an emperor called Asoka' begins the lesson in the school. And the young mind learns with wonder how a great king lived almost like a mendicant, renounced all pleasures of life and preached a religion of the Middle Path. Or, when the child is told about Chingiz Khan, he learns with horror how a man killed people belonging to his own specie without remorse, and destroyed kingdoms and disturbed peaceful life wherever he went just to acquire power and glory for himself. These heroic tales give him knowledge and help him determine his character. In the early stages the young mind can acquire information and gain inspiration better when his lessons are associated with reference to personalities.

In the next stage Events rather than personalities begin to receive greater emphasis. Personalities play a great part as creators of situations and events, but as studies advance Events become more important ; it is they that determine the course of human activities and of history. The mind at the secondary stage becomes pretty inquisitive. It has already learnt in its childhood-days the enchanting story of Napoleon Bonaparte. It now hungers to learn many more things. What did Napoleon achieve—for himself, for his nation, for the rest of Europe ? Did mankind benefit or suffer because of his actions ? Why did he ultimately fail ? What was the impact of his life on the world of his day and after ? And he even wants to know what would have happened 'if Napoleon had won the battle of Waterloo'.

The highest stage is that of Ideas. Men and events are transient. The meaning of all things depends upon purpose. History too is meaningful only when it indicates some transcendental purpose beyond actual facts. Single events as such are not meaningful, nor is a mere succession of events. Events may determine course of human actions, but what determines events is of fundamental importance. There are certain basic, fundamental truths, ideas and forces which determine actions of men and patterns of life and civilizations. Love of beauty, of

liberty and of truth are forces that have worked, as it were, behind the scene, to determine actions of men and events of history. History, in a word, has been enacted by thought, or thought-force, making men move mountains. The history of a people, therefore, in the ultimate analysis, is the study of their ideas, their feelings, their emotions, their outlook on life, expressing themselves through their religion, art and literature. Thus in the highest stages of study there hardly remains any difference between history and philosophy. It was perhaps this that prompted Croce to declare that 'history today has annihilated philosophy'.[1]

Now none of these stages of progression in the study of history is without its importance. Indeed, each stage is important and cannot be dispensed with or even neglected.

In the initial stages history is taught through the medium of personalities. For the young minds personalities are easy to understand. We are sure of them : they stand on documents and are more or less above evasion or dispute. Besides, the personality of a king or even a despot, is the true index of the condition of his subjects. By making a correct study of Asoka, Harshavardhana, Akbar and Aurangzeb one can visualize almost precisely the condition of the people in their respective times fairly accurately. Not only for monarchs, even in the study of governments the same standard would work. To know in detail about Eisenhower and Kennedy, Churchill and Macmillan, Stalin and Khruschev, is to know about the condition of the people of America, England and Russia under the government of these leaders. Similarly a good study of the personality and character of Jawaharlal Nehru would perhaps be sufficient for a young student to know what progress the people of India made under the guidance of this philosopher-statesman. Personalities thus help in the study of even government and society.

Moreover, for the young mind the great and the good furnish the best instructive examples. They inspire, encourage, elevate. Their work, their sacrifices, their achievements in the face of mightiest odds, instil in the minds of the young (and the

1. B. Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, pp. 35, 36.

old alike) reverence for duty, discipline, loyalty and love of perseverence and adventure. Personalities are the best medium through which man can learn from men and about men. No wonder that a historian has declared that history is nothing but the 'essence of innumerable biographies'. Indeed the importance of the study of personalities in history can never be over-emphasized.

Personalities, however, are only a media. Besides they are transient. But their actions result in Events, sometimes of great consequence. Caligula is there no more and many may not even be knowing the name of Chingiz Khan, but by their earthquake-like convulsions they in a way have altered the face of the globe. If history is a record of change, and change for progress, then the spirit of Asokan Digvijaya, the flood-like movements of Napoleonic legions and Hitler's Wehrmacht all play their part equally effectively. These events even eclipse the personalities of their originators and perpetrators. The scientists who split the Atom are important, but of much more importance and greater influence is the impact of their work on the present and future of mankind. In the words of Edward Gibbon events change the face of the earth to a greater degree than even floods and earthquakes. Events like the Asokan Dhammavijaya, the rise of Islam, the conquests of Chingiz, the splitting of the Atom and the flights in space have completely overwhelmed us, changed us, metamorphosed us.

But of the greatest importance, greater than personalities and events, are Ideas which prompt men, through the ages, to perform great deeds, achieve great accomplishments. Ideas are the basis of all actions of personalities and are behind the occurrence of all events and are, therefore, superior to both. 'Ideas which, in religion and politics, are truths, in history are forces.'[1] It is ideas that have determined the actions of men through history. It is ideas that make heaven of hell and hell of heaven. Honour, Liberty and Religion may have half a dozen definitions each, but the bloodshed, conquests, brutalities benedictions, and sacrifices they have inspired are common knowledge. Thus ideas of honour, liberty and religion are

1. Acton, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

neither old nor old-fashioned : they are and have been the thought-force behind all actions at all times. Similar is the case with patriotism, nationalism and even chauvinism.

In religion, art and architecture, in painting, music and philosophy, mankind seeks isolation from tyranny and the mundane things of life. It thinks to express itself in various fields and enriches life and thought. And while these ideas and their results energize and elevate, they also express the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, emotions and susceptibilities of a particular people. It is not a movie that we see in The Robe or Ben Hur, it is not space and colour that we see in Ajanta, it is not just sculpture that we appreciate in Khajuraho, it is not merely architecture that we admire in Alhambra, Buland Darwaza or the Taj Mahal : it is history itself that unfolds before our eyes. To quote the great historian Lord Acton, 'If we are to account mind not matter, ideas not force, the spiritual property that gives dignity, and grace, and intellectual value to history, and its action on the ascending life of man, then we shall not be prone to explain the universal by the national, and civilization by custom. A speech by Antigone, a single sentence of Socrates, a few lines that were inscribed on an Indian rock before the Punic war, the footsteps of silent yet prophetic people who dwelt by the Dead Sea, and perished in the fall of Jerusalem...'[1] are all great forces in history.

Thus Personalities, Events and Ideas all play their part in the making of History. Nor perhaps can history be correctly and properly studied except through this process of progression. To have a true historical perspective, one cannot safely begin with the second or third stage. If one does, he would not be able to appreciate its main currents.

Perhaps one reason why the study of history is not popular in the higher stages in many States of India is that it is not taught as a compulsory subject at the High School level. Once a young man does not have a good grounding at the earlier stages, he is scared to take it up at the higher. And even if he does, he finds it difficult and uninteresting. There is, however,

1. Acton, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

one section with which history (not history as such but a set course of papers) is popular. It is the group of science and Humanities graduates who offer it at the Competitive Examinations thinking it to be a soft optional. It is not love of history but the lure of job that prompts them to study it for their examination. But passing an examination is a thing different from acquiring knowledge or preparing for life. Similar is the feeling in England. 'History as an academic discipline,' says Professor Carr, 'in this (Cambridge) university is sometimes thought of as a catch-all for those who find classics too difficult and science too serious. One impression which I hope to convey is that history is a far more difficult subject than classics, and quite as serious as any science.'[1]

In a word the study of history has no short-cuts. The poet Pope has rightly said that the proper study of man is man. The study of man in all the ramifications of his thought and action is a stupendous task. What applies to individuals applies to nations in a greater measure. The history of a nation or nations can be completely studied only when it is done in all its aspects—political, social and cultural.

The Historian's Task

We have seen how best history can be studied. Let us now see how best it can be written. The task of the historian consists mainly of three things—(1) To study documents and records, (2) to be objective in his assessment, and (3) to write a readable narrative.

The study of documents is an exceedingly difficult task, although at the first sight it may mot appear to be so. History is older than records just as income and expenditure are older than budgets. The earliest people did not know writing ; later, in the ancient world, not much history was written.[2] Even whatever historical and non-historical literature is available for

1. E. H. Carr, *What is History* ? p. 85
2. In India Kalhan's *Rajtarangini*, a history of Kashmir written in the twelfth century, is probably the first book which may be considered to be a historical work.

ancient times, it is too little for the historian to base his conclusions upon. Therefore, because of the paucity of records, the historian is forced to probe for material in every possible avenue.

A historian ought really to study everything, for everything is a source. Everything which comes down to us, in whatever form, is in some way connected with the mind of man and its creation. A historian is thus a polyhistorian. His study ranges from anthropological and geological researches to coins, inscriptions, archaeological finds and even to ballads and songs and works of non-historical character. He has to hunt through a plethora of material to find something of historical value, so that a writer on the early history of India has to make use of works like the *Vedas* and the *Upnishads* to cull 'historical' information from them. He clutches at even the fragmentary account of Megasthenes, Fahien and Hieun-Tsang and tries to pick out historical facts from literary works of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti.

Of the available records, historical and non-historical, the historian has first to determine clearly why a certain work was written. Until he knows very clearly about the author, and why he wrote, he cannot have a correct appraisal of his work. There were many who wrote only for the sake of satisfying their 'inspiration'. They had a talent which was 'death to hide'. They were selfless, and they wrote, in the words of Milton, 'to serve their Maker, and present a true account.' There was no desire for self-glorification, or for praising someone else. That is why sometimes we do not even know the name of the author or the date of the composition of some works. Such works are usually the creation of religious thinkers, philosophers and poets—works like the *Vedas* or the writings of Kalidasa—works which deeply reflect the peculiarities of their times, but about the authors of which little is known. Kalidasa wrote so many works of great merit, still nothing can be said about the author—when he was born, where he lived and wrote etc.—with any amount of certainty. All that can be said is that perhaps he wrote, like many others, without any mundane motives.

Some others wrote with the aim of clarifying certain

misconceptions and to present (as they claimed) a true account. Flavius Josephus of Jerusalem wrote with such a motive and asserts it in his *The Jewish War*. 'The Judaeo-Roman War," writes he, "is the greatest war of our own times . ... Nevertheless, its history has been written academically by authors who did not participate in the events themselves, but have collected random and discrepant accounts of them by hearsay, while the first hand witnesses have been tempted by their wish to flatter the Romans or by their hatred of the Jews to misrepresent the facts. Such facts consist of alternative invective and encomium, without a vestige of historical accuracy, and this has induced me to offer to the public of the Roman Empire, in a Greek translation, a work of mine, originally composed in my native language (Aramaic)..... My name is Josephus son of Mathius. By descent I am a hebrew from Jerusalem, by profession a priest. I saw service under the Romans in the initial phase of the war, and was a compulsory spectator of its later stages... It is far.....from being my intention to enter the lists against the champions of the Romans and to blow my own compatriots' trumpet. In describing the performances of either side I shall maintain a strict objectivity, though I may devote my comment upon the events to the expression of my subjective point of view and may give vent to my personal feelings in lamenting the misfortunes of my country.'[1]

Or, there were those who wrote in anger and to spite. Isami was angry with Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq because when the latter shifted his capital, Isami was compelled to go to Daulatabad against his will, some seven hundred miles away from the Delhi he liked, with the result that he has painted Muhammad bin Tughlaq in very dark colours. There is also the classic example of Tacitus who declared : 'Let Nero know that he will not prosper for has not Tacitus been born in his empire.' In view of this assertion, some modern historians have begun to doubt the story of Nero's setting fire to Rome, and then playing on the fiddle and enjoying from the terrace of his palace the sight of a confounded people fleeing for life.

1. Toynbee, *Greek Historical Thought*, (A Mentor Book, 1953), pp. 60-61

Many others wrote at the command of rulers or probably with a motive for wordly gains. Most of the Persian historical works in the medieval times written in India and adjacent countries, were at the bidding of kings and nobles. The chroniclers were generally in the pay of their masters and could say nothing except what pleased the latter about themselves and their times. There were also some who wrote secretly and in defiance of orders like the historians of the reign of Aurangzeb.

Whatever the motives of the ancient and medieval contemporary writers, their records are not, and cannot be, perfect. 'Our picture of Greece in the fifth century B.C. is defective not primarily because so many of the bits have been accidentally lost, but because it is, by and large, the picture formed by a tiny group of people in the city of Athens.'[1] It has been noted above that Kalidasa probably wrote for no worldly gains. But one thing is striking even in the works of this great writer and poet. These abound in praise for the king, the Brahmin, and feminine beauty. The subjects convey only one side of the picture—the happy. One wonders if even Kalidasa could think freely. Similarly why our ancient times look so glorious may be due to the fact that perhaps ancient records were made to paint them so ; and even these have probably been adulterated from time to time to make the period look brighter still. The chroniclers and historians of medieval India were good narrators of events, but their religious bias and flowery language often mar the merit of their works. In India in particular, from Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir*, one of the earliest works on Medieval Indian history to the histories written up to the time of the Later Mughals, the Persian chronicles are full of venom for the Hindus besides 'containing the minimum of historical matter diluted in a flood of rhetorical verbiage.' The ever inquisitive foreign travellers provide a lot of information on contemporary social and economic life, but some of them like Bernier, Tavernier and Manucci indulge in scandal-mongering also. Besides, 'what we know as the facts of medieval history have almost all been selected for us by

1. E.H. Carr, *What is History ?* p. 13.

generations of chroniclers who were professionally occupied in the theory and parctice of religion, and who therefore thought it supremely important, and recorded everything relating to it, and not much else .....The dead hand of vanished generations of historians, scribes and chroniclers has determined beyond the possibility of appeal the pattern of the past "[1]

Prejudice, exaggeration and distortion of facts were not the qualities only of the ancient or medieval times. These are shared today in no less degree. We find its proof in abundance in the European Archives. According to Liddell Hart, 'On the whole British commanders do not seem to have been capable of more ingenuity than mere destruction or ante-dating of orders. The French were often more subtle; a general could safeguard the lives of his men as well as his own reputation by writing orders, based on a situation that did not exist, for an attack that nobody carried out while everybody shared in the credit, since the record went on the file.' Such a thing made Liddell Hart to declare: "Nothing can deceive like a document."[2]

It is true that no record is perfect. But the historian can, after studying the motives, biases and exaggerations of the older writers, come to certain definite conclusions. In spite of their shortcomings, the older chronicles remain our only source of information. Besides their paucity compels us to rely on whatever contemporary records one can lay hands on. The sixteenth century empire-builder, Babur, is his own historian. He blames all those who came in the way of his scheme of things. He accuses Daulat Khan Lodi and Rana Sangram Singh of treachery because he expected that the moment he marched into India, they should have helped him even against their ðwn self-interest. Indeed, Babur indulges in a lot of propaganda against Indian princes and things. But in the absence of any other record, particularly a record from Daulat Khan Lodi or Rana Sanga, one has to give due importance to what Babur says. Akbar had two contemporary historians, both meritorious but poles apart in views. Abul Fazl saw

1. E.H. Carr, *What is History?* p. 14.
2. Liddell Hart, *Why Don't We Learn from History?* (London, 1946) p.

nothing but good in the monarch while Badaoni decried him at every step, and yet we have to consider them both. We give, and cannot help but give, due importance to 'contemporary' evidence. After all history has to be based on records. Moreover, as Josephus has rightly remarked, "The ancients all devoted themselves to the writing of history of their own times, in which their personal participation in events gave clarity to their presentment and every falsehood was certain of exposure by a public that knew the facts."[1]

There is one difficulty, however. As in the case of writers of chronicles, documents and records, so also in the case of modern historians, who write on the basis of old records, human element is always discernible, and the modern historian is liable to share the weaknesses of the old chroniclers. He has therefore to be very careful in the surveying and sifting of evidence. If on the other hand to the bias of the chroniclers is added the prejudice of the modern historians, the damage is complete. Therefore, utmost care is needed by the writer of history to be unbiased and have an objective and scientific outlook.

In this regard it has been well said that the historian is seen best when he does not appear. He is a historian only when he does not introduce his personal likes and dislikes in his narrative. A good historian should not be partisan. He should be like an onlooker at a match, and that too in an insignificant corner of the stadium. As a participant in the game, a player cannot be impartial, just because he belongs to a team. Similarly one who teams up on one side in the assessment of historical events cannot be an impartial historian. A historian has to be above the participants in the drama of history. In the pavilion one sees from a distance and can easily detect the defects and merits of the players on the field. The players, as participants, cannot see their own merits or shortcomings. They are in one team, opposed to the other. Besides, in the heat of the game, their attention is concentrated on the ball. But the onlooker in the stadium has the whole playfield before his eyes and sees the whole game in a larger perspective. He alone can be objective. In his letter of instructions to the contributors

1. Toynbee, *Greek Historical Thought*, p. 62.

to *The Cambridge Modern History*, Lord Acton laid the greatest emphasis on objectivity by saying 'that our Waterloo must be one that satisfies French and English, German and Dutch alike.'[1]

But this objectivity, this detachment, is rare though not non-existent. There are many reasons which come in the way of unbiased study. Some are ingrained in human nature ; others are acquired. Such factors may be classified under three categories : (1) psychological, (2) unintentional, and (3) deliberate. The writer is a human being with all his frailties and strength, likes and dislikes, passions and emotions. He belongs to a certain country, has a particular nationality and religion. A man cannot just be a historian ; it would be ideal if he could. A historian is besides a Chrisitian or a Hindu or a Muslim. He is also an American, an Englishman, an Indian, a Chinese or a German. Howsoever disciplined his intellect might be, and whatever efforts he might make to rise above considerations of race or religion, he still cannot help entertaining and giving out his proclivities and propensities. He may come across in the records he studies some statement which he may, without giving it the test of historical verification, believe to be true because it happens to suit his mental make-up or his preconceptions. On the other hand he may brush aside some other statement or fact because it may not be in consonance with his psychological build-up or mental upbringing. Let us take, for example, Akbar as an Emperor and Abul Fazl as his historian. Akbar is renowned for his religious toleration and Abul Fazl for his gifts as a historian. The Hindus have the highest regard for Akbar for his cosmopolitan views. The Muslims entertain certain misgivings. But this very Akbar, whom the Hindus like in every way, does not remain so great in their eyes when it is a matter of Akbar *versus* Rana Pratap. The Hindu is with Akbar in everything, but when it comes to Akbar *vis a vis* Pratap, the Hindu is on the side of Rana Pratap. There is, as it were, a psychological switch over. Similarly Abul Fazl's merits as a historian, in the eyes of the Hindus, are dwarfed when they read his statements about Rana Pratap. Else, this very Abul Fazl

1. Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, (1906), p. 318.

is good and even great. The French have been the allies of the English during the last two Great Wars, but they always remember with distaste, if not with bitterness, the story of Joan of Arc.

Professor Mohammad Habib tells a very interesting story in this connection. In the second edition of his *Mahmud of Ghazni* he says that when the book was first published (in 1927), there was an uproar in the Urdu Press. Mahmud carried out seventeen raids into India and carried away untold wealth from its towns and temples. Mahmud of Ghazni had claimed to have done all this to glorify Islam, and Professor Habib's contention was that the conqueror's claim was not only unfounded but he in fact tarnished the name of Islam. Muslims were amazed and annoyed as to how a Muslim historian could write in such a way against a Muslim conqueror, and criticized Professor Habib vehemently. Similarly when Professor R.P. Tripathi wrote, quite recently, that Rana Pratap of Chittor was a tribal leader, who because of his obstinacy did not co-operate with the enlightened Mughal Emperor Akbar with the result that he only brought misery to his own people, Dr. A.L. Srivastava promptly came out with 'the other point of view'. He also seemed to be surprised as to how a Hindu could write disparagingly about a Hindu hero like Rana Pratap. Professors Habib and Tripathi can only reply to their critics as Ranke did. Ranke said to a Churchman, who too had written on the Reformation, 'You are in the first place a Christian : I am in the first place a historian. There is a gulf between us.'[1]

Bias born out of psychological factors although not justifiable, is more or less natural. It is unintentional and cannot perhaps be helped. Similarly unintentional bias born out of lack of historical perspective too permits of pardon. The older historians who overrated wars were so much impressed by them that they hardly saw the other forces working around them. Wars, they correctly thought, decided things. Territorial boundaries were suddenly shifted, populations were transferred from the rule of one king to another's, and wealth and treasures changed hands overnight. That is why older records are replete

1. Acton, *The Study of History*, p. 56.

with the military exploits of kings, their campaigns and conquests. The author of the *Dynasts* rightly observes : 'War makes rattling good history, (while) peace is poor reading.' But perhaps more lasting were the results of the work of peaceful social and religious reformers, political thinkers, scientists and men of letters. Those who were witnesses of the grandeur of the Roman Empire, hardly visualized that one day the ideas of the 'Jewish rebel' Jesus would conquer the whole world. Similarly those who heard the crash of the fall of Constantinople and thought it would change the face of the world, hardly listened to the click of the printing machine Guttenburg was developing in a little town in Germany. But while the fall of Constantinople is only a matter of memory, the Printing Press is a living force. According to Toynbee, Christianity is still the greatest 'new event' in the memory of man, while the emergence of democracy, the latest new event in the western secular civilization, is 'an almost meaningless repetition of something that the Greeks and Romans did before us and did supremely well.'[1]

And who can tell that the too much talked-of potentialities of Atom may not be of so much service to mankind as the silent idea of co-existence and the active desire of great nations not only to live in peace with the smaller ones but to provide aid to the underdeveloped countries. A modern historian should always have the keenness to distinguish the parochial from what is real though less spectacular. There should always be an energetic understanding of the correct sequence and real significance of events. Perspective should never be lost sight of in the evaluation of historical events.

Now historical bias born out of lack of perspective or even psychological factors, though bad enough, is understandable and even perhaps pardonable. But bias or prejudice born out of chauvinism and imaginary interests of self-glorification is dangerous. It is harmful not only to the cause of historical veracity, but is, as we shall see a little later, suicidal for the people whose historians indulge in it.

The two points that stand out in what has been presently said are that (i) there is paucity of historical material for the

1. A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, (Oxford, 1948) p. 237.

past, and (2) whatever material is available is prejudiced and distorted by the biases or motives of the writers. How is then the historian to go about his task ? If he adopts an attitude that facts are everything, they are all that constitutes history, then, of course, his task cannot even be taken up, not to say of being accomplished, because facts as available in older books and chronicles are imperfect. He would suffer from the same frustration from which Dollinger, Lord Acton's teacher, suffered. 'He would not write with imperfect materials, and to him materials were always imperfect.'[1] But if he takes the attitude that facts by themselves are not history but only raw material for history, then he would not feel discouraged. No chronicle can tell us more than what its writer or his patron thought to be important, but the task of the historian is not to repeat what the chronicler has said but to evaluate it. The facts of history never come to us 'pure'. They are refracted through the mind of the recorder. The historian's job is to interpret these facts. Of course he cannot write history if he cannot establish some sort of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing. This will naturally take the form of imaginative understanding.

But not of imagination or speculation. He cannot take liberties. He cannot say that facts are nothing, interpretation everything. That will permit him to let loose his imagination, assert fanciful ideas and propound fantastic theories. 'History' says Lord Acton, 'to be above evasion or dispute, must stand on documents, not opinions.'[2] Facts must remain the foundation on which history is built, but interpretation is the life-blood of history. To choose facts, to put them in proper perspective, and to so interpret them so as to bring out the situation to the fore as precisely as possible, is no easy job. The task of the historian is indeed a difficult one.

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1. Acton, cited in G.P. Gooch, *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 385.
2. Acton, *The Study of History*, p. 45.

Bias in History

In view of what has been said above, let us now examine the implications of the demand, raised in certain quarters ever since India became independent of British rule, that Indian history should be written from the nationalist point of view. This demand stems from a number of reasons. These in a nutshell may be classified as follows.

1. European scholars, it is said, have deliberately distorted Indian and for the matter of that Eastern history with a view to serving their own ends.

2. Also, since Indians were under alien rule, they could not express their views freely. The only way open to Indian historians was to tow the line of the British historians.

3. The foundations of modern Indian historical researches were laid by Westerners. Most of the works on Indian history were written by Western scholars, especially British, right up to 1947. Their writings are vitiated by the British desire and policy of divide and rule. The Indian historians just followed the patterns laid down by British historians. Now that India is independent, Indians should change over to history 'from the nationalist point of view'.

4. India is a sub-continent with various castes and creeds, religious and language groups. These have to be integrated and united. In the effort at emotional and national integration, Indian historians have to play a major role. Therefore, Indian historians should write history in such a way as not to hurt the feelings of any religion, caste, group or section. In other words, they should help to achieve national unity through their writings.

Let us examine if all these contensions are based on facts. True, a notion does persist not only amongst Indians but among all Asians that Europeans have distorted and decried their (East's) past with a view to eulogize their (West's) own achievements, civilization and culture. This feeling has been repeatedly expressed by Eastern scholars in writing and speech. At the first Asian History Congress held in New Delhi in December, 1961, Sardar K.M. Panikkar was furious against European misconceptions about 'Oriental ignorance', 'Oriental superstition',

'Oriental despotism', etc. These phrases, he said, had been coined by Europeans to run down Asian life and governments Nor was his a lone voice. Delegates from many Asian countries joined in the attack. There is indeed some justification for this. Books have been written by Europeans in the past and in our own times as well disparaging everything 'Oriental' as if all the ills of mankind emanated from the East. But lest Eastern historians should also indulge in fulsome denunciation of everything Occidental, Mr. Amin Faris Nabih, Professor of Arab History at the American University of Beirut, happily struck a note of warning, and pleaded that we should ever try to save ourselves from repeating the sins of others.

But the point to bear in mind is that when European writers in general and British writers in particular disparaged Indian history and civilization and praised their own, they were only trying to assert their racial superiority. Indeed books and movies depicting 'the white man's burden' are too numerous to need mention of specific names or titles. But leaving aside the propagandist literature, and confining to standard historical works, it can safely be asserted that if some European scholars have written things unpalatable to Indians, there are many who have not only sympathetically studied but even glorified many of our achievements. The rule to be applied to the works of both these schools, however, is that everything should be put to a severe test and nothing should be taken on trust.

What about Indians scholars themselves ? Can they also be accused of distorting the history of their own country ? And if so, with what motives ? Indian writers of history, during the British rule, generally came from universities. And the universities were largely free of Governmental control. Maybe, the Indian Universities have not enjoyed that degree of autonomy under British rule and after, as they should. Still university professors have been under no constraint and have written freely on subjects like history. And outside the universities there have been brave or perhaps biased writers like B.D. Basu who wrote *Rise of the Christian Power in India*, hammering heavily at every aspect of British rule in India.

Even presuming that Indian historians were not free to express their views under British rule, restrictions, if there were

any, applied only to criticism of British rule. There were no British restrictions applicable to ancient or medieval periods of Indian history. Scholars were free to express their views on these two periods. Even for the British period, they were not so helpless as might be imagined. There are always ways of conveying one's conclusion even under great restrictions. We have a very interesting example of such an independent writing in a seven-teenth century work entitled *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana* by Ahmad Yadgar. Writing about the strict rules of the Mughals about the law of escheat, and ruminating over the 'good old days' of the Lodi rule, Ahmad Yadgar says: 'God be praised for endowing Sultan (Sikandar Lodi) with such a generous spirit (of permitting retention of any buried treasure discovered by someone). In these days (*i.e.* of Mughal Emperor Jahangir), if any one were to find even a few copper *tankas*, our rulers would immediately pull down his house to examine every nook and corner for more.'[1] If a seventeenth century chronicler could take such a bold stand under the very nose of the mighty Mughals, surely Indian historians under British rule were definitely better-placed. If many Indian historians have praised British rule they were certainly not writing under duress. The probability is that they were convinced of its benefits. Similarly if others have criticized or condemned it, they too came to such conclusions without any pressure. It should not be forgotten that B.D. Basu wrote his book during the British period.

It is true that the pioneers of modern Indian historical research were Europeans, and Indian scholars have learnt much from them. But it is difficult to assess the responsibility of European historians and scholars in twisting facts of Indian history so as to promote the British Government's policy of divide and rule. In fact certain questions have to be answered before it is asserted that the history of India as written by British historians is biased and not true. Perhaps the history of European historical writings on India will clarify this point.

It was but natural for a foreign people, endeavouring to establish their trade and empire in India, to seek to know about it as much as possible. Their ignorance about it was so colossal

1. *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana*, Persian Text, (Calcutta, 1939) p. 36.

that when Macaulay recommended adoption of English as the medium of instruction in colleges and universities, his argument was that Indian, or for that matter Asian, literature was so poor that it could not serve the purpose of higher studies. He indeed declared that all Eastern literature could be accommodated on a shelf of a British Library. Now Macaulay was ignorant, but he was not dishonest. The fact was that when Macaulay gave this verdict, neither Europeans nor Indians knew much about our rich literature. Only later did the world came to know about our rich heritage, but *mirable dictu* through the very efforts of British and continental scholars. It was through the indefatigable labours and sincere efforts of scholars like Sir William Jones, Pargiter, Max Muller, Hultz, Fleet, Prinsep, Cunningham, Grierson, MaCrindle, Sten Konow, Vincent Smith and a host of others, that India and the world were restored what had been lost of the wealth of our history and literature. Students of Indian history and literature, the whole nation in fact, are indeed deeply indebted to European savants for rescuing from oblivion and destruction many old Sanskrit and Persian works. And Indian scholars have built on the foundations truly and surely laid by these Enropean scholars.

Question now arises to what extent were these European scholars influenced by the British policy of divide and rule? Whatever may have been the attitude of the officials of the East India Company, there is no disputing the devotion and dispassionate scholarship of the European scholars. We need not blame them if, on the basis of the material available to them, some of them honestly came to the conclusion that there was something wanting in Indian life and thought or sincerely believed that the system of administration in India on the eve of the establishment of the British Empire was corrupt and inefficient. (In fact many believed in just the opposite ; the British rulers adopted the then existing system of administration and changed it only gradually.) Many of them also studied the relationship between the diverse communities of India, their customs, manners and traditions and came to certain conclusions and wrote them down, whether it was palatable to the Indians or not. British *officials* apart, European scholars and hlstorians have not been under official or governmental influence.

In spite of this, if it be true that some European scholars have gone out of their way to garble our history, there is no reason why we should go the other way about and gloat over our past. After all what is the idea behind writing history from the nationalist point of view if it is not to glorify our past achievements and our present achievements after 1947, and paint the British rule in India with the blackest colours ? What would be the result of all this ? The history of ancient times, already glorified beyond credence, would be delineated in still brighter colours to look almost ridiculous, of the history of Medieval India the corners would be rounded off, shadows would be made to appear less dark and good features spot-lighted. In short, it would be treated in such a way as to provide a bright and beautiful backdrop to the Dark Age of British Imperialism in India. Again, as against this Dark Age the glories of the post-independence India would be enthusiasitcally paraded.

Now this could be called anything but history. History strives for truth, not to praise or blame, not to denounce or glorify. It knows no caste, no creed no nationality. There is no point of view in history like national or international, altruistic, egoistic, communistic or individualistic. (The history of 1947-66 or of the post-Independence period from the nationalist (Congress ?) point of view would be a great epoch of development and progress, but from the Communist point of view it would be a dark age in which capitalism, exploitation and corruption flourished side by side.)

We cannot and should not tamper with history. If we lower our standards in history we cannot uphold them in 'Church or State',[1] in private or public life. History has to rise above the temporary and the transient to fasten us to abiding issues. In view of this any attempt at writting history from the nationalist point of view may even be anti-national. To be proud of one's past achievements is natural, to learn from one's mistakes is rational, but to slur over our failings and only gloat over our past glories is suicidal, as will be presently seen.

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1. Acton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 74.

A word may here be said about the last of the points enumerated in the beginning, that is, that Indian historions have to play their part in bringing about national integration. Indian history shows that the loss of our independence time and again has been due to lack of unity among us. Some seek consolation in the idea that there is an underlying unity in our diversity ; others think that our differences out-weigh the factors that make for unity, otherwise there is no reason why, in spite of the repeated lessons of our history, complete national integration should not have been achieved. The historians of India, it is said, have to fulfil their obligations to society in helping to bring about national integration. After all the historian writes for his age and his society, and the society has certain expectations from him.

The desire to bring about national unity by 'emotional integration' is both noble and utilitarian. But the objective cannot be achieved by ignoring realities. In his desire not to hurt anybody's feelings, a politician can hold in equal esteem the meek and the insolent, the peace-loving and the aggressor, the victim and the persecutor But not a historian. A politician can take recourse to expediency, not so the historian. The historian can interpret, he can explain, but he cannot excuse.

Nor can the historian play the role of a lawyer. A lawyer's job is anyhow to defend his client sometime knowing full well that the latter is not innocent ; but the historian's job is to judge. Unfortunately many historians try to plead like lawyers and to save their heroes and defend their rule put forward all kinds of arguments to explain off words like *mleksha, Jeziya, Turushkadanda, Zimmi, Jihad,* etc.

Once at an after-lecture discussion at the University, a question was put to me if for achieving emotional integration we should not stop the study of medieval Indian history since it was full of references to bitter conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. My answer was that medieval history was not just a story of bitter conflicts. Even granting, (for the sake of argument), that it was, a disease is not cured by hiding it or forgetting about it. It is for the historian to diagnose correctly why we were (or are) prone to be quarrelsome, and

to suggest a probable remedy. But we know that medieval period was not all a period of conflict. If a few were involved in occasional wars, millions of others were engaged in peaceful vocations. Altogether it was an age of great cultural achievements. While there is no reason to shut our eyes to conflicts, proper emphasis needs to be laid on achievements in the field of art and literature, on the work of reformers who brought about social synthesis, and on the work of rulers and administrators who tried to do their best to provide the nation with peace and prosperity. But any distortion of facts or *suppressio veri* in history would not help much in achieveing national unity.

There is yet another pitfall. If every country studies history from the nationalist point of view, its chauvinistic approach would endanger peace. This has been the experience in the past and this is a very real threat in the present. One of the reasons for the frequent wars in the world has been the pride every nation, rightly or wrongly, takes in its history. G.M. Trevelyan sums up the danger in his inimitable style thus: "If all historians, for example", says he, "had condemned aggressive wars, including those begun by their own kings and countrymen, we should not have been where we are today. If French historians of the era of Thiers had criticized instead of glorifying Napoleon, there might have been no 1870 ..If German historians had condemned Frederic the Great's aggressions, they might have taught the teachable German folk the things pertaining to their peace."[1] To this, it may be added that if the Hindu bards from Chandra Bardai to Bhushan and Muslim chroniclers and panegyrists from Hasan Nizami to Abdul Hamid Lahori, and a host of other modern writers, had not exaggerated the achievements of their heroes or vehemently denounced their opponents is every way—their life, their culture and their religion—we would not have been where we are today.

Bias or prejudice born out of chauvinism and imaginary interests of national glorification is not only undesirable, it is indeed dangerous. It is harmful not only to the cause of historical truth, but is suicidal for the people whose historians

2. G.M. Trevelyan, *Bias in History*, an essay.

indulge in it. For example, the "German Penal Code of 1936 laid down that things dug up from past history which were offensive to the German honour would be punished by hard labour, regardless of whether the statements were true or not."[1] Consequently, no historical facts, which were unpalatable to German national honour, whether they were true or not, could be mentioned in German historical works. The whole nation was deliberately kept deluded by its government and historians and was made to believe that there was never whatsoever wrong with the German people. On the other hand they were made to believe that they were supermen. And history knows how the Germans have suffered because of such distortions of truth.

Let us take the case of the Hindus. There was a time when the Hindus had reached glorious heights in many spheres of life and thought. When perhaps half the world was living in dark ignorance, the Hindus had evolved a highly developed religious philosophy and civilization. These undoubted achievements in the domains of philosophy, art, and culture, should have developed in them a sense of humility, but instead they began to suffer from arrogance, and cut themselves off from the world outside. Alberuni, a great and impartial scholar, writes thus about them in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: "All their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them—against all foreigners.....The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge of science whatsoever.....Their haughtiness is such that if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khorasan or Persia they will think you both an ignoramus and a liar. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is."[1] Although Alberuni is cultured enough to concede that, 'we must confess, in order to be just, that a similar depreciation of the foreigners not only prevails among us and the Hindus, but is common to all nations towards each other', yet his statement about the arrogance and

1. Liddell Hart, *Why Do'nt We Learn from History?* p. 12.
2. Alberuni, *India*, Trs. by Edward Sachau, (London, 1910), I, pp. 19-23.

exclusiveness of the Hindus gives us the correct clue to their fall shortly afterwards. The Hindus, conscious of their superiority and feeling secure behind their natural frontiers, gradually lost contact with the outside world. In particular they shut their eyes to what was happening in the West Asian countries. No conversions to Hinduism were permitted. 'They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it or was inclined to their religion. "This...constitutes the widest gulf between us (Alberuni, Muslim) and them."[1] Religious stigma began to be attached to travel abroad, and although the time at which such taboos came into vogue cannot be fixed with any amount of certainty, yet Professor Habib thinks that they were in operation on the eve of Turkish invasions.[2]

Similarly Muslim scholars and historians wrought irreparable damage to their own faith and people by unduly glorifying their achievements. There was a time when Muslim arms had become irresistible both in the East and the West. Their maritime activity was equally daring. Due to their military strength and technological skill, they conquered large parts of the globe in medieval times. But the Muslim historians in their egotism, chauvinism and self-glorification exaggerated and distorted the facts of history. The epithets they used for their vanquished enemies, the glories they sang of their own exploits, throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, make us smile today. But for them their own subjective historical writings proved an anathema. The robust Muslims gloating over their past achievements and resting on their oars, began to believe that they were invincible. They became complacent and luxurious. Muslim rulers in the East began to live 'soaked in wine and sunk in debauch'. In the West, those who at one time had stormed Constantinople, and threatened and occupied portions of Spain, became inert. All their progress stopped. Those who at one time had ruled over the Mediterranean Sea could no longer boast of seafaring achievements. They stopped where they

1. *ibid.* p. 23.
2. Mohammad Habib, *Indian Culture and Social Life at the time of Turkish Invasions*, (Aligarh, No date) p. 64.

were and the glory of the discovery of America fell to the lot of those whom their historians had despised. Nay, such was their decadence that, in course of time, the Turkish Empire began to be considered as the 'Sick Man of Europe'.

On the other hand, nations whose historians have been critical of their kings, governments and social set up, have served their nations best. A team of panegyrist historians can turn a nation into dust even as a sycophant ultimately bedevils the man he flatters, Chauvinistic historical writing is not only a misconduct against objectivity and truth ; it has often proved dangerous to nations whose historians have indulged in it.

It is true that at times of national crises, such as war or struggle for freedom from foreign domination, historians find themselves under pressure, both social and psychological, to sentimentalize the history of their country even with some disregard to truth. But even during such stresses, which are after all only temporary phases, they have to keep their heads cool. Pursuit of truth is a spiritual urge which has to rise above temporary expediency. To assign patriotism a place superior to historical truth may be condoned in a politician or a journalist, but not in a historian. The historian has to live in a world 'which is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls' and 'where knowledge is free'. For him there is no nationalist or extra-territorial point of view in history. History has only one point of view—Truth.

Differences In Interpretation

Now it may be argued that if truth is the only point of view in history, how is it that opinions among historians sometimes widely differ, and many times they cannot see eye to eye with one another on certain specific points. There are many reasons for this. One is the mental and psychological propensities of the historians. Another is the occasional discoveries of new historical material which alter opinions and revise concepts. A third reason is the approach of the older writers to their age in which their works were produced ; but this approrch goes on changing with times so that the angle of vision of the modern writer of looking at problems and

events of the past may be entirely different from that of the earlier writers; and thus there may be differences among older writers, between old and modern writers; and among modern writers themselves. And lastly, because of the human element in history, historical writings cannot be as exact or similar in results as are obtained in laboratries with scientific subjects.

Quite a bit has been said before about the part the psychology of the historian plays in the evaluation of things. All that need not be restated. However, to be able to appreciate better the psychological factor, let us take an example. There is, say, a bunch of flowers and these have to be arranged in a vase. There are, say, roses, violets, sweet peas, pansies and forget-me-nots and a number of ladies want to arrange them in the vase. One lady, who has a liking for roses, will arrange these flowers in such a way that the roses will look very prominent, while another may set them in a fashion in which violets will look prominent because she likes violets more than the roses. In this way the same set of flowers will be arranged in twenty patterns if there are twenty ladies. The flowers are the same but personal prefernces resulting in different types of arrangements will give the vase a completely new look at the hands of each one of them. Similarly the facts of history are the same, but their study and arrangement at the hands of the historians, because of their environment, training, religion, standard of living and personal likes and dislikes, will make their writings look very different. Some scholar may give importance to a particular fact or document which another may think of no consequence. Some may have an eye for the economic factor, another for the religious or social aspect. Thus while they write about the same people, the same country and the same age and base their conclusions on the same source-material, they may give very different interpretations because of their education and psychological make-up. In historical writings all these factors play a far more important part than is ordinarily realized, and that is why historical writings indicate great divergences in interpretation.

Occasional discoveries of facts and meterials also affect opinions and conclusions. It is common knowledge that every

now and then some new historical material is always coming to light in the shape of manuscripts and records and as a result of archaeological, epigraphical and numismatical finds. Fresh materials and discoveries add to our knowledge and many times change our views on what we used to take to be established facts. To illustrate this point, let us again take a few examples. There are two 'discoveries' of the first half of the nineteeth century which have revolutionized our whole concept of Indian and Eastern history. The first has resulted in our present day knowledge of Emperor Asoka. About a century and a half ago nobody in India or the world knew that there had lived more than 2000 years ago a saint-philosopher-monarch who successfully conquered the East by his Religious Conquest (Dhammavijaya). His name and fame had been lost to humanity for no one knows how many centuries. Once in the fourteenth century Firoz Shah Tughlaq felt interested in a pillar (without knowing it was Asokan) becaure there was an unintelligible inscription on it. He got it removed from Meerut to Delhi with considerable difficulty and later on put it on Firoz Shah Kotla where it exists to this day. The Sultan was naturally keen to know what the inscription in the pillar contained. He is said to have called some Pundits to read the inscription, but they, unable to decipher the script and afraid to displease the monarch, declared that it was recorded in the inscription that no one would be able to remove the monolith until the advent of Firoz Shah. This was perhaps the first and the last effort in medieval times to know about an emperor who had been lost to history. For centuries later on nobody knew about Asoka although, besides the one pillar at the Kotla, his inscriptions on stones lay scattered here and there throughout the country. People had lost touch with Brahmi script in which these were inscribed.

But the inscriptions continued to arouse the couriosity of epigraphists and research scholars. Then in the first half of the nineteeth century an English savant James Prinsep, after years of painstaking effort, succeeded in deciphering the Brahmi script. He collected a large number of Indo-Bactrian coins of the Mauryan period with bilingual legends on them, in Greek and the then Indian language (Asokan) Pali in

Brahmi script. On the basis of these and other helpful materials he was enabled to reconstruct the Brahmi alphabet. This discovery helped in the reading of the Asokan inscriptions. And India and the world learnt with pleasant surprise the glories of the days of Asoka. Knowledge about Asoka added another chapter to the glorious history of ancient India and, may we say, to modern India too. It raised the status of Indians in their own eyes and the eyes of the world. It influenced opinion about our heritage. Orientalists began to have a concept of the country's achievements different from the one entertained in the days of, say, Macaulay. Today Asokan *Dhammachakra* is stamped on free India's National Flag. Asokan Lions form the emblem of our State.

Still more romantic is the second 'discovery', that of the Egyptian civilization. For hundreds of years the people of Egypt and visitors to that country used to see the Pyramids at Ghizeh and the numerous other awe-inspiring monuments lying scattered throughout the valley of the Nile, but nobody could say what they were about. There were inscriptions also engraved here and there on various monuments, but nobody knew what they said. All that Europe knew about Egypt was the Roman version of the story of queen Cleopatra. Then Napoleon Bonaparte went to Egypt. There he felt interested in some 'rosetta' stones containing inscriptions in hieroglyphics. He carried them to Paris to adorn his capital with this curio. There a scholar by the name of Champollion worked on them for years. At last he succeeded in deciphering them, and the world came to know about the rich civilization of ancient Egypt. The discovery took the historical world by storm. Till today Egyptology remains an extremely absorbing study. It is so fascinating indeed that dozens of books have been written to help us have a glimpse of the Egyptian civilization of the hoary past.

Another instance of a forgotten empire being discovered is that of the Hittites, the ruins of whose capital city were found to the east of Ankara in 1861. A particularly interesting discovery in connection with the Hittites was the finding of a collection of their archives containing about 13,000 clay tablets, the language of which was deciphered by the labours of Fried-

rich Hrozny, a Czech scholar. The inscriptions proved to be invaluable, not only for the history of the Hittites but also about other peoples in the Near East. Similarly a Greek myth, behind which was hidden the story of a vanished people, was that of Minos and the Minotaur. Sir Arthur Evans began his excavations on the island of Crete in 1900, and he and his successors did discover an unsuspected civilization, the Minoan, that had flourished over 3,000 years ago. Much more recently archaeologists have disintered the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro in India and changed our whole conception of the pre-Aryan ancient civilization. Students of history need not be reminded of the fact that in a similar way information regarding the civilizations of Assyria, Babylonia and Iran and many other countries and regions had to be literally unearthed.

Archaeological and epigraphical finds are only one part. Old documents discovered from time to time have changed ideas like, say, that of the Turkish seizure of Constantinople. It was commonly believed that the Turks blocked trade to the East and thereby forced the Europeans to look for new trade routes. The connection between the events of 1453 and 1492 was for long universally accepted. This idea was exploded when an American scholar Albert Lybyer, who had once been a professor at Constantinople, discovered a discrepancy in this belief when he checked the primary sources. He thought that even if the Turks closed the trade routes, they did not become masters of the Syrian and Egyptian routes until nearly one generation *after* the discovery of America. Even after that did they really close the routes they controlled. Lybyer came to the conclusion that any strangling of trade and commerce would have led to rise in prices of eastern products such as pepper. But an examination of pepper prices in England and France in the fifteenth century revealed no such rise ; on the contrary they showed a general deciline *before* the Portuguese and Spaniards began to go directly to the East. Indeed far from wishing to block the trade, the Turks, who earned a substantial revenue from such commerce, encouraged it. The original conception about the reasons of the European discovery of new trade routes thus stood disproved.[1]

1. Carl G. Gustavson, *A Preface to History*, (New York, 1955), p. 168-70.

Thus new records, documents and archaeological finds are everyday adding to our knowledge and changing our opinions. But documents and records, on which the historians work, are themselves creations of human beings and are not perfect. First of all there may be differences of opinion regarding the authenticity, time of writing and veracity of the documents. One historian may give undue importance to a particular record or fact, others may not. Then those working on such documents are also human beings with their frailties and good points, likes and dislikes. Hence also the divergence of views among scholars.

Let us now take the next point, namely, the changing pattern of approach to historical writing. Since the historian writes about events that some one else saw or heard or wrote, his writing of history is necessarily a co-operative effort between him and the witness or writer of the past. He strives at the truth, but his concept of historical truth may differ from that of his predecessor. Historical writings reflect the age in which they are produced. They deal with human situations and how many different points of view does one not find in everyday life? Ancient Indian, Greek and Roman writers narrated individual episodes chiefly in terms of great men involved. If a broader causation was needed, they attributed the course of events to the gods or to a more impersonal and mysterious Fate. In the medieval period historians viewed events of history as a struggle between good and evil and as a pattern in which God manifested His plan for the salvation of mankind. In the eighteenth century Reason was exalted, and when traditional institutions and ideas were under attack the historians tended (like Voltaire) to depict the past as a chronicle of crimes and misfortunes and historical figures acting according to superstitious beliefs. Acutely aware of recent successes in finding laws of nature, the writers sought similar laws in society and in so doing studied the influences of climate, geography, and other factors upon human activities which the ancients had not done. The same enlightenment giving birth to the ideas of progress, produced historical works based on the optimistic belief that national thought was now finally enabling man to ascend to the higher plane of civilization.

During the nineteenth century, when science was rapidly rising in prestige, historians began to apply a scientific methodology for their own historical materials. On the other hand, the romantists, valuing the past more highly and influenced by the concept of progress, emphasised the developmental aspect of human institutions. In doing so they evolved the concept of organic evolution, that is, an institution or idea or age contains seeds of growth within itself. More recent writers were to employ this idea in an extreme form to create dogmatic patterns of history along deterministic lines. If historical development follows a pattern of its own, what then becomes of individual efforts. The man is simply a pawn of greater forces, and his only choice is whether to join in this inevitable movement or make a futile fight against it. Others believe that man is the maker of his destiny.

Herein lies the difference of concepts between the ancient, medieval and modern times. There was a time when the concept of the Divine Right of Kings was universally accepted, another when Church was supreme, with some the proletariat is everything, with the Fascists it is the State. Because of this, historical writings are bound to differ from time to time and from writer to writer. Thus history, strange though it may sound, will have more facets than one, and there will be many points of view regarding them. Besides, the past is so remote in its ways that it needs sympathy and considerable exercise of the imagination to comprehend it. This sympathy and imagination may be different in different historians. Hence, too, there are divergences of opinions.

All these situations are understandable. But why is there sometimes great divergence of opinion among modern historians working on the same period and the same facts based on the same records ? This is particularly noticeable in the study of medieval Indian history, although it is not uncommon in other branches too. Comparisons are unfair, but for the sake of understanding the point, let us see the differences in the viewpoints of the Allahabad and the Calcutta school of historians. The Allahabad school has had a galaxy of scholars like Dr. Tara Chand, Dr. Beni Prasad, Professor Rushbrook Williams, Dr. R. P. Tripathi, etc. The Calcutta school's doyen

was Sir Jadunath Sarkar, who had a number of disciples like Professor K. R. Qanungo and many others of lesser rank. All these scholars studied the same documents, sifted the same material, but to the scholars of Allahabad Muslim rule in India seemed to have many good aspects and served well as a healthy link in the evolution of Indian Culture, while to the scholars of the other school it was full of shadows and retarded the healthy growth of Indian life and thought. Why this wide divergence of opinion ?

