Paper-VII

INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

By
Dr. Binod Bihari Satpathy

CONTENT

INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

UNIT-I

Chapter-I

HISTORICAL SENSE IN ANCIENT INDIA
IDEA OF BHARATVARSHA IN INDIAN TRADITION

Structure

1.1.0. Objectives

In this lesson, students investigate the historical sense of ancient India. Throughout the chapter, emphasis will be on the various theories in the historical sense of ancient Indian as visible in its ancient literature. After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- *understand the notions of historical sense in ancient India;*
- *discuss the opinions of various authorities on Indian history regarding the historical sense in ancient India.*
- *compare the historiographical trend in ancient India with that of classical world.*
- *Identify the various assumptions on the existence of historical sense among ancient Indian, and;*
- *analyse the concept of Bharatvarsa in Indian tradition..*

1.1.1. Introduction

Foreign scholars have often complained about India's lack of an indigenous tradition of historiography. India possesses an enormous heritage of literature accumulated over the Centuries, much of it relating to past events, yet there has never' been a historian to compare with those of ancient Greece and Rome, or later European scholars who contributed to the development of history as a discipline. Indifference to the western conception of history, to the idea that man can be its subject and agent, actively working to change the human condition, is cited as a distinguishing trait of Indian civilization. Explanations offered for this deficiency are that Indians have no sense of history, are not interested in factual or 'objective' history, or have in any case had such a static society that there has been little in the way of historical development to encourage its scientific study. Indian religions, besides acting as 'a tremendous force for social inertia' in that they usually adopt a reactionary attitude towards social change, are also blamed for inculcating a world view that has never been conducive to any interest in what westerners know as history. How far these assumptions are justified, and what has been achieved in the field of Indian historiography relating to the pre-modern period, are the concern of this chapter.

1.1.2. Historical Sense in Ancient India

Scholars, including the historians, Indologists and orientalists, are divided in their opinion about the historical sense of the ancient Indians, particularly the Hindus. It has been said that the ancient Indian had no sense of history and chronology. Alberuni was the first to remark that “The Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things, they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of their kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling”. He made this remark in AD 1030 in his work *Tehkik-i-Hind*. It is striking to note that the genealogies of kings of different dynasties in the Puranic records, which were the principal sources of information for him for writing his book as admitted by himself, are in proper historical and chronological order,

of course, with a few exceptions. It is paradoxical that he calls his own works "a simple historic record of facts", but the sources on which it is based are spoken of as unhistorical. He presents the picture of Indian civilization as painted by the Hindus themselves. He has himself tried to fix the chronology of some historical events with the help of the chronological data furnished by the Hindus in different works, as it appears from his book.

S.R.Sharma in an attempt to justify the statement of Alberuni writes that his " version of the lack of historical sense of Indians justified by the paucity of historical works properly so called in our country down from ancient times. Materials from which history can be constructed is undoubtedly available in abundance but very little of it shares the character of regular history". On the other hand, A.K.Majumdar asserts that "…. We can't admit that the Hindus had incapacity for writing history and our ancestors have not bequeathed to us any reliable historical work for early period. They know the simple art of writing history.

L.J.Trotter and W.H. Hutton have remarked that "…the old Hindus produced, not one historian of even the smallest mark" . Any sensible historian will accept such kind of absurd remark. Some scholars have leveled the charges against the ancient Hindus that they wrote no formal history at any period". They did not have capacity to write history. Though genuine materials once abounded in India, yet we find no national history of the Hindus. H. Beveridge opines that " With the exception of a work on Kashmir, the literature of India has failed to furnish a single production to which the name of history can in any proper sense of the term be applied. These biased remarks made within conceptual framework have increasingly given rise to misgivings in the minds of many. However, the subjective elements should not be allowed to influence and overshadow our objective judgment.

A.S Macdonell is of opinion that "History is the one weak spot in Indian Literature. It is, in fact, non-existent. The total lack of historical sense is so characteristic that the whole course of Sanskrit literature is darkened by the shadow of this defect, suffering as it does from an entire absence of exact chronology. In the first place, early India wrote no history because it never made any…. Secondly, the Brahmans whose task it would naturally have been to record the great deeds… have felt but little inclination to chronicle historical events". This is nothing but a total rejection of truth.

1.1.2.1.**Opinion against historical Sense in Ancient India**

Nothing can be more farther from truth than the statements that ancient India was without history and historians. The ancient Indians had distaste for history. The details of past events did not interest them and, therefore, they did not record them.

J.W.McCrindle (a popular authority on Ancient India by the classical writers) holds that "The Indians themselves did not write history. They produced no doubt, a literature both voluminous and varied… but within its vast range, history is conspicuous by its absence. Their

learned men were Brahmins whose modes and habits of thought almost necessarily incapacitated them for the task of historical composition…they allowed events, even those of the greatest public moments, to pass unrecorded, and so to perish from memory and Sanskrit literature if deficient in history and chronology. However, his views cannot be accepted as they run contrary to the truth. R.G.Bhandarkar's observation, that "India has no real history….the historical curiosity of the peoples was satisfied by legends what we find of a historical nature in the literature of the country before the arrival of the Mahommedans, can also be disposed of. He like many other scholars considers only Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* a historical work.

It is very unfortunate that some Indian and foreign scholar have fallen into the grip of confusion about the historical value of Sanskrit literature. The confusion has been made worse confounded buy some recent writings on historiography in the context.

It is not correct to say that only the ancient Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Persians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians and Sumerians maintained the historical records. The Indians in the ancient past were not historians and had no political history like them. It is further said that, "The Hindus have no history and no authentic Chronology…. And there is no certain date in the wide range of their literature except what is imported from Greek history". In fact, each country had its own tradition of historical writings and each tradition has its value. The value of historiographical tradition in ancient India should be judged independently and not by comparing with that of other countries.

1.1.2.2.Historical Sense in Ancient India and Classical World- A Comparison

Quite a few historians of ancient India have opined that in all the large and varied literature of the Brahmans, Buddhists and Jains there is no single work, which can be compared to the *Histories* of Herodotus, historical work of Thucydides or the *History* of Polybius of Greece or the *Annals* of Livy or Tacitus of Rome. Nevertheless, this is not because the ancient Indians had no history. E.J.Rapson remarks; "We know from other sources that the ages were filled with stirring events; but these events found no systematic record. Of the great foreign invasions of Darius, Alexander the Great and Seleucus no mention is to be discovered in any Indian work. The struggles between native princes, the rise and fall of Empires, have indeed not passed similarly into utter oblivion. The memory is to some extent preserved in epic poems, in stories of the sages and heroes of old, in genealogies and dynastic lists. Such in all countries are the beginning of history; and in ancient India, its development was not carried beyond this rudimentary stage. He further observes that the literatures of Brahmans, Buddhists or Jains are deficient as records of political progress. Moreover, by their aid alone it would be impossible to sketch the outline of the political history of any of the nations of India before the Mohammedan conquests.

It will be futile and unproductive exercise to draw a demarcation line between the historical writings in ancient India on the one hand and in ancient Greece and Rome on the other from the standpoint of degree of importance. All these three ancient countries were the repositories of historical wisdom. James Tod has rightly pointed out that "Those who except from a people like the Hindus a species of composition of precisely the same character as the historical works of Greece and Rome commit the very egregious error of overlooking the peculiarities which distinguish the native of India from all other races, and their intellectual productions of every kind. Their history like their Philosophy, their poetry and their architecture are marked with traits of originality". He speaks very highly of historical sense and historical works of all kinds of ancient Indians. He further adds that historical records including the Puranic ones and other works of a mixed historical character existed in ancient India.

The said ancient Greek and Roman historians produced only political histories, whereas the ancient historians of India touched upon all aspects of history- social, economic, political, religious and cultural. Both ancient Indian and classical tradition of historiography have relative value. Max Muller is right in stating that history provides a comprehensive knowledge of all that happened in the past. There is history in the large and history in the small, each has its value, but their values are different.

It is worthy of note that in every country and in every age the body of history has been shaped by the events of the contemporary age which were not identical at all. The events became the theme of historical writings or subject for historians to deals with. The historians make history and the subject makes historian. Instead of the historian choosing the subject, the subjects choose the historian. Sometimes history is produced by a historian and a sometimes historian is produced by an event. The historian, before he begins to write history, is the product of history.

As in ancient India so in ancient Greece and Rome history developed as a branch of literature. To the Greeks and Romans, also history was an art and not "a critical science". Very few of them were critical historians. It is not the fact that the classical historians concerned produced purely scientific histories. In fact, they made both scientific and artistic approach to the study of history. They too like the ancient historians of India adopted the literary style of writing. They have been called literary artists by the authorities on classical historiography. They have described even Herodotus, the father of history as a great artist and storyteller. It is a fact to reckon with that he has also mixed up history with myths and legends. All ancient historians, whether of India, Greece or Rome, were much more concerned with the artistic presentation of the truth than the creation of regular and scientific history. Greece was not the first home of historical composition as generally believed by the scholars. It is equally not correct to say that the Greeks first learnt the art of writing history. The history acquired its meaning and purpose and received the treatment in both ancient India and Greece concurrently. The contemporaneous

growth of historical sense and development of historical writings in both the countries cannot be denied. Thus, it will be unfair to highlight the importance of one and discard or depreciate the value of other.

We do not find ourselves in agreements with E.J. Rapson that if "any ancient Indian literature, Brahmans, Buddhist and Jain" is compared with Greek and Latin classics, it will be found that "in none of them has the art of historical composition been developed beyond its earliest stages". He further observes "Its sources-heroic poems, legendary chronicles, ancient genealogies-are indeed to be found in abundance. From the literature and from the monuments we learn the names, and some of the achievements, of a great numbers of nations who rose to power, flourished, and declined in the continent of India during the twenty-two centuries before the Mohammedan conquest; but not one of these nations has found its historians". The literature of ancient India "supply materials by means of which it is possible to trace the daily life of the people, their social systems, their religion, their progress in the arts and sciences, with a completeness which is unparalleled in antiquity; but events are rarely mentioned, and there is an almost total absence of chronology. Dynastic lists with, in some instances, the length of the different regions are certainly to be found; but these in themselves supply no fixed point for the determination of Indian chronology".

In above observation we find both acceptance and distortion of truth. His all statements are correct except that ancient India had no historian; and in ancient Indian literature, historical events are not recorded and chronology is totally absent. The statements of J.Allan, Wolseley Haig and H.H.Dodwell are also of mixed nature. Ancient Indian literature in comparison to European literature, according to them, is of little value from historical and chronological points of view. They state that the two great epics are of little importance for political history. The Puranas, whose authors may be compared to medieval chroniclers, are mainly legendary and mythological collections". However, they "contain certain amount of genealogical matter, the historical significance of which it is very difficult to estimate. The only professedly historical work, the late twelfth century chronicle of Kashmir, contains a certain amount of historical information….Bana's Harshacharita, a pseudo-biographical work, contains disappointingly little of historical value and belong to literature rather than history….The historical data that can be gathered from Sanskrit and Pali literature cannot be despired, but interpretation is often difficult and there is an entire lack of chronological data. It is with the help of synchronisms given by….mainly Greek and Chinese writers that the chronology of Indian history has been built up".

The Purana are very authentic records of dynastic genealogies and chronology, Bana's Harshacharita is a historical biography and forms part of historical literature; the chronicle of Kashmir contains a bulk of valuable historical information. The Puranic and Buddhist literature

are not deficient in chronological data and it is because of this data that chronology of ancient Indian history has been partly built up.

1.1.2.3.Opinions in favour of historical Sense in Ancient India

Some balanced and rational judgments have been pronounced on the subject under review. Affirming the historical sense of the ancient Indians and their historical writings, Maurrice Winternitz, a German Scholar writes "one must not believe as it has so often been asserted that the historical sense is entirely lacking in the Indians. In India, too there has been historical writing and in any case we find in India numerous accurately dated inscriptions which could hardly be the case if the Indians have had no sense of history at all. It is only truth that the Indians in their writings of history never knew how to keep fact and fiction strictly apart, that to them the facts themselves were always more important than their chronological order, and they attached no importance at all especially in literary matters to the question of what was earlier or later. Since the fifth century after Christ, inscriptions too begin to give us information about the dates of many writers. He further asserts that there is an abundant wealth of historical information in ancient Indian literature; which forms a necessary complement to the classical literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

A.B.Keith is perfectly right is stating that "To the old complaint that India has not historians and no historical sense it has recently been objected, doubtless with a measure of truth, that there is certain amount of writing and a number of facts attesting a degree of sense for history. In view of the antiquity and the developed character of Indian civilization it would indeed by ridiculous to expect to find India destitute of historical sense…." But his statements, that despite that abundance of its literature history is so miserably represented, and that in the whole of the great period of Sanskrit literature there is not one writer who can be seriously regarded as a critical historians", are not absolutely correct. He, however, admits that some historical and semi-historical works were produced in ancient India. The *Puranic* genealogies, the *Pattavlis* of the Jains and the works of the Buddhists, according to him, are of considerable historical value. The biographical works of Vakapatiraja Padmagupta, Bilhana and others in his estimation are of greater historical value. The chronicle of *Kings of Kashmir* in his opinion like that of others is nearest approach to history. And its author, Kalhana, is called by him " a true historian", who, according to him, is not a suitable match for Herodotus. We are in perfect agreement with him that the historians of Kashmir made substantial contributions to the growth of historiography of a serious nature. He points out that the national feeling, which is a powerful aid to the writing f history, was not evoked in ancient India. The political events, which took place in India up to the twelfth century AD, including the foreign invasions and the struggles and wars between rival dynasties and empires, were not recorded by its historians of ancient times because of absence of such feelings. The struggles and wars between native rulers do find

mention in some ancient Indian historical works; but the foreign invasions could not be recorded by ancient historians of India which may be attributed to non-availability of sources concerned in India during their times and not to the absence of national feeling among them.

A.K Warder, a great authority on Indian historiography, has strongly advocated the historical sense of the ancient Indians. He has presented in his work abundant proofs of historical writings in ancient India. He says that it is superficial misconceptions that ancient India produced little or no historical literature. He has firmly established that there was continuity in historiographical tradition in ancient India from Vedic antiquity to the twelfth century AD.

U.N.Ghoshal, A.D. Pusalker, R.C.Majumdar, R.C.Dutt, Radha Kumud Mookherji, Radha Kamal Mukherjee and Romila Thapar are the noted authorities on ancient Indian history, have proved beyond doubt that the ancient Indians had a true sense of history and they produced historical and quasi-historical writings was maintained in ancient India; the historical tradition is preserved in the epics and Purana, the historical biographies, historical chronicles and other historical treaties were composed in different parts of India, the Hindus, Buddhist and Jains made significant contributions to the evolution of Historiography in ancient India.

Radha Kumud Mookerji has rightly pointed out that "History is not merely political and chronological and is not to individual and datable facts and events. History is more important and interesting as a history of thought. It is social and cultural history.

1.1.3. Ancient Indian Historical Sense- Assumptions

It is not merely the genealogies, biographies and chronicles of kings but also other materials of history that received the attention of the ancient Indians. There were different conceptions of history. There is a positive evidence to prove the recording of history in the time of Chandragupta Maurya,. Various state officials were appointed by him to collect the details of all-important events and to put them in writing which constituted the source material of history. It is evident from the Arthasastra of Kautilya that it was the duty of the *Gopa* (an official in charge of five or ten village) to keep a record of everything concerning a village including its agricultural products and trade and commerce. He had to show social groups, class and caste, and different professionals and occupational groups. He had to register the total number of the *Kshatriya*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*, farmers, traders, artisans, labourers and slaves. These materials supply invaluable data for the purpose of social and economic history of the contemporary age. Kautilya also testifies to the maintenance of the archives in the Maurya court.

Hiuen-Tsang testimony of the practice of preserving historical records in India also deserves our notice. He during his stay in the country for about fifteen years (AD 629-45) noticed that its each province had its own state officials for maintaining written record of events. He has distinctly mentioned that there were separate custodians of the archives and records. The official's annals and state papers, according to him were called '*Ni-lo-pi-Cha'* or '*Ni-lo-Pi-t'u'*.

The *Sutas* were the first to keep the records of the genealogies of royal families preserved some of the Puranas. The practice of maintaining written record continued for centuries after Hiuen-Tsang. At the courts of kings, archives were maintained for preserving the records of important happenings. The archival records were used for compiling mainly the chronicles and *Vamsavalis.* The existence of the historical chronicle of Kashmir, Gujarat and Nepal support the belief that the royal archives of different states contained such chronicles.

A great nation never passes away without leaving record of its deed and achievements. Ancient India was not bereft of such record. "Each successive age has left in its literature, an impress, a photographs as it were, of its thought and civilization; and when we bring all these photographs together….we perceive at a glance the whole history of the Hindu nation and its civilization.

It is also believed that some of the ancient annals and other written records were destroyed or tempered with by the Muslims in the course of their invasions of India.

The inscriptional records also reflect the historical and chronological sense of the ancient times. The inscriptions constitute valuable testimony to historical writings in ancient times. They are in fact the earliest history in rose…betraying the historical ideas of their authors. They give a lot of historical information with reliable dates. They supply genealogies of the reigning kings and recount their as well as their ancestors' lives and deeds, throw light on conditions of gifts and grants of lands, etc. Inscriptions engraved on stones, copper plates, rock, pillars, walls and coins bespeak the history of the land. The historical sense of the authors or composers of the inscriptions can in no way be doubted. The information supplied by Harisena in Allahabad pillar inscription about the conquest and campaigns of his patron, Samudragupta (AD. 335-375) and by Ravikirti in Aihole inscription (AD 634)about the achievements of Pulakesin-II, the Chalukya ruler of Badami (AD 610-43), vindicates their sense of history. Historical events were recorded in the inscriptions at the instance of the contemporary kings so as to preserve them as records for the future.

Most of the ancient Indian inscriptions are dated. They give the dates of the events that took place during the reign of kings. They specify the reign periods or length of the reigns of the kings. The inscriptions of Asoka, King Kharavela of Kalinga, Rudradamana of Junagarh, the Satavahana, Samudragupta, Harsa, the Palas, Senas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Pallavs, Cholas and Hoysalas are important from both historical and chronological point of view. Fleet, an authority on Gupta inscriptions, had to accept that the ancient Hindus had an ability and capability to write history.

The coins also like inscriptions give us the dates of rulers and events. Among the non-literary sources, these two provide the most important materials for writing history of ancient India. Ancient India was not devoid of either history or historians. The hitherto existing

impression created by some Indian and foreign scholars that the ancient Indians lacked in historical sense can be dispelled on the basis of the richness of historical materials embodied in different kinds of literature and the inscriptions. They have displayed enough historical sense in the genealogical lists of royal dynasties, biographical works and chronicles. Some of the Purana, Pali chronicles and commentaries, and the Jain works, Kalhana's work and the inscriptional records testify to their knowledge of both historical and chronological sense of ancient Indians.

1.1.4. Conclusion

The ancient Indians were acquainted more with the art than sciences of historiography. It would be too much to expect scientific, serious or genuine histories from the authors of ancient times. The professional historians of today with few exceptions in their zeal for the truth, accuracy, objectivity and authentic chronology often neglect the study of histories contained in ancient Indian literature. It has been aptly remarked that the modern historian of ancient India unceremoniously discards the ancient forms and ideas, the very context of ancient historical works. The value of the works produced by ancient historians of India should be judged by the standard prevailing in a contemporary age and not by the modern standards of historiography. Every age had its own tradition of historiography. The prevailing attitudes in any age guide or influence the historian in the treatment of his subject. The ancient concept of history and chronology was totally different from the modern one. The ancient historians of India have presented the facts whatsoever without distorting them. The tradition of presenting history within a chronological framework had not fully developed in ancient India. In ancient Indian historical writings, facts are more important than the chronology.

The tradition of historical writing in ancient India began in the time of Vedavyasa and continued until the end of twelfth century AD. The oldest Indian historical tradition is preserved in the Rgveda. The Rgveda hymns about the Aryan people speak of the sense of history of those who composed them. These hymns constitute the earliest evidence of the historical sense in India. Moreover, the composition of the original *Bharata Itihasa* or *Bharata Samhita* and the *Purana Samhita* or *Itihasa Samhita* by Vyasa in the Dvapara age marked the beginning of Indian historiography. The two main tradition of historiography in its early phase were the epic and Puranic. The Puranic tradition is relatively of greater value. The Puranakara were the first to record and preserve the dynastic genealogies and chronology- the two legitimate constituents or components of history. Their historical conception and chronological perception find reflections in the information they have supplied about the kings of different dynasties with length of their reign. They have provided the dynastic history of India in a very systematic way up to the beginning of the Gupta rule. The details of the Kingdoms and the dynasties of the Gupta post-Gupta period furnished by them with some chronological data though not very systematic are also of considerable historical value. The other two important tradition of historical writing in

ancient India were the Buddhist and Jain. The Buddhist and Jain scholars produced a number of semi-historical works before the seventh century AD.

Ancient Indian historiography anterior to the seventh century AD was largely based on Itiohasa-Purana tradition. However, its impact on the historical writings of the later period to a considerable extent is also discernible. The traditional concept of history went on changing with developing historical sense, prevailing historical tradition in a contemporary age and events of the time.

The period extending from the seventh to the twelfth century AD proved to be a blooming one in the history of historical writing in ancient India. A number of historical biographies were produced in different parts of India during the period. The court poet who wrote the biography of his patron highlighting his life and achievements was no less than a historiographer. There were many such court poets. The kings who patronized them also deserve the credit of giving fillip to the production of biographical works by encouraging them to undertake such works. They wanted their court poets to records both the past and contemporary events for the purpose of preserving them for the future. Their respective court poets composed the biographies of many famous kings who occupy important place in the annals of ancient India during the period concerned. Some biographies are the productions of the historical school that flourished in the post-Harsha period under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal, the Paramaras of Malawa the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kalyani and the Cahamanas of Sakambari. The chronicles were also written in Sindh, Kashmir, Gujarat, Odisha and Nepal. The writing of historical biographies and chronicles were the two significant stages in the evolution of Indian historiography. The biographies and chronicle composed during the period from important parts of historical literature. Besides these works, other historical works of various kinds were produced during the period.

The Jains made more serious approach than the Buddhist to history as evidenced by the quality of the works they produced. They have a number of historical treaties to their credit. They, however, like the Hindus made significant contributions to the development of historical writing in ancient India. The Muslim author of the chronicle of Sindh was one of the ancient historians of India.

It is not correct to say that the ancient Indians did not produce political history. The deeds of kings, the political events, including struggles between native princes for power and political supremacy, attacks and invasions, wars and conquests and rise and fall of kingdoms, etc., are described in detail especially in the biographies and chronicles of the post sixth century AD.

The tradition of historical writing in south India was no less rich than that of in other parts of the country. Various kinds of quasi-historical works were produced in south India both

before and after the seventh century AD, which include histories of kingdoms and dynasties, and biographies.

It is a wrong notion that except the *Rajatanagini* of Kalhana, there is no work in Sanskrit literature, which merits the little of history. The fact remains that Kalhana was the best of all ancient historians of India and his work was the best of all historical works produced in ancient India.

There were various school s of historical writings in ancient India. The historians of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Kashmir schools made proportionately greater contributions than those of other schools to the evolution of historiography in ancient India. The historians of these three prominent schools left imprints of their writings on the historical thoughts and writings of the succeeding generations of Indian historians.

There was no poverty of historical knowledge and no dearth of historical works in ancient India. The works produced as a whole throw light on various aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. The view held by some scholars that the regular historical works on the part of the Hindus has long been a desideratum is not tenable.

The Puranic, Buddhist and Jain traditions of chronology and the chronology supplied by Kalhana are of great value.

The ancient Indians did possess historical sense. We, of course, do admit that only few of them were endowed with perfect sense of history and were critical historians. There were both historians and historiography in ancient India. However, there was none among the ancient Indians to leave for posterity the complete history of ancient India. The histories we have belong to different ages and different brains" history is what the historian makes".

1.1.5. Idea of Bharatvarsha

In traditional and legendary Hindu literature, India is called Bharatakhanda. It is known as Bharatvarsha or the land of Bharat, famous king in the Pauranic traditions. Bharatvarsha was said to form of lager unit called Jambhudvipa that was considered to be one of the seven concentric legendary islands comparing. The present name 'India is derived from 'Sindhu" (the Indus), the great river in the North- West. The early Aryan settlers in India were amazed at the sight of the huge river and called it 'Sindhu' meaning a huge sheet of water.

Ancient India was known as Bharatvarsha. The ancient Indian historians and scholars differ in their views regarding how the name Bharatvarsha had been derived. According to Vedavyasa the name Bharatvarsha was derived from the name of the Bharat, the son of emperor Dushyant.

Bharatvarsha signifies the nation of Bharat. According to the *Aitareya Brahmana* "Bharata was a universal monarch who had built a vast empire winning vast areas of land spread all over the four directions". He had performed Aswamedha Yagna and the name Bharatvarsha

derived from his name". According to one of the hearsay of Maitareya purana "the land ruled by Manu, the primogenitor of the human race, was named Bharatvarsha". For system of justice and love for the public, Manu was known as Bharat.

According to Jainas and Bhagavadas 'the name of the eldest son of Rishabha deva was Bharat, who was a virtuous person and great ascetic. The name Bharatvarsha was derived from his name.

All the facts cannot be taken to be logical because traditionally only some small towns or provinces have been noticed to have derived their names from the name of some prominent person. The large countries are named after its citizen and race. In this context, it could be said that the name Bharatvarsha had been derived from the Bharata race of the Vedic Aryans because this race is known to be in the forefront of the contemporary political power. Consequently under the influence of its culture the entire nation came to be known as Bharatvarsha. This fact has been explained in the Vayu Purana as "the nation to the north of the sea and to the south of the Himalaya is known as Bharat, because it is inhabited by the progeny of Bharat.

1.1.5.1.Scriptural View on the concept of Bharatvarsa

Bharatavarsha literally means the continent ('varsha'. Sanskrit) that is dedicated ('rata') to light, wisdom ('bha'). Vedic Rishis devoted themselves to the quest for the eternal truth and ultimate reality, kevala jnana, satchidananda. The Bharatas were a venerable and ancient tribe mentioned in the Rg Veda, particularly in Mandala 3 of Bharata Rishi Vishwamitra. Mandala 7 says the Bharatas were on the victorious side in the Battle of the Ten Kings.

There were three personifications of 'Bharata' in Hindu tradition, one each in the first three yugas, or time cycles. The **first Bharata** was born in the Satyuga as the son of Rshabdeva, first among recognized ancient sages. The Jaina community traces its spiritual lineage from Rshabhdeva, designated as the first Tirthankara; he is also known as Adinath, and synonymous with Siva, the foremost yogi of the Hindu tradition.

Jinasena's Adipurana says three great events occurred simultaneously in Jaina history: Rsabhdeva attained enlightenment and became the first Jina; the cakra (wheel) appeared in the armoury of his son Bharata and proclaimed him a cakravartin (emperor); and a son was born to Bharata, ensuring continuation of the Iksvaku dynasty founded by Rsabhdeva.

Elaborating the multiple rebirths of father and son in the bhogabhumi (world of enjoyment) where salvation is not possible, the Adipurana explains their evolution to karmabhumi (world of karma) where the law of retribution operates and men follow different occupations (karman). Rsabhdeva created the Ksatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra castes; Bharata later created Brahmanas and appointed kings.

The duty of the Cakravartin is total conquest of all the directions (digvijaya) by means of superior moral and political powers, to unite the country under a single moral kingdom and

prevent anarchy. Readers will note that the Cakravartin is not merely an ideal ruler, but a powerful ancient political concept, inspired by a vision of the Hindu bhumi as a unity which was not belied by the presence of multiple centres of political power. That is why civilisational values permeated the whole land and gave the tradition its abiding continuity.

As first cakravartin, Bharata fasted, meditated, performed puja and followed the cakra symbolizing his kingship as it moved of its own accord to various parts of the country. He paused to perform pradaksina in Saurastra, where the Jina Aristanemi (cousin of Sri Krishna) would be born, all the while circling Ayodhya, centre of Aryavarta (land of the Arya, noble ones).

Bharata thus subjugated rival kings and punished those who taxed their subjects excessively. His digvijaya was accomplished without violence, through innate capability, on account of *punya* (merit) acquired in previous lives through practice of Jaina precepts. He exemplified the virtues of compassion (daya), divine-wisdom (brahma jñana) and penance (tapas).

The **second Bharata** was born in the Tretayuga as the son of King Dasaratha of Ayodhya, and younger brother of Sri Rama. He embodied the virtues of love (prema), devotion (bhakti), and brotherhood (bandhutva).

The story of the Ramayana is well-known, but briefly, Keikeyi, the second wife of King Dasaratha, schemes to have the heir apparent, Sri Rama, sent into exile for fourteen years, and her own son, Bharata, appointed crown prince in his place. Rama, accompanied by his brother Lakshman, and wife Sita, departs immediately and the grief-stricken Dasaratha passes away soon afterwards.

Bharata, then on a visit to his maternal grandfather's kingdom in Gandhara, returns only to learn of his father's tragic demise and brother's unfair exile. Tortured further by the thought that he could be considered complicit in this palace conspiracy, he decides – unswervingly – not to accept the throne. He then leads the people to the forest to persuade Rama to return. This political renunciation of a kingdom won illegitimately is a unique Hindu ethic.

Bharata is regarded as the symbol of dharma and idealism, second only to Sri Rama. To this day, he is revered for his adherence to family values, truth, righteousness, filial love and duty.

When Sri Rama refused to return to Ayodhya as rightful king, Bharata, at the intervention of Sita's father, King Janaka, accepted the onerous duty of facilitating Rama to live righteously, i.e., in exile for fourteen years. He vowed to immolate himself if Rama did not return immediately at the end of the exile period and ascend his throne. Agreeing to govern Ayodhya only as regent, he placed Sri Rama's sandals at the foot of the royal throne as the symbol of His kingship.

The **third Bharata** was born in the Dwaparyuga as the son of Shakuntala and King Dushyant. Their story is part of the Mahabharata narrative, but it was Kalidasa who immortalized their love in *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*.

Shakuntala was the daughter of Rishi Vishvamitra and the apsara Menaka, who was sent by Indra to distract the sage. Menaka returned to heaven, and her daughter was raised in the hermitage of Rishi Kanva.

King Dushyant was the youngest son of King Puru, who had sacrificed his youth for his father, King Yayati. He founded the Paurava dynasty. Dushyant was hunting in the forest when, following a wounded deer into the hermitage of Rishi Kanva, he found Shakuntala nursing the animal. He fell in love and they married secretly in the Gandharva style, being their own witnesses.

The king gave her a ring as token of his love and to establish her identity as his wife. Sadly, Shakuntala lost the ring and the king refused to accept her; she retired to the forest and gave birth to Bharata, who grew up so bold and fearless that he played with lions. Some years later, the ring was found and Dushyant brought Shakuntala and Bharat to Pratishthan, where Bharata later became king.

Bharata, is regarded as the greatest king of India, who lent his name to the country. He had nine sons, but deemed none of them fit to succeed him, and hence adopted a capable child as future ruler. Bharata personified the values of service (seva), valour (shaurya), and charity (dana).

Thus the three Bharatas (two kings, one prince) seamlessly united the Satayuga, Tretayuga and Dwaparayuga and the land itself in political and cultural unity.

Himalayam Samaarabhya Yaavadindusarovaram
Tam Devanirmitam Desam Hindusthaanam Prachakshatey

From the Himalayas all the way to the ocean, the Devas created the sacred land of Hindustan

According to the Vishnu Purana,"The country that lies north of the ocean and the south of the snowy munatains is called Bharat for there dwell the descendants of the Bharat."

Uttaram yat samudrasya Himaadreshchaiva Dakshenam
Varsham tada Bharatam Naam Bharati Yatra Santatih

In other words, it is stated that the subcontinent of India stretches from the Himalayas to the sea. It is known as Bharatvarsha, or the land of Bharat where the descendants of Bharata live.

Bharata was a king highly praised in Puranas. As per the contents of various Puranas, Bharatvarsha was a land, which formed the part of a larger unit called Jambu-dvipa. Bharatvarsha on Jambu-divipa (the continent) was considered the innermost of the seven concentric islands or the continents into which the earth, as conceived in the Puranas, was

supposed to have been divided. In epics and some of the Purana, the whole Jambu-divpa is called the Bharatvarsha.

According to one other interpretation, varsham means country and thus Bhartavarsha means the country of Bharata or the country of the descendants of Bharata, son of Dushyant and Shakuntla and nurtured by Rishi Kanva.

Bharatvarsha is said to be widely spread. It also used to be called greater Bharat, the matsya purana states that there were 9 divisions of greater Bharat which have since submerged in the sea and are now beyond reach. These divisions were such as; Indradweepe, Kaseru, Tamraparni, Gabhistiman, Nagdweepa, Saumya, Gandharva, Varuna, Bharat surrounded by the sea.

1.1.5.2.Idea of Bharatavarsa-Assumptions

Defined by Raja Rammohun Roy, a poliglot and an Indian Reformer in his published track titled, "Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue System of India, and of the General Character and Condition of its Native Inhabitants, as submitted in Evidence to the Authorities in England, with Notes and Illustrations. Also a brief preliminary sketch of the Ancient and Modern Boundaries, and of the History of that country.

"India, anciently called the “Bharat Varsha” after the name of a monarch called “Bharat” is bound on its south by the sea; on east partly by this sea, and partly by ranges of mountains, separating it from the ancient China, or rather the countries now called Assam, Cassay and Arracan; on the north by a lofty and extensive chain of mountains which divides it from Tibet; on the west partly by the ranges of mountains, separating India from the ancient Persia, and extending towards the Western Sea, above the mouth of the Indus, and partly by this sea itself. It lies between the 8th and 35th degrees north latitude, and the 67th and 93d degrees of east longitude.

Raja Rammohun Roy had remarked as follows: Vaarshaa implies a large tract of continent cut off from other countries by natural boundaries, such as oceans, mountains, or extensive deserts. Further, on Bharat he wrote, “Bharat” a humane and powerful prince, suppose to have sprung from the “Indu-Bangs” or lunar race.

Raja Rammohun Roy had excluded the territories east of Bhramputra River, starting from Assam from the territories of India as given in his report. However, he had given following substantiating note about the exclusion of the territories on both the east and west.

“The Boundary Mountains are interrupted on the east between 90 degree and 91 degree East and latitude 26 degree and 27 degree north. Hence the countries to the east of the Burrampooter, as Assam, Ava, Siam, &c as far as 102 degree east longitude, are by some authors considered as part of India, though beyond its natural limits; and by European writers usually called ‘India Beyond Ganges’. There, relics of Sanskrit literature, and remains of Hindu temples

are still found. Other ancient writers, however, considered these countries as attached to China, the inhabitants having greater resemblance to the Chinese in their features.

The western boundary mountains are in like manner broken at Longitude 70 degree East, and at Latitude 34 degree North. Consequently, the countries beyond that natural limit, such as Caubul and Candhar, are supposed by some to be included in India, and by others in Persia. But many Hindu antiquities still exist there to corroborate the former notion. Not only the northern boundaries of mountains of India, but also those mountains which form the eastern and western limits of it, are by the ancient writers of India termed Himalaya, and considered branches of that great chain. "In north direction is situated the prince of mountains, the 'immortal Himalaya' which immerse both in the eastern and western seas, stands on earth as a standard of measure (or line of demarcation)."

1.1.6. Summary

- *Scholars, including the historians, Indologists and orientalists, are divided in their opinion about the historical sense of the ancient Indians, particularly the Hindus. It has been said that the ancient Indian had no sense of history and chronology.*
- *The Indians themselves did not write history. They produced no doubt, a literature both voluminous and varied… but within its vast range history is conspicuous by its absence.*
- *The ancient Greek and Roman historians produced only political histories, whereas the ancient historians of India touched upon all aspects of history- social, economic, political, religious and cultural. Both ancient Indian and classical tradition of historiography have relative value.*
- *As in ancient India so in ancient Greece and Rome history developed as a branch of literature. To the Greeks and Romans also history was an art and not "a critical science". Very few of them were critical historians.*
- *A.K Warder, says that it is superficial misconceptions that ancient India produced little or no historical literature. He has firmly established that there was continuity in historiographical tradition in ancient India from Vedic antiquity to the twelfth century AD.*
- *The ancient Indians were acquainted more with the art than sciences of historiography. It would be too much to expect scientific, serious or genuine histories from the authors of ancient times.*
- *The tradition of historical writing in ancient India began in the time of Vedavyasa and continued until the end of twelfth century AD. The oldest Indian historical tradition is preserved in the Rgveda.*
- *The two main tradition of historiography in its early phase were the epic and Puranic. The Puranic tradition is relatively of greater value.*

- *The other two important tradition of historical writing in ancient India were the Buddhist and Jain. The Buddhist and Jain scholars produced a number of semi-historical works before the seventh century AD.*
- *Ancient Indian historiography anterior to the seventh century AD was largely based on Itihasa-Purana tradition. The traditional concept of history went on changing with developing historical sense, prevailing historical tradition in a contemporary age and events of the time.*
- *Ancient India was known as Bharatvarsha. The ancient Indian historians and scholars differ in their views regarding how the name Bharatvarsha had been derived. According to Vedavyasa the name Bharatvarsha was derived from the name of the Bharat, the son of emperor Dhyanta.*

1.1.7. Exercise

1. Write an essay on the historical sense of ancient India.
2. How the historical sense of ancient India is different to those of the classical world? Discuss.
3. Examine the conception of history as depicted in the ancient Indian literature.
4. Elaborate the idea of Bharatvarsa in Indian tradition.
5. Ancient Indian had a strong historical sense. Explain.

1.1.8. Suggested Readings

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UNIT-I

Chapter-II

ITIHASA-PURANA TRADITION IN ANCIENT INDIA; TRADITIONAL HISTORY FROM THE VEDAS, EPICS AND *PURANA*S

Structure

1.2.0. Objectives

In this lesson, students investigate ancient Indian historical tradition. Here the chapter will discuss the *itihasa-purana*, the Vedic and epic tradition of ancient India. Throughout the chapter, stress will be on various historical information available in the ancient tradition of Indian historiography. After completing this chapter, you will be able:

- *examine the ancient Indian historical traditions;*
- *analyse the Itihasa-Purana tradition as a historiographical trend in ancient India.*
- *give an account of the significance of Vedic literature as historical source;*
- *understand the importance of Epics and Purana for reconstruction of ancient Indian history.*

1.2.1. Introduction

The ancient Indians were acquainted more with the art than sciences of historiography. It would be too much to expect scientific, serious or genuine histories from the authors of ancient times. It has been aptly remarked that the modern historian of ancient India unceremoniously discards the ancient forms and ideas, the very context of ancient historical works. The tradition of historical writing in ancient India began in the time of Vedavyasa and continued until the end of twelfth century AD. The oldest Indian historical tradition is preserved in the Rgveda. The Rgveda hymns about the Aryan people speak of the sense of history of those who composed them. These hymns constitute the earliest evidence of the historical sense in India. And the composition of the original *Bharata Itihasa* or *Bharata Samhita* and the *Purana Samhita* or *Itihasa Samhita* by Vyasa in theDvapara age marked the beginning of Indian historiography. The two main tradition of historiography in its early phase were the epic and Puranic. The Puranic tradition is relatively of greater value. The *Purana*kara were the first to record and preserve the dynastic genealogies and chronology- the two legitimate constituents or components of history. Their historical conception and chronological perception find reflections in the information they have supplied about the kings of different dynasties with length of their reign. They have provided the dynastic history of India in a very systematic way up to the beginning of the Gupta rule. The details of the Kingdoms and the dynasties of the Gupta post-Gupta period furnished by them with some chronological data though not very systematic are also of considerable historical value. This chapter will discuss the tradition of historical writings in ancient India in three different contexts such as the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition, the Vedic tradition and the Epic and Puranic traditions.

1.2.2. *Itihasa-Purana* Tradition

In fact, it was the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition, which marked the beginning of ancient Indian historical tradition. The three main constituent elements of the historical tradition were *akhyana*

(narratives), *Itihasa* (pas events) and *Purana* (any old tale or ancient lore). These three constitute rudimentary specimens of history. In fact, they contained the seeds of history. *Akhyana* signifies presentation of history in a narrative style. *Itihasa* in real sense of the term signifies history, which appears in ancient Indian literature not only as a record of the past but also as a trustworthy guide to contemporary cultures and civilization. In its broader sense, it comprises ancient events arranged in the form of story based on historical truth. The writer of *Itihasa* tradition took history in a very comprehensive sense and attached more importance to the delineation of contemporary social, economic, political, religious and cultural life of the people than to the mere description of wars and battles, political conflicts and discords, etc. *Purana* is generally applied to tales of primeval antiquity or ancient stories whether quasi-historical, mythological or fanciful. *Itihasa* or *Purana* in the widest application of the term denotes actual traditional history. Various legendary and historical accounts of the events of the past or primordial events of humanity have been incorporated in the *Itihasa* and *Purana*. The earliest form of *Itihasa* based on real or oral tradition emerged in the Vedic age. The written records of the tradition appeared much later. The written form of history began with written tradition. The literature of both Vedic and Post-Vedic times contains the rudiments of history.

1.2.2.1.Antiquity of *Itihasa-Purana* Tradition

The antiquity of *Itihasa-Purana* tradition can be traced back to the Vedic Age. The earliest reference to the word *Purana* occurs in Rgveda *Samhita,* the oldest Vedic text. The sense of ancientness of anything is imposed in the word. In the same text, it has been used in the form of tale of hoary antiquity, *Gatha,* etc. Yaska (who may be tentatively placed between 800-700 Cnetury B.C) also referred to *Purana* and *Itihasa*. He cited the Kuru dynasty as an example of *Itihasa,* which according to him, may be distinguished from the *Gathas.* He uses Aitihasiaka, for those who interpreted the Veda with reference of traditional history, which can also be supported by statement of Durgacharya (A.D 1300-1350), a commentator on his work. The Puaranic Akahyanas in the Veda were purely based on contemporary tradition. *Itihasa* as a kind of literature is repeatedly mentioned along with *Purana* in the later texts of the Vedic period as well as in the text of post- Vedic times. In the Atharva Veda *Samhita,* the *Purana* has been mentioned fast singularly along with three other Vedas and then conjointly with *Itihasa*. In this connection we are further told that *Itihasa*, *Purana*, Gatha and Narasamsis were known to the people. They being repository of age-old traditions were seriously studies by scholars and elites of the days. The Gopatha Brahmana mentioned not only purana but also the *Itihasa*- vedaand *Purana* –Veda. In the Satapatha Brahmana, the *Itihasa* and ther *Purana* have been identified with Vedas. The compound word *Itihasa-Purana* also figures in it. In one passage, *Anvakhyana* and *Itihasa* are distinguished as different classes of works. But the exact point of distinction is obscure. The former was probably supplementary to the later. The stories narrated in the Brahminical texts

were also based on *Itihasa Purana* tradition. In Taittiraiya Aranyakas, *Itihasa* and *Purana* have been mentioned together with Gathas, Narasamsis and Kalpa. The combination of *Itihasa* and *Purana* appear in the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad. In the Chhodangya Upanishad also *Itihasa* finds mentioned in combination with *Purana*. This is the texts, which specifically referred to *Itihasa –Purana* as fifth veda, the four veda being the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva Veda. From the Upanishad it distinctly appears that *Itihasa, Purana* and Veda were important subjects of study. The Sankhayana srautasutra, mentioned the *Itihasa* as well as the *Purana* as a veda. In two Grihya sutra also *Itihasa* and *Purana* have been mentioned, which stand for stories and legends. In one of the pali texts, *Itihasa* is called as the fifth veda. Sayana, (1300-1380 A.D), a commentator on Veda, while examining the relationship between *Itihasa* and *Purana*, tried to distinguish one from other which yields no consistent result. We find that by the former he means the Mahabharata and by the later the Brahmanda. They, according to him, form parts of the sacred literature, which consist of the story of either god or men or cosmogony tradition. In fact, the general use of compound word *Itihasa-Purana* indicated the close relation between the two. In the later vedic age, the three family of the Angiras, the Atharvanas and the Bhrigus, merged and the resultant composite family of the Bhrgviangirases successfully carried on the tradition of *Itihasa-Purana*, Akhyanas and Akhyayikas etc.

There is no denying fact that in the later Vedic age, *Itihasa* assume greater importance than *Purana*, however the fact remains that both were equally popular and remains indistinguishably. In the later time, of course some distinction was made between the two. The connotation of *Itihasa* gradually changed; *Itihasa* was often used as a general term as is embrace all the historical and related tradition and the *Purana*.