There can be no question of religious or psychological bias among these historians. They are all Hindus writing about the Medieval period. There can also be no question of *suppressio veri* or *suggestio falsie* because all of them are distinguished and honest scholars. There can be only one explanation. They look at Medieval Indian history from different angles of vision. Let us say that one school *looks at it* and the other *looks back at it*. The Allahabad School probably studies Muslim rule in India as it was in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and the following centuries. What were the conditions then in India and other parts of the world ? Was Muslim conquest more brutal or Muslim administration more tyrannical compared with similar things in the then times ? And they find that it was perhaps not worse off if not better. The Calcutta School on the other hand perhaps compares Muslim rule with conditions prevailing today, and it is shocked at the religious intolerance and cruelty of the medieval times. It looks back, as it were, and tries to compare conditions in the thirteenth-fifteenth century with those of the twentieth and is surely disappointed with the fifteenth. This latter is an uncharitable approach, because to try to find in medieval times things that are modern is to fly in the face of historical evolution. But equally wrong is the approach to credit medieval Indian kings with possessing modern ideas of religious tolerance and general well-being of the subjects. It is erroneous to import our own ideas in evaluating actions of the medieval people. For example we would laugh if we are told that Alauddin Khalji went in a Railway train to Devagiri and that he fought there with automatic weapons, yet some of us do not hesitate to put twentieth century thoughts in his fourteenth century

mind in the spheres of economic and religious concepts and the concept of the welfare state.

The historian, consciously or unconsciously, projects the present into the past, and thus his special interests, attitudes and biases, influence his reconstruction of events and movements which he investigates. But times and conditions change so rapidly that comparisons can never be fair. Even the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century was a backward age when compared with the age in which we live (after the Second World War). This is best reflected in a movie I saw a few days ago. A man in the Atomic Age, greatly scared at the destructive potentialities of the atom bomb, imagines that he would have been happy to be born in the nineteenth century. He wishes to be back to that age. How peaceful was the nineteenth, how full of hazards is the twentieth century, thinks he. He goes to bed and to sleep with his mind overstrung with such ideas. He dreams that he *is* in the nineteenth century. There he begins his daily routine. He dresses up for work and goes out into the streets. They are dark ; the roads are stony and unclean. His place of work looks shabby. He reads the morning newspaper and finds that out of every five children born, four do not survive for long. And so on. When he wakes up he has almost been horrified at the conditions prevailing in the preceding century and feels satisfied and thanks God for being in the twentieth in spite of the atom bomb.

In the nineteenth century Europe was exploiting, fleecing and conquering those parts of Africa and Asia which until then had somehow escaped the impact of its arms. In the second half of the twentieth, on the other hand, Europe and America are vieing with each other to help with money, material and technical know-how the under-developed countries of these very regions. More than what England looted from India during the last two hundred years, America has perhaps given back to India in a decade. Thus when even the nineteenth century cannot be compared with the twentieth, it is very difficult to judge fairly the medieval period by comparing it with the modern.

We need not wish ourselves back into the Ancient times or the Middle Ages, but try to understand them and study

them. Studying a particular age is like meeting its kings, nobles, scholars, common people, etc. When we approach them sympathetically and try to understand them and their times, we are prone to be liberal. But when we begin to compare them with others, who preceded them or followed them, we naturally have occasions to praise or blame. Both these schools of historical study are right in their own way. Only both need to be a little cautious. The one school should remember the popular saying of Madam de Stael that we forgive what we really understand or the dictum of Duke de Broglie : "Beware of too much explaining, lest we end by too much excusing." The other school too should remember that comparisons are odious and to compare the ancient with the medieval or the medieval with the modern, is fair to no age.

But the most important reason why there are differences of opinion among historians is that history (as we will presently see) is not a science. Consequently, the conclusions of the historians cannot be 'exactly similar'. Historians can think only in terms of possibilities and probabilities. And opinions are often prone to differ even about these possibilities. In science every natural calamity has a scientific explanation. But for social calamities historians in olden times (and even now) explain by saying that these were perhaps scourges of God sent to punish us for our sins.

Now, although opinions in history differ, it is not always difficult to distinguish the truth from untruth. "History," says Froude, "does teach that right and wrong are real distinctions. Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity."[1] The task of the historian is to discern this truth. He can do so if he practices freedom from prejudice and develops a power of discernment and a sense of proportion. Just as the historian may find it possible to discover the truth, he may also become, with practice, skilled in detecting untruth. If there is one saying that embodies a general truth, it is : "No man is condemned save by his own mouth."[2] By applying this test

1. Inaugural Lecture at St. Andrews, 1869, p. 41.
   Also Acton, *The Study of History*, p. 45.
2. Liddell Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

to the records, documents and chronicles he consults, he can go a long way towards a clear verdict on history. Even a fourteenth century chronicler, Ziyauddin Barani, hit the mark when he said, "Since the records of history are the true evidence of the achievements of kings and great men, the historian should write nothing but the truth, and his readers should be convinced of his truthfulness. A historian, besides being scholarly, should be God-fearing. Some irreligious and false writers on account of their biases and bigotry concoct all sorts of false stories and mixing fiction with fact write all kinds of marvellous and spectacular falsities. Such history is misleading. A historian should be fearless. He should write not only the good things about (contemporary) rulers but their shortcomings as well. If he cannot write the truth without fear, he should try to convey it with the help of similes and metaphors and appraise the readers with actual facts. If a historian has been rewarded by some one or has been ill-treated or harmed (by some one else), these personal considerations should not come in the way of objective study. He should not write like a bard, courtier or sycophant. Since because of his writings the good (works of the dead) are reborn, he should be prepared to answer for his statements on the Day of Judgement."[1]

Historical Style

In the last three sections problems concerning the study of documents and an objective assessment of things were discussed. Let us now see about the third task of the historian, namely, the writing of a readable narrative. History provides the best lessons in human achievement and the greatest inspiration to achieve more. And yet while its study is utilitarian, its appeal is romantic. It is like the appeal of poetry which elates and elevates.

The past, despite our efforts to recapitulate it, is a mystery. There is no place from where we can start and where can go to. And so like a poet's, our mind starts to conjure, to resuscitate, to recapture an elusive and mysterious situation.

1. Ziyauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*, Persian Text, (Calcutta, 1862). pp. 15-20.

History thus takes us into the realm of romance. "How wonderful a thing it is," says Trevelyan, "to be able to look back into the past as it actually was, to get a glimpse through the curtain of old night into some brilliantly lighted scene of living men and women, not mere creatures of fiction and imagination, but warm blooded realities even as we are." I have myself undergone such an experience on many occasions.

When I first went to Ajanta and visited one cave after another and saw the rich and exuberantly exquisite paintings on the walls and the ceilings, I felt like being in a dreamland. Two thousand years or so ago some people, perhaps like us, perhaps different from us, had created those wonders on plaster. What were those people like ? How did they live ? What did they think ? Many such questions began to crowd in my mind. They were, I thought, perhaps, like us. They had their weaknesses and points of strength as we have. They were jealous of one another and perhaps quarelled too. But all their frailties are forgotten ; only the good work they did remains. Only the beauty they created and left for us is all that they can be remembered for. It was with feelings of gratitude and of reverence that I returned from Ajanta. It was not stone-caves or paintings that I had seen, it was history itself that had unfolded before my mind's eye. And this history had nothing but a romantic appeal.

On another occasion I had a similar experience when I went to Fatehpur Sikri in the company of my students. There we saw the majestic Buland Darwaza, the beautiful Jama Masjid, the Panch Mahal and the Bazars which were once humming with life, but afterwards had lain silent for centuries. In the open court we got stuck up in one place. There was a very large square platform with small squares marked all over, where, it is said, Akbar used to play chess with human beings dressed as chessmen. On the two sides of the platform there were large seats of stone where the Emperor and his partner used to sit, on embroidered satin cushions. There I stood for some time with my students gazing at the whole thing. Then by turns each one of us sat on the stone seats to have a feel of how Akbar must have felt when he played. And when I thought that we were sitting at a place where

Akbar used to sit four centuries ago, and were walking on the ground where Akbar and Birbal walked and talked and joked and laughed, I felt elated. The whole atmosphere of Akbar's days, as it were, entered into our souls. And then we thought of the relinquishing of Fatehpur by Akbar and of his death and I was unconsciously reminded of the famous lines of Fitzgerld:

> " 'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
> Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays :
> Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
> And one by one back in the Closet lays."

Back in Agra we visited the great monarch's fort, where another sweet experience awaited us. In a marble palace, a later day construction, the guide showed us a niche where he told us Jahanara and Roshanara, when little princesses, used to keep their 'pocket money'. Impromptu one after another our hands went into the slit of the niche to see if any gold *asharfi* was still lurking somewhere. What a disappointment at not finding one ! What a quaint romantic experience of searching for gold pieces in the place where little princesses used to keep them three hundred years ago.

It is not stone and mortar I have seen when during many of my sojourns I visited Daulatabad, Ellora, Asirgarh, the Bibi Ka Maqbara at Aurangabad, the Sikandara and the Taj Mahal at Agra, or Nur Jahan's tomb at Shahadara near Labore and the Meenakshi temple at Madura, but I have felt history itself speaking. I feel convinced that history is not mere book-learning but a living reality. It is the study of how men have lived before us, what progress they made in the past and what progress people are making now. It is a study of what has been done, is being done and will be done. Or, as Tennyson has said :

> "Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping
> something new :
> That which they have done but earnest of the things
> that they shall do."

And it is indeed a romantic experience to remember with gratitude those who worked hard and achieved success, or

failed and suffered, to make the world a place worth living in for us. It encourages us to follow in their footsteps and inspires us to do even much more than what they achieved.

There were some who conquered through the sword. There were others who through their teachings conquered the hearts of millions. Then there were those who through efficient and humane administration served God and humanity. There were still others who, far from the madding crowd's ignoble stife, lived an undistrubed tenor of life like mute inglorious Miltons or Cromwells guiltless of their country's blood. But all of them remain as great and good, perhaps even more so with passing of time, as when they lived and loved and achieved success, or suffered and failed.

Historical figures succeed each other like figures in a drama—they do not seem to grow old. They are, in the words of Keats, a thing of beauty, a joy for ever. Akbar lived and died more than three centuries ago, yet the personality of this mighty monarch which lingers in our memory is the one delineated by Father Monserrate and it is by this that Akbar will ever be remembered. "He was in face and stature fit for the dignity of King, so that anybody, even at the first glance, would easily recognize him as the King. His shoulders were broad, and his legs slightly bandy, and adapted to riding. His complexion was fair, but slightly suffused with a darker tint. He carried his head slightly inclined to one side, towards the right shoulders ; his brow was broad and open, and his eyes sparkled as does the sea when lighted by the sun..... His nostrils were expanded as though he were enraged, and on the left one he had a wart, which met the upper lip. He shaved his beard, but not his moustache,... (and) bound his hair with a turban, which they say, he did in imitation of the Indian custom, in order to conciliate them..... He has in his body, which is very well made.....much courage and strength. When he laughs he is distorted, but when he is tranquil and serene he has a noble mien and great dignity. In his wrath he is majestic."[1]

Nur Jahan died an old lady and lies buried in a

1. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV (Cambridge, 1937), p. 155.

dilapidated tomb near Lahore. But the name Nur Jahan reminds us only of the Nur Jahan of youth and beauty. On the evidence of her contemporaries, Dr. Beni Prasad writes thus about her : "No gift of nature seemed to be wanting to her. Beautiful with the rich beauty of Persia, her soft features were lighted up with a sprightly vivacity and superb loveliness,..... slim slender frame, an oval face, an ample forehead, large blue eyes, close lips. She was intensely fashionable, (and) intensely charitable. When in power, she ruled everything ; when out of power, she abstained religiously from all active life. Her enemies admitted that difficulties vanished at her touch. Such was the lady, at once bold and graceful, fashionable and bountiful, loving and ambitious, charming and demoninating"—Nur Jahan, the Light of World.[1]

It is again a romantic feeling to sit in judgment over their work, all the time aware of the fact that although today we are the jury, tomorrow we overselves will be judged. Those who have gone before us did not fail us. Today we cannot fail those who are with us and those who are to follow us. These facts even keep reminding us of our duty to ourselves and to others. For the judgment of history knows no mercy. If we fail today posterity will never take kindly to us. History, therefore, educates us, inspires us, reminds us of the part that destiny has determind us to play. The very idea uplifts us and makes us feel important. All this is an exhilirating and inspiring experience. And as we think of our debt to the future we seek inspiration from the past. Past, present and future stand still before us in an unbroken continuity and we stand amazed and dazed at the idea.

As we look back we are perhaps apt to feel proud of our present achievements. But we are at once reminded of the distinctions future generations would achieve. This retrieves our mental equilibrium and we begin to think of the achievements of those gone by, not with a sense of condescension but with a feeling of reverence and gratitude. It was Goldsmith who wrote :

> "Wherever I go, whatever realms to see,
> My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee."

1. Beni Prasad, *History of Jahangir*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 157-59.

Similarly whether we go to the age of Coal and Steel, or of Telephone, the Telegraph, the Wireless, or of the Atomic energy and the Sputniks, our hearts always fondly turn to those who have ever tried to do their best before us. At every stage it was a living present ; each age has been a living age. The actors were just as absorbingly preoccupied as we are in our own day. The painters of Ajanta, the builders of the Taj, and the conquerors of Bijapur and Golkunda took to their work with as much zeal as the delegates of United Nations Organization do today. The urge to achieve finality is not a gift only of the modern mind. The Egyptians who built the Pyramids must have felt as if they had reached the climax of everything. What more could man achieve ?

It is perhaps because of this that Professor Trevor-Roper says that the historian 'ought to love the past.'[1] Whether he ought to or not, he somehow does love the past. Past is indeed so engrossing that we like it for its own sake. Beauty may have no utilitarian value, but it is liked and cherished for its own sake. Taj Mahal has no utility : it is just a piece of art, but we love art for art's sake. Similarly we are interested in the past for its own sake. History is enchanting because it gives us the possession of the past. Besides, we utilize it, for while in history our eyes are turned towards the past, we seek guidance from it for our present and our future.

How best can history, which provides us with instruction and inspiration, and at the same time has a poetic appeal, be delineated to educate, to guide, to inspire ? History is the record of the activities and achievements of mankind. The medium of history can only be a language which vividly depicts the hopes and fears, feelings and emotions, joys and sorrows of the people. This to my mind can best be done in literary style. History cannot be correctly or properly appreciated if written as a scientific treatise.

Lest this suggestion should invite the protest or even wrath of some modern historians, a word may be said to explain it. Almost up to the beginning of the nineteenth century,

1. Introduction to J. Burckhardt's *Judgement on History and Historians*, (1959), p. 17.

history was treated as a branch or part of literature throughout the world. It is not only Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Macaulay's *History of England*, Theodore Mommsen's *History of Rome*, Guizot's *History of Civilization* and Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, but also Kalhan's *Rajtarangini*, Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* and Abdul Hamid Lahori's *Badshahnama* that were written in literary style full of richness and grace. Then about the middle of the nineteentht cenury there was a swing towards a change for two reasons : (1) there was a trend towards reaction against the Gibbon-Macaulay style and more so because (2) a movement to treat history as a science had gathered some momentum and many supporters. Reaction against the literary style was natural, desire for change being a human urge. Besides writings of historians like Carlyle showed that the literary style had reached a point of saturation. Perhaps it was also due to this factor that there was created a desire to transfer history from the domain of Arts to that of Science and to make historical writings as precise as those on scientific subjects.

Whether or not history is science, is an old controversy. It seems to have by now subsided. I do not think historians are even interested in it now. But since the question has been hotly debated by a number of thinkers and for a number of years, let us study it in a little detail even at the cost of some digression. About the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century when science had contributed so much to man's knowledge of the physical world, it began to be asked if it also could further man's knowledge of society. The conception of social sciences, and history among them, gradually developed throughout the nineteenth century.[1] We hear the phrase 'social sciences' quite frequently now. Economists soon enunciated Gresham's Law of Currency, Malthus's Law of Population and Lassalle's Law of Iron Wages. Historians were not slow to catch the contagion. J. B. Bury, when he succeeded Lord Acton as Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1903, declared, "I may remind you that history is not a branch of literature..... History is a science, no less and no more."

1. E. H. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Macaulay had believed in "the art of narration.....by skilful selection and disposition, without indulging in the licence of invention." But the scientific approach could not be satisfied with how things happened ; it was determined to determine why things happened. The historians' job no longer remained to recreate or revivify the past but to dissect it. The result was that researchers began to cudgel their minds to fix 'exactly' and 'precisely' data on which history was to be based. Ranke is the preceptor of this school of history. "He taught it to be critical, to be colourless, to be new." Principles were enunciated on which the forces of history were supposed to work. There developed ideas of laws of History as there are laws of Gravitation and of Motion. The slogan of 'History repeats itself' just as scientific phenomena do, was raised in full force.

But history itself became unpopular because of all this. Even Ranke has foreseen that scientific history would tend to become 'harsh, disconnected, colourless and tiring.' In India too the same thing happened. Pages after pages began to be written on the date of, say, Asoka's or Sher Shah's birth, pages which looked like scientific treatises, cut and dried, but which were lifeless and made a boring reading. The beauty of the literary style was lost in the barrenness of 'scientific' or 'technical' discussions of human problems.

But except for making historical writing jejune and therefore unpopular, the scientific history could go no further, because history is not science. Historical events do not repeat themselves as scientific phenomena do. Human life, thought and society are perpetually undergoing a change in innumerable ways, and no two situations in human affairs, in spite of many elements of apparent similarity, are ever the same. Each and every situation and event in history is unique. Although a certain episode may have resemblances to other similar events, it has, nevertheless, never happened in exactly the same way before. We can scarcely hope to discover laws in history because the elements and factors with which it deals are too variable. There is no historical law like the physical law of H_2O wherein if two atoms of Hydrogen are introduced to one of Oxygen, the result would invariably be the creation of water. This phenomenon will occur in the B.C.s and the A.D.s, at the

bottom of the Indian ocean and at the top of the Himalayas. But not so in history. There are too many elements in a historical situation and too many variables. Only one instance will suffice to illustrate the point. Napolean attacked Russia on 22 June (1812). By an intentional or unintentional coincidence Hitler also attacked Russia on 22 June (1941). Both failed against Russia, but it cannot be said that since both the invasions came off on a date having the same figure 22, the result was bound to be the same. Conditions were entirely different in the two cases and no scientific principle is involved in the figure of 22. History has causation and effect. But these are different in different situations as two situations in human affairs are not identical.

Thus contrary to popular belief, history does not repeat itself. Two historical situations are never the same, and there is no 'historical law' governing them. In fact "we can learn little from history unless we first realise that she does not, in fact, repeat herself. Events are not affected by analogies ; they are determined by the combinations of circumstance. And since circumstances vary from generation to generation it is illusive to suppose that any pattern of history, however similar it may first appear, is likely to repeat itself exactly in the kaleidoscope of time."[1]

In a word, history is not science. Historical writings cannot be like writings on scientific subjects like Physics, Chemistry or Mathematics. Historical writings can be called scientific only in a very limited sense, that is the conclusions of the historian are subject to verification. The historian, however, cannot be as indifferent to his situations as a chemist with the elements in his test tube. True, he has to be a neutral observer, but he is also bound to share in the experience of his historical situation. Historical writing has to depict all the forces in operation in a situation as well as the reaction of the people towards them. If a battle has to be described, it cannot just be put in the scientific way like 50,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry on one side, 48,000 horse and 12,000 foot on the other ; battle fought for six hours ; result, this side won and

1 Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna*, (London, 1948), p. vii.

that side lost ; causes of the success of this side were these and of the failure of the other side those. Similarly the social life of a people cannot be delineated as : population involved five million of which so many were men, so many women and so many children. Major occupations of men were these, of women those, etc., etc. Such writing would not only impoverish history, but even falsify it. As Louis Gottschalk aptly remarks, "The historian is under obligation to describe, along with the ordinary, the most exciting events of the past and to recreate their atmosphere. If his account of a battle reads like a gunsmith's catalogue, if his tale of a hero's romance sounds like a licence clerk's register," then it is not history. "It is doubtful that a drab description of events would be more truthful than an eloquent one."[1] History cannot be correctly or properly appreciated if written purely as a scientific treatise. In the description of a battle what were the feelings, passions and emotions on the one side or the other have to be clearly brought out. How was the victory or the defeat taken ? Did success make the victor arrogant and brutal or humane and generous ? Did defeat demoralize or chasten a people ? Any history of war which treats only of its strategic and political course is merely a picture of the surface. Human currents run deeper and may have a deeper influence on the ultimate outcome. Similarly in the depiction of social life, the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears of a people, their philosophy of life, their ideals and their pursuits have to be clearly brought out.

This can be done only through the literary style. The 'scientific approach' is all right in so far that in handling historical material there should be no bias or prejudice, that exaggeration should be avoided, that the historian's likes and dislikes should not appear in his work, that he should have a correct perspective, and that his assessment of things should be objective. But above all history has to be readable. Indeed there need to be no quarrel between the technical and the romantic so far as history is concerned, because there is nothing like technical or romantic history. In history 'scientific approach' to material and 'literary style' in writing would serve best. Literary historical

1. Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, (New York, 1958), pp. 14-18.

writing need not be unsound, nor a scientific approach necessarily make it dull.

It is indeed a matter of satisfaction that history has been brought back from the scientific style pigeon-hole and reinstated in the domain of humanities. And one of the great historians who had helped do this is George Macaulay Trevelyan. To my mind he is one historian of the first half of the twentieth century who has rescued history from the barrenness of the dry-as-dust scientific style and again made its writing engrossing. He clearly realized that the appeal of history is ultimately 'poetic' and to him belongs the credit of writing 'readable' history and continuing the style of the literary history of Gibbon, Carlyle and Macaulay. One reason who many histroy theses which have secured Ph. D. degrees of our universties are unacceptable to publishers is that they are too scientific with the result that they do not remain 'readable'. There may be many other reasons added to this. One to my mind, is the condition in some universities for submitting a synopsis for enrolment as a Ph. D. candidate. A fresh graduate in his hurry to get 'enrolled' picks up a few books, rushes through the contents and adopts some of the chapters to suit his subject of study. The result is a thesis on stereotyped lines, lacking in originality of thought and excellence of style. But the main reason is the approach to the subject. Too much emphasis is laid on the scientific approach, scientific method of writing and brain-cudgling on dates and other details which fill dozens of pages, but mar the merit of the work. I am pretty sure that Emil Ludwig's *Napoleon* would not be considered suitable for the Ph. D. degree by an Indian University. But it is the works of G.M. Trevelyan, Winston Churchill and Emil Ludwig in Europe and Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Dr. Tara Chand and Dr. Beni Prasad in India that provide the best type of historical writing.

Use and Abuse of History

In spite of its romantic appeal, the lesson of history is deep and its moral high. In spite of its poetic appeal the study of history is utilitarian. Bacon emphasises this point in his crisp style in one word. 'History,' he declares, 'makes men

wise.' I am tempted to reproduce here the words of a fourteenth century Muslim chronicler, Ziyauddin Barani. "After the study of Religion," says he, "no other study is as useful as the study of history. From history one learns about the prophets, caliphs, kings and great men of religion and of action and men who have done great things and earned great renown. History does not deal with men of low aims and low character. Indeed the low type of people are not interested in history. Nobody can live without learning history. History has many uses. Firstly, it is that science which provides capital stock of examples for the intelligent and the wise. Its second benefit is that it reminds us of the great works of the prophets and other men of religion ..Future generations get solace and strength from the deeds of the people of the past. Third benefit is that the study of history makes men wise and truthful. It is a means of strengthening reason and judgment and developing a sense of discretion. The fourth benefit from the knowledge of history is that the kings and nobles do not get ruffled during times of stress or calamity. Political problems are solved with the help of the experience of the decisions of former rulers. The fifth benefit is that the knowledge of the lives and works of great men infuse an element of patience and perseverence in men... ..The sixth benefit is that people, on the basis of the experience of those gone by, develop virtuous qualities, and the sad results of the acts of tyrants in the past deter them from doing injustice. The seventh benefit is that since history is based on truth, it is a very fine and useful art."[1]

This long quotation has been given to show that not only the ancient Greeks but even medieval Indian chroniclers, who are often supposed to be steeped only in theological lore, too, realized the importance of history. In modern times, its value is too well-known to be repeated. However, there is no harm in reiterating it in the words of U.S. ex-President Harry Truman, "My debt to history," says he, "is one which cannot be calculated .....Reading history, to me, was far more than a romantic adventure. It was solid instruction and wise teaching which I somehow felt that I wanted and needed... .While still a boy

1. Ziyauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Persian Text, pp. 10-13.

I could see that history has some extremely valuable lessons to teach.....I made it my business to look up the background of 'events' and to find out who brought them about . ...I wanted to know what caused the successes or the failures of all the famous leaders of history."[1]

History indeed is the broadest of studies ; embracing every aspect of life It is the foundation of all education. The gain from the study of history lies in having thousands of years of experience, of knowing how mankind has achieved success and progress and how it has committed errors and indeed what those errors are. Two thousand years ago Cicero uttered the words : "To be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to be ever a child." The philosopher Santayana used stronger words to say : "He who does not know history is fated to repeat it." And Bismarck put it still more bluntly. "Fools say that they learn by (their own) experience, I prefer to learn by other people's experience." The study of history offers us that opportunity.

It was not Bismarck alone who gained by this experience. He could clearly visualize the aspirations and needs of the German nation and by his policies of Blood and Iron on the one hand and compromise on the other (as in the case of Kulturkampf), succeeded in fulfilling them. The seventeenth century enlightened despots like Frederick of Prussia, Joseph of Austria, Peter and Catherine of Russia also could know what reforms their people needed, and they forestalled the people's demands by effecting them before any cry was raised. But France which refused to learn from this experience had to witness the horrors of a bloody revolution. Prussia and Austria and Russia were slowly shedding their old ways of Eastern Europe and trying to become strong. They wanted to develop like any other West European nation and kept their eyes open to the development in the West for tackling the problems of their own countries. Frederick of Prussia was a keen student of French Philosophy of Enlightenment ; Peter was not shy to work in the naval dock-yards of Holland to learn ship-building. France on the other hand had seen a long and glorious past. She

1. *Memoirs*, I, p. 119.

had won laurels during the Age of Louis XIV. She gloated on the idea that her Sun King had been a power to contend with, his Grand Army had been supreme in Europe and she had determined the fashions and etiquette for the whole continent. This attitude brought about decadence. Her body politic became diseased, her rulers and nobles lazy and luxury-loving. In their pride the successors of Louis XIV failed to realize that the French giant had developed feet of clay, that its people had grown sick of suffering. Similar turned out to be the case with the Czarist Russia in our century. Such examples can be multiplied, but students of history already know them. Historical experience is like the writing on the wall, and those who do not learn from it have only to blame themselves. This experience is universal—infinitely longer, wider, and more varied than any individual's experience. A man may be only forty or fifty, but he can be three thousand years old in mind if he educates himself intelligently.

Now the question arises that if we have so vast and varied an experience ready at hand, why don't we gain by it. Why does mankind repeat its errors? For had it not been so, we should have eliminated wars centuries ago and the problem of disarmament, which is worrying the world today, would have been solved long back. Not only have these difficulties not been overcome, weapons of great destructive power have been invented through the ages, so that today human civilization is itself threatened with extinction. In a word, as has been humourously said, 'We learn from history that men learn nothing from history ?'

There are many factors contributing to this dilemma. There is, first of all, the problem of the complex nature of man. It is said that Sultan Muhammadbin Tughlaq was a mixture of opposites. Ibn Battuta says that not a day passed when through the Sultan's wrath somebody was not condemned to death and because of his generosity some one else was not rewarded with a purse full of gold. These contradictory traits were perhaps only a little too prominent in Muhammadbin Tughlaq, else, human nature itself is a congeries of contradictions. On the one hand man loves peace, wants to live on happy terms with his neighbours, does not want to pick up a quarrel,

and indeed wants to exert or worry as little as possible. On the other hand he looks askance at his neighbours every now and then and picks up a quarrel on the flimsiest excuse. The same man is at one time greedy and stingy, at another recklessly generous. Pride and humility, arrogance and sycophancy, sadism and kindness are all intermingled in human nature. Being a thinking being, he is convinced of the futility and unreality of this world in which everything is transient ; on the other hand he is also ever trying to grab at almost ev rything even if it be at the cost of others. For this he tries to find all kinds of ways and means, and often resorts to questionable methods.

It is almost a law of nature that all men are not equal in intelligence and physique. Those who are physically strong and mentally alert or exert more and think better, while sometimes sympathizing with the weak, are prone to exploit them for their personal benefit. These contradictions exist not between one set of people and another or one nation and another. These contradictory tendencies are present in each and every individual. Men in whom there is predominance of ideas of peace, and service, sometimes turn out to be great social and religious reformers. Men who have a greater element of egoism, selfishness and activeness, turn out to be conquerors and exploiters. What applies to individuals applies to groups of individuals or nations. This is probably why UNESCO in its preamble mentions that wars start in the minds of men. Clauzewitz has clarified this point by saying that war is the continuation of policy by other means. Religious, social and economic ideas of people determine its attitude towards war. The kind of politics that one pursues determines whether one is prone to war or not.

Therefore, lessons of history cannot naturally have the same impact upon the varied minds of the individuals and nations. Some learn from it to good purpose, some to evil, while some others remain indifferent to or even ignorant of the experience offered by history. Keeping this at the back of our minds, let us see how man has not entirely benefited from the lessons of history and how wars, acts of cruelty and barbarism, exploitation and the like have gone on.

Man repeats the errors of the past because of the (not quite mistaken) notion that two situations are not alike, that the situation he is faced with is different from similar situations in the past. In the world there are many processes working simultaneously. There is continuous rise in population, new discoveries and inventions take place, better weapons of war are manufactured and newer ideas of strategy and tactics strike the mind of man. Under the new developments new situations seem to arise, giving the people an impetus to 'try again'. Let us study the difference in the psychology of the paleolithic and the neolithic man. The life of the paleolithic man in the famous words of Hobbes was 'nasty, brutish and short." He lived the life of almost a savage. His resources in terms of 'weapons' were very limited and he faced many dangers. But when he began to manufacture sharp-point stone weapons, he not only began to have greater confidence in himself but even began to think of dominating over those who till then had not developed the art of manufacturing similar 'effective' weapons. The result was the domination of a few over the others, resulting in constant friction, revenge and counter-revenge. Similarly the discovery of metal gave greater confidence to the conquerors and infused a fresh hope in the defenders. The discovery of steel, coal, gunpowder ; the invention of fire-arms, cannons and bombs, and with them the improved methods of strategy would not somehow let man give up war. The atom, cobalt and hydrogen bombs and the ever-growing scientific knowledge would not let man remember the lesson of history that war in the ultimate analysis brings about nothing but misery. It is in the human nature to try again and again. Man does not believe that any situation can be so hopeless as to be beyond redemption. In his confidence he misses the lesson of history. That is why, although he abhors war, he is not frightened out of it.

It is again a quality of human nature to enter into a sort of competition with his fellow beings. He delights in outwitting and oustripping them. Since the life-chain of humanity has no 'past' or 'present', man tries to compete not only with his contemporaries but also those who have gone by. He tries to achieve what others in the past could not. This satisfies his

ambition, his ego and even his curiosity, but sometimes makes him forget the lesson of history. In his mad rush to achieve what others could not, he also unwittingly repeats the errors of the others. Take, for example, the error of the ambition of invading Britain. The Romans, of course, could conquer Britain and so also did William the Conqueror. This provided European nations with the idea of the possibility and practicability of invading and conquring the British Isles. But the Spanish Armada failed miserably in a similar venture. Napoleon wanted to achieve what the Spaniards could not and Hitler in his turn tried to succeed where Napoleon had failed. Napoleon and Hitler brought hardship to England and misery to the people of their own country by seeking an egoistic pleasure in trying to achieve something their predecessors had failed to accomplish. The idea of the invasion of Britain may in future years also perhaps lure some other adventurers in defiance of the experience of history. Whether they will succeed or fail matters little, what matters is the nature of man which strives to outdo others.

People are also prone to forget the lessons of history when they are faced with frustration, despondancy or nervousness. A cool head is not the quality of every man, and in times of distress even the stable minds get ruffled. Napoleon's invasion of Russia was the outcome of such a state of mind, more so was Hitler's attack on the same country more than a century latter. On the other hand Russia could face both of them because in the direst of difficulties the morale of its leaders and people ever remained high.

Ambition, greed, racial pride, hero-worship, religious fanaticism, love of war, are all enemies of wise experience. To these may be added the ambition of the politicians. It is strange how politicians assume that no training is needed in the pursuit of truth in public affairs. Their bellicose utterances and acts, their recourse to expediency—expediency being referred to as principle—undo the lessons of history perhaps more than anything else. Britain's maladjustment of morality and materialism complicated the Eastern Question. She remained on the side of the Turkish Sultans against all progressive forces. It was the narrow vision of 'My country, right or

wrong' that guided Britain's policy in this regard. It is because of instances like these that the historian is led to realize how greatly the causation of events on which the fate of nations depends is ruled, not by balanced judgment based on historical experience, but by momentary current of feelings, as well as by personal considerations of a low kind. Napoleon used to say that an army marches on its stomach. History indeed marches on the stomachs of the politicians.

These politicians distort facts of history to elevate a low aim into a national cause. China in the hoary past developed a great civilization. Even today she has adopted a way of life (with which one may agree or not) mainly for the purpose of raising the standard of living of her teeming millions. But her leaders, to add military glory to their civil achievements, have decided to extend the already extensive territories of China. Chinese government's unabashed aggression against India in 1962 was preceded and followed by a vicious propaganda that India was an 'Imperialist power', that she had inherited 'Imperialistic and colonial ambition' from its erstwhile British rulers and that she had joined the 'capitalist-imperialist' camp. Now every one knows that India throughout her history has never been an expansionist country (indeed her frontiers have only receded), that she has never committed aggression on neighbouring countries, that she has never built her armed might for offensive wars (indeed she has suffered many times on account of military unpreparedness), and today she is perhaps the greatest champion of non-alignment. China's intrusion into Indian territory and her bellicose utterances are the consequences of maladjustment of morality and chauvinism. Her politicians distort facts of history to elevate a low aim into a national cause.

Another reason for our not learning from history is that man always finds explanations to justify his actions. It is indeed painful to note that in spite of wide historical experience, jingoistic utterances are elevated into principles of politics. Great thinkers and statesmen, decent and scrupulous in private life, advocate, and if not, at least countenance the law of the jungle in international affairs. Otherwise there is no justification for slogans like 'All is fair in love and War,' 'War is a

biological necessity', 'To insure peace is to prepare for War', etc , etc. These slogans are all in defidance of the judgment of history, but not only are they not discounted, on the other hand voluminous works are written by scholars of acumen and discernment to support and propagate them. It was all right for a Machiavelli, threatened as his weak and divided country was with powerful neighbours, to have advocated disregard of good principles of private life in international affairs. But when after centuries of historical experience international promises are thrown to the winds on one pretext or another, all that can be said is that we have deliberately refused to learn from history. It was again perhaps all right for James I of England or Archbishop Bossuet of France to advocate the Divine Right of Kingship, but centuries of historical experience has shown that even the most inefficient democracy is better than dictatorial tyranny. And when we permit dictators to rise, to impose their ideas by force and to let them make war on some neighbouring State as a means of diverting attention from internal conditions and allowing discontent to explode outwards, we are guilty of forgetting the lessons of history.

In the end it may be said that lessons of history are often forgotton by narrow mindedness, parochialism and chauvinism of men and nations. But not entirely. Humanity has gained much more from history than otherwise. We are definitely better off today than the people of some centuries ago in our moral, social and political standards. As Phillip Toynbee wrote in the Observer[1] : "Consider that most young people today instinctively know that young people of other races and classes are as human as they themselves. Two hundred years ago smart young Londoners used to round off the evening by teasing the lunatics in Bedlam. Their equivalent today are beginning to understand that a poor Negro is as much a human being as a rich duke. Compare two events as close together as the First and Second World Wars. Look again at those odious 1914-1918 *Punches* with their vulgar and cruel hysteria against everything German. Consider that dachshunds were kicked off the London pavements, and that anyone with a German name was persecuted

1. Reproduced in *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 30 December, 1962.

in the name of patriotism. In the Second World War, with far more cause for hating everything German, how humane and sensible was the public attitude by comparison with what it had been." Still better times are bound to follow. Let us hope that there amidst a world new builded peace will be stabilized. The seeds of such a world are contained in the principles of the United Nations Organization. Bernard Shaw expressed in *Major Barbara* that wars would continue until the makers of gunpowder become professors of Greek or the professors of Greek become the makers of gunpowder. And this, in turn, was derived from Plato's conclusion that the affairs of mankind would not go right until either the rulers became philosophers or the philosophers became rulers.[1]

Purpose of History

This rambling essay was inspired by the young doctor who had questioned the value of the study of history (see Preface). He had declared that the study of engineering and medicine were useful, while history was all a thing of the past without any value to us today. He was probably thinking of the work of the engineers and doctors in the development of the country being achieved through our Five Year Plans. Every day new bridges are being built, dams constructed and hospitals opened. Bridges and hospitals are good things ; they are visible signs of progress. But the questione is : For whom is the bridge built, for whom a hospital opened ? The answer is : Man. Surely man is more important than bridge and the study of man more important than all other studies. And history as a study of man is important indeed.

In the first section we saw what the meaning of history is. Let us now see what is its purpose. Whether in ancient times or in modern, the purpose of history, as we shall see in greater detail presently, is to guage the progress man has made in making the world a better and a still better place to live in. This progress, according to many thinkers, is not continuous. There are periods of decline interspersed with those of

1. Liddell Hart, *op cit*, pp. 55-56.

progress. Thus in ancient India a cyclic conception of history is envisaged. In each cycle there are four *yugas* or ages, the first *Krita* or the Golden Age, the second *Treta* in which there is some decline of virtue, the third *Dvapar* in which the world is full of sin and strife, and the last where suffering predominates and religion is neglected. Then there is *Pralaya* or Destruction after which this historical cycle starts anew. This cyclic conception is suggested in the *Mahabharta* and the *Puranas*. Indeed in the *Bhagvadgita* the Lord promises to return again and again to destroy evil and establish virtue.

In the view of Herodotus also, history shows a repetitive pattern, regulated by a cosmic law of compensation mainly through nemesis (in the case of Hindus by incarnation and reappearance of God again and again), which time and again restores the equilibrium.[1] According to the Greek view of life and the world everything moves in recurrences, like the eternal recurrence of sunrise and sunset and summer and winter. Also in the Greek and Roman mythologies and geneologies the past is represented as a meaningful preparation for the future.[2] Belief in a brighter future took the form of poetic visions of a return to a golden age of the past and a cyclic and repetitive conception of history developed.

Another idea that is developed in the ancient Indian texts is that the world is the sphere of God's activity and we are all participants in his *Lila*. History has therefore a divine purpose. Through His Grace, God may be a factor within the individual's and nation's history and indeed He is believed to be so. The idea that this world is a place for the *Lila* or sport of God reverberates every aspect of ancient Hindu life and culture—song and dance, music, painting, architecture, sculpture and literature.

In medieval writings too this Divine purpose in history is clearly visible. Most of the medieval Indian historians writing in the Persian language begin their chronicle either with the praise of God, prophet Muhammad and the story of the Caliphs, or with the beginning of the world and Adam

1. Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, (Chicago, 1955), p. 7.
2. Ibid', p. 6.

and Eve and only after that do they come to 'factual history'. With them also there was the idea that kings had been ordained by divinity and had a divine function to perform, and that was to root out evil and establish virtue. Similarly to the Jews, and later on Christians, history was primarily a history of salvation. It emerged from the faith in an ultimate divine purpose. According to it men are to acknowledge the divine dominance in history and endeavour to accord with it.

Thus both in the East and the West the ancient and medieval concepts of history envisaged (i) that there was a cyclic or repetitive pattern, (ii) that it had a divine purpose and (iii) that there was a striving towards a better world to come. Some modern conceptions of history are akin to these, others different. Like the ancients, Toynbee tries to establish a recurrent rythm of life-cycles, repeating a pattern of genesis and growth, breakdown and disintegration.[1] On the other hand Voltaire, Vico and Montesquieu contradicted the theological interpretation of history having a divine purpose. The leading principle was not the will of God and divine providence, but the will of man. Another modern philosopher Croce thinks on similar lines when he declares that man creates the historical world by his own actions, and by thinking it, he recreates his own creation and thus knows it fully. 'Here is a real world, and of this world man is truly the God.'[2]

Spengler thinks that the course of history is determined neither by the will of God nor by the will of man, but by necessity. Yet when Spengler goes on to define the supreme concept of 'destiny', he introduces the notion of a 'historical time' directed towards the future. The historical sense, according to him, is a 'sense of the future.'[3]

Two things seem to be common in the ancient and mordern thought about the purpose and goal of history. The one is that the 'permanent centre of history' is man. 'Man as

1. A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (London, 1934-39), Vol. IV, p. 23 & ff.
2. Croce, cited in Lowith, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
3. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, (New York, 1937), Chap. IV, p. 117 ff. Also Cf. Lowith, pp. 16-17.

he is and was and ever shall be,' says Burckhardt, 'striving, acting, suffering.'[1] In ancient Greece or Rome or India, only the work of the heroes finds mention ; they are supermen and demi-gods and their work and accomplishments set standards of virtue and determine the historical process to the will of God. To modern thinkers like Vico and Croce, man is the maker of his destiny, creating his world, now makes and will make—through his extraordinary efforts.[2]

The other is that there is a striving towards a better world. The great historian Edward Gibbon came to "the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race."[3] This progress may not be continuous, there may be periods of both ups and downs, advancement and regression, 'growth and disintegration', but the struggle for and pursuit of a better and a still better world go on. The aim of all great thinkers, philosophers, prophets and conquerors has been to try to create a better world—in their own way.

It can therefore be safely claimed that one of the purposes of history is to serve as a constant narrator of this striving towards a better world ; another is to serve as the guardian of the cultural heritage of man—man as he is and was and ever shall be. The function of history is to study man and his problems through the ages as tackled by its leaders and extraordinary personalities. That is why history becomes the basis of study of all social sciences and humanities. While for acquiring literacy, one begins with the three R's—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, for *education* one invariably starts with history.

Since this is a bold assertion, a word may be said in its explanation. As the alphabet is the basis of all languages and literature, of all Prose, Poetry and Drama, and Arithmetic is the basis of all scientific study in Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, etc., similarly History is the basis of the study of all

1. Cited in Lowith, p. 21.
2. Ibid., 125.
3. Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chap. xxxviii.

subjects which fall under the category of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is the basis of all Philosophy, Politics, Economics and even Art and Religion. If Ethics is to be taught to a beginner, the lesson would always begin with the proverbial : Once upon a time, there was a good (or bad) king, and the narrative will point on a moral. Economics, Politics and Religion are introduced to a child in a similar fashion. No wonder that the study of history starts with childhood itself—in the form of little stories.

That is also why history is one of the oldest subjects of study ; it is perhaps the earliest secular discipline. It is older, for instance, than Political Economy, Political Science, Civics, Public Administration, etc., etc. Acton is right in declaring that 'History is the source of Philosophy, if not a substitute for it.'[1] Croce goes a step further in asserting that history has annihilated Philosophy. And he does not exaggerate. We have seen the importance of Buddha's teaching, through the ages. The conservation or continuance of the historical Buddha is not exactly perpetuation. It is rather utilization. The historical process not only completes, but supplements the past. Besides the discovery of facts, history itself has a career of continually adding to and completing our knowledge of the past. While other studies have tried to fix and settle things, history goes on altering and improving. History, thus, as a branch of knowledge grows with the growth of knowledge. Akbar and his contemporaries knew their own time and the time gone by. In other words they knew their present and their past. But history knows their future too. Akbar knew of Agra of his days, without the Taj Mahal. History knows the Agra of Akbar and of Taj Mahal. Through history we know about Akbar more than he knew about himself.

Every decade, every century adds to this knowledge. History as a medium of knowledge adds to knowledge and continues the process. The perspective of history goes on steadily widening in the dimensions of time and space. The understanding of the past becomes clearer, brighter and fruitful as man's knowledge of himself grows.

1. Acton, *The Study of History*, p. 57.

And now a last word about the importance of history *today*. Man has many problems and his society suffers from many ills, and both these need study and solution. As the doctor tries to prescribe a recipe for the disease of the body, the historian thinks in terms of society as a whole. Medical scientists are experimenting day and night to find out the factors that are responsible for cancer in the human body. Some say it is due to smoking, others due to over-eating, over-drinking, or too much sun-bathing, while many others think that it is due to smoke enveloping industrial towns and the gases exhaling from petrol. Until the cause is correctly and definitely diagnosed, remedy would be difficult to find. But the researches on cancer are very important and one day, let us hope, a sure remedy for cancer would be found as has been done in the case of malaria.

Similarly there are diseases in society. In India there is the well-known problem of Hindu-Muslim differences which sometimes result in communal riots. Some say that it is due to Muslim fanaticism, others due to Hindu orthodoxy, that the disease persists. But the remedy is not easy to find because probably the causes of the disease have not been properly diagnosed. Is not historical research on this problem as important, if not more, than the researches going on about cancer ? Similarly there was a time when the Hindus had developed a very high civilization and produced such great works on religion and philosophy and mathematics that foreigners in large numbers used to come to study in Indian Universities. Then the Hindu thought declined. Today the boot is on the other leg. It is Indians who are now keen to go abroad to study, and feel that not only can they not provide any education for foreigners, but that even for themselves, their education cannot be full and complete in their own land. Is it not necessary to study the causes of the cancer that has invalided the robust Hindu mind ?

In history, however, one cannot study a few books and give a categorical answer, or work in a laboratory with certain cases and strike at a sure remedy. Historical researches do not provide categorical solutions or cut-and-dried recipes. Although the historian will have good ground for anticipating

certain developments, he can make no positive prediction. He cannot phrase his conclusions beyond the probable. "Clear-cut conceptions belong.....not to history, where everything is in a state of flux, of perpetual transition and combination."[1] But it is also not the function of history to provide sure recipes for our problems. History makes men wise, not clever. Historical experience makes us, not shrewder (for next time), but wiser (for ever). Therewith the saying *historia vitae magistra.*

Study of history has a value at all times. But it is of the utmost importance today when the world is shrinking and we are coming closer to one another. We can be nearer to one another better if we understand one another well. And "we cannot understand our own country," says G. M. Treveyan, "still less any other, unless we know something of its history. .....You cannot understand the French unless you know something of the French Revolution, its causes and effects. You cannot understand the Russians unless you have some conception of the long centuries during which they were hammered into the sense of community by the continual blows of Tartar and Teuton invasion sweeping over the unbroken steppes." In the world of today it is essential, as never before, to have a good knowledge of history, to understand a little of one another's historical experience and resulting attitudes.

1. Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1950), Translated by Hottinger, p. 74.

TWO

MODERN INDIAN HISTORIANS OF MEDIEVAL INDIA

(A. D. 1,000 to 1707)[1]

Introduction

The title of this paper happily limits my study in four spheres. Firstly, I shall confine myself only to Indian writers and will mention European writers either to emphasise their pioneering work in any particular field, or when comparison of their work with Indian historians is thought to be necessary. Secondly, the work of scholars reviewed here will be only on medieval *Indian* history. This will exclude works on provincial dynasties and independent kingdoms. Thirdly, the period will be circumscribed roughly to the one beginning with the Turkish invasions and ending with the death of Aurangzeb. This will exclude the works on the Arab invasion and immigration, and the so-called Later Mughals. Fourthly, and lastly, only those who have written in the English language will find a mention here. I shall thus not say anything about the vast modern historical literature that is extant in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Urdu and many other languages of the country.

Even while restricting myself in these four ways, my field of study remains vast, and I hope to do justice only to a fringe of the problem of modern Indian historiography on medieval India.

The study of medieval Indian history in modern times may be said to have begun about a century ago when, in the eighteen-sixtees, and under the patronage of the Asiatic

1. Read at a Seminar on Historians and Historiography of Medieval India at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 2-5 January, 1966

Society of Bengal, the Indo-Persian chronicles of the medieval period began to be printed in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, and in 1867-77 appeared Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*. Elliot's work contained in eight fairly bulky volumes translations of extracts from most of the then known Persian chronicles, and soon became indispensable for the researcher on medieval history.

Therefore, before giving an appraisal of modern Indian writings on the medieval period, it is necessary to say something about Elliot and his material. Elliot's material had certain peculiarities, three of which need special notice. Firstly, medieval Indian chroniclers wrote with a strong religious bias. To some belief in the superiority of the Islamic faith was an obsession, to others it appeared as a patent fact. Therefore whenever they referred to non-Muslims, they did not fail to use the most uncomplimentary epithets against them. It is sometimes argued that theirs was just a style of writing and no serious notice should be taken of their choice of words. But the manner of their writing surely reflects their pattern of thinking. Maybe, later on it just became a mode of expression, still their words of hate have left a trail of bitter memories which is difficult to erase.

Secondly, Persian chroniclers, by and large, wrote at the command of kings and nobles. As panegyrists they naturally extolled their patrons and the burden of their theme was that medieval monarchs left no stone unturned to destroy non-Muslims and establish the power of the people of the Islamic faith. Thus from Hasan Nizami to Abdul Hamid Lahori, almost all Persian writers have exaggerated the achievements of their contemporary rulers, especially in the spheres of conquest and crushing of infidelity, and their acts of cruelty and atrocity have been painted as virtuous deeds.

Thirdly, even those who wrote independently suffered from racial pride and prejudice. They have all portrayed Muslim rulers as champions of Islam and destroyers of disbelief. On the other hand they write little about the life of the common people, their economic condition and social behaviour. Thus the medieval chroniclers, while they thought they were extolling their heroes, have, by their exaggeration,

brought odium on the kings and conquerors of their own race and religion. There is a saying : 'No man is condemned save by his own mouth.' The chroniclers of medieval India have thus 'condemned' their own rulers.

Working on the writings of these chroniclers, Sir Henry Elliot arrived at the conclusion that medieval histories were "recorded by writers who seem to sympathize with no virtues and to abhor no vices," and that medieval rulers were "sunk in sloth and debauchery" and "parasites and eunuchs" revelled in the spoil of plundered provinces.[1] And with the white man's burden on his shoulders he even felt encouraged to hope that these chronicles "will make our native subjects more sensible to the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule."[2] Thus while this great savant rendered valuable service in providing in the English language the primary sources of medieval Indian history, he also did great disservice in pronouncing his own prejudiced judgment upon them.

Any other writer's denunciation of the medieval chroniclers or Muslim rulers would have gone unnoticed, for similar statements appear in the writings of many British historians on medieval Indian history but are not taken quite seriously. But no research worker on medieval Indian history could help reading and rereading Elliot's works, and in some measure being guided by his opinions ; so that till the other day (and to some extent even today), whether one liked it or not, one could not do without Elliot. Indeed Lanepoole opined : "To realize Medieval India there is no better way than to dive into the eight volumes of the priceless *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*...a revelation of Indian life as seen through the eyes of the Persian court annalists."[3] Lanepoole, Pringle Kennedy,[4] and Ishwari Prasad depended primarily on Elliot and Dowson's eight volumes. Indeed Dr. Ishwari Prasad went to the extent of saying : "In preparing this volume (*Medieval India*) .....I am not so presumptuous as to think that I have improved

1. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. I, Preface, pp. xx-xxi.
2. Ibid., p. xii.
3. *Medieval India under Muhammadan Rule*, (London, 1903), Preface, p. v-vi.
4. *A History of the Great Mughals*, (Calcutta, 1905, 1911).

upon Elphinstone and Lanepoole, to whom I must gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness."[1]

Thus the great laborious worker Elliot and his followers wrote with an angle which was critical of medieval Indian rulers, and this school held the ground for quite some time. Soon other writers, who would not agree with this version, or who were determined to refute it, appeared on the scene, and the situation so created divided the modern Indian writers on medieval history into two schools—anti-Muslim and pro-Muslim, to put it bluntly. To some scholars like Dr. Ishwari Prasad and Dr. A. L. Srivastava the medieval age was a period of unmitigated suffering for the Hindus ; to other like Dr. I. H. Qureshi and Dr. S. M. Jaffar it was an age of all-round progress and prosperity. Writing about the Sultanate period, Dr. Ishwari Prasad says : "There was persecution, partly religious and partly political, and a stubborn resistance was offered by the Hindus..... The state imposed great disabilities upon the non-Muslims.. Instances are not rare in which the non-Muslims were treated with great severity...The practice of their religious rites even with the slightest publicity was not allowed, and cases are on record of men who lost their lives for doing so."[2] According to Dr. A. L. Srivastava the Sultanate of Delhi "was an Islamic State, pure and simple, and gave no religious toleration to the Hindus.....and indulged in stifling persecution."[3] About the Mughal times his conclusion is that "barring the one short generation under Akbar when the moral and material condition of the people was on the whole good, the vast majority of our population during 1526-1803 led a miserable life."[4] On the other hand Dr. I. H. Qureshi declares ; "The Hindu population was better off under the Muslims than under the Hindu tributaries or independent rulers. Their financial burden was lighter than it had been for some centuries in pre-Muslim days.....Nor was the Hindu despised socially. The Muslims, generally speaking, have

1. *History of Medieval India.* (Allahabad, 1925), Preface, p. ii.
2. *History of Medieval India* (Allahabad, 1940 Edition), pp. 509-513.
3. *The Mughal Empire* (Agra, 1964), p. 568.
4. Ibid., p. 571.

always been remarkably free from religious prejudice ...."[1]

It is indeed an unpalatable fact, but all the same it is a fact, that there are two schools of historians of medieval India, the pro-Hindu and the pro-Muslim. Of course there are also the objective writers who try to rise above bias. But this unbiased historiography too is not entirely faultless. The phrase 'objective history' is very attractive, but it has its pitfalls. Sometimes under this appellation, all shadows are removed and medieval times are painted in such bright colours as to shame even the modern age. At others, modern ideas of class-conflict, labour-exploitation and all that goes with it, and many other modern phenomena and problems are projected backwards to fit in the medieval social structure. The word religion is tried to be avoided because it is thought to be associated with bitter memories. If the medieval chronicler cries out 'Jihad', it is just not heard ; but if he cries aloud persistently, it is claimed that he never meant it. Thus objective writings sometimes, in the process of explaining, go to the extent of excusing. But I have not said all this to decry the works of objective writers. They have certainly raised the standard of medieval historical research by adopting and advocating the scientific methodology. They do not care to repeat the narrative of chronicles, but try to recapitulate the spirit of the times. They do not merely harp on the incidents of the past, but record their lessons.

After these introductory remarks, I shall now attempt an appraisal of the work of modern Indian historians on medieval history. I am not here expected to give, nor shall I try to give, an 'exhaustive bibliography' on the medieval period ; and therefore I shall mention only a few scholars and their works. This does not mean that others are less important. Also for the sake of convenience my study will be classified under (1) works on the political history of the Turkish and (2) the Mughal period ; and (3) works on social, cultural and economic history and on administration.

1. *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Lahore, 1942) pp. 207-13.

Historiography on the Turkish Period

On the pre-Mughal period the life of the indefatigable conqueror Mahmud Ghaznavi has attracted the attention of two historians, Professor Mohammad Habib and Dr. M. Nazim. Professor Habib's *Mahmud of Ghazni* was first published in 1927. His contention was that Mahmud was cruel and unscrupulous and did everything against the teachings of Islam and therefore tarnished its name. There was a spontaneous 'uproar in the Urdu Press' against this book, but it has held ground. As against this Dr. Nazim's *Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni* (1931) looks upon Mahmud as a hero of Islam.

The first Turkish dynasty of the so-called Slave rulers has been ably dealt with by Dr. A. B. M. Habibullah who has written an excellent monograph on it under the title of *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* (Lahore, 1945). The book has been written against Indian background and not Islamic background. The author believes that under the Mameluke Sultans there was "continuity of Indian institutions and ways of life which the new rulers had little capacity or desire to change drastically" (Preface, p. vii). There is another work on this very subject by Muhammad Aziz Ahmad entitled *Political History and the Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi* (Lahore, 1949).

For the Khalji dynasty there is the *History of the Khaljis* by me (Allahabad, 1950). The first two Tughlaqs have been studied by Dr. Ishwari Prasad in his *A History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*, Volume I, (Allahabad, 1936). The author promised to write a second volume on Firoz Shah and his successors, but this hope has remained unfulfilled for the last thirty years. Even in the first volume, the very important contemporary authority of Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin* is never heard of, and therefore the work remains a weak production. Dr. Mahdi Husain has enhanced the scope of his earlier work, *The Rise and Fall of Muhammad bin Tughlaq* (London, 1938) into a comprehensive *History of the Tughlaq Dynasty* (Calcutta, 1963). About the Lodis Dr. A. B. Pandey wrote in 1956 a book entitled *The First Afghan Empire in India*. In 1963 appeared my *Twilight of the Sultanate* covering the period from

the invasion of Timur to the conquest of Babur. To these may be added Dr. K. S. Aiyanger's *South India and her Muhammedan Invaders* (London, 1921) and N. Venkataramayya's *The Early Muslim Expansion in South India* (Madras, 1942).

It will be noted in the above list that except for the first two Tughlaq sovereigns and the Lodi kings, who have been studied by two, the rest of the rulers and dynasties have received the attention of only one scholar each. Of course there are a number of general histories like the *Cambridge History of India* Vol. III and the voluminous publications—*The Struggle for the Empire* and *The Delhi Sultanate*—brought out by the laudable cooperative effort of a number of scholars in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan series, yet it must be conceded that of the detailed monographs one single work on a particular dynasty shows the dearth of historiography on the Turkish period, more so when it is remembered that the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan volumes view the political problems of the period in the light of Hindu-Muslim relations and the *Cambridge History of India's* third volume is only a good narrative of the political struggle during the Sultanate period in Hindustan and in the provincial kingdoms with just a chapter on the 'Monuments of Muslim India' at the end. It is obvious that, apart from other spheres, even in the political history of the early middle ages much research remains to be done.

Works on the Mughal Times

The study of Mughal India has received greater attention than that of the Turkish period. It is a strange coincidence that while Babur has been monopolized by European scholars, Humayun is the exclusive field of Indians. Babur's *Memoirs* have been translated by Leyden and Erskine (1826) and Mrs. Beveridge (1921), while Erskine, Rushbrook Williams, M. S. Edwardes and Lanepoole have written on his life and times. The ill-starred Humayun has been studied by S. K. Banerjee (1938), Ishwari Prasad (1955) and R.S. Avasthi, whose excellent doctoral thesis on Humayun (Allahabad University) could not be published on account of his untimely death. Sher Shah's hero-worshipper is Dr. K. R. Kanungo (1921), but after

forty years his views have matured in his scholarly monograph recently published under the title of *Sher Shah and His Times* (Orient Longmans, 1964). Unfortunately in this second work, there is no mention of Sher Shah's Administration, and if Sher Shah is important for anything it is his administrative system. In 1934 Professor N. B. Roy published his work on the successors of Sher Shah. Dr. S. C. Misra's thesis on Sher Shah still awaits publication.

Akbar has the largest number of biographers, but mostly European. The names of Von Noer, Malleson, Vincent Smith and Laurance Binyon are well known. Among Indian historians, Professor S. M. Jaffar in *The Mughal Empire from Babur to Aurangzeb* (Peshawar, 1936), has many contradictory things to say about Akbar. At one place Akbar is a liberal-nationalist and progressive, at another he "cleverly manipulated.....to attract the whole population", and still at another he "managed to be both a nationalist and a Muslim by being neither sincerely." Dr. A. L. Srivastava has the ambitious plan of writing a history of 'Akbar the Great' in three volumes ; we wish him success, the first volume is out already (Agra, 1962). J. M. Shelat has written a good book on *Akbar* in two volumes in the pocket-book series of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Bombay, 1959), although there is a lot of hero-worship stuff in it.

Jahangir found an able biographer in Dr. Beni Prasad (1922). His adoption of the style of Gibbon (as claimed in the Preface) was well suited to portray the merry monarch (he thinks him to be sedate), the clever Nur Jahan and the gay Mughal Court. Shahjahan's life and times have been ably depicted by Dr. B. P. Saksena (Allahabad, 1932). What a pity that this monarch whose reign is known to be the golden age of the Mughals has not attracted the attention of more than one scholar. It is some consolation that Professor K. R. Kanungo wrote the biography of his mystic philosopher son Dara Shikoh (1934).

Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *History of Aurangzeb* in five volumes (1912-1924) has rightly earned him the position of the doyen of Indian historians. It eclipsed the earlier effort of Lanepoole (1908) and provoked a lawyer by the name of

Faruki into writing, 'away from libraries',[1] an apology for this monarch (Bombay, 1935). Faruki is not the only defender of Aurangzeb. M. S. Jaffar in his *The Mughal Empire from Babur to Aurangzeb* tries to shield him behind the same stereotyped, though unconvincing argument, that "the lot of the subjugated has never been happier than under the ruling races of Islam." But neither the work of Faruki nor of Jaffar stand anywhere in comparison to Sarkar's. "Jadunath applied the critical and scientific methodology of Ranke and Mommsen to Indian history and could only cover 150 years of its history in 50 years ...His historical works...were examples of 'honest history', an epithet applied by V. A. Smith to his *Aurangzeb*."[2]

Indeed Dr. Jadunath Sarkar has been a source of inspiration to hundreds of scholars. To him we owe the beginning of scientific research in India. His study is based on the critical appraisal of original sources, and his *History of Aurangzeb* is almost a classic. Supplementing this work are his *Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign* and *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb*. Dr. Sarkar wrote about twenty books, but most of them do not fall within the purview of this paper.

At the end of this section two more books may be mentioned—Professor S. H. Hodivala's *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* (Bombay, 1939) and its *Supplement* (Bombay, 1957). These two volumes are scholarly commentaries on Elliot and Dowson's work in eight volumes. Like some ancient commentaries, they are mines of information (on medieval times) and have rendered greater service to scholars working on medieval Indian history than any other single work. Research workers are also indebted to Professor Sri Ram Sharma for his *Bibliography of Mughal India* (1526-1707) which provides practical guidance in the selection of original sources.

Historiography on Medieval Government and Society

Although every text book on medieval history appendages a chapter on administration, there are only a few standard

1. Peter Hardy in *Historiayns of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, Edited by C.H. Philips. (London, 1961), p. 303.
2. Professor Jagdish Narayan Sarkar in the *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* Vol III, (Calcutta 1963-64), p. 57.

works worth mentioning on the system of administration in medieval India. Dr. R. P. Tripathi's book lays the modest claim of dealing with only *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration* (Allahabad, 1936), but it is a work of immense scholarship, and behind its simple language the deep insight and wide learning of the author are clearly discernible. Dr. Ibn Hasan's *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (London, 1936) is mainly a study of administration under Akbar, his son and grandson, but references to the Sultanate period are not lacking. He is non-committal on the issue whether or not the Mughal government was an Islamic State, although he states that Akbar and his successors strictly followed the Islamic law. He also advocates that the 'Ulema should not be condemned wholesale'. It is a good work, and its tone as a whole is dispassionate.

Dr. I. H. Qureshi's *Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Lahore, 1942), published six years after Tripathi's and Ibn Hasan's books should have made some effort to improve upon these earlier works, but unfortunately, and in the words of Peter Hardy, "his approach is strongly communalistic... He is proud of the political achievements of Muslims in medieval India and believes that they more than satisfied modern ideas of tolerance, benevolence and efficiency... (He) treats the Delhi Sultanate as a welfare state, the Muslim community in medieval India as a nation, and the Sultans of Delhi as Muslims both in a religious and political sense."[1] This book prompted, indeed provoked, me to write a criticism of it which ran into a hundred pages and was published under the title of *Muslim State in India* (Allahabad, 1950). Dr. U. N. Day's *Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate* (Allahabad, 1959) 'is a welcome addition to the scanty literature we have on the subject.'[2]

Dr Jadunath Sarkar's *Mughal Administration* is well known. Abdul Aziz's *The Imperial Treasury of the Mughals* (Lahore, 1942), *The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army* (Lahore, 1946) and *Arms and Jewellery of the Indian Mughals* (Lahore, 1947) are good works on medieval administration. Dr. P. Saran's *The Provincial Government of the Mughals*

1. Peter Hardy in *Historians of India* etc., p. 302.
2. Shaikh Abdur Rashid in Foreword to the book, p. vi.

(Allahabad, 1941) also touches on the central administration and is a good work but for the bitter attacks on other scholars from whom he differs.

It is a matter of some satisfaction that there are three works exclusively on the judicial administration—Wahed Husain's *Administration of Justice During the Muslim Rule in India* (Calcutta, 1934), Muhammad Bashir Ahmad's *The Administration of Justice in Medieval India* (1941), and Muhammad Akbar's *The Administration of Justice by the Mughals* (Lahore, 1948).

Of the books on social life, the best so far produced is Dr. K. M. Ashraf's *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan* (Calcutta, 1935). His approach is non-communal and nationalistic and he attempts to study the life and conditions of the people of medieval India in economic terms and not on religious lines. Although the chapters in his book are divided under headings like 'The Sultan as a Private Person', 'The Sultan as a Public Person', 'The Court', 'Rural Life', and so on, yet it is uncharitable on the part of Peter Hardy to say that his picture of society, "is not dynamic but static ; the work is an essay on dissection of a corpse not a description of a living, moving, changing organism."[1] Yusuf Ali's *Making of India* (London, 1925) published ten years before Ashraf's book takes pride in claiming that the Muslims 'brought a better organisation and a manlier culture in India' (p. 81), but by and large his approach is liberal and nationalistic. Professor Mohammad Habib's *Indian Culture and Social life at the Time of Turkish Invasions*, published by the Aligarh Historical Research Institute, is but an abridgement of Alberuni's *Kitab-ul-Hind*. Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan's *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1957) is a welcome contribution and contains essays on various subjects like Islam, the Bhakti Cult, Sufism in Medieval India, the Educational System, Social and Economic Conditions etc., etc. Dr. N. N. Law's *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule* (London, 1916) gives a graphic description of the state of education in the medieval times, and so does S. M. Jaffar's *Education in Muslim India* (Peshawar, 1936). In 1955 came out Dr. P. N. Chopra's *Some Aspects of*

1. Peter Hardy in *op. cit.*, p. 301.

Society and Culture during the Mughal Age. Dr. P. N. Ojha's thesis on *Some Aspects of North India's Social Life from Akbar to Aurangzeb* has been recently published. In 1958 Dr. Muhammad Yasin brought out a *Social History of Islamic India* (1605 to 1748). The work is based on comtemporary sources, but its title raises the question : What is Islamic India ?

On the economic conditions in medieval India, besides the three books of Moreland[1], there is Dr. Irfan Habib's recently published excellent monograph. Although entitled *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963), it throws a flood of light on the economic condition of the masses in the medieval times.[2] Dr. Pant has written on the *Commercial Policy of the Mughal Emperors* and Dr. R. K. Mukerjee on Indian shipping and maritime activity in *A History of Indian Shipping* (Orient Longmans, 1957). Dr. Mukerjee's *Economic History of India* (1600 to 1800) too is a great work.

On the religious life in medieval India, Dr. Jadunath Sarkar's thought-provoking work *Chaitanya's Pilgrimages and Teachings* came out many years back (1913). Professor M. K. Sen's *Medieval Mysticism in India* is an excellent treatise on an engrossing subject. There are indeed quite a large number of books on medieval saint-reformers, but space forbids their notice here.

Dr. Tara Chand's *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Second edition, Allahabad, 1946), despite its critics, remains a work of immense scholarship, and makes a refreshing reading having left the beaten track of medieval Indian historiography. As against this Dr. M. L. Roy Choudhary's *Din-i-Ilahi or the*

1. *India At the Death of Akbar* (1920), *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1921), and *Agrarian System of Moslem India* (1929).
2. An admirer of Dr. Irfan Habib's work declares : "Once in a very long while something happens to stir the shallow, turbid and extensive waters of Indian historiography. The publication of Dr. Irfan Habib's *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* is generally recognized—even in the most unlikely quarters—as one of these rare occasions." (Dr. Tapan Raychaudhari in *Enquiry*, Delhi, Spring, 1965, p. 22.)

   My own regard for Dr. Irfan Habib and recognition of his work do not grow less by pointing out that his views are similar to those of Professor I. M. Raisner whose Marxist interpretation of the history of Mughal India is now too well-known to be restated in any detail.

Religion of Akbar (1941) is a tame study. In 1940 appeared Professor Sri Ram Sharma's *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (Second edition, Bombay, 1962) in which 'a systematic attempt has been made to study the religious policy of the Mughal Emperors from the original records of their reign' (Preface). Dr. S. A. A. Rizvi has brought out a very learned monograph on *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Agra, 1965). It is a unique contribution and deserves the highest praise.

Foremost among scholars interested in the Sufi Saints of medieval India, is Professor Muhammad Habib. His *Hazrat Amir Khusraw of Delhi* (1927) and *Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh of Delhi* (1946) throw a flood of light on Sufi mysticism in medieval times. Professor Habib's lead has been followed by Dr. K. A. Nizami in his *Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar* (1955), *Studies in Medieval Indian History* (1956) and *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century* (1961).

In the domain of art, we have excellent works by N. C. Mehta, M. S. Randhawa, Dr. Moti Chandra and some others on medieval Indian painting. But on architecture I know of no work of merit by an Indian scholar despite the fact that medieval monuments bespangle the whole country and we swear by our medieval Indian architectural achievements.

On the basis of the above notice, it may be concluded that while the history of medieval India covers a large span of seven hundred years, the historiography of Indian scholars on it is still not considerable. In the first place there is a tendency in our country not to take up a subject on which some one else has already done some work. This is most obvious at the time of a Ph. D. scholar's chosing his subject. Both the research worker and his supervisor are reluctant to select a topic on which somewhere else 'work is being done', and whether or not a thesis on the subject has been published or even completed, they want to avoid 'duplication'. This is, to my mind, an unhealthy practice. If one work has been produced, say, on Alauddin Khalji or Shahjahan, it does not follow that nothing more need be written on their lives and times. It is true that there is still much virgin ground left,

and the researcher naturally tries to plough his furrow there, but then this is also true that while in Europe there are dozens of works on Elizabeth I or Charles I or Napoleon Bonaparte, in India Shahjahan has only one historian and even the works on Akbar can be counted on finger tips. In India it is perhaps thought that two books on one subject are superfluous.

In the second place, scientific historiography on medieval India is not older than forty years. In fact leaving aside pioneers like Sir Jadunath Sarkar, it was only in the nineteen-thirties that a large number of good works on scientific lines began to be produced. Because the time-span of Indian historiography on the middle ages is too short, not much work could have been produced in this short period.

Modern Historiography on Medieval India

What are the characteristics of modern historiography on medieval India for the last forty years ? Firstly, the chief trait is that in the beginning it continued to be political history or biography writing. Then, and gradually, the non-political features of medieval India like the cultural aspects of Muslim rule in India, Islam as a civilization, literature and art, social and economic life, began to attract the attention of scholars. That history is not to be merely a narrative of kings and wars, but has to be a story of the people as well, has now become well recognized. But this conception has taken time to grow.

Secondly, there is now the conviction that history is a form of critical inquiry into the past and not merely a repetition of testimony and authority. Gone are the days of producing a modern chronicle by repeating the statements and biases of medieval chronicles. The modern historiographer of medieval history tries to probe into the ideas and to determine the behind human actions performed in the past. These motives they find, unlike the medieval historiographer, not only in religious, but in political, economic, social and other causes and try to trace a relationship between them.

And thirdly, modern historiography applies the critical apparatus of footnotes, appendices, bibliography, and sometimes maps also. This is good, but occasionally it results into 'a very sophisticated form of activity'.

These are merits, but there are some weaknesses also in modern Indian historiography on medieval times. One is that sometimes the writer seeks only those sources which bear out his thesis, and cites only those authorities which buttress his views. Another is that Indian historiography is still mostly of the doctoral thesis type, and too many foot-notes and citations of authorities, sometime weigh too heavily upon the narrative and the work becomes lifeless. One reason why publishers are not enthusiastic about accepting such works is that while the authors make the right use of the scientific apparatus, the work itself turns into dry-as-dust unreadable stuff. If anything, history has to be readable.

But the most glaring weakness is that modern Indian historiography on medieval India suffers from what may be termed as rigid compartmentalization. As seen above, some have written on political history, others on administration and the army, while some others on religion and society. Even those who have attempted to write an integrated history have only succeeded in adding, say, to the political narrative, a chapter on administration, another on social life and a third one on architecture and so on ; and it would not be presumptuous to say that a comprehensive view of medieval Indian history has yet to be developed and an integrated study yet to be attempted.

However, when, with its merits and weaknesses Indian historiography was making good headway, India was partitioned into two. Partition of the country has been tragic in many ways, but no branch of study has been perhaps so much directly and vitally affected by it as the historiography on medieval India. Many distinguished scholars conversant with classical Persian went over to Pakistan and history has certainly suffered from their migration. There is no denying the fact that there has been a marked quantitative decline in medieval Indian historical studies after 1947. This can be easily seen in the number of students offering medieval history in colleges and universities, in articles published in the historical journals of the country or papers read at various conferences—as compared with the Ancient or the Modern periods of Indian history. At the Trivandrum session of the Indian History

Congress (1958) a seminar was held to probe into the causes of this decline and suggest means of checking it, but nothing much seems to have been done to improve the position. On the other hand, once in a while one even comes across the puerile argument : Where is the necessity of continuing with medieval historical studies in India after the creation of Pakistan ?

But the worst affect of Partition has been that 1947 has tended to produce two historiographies based on territorial differentiation. Comparing the works of Ahmad Ali (*Culture of Pakistan*) with Richard Symond's *The Making of Pakistan* (London, 1950) on the one hand and Humayun Kabir's *Indian Heritage* and Abid Hussain's *National Culture of India* on the other, W. Cantwell Smith says that the Pakistan historian "flees from Indian-ness, and would extra-territorialize even Mohenjodaro (linking the Indus-valley civilisation with Sumer and Elam) as well as the Taj (yet though left in India, the monuments and buildings of Agra and Delhi are entirely outside the Indian tradition and are an essential heritage and part of Pakistani culture,—p. 205), and omits from consideration altogether quite major matters less easily disposed of (such as Asoka's reign, and the whole of East Pakistan)"..... The Indians "on the other hand seek for the meaning of Muslim culture within the complex of Indian 'unity in diversity' as an integral component."[1] So, after 1947, besides the pro-Hindu and pro-Muslim versions, there are the Pakistani and Indian versions of medieval Indian history.

This situation poses a plethora of problems to the modern Indian historian writing on medieval times. If history is knowledge, and not mere information, then knowledge should lead to no bitterness. If history is truth, it should lead to light and not darkness, to amity and fellow-feeling, not suspicion and spite. But writings on medieval history are not only sometimes written with a bias, but are also judged with coloured glasses. There are some subjects like the Bhakti movement, Sufism, painting and architecture, on which one can write without fear of being accused as a partisan. But history without the study of government and

1. *Historians of India, Pakistan*, etc., pp. 322-23.

politics, law and administration, is mere skeleton. And a writer on medieval government and political history is often accused of having 'preconceived notions', or of being 'anti-Muslim' or 'pan-Islamic' or 'chauvinistic'. Even an objective writer is dubbed as a 'politician' who wants to please all. Because of all this, a writer on medieval Indian history is afraid of being 'fearless', a quality a historian must possess. He writes with a sort of a restraint and before putting his thoughts to paper he thinks twice whether or not he would be hurting anybody's (or community's) feelings or would be accused of partiality. Indeed writing on medieval Indian history today is like walking on a razor's edge.

This surely is not a happy state of affairs. But the situation is not altogether hopeless either. With the all round development of education, prejudices are bound to fade away and medieval history in bound to be released from involvement with modern politics. With extension of library facilities historiography on medieval India, in spite of some setbacks, is not only bound to return to normalcy but go forward to fresh growth and development. According to Dr. K. K. Dutta, "One phase of modern Indian cultural renaissance has been the increasing interest of the Indians in historical research of the right type. This has found expression not only through efforts for exploration and discovery of .... documents of historical value...but also through their scientific study and consequent output of a large number of original works dealing with the varied aspects of Indian life . Besides helping the eradication of gross historical inaccuracies,... which held ground for years and years, such original works have thrown sufficient light on many unknown or ignored episodes and have helped a great deal in revealing a correct picture of the people's life.

"There is no doubt that Indian intellect was stimulated through contact with the dynamic forces in the new Western world and many European scholars made pioneer studies on Indian history.....But there was at the same time a genuine urge within the country to study and understand its past."[1]

1. K. K. Dutta in *Studies in Cultural History of India*, edited by Guy S. Metraux and Francois Crouzet, UNESCO, and published by Shiv Lal Agarwal (Agra, 1965), p. 482.

Today, besides individual workers in many places, some universities in particular, like the Aligarh Muslim University, are specially devoted to medieval Indian historiography. Aligarh has funds, facilities and professoriate for medieval history, and all these have given her advantage over other universities in devoting itself mainly to medieval Indian historical studies. The *Medieval India Quarterly*, the various texts and books edited and published under Aligarh Historical Series and the studies on Sufi saints may be recounted with a feeling of satisfaction.

However, the revised edition of the second volume of Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as Told by its Own Historians* published from Aligarh contains a long Introduction on dialectical materialism and the materialistic interpretation of history. The idea has caught on and there is a clear Marxist influence on the Aligarh school which has prompted Peter Hardy to say that "the significant feature of Professor Habib's Marxist interpretation of medieval Indian history is not that Marxism has absorbed Islam but that Islam has absorbed Marxism."[1]

There can be no quarrel with the Marxist interpretation of history so long as it does not lead to misinterpretation of medieval history by projecting modern notions to medieval life and society. It is also hoped that besides depending exclusively on Persian sources, the Aligarh school will enrich its researches on medieval history by making use of the large number of non-Persian sources, especially Rajasthani, which are coming into light day after day.

1. Peter Hardy in *Historians of India, Pakistan, &c.*, p. 309.

THREE

ZIYAUDDIN BARANI AS AN AUTHORITY ON THE KHALJIS

The history of the Khalji Sultans (1290-1320) suffers from want of contemporary historians. It is said that Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi, was the court historian of Alauddin (1296-1316), and wrote the history of the latter's reign in several volumes. His work *Fathnamah* is not traceable and consequently a very useful account of Alauddin's reign has been lost. Next to *Fathnamah*, in matters of historical importance, is Maulana Ziyauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. It was completed in 1359 after about four decades of Mubarak Shah's death. Born in 1285, Barani was about five years when Jalaluddin ascended the throne and thirty-five when Mubarak Khalji died. Thus he was an eye witness to the events of the reigns of all the Khalji Sultans, especially of Alauddin and Mubarak in whose time he had quite passed the age of adolescence. Barani received his education at Delhi, where great scholars and teachers flocked from all parts of Asia and his scholarship is clearly manifested in the pages of the *Tarikh*. In a lengthy introduction to his book Ziyauddin dilates upon the uses of history, its method of writing, its place in man's education. He considers the study of history in no way less important than the study of *Hadis*, *Fiqah* and hagiological literature.[1] Like Bacon he thought history made men wise and they learnt from the experience of the past. A historian, says he, should be truthful, honest and fearless. If for one reason or another he cannot write true facts openly he should try to convey his ideas through implications and suggestions.[2] In the course of

1. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Bib. Ind. Text, p. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16.

his narrative, on more than one occasion, he asserts that whatever he wrote was all true,[1] but that is exaggerated self-estimation. Ziyauddin died at a ripe age after experiencing both the 'bitter and sweet' of life. Born and brought up in rich surroundings and patronized by Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, Barani was destined to die a deplorable death, poverty-stricken and destitute.

Ziyauddin catches the thread of the narrative dropped by Minhaj Siraj. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* begins with the history of the reign of Balban and ends with the first six years of Firoz Tughlaq's reign. It appears that the book was written from time to time and not all at once or after consulting all the available trustworthy documents on different periods. Comparatively studied, the reign of the Khaljis is more systematically treated than that of the Tughlaqs. In the narrative on the Khaljis chronological sequence of events is maintained fairly accurately, although the chronology itself is far from satisfactory.

His father Muid-ul-Mulk's and his uncle Ala-ul-Mulk's official positions under the Khaljis as also his associations with Amir Khusrau, Ala Hasan Sijzi and other state officials gave Barani ample opportunity to collect and ascertain historical facts. He very often refers to his sources of information *e.g.* Khvaja Zaki, nephew of Hasan Basri and a Vazir of Balban; Malik Qirabeg, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan.[2] He also studied the *Divans* of Khusrau whom he quotes at various places.[3] But surely he did not take full advantage of the works of his contemporaries in writing his *Tarikh*. Had he improved upon the draft of his book after consulting Khusrau's *Miftahul Fatuh*, *Khazainul Fatuh* and *Deval Rani*, and Kabiruddin's *Fathnamah*, he would surely have given more valuable information on Alauddin's wars in Chittor, Ranthambhor, and Malwa. He does not refer to the Deval Rani episode at all and his account of the Deccan campaigns of Malik Kafur is extremely poor. Moreover, once he starts writing about the

1. E.g., p. 237.
2. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 67, 114, 299.
3. E.g., pp. 118, 370.

Deccan, he neglects the North altogether. For example, he furnishes little information about events in northern India from 1308 to 1313 particularly about wars in Jalor and Sevana. It must, however, be observed that Ziya finished his work at the advanced age of seventy-four when he was in a miserable plight. His pecuniary embarrassments had made him bitter and disappointed, and so he was prone to pour forth the agonies of his soul. Hence the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* at times betrays symptoms of a number of jottings carelessly pieced together.

Except in the preface, which is written in a highly florid language, the historian adheres to a simple, clear, and lucid style. His narrative, far from exhibiting the highly ornate style then in fashion, seems to be a painful translation from the spoken Hindustani into Persian. Ziyauddin uses Hindi words like *badla* (revenge), *bhatti*, *chakar*, *charai*, *choutra*, *chouki*, *chapper*, *mandi*, *morha*, *mathaha*, (earthen jugs) and *palak* (eyelids) frequently in the course of his narrative. At places his language is so broken as to make out little sense. Moreover, he is prone to making contradictory statements. Being a chronicler of contemporary events he saw the various aspects of a certain thing and mentions them all unsynthetically. At some places he extols Alauddin, at others dubs him a Pharaoh, and on a study of the *Tarikh* it is difficult to say whether Alauddin was a benefactor or a tyrant. Anyway, the historian possessed a facile pen and writes in a clear and unostentatious way. He had a sharp intellect which sharpened with age.

Barani has his own peculiar way of describing events and he takes pains to make them credible, *e.g.*, Alauddin's conversation with Qazi Mughisuddin of Bayana and Qutbuddin's attachment to his favourite Vazir Khusrau Khan. On the occasion of Alauddin's talk with Qazi Mughis there was no third person present, yet the historian writes every word that passed between the Qazi and the Sultan. In such cases the historian finds a welcome opportunity to put his own ideas in the mouth of others, and the injunctions of Qazi Mughis are nothing but Barani's own views. At another place the historian gives such a graphic description of the eventful night on which Qutbuddin Mubarak was murdered, as to make us believe that he was

peeping through a crevice into the apartment where Qutbuddin and his favourite Vazir Khusrau Khan were sleeping.[1] These vivid descriptions do grip popular imagination but they cannot satisfy the craving of student of history for truth.

Ziyauddin's sarcasm is incisive. Occasionally his sardonic humour helps him to sum up his ideas in a few words. His remark that in Alauddin's days "a camel could be had for a *dang*," but wherefrom the *dang* ?[2]—shows at once how the reforms of Alauddin had made articles cheap and people poor. Again, the stern attitude of Alauddin towards the revenue officials, according to our historian, made them so wretched that service in the revenue department was considered worse than 'plague' ; nobody "gave his daughter in marriage to a revenue clerk", and "the office of Superintendent was accepted by one who had no regard for life."[3] The plight of the agriculturists had reached such dimensions that the peasants "sold their wives and children" to remit the land-revenue,[4] while the wives of rich Zamindars (Khuts and Muqqaddams) worked in the houses of the Musalmans and received wages. And the bazaar-people, to our historian, are the worst of all the 'seventy-two' classes of people (that inhabit the globe).[5]

Barani has his likes and dislikes as all human beings have. He does not feel interested in the description of battles, tactics used in a particular engagement, and such other points of military strategy. Whenever he has to give such a description he invariably has recourse to brevity. He does, however, pause to praise an act, a character or a motive. When he praises somebody he extols him to heaven, when he condemns he writes with his pen dipped in acid. Nonetheless his character sketches are excellently done. He is a philosopher-cum-historian and not an accurate historian always. His memory is prodigious.

Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi has greatly suffered at the hands of its transcriptors. Certain passages of the book are altogether incomprehensible. It is possible that at some places Barani

1. Barani, p. 465-6.
2. Barani, p. 312.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

dared not write actual facts, as is clear from the passage about the death of Ghayasuddin Tughlaq, but at other places, where he could never be suspected of suppressing the truth, as for example in the description of the salary of soldiers in the time of Alauddin,[1] or the increase of revenue by Muhammad Tughlaq, the fault probably lay with later copyists.

But a few shortcomings cannot mar the extraordinary value of Barani's *Tarikh*. He does not only write about the courts or kings or their victories as most of the medieval chroniclers do, but also gives social and economic reforms of rulers, their administrative measures and their system of advancing justice. He gives a long list of contemporary saints, philosophers, historians, poets, medical men and astronomers. His references to cloths, fruits, and sweets and other sundry articles of those days throw a flood of light on the socio-economic history of the 14th century. Barani's description of the market control of Alauddin and the Sultan's revenue regulations clearly shows that he is not a mere chronicler of events but a historian in the true sense of the word. Barani knew the shortcomings of his contemporaries and says that Kabiruddin and other historians confined their narratives to kings, courts and conquests. Ziyauddin begins his book with a long discourse on historiography and the uses of historical study.[2] He talks at length about the duties of a king.[3] As a historian he tries to analyse critically the causes which brought about the end of Jalaluddin, of Alauddin and of the Khalji regime as a whole. Ziyauddin was cognizant of his contribution to historical literature and declares, without diffidence, that for a thousand years such a book as the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* had not been produced.[4]

Barani's work is undoubtedly very valuable. Later historians have greatly depended upon him for information as as well as inspiration. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Badaoni, Ferishtah, Hajiuddabir and almost all important historians of the later part of Muslim rule have depended upon Barani for their

1. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
2. Barani, pp. 10-12.
3. Barani, pp. 41-44.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4.

account of the history of the period covered by him. Nizamuddin especially quotes him very often ; at some places he almost copies Barani, at others tries to solve the knotty problems left by him. Thus he tries to explain the origin of the Khaljis about which Barani says nothing except that they were not "Turks". Ferishtah also tries to tackle this question. In the same way Ferishtah tries to analyse the passage in which Barani describes the salaries of the soldiers fixed by Alauddin.[1] Hajiuddabir throws fresh light on some vexed questions not properly explained by Barani' such as the age of Alauddin and the causes underlying the constant quarrels between Alauddin and Sultan Jalaluddin's family. Abdul Haqq Dehlvi, the author of *Akhbarul Akhyar*, almost entirely depends upon Barani for the biographical sketches of Nizamuddin Auliya and other saints of the period.

Two questions about Ziyauddin Barani need to be particularly studied. The one is as to why he was so bitterly prejudiced against the Hindus and the other how far he is reliable in his narrative of the Khalji times.

Dr. K. A. Nizami writes : "Ziauddin Barani...was so deeply prejudiced against Hindus that it is difficult to vouch for the truth of his statements. Probably his personal interests had suffered at the hands of some Hindu landlords and this embittered his attitude towards the Hindus in general."[2] Professor Mohammad Habib writes : " 'On the matter of the Hindus,' Afsar Begum correctly remarks, 'Barani was mentally unsound.' But what drove him to madness was the fact that in the empire of Delhi no privileges whatsoever were given to a Musalman as such. He had to find his livelihood in an economic system dominated by the Hindu groups."[3]

Both these statements are not based on any authority. Ziyauddin Barani belonged to a family of high state officers. His maternal grandfather, Sipahsalar Hisamuddin, was the Vakil-i-dar or Deputy of Malik Barbek Bektars Sultani, the Hajib or Chamberlain of Sultan Balban. Barani declares that

1. Barani, p. 303 ; Ferishtah, Lko. text, p. 114.
2. *Religion and Politics in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 317.
3. Introduction to the Translation of the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. v.

Hisamuddin "had a high status and position before Sultan Balban."[1] His father Muid-ul-Mulk was the Naib or Deputy of Arkali Khan, the second son of Jalaluddin Khalji, and in the time of Kaiqubad had built a 'large and high house' at Kilughari. "The father of this weak individual," Barani writes, "was a man of status."[2] Barani's uncle, Malik Ala-ul-Mulk, was first the governor of Kara and then the Kotwal of Delhi ; besides he was a friend and guide of Alauddin and had played a major role in Alauddin's securing the throne. Barani himself was a Nadim of Muhammad bin Tughlaq for full seventeen years (1334-1351) and had built his own mansion at Ghayaspur. Among his friends were Amir Khusrau and Ala Hasan Sijzi, important both in public and private lives.

Such a man would not have been touched by Hindu landlords much less his interests could have been permitted by the government to suffer at their hands. The real reason of Barani's fall is not known, but it appears that it came about as a sequel to the events connected with the accession of Firoz Shah. Khwaja Jahan had placed a supposed son of Muhammad bin Tughlaq on the throne at Delhi when Firoz had ascended at Thatta. Barani was then at Delhi and on Khwaja Jahan's side. On Firoz's arrival in Delhi, Barani's star went down, never to rise again. Barani's interests had suffered not on account of Hindu landlords but because of the Sultan's displeasure.

Barani however went on trying to win back his lost position. He whimpered, he wept, he implored, he flattered, he wrote book after book to please the Sultan, but nothing helped him to regain the favours of Firoz Shah. "In these circumstances," Professor Habib himself remarks, "the main attempt of Barani.....was to flatter those in power and to praise the regime."[3] He entitled his history after the name of Firoz Shah, and not only the eleven chapters on the first six years of Firoz Shah's reign but the whole book itself he wrote with a view to please him. Barani was a shrewd man ; he

1. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
2. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 350.
3. Habib in *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. 165.

knew the nature of Firoz Shah. He knew the king would like anti-Hindu stuff and he filled his book with it. This satisfied his own soul too. He was a scholar of great merit, as his works show, and had studied the Islamic law thoroughly. Like many Maulanas of his time he put the most illiberal interpretation on the Muslim law speaking through the agency of Qazi Mughisuddin.' In his old age, crestfallen and destitute, craving for desires which were past his age, begging for favours which he was not destined to receive, he began to hate everything. "He hated the Hindus ; he hated converted Hindus... He hated new men in the administration."[1] Ziyauddin hated the Hindus to please Firoz Shah, he hated the Hindus because he derived a cynical pleasure from hating them.

Then there is the question of the reliability of his narrative. In recent years many historians have expressed doubts about Barani's truthfulness, but they themselves quote him intermittently, including Professors Nizami and Habib. Professor Habib even goes to the extent of calling his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* as 'The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate.' Now how can Barani's writings on politics and government form the political theory of the Sultanate if he is not trustworthy. The fact is that despite his shortcomings, Barani is quite a reliable authority.

The reasons given in support of Barani not being reliable are that he wrote when he was past seventy, he wrote in a hurry, he prepared no notes and had no access to records, he wrote only from memory, he wrote to eke out a living and he was half-blind. All these allegations, when put to a critical test, turn out to be nothing more than mere suppositions.

If Barani's visual faculties had been vitally affected, as Professor Habib is prone to think, he could not have been able to write nine books in six or seven years' time.[2] His *Tarikh-*

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
2. Barani's works known so far are (1) *Sana-i-Muhammadi*, (2) *Salat-i-Kabir*, (3) *Inayat Nama-i-Ilahi*, (4) *Maasir-i-Sadat*, (5) *Tarikh-i-Baramakah*, (6) *Lubbatut Tarikh*, (7) *Hasrat Nama*, (8) *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, and (9) *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*. Only the last two are available to us in print.

i-Firoz Shahi and *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, in spite of some free-lancing, are crtitical studies even from modern standards, and Barani was aware of their merit. He derives pleasure from the fact that "histories written by persons of no standing and no authenticity become old in bookshops ; they are then given back to the paper-merchants and the paper is washed white."[1] Conversely he was happy that his books sold well. Professor Habib even goes so far as to suggest that some of his books "could not have been written without a view to the book-market."[2] Such an author will not write in a casual way. On the contrary, Barani wrote well, very well, and effortlessly. He broke away from the traditional style and his *Tarikh* reads like a racy novel without losing in any way in historical value.

It is true that when he wrote—in his last days—he had no access to official records and even important people, in the know of things, would have shunned his company. But it is also true that he was a frequent visitor to the book-shops where he could always check upon his memory, which, as said before, was itself prodigious. Now it is a well-known fact that in old age memory for immediate things gets blunted, but for remote past it gets sharpened. Do not the old people always frantically hunt for the bunch of keys they have just kept somewhere, but when it comes to describing a wedding of years gone by, their narrative hardly misses any fact—indeed imagination may add some more? "Our author lived at Delhi through the stormy reign of Alauddin Khalji, seeing everything, observing everything and discussing everything. Though occasionally he forgets the sequence of events, his account of Alauddin's reign is more complete than that of any other king," and all the features of his reign "sank deep into Barani's mind."[3] His description of Alauddin Khalji's Market Control and the details of the various regulations and their implementation show how amazing his memory was if he really depended upon it only.

1. Barani's *Tarikh*, p. 140.
2. Habib in *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. 122.
3. *Ibid*, p. 153.

There is no denying the fact that Ziyauddin had his prejudices, his weaknesses and his handicaps. He errs in dates and his chronology is far from satisfactory. "But after all these deductions have been made, the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* remains the greatest book that has survived to us from the Sultanate period. Its eminence in this respect is unchallengable ; and so long as the history of India is studied, Barani cannot be ignored."[1] At least for the Khalji period, Barani's *Tarikh* is not only reliable, it is by and large authentic.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

ONE

FACTORS UNDERLYING THE LOSS OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE IN THE TWELFTH-THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

Whether or not the kings and people of Hindustan (comprising approximately the Punjab, Sindh, Rajputana and Uttar Pradesh) knew of the rising tide of Islam as a militant force, it is well-nigh certain that from the transient Arab occupation of Sindh nobody could imagine that Muslim rule would one day spread to the whole of the country. The little fears that might have been entertained were set at rest by the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, whose repeated raids must have convinced the people that he was a bandit greedy of wealth, rather than a conqueror coveting territory. Even Muhammad Ghauri, who had obtained possession of Delhi after a bitter fight, had gone back to his native land. His viceroy in India did not live for long.

However, Qutbuddin Aibak's military exploits in the west and Bakhtiyar Khalji's successful adventures in Bihar and Bengal almost all of a sudden posed a new problem for the people of Hindustan. It was now clear to all that the Muslims had come to stay. They had occupied almost all important cities in nothern India. They were destroying important Hindu buildings (most of which were temples), they were converting people to their own faith by sword, by multi-marriages and by missionary activity. It was clear that the conqueror had launched his attack on all fronts—on Hindu land (through conquest), Hindu religion (through conversions), Hindu society (through marriages and abductions) and Hindu Art (through inconoclasm). The answer of the Hindu to all this was resistance—in full force and on all fronts—as time passed.

Almost every other book dealing with this period analyses the causes of the victory of the Muslims and the defeat of the Hindus. C.V. Vaidya,[1] Mohammad Habib,[2] Ishwari Prasad,[3] Wolseley Haig,[4] and a number of others[5] have studied this problem and have arrived at conclusions generally supplementing and not always contradicting one another. It would be superfluous to repeat what they have said, but a renewed analysis of some of the causes of the success of the foreign invaders would not be out of place here.

Militarily speaking the Hindus, especially the peole of the northwest, the Punjab and Rajputana, who bore the first onslaughts of the invading armies, were not inferior to the conquerors. Man to man, the Rajput was equal to the Turk in every way.[6] As we shall see a little later in some detail, the Hindus did not lose necessarily through lack of courage or physical weakness. Lack of unity of the country may also not be an essential cause, for a united sub-continent like India has remained more as an ideal in the minds of men or as a thing worthy of achievement, than as a fact ever existing (except perhaps in the 3rd century B.C. under Asoka); until conditions completely changed under the British rule. Moreover the Turks who conquered this land were themselves a divided people.[7]

Historians on Medieval India, however, are in general agreement on the point that the Hindus lost against Muslims because of their decaying social system. True, the Hindu social system had lost its vigour of the days of the Guptas and Harshavardhana. During the period of political decline, say from the 8th to 12th centuries, even this decaying social system had worked on fairly tolerably, but once the Hindus came in contact and conflict with the Muslims, the rottenness of the Hindu system became clearly manifest.

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1. *History of Medieval Hindu India, Vol. III.*
2. *Indian Culture and Social Life at the Time of Turkish Invasions.*
3. *History of Medieval India.*
4. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III.
5. *E.g. Habibullah, The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*; K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis.*
6. C V. Vaidya.
7. Habib. *Op. Cit*, pp. 1-3.

This decadent condition of Hindu society was closely related to the decadent condition of Hinduism, which needs a little elucidation here. The essential basis of all religions is scientific. When Hobbes declared man to be 'nasty, brutish and short,' he was only stating a well-known fact. The greatest and universally recognized weaknesses of man are anger, greed, infatuation and passion, best put as *kama, krodh, lobh* and *moh*. If man was to live as a civilized being in a civilized society, these weaknesses must need be suppressed. The medium which tries to suppress these is religion. It aims at curbing the evil and developing the good that is in man. Prophets through their religions have sought to show a way to mankind to assuage its anger and check its passions ; and it may safely be said that a religion possesses merit in the degree upto which it teaches its followers the suppression of their passions. As an antidote to anger Christianity advocates for a man who has been struck on one cheek to produce the other. Buddhism prohibits all kinds of violence and Islam preaches austerity.