The question as to which *Itihasa-Purana* or *Itihasa* has been called the fifth Veda in the Sanskrit and Buddhist texts concerned still remains to be answered. K.F Geldner, on the basis of the evidence whatsoever in the ancient Indian literature texts as reasonable concluded that their existed a single word called *Itihasaveda* or *itrihasa Purana*. But he has not spelt out the name of the work. His view have been contradicted by Maurice Winternitz and A.A.Macdonell and A.B.Keith, according to them, the *Itihasa* Veda is not any particular book but that branches of learning which consist of story, legend etc. They simply state that the *Itihasa-Purana* representing the great body of mythology, legendary history, etc, may roughly classed as fifth Veda. Emil Sieg, while dealing with the ancient Indian *Itihasa* tradition, point out that there existed a collection of *Itihasa* or *Purana* under the title of *Itihasapuranaveda*. He has called the Mahabharata the fifth Veda contending that this grate epic posses all the elements of *Itihasa* and *Purana*. J.Herten has also dealt with the subject but without drawing and positive conclusion. However, the so called fifth Veda, is no other that *Itihasa Samhita* or *Purana Samhita* of Vyasa, which have been interchangeably called the *Itihasapurana* and the *PuranaItihasa*. This can

irrefutable be probe on the combined testimony of the puranic texts themselves. Here, suffice it to say that ancient traditions preserved in the so called *Itihasa-Purana* about kings of various dynasties, their genealogies and famous deeds etc., are of great historical importance. The Puranic texts deals with various aspects of ancient Indian history, which are the glaring examples of *Itihasa*s. The *Purana* appeared as enlarge forms of the Vedas. That is why the *Itihasa-Purana* has been mentioned in the Vedic and puranic literature as the fifth Veda along with other four Vedas. The *Itihasa-Purana* and the Vedas were closely related and equally important. The *Purana*s were considered relatively more important that the Vedas. For achieving the correct interpretation, explanation and analysis of the data contained in the Vedas, the sound knowledge of the *Itihasa* and *Purana* was essential for the Brahmans as evidenced by the Mahabharatas, the *Purana*s and one of the Smritis. The *Purana*s was one of the main fourteen branches of learing. According to well-established tradition, the learned members of the society regularly studied the *Itihasa* and *Purana*.

1.2.2.2.Value of *Itihasa-Purana* Tradition

The value of *Itihasa-Purana* tradition is fairly illustrated in some of the Puaranic texts. In some of the Puarana, *Itihasa*, *Purana* and Akhyana have been treated as almost identical. The texts call themselves by all these terms. No clear-cut distinction has been made between them. However, as collective terms *Itihasa* and *Purana* are often mentioned as distinct. They actually became separate from each other much later. The Puranic evidence in this regard is more explicit than the Vedic and Brahmanic ones.

The two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatas, include almost all the elements of historical tradition. The text themselves bespeaks the truth concerned. Valmiki himself calls his Ramayanas a Puratana *Itihasa, w*hose justification lies in the historical data contained in the texts. The Mahabharata is called *Itihasa*, *Purana* and Akhyana. Actually, it embodies several akhyanas, upakhyanas etc. It is also called *Arthasastra* and *Sharmasastra*. It is further said in the text that it is well supported by the Vedic and Puranic evidences. The word *Itihasa* occurs several times in this epic along with *Puravrtta*, akhyana, *Purana*, *katha*, etc., which are all synonymous. According to E.W.Hopkins, the Mahabharats indifferently called the *Itihasa* and *Purana* claims the title of the fifth Veda. The epic account in the present form is based upon that of the *Purana*. He further states that the historical tales embedded in this epic is not wholly without scholastic affinities. The Mahabharat is relatively more important than the Ramayana from the historical point of view. It is no doubt a semi historical work. It is encyclopedic in nature containing a plethora of materials relating to some conceivable aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. F.E Pargiter has correctly observed that "The *Purana*, The Mahabharats and in a minor degree the Ramayana profess to give accounts from tradition about the earliest occurrences. The former two constitute main pillars of the edifice of early Indian historical

tradition. In literature of the later period, names like *Itihasa*, akhyana and *Purana* are by no means restricted to the Mahabharata, Ramayana and the *Purana*s., some Buddhist and Jain works are also based on *Itihasa-Purana* tradition to a considerable extent.

Kautilya had comprehensive idea of History. According to him, *Itihasa* is not a single work but a class of literature consisting of the *Purana*, *Itivritti* (an account of the past event, a narrative or story), *akhyayika* (biographies of kings or princes and important historical personages), *udaharana* (an illustration), the Dharmasastra (law) and the Arthasastra(science of polity or state and government). These were six constituents' elements of history. *Purana* here means Puranas, which, according to him, were most important of all components, parts of *Itihasa*. This description of the *Itihasa* goes well in accord with what we find in one of the Jain *purans* of the ninth century A.D.

The *Itihasa*, *Purana*, Akhyana and *Akhyayika* also received the notices of Katyayana (Second half of fourth Century B.C) and Patanjali as different literary works. Manu also refers to *akhyana*, *Itihasa* and *Purana* (akhyananitihisams ca *Purana*ni) which were learnt and taught. The *itihasa* or history mentioned in this text, according to some scholars, includes also the two epics. But here it does not refer to any particular book. This is just a traditional way of looking at various form of *Itihasa*. However, works on history embodying ancient traditions, stories, *gatha*, etc. did exist. Amara Simha) 5th or6th Century A.D), in his Amarakosa defines *Itihasa* as *puravrtta* (accounts of past events). The commentator on this work includes the Mahabharats in it. Further *akhyayikas* (a biographical work dealing with historical subjects) has also been referred to therein along with *Purana* characterized with five sections (including dynastic genealogies based on traditions) which it comprises. Rajasekharas (who belonged to the last quarter of the ninth and first quarter of the tenth century A.D) calls the *Itihasa* a Veda. He identifies the Puarana with *Itihasa*. According to him, there are two different kinds of *Itihasa*, viz. *parakriyas* and *Purakalpa*. The former focuses on only one hero such as in the Ramayana and the latter on several heroes such as in the Mahabharats.

The ancient Indian writers do not appear to be consistent in their use in the expression *akhyana*, *Itihasa* and *Purana*, for they sometimes use the term as synonymous and sometimes describe them as various kinds of narratives. In fact, it was not always possible for them to draw any hard and line fast of distinction between them. For a considerable period, they were treated as intertwined or interrelated. They were actually complementary to each other.

The *Itihasa-Purana* tradition finds reflection not only in Vedas, the epics and *Purana* but also in the writings of the Buddhist and Jain scholars. The historical writings in ancient India at least to the end of the Gupta period were broadly based on this tradition. The three legitimate constituents of this tradition were myth, genealogy and historical narratives. In the post-Gupta period, there was no doubt slight departure from the earlier tradition. However, the impact of

Itihasa-Purana tradition is discernible on the historical literature of that period too. The concept or idea of history started changing to a reasonable extent from the seventh century onwards. The *Itihasa* and *purana* developed as two distinct subject of study. But the older tradition did not completely die down. Even the writings of Kalhana, the best of all ancient historians of India, bear the stamp of the *Itihasa* and *Purana* tradition.

Our knowledge of the most ancient past rests mainly on tradition. The tradition is human testimony concerning the long past, and hence it is not to be discarded simply because it contains discrepancies. Ancient Indian historical tradition cannot be put aside as wholly unworthy of credence. Its general trustworthiness can be tested by the results of discoveries and excavations. It may be examined and weighed with the aid of all information available to us. The ancient Indian historian have bequeathed to us types of historical works which include dynastic annals, genealogical records, historical biographies, local chronicles, historical narratives, regional histories, etc. the historical sense of ancient Indian writers is eloquently reflected in the works they have left behind.

1.2.3. Traditional History from the Vedas

The earliest literary work of some historical value, which the Aryans have left to posterity, is the Rgveda. It is a *Samhita* or collection of total 1028 (1017 + 11) hymns composed by various priest-poets or sages of great antiquity and arranged into ten *mandalas* or books. The hymns containing historical information reflect the historical sense of those who composed them. They were carefully preserved by the *Brahmanas* and handed down from generation to generation. The knowledge of the past was originally transmitted from one to other through the oral tradition. After the introduction of writing the tradition connected with men and events of bygone times, contemporary persons, the culture and civilization of the Aryans and other subjects was recorded by the *Brahmanas.* They were actually the keepers or preservers of the records of the past. Here it is worthwhile to mention that the Vedic hymns on the whole composed by various authors were collected, compiled, properly arranged and divided or classified into four *Samhitas* by the great sage, Krsna Dvaipayana Vyasa (the son of Parasara), in the beginning of the *Dvapara* age. And thereafter he became popularly known as Veda-Vyasa. It is believed that, Vasukra, a famous Kasmiri Brahmana, undertook the task of explaining the Veda and committing into writing.

1.2.3.1. Historical Information from Vedic Literature

The Rgveda contains many historical data about the life and culture of the Aryans. The data contained in the text about their original homeland within the geographical boundary of India and their settlement patterns are of exceptional value. It is this text from which we learn that the Aryans were originally settled in the territory lying along the rivers, Kubha (Kabul), Suvastu (Swat), Krumu (Kurram), Gomati (Gomal) and Hariyupia (Hariruda of Heart) in Afghanistan and the Sindhu (Indus) and its Principal tributaries, Vitasta (Jhelum), Asikni (Cenab), Parusni (Ravi), Vipasa (Vyasa) and

Sutudri (Sutlej)-the five rivers of the Punjab on the west and the Sarasvati on the east called the Sapta-Sindhu region (the land of seven rivers). There are some indications in the text about their original settlements in Balhika or Bahlika region (the Vamksu Valley) also. The allusions to the rivers – the Ganga and the Yamuna – in the text indicate that they were partly settled in the Gangetic doab. In earlyh Vedic times, the Ganga – Yamuna doab and "the territory between the rivers, Sarasvati and Drsadvati, were occupied by the Bharatas." The areas inhabited by the Aryans in the Rgvedic age extended from Afghanistan to the Gangetic valley. The information contained in the text about the social system, economic condition, political organization and religious and cultural life of the Aryans, their internal divisions, mutual hostility and conflicts with the non-Aryans, inter tribal warfare, the Dasas or Dasyus, the expansion of Aryan culture by the Panis (a trading class) outside India, etc. are of great historical value.

There are incidental allusions in the Rgveda to the five allied Aryan peoples, viz. Anus, Druhyus, Yadus, Turvasas and Purus who were the dwellers of the Sapta-Sindhu region. Besides these, the Bharatas (who later merged into the Kurus), Tritsus, Srnjayas, Krivis and other minor groups are also mentioned in the text. One of the notable events of the Rgvedic age known as the Battle of ten kings also finds mention in the text. This great battle was fought on the river parusni or Ravi in which Sudas, king of the Bharats, defeated with the help of Indra the confederate peoples led by ten kings (five of whom were heads of the above-mentioned allied Aryan groups and remaining five were the chiefs of non-Aryan tribal groups, viz., Alinas, Pakthas, Sivas, Bhalanases and the Visanins of the North-West) and established the political supremacy of the former over the latter. This event constitutes one of the significant aspects of the Rgvedic history dealing with political life of the Aryans.

The Rgveda refers to some important kings like Manu, the son of Vivasvana Iksvaku , the dynastic history of which is available in the Ramayana and *Purana*, Pururava Karusravana, who is identical with Samvarana's son Kuru mentioned in the Mahabharata and *Purana*s, Nahusa and his son and successor, Yajati. Their dynasties and genealogies are not given in the text, but their historicity is beyond doubt. The text also mentions the names of Divodasa, Mudgala, Srnjaya, Cyavana and his son Sudasa and one of his descendants named Somaka who were the rulers of North Pancala kingdom north of the Ganga. The historical credibility of the Rgvedic references to these kings can be confirmed by the Puranic genealogy of North Pancala Dynasty. However, it cannot be denied that the contemporary historical notices in the Rgveda in spite of having all the trustworthiness of first-hand evidence have no chronological setting, and by themselves yield little information that can be coordinated for historical purposes.

1.2.3.2. Vedic Historical Tradition- An Analysis

Louis Renou has correctly stated that some of the Rgvedic hymns are "historical". They contain the "rudiments of history". Adolf Kaegi also observes that these hymns were composed "with the intention of protecting the heritage of ancestral times from further corruption and from destruction;

and the "Rgveda is therefore, to an extent, a scientific, historical collection. We have in these hymns writes L. Geiger, the picture of an original, primitive life of mankind, free from Foreign influences. They are not narration of events, but provide incidental evidence on the life of the Aryans. They can be treated as being historically fairly authentic, since their composition was contemporary with the period described.

R.P. Chanda says "The dawn of history is heralded in India by the hymns sung by the Rsis and enshrined in the Rgveda *Samhita*."

Muir calls the Rgveda a "historic Veda" Its historical value as a number of scholars have acknowledged the most ancient record of the Aryans. A.A. Macdonell describes it as a "unique monument of a long vanished age" and further adds that it contains some materials of historical interest. The Indian conception of history is skillfully embodied in one of the early extent Vedic Aryan Culture.

According to F. Max Muller, the Veda is the earliest history of the Aryan family. It is the safe basis of Indian history. It has importance not only in the history of India but also in the history of the world. He writes in one of his essays that For a study of man, or . . . . for a study of Aryan humanity, there is nothing in the world equal in importance to the Veda. I maintain that to everybody who cares for himself, for his ancestors, for his history or for his intellectual development, a study of the Vedic literature is indispensable . . . it is far more improving than the reigns of Babylonian and Persian kings, even than the dates and deeds of many of the kings of Judah and Israel.

U.N. Ghoshal has clearly stated that the oldest Indian historical tradition is preserved in the Vedic literature. The historical sense, according to him, had dawned upon the Indians at the beginning of their history. The statements of A.K. Warder can more or less corroborate this.

F. E. Pargiter admits that the Rgveda, which is the oldest and the greatest Brahmanical book, "contains historical allusions, of which some record contemporary persons and events, but more refers to bygone times and persons and is obviously based on tradition. He further observes, "The historical tradition preserved in the Vedic literature has one great merit over that in the epics and *Purana*s that literature has been very carefully preserved and what it contains how is the statements of the contemporary age. Its statements being ancient are nearer accuracy than statements in the epics and *Purana*s, which were not so scrupulously preserved. On the other hand, he contradicts his own statement by saying that "Vedic literature is not authoritative in historical matters ("except where it notices contemporary matters" and conclusions drawn from it are not criteria for estimating the results yielded by Historical tradition in the epics and *Purana*s. He has repeatedly mentioned that the Vedic texts are not books of historical purpose nor do they deal with history. However, such view is no longer tenable. A.B. Keith while dealing with the nature of Vedic *Itihasa* has attached considerable importance to the Rgvedic history. He says, "That the Vedic texts the *Samhita*s and the Brahmanas, are not books of historical purpose is notorious.

The Vedic historical tradition cannot be brushed aside as wholly unworthy of attention. It has been truly said that "The evidences derived from the Vedic literature are indeed very strong and generally carry more authority in as much as many of them are either directly contemporary records or are traditions derived from contemporary evidences.

In fact, it is only the Rgveda, which deals with history and culture of the early Vedic period. L.J. Trotter observes, "The history of that olden (Aryan) civilization has been written for us, not in chronicles like those which form the boast of Mohammadan India, but in the sacred writings of Sanskrit-speaking Hindus, and in poems which portray the social life of pre-historic India as vividly as Homer portrayed the social life of pre-historic Greece.

1.2.4. The Epic Tradition

The epic tradition of presenting the history was completely different from that of the Vedic, as it appears from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Both the epics have considerable historical value.

1.2.4.1.Historical Information from the Ramayana

The Ramayana of Valmiki has been rightly called a historical epic. As already stated, the author himself calls it a *puratana Itihasa* (ancient history) which gets vindicated by his incorporation of dynastic history of the Solar and Lunar families and other historical details of various kingdoms and principalities, towns and cities, polity and administration, the condition of the Aryan society in the time of the Ramayana, life and culture of some tribal people, etc., in it. The historicity of Ramayana can do doubt be proved to a certain extent. But K.K. Dasgupta's view that it is "the first historical biography produced in India", cannot be accepted.

1.2.4.1.1. Genealogy of Northern India

The genealogy of the kings of Ayodhya (the capital of Kosala Kingdom) from Iksvaku down to Rama of the Solar family is preserved in Valmiki's Ramayana. The genealogy is no doubt systematically arranged. But it is incomplete as it contains only some 35 kings. In fact, there were 64 kings in the pre-Rama period as it appears from the Puranic records. A brief history of two other dynasties (the Videha dynasty and the Vaisala dynasty) of the same Solar family is also given in the text. The Videha dynasty sprang from Iksvaku's son Nimi who is also called Videha. He was the founder of the royal family of Mithila. He was succeeded by his son Mithi whose son was Janaka I who was further succeeded by several kings down to the time of Siradhvaja identical with Janaka II). From the genealogical order of the kings of this dynasty, it appears that in the line of Nimi there were fifty-two kings after him who ruled over the kingdom of Videha with its capital at Mithila (Janakapur, which now lies just within the border of Nepal.) The text is replete with some valuable information about the history and antiquity of the Vaisala dynasty. The king Visala was the founder of this dynasty or kingdom with its capital at Vaisali

also called Visala. From the genealogical list of the kings of this dynasty as given in the text it appears that he was succeeded by nine kings down to Sumati.

1.2.4.1.2. History of Lunar Family

The Ramayana furnishes us with the history of the lunar family also. We are told that Pururava ruled at Pratisthana (modern Jhunsi opposite Allahabad), the capital city of Madhyadesa. His son, Yayati, whose five sons, Yadu, Turvasa or Turvasu, Druhyu, Anu and Puru ruled over different kingdoms, succeeded Nahusa. Brahmadatta, the king of kampilipuri (Kampilya), the capital of south Pancala kingdom, also finds mention in the text. The information supplied in it about the Haihaya dynasty is of paramount historical importance. The Haihayas constitute one of the branches of the Yadavas in Yadu's line. The king Haihaya and his successors are generally called the Haihayas. Their genealogy is also partly given in the text. The Haihayas extended their rule to the Narmada Valley during the time of Krtavirya's son Arjuna. The latter is said to have conquered Mahismati, situated on the banks of the Narmada, by defeating Karkotaka, a Naga chief who had settled over there and subsequently made it his fortress capital. The Haihayas established themselves in that part of India by overthrowing the Nagas of the Narmada region. The hostile relations of the Haihayas and Talajanghas with the Kosala kingdom during the time of one of its king, Asita, also find reflection in the text. Some fragments of information about the Kasi dynasty are also found there in.

Vasu (Uparicara Vasu, fourth in succession from Kuru's son, Sudhanvan) and his five sons, including Brhadratha who was the found of the kingdom of Magadha with its capital at Giruvraja and Kusa or Kusamba who founded Kausambi (the capital of Vatsa kingdom), also find mention in the Ramayana.

1.2.4.1.3. Information on Historical geography

A number of towns and cities like Pratisthana, Pragjyotisapura, Ayodhya, Mithila, Vaisali, Mathura, Hastinapura, Girvraja (Rajagrha), Mahismati, Kampilya and Kusavati also figure in the Ramayana. The text not only deals with the history of their foundations but also gives their vivid description and provides a glimpse into an urban life. If also abounds, in information about the rights and duties of a king, nature and functioning of the State, administration of justice, war and politics, the social and religious life of the Aryans, etc.

The Ramayana throws a good deal of light on the historical geography also with regard to various kingdoms, principalities, *Janapadas* and urban centers and various races and tribes existing in different parts of India in those days. Monier-Williams, H. Jacobi and R.C. Dutt have also acknowledged the historical value of this epic.

1.2.4.2.Historical Information from the Mahabharata

Vyasa originally composed the Mahabharata exactly three years after the Great Bharata battle ended. It was first named Jaya *Itihasa*. In the text itself it has been repeatedly called an

Itihasa (history). It is further said that this Bharat *Itihasa*, full of the details of valuable subjects, is the best of the *Itihasa*s. It was also called Bharata *Samhita* because of being a history of Bharat dynasty. It consisted of 24000 verses. Further, many stories and contemporary events were incorporated and many additions were made in it, which led to the increase in the number of its verses to 100000. And thereafter it became popularly known as the Mahabharata. The text in the present enlarged form (divided into eighteen *parvans* or books) consists of exactly the same number of verses. It is believed to have been redacted twice, once in the Sunga period and then in the Gupta period.

Some scholars are of the view that the Mahabharata is "a work of history" which is not unworthy of acceptance. C.V. Vaidya considers it both an epic and a history. He further writes Works known as Histories or *Itihasa*s were known even in Vedic times. The Mahabharata itself was originally a history . . . V.S. Agarwala opines that it is not that type of history in which historical events are chronologically arranged. It has its own historical value. It is no doubt an encyclopedia of historical knowledge. It sheds light on different aspects of ancient Indian history.

The Mahabharata as a whole contains valuable historical information about the dynastic history and genealogies of the Lunar race of both pre and post Bharata war period, towns and cities, kingdoms and republics, kingship and state, polity and administration, Aryans and non-Aryans, the contemporary social and religious conditions of the people, etc.

1.2.4.2.1. Genealogical History of Northern India

The genealogies of the kings of the Lunar dynasty of the pre-war period given in the Mahabharata include that of Pururava, of the five sons Yayati, Anu, Druhyu, Tarvasu, Yadu and Puru, of the kings of Puru's descendants called Pauravas, the kings of Bharata and Kuru dynasties in the line of the Pauravas and the kings of the Pancala dynasty. The histories of the kingdoms and dynasties of the Anavas (descendants of Anu) The Yadavas in general including the Andhaka-Vrsnis, the Bhojas and the Haihayas, the Yadavas from Mathura to Dvaraka (which include the details of the reasons of shifting the capital from the former place to the latter, their fratricidal war and destruction and sinking of Dvaraka city in the sea) the Pauravas, Bharatas, Kurus and Pancalas, etc. are also depicted therein. The dynastic history of the Kasi and Magadha kingdoms described in the text is of equal historical value. The details provided therein about the Kuru kingdom of Hastinapura ruled b the successors of Pariksit II in the post-war period are also of considerable historical importance. There are also some fragments of information about the Naga dynasty. However, the dynastic genealogies are not mutually consistent, and the chronological sequence of events is broken to a certain extent. These are the two deficiencies, which are noticeable in the presentation of the historical accounts of the kingdoms and dynasties in this epic.

1.2.4.2.2. History of Urbanization of Ganga Valley

The Mahabharata also throws light on early phase of urban settlements in the Gangetic valley as well as in other parts of India. It contains information about the foundations and growth and some urban features of some towns and cities like Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Kausambi, Ahicchatra, Kampilya, Girivraja (Rajagrha), Campa, Kasi (Varanasi) and Mahismatipur. Their existences have already been archaeologically proved. The history of Dvaraka city in Gujarat in particular from its foundation to its submerging into the sea exactly thirty-six years after the war or Great Bharata battle is recorded in the epic. The information provided in it about the seals made out of shell bearing the engravings of padma (lotus) symbol (Aranyaka Parva,) is quite consistent with the findings of distinguished marine archaeologist, S.R. Rao. He discovered exactly the same seals from Bet-Dvaraka sometime between November 1987 and February 1988. It is striking to note that the political importance and economic value of the seals of Dvaraka in Krsna's time have also been highlighted respectively in the above Parva of the Mahabharata and the Harivamsa (Visnu Parva). The archaeological discovery of the remains of sunken Dvaraka city from the Arabian Sea and that of the said seals by Shri Rao proves not only the historicity of Krsna but also the historical authenticity of the epic account of the city. Some other urban centers like Tamralipti, Bharukaccha Surparaka, Viratanagar, Madra's capital Sakala, Dasapura, Tripuri, Pragjyotisapur, Bhojakatapura, Kundinapura, Suktimatipura, Uragapura (one of the early capitals of Cola kingdom), Rajapura, the capital of Kamboja and Masaka (Massaga in the swat Valley which was in a flourishing condition at the time of Alexander's invasion of north-west India) also find mention in the Great epic.

1.2.4.2.3. Information on Geo-political History of Northern India

A long list of kingdoms (states) and *Janapadas* (territorial units and peoples) existing in different parts of India and that of republican communities, notably the Andhaka-Vrsnis, the confederate Yadava tribes of Mathura and the Sivis, Kunindas, Trigartas, Ambasthas, Odambaras, Yaudheyas and Ksudraka-Malavas of the Punjab are furnished in the Mahabharata. The details of the evolution of institution of kingship, the origin or formation of the state and its seven constituents (based on saptanga theory) nature and types, aims and functions and growth and decline, inter-state relations, etc., have also been provided in this work. The monarchical and republican forms of government are said to have prevailed. The information contained in it about the administrative system followed in a monarchical state, the powers and functions of the king and his *mantriparisad*, councilors, subordinate rulers and officers, military administration, judicial administration, village and city administration *Gana* form of government i.e. the rule of the many, etc. are of great value.

The original settlements of the Aryans in the region extending from the western bank of the Yamuna to Kuruksetra on the bank of the Saraswati (which formed a part of the Sarasvata

region) are also described in the great epic. Kuruksetra was situated to the south of the Sarasvati and the north of the Drsadvati. Several non-Aryan races, tribes, foreign invaders like Sakas, Pahalvas (parthians), Yavanas (a Bactrian Greeks), and Hunas find mention in it.

The picture of contemporary social life with details of caste system, the position of nobles, the Brahmans, slaves and women, the custom of sati, the practice of polygamy, marriage system and the religious beliefs, etc. is vividly portrayed in the great epic.

1.2.5. The Puranic Tradition

The Puranic tradition of historiography deserves our special attention. The *Purana*s have their own history. There was originally a single text called *Purana Samhita* (or *Itihasa Samhita*) whose authorship has been ascribed to the great sage, Veda-Vyasa, twenty-eighth in the line of Vyasas who were known by different names. He inherited the tradition of preserving and compiling the Puranic data from his predecessors. It is categorically stated in the Puranic texts that after having classified the single Veda into four *Samhita*s, he first composed the *Purana* divided into eighteen parts consisting of *akhyanas, upakhyanas, gathas,* etc. and then a *Itihasa* (history) named the Mahabharata (Bharata *Samhita*) incorporating in it some Puranic data in the Dvapara age itself. The said eighteen *Purana*s contain among other things historical tradition of the Aryans. A.K. Warder's view, that the original *Purana* was composed in the eighth century B.C. during the reign of Adhisimakrsna of the Kali age (sixth in the succession from Abhimanyu) or may have existed in some form earlier, appears to be confusing. In fact, the *Purana* was narrated and not composed during the reign of the said king. In reality, it was the Dvapara age, which marked the beginning of the tradition of historical writing in early India.

It is significant to note that Maharsi Veda-Vyasa in his *Purana*s and the Mahabharata also included some important historical subjects like dynastic genealogies of pre-Bharata war period, contemporary events, etc. And it is perhaps on this ground that Umasankara Diksita has called him *Itihasakartta* (composer of historical work) and "a great historian". N.S. Rajaram also observes: "In ancient times Veda Vyasa was considered a great historian. Tradition credits him with the authorship of the historical epic Mahabharata and also with the responsibility for preserving ancient records found in the *Purana*s. It is practically not possible to chronologically arrange his all works. Nor can he be placed in a chronological framework. He was not a mythical figure but a historical personage. In fact, rsis and maharsis built up the tradition of preserving the historical records of the past.

It was Veda-Vyasa who taught the first lesson of history to his pupils. There are some concrete evidences in the Puranic records to show that he taught the *Itihasa-Purana* to his famous disciple, Romaharsana (called suta), who further taught it to his son, Ugrasrava, and six disciples at least five of whom were Brahmanas. The Puranic brahmanas belonging to a class of suta had developed historical sense. Their concept of history was fundamentally based on the

precepts of said Vyasa. In all probability, the work begun by Vyasa might have been completed by Romaharsana and his disciples. The tradition of studying, teaching and interpreting the *Itihasa* and *Purana* set by Vyasa and followed by his disciples was handed down from generation to generation.

1.2.5.1.History of composition of Purana

The original *Purana* contained the details of the kingdoms and dynasties with genealogies of only the pre-Bharata war period. It saw several recensions with additions sometime between c.500 BC and AD 500. The *Puranakaras* applying their historical sense time to time incorporated the historical events of the past along with other subjects in it during the previously mentioned period.

The Puranic sutas played very important role in the preservation of ancient Indian historical tradition. According to some Puranic texts, their special duty was to compose, arrange and preserve the genealogies (*vamsavalis*) of the kings of various dynasties which constituted the source material for the *Itihasa*s and *Purana*s. They used to compile the royal genealogies on the basis of the information collected from the royal families and the families of the priests and other. The materials collected by them were incorporated in the Puranic texts. They were also employed by the kings in their courts to record the events of their reigns as well as that of their ancestors. Thus they were preservers of historical tradition (both Brahmanical and Ksatriya), custodians of genealogical records and chroniclers of events of the past. Kautilya also informs us that "the pauranika, the suta and the Magadha" were three officials of salaried class retained by a king or prince for listening to the *Itihasa* and *Purana*. The former two are said to have been well conversant with their subjects. Maurice winternitz also admits that the *pauranikas* and *aitihasikas* were professional storytellers in very ancient time. According to V.S. pathak, the sutas belonged to Brahmana class. He has connected them with the Bhrgu (Bhargava), Angiras (Bharadvaja) and Kasyapa clans of priests of whom the first two were associated with historiography or writing of history (*Itihasa Purana* and later some other texts). The sutas were also the warrior or ksatriya clas or of mixed parentage. The Bhrgu partly merged with Angiras to form a Bhrgvangiras tradition. There is evidence to show that from the end of the Paurava period to the foundation of the Magadha Empire school of Bhrgvangiras historians revised the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. The contributions made by the sutas in the field of historiography was no less significant than that of any historiographer (or *Itihasa*kara) of the contemporary age.

The *Sutas* are often equated with bards as they used to bestow extravagant praise on great kings and heroes of the past while writing or singing about their deeds. However, the bards as such did not get official recognition in the royal courts before the dawn of the seventh century AD. Nor did their office become professional or hereditary before that period. The sutas gradually lost their importance. "In the early Medieval age when the heroic tradition of history

changed into the courtly one, the wandering Sutas and the Bhrigvangirases were replaced by salaried court – poets. Pargiter has classified ancient Indian historical tradition broadly into two groups, the brahmanic and the ksatriya, for judging their comparative historical value. The events described in brahmanic tradition, according to him, do not bear historicity. Ksatriya tradition, on the other hand, professes to deal with history. He further states that the Vedic and other brahmanic literature give us notices of ancient times from purely the brahmanical point of view and they do not deal with history, while ksatriya tradition preserved in the *Purana*s enables us to have a picture of ancient India and its political conditions from the ksatriya standpoint. He continues to maintain that before the introduction of writing the brahmanas had to rely on tradition when referring to men and events of the bygone age as well as to contemporaneous occurrences, and even after writing was introduced, they discountenanced it so far as their religious books were concerned. There was a total lack of the historical sense among the brahmanas who composed the brahmanical literature. They failed to compose genuine history. They hardly maintained distinction between history and mythology. And there was a constant tendency on their part to confuse the two by mythologizing history, on the one hand, and historifying the mythology, on the other. He has also charged them with fabricating incorrect stories and fables. They often neglected to revise or harmonise historical tradition. The Puranic brahmanas are said to have preserved a large mass of ksatriya and popular tradition, which was inconsistent with brahmanic stories and tenets. He further adds that ksatriya tradition preserved in the *Purana*s is not deficient in the historical sense. This tradition is concerned chiefly with kings and heroes and their great deeds, genealogies, etc. Ksatriya tales and ballads have some historical consistency. Royal genealogies certainly do not betray the lack of historical sense. The Puranic "genealogies are essentially chronological; and the old tales, especially those narrated in the course of the best versions of the genealogies, have also an historical character." The above observations amount to exaltation of the ksatriya tradition and depreciation of the brahmanic tradition. But the fact remains that the Vedic texts and the *Purana*s conssitute joint testimony for writing traditional history. This is erroneous opinion about the ancient Indians that they had neither history nor did possess any historical instinct. The historical treasures buried in the *Purana*s are of great value. "The literature of the Brahmana was always supplemented from the earliest times by the literature of the Ksatriya kings. In fact, the Vedic, epic and Puranic traditions are supplementary to each other, and no coherent picture of early India can be presented without placing our reliance on the combined testimony of all the three. It is altogether different thing that the Puranic account of the subject are more elaborated and amplified than the Vedic and epic ones.

1.2.5.2.Attributes of Purana

The *Purana*s deal with five subjects or topics, viz. (a) Sarga (original creation), (b) Pratisarga (dissolution and recreation), (c) Vamsa (genealogies), (d) Manvantara (an epoch of each Manu) and a) Vamsanucarita (histories of dynasties of kings mentioned in the genealogies). These are the five attributes (called *pancalaksana*) of a *Purana*. Out of these five, the two, vamsa and vamsanucarita, are purely historical subjects. The *Purana*karas had no doubt clear conception of history. The dynastic genealogies in particular constitute nucleus of the political history in the *Purana*s. V.A. Smith says : ". . . . the most systematic record of the Indian historical tradition is that preserved in the dynastic lists of the *Purana*s . . . modern European writers have been inclined to disparage unduly the authority of the Puranic lists, but closer study finds in them much genuine and valuable historical tradition.

1.2.5.3.Historical value of Purana

About the historical value of Puranic genealogies of the royal families, Pargiter observes "Though historical works about ancient India are wanting, yet tradition has handed down fairly copious genealogies of the ancient dynasties. These states the successions of kings and in that way are historical. They are almost the only historical data found in Sanskrit books as regards ancient political development; and the list of teachers in professed chronological order set out in some brahmanical books supply evidence as regards brahmanical succession. The genealogies form the basis by which the investigation of tradition for historical ends may be tested. They supply the best chronological clue, for the Vedic literature . . . is not a sure guide in historical matters.

Tod also writes: "In the absence of regular and legitimate historical records, there are, however, other native works, which in the hands of a skilful and patient investigator, would afford no despicable materials for the history of India. The first of these are the *Purana*s and genealogical legends of the princes, which, obscured as they are by mythological details, allegory; . . . . contain many facts that serve as beacons to direct the research of the historian.

The *Purana*s in general are partly legendary and historical. Out of eighteen main *Purana*s, the six – Matsya, Vayu, Visnu Brahmanda, Bhagavata and Bhavisya – are very important from a historical point of view. The first two have been called by their authors puratana *Itihasa* (ancient history) in support of their historicity as they (like other four *Purana*s) deal with historical events of the past. These six *Purana*s really constitute very faithful historical records. They have preserved highly valuable accounts of different dynasties of both pre- and post – Bharata war period with the help of which we can throw some new light on the dark or obscure aspects of ancient Indian political history of those periods. They have great historical value from dynastic, genealogical and chronological points of view. A. Weber has also admitted that some of the old *Purana*s contain historical portions with kings, dynasties, genealogies and

chronology. The observation made by J.F. Fleet is worth-quoting here : "the ancient Hindus could write short historical compositions concise and to the point but limited in extent. The historical chapters of the *Purana*s do certainly indicate a desire on the part of the ancient Hindus not to ignore general history altogether and are clearly based on ancient archives which had survived in a more or less complete shape and were somehow accessible to the composers of those works.

1.2.5.4.Historical time span of Purana

The *Purana*s are not the productions of one age or of one brain. As stated earlier, the original *Purana* was composed by Vyasa sometime before the Great Bharata battle began. Then time-to-time several additions were made in it by the *Purana*karas. The process of incorporating the past events in some of the *Purana*s began as early as the sixth or fifth century BC and generally continued till the fourth of fifth century AD but in some cases even beyond that period.

Since the Vayu and Visnu provide dynastic history up to the beginning of the Gupta rule, they in the present form must have existed about the middle of the fourth century AD. The Matsya (One of the early *Purana*s) was compiled with new additions towards the end of the reign of king Yanja Sri Satakarni(CAD 165 – 95) of the Andhra or Satavahana dynasty. Its compilation was further carried up to AD 236. It was finally completed before the end of the third century AD as it covers the dynastic accounts only up to the end of the rule of the Andhras or Satavahanas. The Brahmanda in the present form existed in or about AD 400.

The Bhavisya *Purana* existed before C 500 BC as appears from the Apastamba Dharmasutra. The Kaliyugarajavrttanta (details of the dynasties of the Kali age) given in this *Purana* appear to be the oldest of all other Puranic details thereof. The dynastic accounts of the rulers of the Kali age was first included in it towards the dnd of the second century A.d. the text in the revised form very much existed in the middle of the third century AD which is supported by the fact that the Matsya borrowed its account of the dynasties of the Kali age from it before the end of that century, and the Vayu and Brahmanda borrowed their accounts of the same dynasties from it in the next century as the internal evidence therein indicates. The Bhavisya *Purana* contains the accounts upto the times of the famous Rajput ruler, Prthviraja Cauhan (AD 1179-92), as far as the ancient period is concerned. The events of the subsequent periods also appear to have been recorded in it. Therefore, no definite date can be assigned to it in the present form.

The Bhagavata *Purana* existed in the middle of the third century AD. Some additions were, of course, made in it sometime between AD 600 and 800 as appears from the text itself. Some other important *Purana*s like the Brahma (the oldest of all), and Padma (next to it in order of antiquity) must have existed at least as early as the beginning of the fifth century BC.

"Verses praising gifts of land are quoted in various land-grants, that are dated; and some of those are found only in the Padma, Bhavisya and Brahma *Purana*s and thus indicate that those *Purana*s were in existence before AD 500 and even long before that time. Some of those verses, which occur in grants of the years 475-6 and 482-3 are declared in some grants to have been enunciated by Vyasa in the Mahabharata.

The Agni *Purana* in its original form can be placed much earlier than the fourth century AD. However, some additions were made in it between CAD 500 and 900. The Karma, Markandeya, Brahmavaivartta, Linga, Vamana and other *Purana*s were also in existence before AD 500.

1.2.5.5.Historical information form Purana

The Puranic literature contains many valuable historical data about the life and achievements of the kings of Solar and Lunar dynasties of both pre and post Bharata war period and of some other important dynasties.

1.2.5.5.1. Dynastic history of India of Pre-Bharata War

The historical reliability of the Puranic accounts of the kingdoms and dynasties with genealogies of the Iksvaku rulers of Kosala with its capital at Ayodhya and that of the rulers of Videha with its capital at Mithila (Janakapur), of Vaisali which was itself the capital (in north Bihar) and of the Saryatas in the line of Saryati (who reigned at Kusasthali, the ancient name of Dvaraka or Dvaravati in Gujarat, which was named Anarta after king Anarta) of the Solar family of the pre- Bharata war period is beyond doubt. Likewise, the details provided in some of the *Purana*s of the Kingdoms and dynasties with genealogies of the lineal descendants of Pururava, the progenitor of the Lunar family and ruler of Pratisthanapur on the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna in Prayag, of the same period are of great historical value. The Puranic description of Purus of Madhyadesa or Ganga-Yamuna doab, the Yadavas in Yadu's line including the Haihayas of northern, western, central and southern India, the Anavas of North, Druhyus of North-West and Turvasus of South-East all five branches which sprang up from Yayati and that of Kasi and Kanyakubja dynasties, of Kurus in the main Paurava line, of Pancalas, and of five kingdoms, notably Magadha founded by Brhadratha (who was succeded by another nine rulers during the period concerned) and Kausambi founded by Kosamba – two of the five descendants of Vasu – Uparicara of Cedidesa in Kuru's line – are historically and archaeologicaly well-tested.

The first phase of Pauravas settlements in the Sarasvati region and upper doab and Yadavas settlements in Narmada, Malwa, Gujarat and Ganga – Yamuna doab are archaeologically associated with Ochre-Coloured Pottery (OCP) of late Harappan period (C 2200 – 1780 BC and Chalcolithic Black and Red Ware (BRW) ascribed to C 2000 BC respectively.

The Kurus of Upper Sarasvati and Upper doab and the Pancalas of Gangetic doab belonged to PGW period.

1.2.5.5.2. History of Aryanisation of India

The Puranic history of the Aryas is also worthy of our notice. The Puranic data about the origin and expansion of the Aryans is of unique importance. According to some *Purana*s, their original homeland was Pratisthana from where they expanded all over the Gangetic doab. This information provides some clues about their indigenous origin in contradistinction to their foreign origin.

"The *Purana*s profess to give us the ancient history of Aryan India. In doing so they begin from the earliest Rgvedic period describing genealogies of kings who established kingdoms and principalities and thus parceled out and ruled ancient India. Occasionally the feats and achievements of kings . . . . are related, battles mentioned and described, noticeable incidents and happenings recorded and very valuable synchronisms noted down.

A.S. Altekar has rightly pointed out that the history of India of pre-Bharata war period can be reconstructed with the help of epic and Puranic evidences. He further says that the pre-Bharata war dynasties mentioned in the *Purana*s are as historical as the dynasties of Kali age like Maurya, Satavahana etc. The traditional history of India from the earliest times to the accession of Pariksit II (Thirty-Six years after the war) is well recorded in the *Purana*s.

1.2.5.5.3. Dynastic history of India of Pre-Bharata War

The kingdoms and dynasties of the Post – Bharata war period extending from the accession of Pariksit II or the beginning of Kali yuga down to the sixth or fifth century BC have also been covered in the Puranic records. Twenty-nine kings of Puru dynasty called the Pauravas of the Lunar family who ruled over Hastinapura, Indraprastha and Vatsa (Kausambi), thirty kings of Iksvaku dynasty of Kosala of the Solar family including the predecessors and successors of Prasenajit and twenty-two kings of the Barhadratha dynasty of Magadha (with regnal years) have all been incorporated in the dynastic list of the kings. The genealogical lists containing the names of kings of the said dynasties have also been furnished. The information supplied by the *Purana*s about the shifting of Capital from Hastinapura to Kausambi during the reign of Nicaksu (one of the successors of Pariksit), the rule of famous king Udayana over Kausambi, the pedigree and progeny of Buddha of the sakya clan and the kingdoms of Pancala, Surasena, Videha, Anga, Kasi, etc, are of utmost importance. Ten dynasties of the Kali age ruled contemporaneously in northern, central and eastern India. The historical credibility of the information concerned is well established. The five kings of Pradyota dynasty who ruled over Avanti also find mention in the *Purana*s. They are said to have ruled for 138 years.

1.2.5.5.4. Dynastic history of India during historical period

The Puranic accounts of the major dynasties of early historical period are of exceptional value. Ten kings of Bimbisarian and Saisunaga dynasties, including Bimbisara (c.558 – 491 BC) Ajatasatru (C. 491-459BC), both contemporaries of the Buddha (c. 563-483BC) Udayin, Sisunaga and others, are said to have ruled for 360 or 362 years. They actually ruled for 200 years (C. 543 – 343BC). The nine Nandas (Mahapadmananda, the founder of the dynasty, and his eight successors) are said to have ruled for 40 or 100 years. In reality, only two of them, the first Mahapadmananda) and the last (Dhanananda identical with Agrammes or Xandrammes of Classical or Greek and Roman writers and contemporary of Alexander), were the regining kings who altogether ruled for 22 years (C. 343-321 BC). We are also informed that a period of 1050 years had elapsed between the birth of Pariksit and the coronation of Mahapadmananda. It is also clearly stated in the *Purana*s that it was Canakya (Kautilya) who uprooted the Nandas and installed Candragupta Maurya on the throne of Magadha (in 321 BC) which is historically established fact. Ten kings of the Maurya dynasty, including Candragupta, Bindusara, Asoka and his seven successors, are said to have ruled for 137 years (C.321-184BC). Ten rulers of the Sunga dynasty from Pusyamitra to Devabhuti are said to have ruled for 112 years (C.184-72BC). Four kings of the Kanva dynasty from Vasudeva to Susarman ruled exactly for 45 years (C. 72 – 27 BC). These six dynasties ruled successively over Magadha and other kingdoms from the sixth to the first centuries BC. Besides, thirty rulers of the Andhra or Satavahana dynasty from its founder Simuka to Pulumayi IV are said to have ruled for 456 or 460 years. The *Purana*s also supply the information that the period of 836 years intervened between Mahapadmananda and the last Andhara king, Pulumayi. According to this chronological data, the Andhras' rule began 376 years after the Nanda and lasted for 460 years (376+460 = 836). Infact, they reigned in western India and the Deccan (Maharashtra and Andhra) for not more than 252 years (C. 27 BC – AD 225). There are some epigraphic and numismatic evidence to partly confirm the historicity of Puranic genealogy of this dynasty. The genealogical list of the dynasty contains the names of many actual rulers like Sri Satakarni I, Satakarni II, Gautamiputra Satakarni, Vasisthiputra Sri Pulumavi or Pulumayi and Yajna Sri Satakarni. The political achievements of some kings of some of the aforesaid dynasties have also been highlighted in the *Purana*s. Some information supplied in this regard is very useful for our historical purposes.

It is worthy of remark that the above-mentioned seven dynasties that ruled over different kingdoms are historically authenticated. Their genealogies are chronologically arranged. Most of the kings mentioned in the genealogical lists are real. Only few of them are fictitious. The lengths of reign of each individual king as well as the total duration of the rule of each dynasty are given. Some figures are of course inflated and arbitrary, but some are accurate. There are some variations in the *Purana*s with regard to number of kings and their names, order of

succession, regal years and total duration of their rule. The chronological sequence of kings in case of some dynasties is also broken to some extent because of anachronism. However, the total duration of the rule of some dynastic given in some *Purana*s are absolutely correct which can be utilized for the purpose of chronological computation and interpretations to determine the period of the end of one dynasty and the beginning of the other. The Puranic data are no doubt extremely important for genealogical and chronological reconstruction of ancient Indian history of the periods concerned.

A number of scholars has acknowledged the historical value of the Puranic data from dynastic, genealogical and chronological points of view.

The later Satavahanas and some contemporary minor dynasties of the kings of both indigenous and foreign origins that ruled over different parts of India sometime between the third century BC and the sixth century AD which include the dynasties of the post Satavahana period also are vividly portrayed in the *Purana*s. The genealogies and chronology of some dynasties are also given therein.

The later Satavahanas or the successors of the Satavahanas of the Deccan have been referred to in the *Purana*s as Andhravrtyas. They belonged to the lineage of the servants or feudatories of the Andhras. There were seven kings in this line. The Sriparvatiya-Andhras (of Telengana) have been assigned a reign-period of 52 years. One of the five minor dynasties that came into being after the dismemberment of the Satavahana Empire was that of the Abhiras of western India (Maharashtra). The ten Abhira kings are said to have ruled for 67 years. The kings of the Andhra dynasty (who established themselves in the Deccan and Western India sometime after AD 236) are said to have ruled for over a period of 300 years. The eight Yavana kings (Greek princes of Bactria lying between the Hindukush and the Oxus who ruled from the third century BC to the middle of the first century BC) are said to have ruled for 80 to 87 years. The ten, sixteen or eighteen Saka kings (Indo-Scythians, second century BC – second century ad) are said to have ruled (over Afghanistan, northern, central and western parts of India and in the upper Deccan) for 183 or 380 years. The fourteen Tusaras (the tribes settled on the banks of the river Caksu or Oxus in the north-western region) are said to have ruled for 500 years. The seven Gardabhinas or Gardabhillas (who established themselves in Avanti region with their seat of power at Ujjayini anterior to the Sakas) ruled for 72 years.' The thirteen Murundas (a branch or Kinsmen of the Sakas) along with other kings of the Sudra class are said to have ruled for 200 to 450 years. The eighteen or nineteen Hunas (or Maunas) have ruled for 200 to 450 years. The eighteen or nineteen Hunas (or Maunas) ruled for 300 years. The eleven kings of the contemporary mleccha dynasty are also said to have reigned for 300 years. The kings of the said dynasties altogether are said to have ruled for 1090 to 1099 years.

The historicity of the above-mentioned dynasties is well proven. Here it may further be added that the Murundas established their rule in some parts of central India sometime after AD 230. They continued to rule until the time of Samudragupta (AD 335-75) which can be substantiated by the epigraphic evidence and other relevant sources. The Allahabad Pillar inscription confirms that the "Saka-Murundas" were one of those foreign powers who acknowledged Samudragupta as their overlord. They were probably ruling as the Saka lords or Chieftains in the regions of Surastra and Ujjain at his time. The Gardabhinas were actually garddabha princes who once ruled over Malawa region of Central India and some parts of Western India. This dynasty ruled over Avanti in Western Malawa with its capital at Ujjain before the Saka kings established their supremacy there.

The details of Vikramaditya of Ujjain and his dynasty have been provided in the Pratisarga Parvan of the Bhavisya *Purana*.

Vikramaditya regained his ancestral kingdom of Ujjain by expelling the Sakas from there after nine years of their rule (which began in 66 BC) In order to commemorate his victory over them he introduced a new era called Vikram Samvat (or Malawa Samvat in 57 BC). He reigned for 60 years and his four successors altogether for 75 years which comes to total 135 years.

According to the same *Purana*, his son Devabhakta who ruled for 10 years only succeeded Vikramaditya. He was either overthrown or killed by the Sakas. His son, Salivahana, of the same dynasty conquered the Sakas and celebrated his victory by commencing a new era called Salivahana Saka era in AD 78. He is believed to have established his rule over his kingdom with its capital at Ujjain in about AD 32. Ten rulers succeeded him. The Salivahana dynasty and some other dynasties that ruled over Ujjain are briefly described in the same *Purana*. The reign-period of individual ruler, the total duration of the rule of each dynasty and achievements of some of the rulers of some dynasties are also given therein.

1.2.5.5.5. Information regarding foreign race in early India

Some un-anointed kings of Kalikala have also been depicted in the *Purana*s. They are stated to have belonged to either Yavana race or Sudra class. They actually succeeded the Abhiras of Maharashtra after overthrowing them. The rulers of the dynasty founded by the Vindhyasakti succeeded the Kalikala princes. After the extinction of this dynasty three Vahlika kings for 30 years. Sakyma, the famous king of Mahismati, seven kings who ruled over Mekala (situated on the bank of the Narmada rivers), nine kings who governed Kosala, etc. also find mention in the *Purana*s. They were all contemporary provincial rulers.

The *Purana*s also provide description of the rulers (called Mitras) who governed Mekala and Mahismati regions for about 30 years. Pusyamitra was one of the famous rulers. The 'Pusyamitras' are said to have ruled for 13 years. The Bhitari pillar inscription bears witness to the fact that towards the closing years of Kumaragupta's reign (AD 414-55) the Pusyamitras

invasion led to the eclipse of the Gupta power. It was Skandagupta (AD 455-67) who crushed them and restored the fallen fortunes of his family.

We come across some inaccuracies and discrepancies in the *Purana*s with regard to the number of kings of the dynasties concerned and total duration of their rule. The trustworthiness of some reign-periods is doubtful. Sometimes one dynasty is merged or interwoven into another; sometimes dynasties are lengthened owing to various corrupt readings and sometimes their accounts appear to be conflicting and confusing because of fabrications, interpolations and distortions. History and myths have been jumbled upto an extent that sometimes it becomes difficult to extricate one from the other. However, they cannot be put aside as wholly unworthy of credence.

1.2.5.5.6. History of the Naga, Vakatakas and other minor ruling dynasty

The *Purana*s do contain some useful information about the rule of the Naga dynasties at Vidisa (the capital of eastern Malawa), Padmavati (modern Padam Pawaya near Narwar in the Gwalior State, Madhya Pradesh), Kantipuri (modern Kotwar, about 25 miles north of Gwalior) and Mathura (Uttar Pradesh) between the second century BC and the fourth century AD.

The Naga dynasty of Vidisa has been divided into two parts in the *Purana*s. To the first part belonged those kings who flourished before the end of the Sunga and to the second belonged those who ruled in the post-Sunga period. The *Purana*s mention the names of Sesanaga, Bhogin, Ramacandra, Sadacandra, Dharmavarman, Vangara (who ruled during the Sunga and Kanva periods), Bhutinandi, Madhunandi, Sisunandi, Yasonandi and his descendants, Dauhitra and Sisuka, Sivanandi, etc. (who ruled in the post-Kanva period). The historicity of most of the Naga kings mentioned above has been proved, and K.P. Jayawal has chronologically arranged them.

The *Purana*s refer to nine Naga kings of Padmavati without mentioning their names Kantipuri is said to have been one of the chief seats of their power. The said nine kings known from coins and inscriptions were Bhavanaga, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, Bhimanaga, Skandanaga, Brhaspatinaga, Devanaga, Vibhanaga and Vyaghranaga. The archaeologicval excavation at Kotwar has proved that Kantipuri mentioned in the *Purana*s was once the seat of power of the Naga kings.

The *Purana*s also refer to the seven Naga kings who ruled at Mathura after the fall of the Kusanas. These seven kings from Mathura continued to rule over doab for 383 years which can also be confirmed on the testimony of the *Purana*s. The coins discovered from Mathura bear the names of the said seven kings as Purusadatta, Uttamadatta, Ramadatta, Kamadatta, Sesadatta, Bhavadatta and Balabhuti.

Pargiter on the authority of the *Purana*s has stated that the Naga families ruled from more than one place, viz. Vidisa, Padmavati and Mathura. K.P. Jayaswal while throwing light on the

Hindu republics in the Naga period (AD 150-284) has opined that the Nagas of Malawa and Padmavati were largely republican communities.

The Archaeological evidence, including coins and inscriptions, about the Naga kings and seats of their rule mentioned in the *Purana*s proves the historicity of the Puranic accounts of the Naga dynasties. The Puranic style of presentation of subject matter is completely different from what we find in other sources. There are of course, some vacuums in the Puranic accounts of the subject. However, from the twilight of the Puranic history it appears that the Nagas (mostly serpent-worshippers) had spread for and wide in central and northern India. Some Naga rulers became powerful during the times of the later Kusanas in the second century Ad and some of them reestablished themselves after the expulsion of the Kusanas from some parts of northern India in the early third century AD. The Gupta ruler (Samudragupta) about the middle of the fourth century AD exterminated some Naga chiefs ruling in the Yamuna valley and central India.

The information contained in the *Purana*s about the Vakatakas is very meager but authentic.

The founder of the Vakataka dynasty, Vindhyasakti (who flourished about the middle of the third century AD), figures in the *Purana*s. He is said to have ruled for 96 years. His son and successor, Pravira, is said to have ruled for 60 years. Kancanapuri was the capital of his kingdom. Being an ambitious ruler he carried his arms to the Narmada and succeeded in annexing the kingdom of Purika, which was being ruled by a king named Sisuka. He is said to have performed Vajapeya sacrifices after assuming the title 'Samrat'. He had four sons but none of them became rulers. Other details are conspicuous by their absence in the *Purana*s.

There are some inscriptional and other reliable evidences to partly prove the historical authenticity of the information supplied by the *Purana*s about the Vakatakas, particularly about their genealogy and chronology, Vindhyasakti and Pravira have been identified on the basis of inscriptions with Vindhyasakti I and Pravarasena I respectively. The former is said to have ruled from AD 250 to 270. It is said that he had his base in central India from where he occupied parts of Vidarbha or Berar in western India and the Deccan (Andhra Pradesh). The latter is said to have ruled from Ad 270 to 330 (which is in full accord with the Puranic length of his reign, i.e., 60 years). It has also been established that out of his four sons only the second one, Sarvasena, had set-up a separate dynasty with his capital at Vatsagulma in the Akola district of Vidarbha and ruled from about Ad 330 to 335. This also confirms tha authenticity of the Puranic testimony that he had four sons and all of them did not rule. The other rulers of the dynasty further continued to rule till AD 500. After the defeat of the Vakatakas at the hands of the Kalacuris (descendants of Karttavirya Arjuna of the Haihaya race mentined in the epics and *Purana*s) of Mahismati in the second quarter of the sixth century Ad the dynasty ultimately came to end or ceased to exist.

The information available in some *Purana*s about the earliest phase of the Gupta rule is very valuable.

It is fairly stated in the *Purana*s that the "Guptas set-up their rule over Anuganga (the middle Gangetic basin), Prayaga (Allahabad), Saketa (adjoining Ayodhya) and Magadha (South Bihar). It is historically proven fact that the kingdom of the Guptas originally comprised only some parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the end of the third century AD. The earliest centre of their power was in Uttar Pradesh, which can be confirmed by the discovery of early Gupta coins and inscriptions mainly from this part of India. They gradually expanded from Prayaga over the neighbouring regions and the whole of Magadha in south Bihar. The founder of the Gupta dynasty was Srigupta who ruled as a minor chief over a small territory in Magadha from CAD 275 to 300. The Puranic passage shows the extent of the Gupta dominions of pre-Candragupta's period and not of Candragupta's time (AD 319-35) as held by Pargiter. The Bhavisya *Purana* informs us that the seven kings of the Gupta dynasty ruled for 245 years. But we find that in the imperial Gupta line there were tweleve or thirteen kings (from Srigupta to Bhanugupta) who ruled for 235 years (AD 275 – 510).

A.K. Warder opines that the Puransa provide a comprehensive view of ancient Indian history, a universal history from the origin of the state through the earliest recorded kings, and the ancient dynasties down to the early fourth century AD. They mention Guptas and history of early Vakatakas. H.H. Wilson has also stated that the dynastic lists of kings of the post-war period (Kali age) have been preserved in the Puranic historical records with greater precision, which offer political and chronological particulars. Their general accuracy has been incontrovertibly established. Some Andhra and Gupta rulers mentioned in the *Purana*s find confirmation in the inscriptions on columns of stones or rocks and on coins deciphered by archaeologists and others.

The Puranic history of the post-Harsa period (Ad 650-1200) is very reliable. It is only the Bhavisya *Purana* (Pratisarga Parvan) which provides data about the Pratiharas (Pratiharas), the Paramaras, the Cahamanas (Cauhanas) and the Calukyas or Solankis (Suklas), the four Rajaput-families of the Aganivamsa or Agnikula, and the Rajaput rulers of other dynasties. They (except Calukyas) actually dominated the politics of northern India after the death of Harsa in aD 647. They established their rule in this part of India and founded several petty independent kingdoms which lasted for nearly five centuries and then one by one succumbed to the Muslim invaders.

The Pratiharas have been described in the said *Purana* as the Pariharas. It is well-known fact that prior to the conquest of Kanauj (akanyakubja), they established their rule in Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. A notable ruler of this dynasty named Vatsaraja (identified by all historians with the father of Nagabhata II AD 805-33) figures in the *Purana* as a king of Avanti. He

ascended the throne in about AD 778. His empire initially comprised Malawa and eastern and central Rajaputana. Gradually he established his supremacy over a large part of northern India. Bhoja I (AD 836-85) and Bhoja II (Ad 910-12) were also the Pratihara rulers of Kanauj. We find the description of the Bhojas in the *Purana*, but neither their periods nor the details of their achievements are given therein. However, the Pratiharas continued to exercise their sway over Kanauj and Madhyadesa. The last king of this dynasty, Rajyapala (AD 991-1018), also figures in the *Purana*. Mahmud of Ghazni invaded his capital Kanauj in AD 1018, but he could not defend it and fled away out of fear.

The Candellas, who established their sway over the kingdom of Bundelkhanda (situated between the Yamuna dna the Narmada) in the tenth century AD, were the feudatories of the great Pratihara emperors of Kanauj. The king named Parihara, who ruled for ten years, founded the Puranic tradition confirms it that Kalinjar (which was earlier one of the strongholds of the Pratiharas and later occupied by the Candellas). The names of all his successors who ruled over Kalingar are given in the *Purana*. One of them called Karvarman can be identified with Kirtivarman who ruled sometime between AD 1100 and 1129.

The Paramaras of Malawa, according to the *Purana*, were the descendants of king Pramara of Avanti. He is said to have ruled over AVantipura (Ujjain, which had an extent of 4 yojana) for six years. Munja or Manjavarman (Ad 974-98), who was the seventh king of this dynasty, also finds mention in the *Purana*. He is said to have defeated the Savaras and Bhillas. The details about Sindhuraja are also given there-in. The most famous king of this dynasty was Bhoja (son of Sindhuraja) who ruled over Malawa with its capital at Dhara (60 km from Indore). He was popularly known as Raja Bhoja. He ruled for about 42 years from AD 1018 to 1060. The *Purana* explicitely mentions his name as a king of this dynasty. The later Paramara kings of Malawa are also mentioned in the *Purana*. But the historicity of only two of them, Naravarman and Udayaditya, has been established. The copper-plate of the former (nephew of Bhojaraja) preserved in Archaeological Museum of Indore proves that the latter (AD 1059-94) was brother of Bhoja. According to the *Purana*, Udaya (Udayaditya) was the founder of Udayapura, which can be confirmed by 'Udepur' inscription, which describes him as the successor of Bhoja.

The Puranic accounts of the Tomaras of Delhi and the Chauhanas of Ajmer and Delhi are of paramount historical importance.

It is clearly mentioned in the *Purana* that the Tomara dynasty founded by Anangapala I ruled in Indraprastha (Delhi). It is further said that Tomara also ruled there. His descendants became known as Tomara ksatriyas. Tomara's son Cauhanasubha became known as Samaladeva who ruled for seven years. One of his descendants was Ajaya (or Ajayapala).

Ajayapala (Ajayaraja) was one of the Chauhana rulers of Ajmer. He is credited with having founded that city. One of the famous rulers of this dynasty was Visaladeva (or

Vigraharaja IV, AD 1152-64) who captured Delhi about AD 1158 from the Tomaras. In the Puranic genealogy of the Cauhana rulers, his name figures as Visala. One of the Tomara kings was Jayasimha who is said to have ruled for about fifty years. The two other noted rulers, Anandadeva and Somesvara, have also been mentioned in the *Purana*. The most famous and illustrious king of the Chauhana famiy, Prthviraja (AD 1179-92), inherited the kingdom of Delhi from his maternal grandfather, Anangapala II, the last king of the Tomara dynasty. It is clearly stated in the *Purana* that the death of Anangapala he became the full-fledged ruler of Delhi. He made it a forfeited city. It became an extensive and magnificent city during his time.

The further historical narratives of the subject in the *Purana* show that Jayacandra of Kanauj, the most famous king of Gahadavala dynasty or Rathor family, who ruled from AD 1170 to 1194, disputed Prthviraja's overlordship of northern India. It is said that the former turned the latter into an enemy by forcibly carrying off his beautiful daughter, Samyogita, from her Svayamvara. The rivalry between the two ultimately resulted in the battle, which was fought as Sukar. In this battle, the soldiers of both sides were killed. The hostility between the two potentates proved to be disastrous for the Agnivamsa and blessing for Muhammad Ghori. The *Purana* even records the 'death of Prthviraja at the hands of Saho-ddin (Sihabudin Ghori) which is indicative of the fact that the latter after having defeated the former in the second battle of Tarain (about 14 miles from Thanesvar) fought in AD 1192 put him to death. And thereafter he occupied Delhi and Ajmer. It is also narrated in the same *Purana* that after his death a large number of women of the Chauhana family fell into the hands of the Muslims and their descendants were neither pure Aryans nor *mlecchas*. They were rather of mixed percentage. And the ksatriyas sprang from the Chauhanas.

The *Purana* slightly touches upon the Calukya (called Sukla) dynasty of Anartta (Gujarat) in Western India. The founder of the dynasty, Sukla is said to have set-up his rule at Dvaraka and ruled for 10 years. Visvaksena who ruled for 20 years, Jayasena for 30 years and Visena for 50 years succeeded him. However, it is very difficult to establish their identities and to confirm their reign-periods.

The Puranic accounts of some of the dynasties of Rajput princes shown above are neither systematic nor complete. There are some gaps in the dynastic accounts as well as in the genealogies. The overlapping of dynasties is also apparent. However, the historical validity of the information contained in the *Purana* cannot be doubted. Some of the details are in full accord with the facts recorded in ancient and early medieval history of India.

While critically judging the value of the *Purana*s, E.J. Rapson observed : "The descriptions of ancient monarchs and of their realms (therein) are essentially historical. They may be compared to the Sagas and the medieval chronicles of Europe. They are the products of an imaginative and uncritical age in which men were not careful to distinguish fact from legend.

It is the task of modern criticism to disentangle the two elements . . .." The historical material available in the *Purana*s about kingdoms and dynasties covers the period from primaeval king manu Vaivasvata down to the times of Prthviraja Cauhan and not only upto the early fourth century AD as held by some scholars. It will not be correct to say that the *Purana*s provide dynastic history only up to the beginning of the Gupta rule.

1.2.5.5.7. Historical geography of ancient India

There are some other aspects of ancient Indian history like towns and cities, janapadas (territories and peoples), kingdoms, state and government, polity and administration, society, religion and culture, which are also recorded in the *Purana*s.

The Puranic data about the foundations, planning, naming, antiquity, growth and decay of towns and cities are very important for the study of history of urbanization in ancient India. This is one of the aspects of judging the historical value of the *Purana*s. The Puranic records also throw light on the nature of urban settlements by showing the growth of towns as political, administrative, commercial, religious or educational centres. The town and cities described in the *Purana*s include Hastinapura and Indraprastha (the two capitals of Kuru kingdom), Ahicchatra and Kampil or Kampilya (the northern and southern capitals of Pancala kingdom), Mathura (the capital of Surasena kingdom), Ujjayini or Uajjain (the capital of Avanti kingdom, western Malawa), Virata (the capital of Matsya kingdom), Ayodhya (the earliest capital of Kosala kingdom), Vaisali (the capital of King Visala and later metropolis of eight confederate republican clans), Girivraja or Rajagrha (the earliest capital of Magadha kingdom), Pataliputra (the later capital of Magadha kingdom), Kausambi (the capital of Vatsa kingdom), Varanasi (the capital of Kasi kingdom), Mahismati (the capital of southern part of Avanti), Tripuri (the early medieval capital of Cedi kingdom), Tamralipti (modern Tamluk), Taksasila and Puskalavati (the eastern and western capitals of Gandhara kingdom), Sravasti (the capital of northern Kosala), Kusavati (the capital of southern Kosala), Pratisthanapura (the capital of Pururava and his descendants) Campa (the capital of Anga kingdom) Mithila (the capital of Videha kingdom), Dvaraka, Bharukaccha (modern broach), Vidisa (the capital of Dasarna, Eastern Malawa), Suktimatipura (the early capital of Cedi kingdom), Kundinapura and Bhojakatapura (the earlier and later capitals of Vidarbha kingdom) Surparaka (modern Sopara), Sakalapura (the Madras' capital) and Kanei (modern Kanjeevaram, originaly belonged to the Colas and later became the capital of the Pallavas). These towns or cities belong to different parts of India including those of the upper and middle Ganga valley. The archaeological discoveries of the remains of most of the towns mentioned above not only confirm their existence but also prove the historicity of Puranic accounts of the subject. The archaeological evidences also throw light on the antiquity of the towns and settlement-patterns there. Of the towns mentioned above the first seven are archaeologically associated with PGW (Painted Grey Ware) and NBPW (Northern Black

Polished Ware) phases of culture. The archaeologists based on Carbon-14 dating place them in the first millennium BC. The urban growths of next tweleve are ascribed to NBPW phase or second hald of the first millennium BC. H.D. Sankalia, while placing his reliance on both tradition and archaeology, has reasonably concluded that the antiquity of towns and cities as occurring in the Mahabharata and *Purana*s can also be proved by archaeological evidence. The *Purana*s contain genuine historical tradition, which also finds corroboration in archaeology. R. Morton Smith is perfectly correct in stating that " . . . . . the *Purana* makes a good historical sense consistent with the idea of archaeology."

The Janapadas mentioned in the *Purana*s include Kuru, Pancala, Kasi, Kosala, Surasena and Matsya of Madhyadesa, Bahlika, Gandhara, Kamboja, Sindh, Sauvira (northern part of Sindh), Madraka (northern part of the Punjab) Kashmir, the Sakas, Tusaras, Cinas, Kiratas, Pahlavas (Persians) and Ambasthas of Uttarapatha (north-western region), Anga, Banga, Pragjyotisa or Kamarupa, Pundra, Videha (Mithila), Magadha and Tamralipti of Pracyadesa (eastern region), the Pandyas, Keralas, Colas, Musikas, Sabaras, Pulindas, Mahisaka (Mysore), Kalinga (southern part of Orissa) and Asmaka (toushern part of Maharastra) of Daksinapatha (southern region), Avanti, Vidisa, Tripura, Dasarna and Bhojas of Vindhyan region and the Kiratas, Khasas, Dardas, Malawas and Trigarttas of mountain region.

1.2.5.5.8. Socio-Political and administrative history of Northern India

The *Purana*s throw a good deal of light on the evolution of kingship, emergence of the state and its seven constituent elements (based on the saptanga theory), inter-state relations, administrative organization (local, judicial, civil and military administration), revenue system, etc. The data concerned have their own value in the realm of study of ancient Indian polity and administration.

The Puranic descriptions of socio-religious life of the people with references to the *varnasrama dharma* (four-fold stages of life), caste system, Saiva, Sakti and Vaisnava cults of Hinduism, etc. have considerably historical value.

Several broken chains in the political and cultural history of ancient India can be restored back with the help of the historical data contained in the *Purana*s.

1.2.6. Conclusion

There was no poverty of historical knowledge and no dearth of historical works in ancient India. The works produced as a whole throw light on various aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. The view held by some scholars that the regular historical works on the part of the Hindus has long been a desideratum is not tenable. The *Itihasa-Purana* tradition, Vedic and Puranic, traditions of historical writings indeed provides a vast corpus of historical information on ancient Indian history and nullify the hypotheses opposing historical sense of ancient Indians.

1.2.7. Summary

- *The tradition of historical writing in ancient India began in the time of Vedavyasa and continued till the end of twelfth century AD. The oldest Indian historical tradition is preserved in the Rgveda.*
- *The Rgveda hymns about the Aryan people speak of the sense of history of those who composed them. These hymns constitute the earliest evidence of the historical sense in India.*
- *The composition of the original Bharata Itihasa or Bharata Samhita and the Purana Samhita or Itihasa Samhita by Vyasa in the Dvapara age marked the beginning of Indian historiography.*
- *The two main tradition of historiography in its early phase were the epic and Puranic. The Puranic tradition is relatively of greater value. The Puranakara were the first to record and preserve the dynastic genealogies and chronology- the two legitimate constituents or components of history.*
- *In fact, it was the Itihasa-Purana tradition which marked the beginning of ancient Indian historical tradition. The three main constituent elements of the historical tradition were akhyana (narratives), Itihasa (pas events) and Purana (any old tale or ancient lore).*
- *The earliest literary work of some historical value which the Aryans have left to posterity is the Rgveda. It is a Samhita or collection of total 1028 (1017 + 11) hymns composed by various priest-poets or sages of great antiquity and arranged into ten mandalas or books. The Rgveda contains a lot of historical data about the life and culture of the Aryans.*
- *Louis Renou has correctly stated that some of the Rgvedic hymns are "historical". They contain the "rudiments of history". R.P. Chanda says "The dawn of history is heralded in India by the hymns sung by the Rsis and enshrined in the Rgveda Samhita."*
- *The epic tradition of presenting the history was completely different from that of the Vedic, as it appears from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Both the epics have considerable historical value.*
- *The Epics, throw lights on dynastic history of the Solar and Lunar families and other historical details of various kingdoms and principalities, towns and cities, polity and administration, the condition of the Aryan society.*
- *The Puranas in general are partly legendary and partly historical. Out of eighteen main Puranas, the six – Matsya, Vayu, Visnu Brahmanda, Bhagavata and Bhavisya – are very important from a historical point of view.*

- *The first two have been called by their authors puratana Itihasa (ancient history) in support of their historicity as they (like other four Puranas) deal with historical events of the past. Purnan sheds light on the history of India from Bharat war to 7th Century A.D.*

1.2.8. Exercises

- Discuss the importance of *Itihasa-Purana* tradtion of historiography in ancient India.
- Analyse the significance of Vedic literature as source of ancient Indian history.
- Examine the histricty of Epics tradition in ancient India.
- Elaborate the historical information available from Puarana for reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
- How far the, *Itihasa-Purana and Vedic tradtion* justify the historical sense in ancient India? Explain.

1.2.9. Suggested readings

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- N. R. Ray (ed. vol. 110,), Sources *for the history of India,* Calcutta, 1978-1980.
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UNIT-I

Chapter-III

BUDDHIST AND JAIN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Structure

1.4.0. Objectives

The chapter deals with Buddhist and Jain historiographical tradition in ancient India. The entire chapter will discuss various historical informations available in the different canonical and non-canonical literature of Buddhism and Jainism. The objectives of this unit are to.

- *examine the rich literary corpus of Buddhism and Jainism;*
- *discuss the various canonical and non-canonical literature and hidden historical information therein;*
- *analyse the significance of Buddhist and Jain literature as a tradition of historical writings in ancient India*

1.4.1. Introduction

The Buddhist and Jain traditions of historical also deserve our notice. Both the Buddhist and Jain scholars made substantial contributions to the evolution of historiographical tradition in ancient India. They also like the Hindus felt the need to record the past as well as contemporary events of historical nature in their respective works. They did not ignore the incorporation of historical subjects in their writings and their preservation. They like the scholars of the Brahmanical historical schools presented history in literary form. They have both historical and semi-historical works to their credit. The historical narratives, dynastic genealogies and chronology, biographies and chronicles from very important arts of their historical writings. There were different schools of historical writing in the Buddhist and Jain communities. The historical records were compiled and preserved by the Jains and Buddhists of various schools. Like the Sanskrit literature, the Buddhist and Jain literatures too contain a good number of works of historical value. The Jain historical literature, which is marked by its variety, vastness and richness, is of special importance. The Buddhist and Jain historical traditions are preserved in different classes of works of different periods. Both the traditions have their own authenticity and value.

1.4.2. Buddhist Historiography

Of all the Buddhist works of some historical importance, mention may first be made of the three Pitakas, Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma, which from parts of canonical Pali literature ascribed to the period extending from the fifth century BC to the first century BC. Their historicity can be proved by the historical facts they contain.

1.4.2.1.The Vinaya Pitaka

The Vinaya Pitaka contains valuable historical information about two powerful Magadhan rulers, Bimbisara and his son Ajatasattu (Ajatasatru), the events that took place during their times, socio-economic and political life of the people, towns and cities and kingdoms and republics in the time of the Buddha, Buddhism, etc. Bimbisara is said to have ruled over the kingdom of Magadha with its capital at Rajagaha (Rajagrha). The economic prosperity of this

capital city is also highlighted. We are further told that Ajatasattu employed his two ministers, Sunidha and Vassakara, to build a fort at pataligama (which later developed as a city of Pataliputta or Pataliputra) to repel the invasion of the Vajjians. Brahmadatta, king of Kasi, entered into a war with king of Kosala in which the latter suffered most, but friendship was soon restored. The republican states of Pava and Kusinara of the Mallas were in a flourishing condition at the time of the Buddha. The towns and cities of Majjhimadesa (Madhyadesa) which were intimately associated with the Buddha and Buddhism include Rajagaha, Vesali (Vaisali), Saketa, Savatthi (Sravasti), Campa, Kosambi, Pataliputta, Kapilavatthu and Varanasi. A bried account of the first two Buddhist Councils held at Rajagaha in C.483 BC (three months after the death of the Buddha) under the patronage of Ajatasattu and at Vesali in about C.383 BC during the reign of Kalasoka respectively has also been provided in this Pitaka. Interesting sidelights are also thrown on the political history and social and economic conditions of the people of the Buddha's time. The Mahavagga provides us with information about Gautama's attainment of enlightenment and the first sermon he delivered at Saranath near Varanasi. The entire history of the foundation of the Buddhist community (Samgha) is recorded therein. It records in chronological order the subsequent events of a century in that community. It presents a systematic history of the development of the Buddhist order. It also records a few important episodes in the life of the Buddha. It deals with his life history. In fact, it starts history just from the Buddhahood of Gautama. The Cullavagga provides historical anecdotes connected with the life of the Buddha and history of constitution of the order. These two important sections of the said Pitaka constitute very important sources of the history of Buddhism.

1.4.2.2.The Sutta Pitaka

We find wealth of historical material in the Sutta Pitaka. It consists of the five Nikayas, Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Anguttara and Khuddaka.

The **Digha Nikaya** contains a number of historical Suttas. The Samannaphala Sutta furnishes us with valuable information about the crafts and occupations of the time. The weavers, potters and basket makers have been mentioned as important occupational groups. Another important historical allusion in this Sutta is to the murder of Bimbisara at the hands of his son Ajatasattu. The Ambattha Sutta refers to king Pasenadi of Kosala who was the contemporary of the Buddha. This Sutta also throws light on the social position of the four Vanna, khattiya, brahmana, vessa and sudda. The Sonadanda Sutta refers to Campa visited by the Buddha with 500 monks, to king Bimbisara of Magadha and king Pasenadi of Kosala. This Sutta also tell us how the Anga kingdom with its capital Campa was absorbed in the Magadhan empire. The Mahali Sutta makes an incidental reference to the Buddha's dwelling at Vesali. The Lohicca Sutta states that king Pasenadi used to collect taxes from the inhabitants of Kasi-Kosala. He enjoyed the income not alone but with his subordinates. The Mahaparinirbbana

Sutta makes an incidental reference to the Buddha's dwelling at Vesali. The Lohicca Sutta states that king Pasenadi used to collect taxes from the inhabitants of Kasi-Kosala. He enjoyed the income not alone but with his subordinates. The Mahaparinibbana Sutta contains the details of how the Magadhan Monarch, Ajatasattu, hatched a plot to annihilate his Vajjian rivals. It relates that when the Buddha heard of this plot, he remarked that so long as the Vajjians remain united and filfil the seven conditions of their welfare, there would be no danger to them. But soon Ajatasattu succeeded in annihilating them with the help of his tow ministers. Sunidha and Vassakara. These ministers are stated to have created dissensions among them which rsulted in their fall and annexation of their metropolis Vesali to Magadha kingdom. This Sutta further relates that Buddha on his way to Vesali visited Pataligama where the said two ministers build a fort to crush the Vajjians. The same Sutta speaks of the Malla of Kusinara. It further mentions Savatthi, Campa, Rajagaha, Saketa, Kosambi and Varanasi as great cities. The Janavasabha Sutta refers to Bimbisara of Magadha as a righteous king. This Sutta also refers to Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Cedi, Vamsa (Vatsa), Kuru, Pancala, Maccha (Matsya) and Surasena kingdoms. The Sangiti Sutta informs us that Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, died at Pava. It also mentions the Mallas of Pava who were publican communities. The Mahanidana Sutta and the Mahasatipatthana Sutta refer to the land of the Kurus where the Buddha dwelt for sometime. The Mahasudassana Sutta mentions Campa, Rajgaha, Saketa, Savatthi, Kosambi, Varanasi and Kusinara (also named as Kusavati) as rich and prosperous cities. The Mahagovinda Sutta refers to a number of great cities built by Govinda. They are Dantapura of the Kalingas, Potana of the Assakas. Mahissati of the Avantis, Roruka of the Sovira, Mithila of the Videhas. Campa of the Angas and Varanasi of the Kasis. The Digha Nikaya is also an important record of the dialogues and discourses in which the Buddha expounded his doctrine.

The historical information contained in the **Majjhima Nikaya** are mainly concerned with the life and itinerary of the Buddha. In this respect the Ariyapariyesana Sutta is very important. It deals with different phases of his life and activities. We are told that he in the course of his wanderings stayed at Rajagaha, Campa, Nalanda, Mithila, Kusinara, Kosambi, Vesali, Savatthi and other places. There are historical references in this Nikaya to the Vajjis and Mallas, the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu, the Kasis of Varanasi,the Angas and the Magadhas etc. It tells us of the Vajjis and the Mallas as forming Samghas and ganas, that is, clans governed by organized corporations. We are also informed that the political relation between the Licchavis of Vesali and king Pasenadi of Kosala was friendly.

The **Samyutta Nikaya** refers to king Pasenadi of Kosala the capital of which was savatthi. The whole of the Kosala-Samyutta is devoted to him. It contains historical narratives of a war that broke out between Ajatasattu, king of Magadha and Pasenadi. Each clamied the Possession of the township of Kasi. At first, the former was victorious but later on he was

defeated and taken prisoner by the latter. Pasenadi, however married his daughter, Vajira, to Ajatasattu and granted to him the township of Kasi.

The **Anguttara Nikaya** contains a list of sixteen mahajanapadas (large territorial states) that existed in the age of the Buddha. These were Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vamsa, Kuru, Pancala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja. The list includes the names of the people as well as states.

The **Khuddaka Nikaya** is of inestimable value from the point of view of the study of history of Indian civilization in the pre- and post- Buddha period. The Jataka records (assigned to the second century BC) contain many valuable historical data about political and socio-economic history of ancient India. It is clearly states therein that Anga was once a powerful kingdom. Magadha was once under the sway of Angaraja. it is said that king Manoja of Brahmavardhana (another name of Varanasi) conquered Anga and Magadha. It appears from the same records that before the Buddha's time Kasi was the most powerful kingdom in the whole of northern India. Mahakosala, father of king Pasenadi of Kosala, is said to have given his daughter in marriage to king Bimbisara of Magadha. The pin money was the village of Kasi yielding revenue of a hundred thousand for bat and perfume. We are also told that there took place many a fierce fight between the sons of Mahakosala and Bimbisara, Pasenadi, and Ajatasattu respectively. In one of the Jatakas it is narrated that Vidudabha, in order to crush the Sakyas who deceived his father Pasenadi by giving him a daughter of a slave girl to marry, deposed his father and became king. He marched out with a large army and succeeded in annihilating the Sakyas. But he with hit armymet also with destruction. The river Rohini was the boundary betweenthe territories of the Sakyas and Koliyas, the two republican communities. A quarrel flared up between the two over the possession of the river. But the Buddha succeeded in restoring peace among his kinsfolk. A king of Varanasi attacked the kingdom of Kosala and took the king prisoner. The king of Kosala had a son named Chatta who fled while his father was taken prisoner. Afterwards Chatta recovered his kingdom. A king of Savatthi named Vanka seized the kingdom of Kasi. But it was soon restored to the king of Kasi. It is said that Campa, the capital of the kingdom of Anga, was at a distance of 60 yojana from Mithila. In the Assaka Jataka we are told of the Assaka territory, the capital city of which was Potali. In the Bhimasena Jataka Takkasila is mentioned as a great centre of learning from the Sivi Jataka we know that Aritthapura was the capital of the kingdom of Ceti. In the Gandhharra Jataka the Kasmir-Gandhara kingdom and the Videha kingdom are also mentioned. The kingdom of Kasi with its capital Varanasi also finds mention in the Jatakas. The extent of the city is mentioned as 12 yojana. There are also references to the Kosala kingdom. The Kamboja kingdom is also referred to in the Jatakas, There are innumerable references to the Magadha kingdom. The city of Mithila, the capital of the Videhas, was 7 leagues and the kingdom of Videha 300 leagues in

extent. In the Kumbhakara Jataka Kampilla has been mentioned as the capital of Uttara-Pancala. The river Campa formed the boundary between Anga and Magadha, There are some Jatakas, which throw light on different categories of the Brahmanas, their position in the society and different professions and occupations they chose, the position of the Khattiyas who were warrior par-excellence, agriculture and industry and trade and commerce both internal and external.

Apart from the Jatakas the Khuddaka Nikaya contains some other books which are historically very important. The Udana makes mention of king Bimbisara of Magadha and king Pasenadi of Kosala. The Sutta Nipata deals with social and economic conditions of the people of the time. The social position of the brahmanas and various pursuits they followed as means of their livelihood are sufficiently highlighted in it. It also speaks of internal trade system. It contains historical references to Rajagaha and Kapilavatthu visited by the Buddha Patitthana, Mahissati, Ujjeni, Vedisa, Kosambi, Kusinara, Magadha, etc. The Mahaniddesa speaks of India's commerce by sea with Yona and Paramayona. Towards the east, it mentions Kalamukha, Suvannabhumi, Vesunga, Verapatha, Takkola, Tamali, Tambapanni and Java as countries visited by the Indian sea-going merchants and speaks of the maner in which they followed the difficult land-route after reaching the harbor. The Cullaniddesa makes mention of a trade route from Patitthana to Magadha. There are references to Mulaka, Patitthana, Mahissati, Ujjeni, Vedisa, Kosambi, Saketa, Savatthi, Kapilavatthu, Kusinara Pava, Bhoganagara, Vesali and Magadha. The Buddhavamsa contains in verse the life history of Gautama Buddha. It also refers to the cities of Amaravati, Kusinara, Vesali, Kapilavatthu, Allakappa, Ramagama, Pataliputta, Avantipura and Mithila. The Cariyapitaka (a post-Asokan work) mentions the city of Indapatta ruled by Dhananjaya who met some brahmanas from Kalinga, Kusavati, Pancala where there was a king named Jayadissa in the city of Kappila or Kampil, etc. The Apadana contains a list of occupational groups like basket makers (nalakara, weavers (pesakara), leather-workers (cammakara), carpenters (tacchaka), metal-workers (kammara), blacksmiths, goldsmiths, tinsmiths, jewelers (manikara), potters (kumbhakara), cloth merchants (dussika) and dyers (rojakara). The hereditary artisans or those who followed different occupations and profesions organized themselves into various guilds (called, senis, pugas) agreeing to be governed by their laws and customs. This work also speaks of India's external trade relations with outside world. It bears witness to be fact that traders and merchants from various countries including Malaya (Malay Peninsula), Sonnabhumi (Suvannabhumi) and Cina (China) visited India.

1.4.2.3. Abhidhamma Pitaka

The Kathavatthu, the third book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka also deserves mention here. It is work of the Asokan age. It was composed by Thera Moggaliputta Tissa, president of the Third Buddhist Council held at Pataliputra under the patronage of king Asoka. It is important from the point of view of history of Buddhism and development of Buddhist doctrine of the ages

after Buddha. It is evident from it that at the time of Asoka there existed different schools of Buddhism.

The Tripitaka throw a good deal of light on social, economic, political and religious history of ancient India from the time of the Buddha or rise of the Magadhan Empire to the third or second century B.C. They also provide the narratives of historical events that took place during the lifetime of the Buddha (sixth and fifth centuries BC). It cannot, however, be denied that in the canonical Pali texts the history is mixed up with legends.

1.4.2.4.Post-canonical Pali literature

The post-canonical Pali literature of the period extending from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of the fifth century AD also contains some works including the commendaties and chronicles which are very important for historical purposes.

1.4.2.4.1. **The Milindapanho**

The Milindapanho (a non-canonical or an extra canonical work) preserves the history of rule of the Bactrian Greek king, Menander (c 165 – 145 BC) over the Punjab with its capital at Sagala (Sakala – modern Sialkot). He became popularly known as Milinda after being converted to Buddhism by Nagasena, the learned Buddhist monk. It appears from this work that the capital city was adorned with splendid and magnificent buildings, parks, gardens, tanks, well laid out streets, strong defences and market places. It was one of the important centres of trade and commerce. It had shops for the same of Banaras muslin, jewels and other costly articles indicating the wealth and prosperity of the kingdom. It had also trade relation with Pataliputra. The full details of conversations between king Milinda and Nagasena have been provided in all the seven books of this work. It contains valuable information about the Buddhist monks who were persecuted by the Brahmana ruler, Pusyamitra Sunga (c 184-148 BC) and protected by Menander, a zealous Buddhist. The Sunga king was no doubt a persecutor of Buddhism and Zealous champion of Brahmanism. He after having usurped the thronw of Magadha in 184 BC actually extended his sway over Sakala in the Punjab. In one of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts, Divyavadana also it is recorded that Pusyamitra made the notorious declaration at Sakala setting a price of one hundred gold dinaras on the head of every Buddhist monk. There is hardly any reason to doubt the historicity of such information.

One of the important historical facts recorded in the Milindapanho is about Dhanananda, the last reigning Nanda king, who was uprooted by Canakya in a war in which Bhadrasala was the commander-in-chief of the Nanda army and the carnage was terrible. There are some other facts and contents of historical interest in this work. It contains a list of kingdoms, towns and cities, etc. It refers to the province of Yavana (bacteria in north Afghanistan watered by the Oxus) where the Bactrian Greeks established their rule. Alsanda (the town of Alexandria on the Indus founded by Alexander which was famous for coral trade), Bharukaccha (an seaport town

equivalent to modern Broach), Country of Cina (China), the kingdoms of Gandhara (that had its capital at Purusapura), Kalinga (that had its capital at Dantapura ages before Bhddha's time), Kasmir, Kosala and Magadha with its capital at Pataliputra, the cities like Sagala, Saketa, Ujjeni, Madhura (Mathura) and Varanasi and places like Sovira (Sauvira adjacent to Sindh), Suvannabhumi (identical probably with Lowel Burma and Malay Peninsula) and Takkola which were visited by Indian merchants. It also throws some light on the socio-economic life of the people. It is explicitly stated in it that in a well-laid city or town, rooms had to be made for the residence of the various classes of Khattiyas, brahmanas, vessas, suddas, goldsmiths, silversmiths, workers in lead, tin, iron and brass, blacksmith, jewelers, weavers, potters, leather-workers, wagon-makers, ivory-workers, basket-makers, dyers, money-exchangers, cloth merchants, traders and merchants from various countries and places and other professional groups.