But while the basis of all religions is scientific, its appeal is emotional. What cannot be proved is taught to be believed. It is here that the *mullahs* and *pundits* of all religions have introduced in the thoughts and lives of their followers strangest beliefs and grossest superstitions, so that to-day a great many have come to regard religion as a matter of no great consequence. In this regard let us see the position of Hinduism. Generally speaking all religions possess three essential elements each—a Prophet, who introduces the religion, a Book which the prophet makes the faithful believe to be the word of God and a Church where it is obligatory for the people of the faith to assemble on certain fixed days and pray in congregation. Hinduism lacks all these elements. It is consequently not a religion in the recognized sense of the term. It is best described as a *dharma*, a disciplined way of life, just as there is a disciplined way of life for the disciple (*shishya-dharma*) or for a teacher (*guru-dharma*) or for a wife (*stri-dharma*). Hindu Dharma was (and is), therefore, a disciplined philosophy of life observed by the Hindus. 'The greatest asset of Hinduism is that it grants full liberty to the people to think, behave, worship and

live as they like. The ascetic who goes to the Kailash (mountain peak) and stands on one leg in the snows of the Himalayas, the sage who retires into the forest and writes the *Aranyakas*, the Naga who lives in the nude, the *grihastha* who lives a normal family life and the Sankhyan epicure who believes in the pleasures of the flesh as the sole aim of life—are all Hindus, with one discipline that they interfere with none and tolerate all. In Hinduism, therefore, the liberty of the individual is absolute ; there are no men of the faith and no heretics. That is why there is no word for crusade or *Jehad* in Hinduism. From the point of view of individual liberty, therefore, Hinduism is the highest achievement of mankind. It inculcates only one discipline—interference with none and toleration of all. It is because of this that so many faiths and sects could flourish side by side, so many philosophers could freely think, write and preach and so many schools of art could grow and develop in this land. It is because of this that a Buddha could preach his faith without any fear of opposition or violence, or a Shankaracharya could preach against Buddhism without taking recourse to violence and without fear of violence from others.

No wonder, therefore, that Alberuni was deeply impressed by the tolerance of the Hindus. Their state (*i.e.* the doctrinal position of the Indians) resembles that of Christianity ; for it is based upon (the principle of) doing good and abstaining from evil.[1]

However, this absolute freedom has its pitfalls. Once the robustness and vigour of Hinduism of the Gupta Age or the religious compromise of the age of Harshavardhana are gone, Hinduism degenerates into a jumble of multitudinous faiths and superstitious beliefs. Whosoever had an idea or a ritual to add, he was welcome to do so. Nobody could object. Cruelly enough, therefore, on the eve of Muslim invasions there were not only as many gods and goddesses as human ingenuity could produce, but a number of grosser ways and objects of worship had come into being. True, the highly educated "who study philosophy or theology, and who desire

1. *J. R. A. S.* 1830, N. S. 20, pp. 129-142. Also Alberuni, II, p. 161.

truth (*Sara*), worship God alone,"[1] but their number was small. The majority of the people, especially the uneducated and low-caste, had taken to the worship of all kinds of gods and goddesses. According to Alberuni, the Hindu pantheon of (1) *Bramha, Vishnu* and *Siva*, (2) *deva, daitya, danava, gandharva* and (3) *bhuta, siddha*, etc. totalled to 330,000,000 beings.[2] Alberuni describes them briefly,[3] and pointedly adds that the crowd is kept in thraldom by all sorts of priestly tricks and deceits.[4] A nation exploited by the priestly class, with the highly educated cut off from the people in abstract philosophical speculation, with only one caste set aside for the country's defence (about the reasons of which a little later), could never be gathered under one banner on a slogan like "Hindustan in danger". It had unconsciously drifted into such a state of social order which had lost all sense of oneness and had become so complacent that it could hardly put up a solid resistance against foreign onslaughts.

Such a state of society is clearly depicted in the art and literature of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is a life of complacency, confidence, mirth and festivity. Men are bedecked with all kinds of ornaments, women are made divinely beautiful. Our sculptors make innumerable gods and goddesses tread this happy land like other human beings and every other day is a day of religious festivity. While there is too much emphasis on fine arts, especially architecture and sculpture, mechanical arts are neglected. The plough, the axe, the weaver's implements are never tried to be improved. Improvement of weapons and strategy of war too hardly seem to have received any attention. The society is unapprehensive of any foreign invasion ; the last of the Hunas had occurred centuries ago. The motifs and sculptures in the temples of Khajuraho (in Madhya Pradesh), Bhubaneshwar, Puri and Konarak (in Orissa), which are only a few remnants of the age, are enough to bear out this fact. If the art of the time represents the wealth which made its creation possible and the beauty which

1. *Alberuni*, Sachau, Vol. I, Chap. XI, pp. 112-13.
2. *Ibid*., Chap. III, pp. 89-98.
3. *Ibid*., Chap. XI, pp. 116-20.
4. *Ibid*., Chap. XI, pp. 122.

it manifests, then there were enough attractions for any foreign invader to attack India, while the country was unprepared for any such emergency.

Withal, as we have seen, individualism was the core of Hinduism. There was no cut and dried attitude towards life, except perhaps an emancipation from life itself—*moksha*.[1] Hindu life comprehended all kinds of contradictory values right from asceticism to epicurianism. People were, therefore, divided not only caste-wise but also belief-wise, taste-wise and all-wise. The people were taught the doctrines of patience, pusillanimity and renunciation and at the same time large funds of public and private wealth were wasted on thousands of temples and hardly anything much was spent on building up good armies which would be called upon to defend them.

This would explain the reason why the Hindus lost and the Muslims won. In this brief survey two instances would suffice to show the hollowness of our social system.

The first contact between the Hindu and the Muslim was on the field of battle. There were casualities on both sides, both sides captured prisoners of war. The Muslim prisoners who escaped from Hindu confinement were received with open arms by their erstwhile comrades, and when occasion presented itself they again fought with greater zeal against the Hindus. But the fate of the Hindu prisoners of war was sadly different. "I have repeatedly been told," writes Alberuni, "that when Hindu slaves (in Muslim countries) escape and return to their country and religion, the Hindus order that they should fast by way of expiation, then they bury them in the dung, stale, and milk of cows for a certain number of days, till they get into a state of fermentation. Then they drag them out of the dirt and give them similar dirt to eat, and more of the like. I have asked the Brahmins if this is true," continues the savant, "but they deny it, and maintain that there is no expiation possible for such an individual, and that he is never allowed to return into those conditions of life in which he was before he was carried off as a prisoner. And how should that be possible?

1. Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, (Allahabad), p. 1

If a Brahmin eats in the house of a *Sudra* for sundry days, he is expelled from his caste and can never regain it."[1]

While the Rajputs alone fought against the foreign invaders, since the other castes had no obligation to defend the land, the fate of those who fell into the hands of the enemy was worse than of those who died on the field of battle. They were not only lost to the country, but they had no option but either to commit harakiri or turn Muhammedan. In a caste-ridden society, instances are not wanting when the persecuted castes became secret enemies of the country. This also explains why within a short period of fifteen years all the major cities of northern India fell into the hands of the conquerors. True, the Hindus fought bravely on the field of battle, and gave the foreign conqueror a hard time there. But only there. Once the battle was lost, all seemed to have been lost. In cities and towns day-to-day resistance to the new intruder was not attempted, and that too because of the Hindu social system. Here is the other instance.

"Inside the cities and towns under Hindu rule lived people only of the higher castes. The lower caste people like servants and untouchables like scavengers had their quarters outside the walled city. They came to serve in the city, but could not reside there. The Brahmin cook and Thakur watchman were the only servants who could stay on the premise of the master or go inside his house. It was a very satisfactory arrangement so long as it worked. But when district after district passed into the hands of the Muslims, and Muslims in large numbers began to reside in cities and towns, the shape and form of the latter were completely changed. Not that they treated the menial classes in any way better than the Hindus, but the stigma of untouchability was gradually lost in a Muslim-ruled city. The untouchables served in the cities as before, but now they also lived there. Although the Hindus continued to treat the menials as untouchables and the menial classes continued to remain Hindu, yet in a city under Muslim control the stigma of untouchability was gradually gone and the lower-class people felt better under Muslim rule. The Hindu system had been distasteful to them.

1. *Alberuni*, Vol. II, pp. 162-3.

At least this system could not be reimposed on the cities. That is why once a city fell into the hands of the Muslims, the Hindus could hardly regain complete control of it. This solves the mystery as to why no Hindu prince, in spite of the continual struggle against Muslim rule, ever thought of recapturing Delhi. Delhi could not be made to go back to the old system. This also explains why within a short span of fifteen years all the major cities of northern India fell into the hands of the Muslim conquerors. This also explains why once the Muslims had established their rule there, the Hindus could not recapture them.

But while the success of the Turks had exposed the rotteness of the Hindu social order, it also brought into prominent relief the attitude of the conquering race which was at once revolting to the Hindu mind. Not that there had been no wars in India, nor that heroic acts during wars had been unknown, still the Indian kings waged wars according to certain humane rules. The principles regulating wars have been "elaborately described in the *Dharmasutras* and *Dharmasastras*, the epics, the *Arthasastra* treatises of Kautilya, Kamandaka, and Sukra,"[1] and not unoften punishment was inflicted on the warrior who did not act up to the regulations laid down.[2] *Mahabharata* enjoined that a warrior in armour must not fight with a Kshatriya who is not clad in coat of mail,[3] and cease fighting when the opponent became disabled.[4] The general rule was that warriors should fight only with their equals and should not harm the aged, women, children or those who had surrendered unconditionally.[5] Also fields, gardens, temples and other places of worship were to be left unmolested.[6] This is testified to by Megasthenes,[7] and praised by Clausewitz "as the

1. Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India*, p. 61.
2. *Ibid.*, p 60.
3. *Santi* : 95. 7. नामन्नहयो नकवचो योद्धव्य : क्षत्रियो रणे ।
4. *Ibid.* एक एकेन मान्यश्च विसृजेति चिरामि च ॥
5. Dikshitar, *loc. cit.*, pp. 67-69.
6. *Agnipurana* ; 236. 22.
7. Macrindle, *Fragment*, I, also *Arthashastra*, Shamashastry's trans. XIII, 4.

necessary consequence of the spirit of progress."[1] While in Europe it was only in the seventeenth century that Hugo Grotius in his *Laws of War and Peace* advocated that if war could not be eradicated, it should be ennobled ; it is refreshing to note that in Ancient India the Laws of War were designed to bring out the best and not the worst of human traits.[2] Even during the period under review, as has been observed by Mr. K. M. Munshi : "Whatever the provocation, the shrine, the Brahman and the cow were sacrosanct.....war being a special privilege of the martial classes, harassment of the civilian population during military operations was considered a serious lapse from the code of honour. The high regard which all Kshatriyas had for the chastity of women, also ruled out abduction as an incident of war."[3] Moreover never in this country was a war psychology developed for aggressive ends. The whole nation was never trained for purposes of war. Only one caste—the Kshatriya—was set aside for purposes of defence against foreign invasions and protection of life and property from internal dissensions. And history bears out the fact that this caste ever maintained a high moral and chivalrous standard, "whatever the provocation."

A chivalrous standard of behaviour in warfare, however, could not be a cause of the defeat of the Hindus. Nor the fact of only one caste—the Kshatriya or Rajput—fighting for defence brought any disability to bear upon the course of the battle. There was no question of total war in those days, and on the field of battle the number of Indian warriors was always larger than that of the invaders. Each single Hindu kingdom was bigger in area and larger in population than the kingdom of Ghazni or Ghaur ; its resources were greater and consequently its prowess. But the real weakness lay in two spheres. The Hindu kings neither possessed a good spy system nor had they perhaps developed any strategy of war. The spy system of the Muslim invaders from the time of Mahmud of Ghazni

1. Cited in Dikshitar, *loc. cit.*, p. 71.
2. A.L. Mudaliar in Foreword to *War in Ancient India*. p. v.
3. K.M. Munshi, End of Ancient India in *Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan's Journal*, Vol. IV. No. II, Dec. 29, 1959, pp. 8-14.

onwards was known for its efficiency,[1] while the Hindu Rajas who fought him probably learnt of his arrival only when he was knocking at their gates. The way Bakhtiyar Khalji captured Nadiah[2] and Prince Alauddin marched straight to the citadel of Devagiri[3], makes one doubt whether the Hindu Rajas had possessed any spy system at all. Worse still, they never learnt from experience also, because the attack on Devagiri came a century after the establishment of Muslim rule in North India. Nay, in all probability, when Alauddin was reducing Chanderi and Bhilsa, Ram Deva of Devagiri was either ignorant of this fact or was just unconcerned.[4]

This brings us to the state of military strategy (or rather lack of it) of the Hindu Rajas. It may be conceded at the outset that the Turks were good archers and possessed excellent horses.[5] Indian horses were 'not worthy of praise' and good-breed horses were imported "from the neighbouring countries of the Turks."[6] This factor played a very important role in helping the invaders gain victory. But with the wealth India possessed, a very large number of foreign horses could have been imported. The sources of weakness were indeed others. When Jaipal was defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni in A. D. 1001, he thought it fit to redeem the honour of his race by burning himself on a funeral pyre rather than building up a resistance and avenging the defeat.[7] A few years later we find (A. D. 1008-9) that the flight of Anandpal's elephant from the field of battle brings about his defeat, and this was not just an accident, because such instances of defeat on account of flights of elephants continue to occur as time passes. Ram Deva of Devagiri collects bags of salt in place of grain on the eve of battle with Alauddin, as if it was so difficult to distinguish

1. Nazim, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, p. 144.
2. *Tabqat-i-Nasiri*, I, pp. 557-58.
3. K. S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, pp. 49-52.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45,49. Contrast with this the excellent intelligence post service that Alauddin and Muhammad bin Tughlaq established between Delhi and Devagiri. E & D, III, pp. 581, 602.
5. J. N. Sarkar, *Military History of India* (Calcutta, 1960), pp. 26-29.
6. Al-Qalqashindi, *Subh-ul-A'tha*, English Translation by Otto Spies, (Aligarh, no date), p. 47.
7. Utbi, E & D, II, p. 27 ; Briggs' Ferishtah, Vol. I, p. 38.

between the two.[1] 'And one wonders how during the battle with Alauddin the one thousand soldiers of Nusrat Khan could be mistaken for twenty thousand men and how Warangal agreed to surrender everything to the invader including the 'last nail' in the citadel, when even the fort had not been actually reduced.[2] All this leads us to one conclusion : The Hindus of that time had not perfected any strategy of war. The examples of Hindu bravery are instances only of individual bravery.

1. Ferishtah, Vol. I, p. 95.
2. K. S. Lal, pp. 199-222.

TWO

PROCEDURE OF SUCCESSION IN THE SULTANATE OF DELHI

The procedure of succession to the throne in the Mughal times was simple. From the time that Babur set his foot in India it became a custom that the son of the deceased king should succeed him to the throne. Sometimes there were revolts, as of Salim or Khusrau, or there were wars of succession, as between the sons of Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb ; but it was always a son of the late Emperor, if not necessarily the eldest, who ultimately ascended the throne. The nobles took a keen interest and sometimes an active part in the succession question, yet none of them ever coveted the crown for himself after setting aside the claims of the scions of royalty. One great feature of the Mughal rule is that right from 1526 till the final extinction of the Empire in 1857, it was always "the Great Mughal" who sat on the throne of Delhi.

In the light of the above facts the principle of succession in the Sultanate period seems to be quite unstable, a jumble of nomination, election, hereditary right, right of conquest and so on. Quite a few scholars have studied this problem but only to agree to differ. Mr. M. A. Makhdoomee says : "The King was elected by the nobles—the Khans, Maliks, Amirs, Alims, Shaiks and Saids. But the election was a mere ceremony, as the King's nominee was almost always elected."[1] Criticizing this view Mr. A. C. Banerjee says : "During the thirteenth and and fourteenth centuries there was no recognised law of succession, no recognised procedure to which recourse might be had in cases of dispute. Broadly speaking, the choice was limited, as a matter of convenience, to the surviving members of the

1. Journal of Indian History, April 1935, pp. 96-114.

deceased Sultan's family. The priority of birth, the question of efficiency, the nomination of the dead king—these considerations sometimes received more attention, but the decisive voice seems to have been that of the nobles, who usually preferred personal convenience to the interests of the State."[1] That the nobility played a very prominent part in the succession question in the Sultanate of Delhi is undoubted. It is also true that personal convenience too of the nobles motivated their interest in the succession question. But the assertions that "there was no recognised law of succession" or that "the decisive voice seems to have been that of the nobles," invite a *de novo* study of the problem, for, although there was no written law in this regard, there was a definite convention and a definite procedure adhered to in determining succession to the throne in the Turkish period.

Strange as it may seem, the first Muslim ruler of India was a Viceroy, and not a king.[2] Qutbuddin Aibak, appointed vice-regent in India by Muhammad of Ghaur, continued in the same position even after the monarch had met with a sudden death. When Qutbuddin declared himself sovereign of India three months after the death of his master, there was little opposition, but that Qutbuddin was ever recognized as the lawful king is doubtful. None of his coins, if any were ever struck, exist ; and his name is not included in the list of Sultans of Delhi whose names Firoz Tughlaq had included in the Friday Khutba.[3]

Still when Qutbuddin died, his son Aram Shah was considered to possess a claim to the throne. Whether Aram Shah was nominated by Qutbuddin or not, the very fact that he was the son of the late ruler was enough for him to be considered for the throne. The Lahore nobles supported his cause. But Aram was too young for the throne and this went against him. The Delhi nobles found Iltutmish, a son-in-law of Qutbuddin, a more capable man. Here the relationship of Iltutmish with the late ruler as also his personal qualities determined the

1. Journal of Indian History, August 1936, pp. 196-200.
2. So thought Ibn Battuta, Def. and Sang., III, p. 164.
3. Afif, T. F. S. pp. 106-7.

choice of the Delhi nobles. Later achievements of Iltutmish did not give them any cause to regret his election.

Iltutmish was the first real sovereign ruler of the Delhi Sultanate.[1] To consolidate his position and to perpetuate kingship in his family he tried some infallible methods. He procured the robe of honour from the Khalifa of Baghdad in recognition of his sovereignty, and created an order of nobility loyal to himself. The plans of Iltutmish, however, well-nigh failed when all of a sudden his eldest son Nasiruddin Mahmud, whom the king had declared as the crown prince, died. Iltutmish had risen through sheer dint of merit and knew well that merit alone could keep a sovereign on the throne of Delhi. His other sons were incapable and therefore he preferred Raziya to Ruknuddin Firoz. But if the pitting of a daughter against a grown up son was a very unwise step on the part of the Sultan, it does some credit to the nobility of the day to adhere to the wishes of the late monarch and to raise to the throne a scion of the family even if she was a daughter. Raziya, however, knew that the nobles and the people could willingly serve only a person of gift and determination. When, therefore, she found that there was some plan of excluding her from the throne, she addressed her subjects assembled for the Friday prayers and asked them to allow her a chance to show her abilities and declared that if she failed, her head could be struck off.[2]

But merit lives from man to man and not from man to woman. The frailties of kings could be pardoned, but not of the queen. Raziya fell not because she was incompetent (for her deficiencies as military commander were compensated by her Machiavellian diplomacy) but because her private morals were publicly examined. Moreover, she had tried to arrest the growing power of the nobles. The barons who thought of Raziya's power as of their own creation, could hardly brook her attitude. She fell. After her, her three brothers Muizuddin Bahram Shah, Alauddin Masaud Shah and Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah were tried on the throne one after the other but all of them were

1. Ibn Battuta, Def. and Sang., III, p. 184. He writes on the authority of Kamaluddin. See Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 27.
2. *Futuhu's Salatin*, (Agra text) p. 127.

found wanting. They only reigned while the baronial oligarchy ruled.

The way Nasiruddin had got the throne alone shows the power of the nobles. His resigned way of life was perhaps more of a necessity than a choice. When Nasiruddin died without leaving a son, Balban, who had exercised full powers during the past twenty years, rose to the position of a king. He was the son-in-law of Iltutmish and father-in-law of Nasiruddin, and even during the life-time of the late sovereign used to have the insignia of royalty.[1] But he could become the king only because Nasiruddin had left no son, and had proved himself superior to other nobles in ability and administrative experience. This was known too well to Balban, himself a powerful baron belonging to the oligarchy. Once, therefore, Balban had come to power, although a nominee of the oligarchy, he overshadowed his partisans and sheared their power by and by.

About the last days of Balban a story repeated itself. As the plans of Iltutmish had been shattered because of the sudden death of the crown prince, so were Balban's schemes frustrated when prince Muhammad met with an unfortunate death at the hands of the Mongols. As a last resort he asked the nobles to support the accession of Kaikhusrau, son of Muhammad, in strict hereditary succession. The nobles, headed by Fakhruddin, set aside the nomination of Kaikhusrau, but gave the crown only to Kaiqubad, another grandson of Balban. The fact that Kaiqubad was elected to the throne while his father was alive, was an innovation of the Turkish nobles to serve their ends, for the family of Fakhruddin and especially his son-in-law Nizamuddin seized all power. There was a good reason also for their decision as Bughra Khan was far away in Bengal. Later on, encouraged by the serious illness of Kaiqubad, the Turkish nobles tried to grab power under the camouflage of his infant son whom they placed on the throne giving him the title of Shamsuddin.

Jalaluddin Khalji, more to save himself from the intrigues of the Turkish nobles than to get the throne, resorted to a *coup* and usurped the throne. It is significant to note that Jalaluddin

1. Barani, p. 26.

always used to make voluntary confessions that he did not belong to the kingly stock[1] and showed undue consideration to his great enemy Malik Chhajju simply because the latter was a nephew of Balban.[2] Such was the importance of hereditary right that every one in Delhi was astonished as to how Jalaluddin, who had no connection with the ruling family had become king (*hairan mandandi va aishan ra ajab minamudand*, Barani, p. 175). Jalaluddin on his part dared not enter Delhi for a whole year.

Alauddin Khalji was a usurper. He was not only guilty of regicide, but had ascended the throne while the sons of the late king Jalaluddin were still alive. This fact had struck his contemporaries to be of vital consideration but their mouths were shut with Alauddin's gold.

The death of Alauddin left Kafur complete master of the situation. He was in a position to usurp the throne but he dared not do so and ruled only after placing prince Umar Khan on the throne. The one interesting fact to be noted here is that the greatest source of Kafur's strength was the will, real or forged, of the late Sultan. Shihabuddin was there because Alauddin had nominated him. How much regard there was for the sons of the late king is evidenced from the fact that the assassins who had been sent to murder Qutbuddin left him untouched, and despatched Kafur with the same dagger which had been meant for Qutbuddin.[3]

Qutbuddin was not recognized king immediately after his release from prison. He was first appointed deputy of Shihabuddin, the king nominated by Alauddin. Only when he had consolidated his position by gaining the support of the nobility that he ascended the throne.

Nasiruddin Khusrau's usurpation and his short reign were put to an end by Ghayasuddin Tughlaq, the Warden of the Marches on the North Western Frontier. When Ghayasuddin Tughlaq was in the fittest position to ascend the throne, he made persistent enquiries if there was any son of Alauddin or

1. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 178.
2. Barani, pp. 183-84.
3. *Futuhus Salatin*, pp. 342-43.

Mubarak Shah surviving to whom the crown could be offered ; and it was only when he had been told in the negative that he accepted the crown himself. Whether Ghayasuddin was sincere in his query or not is beside the point ; the important fact is that the principle of hereditary succession was so much recognized that even a conqueror thought it fit to clarify his position.

After Ghayasuddin came to the throne his son, although he was suspected of some foul play in connection with the death of his father. But Malik Juna had been declared heir-apparent by his father and he ascended throne without difficulty.

Firoz Tughlaq ascended the throne on the election of the nobles who based their choice on the kindness and affection that Muhammad Shah had borne him. Without entering into the controversy which attaches to the accession of Firoz, it may safely be said that Firoz was elected by the nobles on the presumption that he would have been nominated by Muhammad Tughlaq had the latter not died so suddenly. "The theory of right of the son to succeed was not challenged by anybody. The nobles simply denied the existence of any son of Muhammad Shah Tughlaq."[1] Two other factors strengthened Firoz's claims—he was closely related to the late Sultan and he was considered fit to rule.

Firoz had nominated his eldest son Fath Khan as his heir apparent but the latter died early. Then the second son Zafar Khan was nominated but he too died. Firoz then wanted to nominate his grandson, Tughlaq Shah, son of Fath Khan, to the exclusion of his third son Muhammad Khan. But Muhammad Khan did not take this decision lying down ; he created a lot of trouble and Firoz had to abdicate in his favour. Intrigues in the royal family continued. After the death of Sikandar Shah the nobles could not decide as to whom they should elect as their Sultan. The throne remained vacant for fifteen days.[2] But the choice ultimately made was of Sultan Mahmud, a son of Muhammad Shah. Even though he was a minor, he was a direct male descendant of the royal house.

1. Tripathi, p. 67.
2. Ferishtah, p. 145.

From what has been said above, some facts emerge very clearly. Firstly, in the Sultanate of Delhi the first claimant of the throne was the son of the Sultan. If he was competent, well and good ; if not, the nobles could not put up with an incompetent monarch and removed him. This did not mean the exclusion of other sons or direct descendants from having a chance of showing their merit. There is no doubt that such a change would have given an opportunity to the nobles to fish in troubled waters, still my study of the period leaves no doubt in my mind that there was a persistent effort on the part of the nobles to place on the throne a scion of the royalty than any one else. They suffered incompetent rulers (although an incompetent ruler could hardly stay for long), they enthroned minors, yet they adhered to this principle. The patience the nobles showed in dealing with the descendants of Iltutmish, of Balban and of Firoz Tughlaq speaks for their persistent desire to keep the throne to the descendants of the dead king.

When such descendants were not available, then of course a change of dynasty could not be helped, as in the case of Balban or of Ghayasuddin Tughlaq. But any violent change without sufficient reason was resented. Jalaluddin Khalji's accession simply shocked the people. The surprise was not that the Turks had lost power and non-Turks had gained, as the Khaljis belonged to the Turkish race,[1] but the surprise was how, while the scions of the old house were alive, Jalaluddin had come to the throne. The abduction of the infant Shamsuddin by the Khaljis made the people of Delhi rise to a man.[2]

Secondly, nomination by the ruling king also was a very important factor in determining the succession question. The king usually nominated his son who was receiving training in statecraft under the monarch himself and about whose capabilities he was fully aware. When Iltutmish's heir-apparent suddenly died, he was faced with a very great problem of making a second choice and he chose Raziya. Another nomination

1. For this conclusion see my *History of the Khaljis*, pp. 7-12.
2. Barani. Also Ferishtah, p. 88.

which proved unfortunate was of Shihabuddin Umar by Alauddin Khalji (if Kafur Hazardinari is to be believed) as against his eldest son Khizr Khan. Exceptions apart, the king's nominee always got the throne.

Lastly, the choice of the nobles was also a dominating factor. With the coming of a new king to the throne a new set of nobility also used to come into being. Thus we have names like Muizzi Amirs (nobles created by Muizzuddin bin Sam, Muhammad Ghauri). Qutbi Amirs (created by Qutbuddin), Shamsi Amirs, Balbani Amirs, Jalali Amirs, Alai Amirs and so on. That being the case, a nobleman created by one king could not always expect to receive a fair deal from another king. The treatment meted out to the nobles of Jalaluddin by Alauddin Khalji or to those of Ghayasuddin Tughlaq by Muhammad Tughlaq are instances in point. Thus a nobleman in the Sultanate period believed in the principle of "make hay while the sun shines." It was this which rendered his interest in the succession question not always healthy. "In fact the Sultans of India could not evolve a governmental machinery to which the nobles could adapt themselves or under which they could feel secure.....Under strong rulers the nobles were a source of strength to the king, but during the reign of weaklings they become a real danger to the sovereign and the State."[1]

Thus the principle of succession was based on hereditary claims and it was adhered to as far as possible. Even women and minors were eligible. If this claim was supplemented by nomination by the king, nothing like it. In all cases, however, consent of the nobles or election by the nobles ratifying the nomination was almost essential. They could seldom stand an incompetent ruler. Thus the chances of women and minors for becoming king were few, and even if they were crowned they could not carry on for long.

This was a simple procedure. The complications arising out of some individual cases should not prompt us to declare that there was no procedure at all or it was quite a haphazard one. True, there was no written law of succession in the Turkish period, but sometimes customs and conventions are stronger than written laws.

1. *History of the Khaljis*, p. 226.

THREE

NATURE OF THE STATE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA[1]

For the study of the nature of the state in medieval India, it is proposed to confine here to the period of A. D. 1200-1600. During these four centuries in northern India flourished the Turkish empire, better known as the Sultanate of Delhi, and the nature and functions of the Mughal government had been clearly laid down by Akbar. In the south the Vijayanagar empire had existed for two centuries and then disintegrated. Besides these, the independent principalities of Rajputana, the kingdoms of Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur and the Bahmani kingdom too had had existed ; some had survived while others had perished in the sixteenth century.

A study of the nature of government and state of all these kingdoms in the compass of a paper is hardly feasible. It is also perhaps not necessary. So far as the kingdoms of Malwa, Gujarat, etc., which had risen on the ashes of the Sultanate, are concerned, they contributed little to the theory and practice of the government, and more or less continued to work on the pattern of the Sultanate. In Rajputana, the ideas of government were derived from the common source of the *Dharmashastras*, and were more or less akin to those of Vijayanagar. This may be a sweeping generalization ; it may also not be true in matters of detail. But it helps one in confining the study of the problem to the Turkish and the Mughal empire in the north and the Vijayanagar empire in the south to have a broad view of the nature of state in medieval times.

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1. Contributed to a Seminar on Medieval India (State and Government) held at Chandigarh, 21-24 March, 1966.

The chief sources of our study are, of course, the contemporary historical works. But besides these, both in the northern and southern regions, some good works on the theory and practice of government were also written. For the north there is the wonderful work of Ziyauddin Barani entitled *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, translated as "The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate".[1] In spite of its few weaknesses (and which book does not have them ?), it "is the most thought-challenging work of the Sultanate."[2] In his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* also, while discussing Balban's theory of kingship and Alauddin Khalji's methods of government, Barani gives some more ideas on the then political philosophy. So does Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari*. For Vijayanagar empire, there is *Amuktamalyada*, a *prabandha* on the various aspects of government and administration by emperor Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1530) himself. This work is in Telegu poetry, and was probably written in co-authorship with one Peddana, but these facts do not minimise the authenticity or importance of the work.[3] Side by side a large number of works on *Dharamshastra* were written throughout the medieval period. Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries alone more than twenty[4] such works are available including Lakshmidhara's *Krityakalpataru* (12th cent.) and Chandeshvara's *Rajnitiratnakar* (14th cent.). Of a later date is the voluminous treatise *Viramitrodaya* by Mitra Misra (17th cent.). These *Dharamshastras* throw a flood of light on the nature of the Hindu state, polity and law. All these works help a great deal in determining the nature of the Hindu state in medieval India.

Since it is customary for students of medieval Indian history to begin and end with the Turkish and Mughal state, let us start with the Vijayanagar empire here. A curious thing which may be mentioned at the very outset is that the

1. Translated by Afsar Begum and Mohammad Habib, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, (not date).
2. *Ibid.*, Introduction by Professor Habib, p. xii.
3. N. Venkata Ramanayya, *The Third Dynasty of Vijayanagar*, (University of Madras, 1935), p. 434.
4. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharamashastra* (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1946), III, pp. xviii-xix.

Hindu empire of Vijayanagar and the Muslim empire of the Turks and the Mughals betray a lot of similarity in most of the spheres of government. Their ideals indeed appear to be the same.

In Vijayanagar, the emperor was the supreme head of the state." "According to the principles of Hindu political science, the king or the emperor had to regulate the Dharma as laid down by the *Dharmashastras* ; and could not go against them. The emperors of Vijayanagar.....were as much subject to the reign of Dharma as any monarch during the early ages..."[1] Also, as head of the state, the emperor, was the fountain head of justice, and he was expected to settle the disputes of his subjects personally.[2] However, as he could not personally attend to the judicial work of his extensive empire, he had to make suitable arrangements for the efficient administration of justice by constituting a series of courts in all the provinces. The manner in which the aggrieved parties brought their complaints before the emperor is graphically described by Nuniz.[2] One thing worthy of notice in this connection is that the law of criminal justice was as stern in Vijayanagar as in the north.[3]

The Vijayanagar emperor was an autocrat.[4] Like Alberuni, Ziyauddin Barani and Hobbes, the writers on *Dharmashastra* had a low estimate of human nature, and, according to them men could be kept on the straight path only by fear of punishment.[4] Although the injunctions of the Dharma as well as the custom of the country must have served as checks upon the arbitrary exercise of his powers, yet there was no way of stopping his tyranny if he chose to be oppressive, or challenging his will except by rising in rebellion, which hardly claimed any popular support.[5] Now if 'Dharma' is substituted by 'Shara', how true the above would read for a north Indian Sultan.

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1. N. V. Ramanayya, p. 93.
2. Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire, Vijayanagara* (London, 1900), p. 380.
3. *Ibid.*, 383-84.
4. Alberuni, II, p. 161.
   Kane, *History of Dharmashastra*, III, p 238.
5. N. V. Ramanayya, p. 94.

Similarly the Sultans of Delhi were autocratic rulers, and opposition to their will could only be expressed through rebellion, which, having no popular support, almost invariably failed. Other similarities follow."

Like the northern empire, "the empire of Vijayangar was organized on a military basis,"[1] and much thought was given and much revenue spent on the construction of forts and maintenance of a well-organized and efficient army. The details given by Paes, Nuniz, Abdur Razzaq, Barborsa and Krishna Deva Raya in *Amuktamalyada* and many other historical works of Vijayanagar indicate much likeness between the north and the south in the matters of construction of forts and weapons of war.[2] The aims of the rulers were also the same—carrying on *Digvijaya* or conquest in all directions. A weak neighbour was the surest victim and any pretext was good enough to attack him. Wars between Vijayanagar and Bahmani kingdoms were as common as between any two kingdoms in the north. In times of war, the Vijayanagar kings were as ruthless as any other, and encouraged plundering of the enemy territory and carrying away of "men, cattle, sheep, goats and horses."[3] Krishna Deva Raya on one occasion is said to have reduced the whole of Bijapur kingdom to ashes.[4] The course of Achyuta's (1530-1542) Raichur campaign was marked by the clouds of smoke produced by the burning cities.[5] The burning of villages and towns by Vijayanagar kings on campaigns was a common practice. Medieval chroniclers of northern India are full of

1. N. V. Ramanayya, p. 120.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 120-142.
   There was no arrangement for any commissariat service in the camp of the Vijayanagar kings, and the loyout of the camp, as described by Nuniz, could as well read for one of the Sultans or the Mughal emperor. (Sewell, p. 332). Almost all soldiers took their wives and children with them in the camp; the higher officers took their courtezans also. (Barbosa, *Th Book of Duarte Barbosa*, London, 1918-21, I, p. 225). How true of the north too.
3. *Rayavachaka*, The Andhra Sahitya Parishad Patrika, III, p. 130.
4. Lakshminarayana, *Shukasaptati* by Palakaveri Kadiripati.
5. Rajnath Dindima, *Achutarayabhyudayam*. (Nos. 3, 4 and 5 cited in Ramanayya, p. 13.)

similar descriptions in their narrative of campaigns and wars in the north.[1]

Both in the Vijayanagar and the northern empire, the king used to seek the advice of his ministers and counsellors. In the south there was the Sabha or Council of Ministers; in the north one may recall the Majlis-i-Rai or Majlis-i-Khas, often referred to by Barani, the Diwan-i-Khas and the Ghusal-khana. In his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* Ziyauddin Barani says that "the duties of his (the king's) high office, that is of conducting the Government in accordance with the *Shariat*.....cannot be discharged by him without loyal supporters.[2] .....Without

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1. Why was there so much warfare in medieval India? Every king, great or small, had the ambition of conquering the whole country. It may be incidentally mentioned here that the plea that conquerors like Alauddin and Aurangzeb wished to unite the whole country under one administration, while those who opposed them stood in the way of the unification of the country, is only partially correct. From what we conclude on the basis of the works of those days, it appears that no king as such had the noble cause of the unification of the country at heart. The idea which seems to have guided each of the rulers was that he himself should be the master of the country. For Alauddin it was to be Alauddin's Empire, for Aurangzeb, Aurangzeb's Empire, and so on. The real motive-force was self-glorification rather than love of unification of the country. Not only men like Alauddin, Aurangzeb, Vijayanagar emperors or Shivaji, but even an ordinary ruler like Alauddin Bahman Shah (1347-1358), who had just succeeded in founding the Bahmani kingdom "was not satisfied with being king of a part of India but wished to..... unite the whole of the Indian sub-continent under his sceptre."

(H. K. Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (Hyderabad, no date, p. 51)

It is in this context that we can understand the constant warfare of the medieval times both in the north and the south, between the Vijayanagar empire and the Bahmani kingdom and even between the various small kingdoms into which the Bahmani kingdom broke up. Writing about the warfare between the kingdoms into which the Bahmani kingdom had broken up Nuniz says: "There is little faith among the Moors, and they bite one another like dogs, and like to see one after the other destroyed."

(Cited in *A Forgotten Empire* p. 326)

2. *Fatawa-i Jahandari*, p. 92.

a wise Wazir kingship is vain ; and the ancients have said that a king without a wise Wazir is like a palace without foundations .....If the Wazir is wise, the folly of the king does not lead to the ruin and the destruction of the kingdom."[1] Similarly Mallikarjuna Singana, a contemporary of Deva Raya II (1419-1449), in his *Sakalanitisamatta* observes : "When a king...attempts with much pride to discharge his duties either without consulting his ministers or going against their advice, he falls an easy prey to his enemies....."[2] In the *Rayavachaka* Krishna Deva Raya is claimed to have said : "We have been placed on the throne. That is all. Everything in the world is really done by the counsellors."[3]

Thus the importance of ministers, counsellors and advisers of the king was recognized both in the northern and southern empires.[4] Now, who were to be these counsellors ? Even in this there is oneness of thought. Ziyauddin Barani strongly recommends that only the high-born should be appointed as counsellors. These should be "adorned with noble lineage and merits of character. He (the king) cannot with the assistance of the worthless.....take responsibility for all his subjects before God."[5] What Barani advised to the Sultans, Vijayanagar rulers practised by appointing ministers and counsellors mostly from the Brahman community.[6] According to *Amuktamalyada*, the cousellors should preferably be Brahmans of good character, learned in the political science. They should be fifty or sixty years in age.[7]

Thus the emperors of Vijayanagar and the rulers of north, both governed their empires with the help of counsellors and

1. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. 10.
2. *Sakalantisamatta*, The Andhra Granthmala, p. 79, cited in Ramanayya, p. 96.
3. *The Andhra Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, III, p. 30, cited in Ramanayya, p. 96.
4. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. 92.
5. Nuniz says that the Brahmans were honest and talented and very good at accounts, but were "lean men.....little fit for hard work." (Sewell, p. 390). The Turkish counsellors were surely not lean and were well fitted for hard work including fighting.
6. *Amuktamalyada*, IV, pp. 11, 211-13. Cited in Ramanayya, p. 96.

ministers." "They were at times so powerful as to create a feeling of helplessness in the mind of the emperor himself."[1] This has been said about Vijayanagar, but is equally applicable to the northern rulers, when the power of the Ulema (as of the Brahmans in the Hindu Empire) is taken into account.

"Both in the south and the north there were the usual departments of Revenue (Atthavana and the Diwan-i-Vazarat) and the Army (Kandashara and the Diwan-i-Arz). Besides there was a religious Endowment Department." The *Rayavachaka* mentions Dharmayya as one of the principal officers of Vira Narasimha who was the Superintendent of the Brahmadayas or tax-free lands granted to the Brahmans.[2] His counterpart in the northern empire is well-known.

Then there was the Diplomatic Corps and the Spy Cadre. The *Amuktamalyada* gives prominence to the spy system by making "audience to the spies" one of the daily duties of a monarch. According to this work, "a spy should be a resident of the capital, and have knowledge of several languages; he should be capable of assuming many disguises; but he should have no knowledge of the other spies employed by his master. The monarch should consider no cost too high for securing the services of such a spy." According to the *Rayavachaka* the spies had to penetrate, on occasions, into the very council chambers of foreign kings. They were capable of speaking several languages, probably with proper accent and idiom, could assume many disguises and they received high salaries.[3]

1. Ramanayya, p. 96.
2. Cited in above, p. 110.
3. *Amuktamalyada*, IV, 279 and *Rayavachaka*, III, 26-27, translated and cited in Ramanayya, pp. 115-16.

   Strangely enough belligerant states seem to have no objection to allowing the enemy's representatives at each other's courts. While the war between the Gajapati and Krishna Raya was in progress, a Sthanapati of Vijayanagar was allowed to remain in Cuttack. Similarly in the time of Alauddin Khalji, when Ulugh Khan was fighting against Kanhar Deva, the latter sent a number of officers like Jait Devde, Lakhan Savat and Lunkaran to see the Muslim army. Ulugh Khan received them with all honour and showed them his 'grand army' (*vishal sena*). They met many Hindu prisoners of war also.

   Shodh Patrika, III, No. 2, December, 1951. Summary of *Kanhad de Prabandh* by Dr. Dasrath Sharma, p. 53.

Thus while well-deserved praise is due to the efficient spy system of kings like Mahmud of Ghazni, Balban and Alauddin Khalji, it has to be remembered that in the Vijayanagar empire also there was an equally elaborate spy system.

The daily routine of the Vijayanagar kings is also not without interest. The first thing in the morning that Vira Narasimha, Krishna Deva Raya and Achyuta did was to listen to devotional literature, give audience to the Brahmans and do short meditation regularly. Vira Narasimha's daily routine included seeing the Brahmans, wearing the Vibhuti (caste-mark), enquiring into the conditions of the temples and maths. Krishna Deva Raya visited the temples every day. His afternoons were spent in worshipping the deity and listening to the *puranas*. Achyuta also paid respects to the Brahmans and listened to the *puranas* everyday.[1]

The buildings of Vijayanagar—the public works and temples—all had a religious stamp. The government was run on the principles of Dharma in which the Brahman, the cow, temples, gardens, fields and women were protected.[2] It was a theocratic state in which Dharma was practised and encouraged and nothing against it was allowed.[3] The state did not assume an attitude of neutrality in religious affairs. It took an active interest in the religious and social activities of its subjects, and extended its patronage to all sects and religions. In the words of Barbosa, "The king (Krishna Deva Raya) allows, that every man may come and go, and live according to his own creed without suffering any annoyance, and without enquiry, whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen. Great equity and justice is observed by all."[3]

The distinguishing feature of the Hindu theocratic states, whether of Vijayanagar in the south or the Rajput states in the north, was that though these were based on Dharma, this Dharma was not the 'Revealed Truth'. It was a mixture of ethical and from time-to-time accepted practices which would

1. Ramanayya, pp. 101-102.
2. For details and authorities see my article, 'Factors underlying the loss of Indian Independence' in the *Journal of the Madhya Pradesh Itihasa Parishad*, 1959, p. 43.
3. Barbosa, I, p. 202.

satisfy all the sections of society, orthodox as well as unorthodox. Also a good deal of elasticity in the interpretation of such a Dharma was always possible. In the words of P. V. Kane, "the proximate goal of the state in India (according to the *Dharmashastras*) was to create such conditions and environments as would enable all men to live in peace...to follow their own customs and usages and their 'Svadharma'."[1]

Thus the state of Vijayanagar was tolerant to all religions. Besides continuing the policy of toleration of south Indian rulers from the early times,[2] there were many other reasons for this attitude and policy. "In the first place Hindu Dharma is not a proselytizing religion. people are not even encouraged to embrace it, not to speak of being forced to do so." Therefore it could not be a part of the state's duty to campaign for conversions or to give inducements or put economic pressure to obtain converts to Hinduism. "In the second place the *Dharmashastras* do not lay down any specific laws prejudicial to the non-Hindus."

But besides these there were some very practical reasons for the tolerant policy of the Vijayanagar rulers. Deliberating with his counsellors on the success of the Bahmanis against Vijayanagar, Deva Raya II (1419-1449) came to the conclusion that the Bahmanis often got the upper hand because they had stronger horses and a 'great body of excellent archers'. Upon this "he gave orders to enlist Mussulmans in his service, allotting them estates, and erecting a mosque in the city of Vijayanagar. He also commended that no one should molest them in the exercise of the religion, and moreover, he ordered a Koran to be placed before his throne on a rich desk....."[3] This policy continued. In the time of Ramraja (1542-1556-1570), when, on one occasion, the Muhammadans sacrificed a cow in a mosque in the 'Turukvada', the excited nobles and officers, lead by the king's own brother Tirumala, made a representation

1. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharamashastra*, III, pp. 238-39.
2. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1946 Edition), pp. 29-48.
3. Ferishta, Briggs Trs., II, pp. 230-232.

to Ramraja. But he did not yield to them saying that it would not be correct to interfere in their religious practices and declaring that he was the master of the bodies of his soldiers, not their souls.[1]

However, the most important reason seems to be economic. Except in the north, Vijayanagar empire's boundaries lay on the sea coast. Any religious intolerance would have discouraged foreign merchants from visiting the empire's ports. Such a situation would have sapped the very foundations of its prosperity, because it gained immensely from the sea borne trade." Writing about Quilon, a great commercial centre which had become tributary of Vijayanagar, Barbosa says : "Hither come Moors, Heathen and Christians in great numbers. The Moors and Heathens are great traders and possess many ships dealing with goods of diverse kinds, in which they sail in all directions to Charamendel, and Ceilam, to the Isles of Benguala, Malaca, Camatra, Peeguu....."[2] Similar is the testimony of Barbosa and Varthema for Honawar, Bhatkal,[3] Bacanor, Manglore, Cumbola, Malaipur, Pulicat, etc.[4] The prosperity of Vijayanagar and its extensive export-import trade are attested to by a number of other visitors and merchants. (When the empire fell the trade also suffered.) The prosperity of the Portuguese trade depended upon the flourishing markets of the Hindu empire.[5]

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1. J. B. B. R. A. S., XXII, p. 28.
2. Barbosa, II, p. 97.
3. "There dwell both Moors and Heathen, all given to trade. Many ships come hither every year from Ormuz to get cargoes of white rice (great store), and powdered sugar (of which this land has great plenty) .....and many cargoes of iron..... to sell them to the Moors of Arabia and Persia, who buy them at a good price. The Ormuz ships, which .....come hither every year, bring horses in great numbers, and many pearls which they sell....." (Barbosa, I, pp. 88-91 ; cf. Varthema, *Itinerary*, p. 51).
4. "It has a very fair sea-haven wither resort ships of Moors in great numbers conveying goods of diverse kinds." (Barbosa, II, pp. 130-132).
5. Cf. also *The Delhi Sultanate*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Bombay, 1960) pp. 416, 420-26.

The Vijayanagar kings encouraged this trade and were tolerant to merchants and peoples of all religions.

But this wordly motive may not be over-emphasised. The point to be noted is that the kings of Vijayanagar continued uninterrupted the policy of religious toleration. In many other states similar conditions seem to have prevailed. On the western coast, the people of Gujarat permitted the Muslims to build a mosque at Ahmedabad in A. D. 1053, within three decades[1] of the devastating attack on Somnath when the temple was still lying in a dilapidated state. In the *Jami-ul-Hikayat*, Muhammad Ufi mentions a very interesting incident in which Siddharaj (Ufi has Jai Singh), on hearing of the destruction of a mosque and killing of eighty Muslims by Hindus at the instigation of 'Fire-worshippers', himself went to the place of occurrence, punished the offenders and gave the Muslims one lac *balotras* to rebuild their mosque.[2] The merchants of Gujarat too made some handsome contribution for the purpose of constructing a mosque for the use of Muslims.[3]

From the above discussion one arrives at the irresistible conclusion that the ideals of the empire of Vijayanagar in the south and the Turkish and Mughal empire in the north were more or less the same. In both the emperor was the fountain-head of justice and worked on the dictates of the religious law. In both the king was an autocrat, although he sought advice from his counsellors and ministers on important matters. In both the king loved to wage war and earn glory through conquest. In both 'religious advisers' (Brahmans and Ulema) had a big say and much influence. And since religious law was supreme in both, both were theocratic in nature.

The last statement lands us into a controversial issue, the issue of whether or not the Turkish state in northern India was a theocracy. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar,[4]

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1. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, (Calcutta), 1939, p. 647.
2. E and D, II pp. 161-63.
   A.K Majumdar, *Chalukyas of Gujarat*, pp. 331-332.
3. A.K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 331.
4. *History of Aurangzeb*, III, pp. 296-97.

Dr. R. P. Tripathi,[1] Dr. K. M. Ashraf,[2] Dr. T. P. Hughes[3] and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,[4] the Muslim state was a theocracy. "All the institutions that the Muslims either evolved or adopted were intended to subserve the law."[5] On the other hand Dr. I. H. Qureshi says that the "supremacy of the Shara (Islamic law) has misled some into thinking that the Sultanate was a theocracy."[6] Dr. Qureshi's contention may not be taken seriously, because he tries to eulogize every aspect of Muslim rule in India.[7] But when Professor Mohammad Habib also declares that "it (Muslim state in India) was not a theocratic state in any sense of the word" and that "its foundation was, nevertheless, non-religious and secular,"[8] it becomes imperative to re-examime the issue by critically analysing these two divergent views.

Before analysing these two views, let us first be clear about what theocracy is. Only then shall we be able to conclude whether or not the Government in medieval India was theocratic. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word theocracy is derived from the Greek *theos*, meaning God ; and a state is theocratic when governed by God "directly or through a sacerdotal class"... ... Theocracy envisages "direct intervention and authorship of God through revelation in government of society."[9] The *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines theocracy as "that constitution of a state in which the Almighty is regarded as the sole sovereign, and the laws of the realm as divine commands rather than human ordinances—the priesthood necessarily becoming the officers of the invisible ruler."[10]

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1. *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration* (Allahabad, 1936,) p. 2.
2. *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1935, pp. 103-359.
3. *Dictionary of Islam* (London, 1885), p. 711.
4. Luzac & Co., (London, 1913-34) I, 959.
5. Tripathi, op cit., p. 2.
6. *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Lahore, 1942) p. 41.
7. Cf. Peter Hardy in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, edited by C.H. Philips (London, 1961) p. 302.
8. Introduction to the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. vi.
9. *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1935 edition), p. 1271.
10. 1950 Edition, p. 1005.

From the above definitions, three elements appear to be essential in a theocracy : (1) presence of a sacerdotal class or priesthood, (2) prevalence of the law of God, and (3) the sovereign or ruler who promulgates this law. Let us examine to what extent these three elements were present in the sate in medieval India.

Dr. I. H. Qureshi denies the presence of the sacerdotal class. "The essential feature of a theocracy—the rule of an ordained priesthood," says he, "is missing in the organisation of the Muslim State ; the jurists are all laymen who claim no sacerdotal immunity from error."[1] It is true that there was no 'ordained' or 'hereditary' priesthood in medieval India. It is also true that the jurists could claim no 'sacerdotal immunity from error,' and a layman like Ibn Battuta was appointed Qazi of Delhi by Muhammad bin Tughlaq. But Ibn Battuta's appointment is a unique case.[2] Else, in medieval India the jurists were invariably theologians. This scholastic class called the Ulema, by education, were orthodox ; and wielded great influence with the Sultan. About their education and orthodoxy, Dr. Yusaf Husain has this to say : "The institutions of higher learning .... called Madrasa, had developed into centres of learning with a distinct religious bias. They were essentially schools of theology..... These Madrasas were the strongholds of orthodoxy and were subsidised by the State."[3]

From amongst the products of these schools of theology were appointed jurists, advisers of Sultans and kings, and interpreters of the *Shara* (Islamic law). "The protection of *Shariat*," writes Ibn Hasan, "has two aspects : The propagation of the knowledge of Shara and its enforcement as law within the state. The one implies the maintenance of a class of scholars devoted to the study, the teaching and the propagation of that knowledge, and the other the appointment of one from those scholars .....as an adviser to the king in all his acts of state.

1. Qureshi, op. cit., p. 43.
2. In any case Ibn Battuta was known as Maulana Bashiruddin in India. Ishwari Prasad, *A History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*, I (Allahabad 1939), p. 339.
3. Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1957), p. 69.

The scholars devoted to that knowledge are called Ulema and the one selected from among them is termed Shaikh-ul-Islam."[1] The Shaikh-ul-Islam was the representative of the Ulema and it was his duty to bring "to the notice of the king what he thought detrimental or prejudicial to the interest of his religion, and the king had little option in acting upon such an advice."[2] Henry Blochmann elaborates the position still further. "Islam has no state clergy;" says he, "but we find a counterpart to our hierarchical bodies in the Ulemas about the Court from whom the Sadrs of the provinces, the Mir Adls, Muftis and Qazis were appointed. At Delhi and Agra, the body of the learned had always consisted of staunch Sunnis, who believed it their duty to keep the kings straight. How great their influence was, may be seen from the fact that of all Muhammadan emperors only Akbar, and perhaps Alauddin Khalji, succeeded in putting down this haughty sect."[3] No amount of arguments can destroy the fact of the great influence of the priestly class (Ulema and Brahmans) in the Muslim empire or independent states of the country.

The second point to consider in a theocracy is the prevalence of the law of God, or religious law (as opposed to secular law). "The medieval Indian state was run on the dictates of the Shara." According to Dr. Qureshi himself the Shara "is based on the Quran which is believed by every Muslim to be the word of God revealed to His prophet Muhammad...On these two rocks—the Quran and *hadis* (the prophet's interpretation of the revelation embodied in his tradition) is built the structure of Muslim Law.....This Law was the actual sovereign in Muslim lands."[4] "Thus the law which obtained in medieval India was the Shara which was not based on human experience but on divine revelation. It was not a secular law."

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1. Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (London, 1936), pp. 255-56.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
3. Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari's* English Translation, (Calcutta, Second edition, 1927), pp. xxxii-xxxiii.
4. Qureshi, op. cit., p. 41.

Dr. Qureshi's assertion that the supremacy of the Shara has misled some into thinking that the Sultanate was a theocracy,[1] contradicts his own contention : at least it is begging the question. "This religious law was detrimental to the interests of the non-Muslim majority of the Indian population, and yet it was imposed upon them." The disabilities they suffered under this law are clearly mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,[2] T. P. Hughes's *Dictionary of Islam*,[3] N. P. Aghnides's *Muhammadan Theories of Finance*,[4] in Blochmann's translation of the *Ain-i-Akbari*,[5] in Ziyauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*[6] and a host of other Persian chronicles, and "there is no need to repeat here the ideas behind 'zimmi', 'kharajguzar', 'jeziyah' etc." The fact to be noted is that this law continued to prevail throughout the medieval period.

It is not only today that we wish that this law should not have been the principal law in the Turkish and Mughal state as it adversely affected the vast majority of the non-Muslims (and hence the wishful thinking that it did not prevail and that the medieval state was not a theocracy), but even the medieval thinkers and rulers found it impracticable if not unjust. When the nobles and Ulema of the Sultanate pressed Shamsuddin Iltutmish to enforce the Shara, the latter asked for time.[7] Equally helpless (or sagacious) were Balban and Jalaluddin Khalji.[8] It was probably the experience of such rulers that prompted Ziyauddin Barani to advocate that if the recognized law was impracticable, new laws should be enacted by rulers. "It is the duty of a king," says he, "to enforce, if he can, those royal laws which have become proverbial owing to their

1. Qureshi, op. cit. p. 43.
2. Vol. I, pp. 958-59.
3. pp. 248, 711.
4. (New York, 1917), pp. 399, 528.
5. Introduction.
6. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* (Calcutta, 1862), p. 250.
7. *Sana-i-Muhammadi* (Rampur Ms.) *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. I, Pt. III, pp. 100-105. K.A. Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 315-16.
8. Barani, T.F.S., pp. 70-79, 151, 216.

principles of justice and mercy. But if owing to change of time and circumstances he is unable to enforce the laws of the ancients (*i.e.* ancient Muslim rulers), he should, with the counsel of wise men... frame laws suited to his time and circumstances and proceed to enforce them. Much reflection is necessary in order that laws, suited to his reign, are properly framed."[1] These laws Barani calls Zawabits.

But how many rulers did actually frame such laws? How many rulers indeed dared frame such laws? The Shara continued to be supreme throughout the Sultanate period. There were many tolerant monarchs in medieval India, and yet none (except Akbar) ever thought of enacting some laws which would have mitigated the theocratic character of the government and would have ensured equity and fair play and removed the disabilities imposed on the majority of the population."

Barani wrote in the fourteenth century. In the fourteenth, fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century no king made any laws of the kind. No chronicler has made mention of any such laws. It was as late as the latter half of the sixteenth century that Akbar promulgated a number of regulations for the good of the people." Between 1562 and 1564 he abolished the practice of enslaving prisoners of war, pilgrim tax and the Jeziyah. Restrictions were imposed on the manufacture and sale of liquor in 1582 and the same year child marriage was discouraged by fixing the marriage age at 14 for girls and 16 for boys. In 1587 Akbar legalized widow remarriage and prohibited Sati for Bal Vidhvas in 1590-91. In 1601 he took the revolutionary step of permitting individuals to choose their religion and those who had been forcibly converted could go back to their former faith. Akbar was a reformer by nature, and the Ulema knew they could not check him. So to make a virtue of necessity, as it were, in 1579 they petitioned to the king to make laws for "the real benefit of the people" in the Mahzar Nama also called the Infallibility Decree.[2]

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1. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, p. 64.
2. The Decree is translated into English in Blochmann's *Ain-i-Akbari*, pp. 195-96. Also Sri Ram Sharma's *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962), pp. 31-32.

But even Akbar did not 'codify' any laws as such for his successors to follow. His beneficial and equitable regulations remained, as they could remain, only for his empire and during his life time. It is significant to note that even in the few reforms that Akbar ordered, many nobles and Ulema saw a danger to Islam.

So what Barani calls Zawabits were few and far between, and the Shara continued to be the supreme law prevalent in the Turkish and Mughal times. The Hindu law was not based on divine revelation. It was based on human experience. Only in this respect the Hindu state may not be considered a theocracy. The Hindu law too was unfair to many sections of the Hindu society itself, but in it no injunctions against non-Hindus were laid down.

Let us now consider the sovereign or ruler whose duty it was to promulgate this law in his dominions. The rulers of medieval India, by and large, were a happy-go-lucky type. They lived a life of luxury ; most of them drank hard, kept large seraglios and were interested in merry-making. Very few of them were educated ; some indeed were illiterate. They were not very much conversant with the Islamic law and were not interested in enforcing it. Those like Firoz Tughlaq and Aurangzeb who had a smattering of it and tried to enforce it, did not succeed as kings. The chief concern of the kings, therefore, was to administer the country well and to see that there were as few rebellions as possible. In other words they were practical administrators and wanted to see peace prevailing.

But a number of circumstances compelled them to stick to the letter of the law and enforce it, howsoever detrimental it might have been to the smooth running of the administration and peace and tranquillity of the realm. Firstly their chroniclers rightly or wrongly always eulogized them as defenders of the Islamic faith. This tickled their vanity and encouraged them to be strict in the observance of the law. It prompted them to be iconolasts, it made them patronize the Muslim minority and resort to all kinds of inducements and coercion to obtain conversions, besides, of course, at times treating the non-Muslims unfairly and even cruelly to exhibit their love for their own religion.

Secondly the Ulema always tried to keep the kings straight. They considered it their sacred duty to see that the kings not only did not stray away from the path of religion and law, but also enforced it on the people. Such indeed was their influence that strong monarchs, who were not interested in their dogmatic assertions, just showed indifference towards them, but did not dare suppress them. Others, of course, tried to walk on the path shown by this bigoted scholastic class.

The third and the most important reason was that the ruler was not quite safe on the throne if he did not enforce the Shara. At the close of the Khalji regime, Ghayasuddin declared himself as a champion of the faith, because the Ulema had been dissatisfied with Alauddin's policies and Ghayasuddin with the activities of Nasiruddin Khusrau. "The solgan of revenge for religion, so common yet so effective in the history of the Muslims, was started."[1] And this to a great degree won Ghayasuddin Tughlaq the throne. The Ulema were equally dissatisfied with Muhammad bin Tughlaq. On his demise, Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh obtained from Firoz a promise "that he would rule according to the tenets of justice and law."[2] Students of medieval Indian history know that Firoz Shah proved true to his word and "made religion the basis of his government." A little later Amir Timur openly claimed to attack India with the avowed object of destroying idolatry and infidelity in the country.[3] Akbar's tolerance had exasperated the Muslim divines, and a promise was obtained from his successor Jahangir that he would defend the Muslim religion.[4] Immediately after his death "Mulla Shah Ahmad, one of the greatest religious leaders of the age, wrote to various court dignitaries exhorting them to get this state of things altered in the very beginning of (Jahangir's) reign because otherwise it would be difficult to accomplish anything later on."[5] And there is

1. Tripathi, op. cit., p. 56.
2. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* (Calcutta, 1890), p. 29.
3. Sharafuddin Yazdi, *Zafar Nama* (Calcutta, 1885-88), II, p. 15.
4. V. A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul* (S. Chand, Delhi, 1962), p. 233. Smith writes on the authority of Du Jarric, III, p. 133.
5. Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 61.

the classic case of Aurangzeb who claimed to have fought "the apostate" Dara to re-establish the Law of Islam.

Thus whether we consider the influence of the Muslim religious class (the Ulema), the application of the law of Islam (Shara), or the activities of the kings, it is clear beyond doubt that the medieval state was a theocratic state.

Why is then there a desire to escape from this fact ? In modern times values of life have changed. In an age of science and secularism, ideas of religious disabilities and persecution appear to be so out of tune with human behaviour today as to make us believe that they were never there even in the past. Modern Indian government is based on the ideals of secularism and in society too religious controversies are tried to be eschewed, and it is thought to be so normal that it is felt that such was the position through the ages.

But medieval times were different from ours. Until we are prepared to accept this fact and refuse to project our own ideas, attitudes and situations to medieval times, we will not be able to study the middle ages in their true perspective. Today Joan of Arc would not be burnt to death for being a 'witch'. Today who would care to excommunicate Martin Luther for his views and threaten to burn him at the stake ? But in the sixteenth century he was excommunicated and hundreds of his followers (and their opponents) were killed that way. Today Bodhan Brahman would not be burnt to death for declaring that Hinduism is as good as Islam, but in the time of Sikandar Lodi he was done to death in that manner. Today who would break one building to obtain materials for constructing for another,—it would be so uneconomical, but in medieval times temples were broken and mosques raised with their material. Today no slaves are sold in the markets of Delhi ; in medieval times they were.

These examples will make it clear that medieval times were different from our own. Modern age can probably be best termed as an age of critical inquiry and science. The chief characteristic of medieval times does not seem to be either scepticism, rationalism, enlightenment, secularism or science. It appears from the study of the works of those times in any language that religion played a very important part in every

sphere of human life including government and politics. There is no need to feel apologetic about it, for the medieval age, like any other age, had its good points and bad. If the fanatical Ulema vitiated the atmosphere, Sufi saints gave a healing touch. If atrocities were committed in the name of religion, often sacrifices made for protecting religion brought out the best and the noblest in human nature. If religious ideas sometimes made for cruelties, they also encouraged the haves to distribute free food and indulge in open-handed charity. Medieval times may have been bad in a hundred ways, but they also produced men like Nizamuddin Auliya, Kabir, Guru Nanak and a host of other saints of hallowed memory and rulers and princes like Akbar and Dara Shikoh.

Thus there is no need to deny the characteristics of medieval times and imagine that they were just like our own. "Whether or not the past helps us to understand the present", writes Louis Gottschalk, "the present inevitably colours our understanding of the past. So true it is...so nearly inescapable is the learning process by which we proceed from the known (our own experience) to an understanding of the unknown (the past) that the historian must be constantly on guard against identifying movements and institutions of the past with contemporary ones. Against such half-true inferences the historian must guard by the studied effort to understand the past in its own setting."[1]

In conclusion it may be said that there are no laws which can satisfy each and every individual in a state. If the medieval theocratic state was prejudicial to the interests of some, it benefited some others. There should be no effort to gloss over this and pronounce the medieval government as being more modern than the modern. Therefore, with all apologies to the 'apologists', it has to be reiterated that the state in medieval India was theocratic in nature.

1. Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History* (New York, 1958), p. 277.

FOUR

CORRUPTION IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The corruption which is prevalent in Indian society today, and against which the machinery of the Governments of the Indian Union and the States is geared up, gives some of us the impression that corruption flourishes in a democracy where nobody can be punished until he is conclusively proved to be guilty and under a strong, autocratic rule or in a regimented society corruption would disappear automatically. We are also prone to think that under strong despotic rulers corruption was not there, because their tyrannical measures would not brook it. Another idea repeatedly put forward is that it is poverty and low salaries that breed corruption and it is bound to be reduced in proportion to the rise in emoluments and standard of living.

However, on a study of the records of medieval times, when autocracy was the order of the day, we find that corruption was even then quite well-grounded, not only in the lower stratum of society, but in all strata, and in spite of the strong measures that were sometimes taken to suppress it, it could not be stamped out. For the study of the problem of corruption in medieval India the period covering the reigns of four strong and autocratic rulers, Ghayasuddin Balban, Alauddin Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq, has been specially selected. Each one of these monarchs was anxious for the well-being of the state and the people. Each one had a long span of reign[1] to be able to give concrete shape to his ideas and schemes of political and social well-being. And although

1. Balban ruled for 21 years (A. D. 1266-87), Alauddin for 20 years (1296-1316), Muhammad Tughlaq for 26 years (1325-1351) and Firoz for 37 years (1351-1388).

(except for Firoz Tughlaq) all these monarchs were not only strict but extremely stern, yet corruption was rife during their rule of more than a century.

From the very begining of Turkish rule in India, nobles, government officials and even soldiers had been given land as gift, grants and rewards and also in lieu of salary. It was a custom to reward nobles, learned men and theologians with grants of land and to allot land for military service. These grants were not hereditary, but ordinarily descendants were left unmolested with their possession. In course of time the land-holders became lazy and even proud as they had a sure income to fall back upon. While on a campaign in western Hindustan, Sultan Balban was struck by the fact that many military grantees of land were unfit for service ; they never went out on campaigns and yet had continued in possession of their land and its revenues. The Sultan instituted an immediate enquiry into such cases.

The facts brought to light were indeed revealing. It appeared that about 2,000 horsemen of the army had received villages in the Doab alone by way of pay during the time of Iltutmish. But for the last forty years or more hardly any check had been kept on their service record. Many of the grantees had become old and infirm, many others had died. But their sons had taken possession of the grants as an inheritance from their fathers. Many of them were clever enough to get the assignments recorded in their own names in the books of the Ariz-i-Mumalik (Master of the Forces), obviously by bribing the officials as we shall presently see. Some others, who had no sons, sent their slaves as their representatives, or probably the slaves of their own accord arrogated to themselves the privileges of the sons and continued to occupy land in lieu of salary for military service which they hardly rendered. Indeed in those days when administration was not paper-ridden, and many allotments were made without actual enactments of deeds, many land-holders called themselves proprietors and not grantees and claimed to have received the lands as reward (inam) from the late Sultan Shamsuddin. "Some of them went leisurely to perform their military duties, but the greater part stayed at home making excuses, the acceptance of which they

secured by presents and bribes...'according to their means by wine, goats, chicken, pigeon, butter and food-stuffs from their villages'...to the Deputy Muster-Master and his officials."[1]

Balban, who did not show any consideration even for his 'kith and kin' in matters of State, could hardly tolerate such a state of affairs. But these corrupt practices had gone on for so long, and so many old and veteran officers (and their families) and descendants were involved, that even he stayed his hands from any drastic step. From the measures he undertook to check the rot, it appears that he was not only not vindictive, on the other hand he was quite considerate. He divided such grantees into three categories. The first consisted of the old and infirm, upon whom he settled a pension of 40 to 50 *tankas*, and took away their villages. The second consisted of the young, who were quite fit to render service. They were confirmed in their posts ; their villages were not taken from them. But they could not obviously be left with the emoluments of their fore-fathers. On them an allowance proportionate to their service was settled, and the surplus revenues of their villages were to be collected by the government revenue officers and deposited in the state treasury. The third category was of orphans and widows, who held villages and sent deputies or slaves to perform military service. Their lands were to be taken away, but allowance sufficient to cover their daily necessities ('food and clothing') was granted to them.

It is clear that because of the orders of Balban nobody was thrown on the streets ; indeed everybody was provided for. And yet the Sultan's orders created 'consternation' among the old grantees, who went in a body to the residence of the Kotwal of Delhi, Malik Fakhruddin, to present their grievances, not forgetting to take with them trays of sweets and sugar-candy (*chand dunbaki va chand tasht nabat*). The Kotwal gave them a sympathetic hearing and promised to plead their case with the king. However, he did not accept the presents, arguing that his pleadings with the king on their behalf will lose their force if he accepted them. On the representation of the old and venerable Kotwal, who clinched the issue by saying that

1. Barani, *Tarikhi-i-Firoz Shahi*, Bib. Ind. Text, p. 62.

since he was also getting old, he too would be 'rejected' one day. Balban was ultimately persuaded to withdraw his orders. And so the evil continued, and the contemporary chronicler Ziyauddin Barani asserts that he saw many of these old (and ineffective) soldiers 'rendering service' at the court of Jalaluddin Khalji (1290-1296).[1]

Balban is known to history as a very strong and strict ruler. He did not tolerate any laxity in administration. He punished some very great nobles like Malik Baqbaq and Haibat Khan so severely that the former was scourged to death and the latter suffered such pangs of mortification that he "never afterwards went out of his house until the day of his death".[2] Balban repeatedly dinned into the ears of his son Bughra Khan that 'kingship knew no kinship'. And yet he left the above mentioned corrupt practice to continue unchecked, although its defects were more than obvious.[3]

Jalaluddin's successor Alauddin Khalji knew the evils of the system of granting land in lieu of service and determined to put an end to it. Although at the time of his accession, to secure the sympathy and support of the influential people, he had to bestow lands on them, yet once he was firmly settled on the throne he turned their estates into crown lands. Particularly after 1301, he ordered that all villages, estates and other lands which were held as *milk* (property), *inam* (reward) and *waqf* (gift) were to be resumed and turned into the Khalisa or crown lands.[4] Another important step he took to streamline the administration and remove causes of curruption was to deprive the chief men (Muqaddams) and Zamindars (Khuts) of their rights to collect land revenue. The Khuts and Muqaddams not only evaded to pay the prevalent taxes like Kharaj (land-tax), Jeziyah (poll-tax) house tax and grazing tax themselves, but even charged an amount as remuneration (Khuti) for collecting

1. Barani, p. 64.
2. Barani, pp. 40-41.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-104.
4. It was not possible to convert all lands into Khalisa, but the Sultan preferred to pay cash salaries rather than allot land in lieu of service. K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, p. 243. Also Qureshi, *Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, Ist Edn., p. 119.

revenue from the peasants, and "whether called or not, they never came to the Divan and paid no heed to revenue officers."[1] The king rescinded all the privileges of the Khuts and Muqaddams, ordered the peasants to pay the land revenue directly to government officials and promulgated a uniform law regarding payment of revenue for both landlords and tenants so that "the revenue due from the strong might not fall upon the weak."

But the revenue officials, whose number had considerably increased with the increase in the area of crown lands, proved to be, by and large corrupt and extortionate. Realizing that the low salaries of Amils (surveyors), Karkuns (clerks) and Patwaris (collectors) tempted them to accept or extort bribes, the Sultan raised their salaries, but that did not improve matters and corruption among the lower officials continued. As the revenue system was yet in the making and the machinery for assessment and collection was yet undeveloped, there was a fairly wide scope for revenue officials to resort to corruption. The Mustakhraj freely punished the Amils and Karkuns and Patwaris to submit correct statements and to account for the unrealized balances with a view to putting a stop to corruption. "In this way thousands of clerks and collectors, (Barani has 10,000, but the figure may not be accepted literally), were punished severely and their flesh was made sore."[2] The stern measures of the Sultan, the inspection of revenue books of Amils and Patwaris by superior officers and the Sultan himself, the ruthless punishments they received for taking bribes and falsifying accounts, brought the service in the revenue department into disrepute, and Barani hyperbolically says that no one would give his daughter in marriage to a revenue official, while

1. Barani, p. 291.
2. Barani, pp. 288-89, 292. The duty of the Divan-i-Mustakharaj was to enquire into the arrears and unaccounted for balances lying in the names of the collectors and realizing them.
The two most prominent corrupt practices were :
(1) Revenue collectors did not submit correct accounts and embezzled government money, and (2) very often collected from the peasants amounts far in excess of the actual revenue. And these evils were not confined to the Sultanate period alone, they continued throughout the Mughal period too. Because of this, incidence of taxation fell hardest on the poor.

the office of the Superintendent (Musrif, Mutsarrif) was only accepted by one who had no regard for his life, for the officials passed most of their days in jail frequently receiving blows and kicks.[1] According to Ziyauddin Barani, however, these stern measures proved to be effective, and it was no longer possible for an official to take even a *tanka* from anyone by way of bribe or extortion.[2]

But the Sultan's success was, if he really completely succeeded, short-lived. According to the same authority, on Alauddin's death most of these people were set free by his son and successor Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji. Strict vigilance of the conduct of the officials was given up, and regulations of Alauddin fell into disuse. People once again began to amass wealth. Bribery and corruption were openly indulged in, and it was a red-letter day for clerks and Munshis.[3] The extent of corruption during the rule of the next dynasty shows that Alauddin's success in stamping out corruption among revenue officials was ephemeral.

Similarly, Alauddin's efforts to put a stop to the undue gains of middlemen and brokers in the market, and check regrating and profiteering by retailers, also met with only qualified success. This Sultan has become famous in medieval history for fixing prices of commodies of daily use, introducing rationing in times of emergency, issuing permits for purchase of valuable articles, and appointing large teams of officials to enforce his orders—all for checking hoarding and black-marketing. Such was his strictness in seeing that prices of commodities of daily use remained stabilized in the market, that he punished as high officers as Malik Qabul, the Superintendent of the Grain Market himself for suggesting a little rise in the prices of foodstuffs, and appointed a number of informers and secret agents to keep a check on the activities of the market people—whole-sellers as well as retailers.

But "brokers and middlemen were a most arrogant, and rebellious class of people." They used to take commission both

1. Barani, p. 289
2. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

from buyer and seller, and had so complicated the business that no transaction could be effected without their mediation. They prevaricated and spoke lies, and lived on high bidding and speculation.[1] About retailers and shopkeepers, Ziyauddin has similar things to say. They were "shameless and cunning" and tried to defraud the people by all means at their command. Hoarding articles for selling them at high price in seasons favourable to them and giving short-weights were their common habits, and they did all this in spite of the barbarous punishments inflicted upon them by Malik Yaqub, the Divan-i-Riyasat or the Inspector-General of the Markets in Delhi, who had earned notoriety for his harsh and cruel nature. He coerced, whipped and tyrannized over the market people for offences committed in contravention of the government regulations. The brokers were punished with life-imprisonment. In the case of shopkeepers, who raised prices of commodities or gave short-weights, a quantity of flesh equal to the deficiency in weight was cut-off from their haunches, but in spite of such stern measures these evils could not be entirely wiped out. Similarly, vintners and illicit-distillers, who fermented wine secretly or smuggled it into Delhi in leather bags hidden under bundles of grass or fuel and by other means, were beaten with sticks, fettered and thrown into wells (holes) specially dug for the purpose in front of the Badaon Gate.

The stern measures of Alauddin checked profiteering and black-marketing, but only for a short time. No sooner were his eyes closed than "the prices of grain and cloth rose high," and the merchants 'rejoiced' at his death. Once again they began to sell articles at rates highly profitable to them, and cheated the public in every way.[2] The narrative of Shams Siraj Afif throws fresh light on conditions obtaining a few years later. Writing of the days of Firoz Tughlaq, the chronicler says that a large number of traders and merchants used to join the Sultan's army on a campaign. Indeed "it had been a practice and rule from olden times" (*rasm-i-qadim va ain*) that only those merchants whom the Kotwal of Delhi (Rais-i-Shehr) permitted, could accompany the army on an expedition.

1. Also Barani, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, Kitab Mahal, pp. 31-38.
2. Barani, p. 385. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, p. 324.

But since on such occasions there could be a lot of profit-making, a large section of the trades-people used to cajole and implore the Kotwal and give him bribes for obtaining permits and licences to go with the army and do business in the Camp.[1] Thus it is not only today that permits and licences can be obtained through bribery : the practice was well-known in medieval times too.

Cheating of the people and the government are almost synonymous today. In the fourteenth century too, those who cheated the people could not rest at that, and they took every opportunity of defrauding the government whenever an opportunity presented itself. One such opportunity came when Muhammad bin Tughlaq introduced his famous token currency. We are not here concerned with the motives of the Sultan in embarking upon this experiment, nor with the circumstances which forced or encouraged him. But the results show that even well-intentioned schemes of the State were scuttled because of the corruption and greed that prevailed among all sections of the people. The Sultan had introduced copper coins to serve for gold and silver ones. They were made legal tender, equal in value to the ones of precious metals. But because of the greed of the people the Sultan failed to make the issue of the new coins a State monopoly. The house of every goldsmith was turned into a mint and thousands and millions of copper coins were manufactured not only in Delhi but also in many other cities of the Empire. While forgery was freely practised, the rich suppressed their gold and silver, and the people paid their taxes and made their purchases in the new coin. Consequently, the State was defrauded while private individuals made enormous profits. The affect of this selfishness and greed are best summarised in the words of Barani: "Trade came to a standstill and all business was paralyzed."

The problem of land revenue and the corrupt practices in its realization also touched new dimensions during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and again the people suffered because of the selfishness of the get-rich-soon type of officials. We have seen that soon after Alauddin's death, most of his agrarian

1. Afif, pp. 289-290.

reforms were rescinded. Ghayasuddin Tughlaq gave up the system of measurement for assessing revenue, because it "implied vexation and corruption," and reverted to the system of crop-sharing. The chiefs and headmen again began to get a share of collected dues as their remuneration. With the reversion to the old system, old "touts and pests of various kinds" also would have come back. Over and above this, Muhammad bin Tughlaq raised the land revenue quite substantially.

The result was a constant recurrence of famine in his times. The Sultan was a well-meaning man and wanted to ameliorate the hardships of the people, and he devoted himself to measures to promote cultivation. He struck upon the novel (now commonly practised) idea of having large-scale farm cultivation. An area of about 45 miles square (30 *krohs*) was set aside for intensive farming in which not a patch was to be left uncultivated at any time by changing crops constantly. A hundred shiqdars were appointed to supervise the project. They promised to cultivate thousands of *bighas* of land and also to reclaim waste land. Each one of them received fifty thousand *tankas* in cash as advance (*sondhar*) from the State. But they turned out to be "greedy, dishonest and thoughtless persons." They cheated the government, squandered the money on personal needs and did not care to cultivate the allotted area. In this way the State lost not less then 70,00,000 *tankas* in all. Of the advance (*sondhar*) not even a hundredth or a thousandth part could be realized and the avaricious shiqdars embezzled the whole amount.[1] And all this callousness was there about a measure which had been undertaken to ameliorate famine conditions. Unfortunately, Muhammad Tughlaq was not destined to live long to punish these dishonest officers.

During the reign of Firoz Shah the profession of soldiers was made hereditary. Also old men were not retired and efficiency of the army naturally suffered. Over and above this, corruption was galore in the Divan-i-Arz. Horses of little value were brought to the Divan and were passed as serviceable, obviously by greasing the palms of the clerks. So many soldiers

1. Barani, p. 499.

whose horses became unfit never cared to replace them. They did not therefore go to the office to obtain a fitness certificate, and the Sultan went on granting extension of time for review of their horses.

The misplaced kindness of the Sultan encouraged corruption in army administration. A story narrated by Shams Siraj Afif is worth citing. Once the Sultan overheard a soldier complaining to a friend that because he did not have the necessary money (to pay as bribe) he had not been able to get a fitness certificate for his horse at the Divan-i-Arz. "The Sultan inquired how much was wanted, and the soldier said that if he had a gold *tanka* he could get a certificate for his horse. The Sultan ordered his purse-bearer to give a *tanka* to the soldier." The trooper went to the Divan-i-Arz with the Ashrafi and paying it to the clerk concerned got the certificate.[1] He then returned and thanked the Sultan. Encouragement to corruption from the head of the State was a matter of concern. But what else could Afif say but that Firoz Shah was a very kind-hearted and affectionate Sultan.

Bribery, corruption and embezzlement were not practised only by clerks. Sometimes the highest nobles of the State indulged in them. The story of the deception of Kajar Shah, the Master of Mint, speaks for itself. It is so interesting that its incidents may be given in some detail.

Firoz Shah Tughlaq had issued several varieties of new coins and *shashgani* (or six-*jital*-piece) was one of them. As the coin went into circulation, it was reported to the Sultan by two courtiers that there was a deficiency of one grain of silver in the *shashgani*, and they prayed for an investigation. If what they had said was proved to be true, they pleaded, the officials responsible for debasement of the coin must take the consequences.

The Sultan naturally got annoyed and worried. He directed the Vazir, Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul, to take immediate steps to investigate the matter. Khan-i-Jahan was equally keen about an enquiry. Indeed he observed that the coinage of kings was like an unmarried girl (daughter), whom no one would seek after, however beautiful and charming she might be, if any

1. Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 301.

aspersion had, rightly or wrongly, been cast upon her character. So also was the case with the royal coins; if any one honestly or falsely alleged a debasement of the coinage, the insinuation would spread, the coinage would earn a bad name, and no one would take it.

The affair was as scandalous as it was unique. To hold an open investigation would have been a great mistake because the *bona fides* of the government itself were at stake. But the matter could not be passed over either, and therefore the Vazir decided on a secret investigation. To guard against the spreading of rumours, he ordered the confinement of the two informants. Accordingly the complainants were confined in the lock-up of the Finance Ministry (Divan-i-Vazarat),[1] and Khan-i-Jahan set about to test the veracity of the allegations. He sent secretly for Kajar Shah, the Master of Mint, and asked him if his officials had been covetous. The Prime Minister assured him that there was no intention of charging him (Kajar Shah) with the participation in the alleged crime, but he must inquire from his subordinates about the truth of the matter. Kajar Shah knew that his game was up. He went through the formality of making necessary enquiries, although he already knew that the coin was deficient in silver. At last he thought it best to make a clean breast of it to the Vazir.

The Sultan had insisted that the intrinsic value of the coin should be tested in his presence. Khan-i-Jahan could not displease the Sultan. But he also could not allow the government to get into disrepute, and now that he had known the truth, he thought it best to hush-up the case. Therefore, he recommended to Kajar Shah to arrange the matter over with the goldsmiths and they so manage their performance before the King that the deficiency of silver in the *shashgani* may not be known. The goldsmiths expressed their helplessness, arguing that unless some silver was smuggled into the room by some one else and they could make use of it while performing the test, they could not prove that the coin contained the correct quantum of silver. Kajar Shah then went to the charcoal dealers and told them how to smuggle silver into the palace-room.

1. Afif, p. 316.

A stove (*angusht*) was cleared in the middle, some silver pieces were placed in it, and its opening was sealed with wax.[1]

Next day Firoz Shah took his seat in a private apartment with Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul. Kajar Shah and his accusers were called in. The goldsmiths were also brought in with the barest clothing, so that they could not keep concealed any metal in their clothes or resort to any other trick. The charcoal dealers brought the stoves and placed them before the goldsmiths. Several *shashgani* pieces were placed in the crucible, which the goldsmiths put upon the fire. The Sultan meanwhile entered into a conversation with his minister, and while he was so engaged, the workmen adroitly picked up the pieces of silver from the bottom of the stove, and threw them into the melting pot.[2] After a while the crucible was taken off the fire and the contents were weighed ; and when the weight of the coin corresponded to the estimate, the *shashgani* was proved to be of full standard value. The informers were declared to be false accusers. Kajar Shah was presented with a robe of honour and other favours. Khan-i-Jahan then suggested that since Kajar Shah's integrity had been proved, he should be seated on an elephant and taken round the city so that people might understand that the *shashgani* was of full value. Kajar Shah was accordingly carried through the city in triumph, and the two accusers, having been proved false, were banished.

After some time, however, the Vazir got Kajar Shah dismissed on some other charge. He had saved a situation, but would not keep the corrupt Master of the Mint. However, one cannot but feel sorry for the two well-meaning informers who were punished for bringing a case of such flagrant corruption to the notice of the King. Kajar Shah's crime was unpardonable, but his confession surely mitigated it a little for Khan-i-Jahan

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1. This is the version in the Persian text, Afif, p. 348. Elliot's Ms. has "they (charcoal men) agreed to scoop out a piece of charcoal to introduce a few grains of silver, and to seal up the aperture with wax". E and D, III, p. 360.

2. Elliot has "threw into the melting pot the piece of charcoal which contained silver". E. and D. III, 360. Text (p. 348) has "Adriotly caught with a pair of tongs the pieces of silver".

Maqbul to award him a belated and secret punishment and in the eyes of the public he remained innocent.

Another great nobleman, Shamsuddin Abu Rija, the Auditor General (Mustaufi), had earned wide notoriety as a professional bribe-taker, embezzler and at that a tyrant. Shams Siraj Afif, historian contemporary of Firoz Shah, devotes thirty-five pages[1] to record the crimes of Abu Rija. The three years during which he held the office of the Auditor General his hand of greed extended to all officers, Zamindars and Amils. Those who gave him bribes, were permitted to go scot-free ; others who did not, were implicated by him on one charge or another and punished. Nobody dared to raise a voice against his criminal breach of trust or his atrocities, because he was a hot-favourite of the Sultan. Even before he was made the Mustaufi, he, as the deputy governor of Gujarat, had borrowed 90 thousand *tankas* from the Provincial Treasury for his own use, but had not refunded the amount. To hide his improper gains he had built a new mansion in Delhi and had buried underground thousands of gold Ashrafis. At last the Sultan could not keep his eyes closed to Shamsuddin's black deeds because a number of nobles, including the Khan-i-Jahan, son of Khan i-Jahan Maqbul, insisted that he should be brought to book. Shamsuddin's mansion was searched and his reserves of gold dug out. He was imprisoned and tortured so severely that he could never ride a horse again.[2]

But the one man who amassed probably the largest amount of wealth in the Sultanate period, escaped scot-free. This man was Bashir, a slave of Firoz Shah. He had originally come as a part of the dower of Firoz's mother. In course of time, and through the favour of Sultan Firoz, he rose into prominence and got the title of Imadul Mulk. His one passion was acquisition of wealth by any means. Soon he accumulated crors of *tankas*. Shams Siraj Afif writes that on one occasion gunny bags were required for containing the coin, and it was

1. Afif, pp. 457-492.
2. Barani, p. 352.
Strangely enough when Firoz's son Muhammad ascended the throne, he recalled Shamsuddin Abu Rija and reinstated him with all honours. Afif, p. 492.

estimated that 2,500 *tankas* would be expended in the purchase of the material, the cost of each bag being four *jitals*;[1] but Imadul Mulk objected to this extravagant outlay for bags and directed that pits should be dug in the ground and the money placed therein like as corn is stored. He had amassed thirteen cror *tankas* but he was greedy about acquiring more.[2]

Just imagine thirteen cror *tankas*. The total revenue of a year during Firoz's reign was six cror and seventy-five lac *tankas*,[3] and one individual slave of the Sultan (Bashir-i-Sultani) had acquired wealth amounting to two years' total revenue of the country. Could corruption go further ? "There were many rich Khans and Maliks in the time of Firoz Shah," writes Afif, "but no one was so rich as he ; indeed there never had been one so rich in any reign or in any kingdom."[4] Still the officers of the Revenue Department could not call him to account ; they were indeed afraid of him, for he was a favourite of the Sultan.

To please the Sultan, Imadul Mulk once presented him with a cror of *tankas* as a "small contribution for the use of the servants of the court." But twelve crors still remained with him. At his death, the Sultan ordered nine crors to be deposited in the State exchequer on the plea that "Bashir is my property, and so his property is mine." Three crors were left with Imadul Mulk's son Ishaq who also got the title of his father. Afif adds that Ishaq himself was an extremely rich man and did not stand in the need of his father's wealth.

The chronicler philosophizes by saying : "These nobles accumulated so much wealth by lawful and unlawful means (*vajeh na vajeh*), and then leaving it undertook the last journey where they were to account for all this wealth."[5] But such ill-

1. Afif, p. 439.
   The chronicler does not exaggerate. The wealth of Imadul Mulk was estimated at thirteen crors of *tankas*. A *tanka* would buy 12 bags at the average rate of 48 *jitals* to a *tanka*. 2,500 *tankas* would buy 30,000 bags and each bag would contain about 4,350 coins or one maund and 14 seers of silver in bullion.
2. Afif, pp. 440-41.
3. *Ibid*., p. 94.
4. *Ibid*, p. 440.
5. *Ibid*, p. 440.

gotten gains at least created havoc in this world, because, according to Afif himself, "much of the trouble that came about in the time of Sultan Muhammad (son of Firoz) was due to the accumulation of such wealth in the hands of a few nobles."[1]

Thus there was corruption in the army, in civil-administration and in the minting of coinage. Hoarding, black-marketing and bribery were commonly practised. Even the judiciary was not free from corruption, and that too during the reign of a strong and cruel monarch like Alauddin. Talking of Qazi Hamiduddin Multani, Ziyauddin Barani cryptically remarks, "it would not be proper to write about his qualities in history." He also says that not "the godfearing and abstemious, but corruptible, greedy and mundane" people were appointed as judges.[2] His one complaint was that judges used to stretch the meaning of the Quranic texts to carry out the wishes of the Sultans.[3] The indictment of Maulana Shamsuddin Turk on the judiciary of the day too is worth citing. The Maulana who hailed from Egypt, addressed a letter to Alauddin saying that "ill-fated wiseacres of black faces sat in mosques with abominable law books and made money by cheating both the accuser and the accused, and the Qazis.....did not bring these facts to the notice of the king."[4] It is said that Shamsuddin Turk was opposed to Qazi Hamiduddin, and therefore wrote in such a way, but in *Mutla-i-Anvar*, Amir Khusrau also observes that the Qazis were ignorant of the principles of law. The appointment of Ibn Battuta, who did not know a word of law, as the Qazi of the capital by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, came to him as the greatest surprise.

Having studied some prominent cases of bribery, corruption, hoarding, and black-marketing in medieval times, let us analyse their genesis and their prominent aspects. It is clear that corruption had nothing much to do with poverty or a low standard of living. During Balban's rule the nobility and army-

1. Afif, p. 440.
   For the troubles of the post-Firoz decade see Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, pp. 2-6.
2. Barani, p. 446
3. *Ibid.*, p. 446.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

men, who could not or would not perform their duties for which lands had been granted to them, were not poor. But they wanted their privileges to continue ; about performing their duties they were not concerned. Fakhruddin, the Kotwal, who pleaded their case with the king was moved as much by compassion as by self-interest. He was himself old and in course of time stood to lose all privileges if the orders of Balban were not amended. The people who minted counterfeit coins found in the token currency of Muhammad bin Tughlaq a challenge to their intelligence and ingenuity, and took advantage of the golden opportunity provided by it to get rich. The officials of the Divan-i-Arz who took a gold *tanka* for issuing the fitness certificate to the cavalryman in the days of Firoz Tughlaq, or the drinkers, distillers and smugglers of wine in Alauddin's days, were habituated to doing it. They could not give up their habit or change their attitude. The shiqdars or officers who embezzled the money advanced to them for cultivation by Muhammad bin Tughlaq again were not poor. The people who minted debased currency, the wholesalers and retailers who indulged in hoarding and black-marketing, men like Kajar Shah and Bashir Sultani, did not do what they did because they were poor, but because they were opportunists. True, the corrupt revenue collectors of Alauddin's days were not highly paid servants, but they were as corrupt as the Khuts and Muqaddams whom they had succeeded. The object of the poor was to get rich, of the rich to get richer.

Thus self-interest, ingenuity and intelligence, opportunism, force of habit, the desire to amass wealth, etc., kept the torch of corruption burning. But how could corruption flourish in the time of such strong rulers who, but for Firoz Tughlaq, can even be called tyrants ? Balban's strictness and the fear he inspired in the hearts of men through his army of spies is well-known. Alauddin has been called 'Pharaoh' by his contemporary chronicler. About Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Ibn Battuta writes that not a day passed at his court when some one was not awarded capital punishment. The espionage network of those days with hundreds of Barids and Munhiyans reporting the slightest irregularities to the kings should have stamped out corruption. The ever vigilant Muhtasibs, who could even enter

the houses of the people to keep their morals straight, would have completed the work of the spies. And the barbarous punishments of medieval times, which are well-known and need not be described here, should have made the culprits shudder.

And yet corruption was there, well-grounded. The reason was that even autocrats could not always behave as autocrats, and in matters of government there is above all laws the law of expediency. The way the Prime Minister Khan-i-Jahan dealt with the case of Kajar Shah is illustrative of this. Corruption in medieval India could not be stamped out because it was perhaps never meant to be stamped out, for after all "kingship (or government) is a combination of terror, strictness and kindness, and it is only maintained by (resorting to) these contradictory principles."[1]

1. Barani, p. 168. *Majmua-i-badshahi qaher va sitvat va lutf ast, va badshahi ba ausaf-i-mutzada qaem mimanad.*

FIVE

HALDIGHATI AND AFTER

"Had Mewar possessed her Thucydides or her Xenophon," writes Col. Tod, the illustrious historian of Rajasthan, "neither the wars of the Peloponnesus nor the retreat of the 'ten thousand' would have yielded more diversified incidents" for Clio than the heroic deeds of the people of Mewar under Rana Pratap Singh Sisodia. The annals of Mewar are replete with accounts of battles memorable, but few were perhaps so momentous as the battle of Haldighati. Here, about four centuries ago, the might of the great Mughal came in clash with undaunted Rajput heroism and it was here clearly shown that the vanquished was greater than the victor.

If governments can claim to be popular, Akbar's certainly was one. Towards this enlightened despot some brave Rajputs extended their hand of co-operation. Some others defied him. Rajputana stood divided in its attitude towards the Great Mughal. The House of Amber (Jaipur) was for co-operation with Akbar, the House of Mewar (Udaipur) was against it.

Great politicians were these Amberites. They measured their strength with that of the Mughal Emperor and found that defiance would mean their destruction. Co-operation was the only course open and they decided to befriend the Mughal. Raja Bihari Mal of Amber pledged his loyalty to Akbar, and a few months later cemented it with blood by marrying his daughter to the Emperor. Later on his son Bhagwant Das and his grandson Man Singh secured high positions in the imperial service.

Such matrimonial alliances were doubly blessed. To the Emperor it meant the conversion of a possible foe into a certain friend. For the Rajput chief it meant removal of fear of an attack from the Emperor, and if aggression threatened from

any other quarter, he could bank upon the support of Agra. A daughter married to the Emperor was the Raja's ambassador of goodwill as also his spy of unimpeachable credentials through whom the father could collect all the information about the imperial palace, capital and court. Moreover, the girls were hardly married to the Emperor, who had dozens of wives and hundreds of concubines ; they were married to the Imperial throne.

Say what one might, Bihari Mal's marrying his daughter to Akbar was an act of great statesmanship. In the words of Dr. Beni Prasad, author of the *History of Jahangir*, this alliance "symbolized the dawn of a new era in Indian Politics ; it gave the country a line of remarkable sovereigns." Many a Rajput house had created a precedent for Bihari Mal, and many others followed his example. All this was also the cause and the effect of Akbar's generosity and tolerance. By his generous politics Akbar was enabled to secure the services of these bravest of warriors. This class of Rajputs vied with one another in promoting the glory of the Empire.

It might have been politic, but in the eyes of many contemporaries the offering of the daughter's hand in marriage appeared to be an ignominious surrender. The Sisodias of Mewar spurned such an alliance. Unable to think of "the degradation of uniting his family with the Tartar" or to accept Mughal suzereignty, Maharana Pratap of Mewar resolved to redeem the honour of his race.

Every High School boy knows the story of how Raja Man Singh of Amber went to pay a visit to Rana Pratap, but was deeply offended when the latter excused himself from dining with him. A threat of attack from Man Singh only elicited an incisive but indiscreet taunt from some one that while invading Mewar he should bring his *phupha* Akbar along with him.

The matter duly reported might well have been an excuse for Akbar's exasperation ; but even if the incident at the dinner party had not taken place, it is too much to believe that Chittor would have escaped the attack of the Great Mughal ; for Akbar was a born imperialist and he would not have left a small state like Chittor unsubdued when he had carried his arms from

Bengal to Gujarat and from Kabul to Ahmadnagar. V. Smith rightly observes that the Rana's "patriotism was his offence."

Thus against Akbar was pitted the Rana of Mewar, a prince who never found rest in his life. He had succeeded to the throne in 1572. Already in 1567 Pratap's father Udai Singh had suffered defeat at the hands of Akbar. Since then Chittor and the eastern part of Mewar had come in the possession of the Mughals. Rana Pratap knew that Akbar would not rest content until the whole of Mewar was subdued and that a clash with the Mughal would mean a fight not only against the Emperor but also against his loyal Rajput chiefs. Aware of the danger, Rana Pratap had taken refuge in the western hills and forests of his dominion dominated by the rock fortress of Kumbhalgarh (or Kamalmer) and had made his base at Gogunda, a town 16 miles north-west of Udaipur. He had taken steps to tone up the administration, reform the army and repair the forts. But the invasion came too soon, only four years after his succession.

In April 1576 Akbar sent Raja Man Singh and Asaf Khan Qazvini against Rana Pratap. The royal forces arrived via Mandalgarh, lying east of Mewar, between Bundi and Chittor. Their march was directed to the hill-fortress of Gogunda to save which the Rana had stationed his horsemen at the pass of Haldighati, some twelve miles north-east of Gogunda. The pass situated at the base of a neck of mountain shut up the valley and made it inaccessible. On the cliffs overlooking the field of battle were stationed Bhil and Lohia tribesmen with their deadly bows and arrows and huge stones to roll upon the enemy. Down below the Rana was posted with the flower of Mewar and the crimson banner. Clan after Clan had come to follow his example. Hakim Khan Sur, the disgruntled Afghan, too was with them. Ram Singh, Prince of Gwalior exiled by Babur, had joined the Rana with his three sons. The force under Rana Pratap counted, according to Muslim sources, three thousand horsemen ; that of the imperialists five thousand cavalry.

Man Singh's army was stationed outside the pass. The battle was fought on June 21, 1576, close to the village of Khamnaur at the entrance of the pass. The fight started in the morning. For some hours the day appeared to be going

in favour of the Rana. Shortly after mid-day "when the air grew like furnace" Man Singh's rear guard changed the situation. The combatants grappled with one another so fiercely that the bewildered Badaoni asked Asaf Khan how he could distinguish between his own and the enemy Rajputs. Asaf's reply was short but significant. "Shoot at whomsoever you chose", said he, "on whichever side they may be killed, it will be a gain to Islam".