The authorship of Milindapanho and date of its composition are controversial aspects of the subject. According to Mrs. Rhys Davids, the recorded conversations of Milinda and Nagasena were edited in the new book from after the former's death by special commission by a brahmana of Buddhist collegiate training named Manava. But it is disputable. The generally accepted view is that it had originally been written in northern India at or little after the beginning of the Christian era in Sanskrit or in some north Indian Prakrt by an anonymous author. It appeared again in an enlarged and modified form in the second century AD. It saw its Pali recension before the fifth century AD.

1.4.2.4.2. Commentarial tradition

The Buddhist historical writing in the commentarial tradition is also worthy of our notice. **Buddhaghosa**, a native of Bodha-Gaya, flourished in the first half of the fifth century AD. He went to Ceylon and wrote fourteen commentaries on the Pali texts there during that period or between Ad 410 and 435. Of all the commentaries written by him, the Samantapasadika (on the Vinaya Pitaka) is the most important from a historical point of view. It provides dynastic history of Magadha from the sixth century BC to the time of Asoka. It provides dynastic genealogies and chronology of the kings of Bimbisara, Sigunaga, Nanda and Maurya dynasties who ruled over Magadha with its capital at Pataliputra. Bimbisara is stated to have ruled over the kingdom of Magadha maintaining a powerful army. He had many sons. His eldest son Ajatasattu, who is said to have ruled for 24 years, succeeded him. He bore the cost of repairing at Rajagaha 18 *mahaviharas*, which were deserted by the Buddhist monks' after the Parinibbana of the Buddha. The Buddha passed away in the eighth year of Ajatasattu's reign. Udayi Bhadda, the successor of Ajatasattu, reigned for 16 years. The other two kings of Magadha are mentioned Anuruddha and Munda. They altogether ruled for 18 years. Then came Nagadasaka who reigned for 24 years. The citizens who anointed the minister named Susunaga (Sisunaga) as king banished him.

He ruled for 18 years. Kalasoka ruled for 28 years. He had ten sons (the most prominent among whom was Nandivardhana). They altogether ruled for 22 years. Then came the Nandas who also ruled over Magadha for the same period. The Nanda dynasty was overthrown by Candagutta (Candragupta) Maurya who ruled the kingdom for 24 years (c.321 – 297 BC) He was succeeded by Bindusara who ruled for 28 years (c.297-269 BC) He was succeeded by Asoka (Dhammasoka) who is said to have enjoyed undivided sovereignty over the kingdom after slaying all his brothers except Tissa. It is clearly stated in this work that he reigned without coronation for four years, which means that he ascended the thrown four years before he was formally crowned as a king. While furnishing an account of Asoka this work also records that he followed his father for sometime in making donations to non-Buddhist ascetics and institutions, and gave charities to the Buddhist Bhikkhus. His income from the four gates of the city of Pataliputta was 400000 kahapanas daily. He is said to have built 84000 viharas all over India. The missionaries who were sent to various places to preach the dhamma of Asoka were all natives of Magadha. These are positive evidences of historical writing in the said tradition. The other historical contents in this work are about Kusinara, the town of the Mallas, where Buddha passed away, the cities of Varanasi, Vesali, Campa, Savatthi and Kapilvatthu, the sea-port of Bharukaccha, Suvannabhumi, visited by Indian traders, the kings of the Licchavigana, the places visited by the Buddha in the course of his wanderings, etc. The historicity of the work is established by the facts stated above.

There are some other historically important commentaries of Buddhaghosa. The Sumangalavilasini (on the Digha Nikaya) describes Ajatasattu as a partricide monarch. It further relates that he had hostile relationship with his father, Bimbisara, whom he imprisoned and kept confined in a room and starved to death. Ajatasattu's two ministers, Sunidha and Vassakara, built fortress at Pataligama to repel and attacks of Licchavis of Vesali. The Sakyas, Koliyas and other republican tribes, the Anga kingdom with its capital Campa, the other tow kingdoms of Kosala and Gandhara, the towns of Rajagaha and Kosambi of the Buddha's time, the economic importance of Varanasi as a trading centre and the weavers who produced soft and beautiful garments there, etc. are also recorded in it. It also contains information about Nalanda, which grew as a town, and a Buddhist University in the fifth century AD.

The Dhammapada-atthakatha abounds in references to some of the important kings like Bimbisara and Ajatasattu of Magadha and Pasenadi of Kosala, some principal cities like Takkasila, Kapilavatthu, Kosambi, Varanasi, Rajagaha, Savatthi and Vesali and the republican tribes like Licchavis, Mallas, etc.

The Sutta Nipata commentary is a mine of various sorts of valuable historical information. It deals with two important kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala. It states that Bimbisara was a Lord of Magadha, and being possessor of big army was called Seniya.

Kosalaraja Pasenadi is also described as a powerful ruler. It mentions Varanasi, Savatthi, Kapilavatthu, Rajagaha and other famous cities of the Buddha's time. It also throws light of the socio-economic life of the people and trade and commerce of the time.

The Atthasalini (commentary on the Abhidhamma Pitaka) contains references to some historical personages including Udayi Bhadda of Magadha. It supplies us with information about the kingdom of Kosala, the urban life of the people, the cities, Kasipura, Patalputta, Bharukaccha, Rajagaha, Savatthi, etc.

The Khuddakapatha commentary furnishes us with many important historical materials concerning political and religious history of ancient India. The details of the Licchavis of Vesali, the kingdom of Magadha, king Bimbisara, growth of Buddhism, eighteen great monasteries in Rajagaha, the importance of Kapilavatthu in the time of Buddha, etc. have been provided in it.

The above commentaries afford an ample testimony of Buddhaghosa's knowledge of history.

1.4.2.5.Ceylonese chronicles

The two Ceylonese chronicles, the Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa, are important historical records. Their association with Indian Buddhist historical tradition justifies their inclusion here. Both the chronicles deal with some aspects of ancient Indian history.

1.4.2.5.1. **The Dipavamsa**

An anonymous Buddhist writer wrote the **Dipavamsa** at the end of the fourth century AD or the beginning of the fifth century AD. Some of the kings of Magadha with the length of their reigns and the events of their times are mentioned in it. Bimbisara is said to have ruled for 52 years, Udayi Bhadda for 16 years and the ten sons of Kalasoka for 22 years. Candagutta Maurya ascended the thronw 162 eyars after the death of Buddha (i.e. 483-162 = in c. 321 BC) and ruled for 24 years (i.e. till 297 BC). It further deals with the reign of the great Maurya king Asoka (the grandson of Candagutta and sonof Bindusara) and the notable events that took place in his time. It was during his reign or in C. 246 BC that Mahinda (Mahendra, his son) went to Ceylon and spread Buddhism there.

1.4.2.5.2. **The Mahavamsa**

The Mahavamsa (Great History) compiled by Mahanama in Ad 431 is an authoritative work. A dynastic list of the kings of Magadha to Asoka with regnal years of most of them is preserved in it. It is recorded therein that Bimbisara was fifteen years old when he was anointed king by his own father and then reign for full 52 years. (Thus he was born in 558 BC, ascended the thronw in 543 BC and reigned till 491 BC) His son Ajatasattu reigned for 32 years (C 491-459 BC). It was the eighth year of his reign when the great Gautama Buddha died (i.e. in 483 BC) Ajatasattu's successor Udayi Bhadda reigned for 16 years. His lineal descendants, Anuruddha and his son Munda, conjointly ruled for 8 years and Nagadasaka for 24 years. The

citizens, ministers and officials of Pataliputta then offered the throne of Magadha to Susunaga (Sisunaga) who ruled for 18 years. His son Kalasoka ruled for 28 years. At the end of the tenth yhear of his reign a century had passed after the nirvana of the Buddha. Kalasoka's ten sons (including Nandivardhana and Mahanandin) together ruled for 22 years. All the above-mentioned rulers altogether ruled for 200 years (c. 543-343 BC). It is further stated in this chronicle that during the reign of Kalasoka's sons the Nanda dynasty became powerful and usurped the sovereignty of Magadha. The nine Nandas have been assigned 22 years as the length of their reigns (c.343-321 BC). It was Canakya who uprooted this dynasty by putting Dhanananda, the last reigning Nanda king, to death. All the three traditions, Puranic, Buddhist and Jain, are unanimous about this historic event. The genealogies and chronology of the kings mentioned above are very reliable. The genealogical lists of kings of the dynasties of pre-Maurya period do not agree with those of the Puranas in respects of their names, order and regnal years and total duration of their rule. However, the Puranic and Buddhists lists are supplementary to each other so far as their names are concerned and they have relative value but about the rest the latter stands as corrective to the former.

The Nanda dynasty came to an end in 321 BC. It was supplanted by the Maurya dynasty. The Mahavamsa also supplies us with information about the origin or parentage of its founder, Candagutta. He was the son of the Chief queen of the king of Ksatriya or Moriya clan (a branch of the Sakyas then ruling over Pippalivana). He is said to have ruled for 24 years which exactly agrees with the Puranic chronology. (Thus he ruled from C. 321 to 297 BC.) And his son Bindusara ruled for 28 years (c. 297-269 BC). But according to the Puranas, the length of his reign is 25 years (c. 297-272 BC) which appears to be more correct than the former.

The Mahavamsa as well as the Dipavamsai state that Asoka was formally crowned as a king 218 years after the deathof the Buddha. Thus it was (483-218)=265 BC. Since he was crowned four years after his accession, the actual beginning of his reign, according to the Buddhist historical tradition, will go back to 269 BC. However, there is another evidence to show that his coronation did not take place until 269 BC which means that he ascended the thronw in 273 BC which is in near approximation to the truth. According to Puranic historical tradition, he ruled for total 40 years (4 years before + 36 years after his coronation), i.e., from 272 to 232 BC. This is generally accepted reign period of his Maurya king. Both the chronicles deal with the propagation of Buddhism in Ceylon by Asoka's Son Mahinda and Buddhist establishments there. The historical statements are of course, not always infallible. They also provide trustworthy accounts of three Buddhist Councils (already mentioned), eighteen different sects in the Buddhist order with their respective schools and systems that arose after the Second Council and the Buddhist missionaries sent to far-off lands for spreading Buddhism after the Third Council. They furnish a good deal of information regarding towns and cities of the

Buddha's time. The chronicles refer in common to all those places in India and Ceylon which are especially important in the history of Buddhism. The Mahavamsa in particular throws some light on the relations between Cola-rattha and Ceylon. We are told that about the middle of the second century AD a Cola prince named Elara conquered the Island and ruled there for a fairly long period. These two chronicles have great value as sources of authentic historical tradition and information.

A.K. Warder, while dealing with historical writing in ancient India, has correctly stated that some of the Pali canon and commertaries, and the two chronicles are historical records.

1.4.2.6.**Avadana**

The Buddhists presented history also in the form of an *avadana*. We have of course some *avadanas* in Sanskrit in which we find some evidences of historical writing.

The ***Asokavadana*** was composed in the first century AD by an anonymous Buddhist writer of the Sarvastivada School. Some scholars suggest a later date of its composition, i.e. second or early third century AD. It basically a biographical work, it speaks of Asoka and his times. Besides, it contains some other historical information too. It is primarily based upon the Asokasutra composed in Mathura sometime after the middle of the second century BC or between 150 and 50 B.c which is no longer extant in original. It contains some stories of historical character about the great king Asoka himself. The Asokavadana consists of four chapters or sections titled Pamsupradanavadana, Vitasokavadana, kunalavadana and Asokavadana. The text throws light on the Anga kingdom with its capital at Campapuri of the time of Bindusara of Magadha. It refers to the Magadhan capital Pataliputra as having been attacked by his son Susima when his younger brother Asoka was reigning there, but the former was overpowered by the latter. It mentions the viharas built during the time of Asoka. It is also stated therein that Upagupta, the teacher at Asoka, was the son of Gupta, a rich merchant of Mathura. The information supplied in it about Asoka and his successors particularly Kunala are of great value. There are of course some discrepancies in the stories narrated in it about them. It also contains some information about Prasenajit, king of Kosala, and Buddha's visit to Vaisali and other areas in its vicinity.

The ***Divyavadana*** in its present form is datable to the fourth century AD. It is one of the important historical compositions. It throws light on the prosperity of the Magadha kingdom. Its capital Rajagrha is described as a rich, prosperous and populous city at the time of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru. It was an important centre of inland trade where merchants flocked from different quarters to buy and sell their merchandise. From Rajagrha to Sravasti there was a trade route for the merchants. In and around the city of Rajagrha there were a number of important localities hallowed by the history of their associations with the Buddha and Buddhism. The Magadhan cap9tal Pataliputra at the time of the Buddha was a great city. The Ganga formed the boundary

between the kingdom of Magadha and the territory of the Licchavis, who were followers of the republican system of government. The Licchavis and the Vaisalakas have been mentioned as two different confederate clans. Vaisali was the metropolis of the entire confederacy of eight confederate clans including the Vrjikas and the Licchavis. The Buddha visited the wonderful city of Vaisali more than once. The Videha kingdom with its capital Mithila (which had originally monarchical constitution) also finds mention in it. The Mallas, who were republican community, had their headquarter at Kusinara which become famous because of the Buddha's Parinirvana there. Varanasi, the capital of Kasi kingdom, is described as a prosperous, extensive and populous city. It was a famous trading centre in king Brahmadatta's time. The traders in his time used to come from Uttarapatha. Hastinapura, capital of the Kuru kingdom, is described as a rich, prosperous and populous city, which was visited by the Buddha. The Makandika-avadna has preserved the tradition about king Udayana of the Vatsa kingdom.

The existence of king Munda, one of the descendants of Udayi Bhadra, and king Kalasoka called Kakavarnin; son of Sisunaga, of Magadha is attested by the Divyavadana. This work also contains a genealogy of the rulers of Maurya dynasty from Candragupta down to Pusyadharman (Satadhanvan) who preceded the last ruler; Brhadratha. Chapter XXVI to XXIX contains many legends about some pre-Maurya and Maurya rulers with some Kernel of historical truth. The Asokavadana, which forms very important part of this work, mainly deals with Asoka and his successors. It is also recorded in this work that the citizens of Taksasila revolted against the oppression of the Maurya officials during the reign of Bindusara. Prince Susima, his eldest son and viceroy there, could not quell the disturbance. Then Asoka was deputed by his father to put down the redvolt. He succeeded in restoring order. The Asokavadana states that Asoka was immediately succeeded by his grandson, Samprati and not by his son, Kunala. The historical tradition recorded in the Puranas is also conflicting about the immediate successor of soka. It contains some anecdotes about his son and grandson. It further offers a glimpse into the conditions prevailing during the last phase of the reign of the great monarch Brhadratha that led to the disintegration of the Maurya Empire. His own commander-in-chief, Pusyamitra, whose name also figures in this work, murdered the last king of the Maurya dynasty.

The ***Mahavastu-avadana*** is one of the earliest extant works in Sanskrit composed before the beginning of the Christian era by an anonymous writer of the Lokottaravada School. Its Rajavamsa section is of exceptional value from a historical point of view. It deals mostly with the history of the life of the Buddha. It appears that the Buddhist historians were not ignorant of biographical tradition. It also contains a traditional record of the sixteen Mahajanapadas or big states of his time. It describes in detail the Licchavis of Vaisali and their close association with him. It also states that there were twice 84,000 Licchavirajas residing within the city of Vaisali. It speaks of all important kingdoms, towns, and cities, which flourished before and after the rise

of Buddhism. It refers to the Kuru kingdom with its capital Hastinapura, the Pancala kingdom with its capital Kampilya, the Asmaka kingdom with its capital Potana, the kingdom of Magadha with its capital Rajagrha of Bimhbisara's time and Puspavati (identical with Pataliputra) of later time, the Vatsa kingdom with its capital Kausambi ruled by king Udayana in the Buddha's time, the Kosala kingdom with its capital Saketa, the Anga kingdom with its capital Campa, the kingdom of Kasi with its capital Varanasi, the Videha kingdom with its capital Campa, the kingdom of Kasi with its capital Varanasi, the Videha kingdom with its capital Mithila, etc. It also highlights the political relation between the kings of Kasi and Kosala kingdoms. We are informed that Kasi came in conflict with Kosala several times and each time the king of Kasi was defeated. At last when he was going to make desperate final attack the king of Kosala rfused to fight and abdicted his throne. Varanasi's commercial importance is also highlighted in this work. The place is descrbied as a great trading centre of Buddhist India. Rich merchants of the city used to travel to far-off countries with ships laden with merchandise. It is also stated therein that a wealthy merchant came to Varanasi from Taksasila with the object of carrying on trade. The history of the foundation of Kapilavastu and the settlement of the Sakyas (republican clan) there is also related in this work.

In the Avadanasataka, it is fairly recorded that the ancient Kosala kingdom was divided into two grat parts the river Sarayu serving as the wedge between the two and that there was a war between the kings of North and South Kosala. The kingdom of Magadha with its capital Rajagrha, the localities in and around this city important in the history of Buddhism, the city of Vaisali and the adjoining area and the Buddha's travels to all these places, the importance of Sravasti, the famous capital of the Kosala kingdom in the time of the Buddha, as a trading centre, etc. also find mention in it.

The ***Bodhisattvavadana***-Kalpalata of Ksemendra (C. AD 1028-63 or 1028-89), a historial of Kashmir school, is an extremely important work. It refers to Hastinapura, the capital of the Kuru kings, the kingdom of Pancala with its capital Kampilya the kingdom of Videha with its capital Mithila ruled by a king named Puspadeva, the Kasi kingdom with its capital Varanasi, Kosala which was an important kingdom during the days of early Buddhism and its king Prasenajit and one of its capitals, Saketa, which was adorned with domes and the visit of merchants of Sravasti to Ceylon. It is stated therein that Kausambi, the capital of Vatsa kingdom, was ruled by the king Udyana, the contemporary of the Buddha. it throws some light on the LIcchavi republic. The Vaisalikas or the inhabitants of Vaisali called ganas are said to Vaisali and neighbouring places. it furnishes us with fragments of historical information about the rule of king Asoka over Magadha with its capital at pataliputra and his different activities and stupas and caityas built by him. This work also contains many stories about the Buddha of both

legendary and historical character. The *avadanas* constitute an important part of Buddhist historiography.

1.4.2.7. Others Buddhist works

The ***Lalitavistara***, an important Sanskrit Buddhist text of the early first century AD is memoirs of the early life of the Buddha. The stories narrated about him there in are mythical and partly historical. Besides, it contains some other valuable information about kingdoms and republics, towns and cities etc. of his time. Kapilavastu, famous in the history of Buddhist India and the home of the republican Ksatriya tribe Sakyas, is described copiously therein as *mahanagara* or great city with four gates, tower, market places, etc. It gives 500 as the number of member of the Sakya council. It also refers to the sixteen kingdoms of the Buddha's time including those of Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa, Cedi, Avanti, Kasi, Matsya, Surasena with its capital Mathura which was a rich, flourishing and populous city, and Kuru. It is further stated therein that Rajagrha, the capital of Magadha kingdom, was a *mahanagara* or great city. It was much frequented by the Buddha. It also provides a description of the people of Magadha. Varanasi, the capital of Kasi kingdom, was very famous for manufacturing cloth called kasika-vastra. The Buddha also visited this city. Sravasti, the most important capital city of Kosala kingdom in the Buddha's time, was full of kings, princes, ministers, councilors, brahmanas, ksatriyas, householders, etc. The videha dynasty is described as wealthy and prosperous. The Licchavis of Vaisali and the system of the government they followed are also recorded in it.

The Sanskrit Buddhist texts unlike some of the Pali texts contain hardly and contemporary evidence of a historical character. They deal mostly with past events.

The ***Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa***, who flourished in the first century AD and adorned the court of Kaniska, is a biographical work (semi-historical) in Sanskrit. It deals with main events of the life of the Buddha from his birth to his death or mahaparinirvana, but the extant portion of this work covers only up to his attainment of enlightenment. It in the original form throws some light also on his teachings and Buddhist doctrine. Since the celebrated author does not treat of the Buddha as a historical personality, this work cannot be considered a historical biography. It was originally composed in twenty-eight cantos as is proved by its Chinese translation of the fifth century AD. But the Sanskrit text is available only in seventeen cantos. It is significant to note that despite the absence of an established tradition of biographical writing in those days the Buddhist scholars made some contributions in this field as appears from this work as well as the Asokavadana which deals with the life history of Asoka and some of the other Sanskrit texts which deal with the life of the Buddha, mentioned before.

The ***Mahabodhivamsa*** composed by a monk ***Upatissa*** in the eleventh century AD has also some considerable historical value. A credible list of the names of king Kalasoka's ten sons including the most prominent Nandivardhana of pre-Nanda period and that of nine Nandas

including the last king Dhanananda who ruled over Magadha is provided therein. It also provides us with an account of attainment of enlightenment of the Buddha. There is a general historical reminiscence underlying of the stories of the three Buddhist Councils recorded in it. The different Buddhist schools that arose after the Second Council also find mention in it. It deals partly with the history of Bodhi-tree in Ceylon which has its own importance in the realm of spread of Buddhism there.

Each ***Vamsa*** work is part of history. The tradition of composing and preserving such work was handed down from age to age. This tradition of the Buddhists continued till the nineteenth century. It may casually be mentioned here that the Sasanavamsa which belongs to this period deals with the history of the growth of Buddhism from the time of the parinirvana of the Buddha to the period concerned.

The early Buddhist literature is important for the history of ancient India from the time of the Buddha down to Asoka. While estimating the historical value of this literature, B.C. Law observes : "From a time when Indian history emerges from confusion and uncertainties of semi-historical legends and traditions to a more definite historical plane, that is from about the time of the Buddha to about the time of Asoka the Great, the literature of the early Buddhists is certainly the main, if not the only, source of the historical . . . . . information of ancient India, supplemented however, by Jain and Brahmanical sources here and there.

The ***Manjusrimulakalpa*** composed in the ninth century AD in Sansikrit is one of the ancient historical records of the Indian Buddhists. It carries the political history of ancient India down to the eighth century Ad dealing with the Nandas, Mauryas, Guptas, Maitrakas (of Valabhi), Maukharis, Pusyabhutis and the Pala ruler of Bengal, Gopala, though in a sketchy manner. The author of the work states that Canakya survived his master (Candragupta) and further served Biundusara as minister for a few years. The information contained in this week about the succession of the Gupta emperors is very important this Tibetan Buddhist work also throws light on the early history of Nepal from the fifth to the eighth century AD.

1.4.3. Jain Historiography

The historical writings of the Jains are found in different categories of literature. Some of their canonical and non-canonical works also contain such writings. Their other works which form part of historical literature include (besides some of the non-canonical texts) the *pattavalis* (political succession lists or dynastic lists), the *guruvavalis* (pontifical succession lists or the lists of Jain gurus, religious preachers and teachers), the *rajavalis* (chronicles of kings), biographies (the life stories of ancient Jain persons of note, mostly historical), *Puranas*, *prasastis* (or colophons) at the beginning or end of Jain works, or at the end of some or all chapters of a work, which supply reliable historical information about the authors, donors, kings etc, and prabandhas (collections of historical narratives akin to chronicles and biographies, or narrative histories).

The *pattavalis* and *rajavalis*, the two important historical records, were compiled and preserved by them with great care. All these works are very important from the point of view of historiography as they throw light on different aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. Besides the above mentioned works, there are some other semi-historical and historical works of the period preceding and succeeding circa AD 900. The bulk of Jain historical literature was produced after AD 900. The Jain literature is as extensive as Buddhist one. The Jain historians unlike their Buddhist counterparts have preserved the historical works of the later period in a better way then those of the earlier period. The period of rule of the Calukyas of Gujarat and the Rastrakutas of Dekkan was a blooming one in the history of Jain historiography. Some very important historical works were composed under the patronage of some Calukya and Rastrakuta kings. The Jain writers, who contributed to Indian historiography, belonged to both Svetambara and Dagambara School.

1.4.3.1. Jain canonical literature

The Jain tradition of historical writing began in the fourth century BC with the biographical one preserved in the canon. Bhadrahahu I, who was a contemporary of the last Nanda king Dhanananda of Magadha and Candragupta Maurya, wrote the biography of Vardhamana Mahavira sometime before C.300 BC which is contained in his ***Kalpasutra***. The work consists of three different sections. The first section contains the biographies of the twenty three Jain tirthankaras (prophets of Jainism) who preceded Mahavira, the last and twenty-fourth tirthankara and a historical personality like Buddha. The main part of this section contains the detailed biography of Mahavira. The twenty-third tirthankara named Parsvanatha who lived 250 years before Mahavira was a real historical figure. He was the son of king Asvasena of Varanasi. He is said to have founded the Jain doctrine which Mahavira later followed. In the said work we find the history of Jainism fromits inceptions fo the close of the fourth century BC. A short biography of Mahavira has also been preserved in the first book of the ***Acaranga Sutra*** and in the ***Bhagavati Sutra***. According to these three sources, Mahavira was born in Kundagrama, a suburb of Vaisali (in North Bihar), in C 599 BC in a rich ksatriya family. His father Siddhartha was the head of a ksatriya clan called the Jnatrikas and his mother, Trisala was the sister of Cetaka, the most famous among the Licchavi Princes and rulers of Vaisali. As king Bimbisara called srenika of Magadha had married Cellana, the daughter of Cetaka, Mahavira was related to the ruling family of Magadha. Mahavira was married to Yasodhara. In c.570BC or in his thirteenth year, on the demise of his parents he renounced the world, left his home and became an ascetic in the quest of truth. He wandered for thirteen years. In C.557 BC, when he was forty-two he attained spiritual knowledge of enlightenment near the Parsvanaths hills and thereafter became popularly known as Mahavira. For the next thirty years he moved from place to place and preached his doctrine. He paid frequent visits to Magadha during the first sixteen

years of Bimbisara's rule. He died at Pava near Rajagrha at the age of seventy-two in C. 527 BC.

The biographical writings embodied in the above three works form part of the Jain canonical literature which was redacted thrice between the fourth century BC and the fifth century AD. The Jain canon of the Svetambara set was finally compiled in the present from in the latter half of the fifth century AD at Vallabhi in Gujarat. The Digambara section of the Jains redacted their traditional canon by the beginning of the Christian era.

The anonymous ***Kalakacarya-Kathanaka*** related in the Kalpasutra (circa fifth century AD) and further repeated in a number of later works throws light on the role the Jain Saint Kalaka played in the overthrow of king Gardabhilla (Gandharvasena Mahendraditya C74-61 BC) of Ujjayini (Ujjain Capital of the kingdomof Avanti or Western Malawa) who was none other than the father of famous king Vikramaditya. The story tells us that Kalaka in his bid to depose Gardabhilla because of his hostility with him and opposition to his unjust and tyrannical rule proceeded to 'Sagakula' (the Prakrt version of the Sanskrit Sakakula, i.e., Sakasthan or the lands of the Sakas or Scythians in Sindh which they had conquered after entering India) whose king was styled as 'Sahanusahi' (Prakrt version) i.e. 'King of Kings', stayed therefore sometime and persuaded the Saka chiefs or Sahis to accompany him to the kingdom of Malawa and to invade it and overthrow the dynasty of the ruler of Ujjayini and occupy the rich kingdom. The Saka satrapas 96 in number marched with their forces towards Malawa. They crossed the Indus and first came to Surastra and encamped near Dhakkagiri. We are further told that they entered Latedesa (Gujarat) and therefrom reached Malawa and invaded it. They first entered Ujjayini (in c. 66 BC) and besieged the city. After having finally defeated Gardabhilla and expelled him from his homeland (in c.61 BC) they occupied Ujjiayini and settled there and continued to rule till they themselves were expelled from there. It was only after 4 years of their rule that the Malawa people led by their valiant leader Vikramaditya, the son of Gardabhilla, rose in open revolt and ousted the Sakas from Ujjayini. Thereafter the glorious king Vikramaditya reestablished himself on the thronw of his ancestors. This National victory was celebrated, and to commemorate this events a new Malawa or Vikrama era (or Samvat) was introduced in C.57 BC. The Saka chief or Sahi who occupied Ujjayini at the instance of Kalaka was probably the first Ksaharata, a predecessor of Nahapana, and the Saka overlord Sahanusahi probabl;y the predecessor of Maues. The work provides a glimpse of the Seythian rule in western India during the first century BC. The Prabhavakacarita of Prabhacandra Suri (AD 1276) also contains the details of some important episodes in the life of Kalaka. The story narrated in the ancient work Kalakacarya-Kathanaka has, undeniably, some historical basis; K.P Jayaswal has also admitted that it records a genuine historical tradition.

1.4.3.2.Jain Non-Canonical Works

Of all those Jain Non-canonical works which are of historical importance, mention may first be made of the ***Tiloyapannatti*** of Yativrsabha (C.AD 150-80) of Digambara School. He originally composed this Prakrt text in C.AD 176. Its later recension may be ascribed to either circa AD 478 or 483. The work in the present form in any case cannot be placed later than the sixth century AD. It is divided into nine major chapters and contains 8,000 verses. It is the most important of the early texts from a strictly historical point of view. It contains a biographical description of al twenty-four Tirthankaras and records Puranic traditions about them. There are also some incidental references to Jain doctrine in it. Besides, it supplies pontifical genealogy of Mahavira's successors or a list of succession of Jain gurus after Mahavira upto ME 683, i.e. AD 156. It also throws some light on the dynastic history of ancient India from the first century BC to the fifth century AD. It provides information about the Sakas occupation of Ujjayini and the beginning and end of their rule (IV, 1496, 1501-03), some rulers of Pradyota and Sunga dynasties, minor dynasties of the post-Satavahana period like the Murundas and the Gaddava, and the Guptas with period of their respective rule, etc. The full dynastic list with chronological details is contained in the text. Overall, the work is important for the study of social, political and religious history of ancient India to a considerable exent.

The ***Vasudevahindi***, a prakrt work of the fifth century AD by Samhadasa (also called Dharmadasa) and later completed by other writers probably in the latter half of the sixth century AD contains some historical information about the Yadu dynasty that ruled the kingdom of Surasena with its capital at Mathura, the Magadhan kingdom of Bimbisara's time, trade and commerce during the period from the first century BC to the third century AD etc. It is a work of quasi-historical nature having half legends and half history.

The ***Kuvalayamala***, a Prakrt work composed by Udyotanasuri of Jabalipur (Jalor) in circa AD 778, is very valuable as it supplied the long colophon (27 verses) at its end much useful historical information. The colophone has both historical and chronological importance. Vatsaraja of the colophon is none else but the Gurjara-Pratihara king of Avanti. We are further informed that his great grandfather Nagabhata I had founded the kingdom of Bhinnamala and had extended it up to Broach. He was a great conquerer. The epigraphic records also speak of his glory. The work provides good source material for the history of Gurjaradesa around Bhinnamala where Jainism had a big following. It furnishes a very reliable account of internal and external trade and commerce of India. It is also stated in the said Jain work that the Huna chief, Tormana, who had established his sway over a large part of north-western India in the late fifth and early sixth centuries AD was converted to the Jain faith.

Somadeva Suri of Digambara School flourished in the reign of Rastrakuta king Krsna III (CAD 940-48). His ***Nitivakyamrta*** (composed in C.AD 959) is an excellent treatise on the

science and art of politics covering the period from circa 100 BC to AD 900. It deals with evolution of kingship, state, government, etc. His another work, ***Yasastilaka-Campu***, was composed in the same year (C.AD 959) at the capital of Baddiga, the eldest son of Calukya prince Arikesari. The later Calukyas of Badami probably patronized him. The author himself tells us that "he finished that work in Caitra Saka year 881 (AD 959) during the rule of the Calukya prince Krsnaraja Deva" which shows both his historical sense and chronological consciousness. The work portrays a vivid picture of contemporary life and society. It also throws light on the economic life of the people with special reference to trade and commerce.

Jatila or Jatasimhanandi in his ***Varangacarita*** (C.AD 700), **Varanandi** (C.AD 978) in his ***Candraprabha-carita*** and **Hariscandra** (C.AD 900) in his ***Dharma-Sarmabhyudaya*** have provided though meager but very important information about state and government, practical politics, etc. These are useful works on political theories and institutions in ancient India. They are to some extent useful for historical purposes.

The ***Jambudvipaprajnapti-Samgraha***, a Prakrt text in 13 chapters by **Padmanandi** (C.AD 700), is almost a semi-historical work. It contains useful information about historical geography of ancient India in Jain tradition. It is also important for religious history. It contains a record of pontifical succession for about seven centuries after Mahavira's nirvana. It is also speaks of 18 settlements of Bhojas of the Yadava group of pre-Bharata war period (1.12).

Haribhadra Suri, a Svetambara scholar, who belonged to the latter half of the eighth century AD, in his ***Avasyakavrtti*** (C.AD 775) in Sanskrit provides reliable information about Mahavira's last phase of life.

Dhanapala, Svatambara poet, wrote ***Tilakamanjari***, in about AD 970 during the reign of Siyaka-Harsa (AD 949-72), the father of Vakpati alias Munja (AD 974-94), the two early Paramara rulers of Malawa. The work provides a trustworthy account of the social, economic, cultural and artistic life of the people during the early medieval period. It is said that it "ranks among the few first-rate works written after Banabhatta."

The ***Trilokasara*** (AD 973), a Digambara work by **Nemicandra**, preserves a dynastic list containing the names of Saka kings, and rulers of the Pradyota and Sunga dynasties with their reign periods. It also contains the information about the period of the rule of the Guptas and that of the post-Satavahana dynasties, etc.

The ***Titthogali-Painna***, an old Prakrt text by an anonymous Svetambara scholar, and ***Tirthoddhara-Prakarana*** contain lists of some important dynasties like Pradyota that ruled over Avanti in central India, Nanda, Maurya and Sunga that ruled over a big empire Magadha in eastern India, the Saka of western India and Gaddabhilla of Ujjayini. The important kings of some dynasties are also mentioned, and the total reign periods of the kings and the dynasties are

also given. The dynastic lists are incomplete and the total reign periods as given by the Jain scholars are not fully reliable.

Hemacandra (AD 1125-72), a celebrated poet, grammarian and historian of Svetambara School, made significant contribution to the evolution of historiography in ancient India. He adorned the court of Jayasimha Siddharaja (AD 1093-1143), and also enjoyed the patronage of his successor Kumarapala (AD 1143-72), the Calukya kings of Gujarat. His ***Parisistaparvan*** (in Sanskrit) is a work of immense historical value. It deals with the history of Magadha from Bimbisara down to the time of Candragupta Maurya. It furnishes a dynastic list containing the names of some of the prominent kings of different dynasties that ruled over this kingdom with their genealogies, chronology and other relevant details. We are told that Bimbisara (called Srenika) was the real founder of the Magadhan imperial power. He governed Anga as a separate province with Campa as its capital. During his lifetime his son Ajatasatru (called Kunika) acted as a viceroy at Campa. His son and successor, Udayin before ascending the thronw of Magadha also acted as his father's viceroy at Campa. But being overpowered with sorrow at the death of his father he transferred his capital from Campa to Pataliputra which accords with the Buddhist tradition but is at variance with the Puranic tradition, according to which, he shifted his capital from Rajagrha to Kusumapura (Pataliputra). We are further informed that Udayin was a powerful king. He defeated and killed the king of a certain country in a battle whose son went to Ujjain. He had political relation with king of Avanti. Nandivardhana (one of the sons of Kalasoka, successor of Sisunaga) was offered the throne of Magadha 5 years before 415 BC. Nanda (Mahapadma, the founder of Nanda dynasty), the son of a courtesan by a barber, became king of Magadha 60 years after the death of Mahavira (i.e. in 417 BC). Nanda (Mahapadma, the founder of Nanda dynasty), the son of a courtesan by a barber, became king of Magadha 60 years after the death of Mahavira (i.e., in 417 BC). Nanda (Mahapadma, the founder of Nanda dynasty), the son of a courtesan by a barber, became king of Magadha 60 years after the death of Mahavira (i.e. in 417 BC). He and his descendants continued to rule Magadha for 95 years or till the last nanda king was deposed by Visnugupta (Canakya) 155 years after the death of Mahavira. Thus, according to Jain Svetambara tradition recorded in the said work, the Nanda dynasty ruled from 417 to 322 BC. This dynasty is said to have been supplanted by the Maurya dynasty. The work further throws some light on the origin of the Mauryas. According to the said tradition. Candragupta was the son of a daughter of the chief of a village of peacock-tamers (mayra-posaka) which belonged to the Nandas which does not agree with Puranic tradition, according to which, he was the son of last Nanda monarch by his sudra wife named Mura after whom Candragupta and his descendants were styled as Mauryas. The author of the work further tells us that Candraghupta ascended the throw of Magadha 155 years after Mahavira's nirvana which may be probably 322 BC. His son Bindusara (whose mother's name was Durdhara) succeeded

him on the throw. In the absence of corroborative evidence, it is difficult to prove the historicity of the said queen mother. However, the succession of the king is well prove. Apart from dynastic history, the work also deals with the history of Jainism of ancient period.

The Jain ***pattavalis***, which are very important historical documents of both the Digambaras and the Svetambaras, were maintained from the early times. The ***Prakrt pattavali*** of the **Nandi Samgha**, which is one of the oldest Digambara ***patavalis***, and the equally old Svetambara Tapagaccha-pattavali belong to AD 500-900 and are sufficiently reliable.

Most of the pattavalis in their present form belong to later medieval times (i.e., fifteenth-seventeenth century AD). They are full of discrepancies and are not very reliable about early times. Some of the old *patavalis* supply useful historical, cultural and geographical information. Some of the Svetambara *pattavalis* refer to Magadhan dynasties of the pre-Maurya period (from Bimbisara to the end of the Nanda dynasty). Srenika (Bimbisara), Kunika (Ajatasatru) and Udayin have been mentioned as powerful kings of Magadha. Palaka mentioned in the lists was the son of king Canda Pradyota of Ujjayini and in the period of 60 years allotted to him Kunika and Udayin were ruling at Pataliputra. The dynastic lists include Palaka, the Nandas, the Mauryas, some of the Sunga rulers, the Sakas and the Gaddabhas or Gaddabhilla, and the period of their rule are also clearly stated. Apart from dynastic succession lists, pontifical genealogy of Mahavira's successors in both Digambara and Svetambara tradition are contained in some of the *pattavalis*. The Prakrt *pattavali* of the Nandi samgha gives the years of individual gurus who succeeded Mahavira during that period of 683 years. On the basis of a close and comparative examination of the *pattavalis* the history with a detailed and exact chronology of the Jain samgha through the ages may be reconstructed, and an interesting detail about the political history of the country during those centuries may be furnished. The *pattavalis* and *guruvalis* of the different Jain samghas, ganas, etc. that developed in both the sects, besides the respective genealogies, contain the faithful accounts of the achievements of important gurus, often give the names of the royal patrons and devotees of such gurus and also shed some light on religious-cultural history of the period.

Dr. Walthur Schubring observes: "It was based upon some misunderstandings which naturally arose when India was measured with the scale found in China, Bablyonia and Egypt. Her sources of history often flow not as plainly by far as those empires of the past, but there are some where no historian would have the right to deny the existence of historical exactness. It is specially Jaina authors who develop this praiseworthy quality. History cannot be told more exactly than has been done, for instance, in the Jaina Guruvavalis and pattavalis, the care with which the history of the primitive Jaina community is written by Hemacandra and other later authors is highly meritorious. Of course, the parisistaparvan (and such other Jaina works) contains much legendary by work, but is it not the something in the west where nobody would

think of not taking notice of our own medieval chronicles where history and legend so often intermingle? . . .

Equally important like the *pattavalis* are the *rajavalis* – brief chronicles of kings with details of some important events that took place in their times. The ***Rajavali Katha*** (an anonymous work of unknown period) about Candragupta Maurya deals with his life and achievements. Some important *rajavalis*, particularly about the rulers of Delhi, have come down to us. They generally begin in the seventh or eighth century AD and end at the time of their respective compositions. The *rajavali* of Delhi in Hindi verse composed by poet Kisanadasa starts with Anangpala Tomara of Delhi in AD 852. The exact date of its composition is not known. A number of important *rajavalis* were produced by the Jain scholars during the medieval period which do not fall within the scope of this work.

1.4.3.3.Biographical works

There are a number of biographical works or the *carita-kavyas* in both Prakrt and Apabhramsa, which deal with the life-stories of some historical Jain heroes, religious leaders and great teachers of early time. The tradition of writing caritras in Puranic style dealing with the lives of individual heroes had already begun by the sixth century AD, but only few of them were written prior to AD 800. In fact, such works in historical style began to appear from the ninth century onwards. Some of the important works in Prakrt are the ***Mahaviracarita*** of **Asaga** (AD 853), of **Gunacandra** (AD 1082), of **Gunabhadra Suri** (AD 1139) and of **Nemicandra** (AD 1170) which relates the life and teachings of Mahavira, the ***Parsvanathacarita***, which deals with the life of Parsvanatha, the real founder of Jainism, the ***Adinathacarita*** of Vardhamana (1103), etc. They supply us with such salient facts about the lives of these heroes as may be taken to be credible. The contemporary royal personalities also find incidental mention in some of these works. The facts and fictions have jumbled up in the stories narrated about them. However, the works to a certain extent bear the character of historical biographies. The other works include the ***Mallinathacarita***, the ***Neminatha-cariu*** and the ***Sanakumara-cariu*** of **Haribhadra** (AD 750-75), the ***Karakandu-cariu*** (in Apabhramsa) of **Kanakamara** (tenth century), the ***Sudarsanacarita*** of **Nayanandi** (AD 1042), the ***Jambu-carita*** (in Prakrt) of **Gunapala** (the post-eighth century AD), of Vira (AD 1019) and of **Sagaradatta** (AD 1020) the ***Santinathacarita*** of **Devacandra** (1108), the ***Sumatinathacarita*** of **Somaprabha**, the ***Neminathacarita*** of **Maladhari Hemacandra**, the ***Supasanahacarita*** of **Laksmanagani** (AD 1142) and the ***Sanatkumaracarita*** of **Sricandra** (1157).

The biographical works chiefly deal with the spiritual life and religious deeds of the Jain saints concerned. These works are more of a legendary than historical character. Their values lie only in those facts, which are related to the Jain doctrine. The most important among the Jain biographical works in Apabhramsa is Puspadanta's Mahapurana, which was composed sometime

between Ad 940 and 968 under the patronage of the Jain ministers of the rastrakuta king Krsna III. This work consists of biographies of nearly 63 Salakapurusas (persons of great note). The work besides containing biographical accounts deals with socio-economic life in the early period. The two other notable works by the same author are the ***Jasahara-cariu*** and the ***Nayakumara-cariu***. The ***Trisastisalakapurusacarita*** of **Hemacandra** also contains biographies of some important historical personages including Kumarapala, the Calukya king of Gujarat who was one of these patrons. The Jain scholars further carried on the tradition of Biographical writing in the medieval period.

1.4.3.4.Other independent works

The period falling in between the accession of Dantidurga in AD 733 and the end of the rule of Amoghavarsa I in AD 877 or 878 (the two famous Rastrakuta kings) produced a marvelous galaxy of Jain authors who produced a large number of valuable works in different languages on different subjects many of which are important for political and cultural history of early India. The authors were actually patronized by the Rastrakutas. One of the authors was Swami Virasena (AD 710-90) of Digambara School who wrote the Dhavala, the Jayadhavala and Mahadhavala in Prakrt and Sanskrit (mixed). He completed his famous work, Dhavala in AD 780 but his other works remained incomplete. His Jayadhavala was completed by his disciple Jinasena III in AD 837. The Dhavala transmits information about some contemporary kings with their dates. The Dhavala of Virasena and the Jayadhavala of Jinasena contain almost the identical dynastic lists with the names of the rulers of Pradyota and Sunga dynasty. The Saka king, the post-Satavahana kings and the dynasties, the Guptas, etc., also figure in the lists. The reign periods of all are also mentioned. The historical and chronological data contained in the works are of into 5 groups together with the periods taken by each group has been preserved in both these works. This historic record of pontifical succession for about seven centuries after Mahavira's nirvana is of unique value.

1.4.3.5.Jain Purana

Some of the Puranic records of the Jains are also rich in historical contents. The ***Padma Purana*** (C.AD 676 – 77) in Sanskrit (with 18,000 verses divided into 123 Parvas) of **Ravisena**, the Harivamsa Purana (AD 783) in Sanskrit (with 10,000 verses divided into 66 sargas) of **Jinasena II** (Jinasena I of the third century AD being the author of the ***Vardhamana Purana*** about Mahavira), who flourished in the Rastrakuta age, the ***Adi Purana***(AD 840) with 47 sargas of Jinasena III (the religious preceptor of the Rastrakuta emperor Amoghavarsa I, AD 815-77) and the ***Uttara Purana*** (AD 898) with sargas 48-73 of **Gunabhadra** (who was patronized by the Rastrakuta king, Krsna II, AD 877-914), forming two different part of the ***Maha Purana***, are valuable from a historical point of view. These Puranas contain some historical portions. The abundant wealth of historical material is embodied in them. They in common throw a good deal

of light on different aspects of history and culture of India of ancient and early medieval period. They deal with society, economy, trade and commerce, polity and administration, state and government, king and kingdoms, towns and cities, religion and culture, art and architecture, Aryan and non-Aryan peoples, etc. The authors of the works furnish useful information about the life and society of their respective contemporary age.