The tragedy of Indian military history has been that on many occasions leaders have hoped to succeed against musketry through sheer force of numbers. Man can fight against man, not against cannon. Ibrahim Lodi thought of winning the battle of Panipat against Babur's guns just because his army was ten times that of his adversary. Later in the day the Bhonslas of Nagpur committed the same mistake. Similarly at Haldighati the valour of the Sisodias, already lesser in numbers than the adversary, proved of no avail against a force with "numerous field artillery". Rana Pratap fought with exemplary courage and of the three thousand Rajputs who had assembled that day, only a little more than half left the field alive. In the darkness of the evening, the wounded Rana left the field on his favourite Chetak. The loss of the imperialists was not heavy, but they were too tired to pursue.

Maharana Pratap had lost the battle, but not his spirit. Soon after he reoccupied Gogunda and Kumbhalgarh from where he concentrated on cutting supplies to the Mughal occupation forces. In October, Akbar marched in person against the Rana. He took Gogunda and sent Bhagwant Das and Man Singh in pursuit of Rana Pratap, but the latter remained untraced and unsubdued. The Rana's confederates suffered from Akbar's revenge, but Pratap, even in his isolation, remained undaunted. Later on he recovered all Mewar except Mandalgarh and Chittor, which had been occupied by Akbar after a barbarous massacre.

During his latter years of life the Rana was left undisturbed. The body was growing weak, but the spirit was unbroken. His nearest associates and the Bhil and Lohia tribals had taken a vow not to return to Chittor until it had regained independence. They would not eat in plates, but only on leaves.

They would not sleep in bed, but only on the ground. They would renounce all comforts till their motherland was freed.

Then an incident happened, as if Providence would not bear to see the Rajput lie low. In 1597 the Maharana, worn out by years of exertion, lay dying in an unknown hut on the banks of the Peshola (site of the present palace of Udaipur). His generals were in attendance by his bedside, when suddenly the Rana's face saddened and he seemed visibly moved. The cause of his anguish was the reaction of his son to a minor injury. As prince Amar was once entering a hut, he was struck by a bamboo projecting from the thached roof. His forehead got scratched and the Rana recollected the emotion on the prince's face and Pratap's eyes wetted.

"What aileth thee, Sire, that thy soul departeth not in peace ?" asked Salumber.

"It lingers," replied the master, "for a pledge that this country shall not be abandoned to the Turk."

The Rana then related the incident which had guided his estimate of his son and exclaimed : "These sheds will give place to sumptuous dwellings, thus generating the love of ease ; and luxury with its concomitants will ensue, to which the independence of Mewar, which we have bled to maintain, will be sacrificed : and you, my chiefs, will follow the pernicious example."

The chiefs, full of tears in their eyes, pledged "by the throne of Bappa Rawal" that they would ever cherish the freedom of Mewar, and untill that was recovered, comfort would be like poison unto them.

The Rana's soul departed in peace. The Rajputs redeemed their pledge. Their deeds of valour in their direst hours will ever be remembered by every Indian with reverence and pride. They fought against the mightiest Empire of their day, and there was a time when Pratap's son had to negotiate with Akbar's son for a compromise. But the bravest amongst them had left their homes to return to them only when Mewar had regained independence. That day was not destined to come in their life-time. It was not to come for decades, for generations, for centuries. But one day it was to come.

Four hundred years after, this land of the heroes, which

had witnessed the struggle of Pratap and the vengeance of Akbar, witnessed another procession symbolising the spirit of man. In March, 1955, Jawaharlal Nehru, more magnificent than Pratap in his humility, more powerful than Akbar in his simplicity, led the descendants of these valiant warriors back to their homes in independent Chittor in independent India. Step by step he led them back to their once desecrated and deserted homes and resettled them in the land their fore-fathers had been forced to forsake. All this reads like a fairy tale, but it is history. And the history of Mewar has a moral to teach : the spirit of man is enbending, unconquerable.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

ONE

CHANGING PATTERN OF SOCIETY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA[1]

In most of the modern historical works on Medieval India, the social life of the people is so treated as to give an impression that it was static and unchanging. It is studied, generally speaking, under sub-heads like 'food and drink', 'dress and clothes', 'manners and customs', 'religious ceremonies and festivals', 'position of women', etc., etc., as if for seven hundred years (A.D. 1000-1700) there was no change in the social order. There is, however, a belief that the condition of the people, particularly of the Hindus, was very bad during the Turkish period, but it improved under the Mughals. But all that glitters is not gold, and even in the Mughal times, if many were happy, some indeed felt miserable. On the other hand shadows are always accompanied by light, and the Turkish period after all was not as bad as commonly believed.

However, from the study of contemporary medieval works one thing becomes menifestly clear. And it is that medieval society was not static ; it was changing, evolving, progressing. The speed of change was not so great as today, nor so slow as in the paleolithic or neolithic times. But the change was clearly perceptible. This change becomes particularly noticeable when we make a comparative study of works like Alberuni's *India*, Ibn Battuta's *Rehla*, Shihabuddin Abul Abbas's *Masalik-ul-Absar fi Mamalik-ul-Amsar*, al-Qalqashindi's *Subh-ul Asha*, Vidyapati's *Kirtilata* and Babur's *Memoirs*. Besides, the accounts of various western visitors like Athnasius Nikitin, Nicolo Conti, Abdur Razzaq, Santo Stefano, Barbosa and

1. Delivered as a talk at the Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, July, 1964.

others and the contemporary Persian chronicles of the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries also throw sufficient light on the changing pattern of society in the middle ages.

Alberuni has to say a lot about the greatness of the Hindus in the field of religion, philosophy, science and arts. This greatness to him was of a bygone age. The society he came across in India in the eleventh century was conservative and caste-ridden. A fact mentioned by him needs special notice. In the battles between Mahmud of Ghazni and Indian rulers, prisoners of war were captured by both sides. Some prisoners managed to escape from captivity, or, when treaties were concluded, they were released. Repatriated Muslim prisoners were received by their co-religionists with open arms, but the fate of Hindu prisoners released by the Muslims was very different. They could not regain their caste and would not be accepted back into the Hindu fold.[1] This rigid Brahmin position might not have been commonly accepted, but it definitely points to a diseased society. Whatsoever the other causes of the success of the Turks in India, such a society could not have withstood the onslaughts of any invaders. No wonder that in about fifteen years' time (1192-1206) the major cities of northern India—from Sindh to Bengal—had been captured by the Turkish conquerors.

Now this society changes. If there was any indifference on the part of the people, contributing to the success of the early Turkish invaders, it gradually disappears. The Indians take stock of the situation and begin to play a significant role in political life. They determine to fight back and reassert their rights and privileges in regions where Turkish invaders become rulers. As a result of this, throughout the early medieval period, provinces and districts frequently change hands between Hindu and Muslim rulers and Dr. A.B.M. Habibullah's *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* cites numerous Hindu inscriptions proclaiming victory. In day-to-day life the Hindus refuse to accept any inferior type of citizenship and resent any religious or political disabilities. Jalaluddin and Alauddin Khalji complained about the pride with which the Hindus

1. Alberuni, Sachau, II, p. 163.

dressed in white, rode on horseback and went about nonchalantly.[1]

Alberuni in the eleventh century talks of the Hindu social order as decadent, but Timur in the fourteenth century claims to have attacked India because the Hindus were very powerful here. The Hindus who had been swept and 'scattered' in the early years of Muslim conquest had rallied and reasserted their power. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the Hindus were very powerful indeed, and if Babur had to fight Ibrahim Lodi he had also to deal with Rana Sangram Singh, as strong if not more powerful than the Lodi monarch. Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir* talks contemptuously of the Hindus. In the years that followed the Hindus could not be treated with contempt either as friends or foes. Ziyauddin Barani's fulminations against them are only indicative of his impotent rage.

In the social sphere again, there are far reaching changes. Alberuni was struck by the fact that because of caste restrictions even a soldier taken prisoner by the Muslims lost his caste and religion for ever and under no circumstances could he regain them. But in the new situation created by the Turkish invasions, this rigid position is appreciably relaxed. From the Hindu works on Dharma and polity of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it becomes clear that regaining of caste, purity and reconversion could be possible for the Hindus by undergoing some fasts and penance[2]. The *Devala smriti* permitted not only men but even women who had been captured by the *mlekshas* as prisoners, to return to the Hindu fold.[3] Professor Sri Ram Sharma enumerates a number of cases of "conversion and reconversion to Hinduism" in a small brochure of the same title.[4] But the most interesting fact is that Firoz Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodi punished some Brahmins who had converted Muslims to Hinduism. A society, which in the time of

1. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 216-17, 291.
2. B.P. Mazumdar, *The Socio-Economic History of Northern India* (K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960), pp.131-33.
3. *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, 1927, pp. 166-67. Trans. of *Devala* by Manmathnath Ray, verses 47-52.
4. D.A.V. College Historical Series, No. 2, Lahore.

Alberuni was not prepared to accept back Hindus who had even once eaten with the *mlekshas*, was in latter years converting Muslims to Hinduism. This was a revolutionary change indeed.

Hindu learning suffered in the early days of Muslim onslaughts. Alberuni graphically and truthfully points out: "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed those 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. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment from both political and religious sources."[1]

Such was the position in Mahmud of Ghazni's time, full of vandalism on the part of the Turks and full of hatred on the part of the Indians. Even later on such destruction and consequent bitterness went on apace. In his days Alberuni had the opportunity of conversing with Pandits at places like Peshawar and Multan in the north and west, of procuring their help and of buying books in these places.[2] But later on the Hindus left these cities desecrated or destroyed by Muslim arms.[3] Later on Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar destroyed the monastic Universities of Odantapuri, Nalanda and Vikramsila, and their scholars fled to Orissa, South India, Benares and even to as far-off places as Nepal, Tibet and China. The Tibetan scholar Dharmaswamin (Chaglo-tsa-ba) mentions another wave of invasion in the time of Iltutmish and sack of Nalanda, Gaya and Vaisali, and the same tale of flight of scholars was repeated.[4] No wonder he found no trace of the Vikramsila University in the early part of the thirteenth century.

But this onslaught on the Hindu centres of education did not

1. Alberuni, I, p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*, xv, I, p. 24.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (1951), pp. 241-46.

emasculate Hindu learning. The large number of books written in Sanskrit throughout the medieval period bear witness to the fact that high classical learning in the middle ages never died out. But the onslaughts of the Muslim conquerors on the centres of classical learning resulted in many unexpected developments as years went by. In the first place Persian was patronized by the Muslim ruling circles and a new language was added to the wealth of Indian literature. In the second place, when passions had settled down, Muslim rulers themselves got many Sanskrit works translated into Persian, not only on fable and fiction alone, but also on music, medicine and other sciences. But the Muslim rulers could not possibly be truly interested in the Sanskrit language which they did not understand.[1] Therefore they patronized local languages in the various regions of the country as and when their rule extended to those parts of the country. It is a well-known fact that Bengali, Avadhi, Brajbhasha, Maithili, Gujarati etc. developed as much through services of the Vaishnava saints as because of the patronage of rulers. From Amir Khusrau to Vidyapati and from Malik Muhammad Jaisi to Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan there were a large number of Muslim poets composing in Hindi and other languages. Similarly, in course of time, many Hindus became scholars of the Persian language. In the light of this development, Alberuni's assertion that "the Hindus believe that their is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no sciences like theirs"[2] soon became an anachronism. Hindu literary society was undergoing a great change from the day the Turks set foot on Indian soil. Subjects of study, centres of study, languages of study were all undergoing a rapid change.

In the early years of Muslim rule there was mutual suspicion and dislike between the Hindus and Muslims because of the nature of the Muslim conquest referred to by Alberuni.

1. E.g. Amir Khusrau in *Nuh Sipehr* : "They (the Hindus) have four books ...Their name is Bed (*Vedas*). They contain stories of their gods, but little advantage can be derived from their perusal."

E and D, III, p. 563.

2. Alberuni, I, p. 22.

The Muslims treated the Hindus with contempt[1] and the Hindus hated the Muslims.[2] This hatred took time to go, perhaps it was not completely wiped out. If in the fourteenth century a scholar like Ziyauddin Barani could hate the Hindus, Vidyapati, a poet of Mithila, could pay the compliment back if not with as much venom at least with equal measure of sarcasm. Barani's ideas about the Hindus put through the mouth of Qazi Mughisuddin are too well-known to be restated here, but let us see what Vidyapati has got to say. The picture of hate and spite given by Vidyapati in *Kirtilata* and also referred to in *Purush Pariksha* makes an interesting reading. Vidyapati writes: "And what should I say of the judgment of the Qazi, one's own wife becomes another's... Somewhere a certain Musalman catches hold of someone going on the way. He catches hold of a Brahman boy and sacrifices a calf over his forehead. He builds a mosque after breaking a temple... He treats the Hindus with contempt. Even a young Musalman shows his rage and attacks (the Hindu). It appears on seeing the Turks that they would swallow the whole lot of the Hindus."[3] Talking about the army of Islam, Vidyapati says: "Sometimes they eat only raw flesh. Their eyes are red with the intoxication of wine... (They) take into custody all the women of the enemy's city...Wherever they happen to pass in that very place the ladies of the Raja's house begin to be sold in the market... They used to set fire to the villages. They turned out the women (from their homes) and killed the children. Loot was their (source of) income. They thrived on injustice and earned name from war (*kshay*). Neither did they have pity on the weak nor did they fear the strong. Neither did they have travelling expenses nor a (married) woman at home. They were neither ashamed of themselves nor had they anything to do with righteousness... They never kept their promise... They were neither desirous of good name, nor did they fear bad name..."[4]

1. Alberuni, I, p. 185. K. S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, (Bombay, 1963), p. 287.
2. Alberuni, I, pp. 19-22.
3. *Kirtilata*, (Indian Press, Allahabad), pp. 42-44.
4. Ibid., pp. 70-72.

Such references of dislike and even hatred one finds from the days of Alberuni to those of Babur and beyond. There is no need to shut one's eyes to them. And Alberuni's analysis that this dislike of each other "received more and more nourishment from both political and religious sources", seems to be correct. But the people could not live on dislike all the time. In the social sphere, with mutual suspicion, mutual understanding and fellow-feeling also developed side by side. The very fact that Hindus and Muslims had to live together, rounded off many of the suspicions and angularities of both the communities. The Muslims in the South had not come as conquerors, and had soon spread out on the Malabar coast In the North also there were many colonies of the Muslims prior to the time of Mahmud of Ghazni himself. Ibn Asir records that 'there were Musalmans' in the area around Benaras since the time of Subuktigin.[1] This is attested to by the Lama historian Taranatha.[2] Contact between the two communities could not be avoided. Indeed it became imperative and even perhaps welcome when wave after wave of immigrants as traders and conquerors began pouring in India.

In course of time, conversions to Islam, activity of Sufi saints and Hindu Yogis, and the sheer fact of Hindus and Muslims living together were bringing about changes in the Indian social set-up. The converted Muslims always remained half-Hindus ; they could not entirely snap their connections with their relatives nor forgot their traditions and customs. Naturally they, and with them other Muslims, participated in the Hindu festivals and *vice versa*. The Muslims indeed adopted some of the festivals of the Hindus. The Shab-i-Barat is said to have been adopted from Shivaratri, as fireworks are common in both. Taking out of Taziyas in Muharram is probably an adaptation from the Jagannath Rathyatra, Krishna Lila and Mahanadi festivals.

Hindu soldiers took up service under Muslim rulers and

1. *Kam Tawarikh*, E and D, II, p. 251.
2. *Indian Antiquary*, IV, 1875, p. 366. Taranatha wrote in the 16th century.

Muslims under Hindu kings.[1] No longer did the touch of the Muslim pollute the Hindu and the Muslim also learnt to live in peace with his non-Muslim neighbour. When Timur attacked India, Hindus and Musalmans all stood up to a man to fight him wherever he went. "The days of Mahmud Ghazni were a story of the past, and Timur met resistance everywhere. At Tulamba, Ajodhan, Deopalpur, Bhatnir, Meerut and Delhi—nay everywhere—the Hindus and the Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder against the invader."[2] Throughout the early middle ages there are instances of Hindu princes giving shelter to Muslim nobles.[3]

Indeed Indian society was rapidly changing after Alberuni's time. Hindus no longer called the Muslims *mlekshas* ; no Muslim writer after him mentions this word. On the contrary they tried to understand the Muslims and *vice versa*. The Muslims belonging to the ruling class as they did, could not say that the Hindus and Muslims were equal. Therefore the mantle of uniting the two communities fell on the shoulders of the Hindus. From Namdeva to Kabir and Nanak, there appeared a large number of saint reformers who undertook the task of national integration. Because of their teachings tremendous changes came about in the social order. The very institution of caste, which was an inalienable part of the Hindu society and which was quite rigid in Alberuni's days, began to be suspected by a large section of the Hindus by the fifteenth century, and its rigidity wore off. Similar was the case with idol worship—many people gave it up altogether. The lower classes among the Hindus began to be treated in a better way. Withal, because of the teachings of the socio-religious reformers Hindus and Muslims began to come closer to one another. The result of all this was as expected. Niamatullah, writing about Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (late fifteenth century) says that the Raja was of such cosmopolitan views that the Hindus considered him to be a Hindu and the Muslims

1. Barani, T.F.S., pp. 255-57.
   Amir Khusrau, *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, Habib Trs., pp. 26-27.
   Masalik-ul-Absar, E and D, III, p. 576.
   Muslim contingents in the Vijayanagar Empire are well-known.
2. K. S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, pp. 42-43.
3. Ibid., pp. 210-211.

a Muslim.[1] Ibn Battuta did not come across such people, Alberuni could not even have visualized such a society.

Influence of Muslim new-comers on Hindu society and *vice versa* brought about tremendous changes in dress and manners, food habits, and indeed in every sphere of social life. Only a few examples will suffice to conjure up this change.

The Hindus used to dress scantily. Usually they wore *dhotis* which made Alberuni declare : "They use turbans for trousers."..... "but those who like much dress wear trousers lined with...much cotton" and *kurtas* and headdress.[2] Also both Barani and Ibn Battuta say that the Hindus preferred white clothes.[3] Later on from the description of dresses manufactured in the Karkhanas as given by Afif and al-Qalqashindi, and for the matter of that available in Alauddin's markets, clothes seem to have been made of many colours and varieties. The description of al-Qalqashindi about "the dress of the people in this country" is fascinating indeed[4]. A novel feature was that saints could now be seen in very fine clothes. Hindu ascetics wore only a loin-cloth or put on a simple sheet of unsewn cloth round themselves. But Muslim saints dressed well, often in long-flowing silk robes. Shaikh Qutbuddin Saiyyad Husain Kirmani used to put on garments of the finest Chinese silks and Kamkhwabs, and his mouth was ever full of *pan*.[5] Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya also used to relish betel.[6] Was not all this a great change in the habits of the people ?

Again, Alberuni saw the Hindus eating alone. "The Hindus eat singly, one by one," says he. ..."They do not make use of remainder of a meal."[7] Ibn Battuta also came across such people in Sindh. "The people known by the name of Samirah," he notes, "do not eat with any one, and no one

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1. *Makhzan-i-Afghani*, B.M. Ms., fol. 78 b.
2. Alberuni, I, p. 180.
3. Barani, pp. 216-17 ; Ibn Battuta, (Mahdi Husain) pp. xlvii, 33.
4. *Subh-ul-Asha*, pp. 51, 69-71.
5. *Siyar-ul-Auliya* (Urdu translation, Lahore), p. 188.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 125. Also *Rahatul-Qulub* (Urdu translation), p. 3.
7. Alberuni, I, p. 180.

must look at them when they eat."[1] Obviously in such a society there could have been no inns, tuck-shops or hotel-like establishments. But with the coming of the Muslims, and in cities where they had settled in large numbers, 'flour-mills,' 'ovens and curriers' began to be found in every quarter,[2] and bread, meat and meat-soup were easily available in shops. In Balban's time baked bread used to sell at two seers for a *jital*.[3] al-Qalqashindi cites Khojandi as saying: "I and my three friends ate beef, bread, and melted butter *ghi* for one *jital* in some places of Delhi till we were satisfied."[4] Obviously public bakeries and cook houses, precursors of modern hotels, had sprung up in the 13th and 14th centuries. This was a great change and yet Babur on arrival in India was not satisfied. He complains that in India there was no good flesh, no grapes or musk-melons,...no ice or cold water, no good food or bread in the bazars..."[5] During the time of the Mughals these deficiencies were removed and many more items of food added.[6]

These are only a few examples of how rapidly Indian social life was undergoing a change. No wonder that when Babur arrived in India he found "everything in Hindustan is in the Hindustani way", neither Hindu nor Muslim. This was not the India which Alberuni or even Ibn Battuta could foresee. Indian society rapidly changed in the early middle ages and the impact of this change was felt in all spheres of life—political, religious, social and cultural.

1. E and D, III, p. 589.
2. *Masalik-ul-Absar*, E and D, III, p. 575. Also al-Qal., p. 30.
3. Hasan Sijzi, *Fawaid-ul-Fuad* (Urdu trs. Lahore), p. 100.
4. Al-Qal., pp. 56-57.
5. *Babur Nama*, Trs. Mrs. Beveridge, p. 518.
6. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 258.

TWO

IDEAS LEADING TO THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE INDIAN PEASANTRY IN MEDIEVAL TIMES[1]

A study of the contemporary indigenous sources and accounts of foreign travellers leads one to the conclusion that the condition of the peasantry in India by the seventeenth century had become deplorable. Up to the fourteenth century their economic condition was not bad. This is borne out by the evidence provided by foreign and Indian writers from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. None of them talks about poverty, on the contrary they give an impression of the well-being of the tillers of the soil. Alberuni has said many things about the Hindus, but nowhere does he say that the people were living in suffering or want. Ibn Battuta, Shihabuddin Abbas Ahmad, the author of *Masalik-ul-Absar*, al-Qalqashindi, the author of *Subh-ul-Asha*, Amir Khusrau and Shams Siraj Afif even talk of the prosperity of the people. Even Barani is impressed with their wealth and conveys this impression when he feels delighted at the action the government of Alauddin Khalji took against rich landlords and cultivators.[2]

1. Read at a Seminar on 'Ideas motivating Social and Cultural Movements and Economic and Political Policies during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries in India," held at Delhi University, 15-18 November, 1965.

2. Only a few examples of this prosperity may be cited. Shihabuddin says : "The general food of the Indians is beef and goat's flesh.. it was a mere matter of habit, for in all the villages of India there are sheep in thousands." E and D, III, p. 583.

Ibn Battuta says : "When they have reaped the autumn harvest, they sow spring grains in the same soil in which autumn grains had been sown, for their country is excellent and the soil is fertile. As for rice they sow it three times a year....." (Mahdi Husain Trs. p. 19).

Afif writing about the prosperity of Orissa at the time of Firoz

(*Continued on next page*)

But by the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries conditions are quite different. They change to such an extent that almost all foreign and many Indian writers are struck by the poverty of the Indian peasant and do not fail to write about it. Athnasius Nikitin, Varthema, Barbosa, Paes, Nuniz, Linschoten, Salbank, Hawkins, Jourdain, Sir Thomas Roe, Terry and a host of others all talk of the grinding poverty of the Indian people. It will serve no purpose to cite from each one of them, but one or two quotations may be given as specimens to convey the general trend of their impression. Pelsaert, a Dutch visitor during Jahangir's reign, observes: "The common people (live in) poverty so great and miserable that the life of the people can be depicted or accurately described only as the home of stark want and the dwelling place of bitter woe.....their houses are built of mud with thatched roofs. Furniture there is little or none, except some earthenware pots to hold water and for cooking....."[1] Salbank, writing of people between Agra and Lahore of about the same period, says that the "plebian sort is so poor that the greatest part of them go naked."[2] These two quotations will suffice to show how miserable the common people in the middle of the seventeenth century were. Although not every word of these foreign writers can be accepted literally, yet one is led to the inescapable conclusion that the condition

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(*Continued from previous page*)

Tughlaq's invasion says: "The country of Jajnagar was very happy and prosperous. It was in a very flourishing state, and the abundance of corn and fruit supplied the wants of the army...the numbers of animals of every kind were so great that no one cared to take them... Sheep were found in such countless numbers..." Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Persian text, pp. 165-66. Also pp. 180, 295.

For prosperity in the Deccan see:

Kincaid and Parasnis, *A History of the Maratha People*, I, p. 37.

Yule, *Ser Marco Polo*, II, p. 323. Wassaf, Bombay text, pp. 521-31.

About the prosperity of Vijayanagar countryside see Abdur Razzaq in *Mutla-ur-Sadain*, E and D, IV, pp. 105-6.

Also Barani; and Ferishtah, Lucknow text, p. 120.

1. Francisco Pelsaert *Jahangir's India*, translated by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 60-61.
2. Quoted in Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (Macmillan, London, 1920), pp. 268-69.

of the peasantry in India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was far from satisfactory.

It is pertinent to ask how the peasant during this period was reduced to such straits. India of the medieval times was mainly agricultural, and histories and legends of the times do not tire of singing in praise of the wealth and glory of the Great Mughals. Then how did the peasant become so miserably poor? Were there any ideas and actions of rulers which led to the impoverishment of the agriculturists? Also, were there any ideas of the peasants themselves which taught them to reconcile themselves to their lot and did not prompt them to fight against their economic disablement? Contemporary chronicles do betray the existence of such ideas. That these have not yet been analysed by historians, does not mean that these ideas were not there. An attempt is being made here to discover such ideas and their effects. It may, however, be pointed out, that this attempt is exploratory rather than conclusive. Also, since here only ideas and motives leading to the impoverishment of the peasantry will be discussed, other ideas, sometimes counter-balancing these, will not find a mention.

To find the roots of the miserable condition of the agriculturists in the seventeenth century, one has naturally to look back to earlier times, and indeed, at the very nature of the Turkish conquest of India beginning with the thirteenth century. In the history of Muslim conquest, a unique phenomenon was witnessed in India. Contrary to the happening in Central Asia, Persia or Afghanistan, India could not be completely conquered, nor were its people converted to the Islamic faith. On the other hand, a perennial resistance to the Turkish rule in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries is clearly borne out by the records of the times. If Muslim chroniclers lay claim to unqualified victories for their Turkish kings, Dr. A.B.M. Habibullah, in his *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*[1] cites a large number of inscriptions of Hindu kings who too lay exaggerated claim to military successes. One thing which is clear beyond doubt is that throughout the Sultanate period (and also the Mughal period), in one region or the other of the country, the authority of the Sultanate was being openly challenged.

1. Lahore, 1945.

Naturally the Turkish kings thought of every possible means to suppress the recalcitrant elements. Besides other things, one idea that struck Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) was that it was 'wealth' which couraged defiance and provided means of 'revolt'. He and his advisers thought that if people could be impoverished, "no one could even have time to pronounce the word 'rebellion.' "[1]

This idea of impoverishing the potential rebels was clearly entertained against Rajas, nobles, rich zamindars etc, who could gather means to rise against the royal authority, but the measures Alauddin undertook to effect this impoverishment were progressively directed against almost all sections of the population, including the poorest of the peasants. He deprived the nobles of all land-grants held as *milk* (property), in *inam* (reward) and *waqf* (gift), and resumed them into the Khalisa or crown lands. Stringent measure were also taken against rural leaders like *Chowdharis*, *Khuts* and *Muqaddams*. But when the king fixed fifty per cent. of the produce as the land revenue, besides collecting other taxes like Jaziya, house tax, grazing tax, etc.,[2] he certainly struck at the very poorest of the poor. The bigoted Maulana Ziyauddin Barani feels jubilant at the suppression of the Hindus, and writes at length about the utter helplessness to which the peasantry had been reduced because the Sultan had left to them bare sustenance and had taken away everything else in *kharaj* (land revenue) and other taxes.[3]

After Alauddin's death (A.D. 1316) most of his measures seem to have fallen into disuse, but the peasants got no relief. Ghayasuddin Tughlaq who came to the throne four years after (A.D. 1320) rescinded many of the irksome regulations of Alauddin, but in the matter of revenue collection he continued the atrocious idea of Alauddin, for he also ordered that "there should be left only so much to the Hindus that neither, on the one hand, they should become arrogant on account of their

1. Ziyauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Bib. Ind. Text (Calcutta, 1862) pp. 233-84.
2. Barani, p. 287.
3. Barani, pp. 288, 305, 307. Also my *History of the Khaljis* (Allahabad, 1950), pp. 241-252.

wealth, nor, on the other, desert their lands in despair."[1] In the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq even this latter fear came out to be true. The Sultan's enhancement of taxation went even beyond the lower limits of 'bare subsistance,' for the people left their fields and fled, and the enraged Sultan "hunted them down like wild beasts."[2]

The idea of leaving only the bare minimum to the peasant and collecting the rest of his hard-earned produce, initiated by Alauddin Khalji, perhaps never left the minds of the rulers of India during the medieval times. During the Mughal period the peasantry remained miserable ; if there was any progress it was in the enhancement of taxation.[3] In the words of Dr. Irfan Habib who had made a special study of the agrarian system of Mughal India, "the basic object of the Mughal administration was to obtain the revenue on an ever-ascending scale."[4] The share that could be taken out of the peasant's produce without destroying his chances of survival was probably a matter of common knowledge in each locality. *Mazhar-i-Shahjahani* (p. 51) says that the Jagirdars in Thatta (Sindh) did not take more than half. In Akbar's time, in Kashmir, the state demand was one-third, but in reality it came to two-thirds.[5] In Gujarat, according to Geleynssen who wrote in 1629, the peasant was made to part with three-quarters of his harvest. Similar is the testimony of De Laet, Fryer and Van Twist.[6]

The conditions in the Vijayanagar empire in down south were equally bad, if not worse. There the government was very oppressive in its treatment of the peasants. They were allowed, according to Nuniz, to retain only a tenth of the produce, the remaining being taken by the government.[7] A survey

1. Barani, p. 430.
2. Hajiuddabir, *Zafar-ul-Vali*; Barani, pp. 479-80. For a detailed discussion on the Sultan's measures see Dr. Ishwari Prasad, *Qaraunah Turks* (Indian Press, Allahabad, 1936), pp. 67-74.
3. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963), pp. 90-100, 190-196.
4. Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 249.
5. Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 191.
6. Moreland in *Journal of Indian History*, IV, pp. 78-79 and XIV. p. 64.
7. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, p. 379 and n. 2.

of the inscriptions reveals the fact that the grasping hand of the tax-gatherer was, indeed, very active. "When the hand of the oppressor became very heavy and ruinous, the ryots, no longer able to put up with the tyranny, either formed voluntary associations to resist his extortions, or, more frequently, deserted their homes and farms and migrated to a neighbouring province where conditions governing life were less intolerable."[1]

To revert to the Mughal empire. An important order in the reign of Aurangzeb describes the Jagirdars as demanding in theory only half but in practice actually more than the total yield.[2] Describing the conditions of the latter part of the seventeenth century Mughal empire, Dr. Tara Chand writes,[3] "The desire of the State was to extract the economic rent, so that nothing but bare subsistence remained for the peasant. Aurangzeb's instructions were that 'there shall be left for everyone who cultivates his land as much as he requires for his own support till the next crop be reaped and that of his family and for seed. This much shall be left to him, what remains is land tax, and shall go to the public treasury.' "[4]

Conditions could not always have been that bad. There were steps taken from time to time to help cultivation and ameliorate the condition of the agriculturists. Shamsuddin Iltutmish constructed a large tank called Hauz-i-Shamsi. Traces of Alauddin Khalji's Hauz-i-Khas and Firoz Tughlaq's irrigation canals still exist. Similar steps taken in Mughal times are well-known. But we are concerned here only with ideas and steps that resulted in the impoverishment of the peasantry. Some steps which looked like helping the agriculturists, sometimes resulted in their perpetual penury. For example, a very common administrative measure of the medieval times was to advance loans to peasants to help them tide over their difficulties. But the important ideal entertained by rulers throughout medieval

1. N. Venkata Ramanayya, *The Third Dynasty of Vijayanagar* (Madras, 1935) p. 244, also pp. 240-50.
2. Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 194.
3. Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, I (The Publications Division, Government of India, 1961), p. 121.
4. Quoted by Sir John Strachey, *India, its Administration and Progress* (third Edition.), p. 126.

India can be best summarized in the words of Sher Shah's instructions to his Amils : "Be lenient at the time of assessment, but show no mercy at the time of collection." This was, on the face of it, a good principle. But when agriculture was almost entirely dependent on rainfall and land tax was uniformally high, it was not possible for the peasants to pay their revenue regularly and keep their accounts ever straight with the government. The revenue used to fall into arrears. From the study of contemporary sources it is almost certain that there were hardly any remissions, on the other hand these arrears went on accumulating and the kings tried to collect them with the utmost rigour.

In the Sultanate period there was a full-fledged department by the name of the Divan-i-Mustakharaj, whose duty it was to inquire into the arrears lying in the names of collectors and to realize them. The Mustakharaj freely punished the Amils and Karkuns and forced them to realize the balances in full.[1] Such was the strictness in Alauddin's times.

Writing about Muhammad bin Tughlaq's time Ibn Battuta says that arrears were collected with great strictness and a separate officer was appointed to realize them from the Amils.[2] Under the Mughals, again, arrears were rigorously collected. The system then existing shows that the peasants were probably never relieved of the 'burden' of arrears. "In practice it could hardly have been possible always to collect the entire amount ; and the balance was generally carried forward to be collected along with the demand of the next year. A bad year, therefore, might leave an intolerable burden for the peasants in the shape of such arrears. These had a natural tendency to grow...It also seems to have been a common practice to demand the arrears, owed by peasant who had fled or died, from their neighbour."[3] And peasants who could not pay revenue or arrears were frequently jailed. Dr. Irfan Habib goes so far as to say that steps in aid of the development of

1. Barani, pp. 288-89, 292. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 262.
2. Ibn Battuta, Def. and Sang., Vol. III, p. 295. Also Barani, p. 470.
3. Irfan Habib, pp. 249-50.

agriculture were taken because these could offer 'an effective means of increasing the revenue.'[1]

Another idea of the rulers of medieval India was to keep the prices of commodities of everyday necessity low. The motives of the rulers were good ; they wanted to benefit the people and make them happy. But the steps they took to bring down prices and keep them stabilized at a low level also led to the impoverishment of the peasantry. In the development of this idea, again, the name of Alauddin Khalji comes first. For defence against Mongol invasions and fulfilment of his imperialistic designs the Sultan wanted to maintain a large army on a moderate salary. To keep his soldiers satisfied on a fixed salary, he fixed the prices of commodities of daily use. To the contemporary chronicler these prices were quite low and fluctuation, not even of a *dang* (small copper coin), was ever allowed whether in seasons of drought or of plenty. Indeed the 'low' and 'fixed' prices in the market were "considered to be one of the wonders of the age." But "when a husbandman paid half of his hard earned produce in land tax, some portion of the remaining half in other sundry duties, and then was compelled to sell his grain at cheap rates to...government,[2] it does not speak well of the general condition of the peasantry in those days. They could never be happy in selling their grain at cheap rates fixed by the government. ...The temptation of making profit, which is the greatest incentive to production, was completely checked by Alauddin's market regulations and the peasants seem to have lived a life of monotony and low standard."[3]

Without caring to understand that low prices cripple production and impoverish the producer, many Sultans after Alauddin took pleasure in competing with him in keeping prices low. Their motives might not have been to crush the poor peasant, but their actions affected him adversely. Shams Siraj Afif feels jubilant at describing and listing the low prices during the reign of Firoz Tughlaq, claiming that while Alauddin made

1. Irfan Habib, pp. 241, 251.
2. Alauddin procured grain from the cultivators, and that too with great rigour, to keep Government godowns ever replenished. Barani, pp. 305, 307.
3. *History of the Khaljis*, pp. 290-91.

great efforts to bring down the prices, in the time of Firoz Tughlaq they remained low without resorting to any pressure.[1] "Like Alauddin, Sikandar Lodi also used to keep a constant watch on the price-level" in the market.[2] Abdulla, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, says that "during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi the prices of commodities were cheaper than in the reign of any other Sultan except in Alauddin's last days" and adds that whereas in Alauddin's time the cheapness of prices was maintained by resorting to coercion, in Ibrahim's reign prices remained low 'naturally'.[3]

So Alauddin Khalji had given an idea which was followed by his successors up to the beginning of the sixteenth century. During the Mughal period prices by and large went up,[4] although as late as in the reign of Aurangzeb, sometimes "the prices reported were regarded as exceptionally cheap." But "since the land revenue accounted for by far the larger portion of the peasant's surplus produce, it is obvious that this increase must have wiped out any possible advantage that the peasantry might have obtained through a rise in the prices."[5]

Besides these handicaps, the peasant suffered because there were no clear ideas about a regular commissariat service to supply the army on a campaign. There is evidence that markets were sometimes established for the convenience of soldiers,[6] but there are also situations on record when the soldiers were encouraged to loot the peasants to obtain grain.[7] Sher Shah took stringent measures to see that agriculturists were not harassed by an army on march, but Babur noted that on the news of the arrival of an army the peasants used to leave their land, flee for life and establish themselves elsewhere. Encourage-

1. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Bib. Ind. Text (Calcutta, 1890) p. 294.
2. Nizamuddin Ahmad *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, I, p. 338. *Tarikh-i-Ferishtah* (Lucknow, 1905), I, 187.
3. Abdulla, *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, *Bankipore* Ms., fols. 223-24.
4. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Trs. by H. Blockmann (Adiesh Book Depot, 1965), pp. 65-71.
5. Irfan Habib, pp. 82 and 89.
6. Barani, pp. 328-29. Ferishtah, p. 119. Afif, p. 290.
7. Afif, pp. 112, 122, 289. Sharafuddin Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, Bib. Ind. Text (Calcutta, 1885-1888), II, pp. 87-88, 152-4, 156.

ment to soldiers to loot was inherent in the idea of *khums* (tax) wherein the state obtained as its share one-fifth of the booty. And above all one fact is clear in the chronicles of medieval India—any measures against nobles and high Zamindars ultimately affected the peasants, because any loss to the nobles, Iqtadars, Zamindars, Khuts and Maqaddams was surreptitiously made up by them by realizing a higher share from the peasantry. In this connection a statement of Shihabuddin Abbas Ahmad, the author of *Masalik-ul-Absar* is significant. "The *khans*, *maliks*, *amirs*, and *isfah-salars* receive the revenues of places assigned to them by the treasury, and if these do not increase, they never diminish..... Some of the officers receive double, and even more than that, in excess of the estimated value of their grants."[1]

These are some ideas and economic motives of rulers of medieval India and their adverse effects on the condition of the peasantry. The condition, as we have seen, went on deteriorating till, by the end of the seventeenth century, it seems to have become intolerable. We shall now see how the people reacted to these ideas and actions, and whether they tried to fight against the uncharitable actions of the rulers.

To understand the ideas prevalent among the peasants of medieval India, I may be permitted to restate what I have written elsewhere particularly about the fifteenth century. "If the absence of the conception of welfare state had made the peasant live in penury, he had his moments of joy. If occasional famines made his life miserable, the timely arrival of rain (in spite of the inconvenience it caused him in his leaky mud-walled thatched-roof house) must have filled his heart with joy....." "The vastness of land had made life easy and inexpensive. Rainfall in the country was abundant..... But there was no safeguard against the vagaries of nature.....The vagaries of nature, on the one hand, made him a worshipper of 'gods' of nature, and on the other, a fatalist."[2]

This 'fatalist' peasant had neither the inclination nor the means to fight against the cruel laws of the government. But

1. E and D, III, p. 577.
2. K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, pp. 258, 259-60.

he had his own ideas about repulsing the onslaughts of nature and man. When famine stalked his land, or there was fear of an attack, or life became unbearable because of the atrocious revenue regulations, the peasant just fled and established himself in some other place. Indeed, migration or flight "was the peasant's first answer to famine or man's oppression." Babur's description of this process may be quoted in his own words.

"In Hindustan", says he, "hamlets and villages, towns indeed, are depopulated and set up in a moment. If the people of a large town, one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do it in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day or a day and a half. On the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place in which to settle,.....they make a tank or dig a well; they need not build houses or set up walls, khas-grass abound, wood is unlimited, huts are made and straightaway there is a village or a town."[1] Similar is the testimony of Col. Wilks about South India.[2] This process of flight seems to have continued throughout the Mughal period both in the North and the South. Writing of the days of Shahjahan, Bernier says that "many of the peasantry, driven to despair by so execrable a tyranny, abandon the country and sometimes fly to the territories of a Raja because they find less oppression and are allowed a greater degree of comfort."[3] One wonders whereto the Vijayanagar peasants migrated.

To flee was a good idea, when it is realized that this was perhaps the only way to escape from the cruel revenue regulations and rapacious officials. Some angry rulers, like Muhammad bin Tughlaq, hunted down these escapists, others clamped them in jails, but by and large, the peasant did escape the rigours of law by this process. Indeed, according to Bernier, it was the fear of losing peasants in this way that operated to mitigate the tyranny of the Mughal governors.[4]

1. *Babur Nama*, Trs. by Mrs. A. S. Beveridge (Luzac and Co, London, 1922), pp. 487. Cf also The Rehla of Ibn Battuta Trs. by Mahdi Husain (Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1953), p. 124.
2. Erskine (*Babur's Memoirs*, Leyden and Erskine, p. 315 n 2) cities from Col Wilks: *Historical Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 309 note.
3. Bernier's Travels, p. 226, quoted in Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 135.
4. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 135, 138.

We have seen the ideas of the rulers and of the people. A word may here be said about the then leaders of men, social reformers and saints. From the 13th century onwards, from Namdeva in Maharashtra to Ramanand, Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya in North India, right upto the 17th century, a galaxy of socio-religious reformers tried to help Indian society through sermon and song. As is well-known the contribution of these reformers to Indian society was immense. They showed the futility of meaningless religious conflicts. They helped to check excessive polytheism, rituals, ceremonies and superstitions and their debasing effects. Their convincing attacks on the caste system helped to raise the status of the common low-caste man. They also helped in the development of the languages of the common people throughout the country. Besides the services of Kabir, Raidas and Jaisi to Hindi language and literature are well-known. Similarly, the Vaishnava poets of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bengal and Punjab contributed much to the development of the languages of these regions.

Thus the services of these reformers to the Indian religious thought, society, language and literature were great indeed. But even these leaders neglected to attack the economic ills. They hardly laid any emphasis on improving the economic condition of the people. Even social reform can be achieved more successfully if it is associated with economic betterment. Changes in the economic life of a people bring in their wake many social and psychological changes. But unfortunately these masters did little to inspire or arouse the common man to shake off his poverty and improve his standard of living. Indeed "with their emotional abandon and mystical rapture they (even provided) the most insidious escape from the realities of life."[1]

The policy of the rulers was to leave the cultivator with just bare subsistence. The peasant was conservative and helpless. Thus neither the rulers nor the reformers nor even the people themselves were interested in improving their standard of living. The result was the lamentable chronic poverty of the Indian village people.

Let us return to the 16th-17th century period. R. H.

1. J. C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature* (Oxford, 1948), p. 25.

Major in his translation of the works of Nicolo Conti, Athnasius Nikitin, Santo Stefano etc.,[1] only refers to the poverty of the Indian peasant in the 15th century. But Babur in the 16th century witnessed extreme poverty ; he repeatedly talks about *langoti*, and *khichri*.[2] Witnesses for the 17th century are numerous, but the idea of this paper is not to describe details but to study ideas, motives, actions, results. Of all the ideas mentioned above, the one of leaving "nothing but bare subsistence," was simply atrocious. This idea begins in the 14th century with Alauddin Khalji, and perhaps continues to be entertained by rulers and kings right through the centuries. At least few seem to have been real friends of the poor peasant. Writing about Aurangzeb, Dr. Tara Chand says, "the policy (of leaving bare subsistence) was suicidal for it killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. It left no incentive for increasing the production or improving the methods of cultivation."[3]

1. Major, *India in the Fifteenth Century* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1857).
2. *Babur Nama*, II, p. 519.
3. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement*, Vol. I, p. 121.

THREE

CONDITION OF THE HINDUS UNDER THE KHALJIS

To disprove the medieval concept that a good warrior made a successful king, Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji ascended the throne of Delhi in A.D. 1290. His administration was lax. The nobles asserted their rights. Even adventurers began to aspire for the throne. No wonder, then, that the Hindus also asserted their former rights of taking out religious processions and riding on horses ; it is doubtful if they had been denied them before. At least now they passed by the ramparts of the royal palace, blowing conch-shells and ringing bells as they went to the Jumna. However, the contemporary chronicler Ziyauddin Barani declares that the religious-minded old monarch writhed with rage at the audacity of the Hindus, but he felt incapable of putting a stop to such indecent display of their worship. "What is our defence of the Faith," cried the Sultan, "that we suffer these Hindus, who are the greatest enemies of God and of the religion of Mustafa, to live in comfort and do not flow streams of their blood."[1]

Why did Jalaluddin, or Ziyauddin Barani who might be putting his own ideas in the mouth of the ruler, think like this ? Why was outrage felt at these time-honoured habits and customs of the Hindus ?[2] It was because in the Islamic law

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1. Barani, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, (Calcutta, 1862), pp. 216-217.
2. Dr. K.A. Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century* (Aligarh, 1961), p. 320, praising the tolerance of the early Turkish Sultans of Delhi, says, "Even in the imperial city of Delhi they (the Hindus) bowed before their idols, blowed their conches, bathed

(*Continued on next page*)

certain disabilities for the non-Muslims had been laid down and a just monarch was expected to enforce this law. Jalaluddin must have crushed them had he possessed the strength to do so, and justifiably, for according to the Islamic law no offensive publicity of the Zimmis' religion or social status was to be tolerated. Therefore before studying in detail the attitude and actions of the Khalji rulers towards their vast majority of non-Muslim subjects, it becomes necessary to briefly discuss the Islamic law and the role of its interpreters.

In the Islamic State a non-Muslim is not accorded full status of citizenship in so far that he cannot expect protection of life and property as a matter of course ; but only against payment of *Jeziya*, or poll tax, may he receive "protection of life and exemption from military service",[1]—military service being incumbent upon every Muslim.[2] The protected non-Muslim is known as *Zimmi*. Although according to both Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf *Jeziya* could be imposed on all non-Muslims without distinction, yet some later and more fanatically inclined jurists do not give the concession of *Jeziya* to idolaters and leave them only a choice between conversion to Islam and death.[3]

The Zimmis had other disabilities also with regard to the payment of import duties,[4] construction of and visit to their places of worship etc. Besides the non-Muslim "must distinguish himself from believers by dress, not riding on horse-back

(Continued from previous page)

in the river Jumna and took out their religious processions without let or hindrance."

The Hindus went to the Jumna every morning for a bath. In medieval times there were no water-taps and no modern bath rooms, and bathe the people must in the Delhi climate. Where else could they bathe if not in the Jumna? They went in large batches—a medieval leisurely habit also affording protection—and after bath put on caste-mark or sandal paste on their forheads and prayed and sang in their habitual way. Not much tolerance on the part of rulers seems to have been involved in all this.

1. Aghnides, *Muhammedan Theories of Finance*, (New York, 1916), pp. 399, 528.
2. Quran IX, 29.
3. Abu Yusuf, *Kitabul Kharaj*—French Translation by Fagnan cited in Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 340.
4. Aghnides, p. 318.

or carrying weapons and by a generally respectable attitude towards the Muslims."[1] It is interesting indeed to note that both Jalaluddin Firoz and Alauddin Muhmmad referred with indignation to the Hindus wearing fine clothes and riding on horseback.[2]

The Khalji rulers in India did not know all the details and ramifications of the Islamic law called the Shariat ; some indeed, like Alauddin, were illiterate. But to know the law and act according to the Shariat was their honest desire and they used to consult the Ulema or Muslim scholars about it.

Since it is customary to clamp all the blame of religious intolerance in medieval India on the Ulema, and dub them as fanatics, a word is necessary to explain their position. Of the four schools of Muslim jurisprudence, three, namely the Malaki, Hanbali and Shafaite, do not give a choice to non-Muslim idolaters except between Islam and death. Only the Hanafite school gives them the choice of paying Jeziya and accepting the status of Zimmis[3]. In India the Hanafite Law prevailed, but there were always differences of opinion about the actual status of the Zimmis (*e.g.* whether they were protected or inferior citizens) or about the mode of payment of Jeziya (whether or not the Zimmis were to be humiliated while making the payment). Of the Ulema who interpreted this law and tendered advice on matters of detail, some were liberal while others adopted a rigid position. No amount of denunciation of the Ulema can destory the fact that even the most liberal school of Muslim jurisprudence was prejudicial to the non-Muslims. It must be said to the credit of the Ulema that they very boldly and sometimes even at the risk of their lives gave a clear interpretation of the Shariat as they understood it. Maybe that the interpretation of some was liberal while of others orthodox, but they were all convinced that they were doing their duty to their education, their king and their law by clearly explaining it.

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, pp. 958-59. Shaikh Shamsuddin Yahya wrote a treatise (*Risalah*) on the dress of the *Zimmis*. The work is no longer extant. Nizami, op. cit., 318.
2. Barani, pp. 217, 291.
3. R. P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, pp. 338-340.

In India, however, with a population of about cent per cent non-Muslims any literal application of the law or any extreme measures were not possible, and here the Khalji rulers were tolerant to the extent that they put political exigencies above religious considerations. This attitude involved many situations. Occasionally there could be a conflict of opinions between the king and the Ulema, not a happy situation for either. If the king worked upon the advice of the Ulema, and accorded second class citizenship to the Hindus, there could be clash between the king and the vast majority of his subjects, because from medieval history itself we learn that the Hindus could not be easily made to submit to a humiliating position. If the king flouted the Ulema and gave equal status and full liberty to the Hindus, the Turkish ruling class and other vested interests could become his enemies and joining hands with the clerical class even try to dethrone him. Therefore the treatment meted out to the Hindus by the various Khalji monarchs was based neither entirely on the Shara nor on a uniform policy of toleration. Besides various types of contingencies, and influences, their attitude was also determined by their own temperament as well as the behaviour of the Hindus as a subject people.

Jalaluddin (1290-1296), the first ruler of the Khalji dynasty, like an old septagenerian, used to fume and bluster against the Hindus, but he had neither the time nor the means nor perhaps the inclination to deal with them sternly. His many problems—the Ilbari malcontents, the Mongol invaders, and even his own nephew and son-in-law—would not let him rest in peace. In these circumstances, he could not, even if he had so desired, deal with the non-Muslims severely. Neither the sultan was so strong nor the Hindus so weak that the persecution of the Hindus could have been possible. Jalaluddin knew that "the Hindus chewd *pan* unmindful of anything, dressed in white and moved among the Musalmans with comfort and ease."[1] Therefore some times his anger flared up and he made a distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Once, after a battle, "whatever live Hindu fell into the victorious

1. Barani, pp. 216-17

king's hands was pounded into bits under the feet of elephants. The Musalman prisoners had their lives spared."[1]

Fortunately for the Hindus, Alauddin refused to lend his ears unblushingly to the orthodox Ulema from the very beginning of his rule, for had he done otherwise, the lot of the Hindus under such a strong and implacable sovereign can only be imagined. Under him the temporal power eclipsed the ecclesiastical. He decreed only what he conceived to be for the best interests of the State.[2] Towards that end he undertook numerous measures which affected all sections of the population, especially the Hindus who formed the bulk of it. Naturally he was curious to know the position of the Hindus in the Islamic State. Qazi Mughis was consulted but he painted a very dark picture. "The Hindu," said he, "should pay the taxes with meekness and humility coupled with the utmost respect and free from all reluctance. Should the collector choose to spit in his mouth, he should open the same without hesitation, so that the official may spit into it ..... The purport of this extreme meekness and humility on his part..... is to show the extreme submissiveness incumbent upon the Zimmis. God Almighty Himself (in the Quran) commands their complete degradation[3] in as much as these Hindus are the deadliest foes of the true prophet. Mustafa has given orders regarding the slaying, plundering and imprisoning of them, ordaining that they must either follow the true faith, or else be slain or imprisoned, and have all their wealth and property confiscated."[4] Alauddin was not very much concerned about the Law. His wide experience, however, had impressed upon him the belief "that the Hindu will never be submissive and obedient to the Musalman."[5] The experience

1. Amir Khusrau, *Miftahul Futuh*, (Aligarh text, 1954), p. 22.
   Za Hindu harche amad zinda dar dast,
   Bazere pae pilan khurd ba shikast,
   Musalmanan-i-bandi gushta ra baz,
   Bajan bakhshi chu Isa gasht damsaz.
2. Barani, pp. 295-96.
3. The Qazi quoted from the Quran *Yan yod vaham saghrun*, Sale's Quran, p. 152. See also Blochmann's Translation of *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 237 note. 1.
4. Barani, pp. 290-91.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

of Jalaluddin was also the same. Alauddin, therefore, determined to strike at the very root of contumacy and "directed that only so much should be left to his subjects (*raiyyat*) as would maintain them from year to year..... . without admitting of their storing up or having articles in excess." And Alauddin felt justified in taking such a step. He knew that the Chiefs and Muqaddams used to lead a luxurious life, and yet never paid a *jital* of their taxes.[1] The measures of Alauddin had the desired effect, and if Barani does not exaggerate, the Hindus were impoverished to such an extent that there was no sign of gold or silver left in their houses, and the wives of Khuts and Muqaddams (Zamindars and Headmen) used to seek jobs in the houses of the Musalmans, work there and receive wages[2].

The picture painted by Barani is revolting. But a study of the Sultan's character shows that religious considerations did not prompt him to suppress the Hindus. Before denouncing him as a religious bigot, his problems must be borne in mind. Alauddin had embarked upon an ambitious scheme of conquest, and nobody can blame a medieval monarch for this for that was an age of *Digvijaya* and war was glorified for its own sake. Besides he had to face the most terrific and persistent attacks of the Mongols. All this necessitated maintenance of a large military force. And payment of soldiers in those days was made from the revenue collected from land. From a statement of Barani, put in a very roundabout way, it appears that the then custom was that the amount of revenue fixed was more or less equivalent to the one spent on the army[3]. According to Ferishtah, Alauddin had an army of 4,75000 men paid directly from the Treasury. Each soldier was paid 234 *tankas* and a *do aspa* 78 *tankas* more. The salary of the soldiers came to 11 cror, 11 lac and 50 thousand *tankas*. Let us say one third of these were *do aspa*. Their extra allowance came to 1 cror and 23 lac *tankas*. Add to this the salary of officers, rewards to officers and

1. Barani, 291.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

men in times of victory, and replacement of horses and weapons of soldiers during campaigns. To say that the yearly budget of Alauddin's army alone was 20 cror *tankas* would be a safe conjecture. If we add the expenses of the civil administration also, we can understand why Alauddin needed to squeeze the agriculturist class, which incidentally comprised mostly of the Hindus. He collected the maximum tax permitted under the law, *i. e.* 50% of the produce, besides many other duties and demands. Barani, probably impressed by the problems of Alauddin's times, also does not feel any pity for the cultivator and believes that so far as the Army was concerned there could be no talk of economy.

But except this, Alauddin could not afford to be bad to the Hindus. He was a practical and shrewd administrator. He could not have been able to fight both the Mongols and the Hindu Rajas at the same time if he had not kept his own Hindu officers, soldiers and subjects on his side. He required a large number of Hindu soldiers and officers for his grand army of about 5 lacs. Not all his soldiers were Turks or Indian Muslims. This becomes clear from many references. The guards (paiks) who had saved him during Ikat Khan's revolt were Hindus. When Alauddin was about to face the Mongol invader Qutlugh Khvaja, Alaulmulk had tried to dissuade him from taking any hurried action and one of his arguments was that "our army is composed principally of the soldiery of Hindustan."[1] Indeed amongst the Hindus were such high officers as Malik Naik. According to Amir Khusrau it was under Malik Naik, the Akhur-beg-i-Maisara, a 'Hindu *banda*' that thirty thousand horsemen were sent against the Mongols, Ali Beg, Tartaq and Targhi.[2] How could Alauddin expect his Hindu officers and men to be loyal to him if he subjected their Hindu co-religionists in the country to religious persecution ? In the end it may be said that the vast empire Alauddin built up could not have sustained but by befriending not only the Hindu public opinion but also many Hindu ruling chiefs.

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1. Barani, pp. 255-57.
2. *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, Habib Trs., pp. 26-27.
   Deval Rani, p. 320.

Alauddin was a strong monarch, even hard-hearted and cruel. He suppressed contumacy ruthlessly. Opposition to his measures he could not stand. For reasons discussed above his measures proved ruinous to the agriculturists. He might have meant to deal severely only with the higher classes of Khuts and Muqaddams, but the strict measures percolated down to the last man working in the field. India then lived on the earnings of the land and in the villages and this India was Hindu. Even those who lived in the cities had close family or land ties with the villages. Therefore there is no wonder that both in India and in foreign lands an impression gathered strength that Alauddin was cruel to the Hindus. There is no doubt that Alauddin's vigorous measures and extensive conquests created misunderstanding both at home and abroad. In India contemporary writers like Barani, Isami and Amir Khusrau were inclined to believe him to be a persecutor of the Hindus. Foreigners also gathered the same impression. Maulana Shamsuddin Turk, a divine from Egypt, was happy to learn that Alauddin had made the wretchedness and misery of the Hindus so great and had reduced them to such a despicable condition "that the Hindu women and children went out begging at the doors of the Musalmans."[1] The same impression is betrayed in the writings of Isami and Vassaf.[2] While summing up the achievements of Alauddin Khalji, the contemporary chronicler Barani also mentions with due emphasis that by the last decade of his reign the submission and obedience of the Hindus had become an established fact. Such a submission on the part of the Hindus "has neither been seen before nor will be witnessed hereafter". This obviously refers to political submission. Religious considerations do not seem to have played any part in it. There is not a single instance to prove that Alauddin oppressed some people simply because they were Hindus and favoured some others only because they were Musalmans. His market regulations were irksome to the traders in the city, his revenue regulations ruinous to the

1. Barani, pp. 297-98,
2. Isami, *Futuh-us-Salatin*, Agra text, pp. 569-70; *Tarikh-i-Vassaf*, Bombay text, Book IV p. 448; Book V. pp 646, 647.

agriculturist in the village. But all these did not involve any Hindu-Muslim question.

Under the next king Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji (A.D. 1316-1320), the city dwelling Hindus seem to have regained their lost position to a very large extent, firstly, because the king rescinded all the thousand regulations of "Alauddin and *tankas* and *jitals* began to ring in men's pockets", and secondly, because Mubarak Shah had gained the throne through the efforts of Hindu foot soldiers (Paiks). They became so domineering that the Sultan could only crush them by dispersing them into various districts and then decapitating them.

Qutbuddin was young, foolish, arrogant and debauch. He took the title of the Khalifa to himself and embarked upon a scheme of converting the Hindus to the Islamic faith. It was a dangerous game for a monarch and according to Ibn Battuta cost him his life.[1] He was also very cruel to the Hindu princes whom he defeated.[2] In the end the crown was snatched away from him by a favourite of his, Khusrau Khan.

Khusrau was a convert from Hinduism and he had got the throne through the help of his Barvari relations and followers from Gujarat. Naturally his Hindu followers became very aggressive and Nasiruddin Khusrau, because of his obligations to them, had to overlook some of their excesses. The Barvaris took possession of Muslim maidens and began to worship idols inside the palace. Copies of the Quran were torn to pieces and used as seats for idols which were placed in the niches of the mosques.[3] But the narrative of the contemporary chronicler suffers from gross exaggeration. It was a political stunt of Ghayasuddin Tughlaq to declare a *Jihad* against Nasiruddin, whom he accused of establishing Hindu Raj. Again, the suggestion of a modern historian that if the Hindus would have rallied round a leader, Delhi would have come under them once again,[4] also lacks historical support.

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1. Ibn Battuta, Def. and Sang., Vol. III, pp. 197-198.
2. Barani, p. 399.
3. Barani, pp. 410-411.
4. Ishwari Prasad, *History of Medieval India*, Fourth Edition, p. 251.

What the Hindus did was only as a retaliatory measure to all that the Muslims were wont to do. They had known the Muslim conquerors breaking temples and destroying religious books of the Hindus. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Barvaris used the copies of the Quran as seats for idols. There was no question of establishing a Hindu Raj nor was any effort made towards that end.[1] All the same the very fact that some Hindus had dared do all this in Delhi itself indicates the amount of influence they could gather.

Thus it would be seen that if the Hindus could not be a real danger to the Sultanate, they were also in no way prepared to submit to the political and social disabilities imposed upon them by the Muslim State. They indulged in idol worship under the very nose of Sultan Jalaluddin. Their suppression under Alauddin was only a temporary phase. They always tried to get back their lost prosperity and Malik Alaulmulk gave a correct picture of them to Alauddin when he said, "If they (the Hindus) do not find a mighty sovereign at their head, nor behold crowds of horse and foot with drawn swords and arrows threatening their lives and property, they fail in their allegiance, refuse payment of revenue, and excite a hundred tumults and revolts."[2] Similar is the testimony of Ibn Battuta a few years later. Obviously the refractory section of the Hindus had to be dealt with severely and even debarred from Government service. Favour was shown to the loyal Muhammadans. Naturally a sub-conscious feeling had developed with the pampered class that they dominated over the Hindus[3]. But for the temporary grounding down under 'Alauddin, the Hindus were economically well-off. They held parties, fought duels, wore white garments and rode on horses. Nor were the Hindus morally degenerated. Shaikh Nizamuddin, a contemporary saint, confesses that the Hindus were not prepared to renounce their faith under any circumstances. In the whole of

1. See my article 'Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah' in the Journal of Indian History, Madras, December, 1944.
2. Barani, p. 268.
3. Amir Khusrau, *Deval Rani*, Aligarh Text. p. 50.

the *Favaidul Fuad* there are only two cases of conversion mentioned, and in both the cases the renegades were poor and illiterate curd sellers.[1] In fact the Hindus were in a position even to pay back the excesses of the Muslims in the same coin as is obvious from the events of the reign of Nasiruddin.

1. *Favaidul Fuad*, Urdu trs., Lahore, pp. 108, 110, 147.

FOUR

HINDU-MUSLIM RAPPROCHEMENT IN EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA[1]

The problem of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement began with the very inception of Muslim rule in India. This was due primarily to three causes : (1) The peculiar nature of Muslim conquest ; (2) the natural bitterness between the conquerors and the conquered ; and (3) the nature of Muslim law as applied to a non-Muslim country.

The first peculiarity of Muslim conquest was that the invaders marched into India not only to conquer but also to enforce a new religion. Indeed the latter objective was more vociferously pronounced. From the time of Mahmud of Ghazni to that of Timur every Muslim soldier that marched into India and within India against a Hindu Kingdom, believed and declared that his mission was to propagate Islam. It was this that distinguished Muslim conquest of India from the Roman or Norman conquest of Britain or any other invasion of India itself prior to the coming of the Arabs and Turks. Introduction of a religion through conquest is not a very happy thing. Islam in India thus was introduced with an unsavoury touch in it. At least it did not come to India as Buddhism went to Afghanistan, China, Burma and Ceylon or Christianity to England.

Another peculiarity of Muslim conquest was that its process was extremely long, so much so that throughout the early medieval period the authority of the central government

1. Paper read at a Seminar on "Hindu-Muslim Rapprochement in Medieval India" organized by the Department of History, Delhi University, in March 1964.

was always defied in one or another part of the country. Consequently at all times, in one place or another, the process of conquest continued. The bitterness introduced by this nature of Muslim conquest was avoided in Persia where the conquerors swept everything before them and the whole country was converted to Islam. But in India it was a different story. Here, even after more than a century of the establishment of Turkish rule, Ziyauddin Barani wrote, "if the Hindus do not find a mighty sovereign at their head, nor behold crowds of horse and foot with drawn swords threatening their lives and property, they fail in their allegiance..and excite a hundred tumults and revolts."[1] Why was the Hindu so obdurate ? The Hindus had seen many changes of dynasties and governments. Why was there so much resistance now ? The reason is that it did not take him much time to realize that the Muslim conqueror had launched an all-out attack, on Hindu land through conquest, on Hindu religion through conversions, on Hindu society through forced marriages, and on Hindu Art through iconoclasm. The answer of the Hindu to all this was stubborn resistance. Even when open clash was avoided or when wounds of war were healed, it was not easy to find a meeting ground for the two. This was due to the social customs and religious ideas of the two communities.

Hindu mind was pretty open on religious matters ; India had seen the birth and simultaneous growth of many religions without conflict, but in the social sphere (especially in matters of interdining and intermarriage—*roti-beti*) it was closed. The Muslim mind was liberal on social matters, but in religious matters it was fixed and rigid. Thus the two could not meet each other half-way. In the social sphere, where the Muslim held out his hand in friendship, the Hindu withdrew his, and where Hindu was prepared for an accommodation, the Muslim was not.

The inferior status accorded to the non-Muslims under Islamic law also kept the Hindus and Muslims apart. Under Islamic law a non-Muslim was given the name and status of a Zimmi. "They (the Zimmis) are not citizens of the Muslim

1. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Bid. Ind. Text, p. 268.

State."[1] Only against the payment of Jeziya, could a Zimmi receive "protection of life and exemption from military service."[2] Jeziya also seems to have been an instrument of humiliation for the non-Muslims.[3] The State rested upon the support of the military class which consisted largely of the followers of the Muslim faith. They were treated like favoured children of the State while various kinds of disabilities, especially with regard to their mode of worship and payment of cesses and duties,[4] were imposed upon the non-Muslims. In these circumstances there is little wonder that Hindus had hardly any place in the higher offices of administration. It is interesting to note that even foreign adventurers were preferred just because they were Muslims to hold offices of importance and dignity which were denied to the Hindus.

The problem of Hindu-Muslim differences, consequent upon the many factors noted above, was obviously fairly well recognized. But it was also a well-recognized fact that they could not go on living like that for all time. It was thought not only desirable but necessary that since they had to live together, they should live in peace and amity. We shall now see the attitude of the various sections of the Indian people towards this problem and the efforts they made to solve it. There were by and large three classes of people in medieval India: (1) the ruling class consisting of the Sultan, his nobles and their advisers, (2) the social and religious leaders of society, and (3) the commoners.

At the head of the ruling class was the Sultan or King. Whether despotic by nature or otherwise, the Sultan was a very powerful person. But the Sultans were by and large a merry-go-lucky type. They lived a life of luxury; most of them drank hard, kept large seraglios and were interested in merry-making. Very few of them were educated; some indeed were

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 1, p. 959.
2. Aghnides, *Muhammadan Theories of Finance*, pp. 399, 528.
3. Al Mawardi, *Ahkamas Sultaniya*, p. 235.
   Tritton, *Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects*, p. 21.
   Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 340.
4. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 1, p. 958.
   Barani, op. cit., pp. 216-17, 291.

illiterate. They were not very much conversant with the Islamic law, and were not interested in enforcing it. Those like Firoz Tughlaq, who had some knowledge of it and tried to enforce it, did not prove to be successful as kings. The chief concern of the Sultans was to administer the country and to see that there were as few rebellions as possible. In other words they were practical administrators and wanted to see peace prevailing. The nobles were like miniature Sultans and for everything they took a cue from the ruler.

But the advisers, chiefly the Ulema or scholars of Islamic law, were made of a different stuff. The Ulema were doctors of Muslim jurisprudence and it is admitted on all hands that they were bigoted. They considered it their sacred duty to see that the kings not only did not stray away from the path of religion and law but also enforced it on the people. Time and again, invited or uninvited, they impressd upon the Sultans the need of enforcing the Shara. "How great their influence was, may be seen from the fact that of all Muhammadan emperors only Akbar, and perhaps, Alauddin Khalji, succeeded in putting down this haughty sect."[1] Such indeed was their power that even the strong monarchs, who perhaps were not interested in their dogmatic assertions, just showed indifference towards them, but did not dare suppress them. Others of course tried to enforce the laws of Islam as enunciated by this bigoted scholastic class. It is true that these laws were not enforced *in toto* and at all times, but it is also true that the vanity of the Sultans was tickled when their historians told them in glowing terms that in dealing with the non-Muslims they had kept to the letter of the law.

The indifference of the strong kings towards the Ulema was a negative approach to a problem needing positive action. A positive attitude would have been to enact a code of laws which could be applied with equity to all sections of the people, Hindus and Muslims. It is strange that of the many talented monarchs in medieval India not a single one thought of codifying such a set of laws. There were rulers who could contemplate measurement of land for assessing revenue, order rationing

1. Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, English Translation, Introduction, pp. xxxii—xxxiii.

and price-control, issue token currency and shift the capital hundreds of miles away, and yet none of them thought of codifying such laws as would ensure equity and fairplay and remove disabilities imposed on the majority of the population; inequality being one of the greatest causes of bitterness. It is a well-known fact that the policy of ceaselessly fighting the Hindus had proved a failure and that wholesale application of Islamic law in a country inhabited predominantly by non-Muslims was not conducive to peace and security. Had even one monarch codified such laws, he would have done a great deed in minimizing Hindu bitterness born out of their inferior status before law.[1] The Sultans patronized Hindu musicians, painters and architects, but extending patronage to some is not like extending equality to all before law. It may, therefore, be stated that the Muslim Government as such did little in this

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1. Only Akbar introduced some such laws. In the so-called Infallibility Decree the Ulema also conceded him the power to do so saying that "Should in future a religious question arise, and His Majesty in his penetrating intellect and clear wisdom be inclined to adopt, *for the benefit of the people and for the betterment of the administration of the country*, any of the conflicting opinions which exist on that point, he should issue an order to that effect... We (the Ulema) do hereby agree that such a decree shall be binding on us and on *the whole nation*. Further we declare that should His Majesty think fit to issue a new order all shall likewise be bound by it, provided always that such order shall not be in opposition to the injunctions of the Quran and *be also of real benefit to the people*."

The Decree is given in Badaoni, II, pp. 271-72. For its English translation see Blochmann's *Aini-Akbari*, pp. 195-97.

But even Akbar did not *codify* any laws as permanent laws for the nation and for his successors to follow. His beneficial and equitable laws remained, as they could remain, only for his empire. On the contrary it is significant to note that even in the few laws enacted by Akbar, Muslim. Ulema and nobility saw a danger to Islam for, when Jahangir ascended the throne, his supporters wanted him to take two oaths: (1) that he would not punish those who had sided with (the rebel) Prince Khusrau and (2) that he would defend Muslim religion. (After Muhammad Tughlaq's death, Firoz also had to make a similar promise.)

sphere for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement.[1] On the other hand the leaders of the people and the people themselves helped a lot in the creation and perpetuation of Hindu-Muslim amity.

Luckily in medieval times the leaders of men were not politicians but social and religious reformers and saints. These leaders by and large did not have any inhibitions or prejudices. There was free intercourse between Muslim saints and Hindu yogis. There were Muslim followers of Hindu saints and *vice versa*. In short both Hindu and Muslim saints were universally respected. The tolerance of the Sufi saints and their pious life earned them universal respect and helped to bring Hindus and Muslims close to each other. They did not have much to do with the Government or the Ulema. Indeed the great among them like Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli sometimes openly defied the Sultans. Hindu saints perhaps dared not adopt such an attitude. But great amongst them like Namdeva, Kabir and Nanak openly attacked the superstitious beliefs of both Hindus and Muslims and they preached a religion of universal brotherhood against all prevailing superstitions. Their services to medieval Indian society are too well known to be restated here. It may, however, be added that what the government had failed to do, the saints accomplished. If the government had failed to give a code of law to the people giving them equal status, the saints showed them a universal path of equality, brotherhood and amity. If the scriptural law was biased, the devotional law of Sufism and Bhakti was uniformally good for all.

1. During the discussion of the paper at the Seminar, it was pointed out that it was not quite possible for a Turkish Sultan to enact any 'secular code of law' faced as he ever was with the problem of keeping himself on the throne with the help of the Ulema and the Muslim ruling class. It is true that enactment of a secular code was not an easy task. But there were such strong Kings who were not daunted to declare, "I do not know whether my regulations are in accordance with the Islamic law. What I consider in the best interests of the state, that I decree". Kings of this type could certainly have taken the initiative. To maintain one's position with the help of the Ulema and the Muslim ruling class was good, but how much better it would have been to earn the gratitude and consequent support of the majority population of the Hindus also.

One reason why the Sufi and Bhakta saints were so popular in medieval India was that they were only voicing the innermost feelings of the common people, both Hindu and Muslim. The very fact that the Hindus had to live under Muslim rule made them forget the angularities of an alien law. Then, whether in times of war or in peace, it was the rebel, the defiant and the recalcitrant who suffered whether he was a non-Muslim or a Muslim. There does not seem to have been any interference with the day-to-day life of the common man. Indeed iconoclasm and conversions were being considered as a matter of course and the people had learnt to accept Muslim rule with all its merits and faults. Conversions, in the social sphere, indeed helped in the *rapprochement*. The converted Muslims always remained half-Hindus as they carried with them the legacies of their former faith. They always had some old Hindu friends and relatives with whom they could not break their connections. Similar was the position in the economic sphere. Commoners of both the communities were poor and shared equally the problems and prospects of life. On conversion a Muslim did not change his profession and his income and standard of life remained the same as when he was a Hindu. He shared with his erstwhile brethern the same joys and sorrows as before. What applied to the poor also applied to the rich in their circle of friends and relatives.

In the religious sphere, commoners of both the communities enjoyed and participated in the festivals of one another. Important Hindu festivals like Holi, Dushehra and Diwali were enjoyed by all. Similarly there were many Muslim festivals which all sections of the people enjoyed. Shab-i-Barat, which was probably copied from Shiva Ratri as fireworks were common to both, was enjoyed by both Hindus and Muslims.[1] Similarly the idea of Taziyas in Muharram was borrowed from Jagannath Rath Yatra, Krishna Lila and Mahanadi festival of South India.[2] The celebrations in the capital and provincial cities in

1. *Islamic Culture*, 1956, p. 7. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1925, p. 574. Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 265-67.
2. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p. 303. Abdur Razzaq in Major, *India in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 35.

the wake of a successful campaign were an occasion of joy for all. Thus the things common between the two communities out-weighed those of difference of religion and contributed greatly towards Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement* in medieval India.[1]

1. For details see K. S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, Chapters XII and XIII.

FIVE

BABUR'S IMPRESSIONS OF HINDUSTAN

It is indeed a difficult task to recapture an accurate picture of the social life of Medieval India from the writings of those times. Persian chroniclers excel in the narrative of political events ; they callously neglect to make mention of the life and activities of the common man. Hindu historical literature giving "the Hindu point of view" is conspicuous by its absence. Fortunately, a number of itineraries of foreign travellers are available, which, read with the writings of the Indian historians, give a fairly satisfactory picture of the social life of medieval India. Not only that, from the writings of Alberuni, Ibn Battuta and Babur, it is clearly seen that Medieval Indian society was not static, as is generally believed, but that its pattern was constantly changing with the passage of time, although the changes were neither sudden nor glaringly perceptible. The picture of society as depicted by Ibn Battuta, in many ways, is quite different from the one delineated by Alberuni, and Babur's Hindustan had changed much since the days of the Moroccan traveller.

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur's impressions of Hindustan are contained in his *Memoirs*. The memoirs of such a versatile genius and "one of the most human and attractive personalities"[1] are so interesting and yet so true that they "must be reckoned among the most enthralling and romantic works in the literature of all times."[2]

To Babur, a conqueror, India was an entirely new country. "Hindustan," writes he, "is a wonderful country. Compared

1. Edwardes, S.M., *Babur, Diarist and Despot*, (London, 1926), p. 15.
2. E. Denison Ross in *Cambridge History of India*, (Cambridge, 1937), Vol. IV. p. 20.

with our countries it is a different world...Once the water of Sindh is crossed, everything is in the Hindustani way, land, water, tree, rock, people and horde, opinion and custom."[1] Ostensibly it would seem from his above statement that he was a foreigner in this land and wrote with all the curiosity and prejudices of an alien. But that is not so. By nature he was fair and impartial. Besides, he had come to realize that he *had* to adopt India as his own. While on many occasions his officers and men had expressed a desire to return to their native country, Babur insisted on staying here. Moreover, he wrote about this country when he had finally settled down in India. His description of Hindustan[2] finds a place in his *Memoirs* just after the description of his victory over Ibrahim Lodi, but in the opinion of such an eminent authority as Mrs. Beveridge, he wrote it as late as A. D. 1529 (935-36 A.H.).[3] Babur, therefore, cannot be accused of entertaining any prejudice against his land of "adoption" which destiny had called upon him to rule. Even otherwise he is a faithful diarist and his statements give a true picture of the life and conditions of Hindustan not only as he saw them, but also as they actually were.

However, it must be borne in mind that the Hindustan about which Babur writes was not the Hindustan of any particular year like 1526 or 1529. Its traditions and customs had been of old, but it bore the impress of half a century's political instability (1400-1450) followed by three quarters of a century's Afghan rule (1451-1526). It was thus in a way the Hindustan of the Lodis whom he had dislodged. To clearly understand Babur's Hindustan we have to bear in mind the inevitable changes in the life of the country that would surely have been brought about by the stress of time and also by the peculiarities of Afghan rule in India.

Babur's description of Hindustan has been studied in

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1. *Babur Nama* or *Memoirs of Babur*, translated from the Original Turki by A. S. Beveridge, Luzac & Co., (London, 1922), two volumes [hereafter abbreviated as B. N. (B)], II, p. 484.
2. B. N. (B), II, pp. 480-520.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 483 and note.

isolated passages in many books of Indian History,[1] and any reference of his, not flattering to India, has been criticized as being the diatribe of a prejudiced foreigner who did not have enough time to sufficiently acquaint himself with the conditions in the country. But if his version is studied in its entirety, such a criticism would lose much of its force.

Babur first begins with the political conditions obtaining in the land. As all successful conquerors and rulers do, he had collected correct information about the various kingdoms and rulers of India from the Afghans in the Punjab and Delhi to the Vijayanagar emperor down South.[2] Besides "there are very many rais and rajas on all sides and quarters of Hindustan, some obedient to Islam, some, because of their remoteness or because their places are fastnesses, not subject to Musalman rule."[3] His study of the political situation of the country which, to save space, has not been quoted here *in extenso*, is quite correct. But towards some of the chiefs and rulers of Hindustan, Babur has not been able to be quite fair, although viewed from his point of view, he was right. He found in Daulat Khan Lodi, Alam Khan Lodi and even in Rana Sanga kings who had not kept their word with him. Although it was too much of him to expect that the moment he marched into India they should have committed their territories to his charge and flocked under his banner, nevertheless, it is a fact that Daulat Khan was neither true to Ibrahim Lodi nor to Babur nor even perhaps to himself. Alam Khan too does not impress us ; he certainly did not impress Babur. Babur's remarks about Ibrahim Lodi are equally significant. On Babur's generous nature, the niggardly Ibrahim could not create a good impression. He was also struck by the indifference of the people of Bengal—"who accept any ruler that comes to the throne"—and adds that there the accession to the throne was generally by

1. R. B. Williams, *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century*, Longmans, 1918. Wolseley Haig, *Cambridge History of India*, Volume IV. Ishwari Prasad, *Muslim Rule in India*, The Indian Press, (Allahabad, 1939).
2. B. N. (B), II, pp. 480-83.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 484.

usurpation.[1] Certainly Babur was not favourably impressed by the political atmosphere of Hindustan.

From the kings the prince-diarist turns to the land and its people. From the account of Babur it appears that there was not much change in the life in the villages. The people dressed scantily. Sometimes they put on only a loin-cloth ("langota") which Babur takes pains to describe in detail.[2] That was due to both climatic conditions as well as poverty. What Ibn Battuta and other foreign travellers in South India knew of the Indian peasantry, was the impression of Babur also. A century later Francisco Pelsaert finds no change. "Their houses are built of mud with thatched roofs," says he, "furniture there is little or none, except for some earthernware pots to hold water and for cooking, and two beds.....this is sufficient in the hot weather, but the bitter cold nights are miserable indeed, and they try to keep warm over little cow dung fires ...".[3] Why, one would like to know, if the medieval Indian society was not static, was there no change in the economic condition of the common man throughout these many centuries ? The question becomes more pointed because the fifteenth century had been a century of reforms. Even after the great socio-religious reformers like Kabir, Nanak, and Chaitanya, besides many others of lesser note, had helped the Indian society extricate itself from the bondage of ignorance and superstition, how was it that Babur witnessed the same tale of extreme poverty, the same *langoti*, the same *khichri*.[4] That is so because the fifteenth-sixteenth century reformers attacked the social evils of the day, but made the mistake of only trying to raise the spiritual level of the people without at the same time trying to raise their material or intellectual level. The Vaishnava reformers were just socio-religious reformers and never insisted on the people to raise their economic standard

1. B N. (B), II p. 482.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 519.
3. *Jahangir's India by* F. Pelsaert, translated by Moreland and P. Geyl, (Cambridge, 1925), p. 61.
4. Cf. *Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, translated by Mahdi Husain, Oriental Research Institute, (Baroda, 1953), (hereafter as I.B.), p. 19.
B.N. (B), II, p. 319.

of life. In the words of J. C. Ghosh "With their emotional abandon and mystical rapture they still provide the most insidious escape from the realities of life."[1] The policy of the Sultans was also to leave the cultivator just with bare subsistence. The peasant too was conservative. Thus neither the rulers, nor the reformers nor even the people themselves were interested in improving their standard of living.

The chronic poverty of the Indian village people is lamentable indeed. But it has had its compensating advantages. It was because of this that Muslim conquest could not penetrate the Indian villages nor Muslim rule affect it. There were emperors and Sultans in the metropolis, but in the village little republics of self-sufficient economy and respect for the elders continued. And if there was any fear of attack the villagers just fled, and re-established themselves after the storm was over.[2] In "Hindustan," writes Babur, "hamlets and villages, towns indeed, are depopulated and set up in a moment. If the people of a large town, one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do it in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day or a day and a half.[3] On the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place in which to settle, they need not dig water-courses to construct dams because their crops are all rain-grown, and as the population of Hindustan is unlimited, it swarms in. They make a tank or dig a well ; they need not build houses or set up walls, khas-grass abound, wood is unlimited, huts are made, and straightaway there is a village or a

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1. J. C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature*, (Oxford, 1948), p. 25.
2. Cf. Havell, *Aryan Rule in India*, pp. 407-409.
3. Erskine (Babur's Memoirs, Leyden and Erskine, p. 315 n 2) cites from Wilks : *Historical Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 309 note, to show that similar conditions prevailed in South India. In the words of Col. Wilks "On the approach of a hostile army, the unfortunate inhabitants of India bury under ground their most cumbrous effects, and each individual, man, woman, and child.....with a load of grain apportioned to their strength, issue from their beloved homes and take the direction of a country .....exempt from the miseries of war ; sometimes of a strong fortress, but more generally of the most unfrequented hills and woods." They called this emigration *wulsa*.

town !"[1] The vagrant growth of jungles also provided good defence for the people.[2] There is no surprise, therefore, that in spite of the ruthless character of Muslim conquest and in spite of three centuries of Muslim rule in Hindustan, Babur notes (without making any comment) that "most of the inhabitants of Hindustan are pagans ; they call a pagan a Hindu."[3]

Babur, who was interested in the working conditions of the peasantry, was a little shocked to note that there was no scientific system of irrigation in the country. True there were tanks and wells, but except for the rivers, there was little "running water".[4] He forgot to realize that since the Punjab and the U.P. were plains there could hardly have been any running waters since they always descend from hills. Of artificial canals, which are found in Mughal Palaces, the Afghans knew nothing. These were introduced in India by the Mughals. However, he quite understood that it rained heavily during the rainy season, fields used to get watered, and artificial means of irrigation were not necessary. But wherever there was need, irrigation was done in various ways. In the Punjab ("in Lahore, Dipalpur and those parts") irrigation was done by a wheel attached to the well. In Agra, Chanderi, Bayana "and those parts" people watered their fields with buckets pulled by bullocks. Babur thought this to be a "laborious and filthy way."[5] "Towns and countries" writes he "subsist on the water of wells or on such as collects in tanks during the rains."[6]

Life in the cities did not impress Babur. "Hindustan is a country," writes he, "that has few pleasures to recommend it. The people are not handsome. They have no idea of the charms of friendly society, of frankly mixing together, or of familiar intercourse. They have no genius, no comprehension of mind, no politeness of manner, no kindness or fellow-feeling, no ingenuity or mechanical invention in planning or executing their handicraft works, no skill or knowledge in design or

1. B. N. (B), II, pp. 487-88.
2. B.N. (B), II, p. 487 ; Cf. I. B., p. 124.
3. B. N. (B), II, p. 518.
4. B. N. (B), II, p. 487.
5. B. N. (B), II, pp. 486-87.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 487, 519.

architecture; they have no good horses, no good flesh, no grapes or musk-melons, no good fruits, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread in their bazars, no baths or colleges, no candles, no torches, not a candle-stick."[1]

His references to bazars, hot-baths and colleges leave no doubt in one's mind that in the above passage Babur is referring to life in the cities only, and probably in the important cities like Lahore, Delhi and Agra. Undoubtedly it is a down-right condemnation of Indian life in the fifteenth century, and had it come from a pen other than that of Babur's, one could have imputed motives to the author and brushed the statement aside. But Babur is no ordinary observer, and he is so gentlemanly in his behaviour and statements that he could not have written in such a way without sufficient reason. A little thought, however, would explain why he has been so uncharitable in his evaluation of the life in the cities and towns of India. Obviously he was judging things from his own standards. Babur was no puritan, and like an honest man he confesses that although many a time he took a vow not to drink, he could not keep it. He was fond of good company and believed in the philosophy of eat, drink and be merry. Very often he drank copiously and on one occasion he exclaimed, "Drink wine in the citadel of Kabul, and send round the cup without stopping, for it is at once a mountain and a stream, a town and a desert."[2] He was so liberal in distributing largesse that the troubles of Humayun, thinks Professor Rushbrook Williams, were in a large measure due to his generosity.[3] Naturally such a gay and liberal character was not happy with the life of the Indian cities over which the Afghans had ruled for the last seventy-five years and under whose influence the standards of life had certainly deteriorated. The standard of drink-and-dinner parties in the fourteenth century as depicted by Ibn Battuta was as excellent as the dishes, the courses and the etiquette.[4] The Afghans do not

1. *Memoirs of Babur* translated by Leyden and Erskine, (London, 1926, hereafter abbreviated as B. N. (L & E), p. 333.
   The passage in B. N. (B). p. 518, does not seem to bring out Babur's reactions so clearly.
2. B. N. (L & E), p. 137.
3. R. Williams, p. 162.
4. I. B. xiii, pp. 15, 65-66, 119.

seem to have possessed that etiquette. In fact in the early days of their rule they were known for their bad manners in the higher circles of society. The rustic and quaint behaviour of Bahlul Lodi's Afghan partisans at the dinner at Hamid Khan's which helped Bahlul to secure the throne of Delhi clearly points to the Afghan way of life.[1] Even in later years we do not hear of any elegant dinner parties. On the contrary, according to Abdulla, Sikandar Lodi had introduced a strange custom. When he took his supper at night, he used to invite seventeen Ulema to join him. Food was served before all, but they were not allowed to partake of it. Only the Sultan ate, and when he had finished, the scholars took their meals home. Such strange customs of the Afghans would surely have irritated Babur. The Afghan principle of *primus inter pares*, which gave every nobleman a place of equality with the king would certainly have bred much suspicion, and Babur found in India one Afghan pitted against the other. The Hindus did not inter-dine with the Muslims, and had scruples about inter-dining amongst themselves. In such an atmosphere there could have been no "frank mixing together," no hilarious drink and dinner parties. Babur, who always had a large table for guests, (although his Begs always maintained a respectable distance from the Badshah because they knew they were not his equals), and ate heartily off porcelain plates[2] and drank lustily his *arak* and the "acceptable" Ghazni wine[3] in the company of friends, while the story-teller (Qissa Khwan) was always at beck and call,[4] would certainly have been rudely shocked at the customs prevailing in the cities and there is no wonder if he wrote : "They have no charm of friendly society, of frankly mixing together, or of familiar intercourse."

Babur must have relished spicy Indian food, although he does not say so pointedly perhaps because of his unfortunate experience with Indian cooks who were bribed by Ibrahim Lodi's mother to poison him. However, to the various items

1. Dorn, *History of the Afghans*, being a translation of the *Makhzan-i-Afghani* (London, 1829), p. 46.
2. B. N. (B), II, p. 541.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 551.
4. N.B. (B), II, p. 460, Also *Islamic Culture*, XXX, 1956, pp. 40-43.

of Indian food, he added a few common in his native country. Ice and iced-water were introduced in India by Babur. In Abul Fazl's days supply of ice was "a comparatively recent innovation"[1] and the author of the *Ain* mentions that ordinary people used ice in summer, while the elite used it all the year round. Babur writes of Indian fruits as a connoisseur and all the Mughals were particularly fond of fruits. From Babur's time melons and other fruits as well as wine began to be imported in good quantities.[2] The standard of dinners improved so that by Akbar's time "the number of dishes served was very great, and the elaboration of the service even more remarkable." Babur did not just complain about the things he found lacking in Hindustan ; he introduced them here. From the time that he began to rule over Hindustan the standard of living of the people, at least of the rich people, began to show an upward trend.

Babur's other remarks about the Indians not having "ingenuity or mechanical invention in planning or executing their handicraft works, no skill or knowledge in design or architecture," are also not entirely without foundation. He rightly saw that in Hindustan even arts and crafts were the business of particular castes. "Again : every artisan there follows the trade that has come down to him from his forefather."[3] In view of this, and in keeping with the Indian tradition, the emphasis was on preserving the old designs in art and craft rather than inventing new ones. The sculptural and architectural achievements of the Hindus of which we are so proud, excelled in everything except in the novelty of vision and design. In the field of architecture no works of the type which had impressed Alberuni and Amir Timur had been produced during the Saiyyad and Lodi rule. If Babur says the same

1. Moreland, *India at the death of Akbar*, (Macmillan & Co., 1920), p. 257.
2. To keep them fresh, "each melon was enclosed in a leather case, packed in ice." It was in this way that melons were transported in Central Asia to places as far distant as requiring three months journey. M. Ilin, *Men and Mountains*, (G. Routledge, London, 1936), p. 31. In all probability melons and other fruits would have been imported by Babur in a similar way to keep their freshness and fragrance.
3. B. N. (B), II, p. 518.

thing, there need not be any unpleasant surprise. He was a good judge of art and talent. What he appreciated he praised unhesitatingly. He was deeply impressed by the beauty of Raja Man Singh's fort and palace at Gwalior. "They are wonderful buildings," writes he, "entirely of hewn stone, in heavy and unsymmetrical blocks, however. Of all the buildings Man Singh's palace is the best and loftiest."[1] Babur is also all praise for the Indian stone-cutters whom he employed in large numbers to work on his buildings.[2]

He was again stating a fact when he declared that in India there were no good horses, for we know that good-breed horses were imported both in the South and in the North. Grapes and musk-melons were then not grown in India. The Hamam and little canals with running water, the Mughal rulers themselves introduced in this country. True, his criticism of the people of India is a little exaggerated not because he was by conviction uncharitable towards the Indian people, but perhaps because firstly his stay in Hindustan was much too short to enable him to acquaint himself fully and accurately with the customs, manners, ideas and habits of the people and secondly because everything struck him strange in "a different world." But he was certainly interested in everything he noticed in this country. He gives a detailed and minute account of the flora and fauna of Hindustan, of its mountains and rivers, of its various kind of vegetables and fruits.[3] His notice of elephants in India, which in his time were found as near as Allahabad, shows that he was interested in the things of the country and was not an India-hater. "The elephant is.....very sagacious. If people speak to it, it understands, if they command anything from it, it does it .....It has some useful qualities : It crosses great rivers with ease,.....and three or four (elephants) have gone dragging without trouble the cart of the mortar it takes four or five hundred men to haul."[4]

And when one reads of Babur's jubilance at India's rains, who can say that he is unfair to the country. "The pleasant

1. B. N. (B) II, p. 608.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 520.
3. B. N. (B), II, pp. 488-517.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 488-89.

things of Hindustan are that it is a large country and has masses of gold and silver. Its air in the Rains is very fine. Sometimes it rains 10, 15, or 20 times a day, torrents pour down all at once and rivers flow where no water had been.[1] While it rains and through the Rains, the air is remarkably fine, not to be surpassed for healthiness and charm."[2]

The emperor-diarist also gives some hints about the economic life of Hindustan of his times. His assertion that India abounded in "masses of gold and silver" is very interesting and deserves study. From the time of Mahmud of Ghazni onwards many conquerors had carried immense quantities of gold and silver from this country. We also know that one of the reasons for Muhammad Tughlaq's introduction of copper token currency was the lack of availability of silver in the country.[3] The situation seems to have improved in the time of Firoz,[4] but Timur had again carried away most of the wealth of the capital as well as the countryside he had ravaged. In the days of Akbar gold and silver were imported from abroad,[5] From the information given in the *Ain-i-Akbari* "the production of gold appears to have been negligible : the silence of visitors to the south may be taken as conclusive evidence that the Mysore gold fields were not worked at this time, and Abul Fazl tells only of the metal being washed from river-sand in some parts of Northern India.....Silver too was obtained in only trifling quantities. Abul Fazl states that a mine existed in the province of Agra, but that it did not pay for working....."[6] And yet an empire-builder of the sixteenth century finds "masses of gold and silver." He might have been impressed with the funds of these precious metals here because his own country lacked them. But the question arises how it

1. Cf. Sidi Ali Reis Travels, (A. D. 1553-56), Translated by A. Vambery, (Luzac & Co., London, 1899), description of Indian rains, p. 23.
2. B N. (B) II, p. 519.
3. Ishwari Prasad, *A History of the Qaraunah Turks*, (The Indian Press, Allahabad 1936), I, pp. 113-116.
4. Thomas, *Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, (Trubner & Co., London, 1871) pp. 308, 309.
5. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 143.
6. *Ibid.*, 146.

was that in spite of the fact that so many conquerors used to carry away so much wealth out of India and so many rulers used to send out large amounts of money for distribution among their co-religionists in Muslim countries,[1] the fund of gold and silver was never on the decline even when these metals were not quarried in India in large quantities? Perhaps a very important reason for this was that much of what the invaders carried away in loot was earned back by Indian traders and merchants in foreign trade from the very countries to which the loot had been carried away. Writing about India's trade Babur says, "On the road between Hindustan and Khorasan, there are two great marts; the one Kabul, the other Kandahar.....This country lies between Hindustan and Khorasan.[2] It is an excellent market for commodities..... From Hindustan every year, fifteen or twenty thousand pieces of cloth are brought by caravans.[3] The commodities of Hindustan are slaves, white cloths, sugar-candy, refined and common sugar, drugs and spices. There are many merchants that are not satisfied with getting thirty or forty on ten (*i.e.* three or four hundred per cent). The productions of Khorasan, Rum, Irak and Chin may all be found in Kabul, which is the very emporium of Hindustan."[4] Surely Indian goods had a good market abroad and Indian merchants made huge profits. And since coins at this period, especially in foreign trade, "were not regarded as standards of value but rather as a form of merchandise,"[5] the Indian merchants obtained large quantities

1. E.g. Babur himself celebrated his victory at Panipat by distributing wealth with prodigal generosity. Offerings were sent to the holy places like Mecca and Medina, "and every living soul in Kabul received a silver coin."
   B. N. (B), II, pp. 522-23.
   Also R. Williams, p. 139 and note.
   Tabqat-i-Akbari, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, II, p. 17.
   Tarikh-i Ferishtah, Persian text, I, p. 206.
2. Route to Kabul was from Lahore, to Kandhar from Multan, Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
3. B. N. (L & E) pp. 137-38. B. N. (B) I, p. 202, has "caravans of 10, 15 or 20,000 heads of horses."
4. B. N. (L & E) pp. 137-38.
5. Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

of gold and silver from foreign trade. In short India was eager to sell every kind of produce for these precious metals.[1] Thus, time and again Indian funds of these precious metals used to get replenished.

Similarly, there existed a flourishing trade between the west-coast ports of India like Dabhol, Chaul and Quilon on the one hand and the ports of Egypt, Persia and other Middle Eastern countries on the other. During the period under review, a new people had entered the arena of overseas trade in the late fifteenth century, when Vasco da Gama landed on the Malabar coast in A. D. 1498. The Portuguese were quite welcome in India,[2] but when they started to show their hand, Malabar resisted their encroachments. Their commercial and piratical activities also broke the monopoly which the Egyptians had so long enjoyed in the trade with India.[3] In 1508 Gujarat and Egypt entered into an alliance and their united fleet attacked the ships of the Portuguese[4] and did them great damage, but their power went on increasing till the Dutch ousted them. This commercial invasion of the Portuguese of the west coast, about which Babur writes nothing because perhaps he knew nothing, is a very significant event of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, because the Portuguese were the first among the Europeans to come to a land which in course of time they were to influence in so many ways.[5]

Inland trade in India was also in a good state. True, after Timur's invasion inland trade and commerce had been adversely affected because of the unsettled condition of northern India, but such a situation would not have continued for long. A treasure-trove discovered in 1908 between Garha and Madan Mahal,[6] and consisting of coins of Muhammedan kings of

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.
2. *Indian Antiquary*. III, p. 100.
3. K. M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, (D. B. Taraporevala & Sons, Bombay, 1929), p. 32.
4. *Indian Antiquary*, III, p. 100. Also Panikkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 69, for Zomorin's invocation of the aid of Egypt.
5. For the presence of numerous Portuguese words in Indian languages, especially Urdu, see R.B. Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Publisher Ram Narain Lal, Allahabad, 1940, p.5.
6. *District Gazetteer, Jubbulpore*, p. 74.

Delhi, Kashmir, Gujarat, Malwa, Bahmani and Jaunpur ranging from A.D. 1311 to A. D. 1553 is a good testimony of the constant inland trade and commerce throughout the length and breadth of the country, because the treasure-trove containing assortment of coins from almost all important states of India was discovered at a place situated in the heart of the country.

Of industries, major and minor, Babur speaks little, but because various kinds of workmen and artisans existed and trade was extensive, it is reasonable to presume that many industries existed too. With the establishment of Mughal rule in India, every sort of work would have received encouragement. A passage from the *Memoirs* gives a good picture of the position. "Another good thing in Hindustan is that it has unnumbered and endless workmen of every kind. There is a fixed caste for every sort of work and for everything, which has done that work or that thing from father to son till now. Mulla Sharaf writing in the *Zafar-namah* about the building of Timur Beg's Stone Mosque, lays stress on the fact that on it 200 stone-cutters worked from.....Hindustan and other countries. But 680 men worked daily on my buildings in Agra....., while 1491 stone-cutters worked daily on my buildings in Agra, Sikri, Biana, Dholpur, Gwalior and Koil. In the same way there are numberless artisans and workmen of every sort in Hindustan."[1]

Such was Babur's Hindustan, to him a "strange country so full of contradictions."[2] When after Panipat the conqueror had first arrived in Agra, "there was a strong mutual dislike between my people and the men of the place. The peasantry and soldiers of the country avoided and fled from my men."[3] That was but natural. Nay, the contemporaries of Daulat Khan Lodi would have even cursed him for the welcome he had extended to Babur to invade India. But we at a distance of more than four hundred years share in the welcome because the Mughal rule ushered in an era of which India has ever been proud.