Jinasena III defines history "as an account of past happenings, which must be authoritative, truthful and righteous". This *Purana* deal with the history of 63 famous men including kings, emperors and the Jain heroes. Jinasena II, the author of the ***Harivamsa Purana***, in particular was more or less a *itihasakara*. He gives history of Jainism down to his own time. He mentions Indrayudha (Ad 783-84), the ruler of Kanyakubja (Kanauj) in the north, Vatsaraja, the Gurjara-Pratihara king of Avanti in Central India, whose identity as the father of Nagabhata II (AD 805-33) is well established, and **Dhruva Nirupama** also called Sri-Vallabha (AD 779-94) the Rastrakuta king of Dekkan, who were all his contemporaries. The dynastic list furnished by him contains the names of some rulers of the Pradyota and Sunga dynasties. The Gaddava kings of Ujjayini, the Sakas, the Hunas, etc., also figure in the said list with length of their respective reign. He also supplies the dynastic chronology for the first one thousand year beginning with Mahavira's nirvana and ending with the termination of the age of the Hunas Harivamsa, sarga 60, vv.487-92, 551-52). The dynastic list given in this Purana is almost identical with the corresponding list of the Uttara Purana.

The Jain Puranakaras were endowed with a remarkable historical sense. They have, in fact, preserved ancient Indian history in their respective works. They have maintained to a great extent the objective in their presentation of the subject-matter. They have debunked brahmanical history and myth in the sense of making the narratives or stories more rational.

1.4.3.6.Jain Prasastis and *prabandhas*

The ***prasastis*** of Jain authors also constitute a valuable literary source of ancient Indian history. These ***prasastis*** occur in the works which were produced after the seventh century AD. They are generally found at the beginning or end of the works, or at the end of some or all chapters of a work. They are of various types. The prasasti of the author gives details about himself, his religious genealogy, when and for whom he wrote the work, etc. It sometimes mentions the name of the place and that of the ruler of the territory as well. The prasasti of the donor provides facts about his family and about the guru to whom the manuscript was given as a gift. We come across such information more in manuscripts from Gujarat and Central India than in those from Karnataka and Tamiladesa. The works produced prior to the tenth or eleventh century AD contains mostly the first type of *prasasti*. The *prasastis* of a number of later works contain useful historical information pertaining to older times the most notable example of which is Vadnagar Prasastis of Kumarapala (AD 1143-72), the Calukya ruler of Gujarat, found in Ad

1152, according to which, Vanraj Chavda founded the capital of Patan in AD 746 and his dynasty ruled in Gujarat for about two centuries.

The Jain works of the ancient period mentioned above as a whole deal with different aspects of history and culture of India. They provide a systematic history of India from the time of mahavira to the rise of the Maurya empire. The history of Jainism recorded in them is of exceptional value. They provide only little information about the post-Maurya dynasties, Gurjara-Pratiharas, Calukyas, Rastrakutas, etc. We do not find continuity in the presentation of Jain authors about them. They are selective in picking out the regions and historical personalities and usually do not give continuous history. Some historical works deal in part with the events of the post-Mahavira period. However, the details of contemporary life and society, general economy, polity, religion, art and culture, etc., provided in some of the works are of great historical value. The works of the period under discussion, in fact, provide the general history of ancient India as they cover various regions and touch on various dynasties.

The Svetambara scholars of Gujarat wrote the *prabandhas* from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. These works are purely of historical character and very valuable for a reconstruction of the history of Gujarat. But, since they belong to the medieval period, we cannot include them here because of limitation of period. The *prabandhas* of Rajasthan too belong to the same period.

1.4.4. Conclusion

The Buddhist and the Jain literature bear more authentic information's on the basis of which, since sixth century B.C., political history of ancient India has been ascertained more or less in chronological order with occasional gaps. Buddhist religious works which preserve valuable testimonies on the present subject of study such as the *Tripitakas* contain all the basic aspects of Buddhist socio-religious order. *Jatakas*, *Divyavadana*, *Lalitavistara*, *Mahavastu*, *Mahaparinibbansutta*, the Pali chronicles of Ceylon-*Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa* etc. are the most authentic Buddhist works in determining the early career and the succession of Chandragupta Maurya as the first Mauryan emperor; the Mahayana works of Asvaghosa, such as, *Buddha Charita*, *Saundarnanda kavya* (partly religious and partly secular), *Vajrasuchi* etc. offer valuable materials on different aspects of ancient Indian history during the Kushana period; another important Mahayana work *Manju-Sree-Mulakalpa* (partly religious and partly secular) throws light on the personal qualities of Samudra Gupta, the first builder of the India-wide Gupta empire. Besides the Jain religious literature such as, twelve-Angas, *Kalpasutra*, *Bhagavati Sutra*, *Marutunga*, *Parisistaparvan*, *Uttaradhayayana*, *Andhara-Magadhi*, *Sthaviravali*, etc. not only bear important historical data on Jain religion and culture, but also on important monarchs like Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, Mahapadma Nanda, Chandragupta Maurya etc.

To conclude, we noticed that there was no poverty of historical knowledge and no dearth of historical works in ancient India. The works produced as a whole throw light on various aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. The view held by some scholars that the regular historical works on the part of the Hindus has long been a desideratum is not tenable. The Buddhist and Jain scholars produced a number of semi-historical works before the seventh century AD, which throw ample lights on the history of India during ancient period.

1.4.5. Summary

- *The Buddhist and Jain scholars made substantial contributions to the evolution of historiographical tradition in ancient India. They recorded the past as well as contemporary events of historical nature in their respective works. They like the scholars of the Brahmanical historical schools presented history in literary form.*
- *Of all the Buddhist works of some historical importance, mention may first be made of the three Pitakas, Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma, which from parts of canonical Pali literature ascribed to the period extending from the fifth century BC to the first century BC. Their historicity can be proved by the historical facts they contain.*
- *The Tripitaka throw a good deal of light on social, economic, political and religious history of ancient India from the time of the Buddha or rise of the Magadhan Empire to the third or second century B.C. They also provide the narratives of historical events that took place during the lifetime of the Buddha (sixth and fifth centuries BC). It cannot, however, be denied that in the canonical Pali texts the history is mixed up with legends.*
- *The post-canonical Pali literature of the period extending from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of the fifth century AD also contains some works including the commendaties and chronicles which are very important for historical purposes.*
- *The historical writings of the Jains are found in different categories of literature such as canonical and non-canonical works. Their other works which form part of historical literature include the pattavalis, the guruvavalis, the rajavalis, biographies, Puranas, prasastis at the beginning or end of Jain works, or at the end of some or all chapters of a work, which supply reliable historical information about the authors, donors, kings etc.*
- *Jain literary works are very important from the point of view of historiography as they throw light on different aspects of ancient Indian history and culture. Besides the above mentioned works, there are some other semi-historical and historical works of the period preceding and succeeding circa AD 900.*
- *The bulk of Jain historical literature was produced after AD 900 and the Jain literature is as extensive as Buddhist one. The historical works of the later period have been preserved in a better way than those of the earlier period by the Jain historians unlike their Buddhist counterparts.*

- *The period of rule of the Calukyas of Gujarat and the Rastrakutas of Deccan was a blooming one in the history of Jain historiography. Some very important historical works were composed under the patronage of some Calukya and Rastrakuta kings.*

1.4.6. Exercise

1. Write an essay on the Historical significance of Buddhist canonical literature with special reference to Tripitaka.
2. Discuss how the non-canonical works both in Sanskrit and Pali formed a major parts in the Buddhist historiography.
3. Give an account on the Historiography of Jainism.
4. Jain biographical writings are important historical source materials. Discuss with examples.
5. Throw lights on the Buddhist and Jain school of historiography and assess the significance of this school in the ancient Indian historical traditions.

1.4.7. Suggested Readings

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4. Jain, J.P., The Jaina Sources of the History of Ancient India (100 B.C to A.D 900), Delhi, 1964.

5. Singh, G.P., Early Indian Historical Tradition and Archaeology, Delhi, 1994.

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UNIT-II

Chapter-I

HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY AND THE CHRONICLE

Harshacharita of Banabhatta and Rajatarangini of Kalhana

Structure

2.1.0. Objectives

In this chapter we intended providing you an insight into the development of historiography in the post-Gupta India. The lesson will briefly discuss the vast corpus of biographies and chronicles produced in India with special reference to *Harsacharita* of Banabhatta and *Rajataragini* of Kalhana as a separate historical tradition in ancient India. By the end of this chapter the learners would be able to:

- *understand the changing nature of historiographical trend in post 6th century A.D India;*
- *trace the development of writings of biographical works in India and their significance in ancient Indian historical traditions.*
- *Survey of Harsacharita of Banabhatta as a historical work.*
- *describe the growth, content and characteristic features of chronicle writings in India;*
- *discuss the content, characteristics and value of Rajatarangini of Kalhana as a genuine historical works in ancient India; and*
- *examine the role of biographical and chronicle writings as historical tradition in ancient India.*

2.1.1. Introduction

Ancient Indian historiography anterior to the seventh century AD was largely based on *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. However, its impact on the historical writings of the later period to a considerable extent is also discernible. The traditional concept of history went on changing with developing historical sense, prevailing historical tradition in a contemporary age and events of the time.

The period extending from the seventh to the twelfth century AD proved to be a blooming one in the history of historical writing in ancient India. A number of historical biographies were produced in different parts of India during the period. The court poet who wrote the biography of his patron highlighting his life and achievements was no less than a historiographer. There were many such court poets. The kings who patronized them also deserve the credit of giving fillip to the production of biographical works by encouraging them to undertake such works. They wanted their court poets to records both the past and contemporary events for the purpose of preserving them for the future. The biographies of many famous kings who occupy important place in the annals of ancient India were composed by their respective court poets during the period. Some biographies are the productions of the historical school that flourished in the post-Harsha period under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal, the Paramaras of Malawa the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kalyani and the Cahamanas of Sakambari. The chronicles were also written in Sindh, Kashmir, Gujarat, Odisha and Nepal. The writing of historical biographies and chronicles were the two significant stages in the evolution of Indian historiography. The biographies and chronicle composed during the period form important parts of historical

literature. Besides these works, other historical works of various kinds were produced during the period.

2.1.2. Historical biography

A historical biography in the true sense of the words deals with the life, character and deeds of a historical personality, royal personage, eminent king, great ruler or emperor, who occupies an important place in the history of a particular nation or region. It is based more on facts than fictions. It can easily be distinguished from a biography of literary figure, religious saint or particular individual and a biography of semi-historical nature.

The history of historical biography in India is not as old as in China, Greece and Rome. The Chinese historian, Ssu-ma Chien (C145-85 BC), produced Shih-chi in C.100 BC which apart from other details contains biographies of important personalities who were his contemporaries. The art of writing historical biography further developed in Greece and Rome in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans by the Greek Plutarch (CAD 50-125), who is considered the "father of biography" and the Life of Agricola by the Roman Tacitus (C. AD 55-120) are the two notable specimens of historical biography produced in the ancient world. In India, it was the seventh century AD, which marked the beginning of the tradition of writing historical biography. The ancient Indians had their own conception of a biographical history, which needs no comparison with that of ancient Greeks and Romans. Their historical tradition including the biographical one was different from each other. And so is the case with the themes and qualities of their biographical works.

Historical biographies in ancient and early medieval India were generally composed in royal courts under the patronage of kings or princes concerned. The court historiographers not only enjoyed the royal patronage but also received the encouragement to record the history of their respective times which gradually led to the development of historical writing in ancient India.

The authors of historical biographies while dealing with the lives and achievements of their patrons have also launched on side by side their pedigree or genealogies, political relations with other kings and the historical events, which took place before and during their times, and the culture and the culture and civilization of the contemporary age. Some authors have focused mainly on the contemporary history and culture. The writing of historical biographies in ancient India marked the significant stage in the development of the *itihasa* tradition. Carlyle pointing to the place of biography in history observed: "history is the biography of great men" Again "History is no more than the sum total of innumerable biographies."

Historical biographies of ancient period as a whole are in Sanskrit, Prakrt and Apabhramsa. These works are faithful records of the lives of kings who left indelible imprints of their personalities on the history of the said period. The remark of a great orientalist, Maurice

Winternitz, that "History and Biography have in India never been treated other than by the poets and as a branch of epic poetry" is not an absolute truth. Historical works including biographical ones have been written also by other than the poets and most of them are in prose.

2.1.2.1.Banabhatta: Harshacharita

Of all the extant historical biographies of ancient times, mention may first be made of the Harsacarita of Banabhatta), the court poet-cum-historian of Harsa (AD 606-48) of Sthanvisvara (modern Thaneswar in Haryana) and Kanyakubja (Kanauj). Bana himself calls his work an *akhyayika* as it has a historical basis. It consists of eight ucchavasas (chapters).

2.1.2.1.1. Personal Life of Banabhatta

In the first chapter, the author speaks of his own ancestry and lineage. According to the information supplied by him, he was the son of Citrabhanu in the Vatsyayana line of the Bhargava Brahmanas. His ancestral home was at Pritikuta, a village situated on the western bank of the river Sona within the limits of the kingdom of Kanyakubja. The first three chapters are devoted, of course, partly to the life and family of the author himself. He belonged to the family, which was famous for scholarly tradition. His inclination towards or interest in history was quite consistent with his family tradition.

2.1.2.1.2. Ancestry of Harshavardhana

Harsa's ancestors find mention in the third chapter of the Harsacarita. The author of the work informs us that it was Pusyabhuti who founded the kingdom of Srikantha with its capital at Sthanvisvara (in the late fifth or early sixth century AD). He has been described also as the founder of the royal Vardhana dynasty. His successors, Naravardhana, Rayavardhana and Adityavardhana (mentioned in Madhuvana copper-plate inscription of Harsa) do not find place in the genealogy preserved in the work. These kings who flourished probably between AD 500 and 580 were the feudatory chiefs. They might have acknowledged the supremacy of the Guptas and the Maukharis. The next king in the line of Puspabhuti, as mentioned in the work was Prabhakaravardhana who was blessed with two sons, Rajyavardhana and Harsavardhana and a daughter, Rajyasri.

Prabhakarvardhana (AD 580-605) was an eminent and powerful king. After having expanded the frontiers of his paternal kingdom by annexing to it the territories of the conquered kings he assumed the titles, Maharajadhiraja and Paramabhattaraka. His wars and conquests have been described in the fourth and fifth chapters. The information Bana provides about him in the former, of course, in the metaphorical style is useful to a historian. He says that he was "A lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of Sindhudesa, a troublers of the sleep of Gurjara king, a bilious pleague to that scent-elephant, the Lord of Gandhara, a destroyer of the pride of the Latas, and an axe to the goddess of fortune and glory of Malava." He appears to have extended his political sway to the Huna territories in the Punjab, which marked the limit of

the northwestern frontier of his kingdom. In the east it was conterminous with the Maukhari state of Kanauj and on the west and south it just covered portions of the Punjab and Rajaputana desert. He achieved partial success in subduing the king of Sindhudesa. However, the latter accepted the political hegemony of the former. Gandhara, which was then under the rule of Kusanas (a branch of those who had established themselves in the Kabul valley), could not be brought within the limits of the kingdom of Prabhakaravardhana. The Gurjaras of Bhinnamala and the king of Latadesa simply tendered their submission. Malawa was, of course, annexed to his kingdom, which can be substantiated by the fact that the two sons of the defeated Malava king, Mumaragupta and Madhavagupta, were sent to his court to confirm their acceptance of his overlordship, as stated in the text. In the fourth chapter itself, it is stated that Rajyasri was married to Grahavarman, the son of the Maukhari prince Avantivarman of Kanauj.

2.1.2.1.3. Circumstances leading to accession of Harsa to the throne

The fifth chapter is devoted to Prabhakaravardhana's and his eldest son Rajyavardhana's conflicts with the Hunas. The former has been called 'Hunaharinakeshari because of his resounding victory over the Hunas. The Hunas, who were defeated by him with the help of his relative, Avantivarman of Kanauj (in Ad 575 or 582), were none other than the petty Huna chief of the northern Punjab with their metropolis at Sakala where they continued to rule after the dismemberment of the Huna kingdom in about AD 563 or 567. In order to strike another blow to the Hunas Prabhakaravardhana sent Rajyavardhana on a military expedition against them in the Uttarapatha. But before they could be finally subdued Rajyavardhana returned back to the capital on account of the illness of his father. His father had already expired and his mother had burnt herself to death on the bank of the Sarasvati River. We are further fold in the sixth chapter that Rajyavardhana because of being socked and terribly upset offered the throne to his younger brother, Harsa. The latter too was not willing to accept the throne and ultimately the former had to ascend the throne of Thanesvar (in AD 605). No sooner had Rajyavardhana ascended the throne he received the sad news that the king of Malawa or Avantidesa (who is identical with Devagupta of the Madhuvana and Banskhera charter) had attacked and killed Grahavarmana and imprisoned his wife Rajyasri and put her into the dungeon cell in Kanyakubja. He chalked out a plan to attack also Thanesvar. However, Rajyavardhana in order to avenge the death of his brother-in-law and the humiliation of his sister at once marched with his troops for Malawa leaving his younger brother Harsa in capital. He had successfully routed the Malawa army and defeated king Devagupta but he was himself treacherously assassinated by the king of Gauda called Sasanka (contemporary of Harsa) who had come all the way from his distant kingdom to assist his ally, king Devagupta of Malawa. This is the coalition of common enemies of Rajyavardhana which has been perhaps called by Bana 'Sasankamandala'. He says that "Sasanka threw Rajyavardhana off his guard by offering to marry his daughter to him as a token

of submission and friendship and when he was weaponless, confiding and alone, the Gauda king dispatched him to his own quarters and killed there." Having thus avenged the defeat of Devagupta of Malawa the Gauda monarch Sasanka occupied Kanauj and released the widowed Maukhari queen, Rajyasri, from captivity in her own capital. Bana has, maintained sequence and coherence to a considerable extent in the narration of events.

Harsa was only sixteen years of age at a time when he heard the news of the tragic end of Rajyavardhana. He was bit reluctant to occupy the throw. But after being persuaded by the councilors of the state he agreed to take the reign in his hand, and ultimately ascended the throw of Thanesvar (in AD 606).

2.1.2.1.4. Military expedition of Harsa as mentioned by Banabhatta

The immediate task before him was to rescue his sister, who after having escaped from the prison had entered the Vindhya forest, and to relieve Kanauj from the control of Sasanka. When he was about to set out on his *digvijaya* (conquest) with a strong force, Hamsavega, a messenger of king Bhaskaravarman of Pragjyotisa (Assam), entered his court with gifts and message of friendship. A perpetual treaty of friendship between these two contemporary kings was concluded as stated by Bana in the seventh chapter of his work. The said messenger in the course of narrating the early history of Assam told Harsa the names of some of the prominent rulers of different dynasties including those of the predecessors of Bhaskaravarman of Varman dynasty who ruled over the kingdom concerned, as we find in the same chapter.

After the departure of Hamsavega from Thanesvar, Harsa entered the Vindhya forest and made a vigorous search for her sister, Rajyasri, and at last with the help of forest chiefs like Vyaghraketu, Bhukampa and Nirghata and a Buddhist monk, Divakaramitra, rescued her at the moment when she was about to immolate herself. He along with his sister returned to his camp on the bank of the Ganga, as described in the seventh and eighth chapters of the work. In these two very chapters, Bana has described in detail the life and culture of the tribal people of the Vindhya region with special reference to the *Sabaras*.

We are informed by Bana that Harsa made an elaborate preparation to wage war against the Gauda king Sasanka, who is described as 'the vilest of Gaudas' and the 'vile Gauda serpent'. But he does not provide us with any detail of the war between the two. It seems that the friendly alliance between Harsa of Thanesvar and Bhaskarvarman of Kamarupa (one of the ancient names of Assam) struck fear in mind or Sasanka, and instead of facing an impending danger he withdraw from Kanauj which paved the way for Harsa to establish his rule there. He probably in the last phase of his life transferred his capital from Thanesvar to Kanauj and made it the seat of his power. Thus, he not only inherited the paternal kingdom but also got the Maukhari throne of Kanauj. The amalgamation of these two kingdoms helped him in consolidating his position and extending his authority and influence in all directions.

Bana, while describing Harsa as a warrior and conqueror, informs us (in third chapter) that he conquered Sindhudesa and annexed it to his kingdom and thereby completed the unfinished task of his father. The river Indus formed the western boundary of his empire. In the same chapter we are further informed that kings of the states in the Himalayan region were also subjugated by him. They after acknowledging his political supremacy started paying taxes to him. His conquest of Malawa and its annexation to his kingdom finds mention in the seventh chapter of the author's work. These initial successes he achieved as a king of Thanesvar. We do not get a clear picture of the extent of Harsa's empire. However, it is true that he earned name and fame as the last great Hindu emperor of north India.

2.1.2.1.5. Politico-administrative and socio-religious information

The information furnished by Bana in the second chapter of his work regarding the administrative system and military organization of Harsa is of considerable historical value. He has highlighted the feudal structure of his administration. It may be stated here that the increase in the number of Samanta, Mahasamanta and feudatory chiefs after the disintegration of the Gupta Empire had great bearing on the administrative system of Harsa. Bana has presented an enlarged picture of the feudal system that had already existed in ancient India prior to Harsa's time. The same system continued in the time of Harsa. According to Bana, there were different categories of Samanta, viz., Samanta, Mahasamanta, Apasamanta, Pradhanasamanta, Satrumahasamanta and Pratisamanta who offered their services to Harsa and his predecessors. The samantas ruling over the territories assigned to them used to pay taxes annually to the said kings. They used to render all kinds of services to the kings. Those who occupied high positions among the Samantas were designated Pradhanasamanta. Satrumahasamantas were conquered chiefs who had to obey the orders of the king. They were treated with some respect. All other Samantas had to offer their services in the kingly court and royal palace whenever needed. The loyal and faithful Mahasamantas used to accompany the kings while going on military expedition. Some of the feudatory kings in the time of Harsa also find mention in the work. Bana has also focused on the inter-state relations in the time of Harsa. The policies he followed towards kings are in perfect harmony with what we find in the Prayaga-prasasti of Samudragupta. In the same chapter Bana has provided the details of military strength of Harsa with special description of elephant force and cavalry.

With regard to religious beliefs and faiths of the people, Bana informs us that altogether twenty-one religious sects existed in India. He has referred to three popular cults of Hinduism, the Saiva, Sakti and Vaisnava, the Lokayatika sect, Buddhism, Jainism, etc., that had already flourished before the dawn of the seventh century AD. On the combined testimony of the data available in the third, fifth and eighth chapters of his work it can plausibly be concluded here that Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were three popular forms of religion. Their co-existence is a

proven fact. In the times of Harsa and his predecessors, Brahmanism and Buddhism flourished side by side, after having reigned for about for a decade Harsa passed away in AD 647 or 648.

A long list of twenty-seven kings of different dynasties that ruled over different kingdoms in ancient India furnished by Bana in the sixth chapter of his work on the basis of his knowledge of the past history also deserves our notice. The list includes Somaka of Paurava dynasty, Nagasena of Naga dynasty of Padmavati (Pavaya), Vatsaraja Udayana (or Kausambi), rulers of Ayodhya, Sravasti, Videha, Kasi, Kalinga, Mathura, Asmaka, Sovira and of Pradyota dynasty, and Kakavarna of Sisunaga dynasty, Brhadratha of Maurya dynasty, Agnimitra, Sumitra and Devabhuti of Sunga dynasty, Brhadratha of Maurya dynasty, Agnimitra, Sumitra and Devabhuti of Sunga dynasty and rulers of Gupta dynasty that ruled over Magadha, and Ksatravarman of Maukhari dynasty. Even the killing of a Saka king at the hands of Candragupta II attracted the attention of Bana. Actually, his elder brother, Ramagupta, after being defeated by the Saka king agreed to surrender even his wife. Dhruvadevi, to him incompliance with his desire, but candragupta in the guise of a woman killed that Saka king in his camp itself, which Visakhadata in his Mudraraksasa has highlighted, already mentioned before. These are some of the additional historical information which Bana has supplied in his work.

2.1.2.1.6. Bana's Harsacharita as a historical work- An Estimation

Bana has not only provided the life history of Harsa but also a true picture of social, economic, political, religious and cultural life of the people of India in his time. Some other historical information of great value has also been incorporated in his work. His historical knowledge was superb. He has nowhere in his work lavished extravagant praise on his patron. Nor do we come across any exaggeration in his presentation of the subject matter. He has dealt with main theme of the work without much bias and prejudice. He has plainly stated the truth. Most of the facts stated by him are historically authenticated. However, it is undeniable that his work suffers from rhetorical descriptions and literary embellishment. The work after all belongs to a branch of literature called *kavya* (epic).

"Indeed, it is possible to prove by a diligent and critical examination of our sources that the Indians in the ancient and the early medieval periods possessed a sense of history, which at present appears to be imperfect and rudimentary, and that they developed a tradition of writing historical biography through its concrete evidence comparable to the lives of Plutarch is not available. Were the sense of history or the tradition of biography-writing completely absent in ancient India, the emergence of Banabhatta and Kalhana would not have been possible. The works of Bana and Kalhana among others represent the mature expression of historiography and historical biography and thus presuppose the continuity of literary and historical efforts and experiences of several generations." Cowell and Thomas have spoken very highly of Bana and his work. They have observed that he in his Sanskrit work "has woven the story out of actual

events." His work, in fact, is "based on real events." It contains "a living and contemporary picture wherein we can see something of the India of that time, just as we see in Arrian and Plutarch something of the India of Alexander's time." The work "has another interest from the vivid picture which it offers of the condition of Indian society and the manners and customs of the period." Bana's "descriptions of the court and village life abound with masterly touches which hold up the mirror to the time . . . . The court, the camp, the quiet village and the still more quiet monasteries and retreats, whether of Brahmans or Buddhists, are all painted with singular power and his narrative illustrates and supplements the Chinese travellers's travel at every turn."

Devabhuti has also admitted that despite some defects typical of the courtly literature of the time, one can find a realistic picture of contemporary life and many valuable facts about Harsa's character and achievements in Bana's Harsacarita.

2.1.3. Chronicles of ancient India: Kalhana's *Rajatangaini*

Here mention may first be made of the *Rajatarangini* (a chronicle or history of kings of Kashmir) by Kalhana, a distinguished Kasmiri historian of the twelfth century AD. He was the son of Campaka, a minister of king Harsa (AD 1089-1101). He adorned the court of king Jayasima (AD 1127-59), the son of Sussala II. It was during his reign that he composed his great work. According to all available evidences, he began his work in AD 1148 and completed it in 1150. His Rajatarangini became the most famous of all the ancient royal chronicles of Kashmir.

Kalhana was gifted with all qualities of a true historian. He occupies the highest place among the ancient historians of India. With his appearance on the scene ancient Indian historiography took a new turn.

2.1.3.1.Sources base of Kalhana

Kalhana utilized the works of eleven chroniclers of Kashmir who preceded him as sources of his information for composing his work. The eleven chronicles (*rajakathas*) used by him include the oldest extensive original works containing the royal chronicles (of Kashmir) condensed or abridged by Suvrata in the form of a handbook of the history of Kashmir the Nrpavali or Rajavali (List of Kings) of Ksemendra (AD 1028-63), who graced the court of king Ananta Deva (I.17), the work (name not known) of Padmamihira containing the list of eight kings who preceded Asoka (I.18), and the work (name unknown) of Srichavillakara (also called Sricchavillaka) containing the list of five princes from Asoka to Abhimanyu out of fifty-two. In addition to the chronicles, he consulted also a Puranic record, which is the Nila Purana of Nilamuni. From this source he obtained the list of four kings, viz., Gonanda and his three successors. While acknowledging the aforesaid works Kalhana observes "I have examined eleven works of former scholars which contain the chronicles of the kings, as well as the Purana containing the views of the sage Nila.".

He critically examined the existing historical records on Kashmir before wielding his pen. In fact, he adopted a critical method of historical research. Of all the works utilized by him for his purpose only the said Purana is now available and the rest have passed into oblivion. We do not possess any information about the use of the earliest historical *kavya*, the Bhuvanabhyudaya of Sankula of Kashmir (C.AD 850), which describes the local battles, by him.

Kalhana made a through use of royal charters, edicts, records of land-grants, the contemporary documents, coins, inscriptions and other archaeological evidence, and with the help of these he corrected errors occurring in the earlier works. He has himself stated that by looking at the ordinances (sasana) of former kings, at the inscriptions recording the grants and erection and consecration of temples and other monuments, at the laudatory inscriptions (prasasti-patta), and the written records (sastras), all worries arising from errors have been overcome and doubts have been set at rest. Like a serious historian or researchers of today he used all the relevant sources available to him for composing a chronicle of Kashmir.

2.1.3.2.Principles of historical investigation by Kalhana

The principles Kalhana followed for carrying out his historical investigation also merit our attention. His strict adherence to the exposition of facts can best be qualified in his own words: "That virtuous (writer) alone is worthy of praise who, free from love or hatred, restricts his language to the exposition of facts.". He tells us that the discovery of truth was hs sole object. He discarded all bias and prejudice, which is duty of a true historian. He laid stress on the fact that while writing a history of the past one has to pronounce his judgments like a judge. The mission of a historian, he says, is to "make vivid before one's eyes pictures of a bygone ago." He further says about the methodological technique he adopted for writing the history of the past : "How great a cleverness is required in order that men of modern times may complete the account given in the books of those who died after composing each the history of those kings whose contemporary he was ! Hence in this narrative of past events, which is difficult in many respects, my endeavour will be to connect.". He had, no doubt, clear understanding of fundamental principles of historiography. His impartiality, honesty and objectivity find reflection in the statement of facts recorded in his work.

2.1.3.3.The Rajatarangini- Content

The Rajatarangini (in Sanskrit containing nearly 8000 verses) is divided into eight books called *tarangas*. It embraces the history of Kashmir from the time of the first Hindu king Gonanda to AD 1149, the 22nd year of the reign of the last illustrious king Jayasimha. It contains the genealogies and chronology of kings of various dynasties that ruled Kashmir during this period. The achievements of all important kings and the details of all important events which took place during their times have been highlighted by the author in his work.

Of fifty-two kings who are said to have ruled Kashmir in the early phase, the list of only seventeen which includes Gonanda I and his successors and some other kings has been provided in Book I, Kalhana could not find the names of thirty-five kings as their records are lost. The same book contains the list of twenty-one kings who succeeded Gonanda III. Book II contains the list of six princes from Pratapaditya I to Aryaraja who belonged to Aditya dynasty. From Book III it appears that there was restoration of Gonanda dynasty and then princes of this dynasty from Meghavahana to Baladitya reigned in Kashmir. These three books contains more or less a traditional history from the time of the great battle of Kuruksetra or beginning of the Kali-yuga to the end of the sixth century AD which is based on *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. Some kings are, of course, mythical but there are some kings like Asoka and his son Jaluka, Kaniska and other whose historicity is well established. Their activities are also well recorded in Kalhana's work. However, there is anachronism in the genealogical list furnished in Book I. And the chronology of some of the kings mentioned in the said three books is not reliable.

Of all the early kings mentioned in the first three books Asoka is the most important. We are told by Kalhana that in his time Kashmir formed part of the Maurya empire. He built there many stupas and monasteries, and founded the city of Srinagara and made it capital (the ruins of which have been found at a distance of about ten miles from modern Srinagara). He also 'pulled down the wall of an old Hindu temple and built a new wall to it". In his time Buddhism was the prevailing religion. After Asoka's death, one of his sons, Jalauka, became king of Kashmir. He drove back the *mlecchas* (Scythians) from there and further extended his conquests to the eastern side of Kanauj. He professed the Saiva sect of Hinduism. During his time, Saivism found many supporters, and Brahmanical supremacy was established. But during the reigns of Kaniska and one of his successors, Huviska Buddhism became once more a popular religion. Kashmir was never under the political sway of the Guptas. The Huna chief, Mihirakula, is said to have usurped the throne of a Kashmir ruler, who was his contemporary, sometime in the early sixth century Ad and exercised his authority over a limited territory in the valley.

The information provided by Kalhana in Books IV – VIII covering the period from early seventh century AD to about the middle of the twelfth century are more trustworthy than what we find in the earlier three books from both historical and chronological points of view.

Book IV contains the history of seventeen kings from Durlabhavardhana to Utpalapida who belonged to the Karkota (also called Karkotaka) dynasty Durlabhavardhana, the descendant of Naga Karkota or Karkotaka, founded this dynasty. He appears to have ruled from circa AD 598 to 634. His reign was chiefly distinguished by this encouragement of religion, the temples he founded, the endowments he bestowed upon the brahamans, and some other benevolent works he undertook for the general welfare of the people. He won the friendship of Harsavardhana by presenting him a prized tooth-relic of the Buddha for installation in a shrine at Kanauj. The most

powerful ruler of the line was Lalitaditya (Ad 724-60), the third son of Durlabhaka alias Pratapaditya. Lalitaditya has been described as an efficient administrator, valiant warrior, great conqueror and patron of arts and culture. The author of the said work has given a faithful account of his digvijaya (conquest). He subjugated Yasovarman of Kanauj (in AD 773 or in about Ad 740) and invaded Karnata, then subject to a queen named Ratta, who submitted to the invader but was later restored to her dominions. He also subdued the coast and the islands opposite the banks of the Kaveri and reduced seven Konkanas. He occupied Avanti and Kamboja, conquered a portion of the Punjab, launched his campaigns in Tukharistan (the upper Oxus valley) and Daradadesa (Dardistan, north-west of Kashmir), carried his arms to the land of the Bhauttas (Tibetans) and advanced to the realms of Uttarakuru. After having accomplished his task he returned to his own dominion and proclaimed himself the sovereign ruler of Kashmir. Next he went for revamping of whole administrative structure. He set-up various new administrative departments and appointed officials of all ranks for the good governance of the kingdom. He founded a number of cities which include Lalitapura and Parihasapura. In the city of Parihasapura he built temples for Brahmanical goods – Bhutesa (Siva) and Parihasa Kesava (Visnu). In this city he erected stone-image of Garuda, and constructed a colossal figure of the Buddha and a figure of Hari. In Huskapura he erected an image of Mukta Svamin and temple of Jyestha Rudra. He built Buddhist viharas at Huskapura and other places. His most famous construction was the Marttanda temple of the Sun whose ruins still testify to its former magnificence and splendidness. Jayapida (AD 779-810), one of the successors of Lalitaditya, was another illustrious monarch of Kashmir. The author has given detailed description of his military enterprises and other activities. He is said to have defeated and dethroned a king of Kanauj who may be identified with Vajrayudha or Indrayudha. His expeditions against Paundravardhana (north Bengal), then the residence of Jayanta, king of Gauda, who submitted to the victor, and his conflict with king of Nepal are narrated in the author's work. One of the principal works of his reign was the construction of the fort of Jayapur and its embellishment by a temple of Siva and by a Brahmanical college. He was a great patron of learning, and his court was adorned by many literary celebrities and geniuses like Udbhata, Vamana and Damodaragupta. In hot pursuit of his passion to amass the wealth Jayapida adopted such measures which became fatal to his subjects. He levied heavy exactions on all ranks of people, and particularly oppressed the brahmanas by taking back the endowments, which he and his predecessors had bestowed upon them. A number of weak and incompetent rulers followed him. Their mutual conflict over the issue of possessing real sovereignty of Kashmir coupled with political convulsions led to the gradual decline of the power of the Karkotakas. About the middle of the ninth century their glory had totally eclipsed and they were supplanted by the

Utpalas. Utpalapida, the last monarch of the Karkota dynasty, was deposed and Avantivarman, the son of Sucavarman and founder of the Utpala Dynasty, succeeded.

The narrative of fifteen princes from Avantivarman to Suravarman to Suravarman II belonging to the Utpala or Varman dynasty has been provided in Book V. The accession of Avantivarman did not take place without opposition and he had to undergo many conflicts with his own cousins and even with his brothers before his dominion was established. By his valour, prudence, sagacity and wisdom aided by the wise counsel of minister, Sura or Suyya, to whom he was indebted for his crown, he overcame all opposition, restored order and tranquility, ascended the thronw in aD 855 and remained the undisputed sovereign of Kashmir till the end of his reign. He was not in a position to embark upon any schemes of conquest as the kingdom had suffered greatly from economic and political troubles during the reigns of the later Karkotkas." He however, took some steps to tone up the administration, establish internal security, mobilize resources and restore the health of state economy. He took some bold steps to curb effectively the power and influence of the Damaras, "a turbulent class of rural aristocrats". The minister of the king undertook some works of public utility. He constructed channels for irrigation which increased the fertility of the land resulting in the higher agricultural production. This led to the economic prosperity of the kingdom. During the reign of Avantivarman many towns and temples were constructed which increased the grandeur of the kingdom. The king himself built temples and bestowed upon them the endowments. He also gave liberal grants in charity to brahmanas. It is said that they also received the Agraharas, Khaduya and Hastikarna, from Suravarman who was nominated by the king Yuvaraja. The city, Avantipura, was founded by the king at Visvakesvara Ksetra in which he also erected a temple and dedicated it to Avantisvara or Siva whose worship he had adopted in place of the Vaisnava tenets in which he had been initiated. He also erected here three statues of the same deity under the names of Tripuresvara, Bhutesa and Vijayesa. But in the last phase of his life he again became the votary of Visnu and popularized the Vaisnava faith. The adoration of deities of Hindu pantheon during his time was on the increase. The King's minister built a town, Surapura or Suyyapura on the banks of Vitasta (Jhelum). The modern town of Sopur still preserves the name of the minister. The king also extended his patronage to literary figures amongst whom the most prominent was Anandavardhana. Avantivarman after having ruled for 28 years passed away in AD 883.

After the death of Avantivarman, the reign of Kashmir passed into the hands of his on Sankaravarman. The latter reversed the peaceful policy of his father and kept himself engaged in wars and conquests. He invaded Darvabhisara (the region between the Vitasta or Jhelum and the Candrabhaga or Cenab), extended his sway to Trigarta region (Kangra) after subduing its king, Prthvicandra, and defeated the Gurjara (i.e. Gujarat of Pakistan) Chief Alakhana and his ally Lalliya Shahi seizing the certain territories, conquered earlier by Mihira Bhoja, from

Mahendrapala I Pratihara, and transferred them to the Thakkiya chief. In order to replenish the treasury which became depleted because of his military operations, and also to satiate his desire to accumulate wealth, Sankaravarman subjected his people to every king of extortion. He levied heavy tolls and taxes, exacted undue proportions of the producte of the land, and let out to farm those lands, which were the property of temples. He levied fees even on religious festivities and ceremonies. This oppressive taxation resulted in the gradual impoverishment of the people. Learning also suffered under his rule for want of patronage. He diverted the attention of his subjects by engaging them in military expeditions. He is said to have led an army to the north where he subdued the people along the Indus. He entered the Urasa (Hazara) region where he was shot I the neck with an arrow by a mountaineer which resulted in his death. Thus, Sankaravarman after having reigned for 18 years died in AD 902.

His son, Gopalavarman, succeeded Sankaravarman. The only notable event during reign of the latter was the defeat his minister Prabhakaradeva inflicted on a rebellious Shahi king of Udbhandapura (Ohind, a few miles north of Attack) who may be identified with Alberuni's Semand (Samantadeva). His coins have also been found in large numbers in Afghanistan and the Punjab which are of the bull and horseman type and bear the legend "Sri-Samantadeva" on the obverse. We also learn that the victor (Prabhakaradeva) placed Kamaluka on the shahi thorne but he was later deposed because of being disobedient and unfaithful to the royal authority in Kashmir. It is noteworthy that in those days the Punjab and the territory beyond the Indus as far as Kabul were ruled by the Hindu princes of the Shahiya dynasty. Gopalavarman after having ruled for two years died in AD 904. The author has narrated all the events in detail which took place in the succeeding period. We further learn that the last king but one, Unmattavanti (Ad 937-39), was 'worse than wicked'. He slew his father and starved all his half-brothers to death. After his death, with the brief reign of Suravarman II the Utpala dynasty came to an end in AD 939.

In Book VI, the author has provided the history of ten kings in the lines of Yasaskara and Parvagupta. We are informed that after Suravarman II, Yasaskara (son of Gopalavarman's minister, Prabhakaradeva), was elected by the brahmanas as king. During his benevolent reign of nine years (AD 939-48) a new era of peace, progress and prosperity commenced in Kashmir. His son and successor, Samgrama, was killed in AD 949 by the minister Parvagupta who unsurped the throne himself. The most prominent and powerful ruler in this line was Didda, granddaughter of Bhima Shahi and daughter of Simharaja, a chief of the Lohara (in the Punch state). It is said that "She was an ambitious and energetic woman, and for nearly half a century-first as queen-consort of king Ksemagupta (AD 950-58), then as regent, and lastly as ruler (AD 980-1003) – she was the dominant personality in the politics of Kashmir." During this period there were constant court-intrigues which were suppressed by her with an iron hand. And in

spite of the opposition of Damaras (land-owning nobles) and the brahmanas she maintained her position and exercised authority with the assistance of Tunga, a Ksatriya of low origin, for whom she had immense affection.

The history of six princes from Samgramaraja to Harsa belonging to so-called the Lohara dynasty is contained in Book VII. Samgramaraja alias Ksamapati, nephew of Didda and brother of the Lohara prince, Vigraharaja, ascended the throne in Ad 1003 and continued to rule till 1028. Samgramaraja proved to be a weak king, and during the earlier part of his reign Tunga was virtually the ruler in the state. Kalhana tells us that the latter went along with army to help the Hindu Shahi king against the aggression of a Turuska (Muslim) named Hammira, who however, utterly routed the combined Hindu army. Tunga was murdered and thereafter Kasmiri soldiers fled back before conquering the Turuskas. And 'Shahirajya' was annexed to the realm of Turuskas. Here Kalhana speaks of Trilocanapala (the Hindu Shahi king of Lahore), who was defeated by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in Ad 1021 depite being helped by his ally from Kashmir, and of the Pujab which was annexed to the Ghazni empire. The historical accuracy of author's statement pertaining to this episode is well tested. We are also told that during the reign of Anantadeva (Ad 1028-630 seven mleccha kings had entered Kashmir but were beaten back by Rudrapala, the powerful Kasmiri general. Barring brief intervals of good government, the subsequent history of Kashmir is mainly a long tale of tyranny, misrule and fiscal oppression. Harsa (AD 1089-1101), who began his political career as an able administrator, military leader, great conqueror, and "liberal patron of the softer arts of music and poetry, later degenerated into a profligate, cruel-hearted, and irreligious man". He is said to have conquered Rajapura (Rajori). He employed Turuska generals in the army, and went on plundering the temples and defiling the images. At last, the powerful Damaras with chiefs, Ucchala and Sussala I, raised the banner of revolt against his excessive taxation and oppression, and consequently chaos and anarchy prevailed in the kingdom. Ucchala defeated Harsa and his son Bhoja in a single battle, burnt the capital and after having killed the former in ad 1101 seized the throne of Kashmir. The political spectacle, however, changed, but the people almost began to groan under the weight of civil wars, misgovernment, and machinations of the aristocracy.

Kalhana seems to be balanced in his value-judgements. He describes the periods of glory, misery,, and greatness and weakness of rulers. He has highlighted both the bright and dark sides of the character of some kings. For instances, he describes Harsa (the patron of his father) as tyrannical, but, on the other hand, counts his bravery as one of his good qualities. He praised Lalitaditya for his valour, benevolence and many other qualities but did not hesitate to criticize him for his betrayal of the king of Gauda. These are some of the instances which constitute a testimony to his objective treatment of subject.

The last and the eighth Book contains the history of seven kings from Ucchala (Ad 1101-11) to Jayasimha (AD 1127-59), the last illustrious sovereign. The author has provided an eye-witness account of the events which took place about the middle of the twelfth century Ad.

Kalhana has presented the narratives of the kings of Kashmir from the early seventh century AD to his own time maintaining his perfect historical sense. The history of this period is not only authentic but also in proper chronological order.

On the whole, the reigns of the kings whose history is known cover a period of 2,330 years up to the time of Kalhana.