1. B. N. (B), II, pp. 520 also 518.
2. R. Williams, p. 139.
3. B. N. (L & E), p. 335 ; (B), II, p. 523.

SIX

AKBAR'S DIN-I-ILAHI

Writing in his monograph on the Din-i-Ilahi,[1] Professor M. L. Roy Choudhary says : "On the whole Akbar's rule had a purpose, a policy and a plan. Events whether spiritual or secular moved more consistently than they did at any other period of Mughal administration before and after him." Indeed the more one reflects the more one feels convinced that Akbar's actions used to be clear and deliberate ; he did not let things drift. His conquests, his administrative measures, his architectural enterprises, his works of art and his social reforms were all well-planned and well-executed. He may not have been correct in everything he did. Many indeed were dissatisfied with some of his measures. Still Akbar did not believe in turning things over to time. He clinched the issues and sought to provide definite answers to problems.

His Din-i-Ilahi too was an answer to a problem. Before making a study of this problem, and also whether or not the Din-i-Ilahi was a new religion introduced by Akbar, it is necessary to recapitulate the background of the problem and the emergence of this new idea. And to have a clear perspective of the situation and an insight into Akbar's mind and actions, Akbar's critic Badaoni and not the official historian Abdul Fazl would help us better, and therefore, in the following pages Badaoni will be profusely quoted.

Of the influences working on Akbar's mind, a few important ones may be mentioned here. One is Akbar's own mental deliberations about truth, God and man. He used to spend many a morning in His remembrance.[2] It was for the

1. Calcutta University, 1941.
2. V.A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Moghul* (Oxford, 1919), p. 130.

love of God and of His people that he ordered remission of Pilgrim-tax (A.D. 1663) and abolition of Jeziya (A.D. 1564). It was again in the spirit of a seeker after the Truth that he ordered in 1575 the Ibadat Khana to be built, where the Emperor used to hold religious discussions with saints and Ulema. Such discussions were a passion with him.

Another is his association with Shias, Sufis and men like Shaikh Mubarak and his two talented sons Faizi and Abul Fazl who were influenced by the Mahdavi thought. Abul Fazl introduced to Akbar early in 1574 had great influence upon him as is clear from a sentence of Badaoni. "He is the man that set the world in flames."[1] Then there was the impact of Christians, Hindus and people of various other religions.

In the beginning only Muslim divines and scholars used to attend the meetings of the Ibadat Khana, but "jealousy, hypocricy, and envy, which to the saints of Hindustan, in their feelings towards one another, are the very necessaries of life,"[2] soon disgusted the monarch. Thereafter Hindus, Zoroastrians, Jains, and Christians were also invited to participate in the discussions. Akbar was convinced that "there were sensible men in all religions.....among all nations."[3] Such a cosmopolitan congregation at the emperor's court for expounding the doctrines of their faiths was a unique phenomenon, a thing the like of which had never been witnessed before in medieval times. Intimate contact with so many people professing different faiths surely had a great impact on Akbar's mind. But in his assuming the prerogatives of the head of the Church and in the development of the idea of the Din-i-Ilahi, the influence of the Christians and Hindus I consider to be the most important, and this may be studied in a little detail.

From Christians Akbar did not learn only to revere Jesus and Mary, but obviously many more things which have not been mentioned either by Abul Fazl or Badaoni. The latter, however, throws a hint. "Learned monks also came from Europe," says he, "who go by the name of *Padre*. They have

1. Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Persian text (Calcutta, 1865), II, p. 198.
2. Badaoni, II, p. 38.
3. *Ibid.*, 256.

an infallible head, called Papa (Pope). He can change any religious ordinances as he may think advisable, and kings have to submit to his authority."[1] This Badaoni writes, how much more he knew is anybody's guess. Surely Akbar, who was coming in direct contact with Christians almost daily, must have known still more. He must have learnt that the Pope exercised powers which prejudiced the rights of rulers, and how the authority of the Pope and the clericals of the church had been challenged in Europe. As in Europe so in India, the anti-clerical sentiment had both a religious and a national root. Throughout medieval times a struggle had been going on between kings and clericals. The point at issue was : who was to decide about the policies of the State, who was to be the dominant factor in the State—the Ruler or the Ulema ? Strong kings like Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq had suppressed the Ulema, but the latter used to raise their heads again and again. But throughout the Sultanate period and even as late as the times of Sher Shah the position of the Ulema in politics had remained undefined. The rulers by and large had adopted an indefinite policy of drift—sometimes of suppression, at others of concession to the Ulema. Akbar, however, armed with the knowledge of the methods employed by European monarchs as he was, decided to teach "the Mullas a lesson."[2] He suppressed the Ulema in many ways and ultimately dealt the serverest blow on their power by declaring himself, in 1579, as the head of the Church.

The method adopted by reformers and rulers who brought about Reformation in Europe was to examine and re-examine every prevalent religious practice, custom and ritual on the basis of reason and a direct reference to the Bible. The same scepticism and spirit of enquiry urged Akbar to look deeply into books of his own religion, Islam. Badaoni says that "Shaykh Mubarak of Nagor (a teacher of Badaoni[3]) said in the presence of the emperor to Bir Bar, 'Just as there are interpolations in your holy books, so there are many in ours

1. Badaoni, II, p. 260.
2. Badaoni, II, 198.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

(Quran); hence it is impossible to trust either."[1] Such scepticism was only possible because of Akbar's attitude. His permission to discuss critically the Quran and other Muslim religious books enraged men like Badaoni, but encouraged many others to express their doubts freely. Now religion is a matter of faith and belief, not of enquiry or reason, and in the free atmosphere created by Akbar many Islamic theories and practices which did not stand the test of reason were challenged. As Abul Fazl observes, "The religion of thousands consists in clinging to an idea; they are happy in their sloth...(and) although some are enlightened, many would observe silence from fear of fanatics."[2]

At the discussion meetings held by Akbar, 'at which every one...might say or ask what he liked,' "the emperor examined people about the creation of the Quran, elicited their belief, or otherwise, in revelation, and raised doubts in them regarding all things connected with the prophet and the imams. He distinctly denied the existence of *Jins*, of angels, and of all other beings of the invisible world, as well as the miracles of the Prophet."[3] People were also busy collecting "all kinds of exploded errors, and brought them to His Majesty, as if they were so many presents...Every doctrine and command of Islam as the prophetship, the harmony of the Islam with reason...the details of the day of resurrection and judgment, all were doubted and ridiculed."[4] "Bir Bar..., Shaykh Abul Fazl and Hakim Abul Fateh...successfully turned the emperor from Islam and led him to reject inspiration, prophetship, the miracles of the prophet and of the saints and even the whole law."[5] Such was the freedom of expression and such was the keenness on the part of some to write books like a *Praise of Folly* or a *Letters of Obscure Men* that "some bastards such as the son of Mulla Mubarak...wrote treatises, in order to revile and ridicule our religious practices, of course with proofs.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
2. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochmann's translation, Second Edition, (Calcutta, 1939), p. 171.
3. Badaoni, II, p. 273.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
5. *Ibid.*, p 211.

His Majesty liked such productions and prompted the authors."[1]

This was indeed unique in the annals of medieval India and made Badaoni rave. And since in this process many clericals lost their position and power and even lands and 'many families were ruined,'[2] Badaoni's rage against the emperor and Abul Fazl knew no bounds and he exaggerated. But shorn of all exaggeration, it all shows how Akbar's humanism was different from that of the clericals. Akbar considered and did things in accordance with the rational temperament and outlook.

He desired all his subjects, especially the educated class, also to broaden their outlook and study other subjects besides the Quran and the Hadis. But Badaoni, as is well-known, speaks against every social and religious reform of Akbar. Consequently, he twists the idea behind this suggestion and says: "Reading and learning Arabic was looked upon as a crime; and Muhammadan law, the exegesis of the Quran, and the Tradition, as also those who studied them, were considered bad and deserving of disapproval. Astronomy, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, poetry, history, and novels were cultivated and thought necessary."[3] Again, "in the same year (995 H, A.D. 1587) a new command was issued that all people should give up the Arabic sciences and should study only the really useful ones *viz.* Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine and Philosophy."[4] Monogamy was rational and Akbar was in favour of it, but Badaoni ridicules it by saying: "No one was to marry more than one wife, except in the case of barrenness; but in all other cases the rule was, 'One God, and one wife."[5] Badaoni of course is not fair to Akbar.

Now Akbar's outlook was not only rational, it was national, and never perhaps has nationalism been based on rationalism as under Akbar. Sir Wolseley Haig very aptly remarks, "with all his faults, Akbar was the first of the Muslim

1. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 321.
3. Badaoni, II, pp. 306-07.
4. *Ibid.*, II, p. 363.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

sovereigns of India to conceive the idea of dealing impartially with all his subjects...It may also be said that he was the last."[1] Badaoni concedes, "The Hindus are, of course, indispensable ; to them belongs half the army and half the land. Neither the Hindustanis nor the Mughals can point to such grand lords as the Hindus have among themselves."[2] But he also admits that those Hindus, who "have no end of revealed books,...do not belong to the *Ahl-i-Kitab.*"[3] Therefore to men like Badaoni they were not worthy of any consideration or regard.[4] But Akbar was not narrow-minded. As Professor Toynbee has said : "Islam, like the other two religions of the Judaic family, is exclusive-minded and intolerant by comparison with the religions and philosophies of Indian origin. Yet the influence of India on Akbar went so deep that he...was characteristically Indian in (his) large-hearted catholicity."[5] He openly invited learned Hindus for discussion. "As they (the Brahmans) surpass other learned men in their treatises on morals, and on physical and religious sciences, and reach a high degree in their knowledge of the future, in spiritual power and human perfection, they brought proofs based on reason and testimony..., and so skilfully represented things as quite self-evident...that no man could now raise a doubt in His Majesty."[6] Also "His Majesty, on hearing...how much the people of the country prized their institutions, commenced to look upon them with affection."[7] "He also believed that it was wrong to kill cows, which the Hindus worship." "The custom

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1. *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 84.
2. Badaoni, II, 339.
3. Badaoni, II, p. 258.
4. "While the compiler of this *Muntakhab* was at Agra occupied in acquiring the usual branches of knowledge Shaikh (Muhammad Ghous) came in the dress of a Faqir, with great display and unutterable dignity, and his fame filled the universe. I wished to pay my respects to him, but when I found that he rose up to do honour to Hindus, I felt obliged to forego the pleasure."
   Badaoni, II, pp. 63-64.
5. A. J. Toynbee, *One World and India*, (Patel Memorial Lectures, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, (New Delhi, 1961) p. 19.
6. Badaoni, II, p. 257.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

of Rakhi (for similar reasons) became quite common."[1] Akbar was by nature tolerant. But he also felt that the sentiments of the vast population of the Hindus had to be respected if a strong and stable national state was to be built up. His ideas and policies paid dividends in all spheres.

The upshot of all these ideas and influences was that Akbar decided, like the sovereigns of England and some other European states, to assume the powers of the head of both the Church and the State. This was necessary for reasons more than one. He could look after the interests of his subjects uninterrupted by the interference of the Ulema and could also be independent of all vested clerical interests. After a long process of deliberations and diplomatic manoeuvres, he declared himself, in 1579, as supreme both in Church and in State. Writing on the events leading to the Mahzarnama or the Infallibility Decree, Badaoni says : "His Majesty was anxious to unite in his person the powers of the State and those of the Church, for he held it an insufferable burden to be subordinate to any one."[2]

The taking over of the headship of the Church posed two problems before Akbar. One was the strong opposition of the Ulema as well as some provincial governors who were aghast at the ways of the king. The Ulema were seized with a fear of losing their privileged position as the champions of Islam. They had entertained such fears ever since the deliberations in the Ibadat Khana had begun, and had felt that these discussions augured nothing but ill for the future of Musalmans in India. The Infallibility decree, which proclaimed the emperor as the supreme arbiter in all matters whether ecclesiastical or temporal, was the last straw that broke the back of their patience. Although Akbar's contemporary Elizabeth had attained to a similar position in England, in India the cry of Islam in Danger was raised. Rebellions broke out in Bihar and Bengal, and banking upon the support of the disaffected elements in the country, Muhammad Hakim of Kabul began to aspire for the throne of India. But Akbar

1. Badaoni, II, pp. 261-62.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

was not to be daunted by all this. On the political field force was met with force and troubles in Bihar and Bengal and Punjab were got under, but not without giving some anxious moments to Akbar. The Ulema too were ruthlessly suppressed ; they had not been spared by Akbar even before.

The other problem was that since now the emperor was supreme in religious matters also, he must give spiritual guidance to his people. This again was a difficult task, but Akbar was determined to carry it out. His cosmopolitan outlook had by now become everybody's knowledge. All the intelligent sections of the people knew in what direction the king's mind had been working for some time past. Years of fruitful discussions had filled Akbar's mind with one definite idea : Islam alone was not sacrosanct ; all religions had some good features common to them. That being so, he wanted toleration for all of them. But he was also aware of the conservatism and narrow-mindedness of the people. His problem was how he could bring together into one fold people who believed in his philosophy of *Suleh Kul* (Peace with All), and his answer was Din-i-Ilahi.

But the orthodox Ulema had their pre-conceived notions. They believed that whatever Akbar would do, will be against Islam, and therefore they began to denounce the Din-i-Ilahi outright. However, the emperor had only recommended to those who were willing to enrol themselves into his new order, only a code of behaviour rather than any religious precepts.[1]

1. The doctrines of the Din-i-Ilahi were not defined. Abul Fazl writes very briefly about the 'ordinances.' Badaoni says that everything in it was against Islam, but gives no regulations as such (Badaoni, II, pp. 305-6). The only book which gives the fundamentals of Din-i-Ilahi is Mohsin Fani's *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*. In the *Dabistan*, the emperor is shown to have propounded the Din-i-Ilahi in ten virtues :
   1. Liberality and beneficence.
   2. Forgiveness of the evil doer and repulsion of anger with mildness.
   3. Abstinence from worldly desires.
      Care of freedom from the bonds of the worldly existence and violence, as well as accumulating precious stores for the future real and perpetual world.
   4. Wisdom and devotion in the frequent meditation on the consequences of actions.

(*Continued on next page*)

Akbar mentioned neither a prophet, nor a book, nor a church, nor a priesthood, universally believed to be essentials of a religion. His brotherhood only possessed a common symbol called Shast, on which Allah-o-Akbar was inscribed, and observed a common form of salutation. "The members of the Divine Faith, on seeing each other, observe the following custom. One says, 'Allahu Akbar,' and the other responds 'Jall Jallahu'! The motive of His Majesty in laying down this mode of salutation, is to remind men to think of the origin of their existence, and to keep the Deity in fresh, lively and grateful remembrance." They also practised certain customs. Instead of a dinner usually given in remembrance of a man after his death, each member was to give a party on the anniversary of birthday, and to bestow alms and thus prepare for 'the long journey.' Members were to avoid eating flesh as far as possible, at least during the month of their birth, but allow others to eat meat without themselves touching it. They were not to take anything slain by one's own self; not to eat with butchers, fishers and bird-catchers; not to cohabit with pregnant, old and barren women nor with girls under the age of puberty.[1] And Smith aptly remarks that there was good deal of uncertainty[2] about the meaning of the Din-i-Ilahi till 1587.[3] And after that date it

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(Continued from previous page)

6. Strength of dexterious prudence in the desire of marvellous actions.
7. Soft voice, gentle words, pleasing speeches for everybody.
8. Good treatment with brethren, so that their will have the precedence to our own.
9. A perfect alienation from creatures and a perfect attachment to the Supreme Being.
10. Dedication of soul in the love of God and union with God, the preserver of all.

1. *Ain.*, Blochmann, pp. 175-76; Dabistan II, p. 91.
2. Badaoni himself testifies to this. He says, "At a council meeting for renovating the religion of the empire, Raja Bhagwan Das said, 'I would willingly believe that Hindus and Musalamans have each a bad religion; but only tell us where the new sect is, and what opinion they hold, so that I may believe.' His Majesty reflected a little, and ceased to urge the Raja." Badaoni, II, p. 313.
3. Smith, p. 213.

had ceased to be considered, if it ever had been considered, a *religion.*

The above rites cannot be called tenets of a religion by any stretch of imagination. In fact Din-i-Ilahi was never considered a new religion even by Abul Fazl who was closest to Abkar in this venture. He writes only very briefly about it under the heading "His Majesty as the Spiritual Guide of the People."[1] Badaoni also does not call it a religion but says that "His Majesty gave his system the name of Tauhid-i-Ilahi (Divine Monotheism)"[2]

Referring to the new order Raja Man Singh also told Akbar : "If you order me to do so, I will become a Musalman, ut besides Hinduism and Islam, I do not know the existence of any other religion."[3] So when Raja Bhagwant Das or Raja Man Singh refused to accept the membership of the Din-i-Ilahi, they were not against Akbar's policy of peace ; only they did not consider the Din-i-Ilahi to be a religion to which to change over. In fact Muslim members remained Muslim and Bir Bar remained a Hindu after accepting the Din-i-Ilahi. When Bir Bar was killed fighting the Yusufzais in 1586, Akbar lamented that his body "had not been brought so that it could be burned."[4] Even when Mirza Jani of Thatta wrote to Akbar that he "rejected Islam in all its phases...and joined the Divine Faith of Akbar, and declared himself willing to sacrifice to him his property and life, his honour and religion,"[5] he did not cease to be a Muslim but only showed great enthusiasm in joining the new order. Moreover, the scanty membership of the Din-i-Ilahi, the attitude of the emperor himself and many other facts also show that it was not a religion.

Let us first take up the list of the prominent members of the order. The total number of the elite who joined the Din-i-Ilahi was twenty. Eighteen names have been collected by

1. Ain, p. 170.
2. *'Va ravish-i-khud ra ba-Tauhid-i-Ilahi mausum sakhtand'*, Badaoni, II, p. 325.
3. Badaoni, II, p. 364.
4. *Ain.*, pp. 204-205 ; Badaoni, II, 340.
5. Badaoni, II, 304-305.

Blochmann from stray references ;[1] those of Akbar and Prince Salim add to total twenty. They are Shaikh Mubarak and his two sons, Mulla Shah, Sufi Ahmad, Jafar Beg Asaf Khan, Qasim Kahi, Azam Khan Koka, Abdus Samad, Mir Sharif Amal, Sultan Khwaja, Mirza Jani, Taqi Shustar, Saikhzada Gosla Banarsi, Sadr Jahan and his two sons, and Bir Bar. All these were eminent men. Faizi was the court-poet and Abul Fazl the court historian. Jafar Beg, Qasim Kahi and Taqi Shustar were poets. Mulla Muhammad was a historian and Abdus Samad a renowned painter. Sultan Khwaja was a Sadr and Mirza Jani the chief of Thatta. As Blochmann rightly points out, "the literary element is well-represented in the list."[2] It was the progressive element at the court, possessing cosmopolitan outlook, that joined the new order.

But who could call the Din-i-Ilahi a 'Religion' with twenty people, the preceptor and the followers all included ? It was more like a society or a club where people of identical views assembled and exchanged ideas rather than an eclectic religion. If Akbar had founded a new religion, he would have hunted for converts, given all kinds of inducements to people to join it and would not have tolerated any kind of scepticism about it. But on the contrary he made a 'clearing search' and put every one to a strict test before admitting him into his order, and "every strictness and reluctance was shown by His Majesty in admitting novices."[3] Nor was Akbar keen on playing the role of a prophet or a pope for he used to say, "Why should I claim to guide men before I myself am guided ?" "Hence he even keeps back many who declare themselves willing to become his disciples."[4]

Only the word Din has misled us into thinking that Din-i-Ilahi was a religion. The want of a better word perhaps compelled Akbar to call his society by that name. Similar was the case with the Ibadat Khana ; literally it should have been a "House of Worship," but actually it was a place where religious

1. *Ain.*, pp. 218-19.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
3. *Ain.*, p. 174.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

discussions were held. Etymology alone is at fault. Din-i-Ilahi was not a religion to which converts were welcome. It was a society of a select few, and any large numbers were discouraged.

Outside the court circle also there were some members. Of these some joined "either from fear or hope of promotion".[1] Some others joined because they had faith in it.[2] Some others like Azam Khan, who after his return from Makkah, where he 'had suffered much harm at the hands of Sharifs' joined it having been perhaps disillusioned with Islam.[3] But coercion and bribery, as suggested by Smith, were not used to attract followers. Here again the testimony of Badaoni is of the greatest value. "His Majesty...was convinced that confidence in him as leader was a matter of time and good counsel, and did not require the sword. And indeed, if His Majesty, in setting up his claims, and making the innovations, had spent a little money, he would have easily got most of the courtiers and much more the vulgars, into his devilish nets."[4]

In short, Akbar never founded a new religion. The real problem was the dearth of understanding and accommodation; there was no dearth of religions. Akbar, therefore, had founded only a society of people of enlightened views and cosmopolitan outlook with a motto of friendship with all and a belief in the oneness of God. The members of the society were high officials and men of respectable positions. People like Shaikh Mubarak, Abul Fazl and Bir Bar were there. Branches of this society were perhaps formed in some other places also, but

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1. Badaoni, II, pp. 269 and 339.
2. *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, pp. 414, 431.
3. Badaoni, II, p. 398.
4. Badaoni, II, p. 313. If there had been anything to the contrary, Badaoni at least would have eagerly clutched at the information. In spite of this Vincent Smith makes a very funny, if not sinister, remark. He says that to bring Sadr Jahan, the Mufti of the Empire, into the fold, the command of 1,000 was awarded to him. Smith thus means to say that bribery was freely resorted to attract adherents. Smith, p. 221.

about their membership and activities nothing is known, and any speculation about them would be of little value.[1]

It is in this light that Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi must be seen. Akbar was tolerant, he was rational, his outlook was national. He had probably learnt much from European Reformation Movement, he had certainly imbibed much of the Indian philosophy and thought. And what was the spirit of India? Badaoni again puts it very aptly and correctly. "Hindustan is a nice large place," says he, "where everything is allowed, and no one cares for another, and people go as they may."[2] Akbar had imbibed this spirit, this tolerant outlook. But Akbar neither claimed nor desired to be a prophet. On the contrary he primarily was a strong monarch, well-versed in the arts of diplomacy and statecraft. He crushed opposition ruthlessly, and carried on conquests almost to the end of his life.

The cosmopolitan society of Din-i-Ilahi with its motto of religious toleration was formed ten years after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in France and thirty-six years before the greatest religious war in Europe broke out. The analogy is not given to show that while the fire of persecution was ablaze in all its ferocity in Europe, in India people of different faiths were living in an atmosphere of extreme cordiality. Europe's religious persecutions started in the 16th century and almost ended after the Thirty Years' War, in the middle of the 17th century. In India intolerance had not been an exceptional phenomenon ever since the 12th century itself. It was sheer irony of circumstance that when the persecution in Europe was at its highest, India had got the most benevolent king of the age. To compare a people in the worst of their religious temper with a people whose king had adopted a policy of peace-with-all would not be fair. But the analogy has a purpose. And it is that

1. Abul Fazl says that the membership of the Din-i-Ilahi numbered a few thousand. (*Ain.*, p. 174.). Abul Fazl, who (according to Badaoni's sarcastic remark, II, p. 398), was the 'Reverend Master' of the new order, was so enthusiastic about it that he might have exaggerated. Even if not, a few thousand were almost insignificant for a vast empire like Akbar's.
2. Badaoni, II, p. 246.

while the intolerance of European monarchs and religionists must have reached Akbar's ears through the European priests and profiteers who were then flocking into this country, and the intolerance of the Jesuit Fathers was all too well known to him, Akbar untouched by the pride of his power, kept his mind cool, maintained a rationalistic approach to things, and carried out an admirable experiment in the service of the people.

It is a mistake to think that the Din-i-Ilahi failed. Akbar had shown a way. The conservatism of the people did not let the scheme succeed. When the spirit of tolerance was given up for parochial slogans, the successors of Akbar learnt to their sorrow that the spirit of the Din-i-Ilahi alone represented the genius of the Indian people and it alone was the remedy for all his ills. Akbar's was a cultural *rapprochement*, not a religious innovation. In art as in administration he had struck a new synthesis. His creative genius could not stop there. He conceived of the bold idea of the Din-i-Ilahi, of showing the people the way to fraternity and peace. Just as his administrative methods were changed and his artistic motifs given up by his successors, the spirit of Din-i-Ilahi was also gradually forgotten. As Blochmann observes : "As Jahangir did not trouble himself about any religion, Akbar's spirit of toleration soon changed into indifference, and gradually died out, when a reaction in favour of bigotry set in under Aurangzeb. But people still talked of the Divine Faith in 1643 or 1648, when the author of Dabistan collected his notes on Akbar's religion."[1]

Blochmann's mention of Aurangzeb's bigotry raises an issue. And I would like to conclude this essay and this *Studies in Medieval Indian History* by saying a word about it because, to my mind, it is the crux of medieval Indian historical studies. Akbar never abjured Islam. He lived and died a good Muslim, but some books and many articles[2] say that it was Aurangzeb who was a good Muslim and Akbar was not, and whatever good or bad Aurangzeb did was due to his religious piety. Now who was a good Muslim—one who thought of breaking temples, imposing the Jeziya and carrying on war on people of other

1. *Ain.*, pp. 222-23.
2. These are too well-known to need any reference.

faiths, or one who thought of uniting peoples of different faiths in one fraternity ? If the former, then it has to be remembered that as love begets love, hate begets hate and good Muslims like Aurangzeb will always produce good Hindus and good Sikhs and good Christians who will answer hate with hate. This is the lesson of medieval Indian history. It was Akbar, a believer in peace with all, that was a good Muslim in the true sense of the word.

INDEX

Abdulla, 195, 226
Abdul Aziz, 91
Abdul Hamid Lahori, 43, 62, 83
Abdul Haqq, 105
Abdul Qadir Badaoni, 32, 104, 172, 233-35, 242-45
Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, 181
Abdur Razzaq, 135, 177
Abid Husain, 97
Abu Hanifa, 201
Abu Yusuf, 201
Abul Fazl, Allami, 10, 31, 33, 62, 133, 227, 229, 233, 234, 236, 237
Achuyta, Vijayanagar king, 135, 139
Acton, Lord, 4, 21, 26, 33, 36, 62
Afghanistan, 189, 211
Afif, see Shams Siraj Afif
Aghnides, N.P., 146
Agra, 12, 79, 97, 145, 224, 225, 229, 232
Ahmad Ali, 97
Ahmadnagar, 171
Ahmad Yadgar, 39
Ahmedabad, 12, 142
Ain-i-Akbari, 133, 146, 227, 229
Aiyangar, K.S., 88
Ajanta, 10, 14, 26, 57, 61
Ajodhan, 184
Akbar, Mughal Emperor, 24, 31, 33, 34, 57, 58, 59, 79, 85, 91, 95, 132, 145-49, 151, 169, 170-74, 191, 214, 215n, 227, 229, his Din-i-Ilahi 233-247
Akhbarul Akhyar, 105
Ala Hasan Sijzi, 101, 106
Alam Khan Lodi, 221
Aluddin Bahman Shah, 136 n.
Alauddin Khalji, 53, 94, 100-102, 104, 105, 108, 122, 123, 128, 131, 133, 136 n, 139, 145, 149, 152, 155, 157, 158, 159, 166, 167, 178, 185, 187, 190, 191, 192, 194, 195, 199, 202, 204-208, 209, 214, 235
Alauddin Masaud Shah, 126
Ala-ul-Mulk, 101, 106, 206, 209
Alberuni, Abu Raihan, 44, 45, 92, 116, 117, 118, 134, 177, 178, 179-181, 183, 185, 186, 187, 219, 227
al-Qalqashindi, 177, 185, 186
Alhambra, 12, 26
Ali Beg, 206
Aligarh, Historical School, 99
Allahabad, 228
Amar Singh, Mewar Prince, 173
Amber (Jaipur), 169, 170
Amir Khusrau, 101, 106, 166, 181, 187, 207

Amuktamalyada, by Krishna Deva Raya, 133, 135, 137, 138
Anandpal, 122
Antigone, 26
Arabia, 22, Arabs 4, 38, 82, 113
Aram Shah, 125
Aranyakas, 116
Aristotle, 14
Arkali Khan, son of Jalaluddin Khalji, 106
Arthashastra, 120
Asaf Khan Qazvini, 171, 172
Ashraf, K.M., 92, 143
Asirgarh, 58
Asoka, 12, 23, 25, 48, 49, 63, 97, 114
Assam, 122
Assyria, 50
Athens, 30
Athnasius Nikitin, 177, 188, 199
Aurangzeb, Mughal Emperor, 24, 30, 82, 124, 136 n, 146, 150, 192, 195, 199, 246, 247
Avasthi, R.S., 88
Aziz Ahmad, Muhammad, 87

Babur, Mughal Emperor, 31, his memoirs 88, 124, 171, 172 177, 179, 183, 186, 195, 197, 199, 219-228, 230-32
Babylon, 21, Babylonia, 50
Bacanor, 141
Bacon, Lord, 4, 66, 100
Badaoni, see Abdul Qadir Badaoni
Bahlul Lodi, 226
Bahmani, kingdom, 132, 135, 140, 232
Bakhtiyar Khalji, Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad, 113, 122, 180
Balban, see Ghayasuddin Balban
Banerjee, A.C., 124
Bappa Rawal, 173
Baqbaq, Malik, 155
Barani, see Ziyauddin Barani
Barbosa, Duarte, 135, 141, 177, 188
Bashir Sultani, Imadul Mulk, 164, 165, 167
Basu, B.D., 38, 39
Bayana, 224, 232
Beirut, 38
Bektars, Malik Barbek, 105
Benares, 180
Bengal, 113, 127, 171, 178, 198, 221, 239, 240
Beni Prasad, 52, 66, 89, 170
Bernier, 30, 197
Bhagvadgita 76
Bhagwant Das, 169, 172, 242
Bhakti Movement, 97
Bhakta Saints, 217
Bhatkal, 141
Bhatnir, 184
Bhavabhuti, 28
Bhilsa, 122
Bhushan, 43
Bibi-ka-Maqbara, 58
Bihar, 113, 239, 240
Bihari Mal, 169, 170
Bijapur, 61, 135
Birbal, also Bir Bar, 58, 235, 236, 242-244

Blochmann, Henry, 145, 146, 243, 246
Bodhan Brahman, 150
Buddha, Gautama, 3, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 79, 116
Bughra Khan, 127, 155
Buland Darwaza, 26, 57
Bundi, 171
Burckhardt, historian, 7, 78
Bury, J.B., 62

Caligula, 9, 20, 25
Caliphs, 67, 76, 126
Carlyle, Thomas, 5, 8, 62, 66
Carr, E.H., 7, 26
Catherine, of Russia, 68
Ceylon, 12, 211
Chaitanya, 198, 222
Chajju, Malik, 128
Champollion, 49
Chanderi, 122, 224
Chandeshvara, 133
Chandra Bardai, 43
Charles I, of England, 95
Chaul, 231
China, 12, 73, 180, 211
Chingiz Khan, 9, 12, 20, 23, 25
Chittor, 101, 170, 171, 172, 174
Chopra, P.N., 92
Christ, Jesus, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 35, 234
Christianity, 115, 116, 211
Christians, 77, 139, 141, 234, 247
Churchill, Winston, 24, 66
Cicero, 4, 68
Clauzewitz, 70, 120
Constantinople, 35, 45, 50
Copernicus, 5
Crete, 50
Croce, B., 22, 24, 77, 78
Cumbola, 141

Dabhol, 231
Dara Shikoh, Mughal Prince, 150, 151
Daulatabad, 29, 53, 58, 122
Daulat Khan Lodi, 31, 221, 232
Day, U.N., 91
De Laet, 191
Delhi, 12, 22, 29, 37, 48, 97, 106, 108, 113, 145, 184, 209, 221, 225, 226, 232
Deopalpur, 184, 224
Devagiri, see Daulatabad
Deval Rani, 101
Deva Raya, II, of Vijayanagar, 137, 140
Dharmasastras, 120, 132, 133, 134, 140
Dharmasutras, 120
Dharmaswamin (Chaglo-tsa-ba), 180
Dholpur, 232
Din-i-Ilahi, members of, 243
Doab, 153
Dollinger, 36
Dowson, John, 83, 84, 90, 99
Duke de Broglie, 55
Dutta, K.K., 98

Egypt, 21, 49, 166, 207, 231
Elam, 21, 97
Elizabeth I, of England, 95, 239
Elliot, Sir Henry, 83, 84, 85, 90, 99

Ellora, 14, 58
Elphinstone, 85
Encyclopaedia of Islam, 143, 146
England, 24, 50, 54, 72, 73, 211, 239
Erskine, William, 88
Europe, 54, 235
European states 239, 245
Evans, Sir Arthur, 50

Fahien, 28
Fakhruddin, Malik, Kotwal of Delhi, 127, 154, 167
Faruki, 90
Fatawa-i-Jahandari, by Barani, 107, 108, 133, 136
Fatehpur Sikri, 57, 232
Fath Khan, son of Firoz Tughlaq, 129
Ferishtah, 104, 105, 205
Firoz Shah Tughlaq, his Kotla 48, 87, 106, 107, 125, sons and grandsons 129, 130, 148, 149, 152, 153, 159-61, 163-65, 167, 179, 192, 194, 214, 229
Flavius Josephus, 29, 32
Fleet, 40
France, 50, 68, 245
Frazer, 18
Frederick the Great, 43, 68
French Revolution, 81
Fronde, 55
Fryer, 191
Futuh-us- Salatin, 87

Gandhi, Mahatma, 19
Gaya, 180
Geleynssen, 191
George Stephenson, 5
Ghaur, 113, 125, 131
Ghayaspur, 106
Ghayasuddin Balban, 101, 105, 106, 127, 128, 130, 133, 139, 146, 152, 153, 154, 166, 167 186
Ghayasuddin Tughlaq, 104, 128, 129, 130, 131, 149, 160, 190, 208
Ghazni, 34, 113, 121, 122, 139, 178, 183, 211, 226, 229
Gibbon, Edward, 9, 10, 25, 62, 66, 78
Grenada, 12
Greek, 75, 76
Greece, 78
Gresham, 62
Gogunda, 171, 172
Goldsmith, Oliver, 60
Golkunda, 61
Gottschalk, Louis, 65, 151
Grierson, 40
Guizot, 62
Gujarat, 132, 142, 164, 171, 191, 198, 208, 231-2
Guttenburg, 35
Gwalior, 184, 228, 232

Habib, see Mohammad Habib
Habibullah, A.B.M., 87, 178, 189
Haibat Khan, 155
Hajiuddabir, 104
Hakim Khan Sur, 171
Haldighati, 169, 171, 172
Hamid Khan, 226
Hamiduddin, Qazi, 166
Harappa, 21, 50

Harshavardhana, 24, 114, 116
Hasan Basri, 101
Hasan Nizami, 30, 43, 83, 179
Hawkins, 188
Herodotus, 6, 76
Hieun-Tsang, 28
Hindu, marriage rite 16, 76, 80, 107, buildings 113, 114, 115, 116, pantheon 117, 118
Hisamuddin, Malik, 105, 106
History, meaning of 3-8, historian's task 27-36, bias in 37-58, style of 56-66, use and abuse of 66-75, purpose of 75-81, historiography on medieval India—merits 95, weaknesses 96-97
Hitler, Adolf, 25, 72
Hittites, 40
Hobbes, 134
Hodivala, S.H., 90
Holland, 68
Honawar, 141
Hrozny, Friedrich, 50
Hughes, T.P., 143, 146
Hugo Grotius, 121
Hultz, 40
Humayun, Mughal Emperor, 88, 225
Humayun Kabir, 97
Hunas, 117

Ibadat Khana, 234, 239, 243
Ibn Asir, 183
Ibn Battuta, 69, 144, 166, 167, 177, 185, 186, 187, 209, 219, 222, 225
Ibn Hasan, 91, 144
Ibrahim Lodi, 179, 195, 220, 226
Ikat Khan, 206
Iltutmish, Shamsuddin, 125, 126, 127, 130, 146, 153, 180, 192
India, 37, 38, 39, 40, British Imperialism in 41, 42, 49, 54, 73, 78, 79, Partition of 96-97, 114, 178, 180, 189, 211, 212, 217, 219, 225, 227-232, 235, 238, 239, 245
Indian History Congress, 96-97
Iran, see Persia
Irfan Habib, 93 n, 191, 193
Isami, 87, 207
Ishwari Prasad, 84, 85, 87, 88, 114
Islam, 25, 95, Islamic State 85, 204, tide of 113, 235-6, 238-40, 244, 246
Islamic law, see Shariat

Jaffar, M.S., 85, 89, 90, 92
Jahanara, Mughal Princess, 58
Jahangir, Mughal Emperor, 39, 89, Prince Salim, 124, 149, 188, 243
Jaipal, 122
Jaisi, see Malik Muhammad Jaisi
Jalaluddin Khalji, 104-106, 127, 128, 130, 131, 146, 155, 178, 200-203, 205, 209
James I, of England, 74
Jami-ul-Hikayat, by Muhammad Ufi, 142
Jaunpur, 132, 232
Jawaharlal Nehru, 24, 174

Jerusalem, 26, 29
Jews, 77, 139
Jeziya, 42, 146, 147, 155, 201, 202, 213, 234, 246
Jihad, 42, 116, 208
Joan of Arc, 150
Jourdain, 188
Julius Caesar, 5, 14
Juna, Malik, see Muhammad bin Tughlaq

Kabir, Sant, 184, 198, 216, 222
Kabiruddin, historian, 100, 101, 104
Kabul, 171, 225, 230
Kafur, see Malik Kafur Hazardinari
Kaikhusrau, 127
Kaiqubad, 127
Kajar Shah, 161-163, 167, 168
Kalhan, 62
Kalidas, 10, 28
Kamalmer, 171
Kane, P.V., 140
Kara, 106
Kashmir, 180, 191, 232
Kautilya, 14, 120
Khajuraho, 26, 117
Khaljis, 87, 101, 104, 105, 109, 130, 200
Khamnaur, 171
Khan-i Jahan Maqbul, 161-164
Khazainul Futuh, 101
Khizr Khan, son of Alauddin Khalji, 131
Khojandi, 186
Khorasan, 44, 230
Khruschev, 24
Khusrau, Mughal Prince, 124
Khusrau Khan, see Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah
Khvaja Zaki, 101
Khwaja Jahan, Minister of Muhammad Tughlaq, 106
Khwaja Jahan, son of Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul, 168
Kirmani, Shaikh Qutbuddin Husain, 185
Kirtilata, 182
Konarak, 117
Krishna Deva Raya, Vijayanagar Emperor, 133, 135, 137, 139
Krityakalpataru, by Lakshmidhara, 133
Kshatriya, 121, also see Rajput
Kumbhalgarh, 171, 172

Lakshmidhara, 133
Lanepoole, Stanley, 84, 85, 89
Lassale, 62
Laurence Binyon, 89
Law, N.N., 92
Leningrad, 12
Leyden, 88
Liddell Hart, 31
Linschoten, 188
Lodis, 87
Louis XIV, of France, 69
Ludwig, Emil, 66
Lybyer, Albert, 50

Macaulay, Lord, 40, 49, 62, 63, 66
Machiavelli, 74, 126

Macrindle, 40
Madam de Stael, 55
Madan Mahal, 231
Madhya Pradesh, 22, 117
Mahabharat, 14, 76, 120
Mahavira, Jain Master, 19
Mahdi Husain, 87
Mahmud of Ghazni, 34, 113, 121, 122, 139, 178, 180, 183, 184, 211, 229
Major, R.H., 198-99
Makhdoomee, M.A., 124
Malaipur, 141
Malik Kafur Hazardinari, 101, 128, 131
Malik Muhammad Jaisi, 181, 198
Malleson, 89
Malwa, 101, 132, 232
Mandalgarh, 171, 172
Mangalore, 141
Manucci, 30
Man Singh, Raja of Amber, 169, 170-72, 242
Man Singh, Raja of Gwalior, 184, 228
Martin Luther, 150
Marxist, 9, interpretation of history 41, 93 n, 99
Max Muller, 40
Meenakshi, Temple, 58
Meerut, 48, 184
Megasthenes, 28, 120
Mewar, 169, 170, 171
Michelangelo, 14
Miftahul Futuh, 101
Minhaj Siraj, 101
Minos, 50
Misra, S.C., 89
Mitra Misra, 133
Mohammad Habib, 34, 87, 92, 94, 99, 105-08, 114, 143
M. Nazim, 87
Mohenjodaro, 21, 50, 97
Mongols, 127, 194
Monier Williams, 3
Montesqueue, 77
Moti Chandra, 94
Mughal India, 10, 88, Later Mughals, 82, 124, 189, 224
Mughisuddin, Qazi, 102, 107, 182, 204
Muhammad, Prophet, 13, 22, 76, 204
Muhammad, son of Firoz Tughlaq, 166
Muhammad Akbar, 92
Muhammad Bashir Ahmad, 92
Muhammad of Ghaur, 113, 125, 131
Muhammad Hakim, 239
Muhammad bin Tughlaq, 29, 69, 104-05, 129, 131, 144, 149, 152, 159, 160, 166, 167, 191, 193, 197, 229, 235
Muhammad Yasin, 93
Muid-ul-Mulk, Barani's father, 106
Muizuddin Bahram Shah, 126
Mukerjee, R.K., 93
Mulla Shah Ahmad, 149
Multan, 180
Munshi, K.M., 121
Mutla-i-Anvar, by Amir Khusrau, 166

Nabih, Amin Faris, 38
Nadiah, 122
Nagpur, 172
Nalanda, 180
Namdeva, 184, 198, 216
Nanak, Guru, 151, 184, 198, 216, 222
Napoleon Bonaparte, 5, 10, 12, 23, 25, 43, 49, 64, 72, 73, 95
Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlvi, 149, 216
Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah, 102, 103, 128, 149, 208, 210
Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, 126, 127
Nero, 29
Nepal, 180
Niamatullah, 184
Nicolo Conti, 177, 199
Nizami, K.A., 94, 105, 107
Nizamuddin Ahmad, historian, 104, 105
Nizamuddin Auliya, Shaikh, 105, 151, 185, 209, 216
Nuniz, 135, 136 n, 188
Nurjahan, 59, 60, 89
Nusrat Khan, 123

Odantapuri, 180
Ojha, P.N., 93
Orissa, 117, 180

Paes, 135, 188
Pakistan, 96, 97, East Pakistan, 97
Panch Mahal, 57
Pandey, A.B., 87
Panikkar, K.M., 37
Panipat, 172, 232
Pargiter, 40
Peddana, 133
Pelsaert, Francisco, 188, 222
Persia, 44, 50, 60, 189, 212, 231
Peshawar, 180
Peshola Lake, 173
Peter Hardy, 91
Pharaohs, 6, 167
Plato, 7
Portuguese, 141
Pratap Singh, Rana of Chittor, 33, 34, 171, 172, 173, 174
Pringle Kennedy, 84
Prinsep, James, 40, 48
Pulicat, 141
Punjab, 113, 114, 198, 221, 224, 240
Puranas, 76, 139
Puri, Jagannath, 117
Purush Pariksha, 182
Pyramids, of Egypt, 6, 10, 14, 49

Qabul, Malik, 157
Qanungo, K.R., 53, 88, 89
Qirabeg, Malik, 101
Quran, 145, 204, 209, 236, 237
Quilon, 141, 231
Qureshi, I. H., 85, 91, 143, 144, 145, 146
Qutbuddin Aibak, 113, 125
Qubuddin Mubarak Khalji, 100, 102, 103, 128, 129, 157, 208
Qutlugh Khvaja, 206

Raidas, saint, 198
Rajnitiratnakar, 133
Rajput, 119, 121, states 139, 169, 172
Rajputana, 113, 114, 132
Ram Deva, ruler of Devagiri, 122
Ramraja, ruler of Vijayanagar, 140, 141
Ram Singh, Prince of Gwalior, 171
Rana Pratap, see Pratap Singh
Ranke, 34, 63
Randhawa, M.S., 94
Ranthambhor, 101
Raphael, 14
Rayavachaka, 137, 138
Raziya, Sultan of Delhi, 126, 130
Rizvi, S.A.A., 94
Romans, 72, their mythologies 76
Rome, 29, 78
Roshanara, Mughal Princess, 58
Roy Choudhary, M.L., 93, 233
Ruknuddin Firoz, 126
Rushbrook Williams, 52, 225
Russia, 64, 68, Czarist 69, 72, Russians, 81

Sakalanitisamatta, by Madiki Singana, 137
Saksena, B.P., 89
Salim, see Jahangir
Salbank, 188
Salumber, 173
Sangram Singh, Rana, 31, 179, 221
Sankhyan, philosophy, 116
Santayana, philosopher, 68
Santo Stefano, 177, 199
Saran, P., 91-92
Sarkar, Jadunath, 53, 66, 89, 90, 91, 93, 95, 142
Sati, custom of, 147
Schliemann, 21
Sen, M.K., 93
Seville, 12
Shahjahan, Mughal Emperor, 89, 94, 197
Shams Siraj Afif, 158, 161, 164-66, 185, 187, 194
Shamsuddin, son of Kaiqubad, 127, 130
Shamsuddin Abu Rija, 164
Shamsuddin Turk, Maulana, 166, 207
Shankaracharya, 116
Shariat, Islamic Law, 136, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 201, 202, 203, 214, 237
Shelat, J.M., 89
Sher Shah, 63, 193, 195, 235
Shihabuddin Abul Abbas, 177, 187, 196
Shihabuddin Umar, son of Alauddin Khalji, 128, 131
Siddhraj, 142
Sikandara, 58
Sikandar Lodi, 39, 150, 179, 195, 226
Sindh, 113, 178, 220
Smith, V.A., 40, 89, 90, 171, 244
Smith, W. Cantwell, 97
Somnath, temple of, 142
Socrates, 26

Solon, 5
Spain, 45, Spanish Armada, 72
Spengler, 77
Sri Ram Sharma, 90, 94, 179
Srivastava, A.L., 34, 85, 89
Stalin, J., 24
Sten Konow, 40
Stephen Leacock, 16, 17
Sufi saints, 151, 216, 217
Sultanate of Delhi, 125, 130-32, 135, 142, 143, 148
Sumer, 21, 97

Tacitus, 29
Taj Mahal, 26, 58, 61, 79, 97
Tajuddin Iraqi, 100
Taj-ul-Maasir, 30
Tara Chand, 21, 52, 66, 93, 192, 199
Tarikh-i-Daudi, by Abdulla, 195
Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, by Barani, 13, 100-04, 108, 109, 133, 146
Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana, by Ahmad Yadgar, 39
Tavernier, 30
Terry, 188
Thatta (Sindh), 191
Theocracy, definitlon of, 143-44
Theodore Mommsen, 62
Thiers, 43
Thomas Arnold, 22
Thomas Roe, Sir, 188
Thucydides, 4, 169
Tibet, 180
Timur, Amir, 9, 20, 149, 179, 184, 211, 227, 229, 231, 232
Tirumala, 140
Tod, Col. J., 169
Toynbee, A.J., 35, 77, 238
Toynbee, Philip, 74
Trevelyan, G.M., 43, 57, 66, 81
Trevor Roper, 61
Tripathi, R.P., 34, 52, 91, 143
Trivandrum, 96
Trombay, 22
Troy, 21
Tughlaq Shah, son of Fath Khan, 129
Tulamba, 184
Turkish invasions 82, Period 88, Sultans 72, Empire 142
Turushkadanda, 42

Udaipur, 169, 171
Udai Singh, 171
Ulema, 138, 142, 144, 145, 147-51, 202, 203, 204, 214, 216, 226, 234-5, 239-40
UNESCO, 70
U.N.O., 61, 75
Upnishads, 14, 28
Uttar Pradesh, 113, 224

Vaidya, C.V., 114
Vaisali, 180
Vaishnava Saints, 181, 198
Van Twist, 191
Varthema, 141, 188
Vasco da Gama, 231
Vedas, 4, 10, Vedic hymns 14, 28, 181 n
Venkataramanayya, N., 88
Vico, 77, 78
Vidyapati, 77, 181, 182

Vijayanagar Empire, 132-142, 191, 197, 221
Vikramsila, 180
Voltaire, 51, 77
Von Noer, 89
Virmitrodaya, by Mitra Misra, 133
Vir Narasimha, 138, 139

Wahed Husain, 92
Waterloo, Battle of 23, 33
Wilks, Col., 197
William, the Conqueror, 72
William Jones, Sir, 40
Wolseley Haig, 114, 237
World War I, 74, II, 20, 74, 75

Xenophon, 169

Yaqub, Malik, 158
Yusuf Ali, 92
Yusuf Husain Khan, 92, 144

Zafar Khan, 129
Zawabits, 147, 148
Zimmi, 42, 146, 201, 202, 204, 212, 213
Ziyauddin Barani, 55, 67, 100-106, his works 107 n, 109, 133, 134, 136, 137, 146, 147, 148, 155-159, 166, 179, 182, 185, 187, 190, 200, 205, 207, 212

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Corrigenda

(This list does not include minor printing errors)

page	line	*read*	*for*
6	22	them	time
60	13	dominating	demoninating
66	13	why	who
88	3	Venkataramanayya	Venkataramayya
	last	Qanungo	Kanungo
150	28	constructing	constructing for
191	13	has	had