2.1.3.4.Historical significance of the Rajatarangini

The Rajatarangini is a native chronicle of Kashmir. One of the characteristic features of this chronicle is that it contains information bot only about kings but also about contemporary society, economy, religion and culture. It contains valuable information about the religious toleration, the prevalence of three popular cults of Hinduism, Saiva, Sakti and Vaisnava and co-existence of Brahmanism and Buddhism, in Kashmir. Thus, it is important for the study of dynastic, political, socio-economic and cultural history of ancient Kashmir, R.C. Dutt has rightly pointed out that the historical value of this chronicle can best be judged by its contents. J. Hutchison opines that "Kashmir is the only country (state) in India of which we possess a written and detailed history of the Hindu period to literary labours of poet-historian Kalhana". A.L. Basham is also of the view that " . . . . No similar chronicles were composed elsewhere . . . ." He observes : "Though every important Hindu court maintained archives and preserved genealogies of its rulers, Kashmir is the only region in India in which a tradition of historical writing is known to have existed in pre-Muslim times.

As a matter of fact, the tradition of historical not only existed in Kashmir but also in other parts of India. Tod has correctly stated that "It is now generally regarded as an axiom that India possesses no national history . . . . but the Rajatarangini clearly demonstrates that regular historical composition was an art not unknown in Hindustan."

V.A. Smith has also acknowledged that "this work is nearest to the European notion of a regular history." Different scholars have estimated the historical value of the work in different ways. This chronicle can undoubtedly be considered a valuable historical record. The statement of some scholars that this is the only work which can be called a history is not worthy of acceptance. In fact, this is the best of all ancient Indian historical works.

Kalhana's name stands the foremost in the galaxy of chronicles or historians of Kashmir school. A true conception of history and the correct method of writing were not altogether unknown in ancient India. However, it was he who set several new landmarks in the history of historical writing in ancient India. He was the first Indian to understand the basic principle of historiography in the real sense of the term. The principles he laid down for writing history were

far in advance of his age. He made a critical and objective approach to the study of history. He was the first to emphasize the need of a through critical examination of all past records useful for the purpose for producing a genuine historical work. A new age of critical historiography began. He made the first serious attempt at scientific presentation of history. Moreover, in that sense he is often called the father of scientific historiography in ancient India, though we cannot deny the fact that to some extent he adopted the literary style of writing as is evident from the earlier part of his work. However, his comparison with Herodotus, Thucydides or any Greek historian is unwarranted. The history writing in ancient India passing through several stages reached the height of its progress in the time of Kalhana. He, no doubt, made significant contribution to the development of historical writing in ancient India. His work is marked by high standard of accuracy. Its value can be judged even by the modern standard of historiography. He was the forerunner of many Indian historians in the realm of debunking the truth from falsehood. M.A. Stein has also observed, "Honesty in a historian has not unjustly been called a forerunner of critical judgement in regard to contemporary history. Kalhana has manifestly endeavored to be fair and impartial. May we not assume that the same feeling has helped to guide him rightly also in the opinions he formed of the past?

Kalhana was the source of inspiration for future historians of India. His historical principles and laws were first followed by the Kashmiri chroniclers of the medieval age.

J.N. Sarkar has unequivocally called Kalhana a "historian". According to him " . . . . . the standard set by Kalhana was not reached by any other Hindu historian of the medieval period, just as the lines chalked out by Ibn Khaldun do not appear to have been worked out by any other Arabic writer."

The tradition of composing chronicle in Kashmir was further continued in medieval period by the future successors of Kalhana.

2.1.4. Conclusion

The biographical tradition of historiography despite all its shortcomings has its own value. "Ancient Indian biographies, like their counterparts in other countries, are by no mean perfect. By modern standards, they fall short of the desired ideal. Mostly their author appears to have been believers in the Great-Men theory of History, being ardent admirers of their patrons. Rarely they have succeeded in unfolding the full courses of the lives of their patrons and have seldom explored the quirks and crannies of their personalities. Yet viewed as a whole, their works have enabled us to know many things about the lives and carriers of eminent personalities of ancient and early medieval India and occasionally to recapture in our imagination all they had live and died for.

Ancient Indian historiography anterior to the seventh century AD was largely based on *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. However, its impact on the historical writings of the later period to a

considerable extent is also discernible. The traditional concept of history went on changing with developing historical sense, prevailing historical tradition in a contemporary age and events of the time.

The period extending from the seventh to the twelfth century AD proved to be a blooming one in the history of historical writing in ancient India. A number of historical biographies were produced in different parts of India during the period. The court poet who wrote the biography of his patron highlighting his life and achievements was no less than a historiographer. There were many such court poets. The kings who patronized them also deserve the credit of giving fillip to the production of biographical works by encouraging them to undertake such works. They wanted their court poets to records both the past and contemporary events for the purpose of preserving them for the future. The biographies of many famous kings who occupy important place in the annals of ancient India were composed by their respective court poets during the period. Some biographies are the productions of the historical school that flourished in the post-Harsha period under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal, the Paramaras of Malawa the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kalyani and the Cahamanas of Sakambari. The chronicles were also written in Sindh, Kashmir, Gujarat, Odisha and Nepal. The writing of historical biographies and chronicles were the two significant stages in the evolution of Indian historiography. The biographies and chronicle composed during the period form important parts of historical literature. Besides these works, other historical works of various kinds were produced during the period.

The Jains made more serious approach than the Buddhist to history as evidenced by the quality of the works they produced. They have a number of historical treaties to their credit. They, however, like the Hindus made significant contributions to the development of historical writing in ancient India. The Muslim author of the chronicle of Sindh was one of the ancient historians of India.

It is not correct to say that the ancient Indians did not produce political history. The deeds of kings, the political events, including struggles between native princes for power and political supremacy, attacks and invasions, wars and conquests and rise and fall of kingdoms, etc., are described in detail especially in the biographies and chronicles of the post sixth century AD.

Banabhatta was the author of the Harshacharita, which is a eulogistic history of the reign of Emperor Harshavardhana and the poet uses a very reliable source of our information regarding the reign of the monarch, excluding of course the pompous rhetoric. The initial chapter of Harshacharita is devoted to the life and family of Banabhatta himself, chapter's second to fourth to the ancestry of Harsha and the history of Thaneswar, and the rest is devoted to Harsha's military campaigns and the different religious sects living in the Vindhyas. Bana's work gives us

an idea of the political, social, economic and religious life of the time and helps us considerably in the task of reconstruction of the history of the reign of Harshavardhana. Cowell and Thomas have translated his work into English. About the merit of the work of Banabhatta, Cowell and Thomas remarks "The Court, the camp, the quiet village and still more quiet monasteries and retreats, whether of Brahamanas or Buddhists, are all painted with singular power". Harshacharita supplements as well as corroborates the work of Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang.

Bana's narrative, however, abruptly ends with the recovery of Rajyasri from the Vindhya forests. From Bana we know of Harsha's determination for world-wide conquests and the issue of a proclamation to all kings of India to either accept his allegiance or to be prepared for a fight with him. We are also told how Bhaskar Varman of Kamrup negotiated a friendly alliance and not one of vassalage. No reference to Harsha's success against Sasanka of Gauda has been referred to by the poet.

Despite the usual exaggeration of a royal panegyrist while praise of his master had been done, the work of Banabhatta in essential parts is reliable and where he is corroborated by the foreign traveler Hiuen Tsang, it is unassailable.

Chronicle writing is not foreign to the imagination of the Kashmiri Brahmins. A host of histories *Charitas* and Mahatmyas amply testify to this assertion. However, the history as it is taken in the modern parlance, is absent in Sanskrit literature. History is not an account of rise and fall of kings but should embrace in its ambit the political, social and religious attainments and aspirations of the people at large. To glean such fool-proof material. from Kalhana's Raja Tarangini (River of Kings) will only mean love's labour lost. In the first instance in his time such a conception of history-writing was not at all known; Even the earlier Greek memoirs cannot be deemed free from this defect. I before accusing Kalhana of inefficient handling of the subject-matter, it is to be borne in mind that he holds brief only for the "Rajas" i. e. Kings, and does not dabble in any other literary or historical pastime concerning people. He has very faithfully and aptly captioned his chronicle as "The River of Kings". Hence he limits his poetic description to the kings for and about whom he has written this Kavya. Thus it can safely be stated that Dr. Mecdonnel's remarks about the non-existence of truly historical material in Raja-Tarangini is only partly true.

2.1.5. Summary

- *The period extending from the seventh to the twelfth century AD proved to be a blooming one in the history of historical writing in ancient India. A number of historical biographies were produced in different parts of India during the period.*
- *Court poet who wrote the biography of his patron highlighting his life and achievements was no less than a historiographer.*
- *There were many such court poets. The kings who patronized them also deserve the credit of giving fillip to the production of biographical works by encouraging them to undertake such works. They wanted their court poets to records both the past and contemporary events for the purpose of preserving them for the future.*
- *Some biographies are the productions of the historical school that flourished in the post-Harsha period under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal, the Paramaras of Malawa the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kalyani and the Cahamanas of Sakambari.*
- *The chronicles were also written in Sindh, Kashmir, Gujarat, Odisha and Nepal. The writing of historical biographies and chronicles were the two significant stages in the evolution of Indian historiography.*
- *The biographies and chronicle composed during the period form important parts of historical literature. Besides these works, other historical works of various kinds were produced during the period.*
- *A historical biography in the true sense of the words deals with the life, character and deeds of a historical personality, royal personage, eminent king, great ruler or emperor, who occupies an important place in the history of a particular nation or region. It is based more on facts than fictions. It can easily be distinguished from a biography of literary figure, religious saint or particular individual and a biography of semi-historical nature.*
- *Of all the extant historical biographies of ancient times, mention may first be made of the Harsacarita of Banabhatta), the court poet-cum-historian of Harsa (AD 606-48) of Sthanvisvara (modern Thaneswar in Haryana) and Kanyakubja (Kanauj). Bana himself calls his work an akhyayika as it has a historical basis. It consists of eight ucchavasas (chapters).*
- *Rajatarangini by Kalhana, a distinguished Kasmiri historian of the twelfth century AD, became the most famous of all the ancient royal chronicles of Kashmir. Kalhana was gifted with all qualities of a true historian. He occupies the highest place among the ancient historians of India. With his appearance on the scene ancient Indian historiography took a new turn.*

2.1.6. Exercise

1. Post-Gupta period marked a steady change in the tradition of historical writings in India. Discuss.
2. Discuss the importance of biographies as sources materials of ancient Indian history.
3. Examine the historicity of Harshacharita of Banabhatta.
4. Chronicle writing marked a new phase in Indian historiography. Justify.
5. Write an essay on the Rajatangini of Kalhana as the first historical works of India.

2.1.7. Suggested Readings

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UNIT-II

Chapter-II

ARRIVAL OF ISLAM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HISTORICAL TRADITION OF INDIA; Historiography of the Sultanate period – Alberuni's –Kitab-ul-Hind and Amir Khusrau

Structure

2.2.0. Objectives

In this lesson, students investigate the growth of a Indian historiography during the Delhi Sultanate. Throughout the chapter, an emphasis will be on the influence of Islam and changing patterns of Indian historiography in medieval India. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- *understand the arrival of Islam in India and its influence on the historical writings in India;*
- *discuss the role of Muslim rulers of Delhi Sultanate and the Muslim scholar for composing historical works;*
- *describe the origin and growth of historiography from 1206 to 1526 AD;*
- *identify the various historical works and examine some important historians of the age under discussion and*
- *trace a brief history trends and nature of Historiography in India during Sultanate period*

2.2.1. Introduction

Historiography is known as *Ilm-al-tarikh* in Arabic. As a responsible to the society, the account of all activities of human race is called history. Historians are always active with the collection of historical data, compilation of books, analysis of historical events, examine authenticity of the sources of history with his wide attitude noted that he is also a member of the society. A historian cannot deny his time, place and environment, own thinking, sense of morality in his writings. In fact, history is itself changing because of having many obstacles. But men always want to know actual events related to the human life. From the ancient time, this trend of the knowledge continued and in this way, historiography is formed as an important part of knowledge and education.

The Ghurian conquest of north India towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. is an important event in Indian history. This is because an independent sultanate, founded in its wake, opened India to foreign influences on the one hand and led to the unification of the country under a strong centre on the other. It also attracted emigrants from the neighbouring countries who represented different cultural traditions. One of the traditions introduced by them was that of history writing. The historical literature produced by them in Persian language is of vast magnitude. As a matter of fact, the study of history was considered by the Muslim elite as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and the jurisprudence. With the coming of the Mughals in the 16th century, the tradition of history writing achieved new heights. During the Mughal period, the state patronized writing of history and we have a large body of historical literature in Persian spread over two centuries. In this chapter, we will discuss only the tradition of history writing during the Sultanate period.

2.2.2. Muslim Historiography

In the early stage of Islam, in the beginning of 9th century Muslim scholars and historians considered historiography to be the third source of knowledge after the research of Quran and Sunnah. For this reason, after the collection and compilation of the Hadith of the prophet, they start writing of the history. It seems very interesting to me that the same tradition was followed to the collection, compilation and preservation of the Hadith of the prophet and the history of the primary age of Islam. This tradition was followed till hijra 3rd century (9th and10th C.E). Since Arab historiography was mostly around with the description of the events and religious theme. In course of time, it was enlarged and enriched with the research of tribal, regional and national history. Also by the description of the world history, Arab historiography becomes a major part of the world historiography and it starts the glorious steps of the Muslims in the development of knowledge Standing on this, Arab historiography took its multi-formation not only discussion of the historical events but also fixed its relation to the cause and effects along with deeply analyzed criticism attached with the history. In this way, the Muslim scholars developed historiography at the same time Arabic language was also developed because the state language was Arabic at that time and research work on historiography was continued naturally in Arabic.

In 1258 A.D, having destroyed Abbassids Khilafat and Ilkhani dynasty was established. With the Ilkhani dynasty, 'Persi' language became the state language and it was developed during the time of Timurids and Safavids. In this way, 'Persi' entered in Indian sub-continent by the change of political power around the world. When Turkish replaced Persians, historiography was also started in Turkish language. But, the research of historiography in Turkish language has not so far enriched. Turkish sultans also patronized the Persian language later and at that time, regional and dynastic history continued in Persian language. Though the Arab historiography follows the Persian trends in the research of historiography, there is something different in the Arab historiography. Main theme of the Persian historiography was the conduct occupation of the kings. In the Persian history, general people was totally absent or a little bit was seen in their historiography during Ilkhani period composed in Persian language "*Jami-at-Tawarikh*" by Rashid-ud-din. In this book, the author tries to follow the trends of At- Tabari's writings but in his writings, the character of Arab historiography is totally absent in this write up. But, Rawatas-Safa composed by Mirkhand represents Arab trends and nature. During the Timurids period, the same trends 'Tarikhi- Khani' and 'Jafarnama' were composed. In these two books, Timurids dynastic history was arranged superbly. It is said that Muslim historiography was influenced later by the trends of Arab and Persian historiography. The Persian and Turkish carried on the central Asian trends of historiography towards Indian subcontinent.

2.2.3. Historiography in Sultanate period

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned, we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the style is also generally eulogizing or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written.

In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works. Apart from historical texts, a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdu'r Razzaq's *Matla'us Sa'dain* (travelogue), Tutsi's *Siyasatnama* (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at* (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (*Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar*) have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will study the historiography for the whole Sultanate period in separate subsections.

2.2.3.1.The Pioneers

The pioneer in history writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhr-I Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period. In Lahore, he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab,* the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri). The compiler wanted to present it to the sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as *Sipahsalar* of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India.

It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting. Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends.

No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogizing the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance. For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. This ceremony, indeed, implied operational legitimacy for Sultan's claim to authority. Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others. The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour were abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian Conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. It was in view of its importance that in 1927, the English scholar, E. Denison Ross separated it from the manuscript of *Shajra-i Ansab* and published its critically edited text with his introduction (in English) under the title *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*.

Another important work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It is written in the episodic form of historiography. It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period.

The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir.* Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. Being a literary genius and a master of the conceits of Arabic and Persian poetry, Hasan Nizami makes abundant use of metaphors, similes and rhetoric for the sake of literary ornamentation. The work abounds in unnecessary verbiage. Sans verbiage and unnecessary details, the historical material could be reduced to almost half of the book's size without any loss of the content. As for his approach, he begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went though in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam. However, from the year 1192

upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 A.D. Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing.

Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was, took part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak. No mention has been made by the Compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority. His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. For example, when he refers to the Hindu Chiefs attending the Sultan's court, he simply states, "the carpet of the auspicious court became the Kissing place of *Rais* of India". It contains no biographical details of the nobles, though many of them were the architects of the Sultanate. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (hereafter mentioned as Minhaj) was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period upto his own time, the year 1259 A.D., seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkuh and Ghazna. He himself served under different Ghurid Princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed the head of the *Firuzi Madrassa* (government college) in Ucch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sind and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236-40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of *Madrassa-i Nasiri* in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the position of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-I Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history writing.

The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol irruption under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterized by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had firsthand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan.

The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections, he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticized directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltumish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptions to writing on the period covered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri.* He rather preferred to begin his account from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban.

2.2.3.2.The Fourteenth Century Historiography

Many scholars seem to have written the 14th century histories of the Khalji and the Tughlaq Sultans. Ziauddin Barani mentions the official history of Sultan Alauddian Khalji's reign by Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi but it is now extant. Amir Khusrau also compiled the

Khazainul Futuh, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji. Khusrau also composed five historical *masnavis* (poems) in each of which historical events are described (in verse). It may, however, be recalled that neither Ziauddin Barani nor modern scholar, Peter Hardy regards Khusrau as a historian. They consider Khusrau's works as literary pieces rather than a historical work. Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami's *Futuh us Salatin(1350)*, Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi(1357)*, anonymous *Sirat-I-Firuzshahi* (1370-71) and Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (c.1400) are important historical works. A few of these 14th century historical works need to be analysed separately.

2.2.3.2.1. Isami's Narrative

The *Futuh-us Salatin* of Isami is a versified history of the Muslim rulers of India. It begins with the account of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's reign (999-1030 A.D.) and comes to a close with that of the foundation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan by Alauddin Bahaman Shah, a rebel against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, in 1350. Though much is not known about the author, yet it may be added that his ancestors served the Delhi court since the time of Sultan Iltutmish. Ziauddin Barani includes one of the Isami family in the list of the leading nobles of Sultan Balban. Isami, himself was brought up by his grandfather, Izuddin Isami, a retired noble. he was still in his teens when his family was forcibly shifted to Daulatabad in 1327. His grandfather died on the way and the young Isami was filled with hatred against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The hostility towards Sultan Mohammad Tughluq is quite evident in his account and needs to be treated with caution.

The early part of Isami's narrative is based on popular legends and oral traditions which had reached to him through the time. His account of the early Sultans of India is also based on popular tales with historical facts available to him through earlier works. But the details of historical events from the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji are much more authentic and can be of corroborative and supplementary importance. In this part Isami supplements the information contained in Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* about the siege operations conducted by the military commanders of the Delhi Sultanate in different regions during the Khalji and the Tughluq period. Isami's description of the foundation of Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughluq as the second most important city and his account of socio-economic growth of Delhi under Alauddin Khalji and other cities is graphic and insightful. Barani has precedence on Isami only in his analysis of cause and effect, connected with historical events.

2.2.3.2.2. Ziauddin Barani's Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi

Barani is, no doubt, the doyen of the Indo-Persian historians of medieval India. Born in an aristocratic family and associated with the royal court of Delhi for generations, he was obviously concerned with the fate of the Delhi Sultanate. He seems to have believed that it was

his duty to present through his *Tarikh-i Furuzshahi* an intellectual composition for the enlightenment of the ruling elite of his times.

Barani's *Tarikh* begins with the accession of Sultan Balban to the throne of Delhi in 1266 and comes to a close with the account of first six years of Sultan Firuzshah Tughluq's reign, i.e. the year 1356. Barani's *Tarikh* is unique to the Persian history writing tradition prevalent till his times. It is for the first time that he tries to analyse the cause and effect of the events and developments taking place in polity and economy. In his account of the economic policies and measures of Alauddin Khalji he provides an analysis with causes and formulation of the policies and their impacts. Barani also elaborates the purpose of writing history in explicit terms :

'The mean, the ignoble, the rude, the uncouth, the lowly, the base, the obscure, the vile, the destitute, the wretched, the low-born and the men of the marketplace, can have no connection or business with History ; nor can its pursuit be their profession. The above-mentioned classes can derive no profit at all by learning the science of History, and it can be of no use to them at any time; for the science of History consists of (the account of) greatness and the description of merits and virtues and glories of the great men of the Faith and State… The (Pursuit of the) science of History is (indeed) the special preserve of the nobles and the distinguished, the great men and the sons of great men.'

Barani also declares that the job of the historian is not only to eulogise the deeds and good works of the rulers but also to present to readers a critical account of the shortcomings and drawbacks of policies. Moreover, the scope of history is considerably widened by Barani with the inclusion of details about the cultural role performed by intellectuals, scholars, poets, and saints. Barani's style of history writing inspired the historians of the subsequent period, many of whom tried to follow his ideas.

2.2.3.3. Late Fourteenth Century Histories

Other major works of history from the second half of the 14th century are the anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi, Futuhat-i Firuzshahi,* composed by the Sultan Firuz Tughluq himself and Shams Siraf Aifif's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi.*. The rare manuscript copy of the *Sirat-I Firuzshahi*, available in the Khuda Bakhsh library, Patna, does not contain the name of its author. It reads as an official history of Firuz Shah's reign up to the years 1370-71. It contains, besides the details of military and hunting expeditions led by Sultan Firuzshah, interesting information about religious sects, sufis, ulema, socio-ethical matters, science and technology such as astronomy, medicines, pharmacology, etc. It is really a compendium of many-sided activities, accomplishments and contribution made by the Sultan to the works of public utility. The construction of canals and water reservoirs, the foundation of the new cities with forts and repair of old monuments are described in detail.

The *Futuhat-i Firuzshahi* was originally an inscription fixed on the wall of the Jama Mosque of Firuzshah's capital. Later on, it was copied and preserved in the form of a book. Through this, the Sultan wanted to disseminate to general public about reforms and projects he undertook for public welfare. Shams Siraj Afif, another historian of the period seems to have served the Sultan during the last years of Firuzshah's reign. He tells us that his great grandfather, Malik Shihab Afif worked as revenue officer in the province of Dipalpur under Ghazi Malik during the reign of Ala-Uddin Khalji. His father and uncle supervised the management of Firuzshah's k*arkhanas*. As Chaos and anarchy began to prevail after the death of Firuzshah (1388), he seems to have retired and devoted himself to writing the history of the Sultanate from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah (1320-1324). He refers to many volumes of his works, each devoted to the reigns of the individual Sultans. Of these only one, devoted to the reign of Firuzshah has survived the ravages of time. It seems to have been completed after the sack of Delhi by Timur in 1398. This work of his is full of nostalgia and portrays Firuzshah as a saintly ruler whose presence on the throne saved Delhi from every calamity. Because of this reason, he has written this volume in the form of *manaquib* (collection of virtues) like that of the spiritual biography of a saint. The name *Tarikh-I Firuzshahi* has been given to it by the editors of the Text.

The book is divided into five *qism* (parts) each containing eighteen m*uqaddimas* (chapters) of unequal length. The last (fifth) *qism* of the printed text comes to an end with the fifteenth chapter. The last three chapters seem to have been destroyed by the Mughal Emperors probably because they contained vivid details of the sack of Delhi by Timur, the ancestor of Babur. This volume of Afif is important for the information about socioeconomic life and prosperity that resulted from the state-policies followed by Firuzshah. The details about the foundation of new urban centers, construction of canals, water reservoirs and the administrative reforms are invaluable. Similarly, mention made by him of the agrarian reforms introduced by Firuzshah casts light on his interest in revenue matters. It may also be pointed out that Afif does not fail to mention the abuses and corruption that had crept in the administration; and says that officials in every ministry became corrupt. In the di*wan-i arz* (military department) the officials took one *tanka* per horse as bribe from the horseman at the time of annual muster. He also provides us with hints about the degeneration of the central army that was considered the best fighting force which could successfully defend the frontier against the Mongol invaders. On the whole it is, an important source of information about the life and culture in the Sultanate of Delhi during the later half of the fourteenth century.

After the dissolution of the Delhi Sultanate, a number of regional Sultanates and principalities arose. The capitals of these regional Sultanates replaced Delhi as the main centre of learning and culture. Khizr Khan (Saiyid) the founder of a new dynasty seized Delhi, which was

reduced to the size of a town. Khizr Khan (ruled from 1414 to 1421) and his son and successor, Sultan Mubarkshah (1421-1434) tried to rebuild the power of the Delhi Sultan but could not succeed. His own nobles assassinated the latter in the prime of his life. One of his officials Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, composed the history of the Sultanate and named it after the Sultan as *Tarikh-I Mubarakshahi* in 1434. It begins with an account of Sultan Muizuddin Mohammed bin Sam, who led the Ghurian conquest of India and the account closes with the accession of Mohammad Shah in 1434. The compiler seems to have drawn information from a number of histories written in India at different times. Some of the sources utilized by Yahya are now extant but bits of information on them survived through information collected and incorporated in the *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*. It enhances its importance. The historian of Akbar's reign utilised the *Tarikh* in the preparation of their volumes devoted to the history of the Delhi Sultanate.

2.2.3.4.The Fifteenth Century Histories

In the fifteenth century a number of historical accounts were compiled about individual kingdoms and were dedicated to the regional rulers. Shihab Hakim compiled the history of Malwa and named if after Sultan Mohammed Khalji as *Maasir-i Mahmudshah.* Abdul Husain Tuni, emigrant scholar from Iran who had settled in Ahmadabad (Gujarat) wrote *Maasir-i Mahmudshahi* during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah Begara. Both the works are extant. Another worth-mentioning history is the *Tarikh-i Muhammadi*, compiled by Muhammad Bihamad Khani, resident of Kalpi. It is written in the *Tabaqat* form beginning with the rise of Islam in Arabia. It is a summary of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* and similar other works to cover history of Firuzshah and his successors. But his account of the rise of Kalpi as a centre of culture and learning under the fostering care of its Sultans is original. He narrates the circumstances in which Mahmud Khan Turk founded the principality of Kalpi and assumed the title of Sultan after the return of Timur in 1398. The information about the nature of relationship between the Sultans of Kalpi, Jaunpur and Malwa is also of historical interest.

2.2.4. Trends and Nature of Historiography in India during Sultanate period

In the ancient India, there were no fixed and specific methods that were followed regarding the preservation and compilation of the historical events. Moreover, it was preserved through oral system. This system helps preserve religious rules and regulations, restrictions and others social rules. But it is not sufficient or enough to establish a permanent system of the preservation of all historical data and events especially the events related to the dynastic rule of India. At that time, the scope of the historical analysis was also very limited. So, we can say that, before the Muslim rule in India, historiography was totally absent. During Muslim rule in India, historians wrote analysis and criticism of political parties, rulers, government, administration and other organs of the country and Indian historiography, on the basis of research methodology,

authenticity and inquisitiveness could not reach to the similar position with the western. In fact, there are separate attitudes and thoughts among the two parts of the historians of east and west.

For the first time, Muslim historians started their historical research by removing this difference between the East and the West. In the composition of" Tabakat- e- Firojsahi", "Tabakat-e-Akbari" Muslim historians follows the modern methods and systems. Based on this, we can say that the Muslim historians were well versed of the modern historiography elements and sources. In the Sultanate period, (1206-1526 A.D) their royal court was filled up with the presence of Historians, Writers, Philosophers, Thinkers, Politicians, Orators, Poets and other scholars of the time. In this time, Indian historians did not fully follow Arabs and Persians, but they introduced a new trend in their research in accordance with Indian local perspective and reality of the time. In all regional historiographical write-ups, we see this tradition was followed seriously.

Muslim conquerors conveyed the traditional historiography and cultural heritage of Arab, Turkish and Persian towards Indian sub continent. The Indian Muslim historian's writings were almost similar with the writings of the outside of India by the Muslim writers on the basis of the planning through objectives of the events and also in the decoration of language. For this reason, the culture of Hindu and their social life are rare in the write-ups of the Muslim historians of India. The reflection of the conservative mentality and social attitude was inactive in the Muslim historiography of India. Hasan Nizami is one of the famous writers among the historians of early Sultanat period. In his "Taj-ul-Maa'sir", history from 1st 'war of Tarain' of 1191 A.D to the of Sultan Iltutmish's time till 1229 A.D was placed. Hasan Nizami presents some pictures of the society and culture with the political history of that mentioned period in his book.

In this book, he discussed the various types of war weapon, musical instruments, ornaments, dresses and other household managements of that time. This discussion reflected the society and culture of the people of India during the early sultanate period. This book is so important in bringing forward the history of establishment of the Muslim rule in India and social life of the Indian people of that time. It is an authentic book regarding the Muslim history of India. Historian Minhaj-e-Siraj (1189-1260 A.D) composed his renowned book *Tabakat-e-Nasiri*. For the first time, he came to Sind from 'Ghur' of central Asia and later, he was patronized by Mamluk Sultan Sams-ud-din Iltutmish in Delhi. He also held various royal post during the period of Sultana Razia, Bahram Sah, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud and Sultan Gias-ud-din Balbon of Delhi. He also served as a principle of 'Delhi Nasiria collage' and kazi of Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi. Minhaj-e-Siraj dedicated this historical book in the name of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. This book gave clear and authentic information on the establishment of the sultanate period of Delhi and its stability. But, it is said that he ignored or hidden weak points of the Delhi sultans because of their favor to him. The sources of his historical data were so

authentic and in somewhere he précised in description of the historical events. In this book, social and religious information of that period was totally absent. Here, the writer only placed military expeditions and conquest of various countries. The method of this book was also conservative and it is probed that, social and religious attitude of the Delhi sultans was fully reflected in the writings of Minhaj-e-Siraj.

In India, the write-ups of Islamic history started traditionally by following the trends of other Muslim writers, but some historians ameliorated it later. Amir Khosru (1253-1325 A.D) was a prominent figure among of them.

Jia-ud-din Barani was another prominent figure in Indian historiography. In his book, Tarikh-e-firojsahi, he wrote history of the period of nine Delhi sultans from sultan Balban to sultan Firoj sah Tughlok. In this book, besides political events, the writer combined the description of social, cultural and religious history of that time. He completed this book by the patronization of sultan Firoj sah Tughlok of Delhi at 1357 A.D and dedicated it to sultan Firoj sah Tughlok. In his view, a historian must be impartial, truthful and out of emotion in his writings. He also believed that if writings of incompetent and lower class writers includes as history, history will lose its importance and values. Jia-ud-din barani is considered to be the first scientific history writer among the Indian historians.

Sams siraj Afif described the history of the period of sultan Firoj sah Tughlok in his book Tarikh-e-firojsahi. He placed Sultan Firoj Shah Tughlak as the greatest ruler of Delhi. He analyzed all steps of Sultan Firoj in perspective of religious view and praised his all activities. Afif considered Sultan Firoj Shah Tughlok as a seal among the Delhi sultans like Prophet Muhammad is the seal among all the Prophets of Allah. So, Tarikh-e-Firojsahi is considered as a 'Manakir' book of sultan Firoj Shah Tughlak. Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi includes the successive history of Muslim rule in India from the period of Muhammad bin Sum (Muhammad Ghuri) to his own period that means from 1192 A.D to 1434 A.D. This book is merely a source to know the history of Syyed Dynasty of India. Sirhindi considered history as the activities of human being.

2.2.5. Al-Biruni (973-1039A.D)

Al-Biruni's full name was Abu-Rayhan Mohammad. He passed his youth on the banks is of the river Oxus in the city of Khwarizm (Khiva) situated in the Republic of Uzbaikistan.

The prince and ruler of Khwarizm professed ardent zeal for science and arts, and encouraged scholars like Al-Biruni to study the various branches of knowledge and inspired people to travel different parts of the world. Al-Biruni, through his dedication and vast knowledge, achieved great scholarship in philosophy, religion, mathematics, chronology, medicine, and various languages and literatures. He was a man endowed with creative genius,

sagacity, wisdom, sincerity, and commitment to inductive reasoning. His humour, courage, enterprise, objectivity, honesty, prodigious industry and intellectual skills were unprecedented.

2.2.5.1.Early Career

Al-Biruni was one of those prodigious minds at work in the medieval world whose creative, versatile, scientific, and international outlook, coupled with universality of thought, amaze the modern world. He was free from dogmatic conservatism as well as emotional bondages. This helped him to remain free from prejudices.

He was more of a synthesizer than a dogmatic scholar, a keen observer of comparative studies par excellence. Al-Biruni's position as a scientist and scholar may be appreciated from the fact that the eleventh century has been regarded as the 'Age of Al-Biruni'.

According to some historians, Al-Biruni was born on 4th September, 973 A.D. (3rd of Dhul-haj, 362 A.H.). His father and mother expired at an early age. Although a Tajik by race, he was Persian by culture. There is a strong controversy about the birth of Abu-Rayhan. It revolves round the identification, interpretation and meaning of the word 'Biruni', a part of Abu-Rayhan's name. Is Biruni a city? Where was it situated? Or is Biruni a suburb of Khwarizm (Khiva)? Or does it denote one who was born in Khwarizm or one who lived outside the city of Khwarizm? This confusion has led some later authorities to find a logical explanation for this term. According to Samani's Kitab-al-Ansab, the people of Khwarizm called foreigners Beruni (Biruni) in Persian and for this reason Abu-Rayhan was called Al-Biruni. The well-known historian, Yaqut, has opined that perhaps Biruni meant one who lived outside the city or in the countryside. Except Abu-Rayhan, no other person was given this appellation which means that it was not in general use.

Abu-Rayhan's stay in Khwarizm was also not short for his first 23 years were spent in that region under Al-i-Iraqi, and a further period of 8-10 years under the Ma'munids. In all he spent nearly 30 years in Khwarizm.

Moreover, he was born in the suburb of Kath-a town in the region of Khwarizm. His other contemporaries like Ibn-Sina stayed for far shorter period in Khwarizm but none was ever styled Al-Biruni, even though Ibn-Sina was a Persian by origin. The use of Al-Biruni with the name of Abu-Rayhan, therefore, appears to refer to his birthplace, a town or a suburb settlement of Khwarizm.

Unfortunately, Abu-Rayhan has not left behind any autobiographical account. There are some scanty references in his writings but these do not throw light on his education and early life. One may presume that he received the traditional Maktab and Madarasah education. Al-Biruni was a great scholar and possessed encyclopedic mind. He was always in search of new knowledge.

2.2.5.2.Alberuni and Different Branches of Learning

He was a liberal and profoundly interested in science. In his age orthodox reaction had already set in and Abu-Rayhan was wary of being accused of heresy while writing al-Hind. Abu-Rayhan, born with a great analytical mind and keen comprehension, was irresistibly drawn to the study of mathematics. Travelling was always regarded as a part of education in Islam.

But, by the 11th century, numerous rich libraries established by rulers had greatly reduced the need to travel to distant places for acquiring knowledge. However, when Abu-Rayhan wanted to study Indian sciences, he had to travel, visit, and use all the means at his disposal to have access to the scattered sources in Western India.

The most noteworthy trait in Abu-Rayhan's character was his insatiable thirst for knowledge. Like a thirsty man he returned again and again to the fountain of knowledge. Even when his life was ebbing out he would not let the scarce minutes go by uselessly. Very little is known about the family of Al-Biruni. Probably, he had no children and this partly explains his polarized devotion throughout his life. Free from the burden of parenthood he lavished almost parental love on his studies and books.

He studied the Greek books through Arabic translation. He was versed in Persian, Turkish, Syriac and Sanskrit. He was familiar with the Roman language of the Byzantine Empire. He had friendly contacts with Syriac and Christian intellectuals. He was acquainted with the Arabic translation of Indian works. Subsequently, when political developments brought him into contact with the Hindus of the subcontinent, he made full use of this opportunity. He learned Sanskrit when he had already completed 45 years of age. He commanded a vocabulary of nearly 2,500 Sanskrit words.

The facility with which he discusses and explains Indian doctrines shows his full command over the subject. His proficiency in Sanskrit literature is also corroborated by the fact that he was able, while delving into the nature of God, to clearly explain the foundations of the Advaita School. He distinguishes between the beliefs of the educated Hindus and the common people. It is clear from his works that he made astronomical observations in the cities of Ghazna, Kabul, Lamghan, Peshwar, and Multan. He was a witness to the Muslim conquest of the city of Nagarkot situated at the foot of the Himalayas. This city was famous for an ancient Hindu (idol) temple. Probably, he accompanied the soldiers of Mahmud, up to Mathura and Kanauj on the banks of the Jamuna and the Ganga, respectively. He died at Ghazna in the year 430 A.H. (1039).

The prolific writer, Al-Biruni, has written a number of books and has dwelt upon a great variety of subjects. Among the main works of Al-Biruni include Kitab-al-Hind, Al-Qanun-al Masudi (The Canon of King Masud), Vestige of the Past Athar-al-Bagiya, Tarikhul-Hind, Kitab-al-Jamakir, and Kitab-al-Saydna. He translated from Sanskrit into Arabic the original title of

Patanjali which contains valuable information on India and China. He wrote 27 books on geography, four each on cartography, geodesy, and climatology, and the remaining seven books on comets, meteors and surveying. Al-Biruni's academic interests and activities encompassed a wide variety of subjects, ranging from abstract theories of philosophy to the practical sciences of mathematics, geography, geology, physics, astronomy and medicine. His main field of study, however, was astronomy.

Al-Biruni's age was characterized by orthodox reaction. There were people who regarded astronomy as heresy. This prejudice was similar to people's opposition to logic on the plea that its terminology belonged to pagan Greek literature and language, although the adoption of Greek terms was mainly the fault of the translators. In much the same way, there were people who ignored geography as something without any utility, though the Holy Quran is full of episodes of travels and adventures, e.g., Prophet Abraham's journey from Ur, Moses' journey from Egypt and the hijrah of the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him).

After analyzing these unscientific tendencies, Al-Biruni produced convincing arguments for establishing the claims of physical sciences. He reminded the opponents of astronomy that God asks people to contemplate on the marvels of the earth and heavens, believing that all the phenomena of nature reveal truth of the highest import.

He provided illustrations of the daily use of mathematical and astronomical knowledge. This knowledge helped in ascertaining the influences of the sun and the noon in the form of what we know as the seasons and tides. Knowledge of stars and their positions is of considerable help in setting directions during travels and journeys. Similarly, it is very helpful in ascertaining the correct directions of qiblah and the timings of prayers and the latitudes and longitudes of cities. In this way, astronomy was shown by him to be a useful, functional and applied science and in conformity with the injunctions of Islam.

As astronomy is interrelated with a number of other sciences such as cosmogony, mathematics, and geography, Al-Biruni's magnum opus, the Qanun-al-Masudi is modelled on the pattern of the Almagast of Ptolemy. His astronomical theories are of significant bearing and, therefore, have been discussed hereunder.

Al-Biruni considered the universe to be situated on the outermost surface of a limited sphere. A detailed study of the origin of the universe was made by Al-Biruni in his book al-Tahdid. The geo-centric and heliocentric controversy engaged the mind of Al-Biruni. Some modern scholars have criticized him for accepting the geocentric theory. However, in that age when telescope and modern precision instruments were lacking, it was difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion. He was not ready to accept the heliocentric theory without definite scientific evidence. Until an alternative theory was conclusively proved, it was but logical to believe and

accept the older theory or explanation. Al-Biruni wrote a separate book, Kitab-al-Tatbiq ft Tahqiq, Harkatah al Shams on the movement of the sun.

After discussing the basic problems relating to the sphericity of the skies and the earth, the geocentric theory, the nature of the eastern and western notions of the heavens, Al-Biruni goes on to define the imaginary circles and signs so often referred to in astronomy and geography, i.e., the poles, the equator, longitudes and latitudes, obliquity and the signs of the zodiac.

He devoted special attention to the study of time and dates. He studied the calendars of different nations. He also inquired about the differences in the time of day and night in different regions and the continued long day at the poles. The problem of finding the correct timings of prayers led him to conduct research over a long period beginning with the writing of the Chronology to Qanun al-Masudi. He wrote a book (Risalah) about day and night which also proved the duration of a six-month day at the poles. He also compiled a small treatise on the Indian determining division of time.

About the sun, he asserted that it is a fiery body for the solar eruption which is noticeable during the total eclipses. Al-Biruni believed in the geocentric theory and regarded the sun as moving round the earth.

Al-Biruni had his reservations about Ptolemy's view that the distance of the sun from the earth was 286 times the latter's circumference. He, however, found the sun immeasurable with the instruments of that age and its distance remained an object for conjecture.

In his monumental book, Qanun-al-Masudi, he presented a masterly exposition of both the solar and lunar eclipses. He described the obliquity of the eclipse as the angle formed by the intersection of the celestial equator and the ecliptic. Earlier, the Greek, Indian and Chinese astronomers found it to be 24° 51′ 20″. Al-Biruni himself took measurements at Khwarizm and Ghazna and found the figure to be 23° 35′ which is very close to the actual obliquity. He also discussed the reasons and timings of dawn and twilight. He found that twilight (morning and evening) occurs when the sun is 18° below the horizon. Modern researches have confirmed Al-Biruni's findings.

About the moon, he asserted that it does not move in a perfect circle. Its maximum and minimum distances differ appreciably. It changes its path and is variable. Al-Biruni stated that the moon returned to its former position in relation to fixed stars but minute differences occur and accumulate. He discussed the lunar month on a synodic basis, i.e., by referring to its position, and return to it, in relation to the sun.

Al-Biruni measured the longest and the shortest distance of the moon and the earth. These were 63° 32′ 40″ and 31° 55′ 55″ of the earth's diameter. However, he was not sure of the diameter of the moon. In this matter, he followed Ptolemy and accepted his value of the moon's

diameter as 31′ 20″ of the earth's diameter. Here again, his scientific insight led him to choose the correct figure, for Ptolemy's value is nearer to the modern value of 31′ 17″.

About the tides, he opined that the increase and decrease in the height of the ebbs and tides occurred on the basis of changes in the phases of the moon. He gave a very vivid description of the tides at Somnath and traced the latter's etymology to the moon.

About the stars, he was of the view that it was practically impossible to determine the number of heavenly bodies (stars) even in a small portion of the sky. He was also aware of the limitations of the instruments of his age. Among the ancient astronomers, Hipparchus was the first to catalogue 850 stars. Ptolemy also worked on this basis. Al-Biruni adopted the Greek nomenclature of 48 figures and 12 constellations arranged on a belt.

He rejected Aristotle's contention that the 'Milky Way' was under the sphere of planets and correctly estimated it to belong to the highest sphere of the stars. He also attacked Aristotle for believing that stars cause injury to eyesight and are responsible for sorrow and misfortune. This shows that he was basically rational in approach and did not attach any superstition to natural phenomena. He thought these stars moved to the east on a central axis and parallel to the zodiac.

He believed that as there was no way to find out the parallel of the fixed stars it was impossible to determine their distance and magnitude. The Greeks thought that the stellar sphere was next to the most distant planet. Ptolemy regarded the distance as 19,666 times the earth's radius. Mars was accepted as one and a half times the sun's diameter. Al-Biruni used Indian figures about the distance and magnitude of the stars.

Regarding the planets, Al-Biruni followed Ptolemy taking his works to be the most authentic and correct. From the earth towards the stars, the planets were arranged by him in the following ascending order: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

Al-Biruni was of the view that the Greeks were more exact in their sciences and observations. The Indians, however, were better equipped in solar and lunar studies and the eclipses. What he basically aimed at was the exposition of the scientific method backed by firm belief in natural laws. He insisted upon continuous observation, collection of reliable data and successful application of all these principles.

Though, Al-Biruni dedicated himself only to astronomy, yet he excelled in mathematics also. In that age, mathematics consisted of arithmetic, geometry, physics and music. Algebra was added to this only after the age of Al-Khwarizm. While Al-Biruni excelled in geometry and arithmetic, he possessed considerable knowledge of algebra too.

He was also interested in physics, though he had no interest in music. In his book, Kitab-al-Hind, he discussed Indian beliefs, Hindu literature, grammar, metre, chess, etc., but totally ignored Indian music.

Besides having expertise in spherical trigonometry, Al-Biruni was an adept in Indian arithmetic. He wrote Rashikat-al-Hind (The Zodiac in India). He was also familiar with the different methods of arithmetic propounded by Brahma-Siddhanta.

Al-Biruni had special interest in geomorphology and paleontology. He compared the different fossils discovered in the plains of Arabia, Jurjan and Khwarizm along the Caspian Sea. His studies pointed to the existence of sea at these places in some bygone age while history possessed no such record. According to him, the Indo-Gangetic plain was formed by the silt brought by the rivers.

He also discussed the occurrence of floods and springs. His study of the changes in the course of rivers of Jurjaniyah and Balkh and Oxus shows his deep insight in geomorphological processes. He found that the course of the Oxus had undergone a change since the days of Ptolemy-a period of 800 years and he also explained how the life of the people living in the region had been affected by these changes.

He correctly estimated the known habitable world as greater in length, i.e., from China in the east to Morocco and Spain in the west. The seas limited the inhabitable world. The known world was divided into age-old seven-fold divisions of seven aqalim.

Al-Biruni also had an accurate idea of the different bays, gulfs and smaller seas. He referred to the Ice Sea in the north-east of Europe and in the west of Tangier and Spain. He also mentioned the Sea of Warang (Norsemen), i.e., probably the Baltic. In the south of Europe, he was aware of the presence of a sea in the form of gulfs up to Sicily and Bulgaria (Mediterranean Sea). The Indian Ocean, he mentioned as being pricked by islands and felt that it met the oceans in the east and possibly below Africa in the west. The Indian Ocean also had its links with the Klymsa Sea (Red Sea) and with the Persian Gulf. He referred to the seas of China and mentioned the fact that in the east the seas were named after the islands or the countries.

The great geographer was also aware of the huge mountain range known in India as Himavant (the Himalayas) which spread across the length of the known world like a spinal column.

He also mentioned the Warangs and their predatory habits. There was mineral industry in North Europe. He referred to the Sawaras, Bulgars, Russians, Slavs and Azovs in the west and to the country of Frank and Galicia, situated beyond the Roman Empire at the western arm of Europe.

Regarding Africa, he was convinced that it lay and extended far into the south. He referred to the ‘Mountain of Moon’ situated near the equator which was the source of the Nile River. He analyzed the causes of floods in the Nile and attributed them to the heavy rains in the upper reaches of the Nile.

Al-Biruni's knowledge of Asia was quite extensive and fairly accurate. In his opinion, the Great Central Mountain (the Himalayas) was the source of most of the perennial rivers of Asia. He provided detailed information about the land of the Turks, identified in the Augarer River, and about the region of the Baikal Lake in Eastern Siberia.

He wrote extensively and accurately about the geography of India. His estimate of India's extent from the forts of lower Kashmir to the Deccan Peninsula is amazingly close to the real dimensions of the subcontinent. He had a definite idea of its peninsular form. The mountains of Himavant and Meru (Pamir) surrounded it in the north. He said that the Eastern and Western Ghats controlled the distribution of rainfall in peninsular India. He provided detailed information about the sources of rivers. However, excepting the Indus, his information about the other rivers is limited to the location of their sources, based on hearsay and the knowledge derived from ancient books, e.g., Matsya Parana.

He was the first person to provide correct information about the Indus, its origin, course and floods. His knowledge of the geography of the Punjab and Afghanistan was based on his personal observations. He also described the rivers of Gherwand, Nur, Kaira, Sharvat, Sawa Panchir, Bitur (Afghanistan), Biyatta (Jhelum), Chandrahara (Chenab), Irwa (Ravi) and Shaltladar (Sutlej). The five tributaries of the Indus, according to him, meet the river at Pancanade (Panchanda) in the Punjab near Multan.

Al-Biruni provided valuable information about North-Western India, particularly Kashmir. For Gilgit, he said that it was two days journey from Kashmir. About Kashmir, he said that it lay on a flat fertile plateau, surrounded by inaccessible mountains. The southern and eastern parts of the country belonged to the Hindus, the west to the various Muslim kings, the north and eastern parts to the Turks of Khota (Khatan) and Tibet. The best access to the Kashmir was through the Jhelum gorge.

He also described the city of Qannauj—the city traditionally associated with the Pandavas. Moreover, he acquired considerable knowledge of the terrain and people of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

He gave an accurate account of the seasons of India. He described the nature of the monsoon, which brought rainfall to the greater parts of the subcontinent during the summer season. He explains how Kashmir and the Punjab receive rainfall during the winter season.

Al-Biruni also discussed the origin of castes in Hindu society, idolatry, and the Hindu scriptures. His study of Samkbya, the Gita, Patanjali, Vishnu Dharma and of some of the Puranas, coupled with his acquired knowledge of the Vedas, provided Al-Biruni with a unique opportunity to give the first objective description of Hindu beliefs. Al-Biruni found a dualism in Hindu beliefs, i.e., the beliefs held by the educated (scholars) and the beliefs of the ignorant masses. This cleavage became wider with a dualism in linguistics. The language of the masses

was quite different from that of the learned. Thus, the educated disapproved of idolatry but the masses believed in it.

In brief, Al-Biruni excelled in philosophy, religion, cosmology, astronomy, geography, geodesy, stratography, geomorphology, mathematics, science, medicine and several languages. He also contributed appreciably in the field of chronology, computation of years and dates. At the same time, he had a clear concept of the ideal historian. His correct view and reasoning led him to think that the institution of Varna (caste), based on inequality, was the main obstacle in a rapport between the Hindus and Muslims. The condition of Indian learning, language, script, centres of learning was also brought out. The gigantic labour, scientific reasoning, and untiring efforts made Al-Biruni one of the most outstanding geographers of the medieval period.

2.2.5.3.Alberuni and India

Attracted by Indian culture, he learnt Sanskrit and studied several books concerning Hindu philosophy and culture. His curious mind and master eyes did not spare even the Puranas and the Bhagavad-Gita. He travelled far and wide and wrote a masterly account of India in his book Tahqiq-i-Hind. This also known as *Kitab-ul-Hind* (1017-31 A.D).

In addition to it, Alberuni is also credited to have translated many Sanskrit works into Persian and Arabic. Talking of Hindu in general, Alberuni complains of their complacency and ignorance of the outside world. He even finds faults with them for their want of sympathy and communication with other peoples whom they call mlechchas.

Observing the consuming arrogance of Hindus he notes, 'The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, and no science like theirs. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, 'he adds, 'for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generations.'

According to him, India was divided into a number of kingdoms such as Kashmir, Sindh, Malwa and Kannauj. He talks of various kinds of castes and distinctions in the society. Another point of society is that early marriage was common and women who lost their husbands were condemned to perpetual widowhood. Parents arranged marriages for their children and no gifts were settled, though the husband made a gift to his wife which became her stridhana.

A further comment of Alberuni is also worth-noting. He observes that the Hindus did 'not desire that a thing which has once been polluted should be purified and thus recovered'. Thus, the above portrayal clearly shows that all was not well with India. Society as the least compact. Caste tensions were prevalent. There was no sense of cause; the disintegrating tendencies were already serious.

The disorganized people of the country finally surrendered themselves to foreign invaders. Alberuni was able to observe the condition of India very minutely. He wrote what he saw here.

2.2.5.4.Al-Biruni and the Kitab-ul-Hind

Al-Biruni was born in 973, in Khwarizm in present day Uzbekistan. Khwarizm was an important centre of learning, and Al-Biruni received the best education available at the time. He was well versed in Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit.

In 1017, when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni invaded Khwarizm, he took several scholars and poets as hostage to his capital and Al-Biruni was one of them. In Ghazni , Al-Biruni developed an interest for India.

When the Punjab became a part of the Ghaznavid Empire, Al-Biruni came to India and spent years in the company of Brahmana priests and scholars, learning Sanskrit, and studying religious and philosophical texts.

He travelled widely in the Punjab and parts of northern India. He collected various information and wrote a book called Kitab-ul-Hind.

Al-Biruni's Kitab-ul-Hind, written in Arabic, is simple and lucid. It is divided into 80 chapters on subjects such as religion and philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.

Al-Biruni adopted a distinctive structure in each chapter, beginning with a question, following this up with a description based on Sanskrit traditions, and concluding the chapter with a comparison with other cultures.

2.2.5.5.Problems or barriers obstructed Al-Biruni in understanding India.

Al-Biruni, discussed several "barriers" that he felt obstructed in understanding India. The first amongst these was language. According to him, Sanskrit was so different from Arabic and Persian that ideas and concepts could not be easily translated from one language into another. The second barrier he identified was the difference in religious beliefs and practices. The self-absorption and consequent insularity of the local population constituted the third barrier. He was aware of these problems so Al-Biruni depended almost exclusively on the works of Brahmanas, often citing passages from the Vedas, the Puranas, Bhagavad Gita, the works of Patanjali, the Manusmriti, etc., to provide an understanding of Indian society.

2.2.5.6.Al-Biruni and His description of the caste system

According to Al-Biruni the highest caste is the Brahmana, who were created from the head of Brahman. The next caste is the Kshatriya, who were created from the shoulders and hands of Brahman. After them the Vaishya, who were created from the thigh of Brahman. At last the Shudra, who were created from his feet.

As these classes differ from each other, they live together in the same towns and villages, mixed together in the same houses and lodgings.

Al-Biruni tried to explain the caste system by looking for parallels in other societies. He noted that in ancient Persia, four social categories were recognized a)knights and princes;

b)monks, fire-priests c) lawyers, physicians, astronomers and other scientists; and d) peasants and artisans.

He attempted to suggest that social divisions were not unique to India. At the same time he pointed out that within Islam all men were considered equal, differing only in their observance of piety. In spite of his acceptance of the Brahmanical description of the caste system, Al-Biruni disapproved of the notion of pollution. As we have seen, Al-Biruni's description of the caste system was deeply influenced by his study of normative Sanskrit texts which laid down the rules governing the system from the point of view of the Brahmanas.

2.2.6. **Hazrat Khwaja Abul Hassan Amir Khusro** (1253 A.D. to 1325 A.D.)

Amir Khusro, one of the most versatile personalities of medieval India, was born in 1253 in a place called Patiyali, Uttar Pradesh. His real name was Ab'ul Hasan Yamin al-Din Khusrow whereas Amir Khusro was his pen name. Also known as Amir Khusro Dehlavi, this creative classical poet was associated with the royal empires of more than seven rulers of Delhi. The life history of Amir Khusrao is truly an inspiring one and he is considered to be one of the first recorded Indian dignitaries who are also a household name. Known for his immense contribution in literature and music, this legendary personality was born of a Turkish father and an Indian mother in a village in India. To know more about Khursro, continue to read this insightful biography on him.

2.2.6.1.Personal Life

Khusro lost his father at a young age and then moved in with his maternal grandparents. His grandfather served as an attendance master of soldiers at the royal palace of Emperor Ghayasuddin Balban. Khusro was exposed to all famous literary figures of his time when he accompanied his grandfather to the royal courts to attend the private congregations. This inspired him to take up poetry and indulge in fine arts like music. He also learnt horse riding and received training in martial arts. The famous Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya was his spiritual mentor.

2.2.6.2.Major Work

Amir Khusro is often acknowledged for creating Khayal of north Indian classical music known as Hindustani. He modified raga Dhrupad and added Persian tunes and beats to it. He created Qawali on the likes of bhajans. The poems he wrote were in Persian and a combination of Bhojpuri and Persian, which he called as Hindvi.Amir Khusro These poems later were developed into Hindi and Urdu.

Probably Khayal originated from Qawalis that he created on the lines of Bhajans. He wrote poetry in Persian as well as what he called Hindvi—a combination of local Bhojpuri and Persian, which later evolved into Hindi and Urdu. Many of his poems are even today used in Hindustani classical as bandishes and as Ghazals by Ghazal singers.

A Royal Poet: Khusro was a Royal poet under Sultan Aalauddin. Aalauddin due to his righteous nature and for the moral wellness his empire banned all the intoxicants from his kingdom. Khusro contributed in Sultan's chastisement movement. He took the responsibility of discipleship. Under his watch he accepted all kinds of people—people who were rich or poor, high in social status or low, nobles or beggars, educated or uneducated, fortunate or unfortunate, city people or rustics, soldiers or priests, murids, etc. Khusro helped people, equally, to live a clean life and abstain themselves from morally harmful habits. When people did commit any sin, then they could approach Khusro and confess. Khusro helped them to get back on the right track and renewed their discipleship. He started the new regime for daily prayers and everybody started following it. Whether it was a man or woman or young child, everyone started gathering together to offer daily prayers. This even included the late morning prayers. Even the high end of the society-people with money and status started attending these prayers. This lot included royal secretaries, clerks, sepoys, slaves, etc. Because of Khusro's praying sessions or barakah, people started concentrating on the pious things and got involved in tasawwuf or mysticism of life. Some of them even turned to renunciation or tark and got involved in devoutness. Even towards the end of Sultan Alauddin's sovereignty nobody in his kingdom gave into the practice of drinking liquor or gambling or taking to any indecent ways of living. Everybody lived in complete harmony and followed the goodness taught by the religion. The effects of teachings of Khusro was so strong and widespread that it is said that even the shop keeper stopped lying, cheating and under-weighing to make more profits. He even entertained the scholars from all walks of life and discussed mysticism with them. These discussions were mainly based on books on mysticism from those times like: Fawaid-ul-Fuwad, Qut-ul-Uloom, Kashif-ul-Mahjub, Awarif and Malfuzat of Hazrat Nizamussin Aulia. People started to self-educate themselves after being in the company of Khusro, on topics like self-control and renunciation. Most of the people took to spiritual style of life and followed the rules and regulation of that life very strictly.

He also catered to the cause of peaceful co-existence of Hindu-Muslim in the society. He helped the cause by writing in Hindvi language, which appealed the most to young children and elderly people. He was proud of the fact that he belonged to a Hindustani nation as in one of his books called Ghurra-ul-Kamal he said that he had written some of his books in Hindvi language because he is a Hindustani Turk and it is a tribute to his connection with Hindustan. He was also proud of his fluency in Hindvi language.

2.2.6.3.Historiographical Contribution

Amir Khosru (1253-1325 A.D) was a prominent figure among the historian of medieval India. He was famous in India as a Poet, Litterateur, Musician and Historian. He composed near about 100 books on various topics in his life. In his long life, he continued his research activities by the patronization of sultan Kaikobad, Bugara Khan, Jalal-ud-din Khalji, Ala-ud-din Khalji,

Kutub-ud-din Mubarak sah Khalji and sultat Gias-uddin Tughlak. He did not write any chronological history; just he compiled some selective events of history. His six books are following: a) Kiran-as-Sadain, b) Miftah-al-Futuh, c) Khajain-al-Futuh, d) Dual rani khijir kha, e) Nuh sifihor, f) Tughlaknama. All these books are the compilation of important events of that time.

Historian Amir Khosru described the dramatic and emotional meet of Sultan Kaikobad of Delhi with his father Bengal sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Bugara khan and also he gave a clear picture of the city life of Delhi in his book 'Kiran-as-Sadain'. In Miftah-al-Futuh, he describes four military expeditions and victory of sultan Ala-ud-din khalji. In Khajain-al-futuh, he discussed the victory of sultan Ala-ud-din khalji. His another book, Dual rani khijir kha, was composed with the romantic description of the romance of sultan Khijir khan, son of sultan Ala-ud-din khalji with princes Dual rani daughter of king Koron of Nahrawala. His book, Nuh Sifihor, was composed by the description of the events related with sultan Kutub-ud-din Mubarak sah and in this book, the writer also presented a brief discussion on language, eco-geographical condition and royal court of Delhi sultanate. In his book, Tughlaknama, he described the victory of sultan Gias-ud-din Tughlak, especially the victorious events of Delhi in 1320 A.D.(*Minhaj-e-Siraj, Tabakat-e-Nasiri*, translated and edited by Abul kalam Mohammad Jakaria, Dhaka, 1983, page-245.) He wrote eventual history based on political theme and his writings also did not follow any chronological time line and period.

The motive of Amir Khosru's writings was to maintain the request of the sultans and the royal members of Delhi sultanate to won prizes from royal kings and to be famous in his life as a scholer. In his writings, he just tried to give pleasure to the readers of history by making an interesting description and did not try to deeply analyze the historical events and purify its authenticity or he did not try to convey any kind of message in his writeups. Futuh-us-Salatin was composed by Khaja Abdul Malik Isami. In this book, the writer described the history of around three hundred and fifty years from Sultan Mahmud of Gazni till sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak of Delhi. Isami composed this book by the patronization of Bahmani ruler Ala-ud-din hasan sah of Deccan. In this book, he strictly criticized sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak of Delhi. But, this book of Isami was an excellent historical document to know successive history from sultan Mahmud of Gazni to sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak of Delhi.

2.2.7. Conclusion

Based on above mentioned discussion, it is to be noted that in Indian sub-continent, Muslim historians write the praiseworthy history under the patronization and supervision of the Muslim sultans even they named their books by the name of sultans. Historiography of this time is almost based on politics. Other side and sector of human society was totally absent in their writings. We see that some historians hardly include the description of society and culture in

their writings. So, we come to an end that historiography of sultanate period was based on rulers' and the activities of the royal court and royal persons and Persian-Turkish trends were also reflected through their write-ups.

1.2.1. Summary

- *Historiography is known as Ilm-al-tarikh in Arabic. As a responsible to the society, the account of all activities of human race is called history.*
- *The Ghurian conquest of north India towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. resulted in foundation of an independent sultanate, opened India to foreign influences on the one hand and led to the unification of the country under a strong centre on the other. It also attracted emigrants from the neighbouring countries who represented different cultural traditions. One of the traditions introduced by them was that of history writing.*
- *The historical literature produced by them in Persian language is of vast magnitude. As a matter of fact, the study of history was considered by the Muslim elite as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and the jurisprudence.*
- *In the early stage of Islam, in the beginning of 9th century Muslim scholars and historians considered historiography to be the third source of knowledge after the research of Quran and Sunnah. For this reason, after the collection and compilation of the Hadith of the prophet, they start writing of the history.*
- *The available histories of this period put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan..*
- *In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works. Apart from historical texts a number of other Persian works are available for the period.*
- *Abdu'r Razzaq's Matla'us Sa'dain (travelogue), Tutsi's Siyasatnama (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar) have provided excellent travel accounts.*
- *Al-Biruni was one of those prodigious minds at work in the medieval world whose creative, versatile, scientific, and international outlook, coupled with universality of thought, amaze the modern world. He travelled widely in the Punjab and parts of northern India. He collected various informations and wrote a book called Kitab-ul-Hind.*

1.2.2. Exercise

1. Discuss how arrival of Islam influenced Indian historiography.
2. Write an essay on the Arabian historiography.
3. Examine how the historical writings flourished in the 14th century A.D under the patronization of Delhi Sultanate.
4. 15th century .D marked a changing trend in sultanate historiography. Discuss.
5. Assess the life and works of Alberuni as a historians on India.
6. Write an essay on the historical significance of writings of Amir Khsrou..

1.2.3. Suggested Reading

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UNIT-II

Chapter-III

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE MUGHAL PERIOD

Baburnama, Abul Fazl and Badauni

Structure

2.3.0. Objective

In this lesson, students investigate various facets of Historiography flourished during the Mughal rule in India. After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- *understand the historiographical trends emerged during Mughal era.*
- *know growth of historical writings under the patronisation of different Mughal emperor;;*
- *describe the distinctive features of Mughal historiography;*
- *explain the significance of Baburnama as a historical work;*
- *points out the contributions of Abul Fazl and Baduni as historians of Mughal age.*

2.3.1. Introduction

"History is always written by the winning side", though a cliché, is an expression which points out imperfectness and dubiety of history that we learn today. In this respect, though history provides us with academic interest from its intrinsic attractiveness, historiography, a study of historical records, gives a different kind of scholarly amusement by focusing on the historical records themselves, analyzing them, and broadening the scope of our awareness of history.

With historiography, this chapter aims to investigate historical records written by historians of the Mughal Empire, one of the most prosperous countries in South Asia throughout the history. A wide range of aspects about historical records will be dealt: historians who wrote the records, sources they used for historical records, purpose of historical writing, historical records in context of the time they were written and the time they are concerned with, and other different tendencies concerned with historical records such as perspectives, bias, etc. With in-depth analysis of historical records and comparing it with societal or cultural background of the Mughal Empire, this paper will try to find either individual historical approach used by Mughal historians or common tendencies regarding historical records of the Mughal Empire. When analyzing sources, this chapter will examine source by source in the order of the time it was written.

2.3.2. Introduction of the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire ruled the South Asian region including current northern India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan from the early 16th century to the 19th century. As the name of the empire, Mughal, which means Mongol in Persian language indicates, the empire was built by a foreign tribe of Mongol origin. Babur, the progenitor of the Mughal Empire, is a direct descendant of Timur who descended from Genghis Khan.

The Mughal Empire was founded in 1526 when Babur defeated and superceded Delhi Sultanate. However, his son and successor Humayun was beaten by Sher Shah of Suri dynasty of Afghan origin and fled for Persia in 1540. In 1555, he retook Delhi and revived Mughal dynasty. The next period from the following emperor Akbar to Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb is

considered as a golden age of The Mughal Empire. Akbar fired a flare of the golden age by achieving several great achievements. He largely expanded his empire by conquering Malwa Plateau (central part of India), Gujarat (western part of India), Bengal, Kashmir, Kandahar (southern part of Afghanistan), etc. Under his rule, The Mughal Empire established its centralization by organizing bureaucracy and administration. Moreover, with religiously tolerant policies such as giving government positions to Hindu, Akbar sought for solid integration within Mughal society. He announced Din-i-Ilahi, a syncretic religion which derives primarily from Islam and Hinduism, as the court religion although the religion could only get few adherents (including Abul Fazl) and disappeared.

The Mughal Empire continued to flourish both economically and culturally under the next two successors Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Prosperity passed its peak and started to decline under Aurangzeb. He achieved the largest territory throughout the history of India by conquering southern India. However, different from Akbar, he was intolerant of other religious, destroying Hindu temples, bringing a poll tax for other religions back, and forcing conversion to Islam. His uncompromising religious policies and expansionist policies enlarged resistance among his subjects and consumed a great amount of expense, threatening the cornerstone of the empire. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire continued to collapse. From the late 18th century, The Mughal Empire lost its effective control over India to the British. As the British East India Company took power of the Mughal Empire in 1805, Mughal emperors existed for only nominal ruler used for colonial domination. In 1857, Sepoy Mutiny rose up and Indian soldiers crowned Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II as an emperor, but the mutiny was repressed in two years and the Mughal Empire went out of existence.

Economically, commerce and fabric industry developed and monetary economy was vitalized. The establishment of a system of a law and communication network contributed to the exuberance of the empire. Trade with foreign countries such as those in West Asia and Europe developed, developing domestic industry and introducing its goods in European market. However, economy gradually declined from the late 17th century because of the decreased agricultural productivity by acidification of land, corruption of administration, and expansionist policy.

The Mughal Empire also saw a cultural prosperity with its mixed culture. Although Islam was a dominating religion of the authority in the empire, tolerant policy in the early period led to Islamic culture fused with Hindu. In religion, Sikhism, a syncretistic religion integrating elements of Hinduism and Islam, had emerged in the 15th century and gained followership under Mughal rule, especially in the Punjab. Art, Literature, Architecture, etc, showing a blend of Hindu, Turkic and Persian culture, thrived. Mughal emperors such as Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan showed a great interest in culture and supported it. For example, the Taj Mahal, built by

Shah Jahan, has a lotus pattern derived from Hindu art and spires, a mosque, arabesque from Muslim art.

The dominant and official language of the empire was Farsi (Persian), but Hindi and Urdu, a language of the elite derived from Persian and heavily influenced by Arabic and Turkic, were also widely used. Science including astronomy and technology such as gunpowder continuously developed.

2.3.3. Historians and History Books in the Mughal Empire

Writing history of a country is meaningful in many aspects. For great leaders of a country, history can be used as a mean to boast of their achievement to their descendants. For future generations, historical records are useful source to trace their origins and learn from the past. In addition, since writing history is both a scholarly work which needs much academic efforts and a cultural task intended for descendants, a quality and a quantity of historical records in one country are often considered as criteria which determine the cultural level of a country.

The Mughal Empire, once an economically and culturally prosperous country, also left many historical works. It is during the Mughal dynasty when Indian historiography reached its highest point of its growth and development. Historical books written in this period are great sources from which today's people can learn the history of South Asia and some other regions such as Afghanistan.

Mughal historians were often patronized by emperors or nobles and many of them had other original occupations such as courtiers under emperors, or poets, scholars. For example, Abul Fazl (Abu al-Fazl), the author of *Akbarnamah*, was a close vizier of Emperor Akbar. Similarly, Jawhar Aftabi, the writer of *Sah Jahannamah*, was an intimate friend of Shah Jahan. Mir Masoom Shah Bakhri (Mir Muhammad Masum), who wrote *Tarih-i Sind*, did his service under Akbar. Nimat Allah al-Harawi (Nimat-Allah ibn Habib-Allah Haravi), although he served Khan Jahan Lodi later, was a historian under Jahangir. Those historians were encouraged to write history of emperors themselves or history of the past including not only Mughal history but also history of other ethnicities. For example, Abbas Khan Sarvani(Abbas Han Sarvani), written at the request of Akbar, wrote history of Sher Shah in *Tuhfah-yi Akbar Sahi* (A Gift to Akbar Saha), a sultan of Suri Dynasty, who ruled South Asia from 1540 to 1545 when The Mughal Empire retreated. Sayh Rizq-Allah ibn Sad Allah Dihlavi in the name of Mustaqi wrote *Vaqiat-i Mustaqi* which contains the Afghan sultan.

Some emperors who were learned themselves even wrote history by themselves. The founder of the Mughal Empire Babur wrote his autobiography *Vaqiat-i Baburi*. Jahangir, the fourth emperor, also wrote his autobiographical memoir called *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. In addition, Gulbadan Bigam, the daughter of Emperor Babur, wrote *Humayunnamah* which is an account of her brother, Humayun.

While in the earlier period of Mughal dynasty historians are often under the service of emperors, in the latter period during which the Mughal Empire declined, historians often served local government or East Indian Company. Although there were also historians serving local government in the earlier periods, there are less famous historians who served the emperors during the declining period of Mughal dynasty. For instance, Muhammad Ali-ibn-Muhammad Burhanpuri was a historian supported by the governor of Oudh and Muhammad Ali Han Ansari served the deputy governor of Bengal during the reign of Mughal ruler Shah Alam II in the 18th century. Hayr-al-Din Muhammad Ilahabadi and Gulam Husayn Zaydpuri are historians who were employed in the East India Company. Gulam Basit is a historian whose ancestors had been in the service of the Mughal Empire, tried to enter the service of the empire and who himself tried to serve the empire. However, in the periods of decline of the empire, he sought for employment under English who supported him greatly. Additionally, writing a historical book was often a cooperated work done by many different writers but led by one chief writer.

2.3.4. Sources of Mughal Historians

There were several ways in which Mughal historians could get sources to write historical works. Sometimes, one's direct experience became a primary source of a historian. The autobiography written by Babur, Vaqiat-i Baburi, the memoir of Gulbadan Bigam, Humayun-namah, and Jawhar Aftabci's Tazkirah al-vaqiat, which gives an account of Humayun, are examples which use historians' personal observations.

Many other historians seem to have depended on existing written sources. For example, when Abul Fazl wrote Akbar-nama, he used Sanskrit texts and knowledge system which he could have accessed through intermediaries, likely Jains favored during Akbar's reign to access Indian knowledge of geography, cosmography, etc. Hwajah Nizam al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad Muqim Haravi, when he wrote Tabaqat-i Akbari, a celebrated history book which for the first time deals with the history of India, cited twenty-nine authorities. Tabaqat-i Akbari itself became the major historical sources which later historians copiously extracted from and relied on. Muhammad Tahir Asna, the author of Sah Jahan-namah, relied on Padsah-namah by Abd al-Hamid Lahuri when he wrote about the first twenty years of the rule of Shah Jahan. It seems that there existed plenty of historical collections made by the authority; when Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin wrote about Aurangzeb, he was permitted to use the Royal Records guarded by officers. It seems that with few sources of history, some historians sometimes relied on their guess.

2.3.5. Reasons for Historical Record-Keeping

Surely, pure scholarly interest would be one of the reasons why Mughal historians wrote history books. However, there existed other reasons which made Mughal historians want to write history.

Loyalty to their patrons was one major reason of historical work. Historians, often serving under emperors or authority, wrote history dedicated to them. It is possible to find several major historical books which starts with the name of the emperor and ends in namah such as Akbar-namah, written by Abul Fazl, also referred to as Sah Jahan namah, written by Muhammad Salih Kanbu Lahuri, Alamgir-namah (The Book of Awrangzib) written by Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin, Sah Jahan-namah written by Muhammad Tahir, Humayun-namah written by Hwandamir, Giya al-Din ibn Humam al-Din, etc. These works, as their names indicate, are dedicated to the emperors and mostly dealt with the accounts related to the emperors. Historical books were also written at the direct request of the patrons. Tuhfah-yi Akbar Sahi (A Gift to Akbar Saha) by Abbas Khan Sarvani(Abbas Han Sarvani) was made at the request of Akbar.

Abdul Hamid Lahori (Abd al-Hamid Lahuri)'s *Padshahnama* was written at the request of Shah Jahan. A historian in the period of decline of the Mughal Empire, Mirza Abu Talib Han Isfahani wrote *Tafzih al-gafilin* as Captain Richardson of the East India Company asked Talib to write a history of the time of Asaf al-Dawlah.

Some history books are written because of the historians' individual interest such as in *Tarih-i salatin-i Afaginah*, which is about a history of the Lodi and Afghan dynasties, written by Ahmad Yadgar who claim he was a servant and witness to the last days of the Afghan kings in Bengal and Tarih-i Sind (the history of Sind) by Mir Muhammad Ma who was a native of Sind.

2.3.6. Mughal Historiography according to the time sources were written

2.3.6.1.Establishment of the Mughal Empire (1526-1556): Babur to Humayun

One of the earliest historical works during the Mughal Dynasty is probably the autobiography of the emperor Babur Vaqiat-i Baburi (The Events of Babur) which extends to 1529 before his death in 1530. Originally written in Turkic and later translated into Persian during his term, his autobiography takes an important position in the early Mughal Historiography. Babur, a learned and precise man as well as a great politician, shows detailed and faithful but simple description of his history in his autobiography. He uses bountiful statistical accounts; his description of Hindustan for example, "contains, not only an exact account of its boundaries, population, resources, revenues, and divisions, but a full enumeration of all its useful fruits, trees, birds, beasts, and fishes, with such a minute description of their several habitudes and peculiarities as would make no contemptible figure in a modern work of natural history." His accurate and close records provide us with important knowledge of the political, social, and cultural situations of The Mughal Empire in the first quarter of the 16th century. A details account on Baburnama is dealt here in a separate section.

Another historical account of Babur made in this period is *Tabaqat-i Baburi* (Generations of Babur) by Sayh Zayn al-Din Hwafi. Work of Shaikh Zain, Babur's secretary, which describes

Babur's fifth invasion of Hindustan, is contrasted to Babur's autobiography in that his work lacks simplicity and intelligent style found in Babur's but is rather pretentious. Tabaqat-i Baburi is not as detailed as *Vaqiat-i Baburi* but more descriptive and dramatic as seen in "The shrill blast of the clarion of destruction, and a scene like that of the day of judgment, full of awful and tremendous strife, now operating together, the meaning of the text, 'When the heavens shall be rent,' became manifest; and the heads of the leaders of the armies of the time, like shooting-stars falling from the sky, fell like balls in the arena, and the meaning of the words, 'The stars shall be scattered,' became apparent" which describes Babur's victorious defeat of enemies.

Humayun-namah completed in 1534-1535 by Hwandamir, Giya al-Din ibn Humam al-Din Muhammad, is an account of a cultural and social condition of Humayun's reign. Especially, his work is marked by the account of rules and ordinances made under Humayun, and poems.

2.3.6.2. Period of Prosperity (1556-1707): Akbar to Aurangzeb

2.3.6.2.1. During the rule of Akbar (1556-1605)

Gulbadan Bigam, as a daughter of Babur and a sister of Humayun, gives a direct account of Humayun in *Humayunnamah* which was requested by Akbar. Since she was in a royal family herself, she narrates the history in a personal voice.

"At the time when his Majesty Firdaus-makani passed from this perishable world to the everlasting home, I, this lowly one, was eight years old, so it may well be that I do not remember much. However, in obedience to the royal command, I set down whatever there is that I have heard and remember."

"At these words hearers and onlookers wept and lamented. His own blessed eyes also filled with tears."

As shown in the above quotes, her narrative style is quite emotional. She does not include much political information but she gives a detail account of what happened within her royal family.

Abul Fazl's *Akbarnamah*, considered one of the monumental historical works in the Mughal historiography, contains history from Timur, ancestors of Akbar, to Akbar's reign. Originally added with a number of painting related to the texts, the book helps the understanding of history with visual. It consists of three volumes: the first deals with the history of Timur's family, Babur, Humayun and the Suri sultans of Delhi, the second is about the history of the reign of Akbar till 1602, and the third gives a detailed description of the political, economic, geographical conditions of the Mughal Empire. He also gives bountiful information about other philosophies or religions. Though he relates Hinduism in the view of Muslim, he shows relatively more rational and secular approach and tries to explain the history of India not as the conflict between religions but as the conflict "between forces of nationalism and regionalism,

secularism and religious fanaticism, stability and disintegration", which makes him a great historian of his age.

Another significant historical work written in similar period is *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* (Generations of Akbar) written by Hwajah Nizam al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad Muqim Haravi. It is the first general history whose subject matter is solely on the history of India. The Ma-asiru-l Umara says, "This work cost the author much care and reflection in ascertaining facts and collecting materials, and as Mir Masum Bhakari and other persons of note afforded their assistance in the compilation, it is entitled too much credit. It is the first history which contains a detailed account of all the Muhammadan princes of Hindustan. ... From this work Muhammad Kasim Firishta and others have copiously extracted, and it forms the basis of their histories, deficiencies being supplied by additions of their own; but the Tabakat occasionally seems at variance with the accounts given by the celebrated Abu-l Fazl. It is therefore left to the reader to decide which of the two authors is most entitled to credit." According to above quote, it seems that the author could produce celebrated standard history of India which is based on strict historical research. With its special focus and historical value, *Tabaqat-i Akbari* is considered one of the greatest works which largely influenced the future generations.

2.3.6.2.2. During the rule of Jahangir (1605-1628)

In this period, another autobiography of emperors, after Babur's, was written by Jahangir. Jahangir's *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (The Memoir of Jahangir) is also considered important historical source with its lively and comprehensive record of the political and socio-cultural developments in the 17th century and supplement to *Akbarnama* written by Abul Fazl. Although Jahangir's memoir provides relatively frank and honest description of wars, rebellions, imperial regulations and the emperor's daily life, its literary value, objectivity, and historical value are less than his forefather, Babur. His account of himself has an implicit tendency to highlight his achievement or gloss over his faults such as his rebellion against his father. However, just like Babur's, Jahangir's autobiography has its value in that it provides faithful account of others including his father Akbar.

2.3.6.2.3. During the rule of Shah Jahan (1628-1658)

Ma-asir-i Jahangiri (Literary Works about Jahangir) written by Kamgar Husayni, who served both Jahangir and Shah Jahan, is an account of early life and reign of Jahangir completed in 1640-1641. It does not have much detailed descriptions and its description on the period before Jahangir's rule is thought as very independent and free-spoken compared to contemporary historical work on similar subject, *Ikbal-nama* by Nawab Mutamad Khan which was made for Imperial favour. Nevertheless, it still has much flattery to the emperor and hides his misdeeds.

Padsahnamah (The Book of Kings) is a work led by Abdul-Hamid Lahuri who completed his part in 1648 on the request of the emperor and finished later by his pupil. With a

minute detail and beautiful illustrations, *Padsahnamah* is a major source of information about the Shah Jahan's rule which describes imperial lifestyle vividly. A notable aspect about the author Abdual-Hamid Lahuri's description is that the author adopted styles of Abul Fazl very much. The author, who studied and greatly admired Abul Fazl, in fact states himself as an imitator of Abul Fazl's style and use verbose, turgid description if asked eloquence. However, when he describes simple facts, he uses simple language. His work also contains lots of information about the nobles and courtiers of the time, which were not a commonly dealt historical matter. Later historians drew historical sources related to nobles from his work.

2.3.6.2.4. During the rule of Aurangzeb (1658-1707)

Sah Jahannamah (The Book of Shah Jahan) was written by Muhammad Tahir "Asna" deals with the reign of Shah Jahan. In the preface, the author reveals the purpose of his works. "it seemed to the writer of these pages that, as he and his ancestors had been devoted servants of the Imperial dynasty, it would be well for him to write the history of the reign of Shah Jahan in a simple and clear style, and to reproduce the contents of the three volumes of Shaikh Abdu-l Hamid in plain language and in a condensed form."

As the description of *Padsahnamah* by Abdul-Hamid Lahuri is verbose, he states that he gave a more simple and reduced account of Shah Jahan. He also mentions, "And as only a selection has been made of the events recorded, this work is styled Mulakhkhas (abridgement)". As the historian himself indicates in previous quote, Sah Jahan-namah gives a simple account of Shah Jahan, though maybe a summarized history.

Alamgirnamah (The Book of Awrangzeb) by Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin is a typical historical work dedicated to the emperor Aurangzeb, full of panegyrics. With great support from the emperor himself, Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin was encouraged to collect extraordinary events related to the emperor, use any available sources, and ask any questions about omitted information even to the emperor himself. Because of its nature of purpose of the works, *Alamgirnamah* has a panegyric, verbose, and strained style.

Sujan Ray Bhandari's Hulasah-al-tavarih (Summary of Histories) is concerned with a general history of India from the earliest times to the accession of Aurangzeb. His work includes a good account of the products and geography of Hindustan. As the name implies, the author tends to condense history to a great extent that he does not include much details. However, his work sometimes shows poetical remarks and unnecessary digression. He gives abundant account of the first four Mughal Emperors but does not give separate history of other monarchies of India, about which he gives only brief information of each king. In his narrative of the history, he includes many verses some extracted from various authors, and some to be original.

2.3.6.3. Decline of the Mughal Empire (1707-1857): Bahadur Shah I to Bahadur Shah II

Burhan al-futut (The Demonstration of Victories) by Muhammad Ali ibn Muhammad Sadiq Husayni Nisaburi Najafi Burhanpuri is a short general history of India. It is considered as a very useful book of reference as it shows close attention to dates, though it is too short.

The History of Hindustan by Rustam Ali *Sahabadi Tarih-i* is another Mughal historical work which deals with the history of India. Divided into ten chapters, this work provides much information about Muhammad Shah and the contemporary poets of the author. There are poetical quotations, sentences from Koran, and moral reflection in his work. His work, different from previous Mughal historical works, provides direct and critical evaluations on Mughal emperors. Followings are parts of his work about a Mughal emperor:

"This Prince was a lover of pleasure and indolence, negligent of political duties, and addicted to loose habits, but of somewhat a generous disposition. He was entirely careless regarding his subjects."

"to the great mortification of poor people and all good subjects, the Emperor became master of his own will, and, actuated by his youthful passions and folly and pride, resigned himself to frivolous pursuits and the company of wicked and mean characters."

Tarih-i mamalik-i Hind (The History of the Lands of Hindustan), written when the Mughal dynasty met its decline, is a short history of rulers of India by Gulam Basir. Requested by General Charles Burt to write a short account of the rulers of Hindustan based on books and oral traditions, the author produced brief historical accounts with the help of his father, who was also a historian. He not only gives information about the rulers of different regions in India but also includes cultural or social elements such as customs, religions, classes, etc.

Tarih-i Ibrahim Han by Ali Ibrahim Han Bahadur Nasir-Jang Azimabadi written in the late 18th century is a history of the Maratha's campaign for the control of the Mughal Empire. The author, who served the Nawab of Bengal, gives a clear and succinct account of the Marathas in his work. He describes the failure of the Mughal Empire in subverting the Maratha objectively and lucidly.

Sarup Cand Hattri's *Sahih al-Ahbar* (Owner of Notices) is another general history of India extended to the author's time. He gives the reason of his work in the following quote:

"It is owing to the curiosity and perseverance of the English that the tree of knowledge is planted anew in this country; and it is also to the inquisitive spirit of that people, and particularly to the zeal and liberality of Sir John Shore, Governor-General of India, that I, an old servant of the State, am favoured with the honour of compiling a work on the History of the Hindus, together with an explanation of the names of days, months, years and eras; the reigns of the Kings of Dehli, with an explanation of the words raja, zamindar, chaudhari, taallukdar, hawaldar,

and the mode of administration, both ancient and modern, together with the names of the subadars of Bengal and the revenue and political affairs of the province."

As the above quote about the purpose of his writing indicates, his work contains fair definitions of revenue terms, and explains administration systems and political affairs of the Empire for English.

2.3.7. Perspectives, Bias, and Errors

Many early Mughal historical records show great loyalty of historians to their emperors or patrons or at least, flattery to them. Since many early historians were in the service of Mughal emperors and they were supported by royal families, a great number of their works were dedicated to their lords, which greatly influenced the writing of historians in their works. Many historical books written in this period emphasize the greatness of emperors. For example, Jawhar Aftabci's *Tazkirah al-vaqiat* (The Memorial of Events) completed in 1587 accentuates the sagacity and generosity of Humayun in following quotes:

"After a few days one of the Sultan's principal officers, named Aalum Khan, came to pay his respects to his Majesty; on which occasion several of the counselors advised his being seized and put to the torture, in order to make him discover where the treasures were concealed; but the King replied, 'as this personage has come to me of his own accord, it would be ungenerous to make use of force: if an object can be attained by gentleness, why have recourse to harsh easure ? Do ye give orders that a banquet may be prepared, and ply him well with wine, and then put the question, where the treasures may be found'"

"Humayun received the unfortunate monarch with great courtesy; encouraged him to keep up his spirits, and assured him he would reinstate him in his kingdom of Bengal"

Alamgirnamah (The Book of Aurangzeb) by Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin is a typical example which is full of panegyrics for the emperor. This work is greatly biased in favor of the emperor that not only it praises the emperor greatly, but also it ridicules and defames Aurangzeb's brothers who were defeated by Aurangzeb and failed to get the throne.

Ma-asir-i Jahangiri written by Kamgar Husayni, although evaluated as giving independent and fair accounts on events before Jahangir's rule, gives biased information. Following is a description of Abul Fazl, a celebrated Mughal historian and courtier of Akbar, who was killed by Jahangir:

"One of the events of those days was the murder of Shaikh Abu-l Fazl, who, by his superior wisdom and vast learning, was the most distinguished of all the Shaikhs of Hindustan. The following is a detailed account of this event. The Shaikh, intoxicated by the wine of fortune, and vain of the influence he had obtained over the Emperor's mind, had lost his senses, and having suffered the thread of wisdom and the knowledge of self to drop from his hands, had become proud of his position, and acted with rancor and animosity against his master's son. He

often said to the Emperor, both publicly and privately, that he knew none but His Majesty, and would never entreat or flatter any person, not even the eldest Prince."

"When this news reached the Prince, that master of prudence and scholar of the supreme wisdom at once reflected, that if the Shaikh should ever arrive at Court, he would certainly estrange His Majesty's mind from the Prince by his misrepresentations"

Here, the author tries to justify Jahangir's murder of Abul Fazl by intentionally pointing out faults of Abul Fazl.

Such tendency among early historians, however, is hardly seen in works by later historians especially when the Mughal Empire declines and English held power. As mentioned in previous chapter, the History of Hindustan by Rustam Ali *Sahabadi Tarih* shows explicit criticism of an emperor and many other works are independent of such pressure from emperors because the power of Mughal emperors decreased significantly and historians, serving other authority, do not have incentives to write in favor of emperors.

Islam is another influential element in historians' writings. Throughout the history of Mughal historiography, it is rare to find works without Islamic perceptions. In every preface of their works, historians express their gratitude to their god. Although many works explain Hindu or other religions, their major parts are on Islam. Even Abul Fazl, who is thought as a great historian who approached history in rational and secular ways, tries to explain Hinduism as something that the Muslims could understand. Additionally, many historians quote verses from Koran in their works. Interestingly, it is also possible to find that a Hindu historian, Sarup Cand Hattri opened his work as if composed by a devout Muslim with praise to God, Muhammad, and his family and companions.

2.3.8. Other Significant Aspects

One noticeable aspect seen in many Mughal historical works is that they include lots of verses while narrating the history. They could be either from already existing poems or authors themselves. Here is a description of Sujan Ray Bhandari's *Hulasah al-tavarih* (Summary of Histories) in the History of India by Sir Henry Elliot. "Many verses, some said to be original, and some extracted from various authors, are inserted in different passages of the narrative, to which they were considered appropriate." Sometimes, they were from Koran.

It is thought that through verses, Mughal historians may have wanted to give vivid and beautiful description of history to readers. The fact that many Mughal historians were also poets must have contributed to this aspect.

Although limited to only small number of historical works, beautiful paintings or illustrations which support narratives in *Akbarnamah* and *Padsahnamah* are what appreciate values of those historical works. Such visual methods must have helped readers to get the sense of history much more easily and contributed to the fame of those two works.

With such various methods to deliver history, Mughal historians may have wanted to accomplish both historical and artistic achievements while narrating the history as easily as possible.

2.3.9. List of Some Mughal Historians and their works

- Abbas Han Sarvani, *Tuhfah-yi Akbar Sahi* , A Gift to Akbar Sah (completed after 1579)
- Abd al-Haqq 'Haqqi' Dihlavi Buhari (1551-1642), *Tarih-i Haqqi,* The History by Haqq (1596-1597)
- Abu al-Fazl "Allami" ibn Mubarak, Sayh (Shaikh Abul Fazl ibn Mubarak) *Akbarnamah,* The Book of Akbar (1596-1604) and Ain-i Akbari, Akbar's Regulations
- Ahmad Yadgar, Tarih-i salatin-i Afaginah, The History of Afghan Sultans(1558)
- Asad Big 'Asad' Qazvini (-1631-1632), Halat-i Asad, Big The Times of Asad Big.
- Gulbadan Bigam (1523-1603),*Humayunnamah,* The Book of Humayun (extends to 1553)
- Jahangir (-1627), *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* , The Memoirs of Jahangir
- Kamgar Husayni (-1640-1641), *Ma-Asir-i Jahangiri,* Literary Works about Jahangir (1630-31)
- Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin (-1681), *Alamgirnamah,* The Book of Awrangzib (1667-1668)
- Muhammad Masum 'Nami', *Mir Tarih-i Sind* , The History of Sind (1599~1600)
- Muhammad Muhsin ibn Hanif Siddiqi, *Jawhar-i Samsam,* The Essence of Swords (1740-1741)
- Muhammad Sarif al-Najafi (-1628,1629), *Majalis al-salatin,* Assemblies of Sultans (1628-1629)
- Muhammad Tahir 'Asna' (-1666-1667 or 1670-1671), *Sah Jahannamah,* The Book of Sah Jahan)
- Murtaza Husayn, *Hadiqat al-aqalim* , The Rose Gardens of Regions (1778-1782)
- N mat-Allah ibn Habib- Allah Haravi, *Tarih i Han-Jahani,* The History of Han-Jahan (1612-1613)
- Nur al-Haqq 'Masriqi' Dillavi (-1662), *Zubdah al-tavarih* , The Choice Part of Histories
- Rustam Ali Sahabadi, *Tarih-i Hindi* , The History of Hindustan (1741-1742)
- Sarup Cand Hattri (Sarup Chand Khatri), *Sahih al-Ahbar,* Owner of Notices (1794)

2.3.10. Baburnama- The Memoirs of Babur

The "Memoirs of Babur" or *Baburnama* are the work of the great-great-great-grandson of Timur (Tamerlane), Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530). In 1494, aged twelve, Babur acceded to an uncertain position as a minor ruler in Fergana, in Central Asia; at his death in 1530 he controlled much of northern India, having founded what would become the "Mughal" empire.

As well as covering key historical events, his life story, the Baburnama, offers a fascinating picture of ordinary (aristocratic) life in Islamic Central and South Asia around 1500. One of the most recent translators declares, Babur's memoir is the first and until relatively recent times, the only true autobiography in Islamic literature." The Baburnama tells the tale of the prince's struggle first to assert and defend his claim to the throne of Samarkand and the region of the Fergana Valley. After being driven out of Samarkand in 1501 by the Uzbek Shaibanids, he ultimately sought greener pastures, first in Kabul and then in northern India, where his descendants were the Moghul (Mughal) dynasty ruling in Delhi until 1858.

The memoirs offer a highly educated Central Asian Muslim's observations of the world in which he moved. There is much on the political and military struggles of his time but also extensive descriptive sections on the physical and human geography, the flora and fauna, nomads in their pastures and urban environments enriched by the architecture, music and Persian and Turkic literature patronized by the Timurids. The Memoirs content following chapters and aspects of Babur's life.

2.3.10.1. Table of Contents:

i. Description of Fergana.
ii. Description of Samarkand.
iii. Babur leaves Kesh and crosses the Mura Pass.
iv. Babur takes Samarkand by surprise, July 28, 1500.
v. Babur in Samarkand.
vi. Ali-Sher Nawa'i, the famous poet.
vii. Babur leaves Samarkand, July 1501.
viii. Babur in Dikhkat.
ix. Shabaq (Shaibani) Khan's campaigns; winter conditions and mountain springs.
x. The acclaiming of the military standards according to Mongol tradition.
xi. Babur's poverty in Tashkent.

2.3.10.2. Life of Babur

Babur was the founder of the Mughal Dynasty, which ruled the north and central Indian subcontinent from 1526 until its colonisation by the British, after which the Mughal Emperors ruled in name alone. Descended on his father's side from the Turkish conqueror Timur, Babur also claimed Chenghis Khan as a maternal ancestor.

His first exercise of military and political power came with his claiming the throne of Samarkand, in modern-day Uzbekistan, and taking control of the region around the fertile Fergana Valley. It was at this time that Babur began his memoirs – among the first autobiographies in Islamic literature. In June 1494 AD, he wrote the opening lines, "In the name

of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate. In the month of Ramadan of the year 899 and in the 12th year of my age, I became ruler in the land of Fergana."

Seven years later Babur was driven out of Samarkand, but he had more far-reaching ambitions. From his new powerbase at Kabul in modern-day Afghanistan, he set out to conquer the Sultanate of Delhi. In 1526 he defeated Sultan Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat and founded the Mughal dynasty. Babur first established his capital at Agra, which became the cultural and intellectual focus of one of the greatest empires of the late-medieval world.

Though a hardened warrior, Babur was far from a barbarous, ignorant soldier. He was a cultured and pious man who wrote fine poetry and schooled himself in the culture, natural history and geography of Central Asia and India. His inquiring and observant mind and literary skill add a higher dimension to the battles and body counts of his memoirs.

2.3.10.3. Contents of Baburnama

Babur begins by describing the geography of Fergana and giving some background history. He then recounts his part in the internecine conflicts between the Timurids (descendant's of Temur/Tamerlane) over Khurasan, Transoxiana, and Fergana and their loss to the Uzbeks under Shaybani. Initially a puppet of others, used for Timurid legitimacy, Babur gradually became a real leader. His fluctuating fortunes saw him take and lose Samarkand twice; eventually he was forced into a kind of "guerilla" existence in the mountains. In 1504 he left Transoxiana with a few hundred companions, acquired the discontented followers of a regional leader in Badakhshan, and took Kabul. From there he began carving out a domain for himself, in a process combining pillage and state-building.

The story breaks in 1508, with a large lacuna in our manuscripts; it resumes in 1519, when we find Babur solidly established in Kabul and campaigning in and around what is now Pakistan. Matchlocks (not mentioned at all previously) are now in regular use, though restricted to the elite. A more personal change is Babur's fondness for riotous parties and use of both alcohol and the narcotic ma'jun, contrasting with a teetotal youth. After another lacuna, the work finishes with the years 1525 to 1529, covering the battle of Panipat, the conquest of Delhi, and the defeat of a Rajput coalition at the battle of Khanua (in which battles artillery played a key role). India was only a consolation prize for Babur, however-he always compares it unfavourably with Kabul and his beloved Samarkand.

Though Thackston claims it is "the first real autobiography in Islamic literature", the Baburnama contains little personal reflection. Babur is frank and open, but tends to describe actions rather than motivations. The Baburnama does, however, extend far beyond the military and political history summarized above. Babur includes descriptions of many of the places he visits and is interested in flora and fauna and techniques of hunting, fishing, and agriculture; there are also set-piece geographical overviews of Fergana, Transoxiana, and the area around

Kabul, as well as a twenty-page description of Hindustan. And on a few occasions he describes events at a distance, outside his own direct experience for example battles between the Persians and the Uzbeks.

A notable feature of the Baburnama is the sheer number of names that appear in it: Babur writes extensively about people, including personal followers he wants to honour as well as more prominent figures. The death of each Timurid sultan, for example, is followed by an obituary covering not just their battles and the events of their reign but their wives, concubines, and children, their leading followers, and the scholars and artists whom they patronised (or just ruled over). Poets and poetry are particularly highly respected: Babur quotes his own and others' verses, and among his youthful exploits he is as proud of a poetic exchange with Mulla Banna'i as of a successful surprise attack that took Samarkand.

2.3.10.4. Importance of Memoirs of Babur

This is the personal journal of Emperor Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty. It records the events of his remarkable life from the age of 12 until his death in 1530. His grandson Akbar had the memoirs translated into Persian from their original Chaghatay Turkish so his grandfather's achievements might be more widely known. This is the largest of four major illustrated copies made during Akbar's reign.

The translation was ordered by Babur's grandson, the Emperor Akbar, who ruled the Mughal Empire from 1556 to 1605. He had amasses a great library devoted to subjects such as history, classical Persian literature and translations of Sanskrit texts. Akbar entrusted the work of translating Babur's memoirs into Persian to an army general and close friend called Abdul-al-Rahim, who enjoyed the title *Khan-i- khanan*, meaning 'commander of commanders'

Covering some 36 years in the life of one of Central Asia and India's most powerful figures, Babur's detailed and insightful autobiography presents vivid picture of his life and times, the peoples he ruled, and the lands they inhabited. For example, we read in his own words the story of events leading up to the defeat of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi and fall of Delhi:

"During the seven or eight days we lay in Panipat, our men went close to Ibrahim's camp a few at a time, rained arrows down on the ranks of his troops, cut off and brought back their heads. Still he made no move, nor did his troops venture out. At length, we acted on the advice of some Hindustani well-wishers and sent four or five thousand men to deliver a night attack on his camp. It being dark, they were unable to act well together and, having dispersed, could achieve nothing on arrival. They stayed near Ibrahim's camp until dawn, when *nagarets* [kettle drums] sounded and his troops came forth in force with elephants…"

Alongside accounts of military conflicts and strategies, there are well-observed descriptions of landscapes and cities, local economies and customs, plants and animals. Subjects discussed by the Emperor Babur and illustrated in this manuscript include Hindu ascetics at

Bagram (today in Afghanistan); the elephant, rhinoceros and buffalo; the peacock, parrot, and stork; the water-hog, and crocodile; trees and shrubs such as the plantain, tamarind, and oleander; and the author supervising work on his own gardens in Kabul. Babur also provides what is probably the first reliable record of the famous diamond known as Koh-i-Noor, the 'Mountain of Light'.

2.3.11. Abul Fazl

The most celebrated official historian during the Mughal Age was Abul Fazl, who undertook the gigantic work Akbarnamah, under the specific order of Akbar. Aheikh Abul Fazl, the son of Shaikh Mubarak of Nagaur was born at Agra on January 14 1551. He was a born genius, precocious child who completed his education by his fifteenth year and became a teacher by his twentieth year. In 1573 he was introduced to Akbar, who quickly perceived his sharp intellect and made him his close associate. He rose quickly in Akbar's esteem and gained one after another very responsible posts in the empire. Whatever he touched he turned into a great success, whether it was in the arena of scholarship, politics, diplomacy or warfare. But he is known to the world mostly a s historian. He wielded a very powerful pen which was well utilized for his monumental work, when Akbar asked him to present a sincere and truthful account of the happenings of the Empire. Abul Fazl states how he set about doing this job, which was all not very easy. Very painstakingly he labored hard to collect the material, interrogated numerous officers, nobles and dignitaries and examined young and old witnesses in order to extract exact information from them. He caused a royal decree issued to al the provinces to furnish him every bit of relevant data on administration, social conditions and economic life. Special care was taken to see that correct information was furnished which was to be recited in the royal hearing. The result was the daily inundation of official reports in his office, which became a massive record office. Great pains were taken to obtain the original orders issued to the provinces from the centre, the reports of the ministers and high officers which were all scrutinized and utilized, whenever any doubts occurred, he consulted Akbar himself whose perfect memory, recollects every occurrences in gross and in detail, from the time he was one year old."

2.3.11.1. Abul Fazl and *Akbarnamah*

Abul Fazl wanted to write four volumes on Akbars reign and a fifth volume on the administrative institutions. Abul Fazl was so keen on doing the job well that he revised the original draft five times until it came up to his expectations. The volume on administration was completed in 1593. When the main work, *Akbarnamah* was completed in 1598, it created a sensation. This work is regarded as the most complete and authentic history of Akbar reign. In terms of the authenticity of information obtained, the variety of topics covered, the critical and analytical methods adopted, the honesty and sincerity of purpose displayed, and the analysis and interpretations presented are all such that it is a class by itself. What Thucydides is to Greece,

Tacitus is to Rome and Ibn Khaldun to Arabs, Abul Fazl is to the Mughals. He richly deserves the title of Historiographers- Royal of the Mughals. A contemporary remark about his style, Abul Fazl stands unrivalled. His style is grand and is free from technicalities and flimsy pettiness of other Munshis; and the force of his words, the structure of his sentences, the suitableness of his compounds, and the elegance of his periods are such that it would be difficult for anyone to imitate him.

The *Akbarnamah* is a comprehensive history of the reign of Akbar. The first part deals with Babar and Humayun, the Second part deals with Akbar from his accession to 1602, and the third part is Ain-E-Akbari that deals with the administrative machinery of the Government. It is a mine of information that gives us minute's details on the extent, resources, conditions, populations, industry, trade and commerce of the empire. Abul Fazl regarded history as a unique pearl of science, which quiets perturbations, physical and spiritual, and gives light to darkness external and internal. He declares that he complied this history with a scrupulous regards for truth. It was his practice to be critical of self and indulgent of others. Akbar's age witnessed a great awakening in social, political and religious areas, and Akbar himself was the main source for the great change. Abul Fazl attempted to capture the mood of the age nd depicted the manners of the people, so that posterity could appreciate the powerful impact that one enlightened monarch could bring about in all vital areas of human society. What Voltaire was to perform more than a century later in respect of Louis XIV, Abul Fazl had already done it in respect of Akbar the Great, namely to depict the spirit of the age its arts and social life, its administration and culture. Akbar realized the basic needs of the time, a strong monarchy, a liberal outlook which would bring down the barriers between man and man and political stability and social stability which were all needed to push India forward to the level of the most advanced nations of the world. He did succeed to the level as he was ably assisted in his endeavor by a band of selfless associates who were sincerely loyal to him and who genuinely believed in the nobility and necessity of his missions. Akbar needed a kind of wide publicity for his policies and programmes and no medium was more suited in those for the purpose that Abul Fazl. It was the greatness of Akbar that he had a discerning eye which could at once detect who suited most for a work; it cannot be denied that it is not altogether free from a subjective approach. Abul Fazl believed in Akbar as saints believed in God. Abul Fal was first an artist and than a scientist, and hence in many places Akbar's vices have been minimized and virtues have been exaggerated. His style is not easy , lucid and captivating, but so terse and sophisticated that only serious scholars could make good use of it. Persian is more suited for poetic and artistic purposes, and when an author adopts almost n epic style in prose and attempts to produce a scientific treatise the natural confusion is imaginable. Consequently *Akbarnamah* is not on the lips of all those who know Persian, but a sacred and a celebrated book of reference, like an

authority on jurisprudence or an encyclopedia, consulted at times of compelling necessity but not read for pleasure.

2.3.11.2. Assessment

There is a striking difference of opinion regarding Abul Fazl's veracity as a historian. He is accused of gross flattery, suppression of facts and dishonesty. His History is consequently regarded as not doing justice to Akbar. Abul Fazl is not for a moment to be compared, either in frankness or simplicity, with Comines, Sully, Claredon, and other ministers who have written contemporary history.

There is truth in all this criticism. But when every discount has been made, there is much to be said in the historian's favour. The new methodology that Abul Fazl introduced-the extensive collection of regional sources and their critical investigation was the most advanced attempt so far made in Indian historiography. The systematic collection of data by the use of official records, and the rigorous investigation of the authenticity of every piece of information make the Akbar-Namh a genuine work of research. Among medieval historian, Abul Fazl alone can lay claim to a rational, secular and liberal approach to history. The new approach was of abiding value, and had the effect of widening the scope of Indian history in two directions. First, in consonance with Akbar's new concept of a national empire, Abul Fazl's work went a long way in turning medieval Indian history from the narrow confines of a story of the Muslims in India into a national history in which Hindus and their life and culture found a place. Second, alone of the Medieval historians, Abul Fazl left an account not only of the political institutions and administrative arrangements of north India in the sixteenth century, but a description of the country and the manners, customs and popular beliefs of the people. Thus, for the first time, the governed classes were brought to the foreground. The charge that Abul Fazl deified Akbar is true enough. But it must be added that he wove his epic around the personality and achievements of a real hero. He saw in Akbar the ideals monarch whom he made a legend for the Indian people. The halo with which he made his book surrounds Akbar remains undimmed to this day.

2.3.12. Mulla Abdul Quadir Badauni (1540-1596)

Badauni regretted having been born at all; but consoled himself that the unfortunate incident took place during the reign of Sher Shah whom he described as destroyer of the infidels, an epithet which in fact was unjust to the great Afghan sovereign. Abdul Quadir was born in August at Todah, brought up at Bhusawar, while Badaun seems to have been parental home. He studies first under Shaikh Hatim Sambhali and later under the famous Shaikh Mubarak, along with Faizi and Abul Fazl. Faizi testifies to Badaun's vast and varied learning. The historian mentions his second marriage (1574), but not the first. In 1574 Badauni was presented to Akbar at Agra. It was the time when young, determined emperor was feeling uneasy about the pretentious dominance of Ulema. The intrepid scholar easily challenged the spurious profundity

of the Ulema and Akbar was pleased. Badauni was appointed Imam (priest) for prayers on Wednesday on account of his sweet voice, and was given thousand *bighas* of land- a goodly gift.

But the intimacy between the sovereign and the scholar turned into estrangement. Akbar began to suspect that Badauni was a fanatic. The springs of Badauni's bitterness were personal and religious. Abul Fazl who had followed him to court now far outdistanced him in imperial favour. And Badauni saw the faith ebbing from the emperor's heart and thought that it was indanger. The discussion in the Ibadat Khana (Hall of Worship built by Akbar for the purpose of discussing religious and philosophical problems) had so planted doubts in Akbar's mind that loss of faith in Islam itself was only a matter of time. The Ulama were banished, and Akbar assumed supremacy in spiritual matters as well. And discharging the scholars religious susceptibilities the emperor thrust on him the task of translating the holy book of the Hindus. Badauni's bitterness found vent in the language which in the times verged on obscenity.

Badauni's intense zeal for his faith was inseparable from his hatred of Sufism., the Shias, the Hindus, and the liberalism of Shaikh Mubarak and his sons- Faizi and Abul Fazl. He adopted rigidly orthodox attitudes towards the new flexibility, the more liberal thinking, initiated by Akbar's policies. He criticized everything that Akbar did- not only such religious and social reforms as fixing the age of marriage and establishing poor houses, but administrative measures like the branding of horses and the Mansabdari system. He would condemn Akbar and his program for the benefit of prosperity in his Muntakhab, which he wrote in secret lest he should bring down the wrath of the emperor prophet. The work must have occupied the author for five years before he completed it in 1596. He died the same years.

2.3.12.1. Sources

The inducement to write the *Muntakhab*, Badauni announces, was his sorrow for the faith and heart burning for the deceased Religion of Islam. The *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh* is a history written with a vengeance intended to give a true version of the anti-Islamic heresies and innovations of Akbar's reign. To Badauni, history was a noble science and instructive art, but he warns that taken as a rational science, its study and contemplation might lead the shortsighted 'into deviation from the straight path of Muhammad. Badauni mentions only the *Tabaqat-I-Akbari* of Nizam ud-Din Ahmed and *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* of Sirhindi as the sources from which he derived his information to which, he sya, he added something of his own. But he consulted diverse sources like Minhaj's *Tabaqat-i-Nisiri*, Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, and Amir Khusrau's *Ashiqa*. The second volume of the *Muntakhab*, which contains Badauni's reactions to the events of Akbar's reign, is written mostly on the basis of his first hand, personal knowledge. To such information, he adds his own thoughts and what he thinks to be the thoughts of others.

2.3.12.2. Forms and Content

The *Muntakhab* is written in three volumes. The first volume is formal history from Subuktagin to Humayun, written in the form of reigns in strict chronological order. But the narrative is impartial to the importance of the rulers. Balban gets five pages while a political non-entity like Kaiqubad is honoured with eight. Badauni admires Sher Shah, but his reforms do not receive attention at all. The second volume comprises the events of the first forty years of Akbars reign set in the form of an annual chronicle. The third volume consists of a series of biographical sketched of the Ulema., the physicians and poets of Akbar's court. There are somewhat detailed accounts of the Karori system and of the branding of the horses, but the Mansabdari system and the revenue administration receive little attention. But Badauni's account is our chief contemporary source for the religious and philosophical discussion in the Ibadat Khana, and the account is given first hand. The historian disliked Akbar's eclecticism and was disgusted with the emperor's patronage of men of different persuasions to the detriment of the Muslims who, he thought, had the sole title to government office and preferment. There are accounts of famine and earthquakes, the jauhar at Chitor, and of some of the buildings the Suthor had seen.

2.3.12.3. Historical Causation

Of causation in history, Badauni thinks that the individual acts not in the background of any historical situation, but according to his nature, motives and will. The source of all action is the individual will which creates historical events. Akbar welcomed Abul Fazl to his court because he expected to find in him a man capable of teaching the Ulema a lesson. It is in human volition, the belief that men act of their free will, that Badauni establishes historical causation. It is for this reason that he is so bitter against Akbar and all those who were instrumental in corrupting his mind. For this reason, Badauni attack on his adversaries is invariably of a very personal nature.

2.3.12.4. Subjectivity

Perhaps the most important features of the *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh* is its chronic subjectivity, for its author wrote under great emotional stress created by what he thought was the organized undermining of Islam by Akbar and his sycophants. His highly personal views and interpretation of historical events were devoid of historical perspective. Value judgment abounds and the *Shariat*, the mainstay of Muslim life was the sole criterion of judgment for him. Of the one and half pages given to Hakim-ul-Mulj Gilani, exactly nine words are devoted to his medical accomplishments, the rest to his postures in disputes between the ulema and the physicians. And medicine being rational science, Badauni throughlu distrusses its efficacy. His value judgments are entirely negative, emotional and personal, and made always from the religious point of view. He poured his ire into the *Muntakhab* which castigated Abul Fazl, in literary abuse, but it is rendered tolerable when we hear him maliciously condemning to fell Faizi, a friend who had

always helped him and never offended him. And yet, the historian claims that it was not his habit to record the faults of others. Akbar and Abul Fazl escaped similar description of their death for Badauni died before them. According to Khafi Khan the publication of *Muntakhab* was suppressed by Jahangir.

2.3.12.5. Style

Badauni's feelings conditioned his style, a feeling not harnessed by reason. The language is racy and outspoken, and feelings sometimes carried it to the verge of obscenity. The *Muntakhab* vibrates with life and emotion and is a very readable, if not an equally reliable, work. Often, the language is pithy, epigrammatic, packed with meaning.

2.3.12.6. Assessment

In final assessment, we have to say that Badauni's *Muntakhab* is not wholly reliable and that it suffers from many faults; buit we also have to add that it supplements and corrects the over laudatory *Akbarnamah*. The bitter historian comes to our aid in regard to some crucial pieces of information which Abul Fazl glosses over as unfavorable to the reputation of Akbar. For instance Badauni's description of the terrible suffering of the ryots which the Karori system of land revenue entailed. Again, Badauni's account of Akbar's religious evolution is of inestimable value. He tells us of the emperor alert mind which speculated on most questions known to man, and of his spiritual yearning which led him to spend whole nights and long hours of the day in contemplation and meditation. Even in his bitter lament for his faith Badauni does not seem to tell an untruth.

2.3.13. Conclusion

In accordance with flourishing The Mughal Empire, historical works by Mughal historians also were abundant and impressive. Under the patronage of either emperors or local government, early historians such as Abul Fazl who wrote *Akbarnamah* and Hwajah Nizam al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad Muqim Haravi who worked on *Taqat-i-Akbari* left great expectations which enable later historians to work on other great histories and become the base of current knowledge of the history of India. A wide range of subject matters which include ancestors of Mughal emperors, Mughal nobles, independent countries, geography, governmental systems, religions, and many others in India, Mughal historiography is truly respectable. Although some historical works contain a great deal of flattery to authority and religious prejudice, such aspects are also common in other countries and many other historical works try to show relatively detailed and verified history cited by various historical sources. Moreover, it is interesting to read historical accounts in literary language and with visual materials. The Mughal Empire, one of the most prosperous empires in South Asian territory, probably owes its fame partly to the efforts of its great historians.

2.3.14. Summary

- *It is during the Mughal dynasty Indian historiography reached its highest point. Historical books written in this period are great sources from which today's people can learn the history of South Asia and some other regions such as Afghanistan.*
- *Mughal historians were often patronized by emperors or nobles and many of them had other original occupations such as courtiers under emperors, or poets, scholars.*
- *Some emperors who were learned themselves even wrote history by themselves. The founder of the Mughal Empire Babur wrote his autobiography Vaqiat-i Baburi. Jahangir, the fourth emperor, also wrote his autobiographical memoir called Tuzuk-i Jahangiri. In addition, Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Emperor Babur, wrote Humayunnamah which is an account of her brother, Humayun.*
- *While in the earlier period of Mughal dynasty historians are often under the service of emperors, in the latter period during which the Mughal Empire declined, historians often served local government or East Indian Company.*
- *There were several ways in which Mughal historians could get sources to write historical works. Sometimes, one's direct experience became a primary source of a historian. The autobiography written by Babur, Vaqiat-i Baburi, the memoir of Gulbadan Bigam, Humayun-namah, and Jawhar Aftabci's Tazkirah al-vaqiat, which gives an account of Humayun, are examples which use historians' personal observations.*
- *One noticeable aspect seen in many Mughal historical works is that they include lots of verses while narrating the history. They could be either from already existing poems or authors themselves.*
- *Although limited to only small number of historical works, beautiful paintings or illustrations which support narratives in Akbarnamah and Padsahnamah are what appreciate values of those historical works. Such visual methods must have helped readers to get the sense of history much more easily and contributed to the fame of those two works.*
- *The "Memoirs of Babur" or Baburnama are the work of the great-great-great-grandson of Timur (Tamerlane), Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530). The Baburnama, offers a fascinating picture of ordinary (aristocratic) life in Islamic Central and South Asia around 1500. One of the most recent translators declares, Babur's memoir is the first and until relatively recent times, the only true autobiography in Islamic literature."*
- *The most celebrated official historian during the Mughal Age was Abul Fazl, who undertook the gigantic work Akbarnamah, under the specific order of Akbar.*
- *Badauni's was a famous historian and bitter critics of Emperor Akbar composed Muntakhab and established himself as a famous historian during Mughal Age.*

2.3.15. Exercise

1. Compare the writings of Abul Fazl and Badauni on Akbar's reign.
2. Write a brief note on the historical works during Jahangir's reign.
3. How the Mughals patronized historical writing? Discuss.
4. Examine the significance of Abul Fazl's Akbarnama as a historical work.
5. Write an essay on the growth of historical works during Sahahahan' reign.
6. Analyse the historicity f Baburnama.

2.3.16. Further Reading

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UNIT-III

Chapter-I

WILLIAM JONES AND ORIENTALIST WRITINGS ON INDIA

Structure

3.1.0. Objectives

In this lesson, students explore the history of historical writings started in India with the arrivals of European, particularly the Britishers. The chapter will emphasise the rise of Orientalist with special reference to William Jones and their contribution to Indological study. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- *trace the origin and growth of orientalism and Indological study in 18th century India;*
- *identify the influence behind ideological quest of the European and the early Indological efforts made in 18th century India;*
- *recognise the contribution of orientalist for modern historiography in India;*
- *appreciate the role played by Sir William Jones and his Asiatic Society of Bengal for the growth of modern historical writings in India;*
- *point out the significance of orientalism in India.*

3.1.1. Introduction

The earliest and one of the positive results of the British conquest and unification of India- one which kept pace that process itself was the recovery of ancient Indian history on modern lines of historiography. The Hindu, as the British found him, had a vague consciousness of the antiquity of his country's culture which, indeed, he was prone to exaggerate, but it was far from a genuine historical consciousness as we understand the term. It was to this task of reconstructing the lost history of India that the Orientalist or the Indologists addressed themselves. In the absence of genuine historical texts, the work of reconstruction had to rely almost entirely on information obtainable from literature and different kinds of archaeological finds like inscriptions, coins, monuments and sculptures.

3.1.2. Influences behind Indological Quest

Modern Indian historiography began with the writings of the scholar –administrators of the English East Indian Company. What were the influences behind these men? Dvaid Kopf has shown with deep insight that the Company servants, the more elite among them, came from the intellectual –cultural milieu of the eighteenth century Europan Enlightenment, a fact which goes far to explain the phenomenal Orientalist rediscovery of the Hindu classical age. Men like William Jones and Henry Colebrooke were as much products of the eighteenth century world of ideas as Voltaire and Gibbon. The Orientalist fully subscribed to the Enlightenment view that differences among large aggregates of human beings as, for example, between Europeans and Asians, are not to be explained by their nature which is constant and universal, but by their custom and culture which bear diverse fruits. Such a position tended towards unity of all human history. This historical and cultural relativism bore fruit not only a sweet tolerance and high intellectual regard for non-European peoples, but in a positive appreciation of their histories and cultures. Indeed, Volatire believed that there must have been a widespread civilization in

Mesopotamia in times of old, and he had written that India and China had invented nearly all the arts before Europe possessed them.

The impact of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment was combined with the fertilizing influence of European Romanticism, which invested non- European civilization like the Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Persian and Arabic with an aura of sanctity and positive value. The Romantic love of the mysterious and unknown had contributed to a new interest not only in distant races, societies and civilizations, but in distant historical epochs. The Orientalist interest in ancient India needs no further explanation.

Moreover, the establishment of British rule in India was roughly coincidental with the development in Europe of a strictly scientific spirit in historical reconstruction. A highly critical attitude in the treatment of the sources had come in the wake of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth Century, a revolution which had brought about Enlightenment attitude itself.

3.1.3. Early Indological Efforts

Indology may be defined as the scientific study of data relating to Indian history ands culture, a study in which little emphasis is laid on the political aspect. The missionaries- particularly the Jesuits had begun the Indological quest long before the British efforts in that direction. But the missionary scholars, for all their studies made no real attempt to know the historical background of the culture of the people among whom they worked, for in them, the religious motive had a preponderance over the historical.

There was already in Bengal, even before William Jones's arrival there, a group of young officers who had been charmed into indological studies. These early British Orientalists produced works of great interest. One of them, Francis Gladwin, had published the Institute of Emperot Akbars, an abridged form of Abul Fazl's Ain-I-Akbari. In 17176 Nathniel Halhead, at the age of twenty three, produced the famed Gentoo Laws which , two years later, was followed by a A Grammer of the Bengal Languages. Charles Wilkins who came to India in 17170 had been fascinataed by Sanskrit which he mastered, and for that reason, had commanded himself to the special favor of Warren Hastings. Jonathen Duncan who served in India from 1772 to 1811, was a avid as scholar as he was an able administrator. True to the Hastings tradition, Duncan constantly encouraged the revitalization of Hindu learning and philosophy.

Apart from personal love and devotion there were two circumstances to which the recovery of India's forgotten past owed its impulse. The first was that the company officials needed to know the language and culture of the people committed to their charge. Linguistic proficiency was the key to advancement in the Goveror-general himself. Warren Hastings mastered the Persian language, collected Indian paintings and manuscripts, drew inspiration fron the Bhagvad Gita, and quoted it in his letters to his wife. He encouraged the Indologists, fought for them in the Supreme Council, and held long discussion with them on their subjects.

3.1.4. Sir William Jones (*1746 – 1794)*

Lawyer, historian, linguist, botanist, civil servant, and literary theorist William Jones had an interest in promoting understanding of and appreciation for Asian languages and cultures that led him to make an original contribution to scholarship unrivalled in his time. Though "Orientalist" Jones is now best remembered for these numerous contributions to Oriental studies, his theories of poetry and poetic inspiration also had an immeasurable influence on the development of the Romantic movement. He was the greatest figure in the Orientalist movement in India. Jones's widowed mother, Mary Nix, brought up her son in an intellectual atmosphere and the child Jones grew into a prodigy. In his seventeenth year, Jones went to the Oxford. Already he had learnt Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and now at Oxford he learnt Arabic from a Syrian by Name Mirza whom he maintained from his own stipend. Arabic drew him to Persian. By 1768, Jones had become well known as an Orientalist. Meanwhile he studied law and in 1783, was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta.

Jones showed an early facility with languages, and before entering Oxford University he knew Greek, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, French, and Spanish and had taught himself the Hebrew and Arabic scripts. At Oxford, he expanded his study of Arabic while commencing Persian and Turkish. He soon became one of the nation's leading Oriental scholars, and the King of Denmark commissioned his first published work, a translation into French of the history of Persian conqueror Nadir Shah.

Jones's following publications advanced his goals of increasing the study of Asian languages and the printing of Asian writings. *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) is filled with examples that both provide a comprehensive introduction to Persian poetry and illustrate its beauty and sophistication. *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatic Languages* (1772) fed a burgeoning public interest in Oriental culture and became his most popular early work.

Appended to that collection were two groundbreaking essays. In "On the Arts Commonly Called Imitative," Jones rejects Aristotle's thesis that all fine arts rest upon imitation of the natural world. Instead, he said, poetry is "a strong and animated expression of the human passions"-a declaration almost identical to Wordsworth's more famous, though much later, statement in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) that "good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Investigating these same ideas, "On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations" posits that the poetry of Asia (which Jones believed was richer and more inventive because in Asia the passions were more freely experienced and described) could provide a refreshing source of inspiration for Western literature. The work that made Jones's reputation as a great classical and Oriental scholar, however, was his treatise on aesthetics, *Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum Libri Sex* (1774). Still un-translated from the original Latin (and therefore

virtually unknown today), this comprehensive examination of the topics, imagery, and forms of Asian poetry also develops Jones's theories on the nature of poetry's beauty and the emotional and imaginative sources of its inspiration. In order to earn a living, Jones practiced law in his father's native Wales for nine years, until his legal work and continued Oriental scholarship allowed him to realize his lifelong dream of a post in Asia.

3.1.4.1.Asiatic Society of Bengal

In 1783, Jones, recently knighted and married, arrived in Calcutta as the newest judge on the Bengal Supreme Court. In January 1784, supported by Warren Hastings, Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal- the first organized effort to study the history, society, and culture of Indi-and began learning Sanskrit in order to access Muslim and Hindu laws in their original form. The birth of the Asiatic Society was an event of momentous importance. Jones extended to indology the methods of organized scientific research then spreading in Europe. The Society's unremitting labor bore its first fruit in important translations from Sanskrit literature. In 1784, Wilkins's Bhagavad Gita, the first direct translation of a Sanskrit work into English, was completed. In 1887 Wilkins presented his translation of the Hitopadesa. Jones himself was studying Sanskrit under Pundit Ramlochan with a devotion, which has few parallels. His very first performance in the art of translation that of Shakuntala (1789), was of epochal importance. It immediately caught the imagination of literate Europe and five editions followed in twenty years to cater to the new appetite. The avid scholar quickly followed it up by the translation of the Gita Govinda. Jones's translation of Manusmriti was published posthumously under the title The Institute of Hindu Law.

In *Asiatic Researches*—the journal of the Asiatic Society in which nearly all Jones's work in mythology, literature, linguistics, botany, history, and poetry was printed—Jones continued his work in aesthetics. "Sixth Anniversary Discourse" (1790) and "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus" (1792) expand upon what would later become an essentially Romantic view of poetry as resulting from mystical experience. Jones also began extensive comparative studies of mythology, and Romantic works such as *Kublai Khan* show the influence of Jones's belief in the common origins of all mythology and in a single origin of civilization (though Coleridge's poem takes this locus as Abyssinia, while Jones proposed Iran).

Jones's interest in Indian culture also spurred him to compose nine hymns addressed to aspects of the Hindu god Vishnu. The images in these poems helped to shape the visions of a mystical, resplendent India found in the works of Romantic poets such as Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge. The most famous of the hymns is the "Hymn to Narayana" (1785), whose verses, together with the prefatory argument, examines the nature of perception and create an analogy between the poet's act of creation and that of God. In their emphasis on personal experience,

creative imagination, spontaneity of thought, and subjectivity, these poems are distinctly Romantic in sensibility.

Jones's studies led to several other groundbreaking developments. While learning Sanskrit he identified common grammatical roots with classical European languages such as Latin and Greek-a discovery that marked the beginnings of Indo-European comparative grammar and of modern linguistics. In his study of Indian history, Jones became the first to identify a point of correspondence between Western and Indian historical times, enabling Western scholars to determine the chronology of India's past in relation to their own.

At the time of his death in India at the age of 47, William Jones had learned nearly 30 languages and made advancements in poetic theory, law, comparative linguistics, religious studies, and history, the full import of which are still being realized today. His influence on future developments in the genre of poetry alone is such that any comprehensive study of Romantic poetry should begin with his work.

3.1.4.2. Great Discoveries

3.1.4.2.1. Indo-European Language

It was not, however, his translations, but the way he drew the attention of the world in the direction of India's ancient history that made Sir William Jones a senial figure in the Orientalist movement. Of the eleven annual discourses that Jones delivered before the Asiatic Society, eight were on history and one on science. In the discourse for 1786, Jones announced the first of his outstanding achievements in Indian history, namely the discovery of of the Indo-European family of languages. In the discourse, Jones first propounded a theory that India's golden period as a culture lay in a remote, uncharred period of world history, and then he started the world of scholarship by announcing that Sanskrit was cousin to Old Persian, Greek, Latin and the modern languages of Europe. The theory depended for its validity on the striking affinity that existed between the words of say, Old Persian, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German and English. Jones postulated that Sanskrit, Old Persian and most of the European language must have originated from one mother language, which does not exist now.

3.1.4.2.2. Aryan Race

From the theory of a common linguistic origin for what came to be called the Indo-European family of languages, Jones made an audacious advance to the theory of a common race. The speakers of the ancient common mother language from Old Persian, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and the modern languages of Europe evolved must have belonged to a common nucleus race known to us as Aryan. Jones's discovery made the people of northern Indian relatives to the Persians and the Europeans, and Central Asia the cradle of the Indo-European Aryans.

3.1.4.2.3. Chandragupta

Equally momentous was the breakthrough in ancient Indian history, which Jones effected through a process of synchronism and identification. In the history of Alexander's invasion of India, the classical sources mention an Indian prince called Sandrocottas who ruled the land of Prasii, and whose capital was Palibotra. In his tenth annual address on 28 February 1793, Jones referred to the importance of mythology, tales and even drama as containing facts of history such as the murder of Nanda and the usurpation by Chandragupta. He then provided a third fact of pivotal importance to the recovery of ancient Indian hstory. This wasthe accession of Chandragupta Maurya to the throne of Pataliputra. The identification of the Greek Palibotra with the Indian Pataliputra led to the concomitant discovery of greater moment: Chandragupta Maurya who had the seat of his empire at Pataliputra was none other than the Greek Sandrocottas who ruled from Pataliputra and conducted a treaty with Seleukos Nikator. No sunchronism and identification has added more chapters to the history of an ancient people. Besides bringing to light the first great empire in Indian history, it supplied for the first time a firm historical date, 325 B.C, from which reckoning backward and forward, other dates and periods could be fixed. Simple though it may seem, the synchronism of Chandragupta Maurya with Seleukos Nikator has truly been called the sheet anchor of Indian history.

After William Jones, Indological studies developed mainly along two lines. The first was the critical study of ancient Indian texts and documents, and the second, archaeological discovery and study of old inscriptions, coins and monuments. The Asiatic Society became a centre for organized research and hundreds of articles on Indian antiquities were published in its Journal. Systematic attempts were made to search for old manuscripts, and translations and critical editions of important texts on Indian history and culture were published in the Bibliotheca Indica series. At the same time the rediscovery of Indian's forgotten past could not safely rely on literature alone, for much of that past, as in the case of Egypt, Crete or Troy, lay in epigraphic, archaeological or numismatic materials. The Orientalist came from a Europe that had started digging up history or reading it on stones and tablets. With each digging, each reading, the frontiers of man's knowledge of his own development was being pushed further and further. There cannot be anything finer in civilizations than this noble curiosity, this restless passion, to discover the development of human life from rude stone-age flints to whole civilization. The orientalist in India also begun the same activities it was James Princep and Alexander Cunningham who pioneered the archeological rediscovery of India's past in the early nineteenth century.

3.1.5. The Significance of Orientalism in India

3.1.5.1. Impact on Indian historiography

It was with the indological quest that modern methods of historical research and reconstruction then spreading in Europe were introduced into India. The Asiatic Society of Bengal which William Jones had consciously modeled on the Royal Society in London ushered in the age of scientific and specialized study in Indian history and culture. Jones revelation of the kinship between the Indo-European languages and peoples almost created the modern sciences of comparative philology, comparative mythology and ethnology; he had demonstrated the importance of linguistic studies in historical inquiry. Princep seminal success with the riddle of Old Brahmi not only solved the problem of the Asokan edicts but set the grand example of epigraphic revelations of Indian history; in the course of 19th Century three-fourths of ancient and medieval Indian history would be read from inscriptions. Indian archaeology and numismatics, taking shape with the indefatigable Cunningham, were to make history in the years to come. Burnouf's Essai Sur Le Pali opened up another untapped fount of Indian religion and thought, the Buddhist and roused his great pupil Max Muller to make possible the translation of all the sacred books of the East into English, and Rhys Davids to devote his whole life to the exposition of Buddhist literature. By the end of the nineteenth century, ancient Indian that terra incognita to the academic world had been historically charted and mapped.

3.1.5.2. Revelation of India to the world

The Indologist findings should be reckoned as one of the major breakthroughs affected in the history of knowledge. A.A.MacDonnel writes: Since the Renaissance there has been no event of such worldwide significance in the history of culture as the discovery of Sanskrit literature in the latter part of the eighteenth century. By a supreme irony of history even as India was helplessly passing under British rule, the British Orientalists were holding up before the world an image of the Indians as one of the creative peoples of the world with an impressive continuity of development and civilization for more than three thousand years. The literate West often compared the Orientalist with the Italian humanists and praised them in the press for their gift of a new Renaissance in the East. William Jones was accorded the greatest honor of all, as the one who had restored Indian to its rightful place among the civilizations of the world.

3.1.5.3. Seamy Side of Orientalism

The work of the Orientalist had its seamy side which should not be ignored. A cloud of doubt came to be cast on William Jones's notion of the language-race nexus and the theory of the Aryan race has now been generally discarded. The theory however, came to have a somewhat harmful influence on future thought. The belief in the superiority of the white Aryan race became a basic assumption of European imperialism everywhere, and the British imperialist historians of India would duly employ it as the *raison d'etre* of British rule in India.

But the Aryan race theory had a more insidious influence on the editing of Indian history. It come to mean that a superior conquering race of Aryans speaking as Indo-European tongue came invading India through the northwestern passes in the second millennium B.C, conquered the indigenous population of mostly Dravidian and Austric origin, inferior in race and culture. The Aryan invasion supposedly effected a racial segregation of the group's through the mechanism of caste and established the superior Vedic Aryan culture which became the foundation the foundation of Indian civilization. The interpretation not only contained an explanation of upper caste superiority, but also suggestion of an Aryan-Dravidian racial divide. Future revelation and research would caste many of these assertions into the realm of motivated fancy. Again, the race theory in the hands of the European scholar, particularly of the British imperialist historian, also came to mean that everything of value in Indian life and culture, at least above reproach in European eyes, was of European origin. The habit of looking for foreign origins for things of value in a people's life is unhistorical.

3.1.6. Conclusion

Great as were the Orientalist revelations, much of it was fanciful too, and this letter aspect misled some modern Indian historians. The Orientalists, particularly William Jones, had, in the enthusiasm of discovery, romanticized and exaggerated the value of the new revelations, not always warranted by the sources. Jones had found the Sanskrit language " more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either…" He labored to show that the Indian division of the Zodiac was not borrowed from the Greeks or Arabs; he supported the story that Plato and Pythogoras borrowed their philosophical ideas from India and concluded that the six Hindu school of Philosophy comprised all the metaphysics of the old Platonic Academy; he endeavored to prove that India had excelled in arithmetic, geometry and logic; he thought that it is possible that Aristotle based his system of logic on Brahmanic syllogisms; and took pains to show that the fertile genius of the Hindus invented the decimal scale, the science of grammar and the game of chess. Such claims were a soothing balm to a wounded, decaying civilization, and nothing could have been bred chauvinism. When, at the turn of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, nationalist historiography grew in reaction to British imperialist historiography on India, some of the nationalist historians- in their enthusiasm to whip up national feeling by extolling national achievement and virtues- found a ready quiver in Orientalist assertations and read into the source things that were not there.

3.1.7. Summary

- *The earliest and one of the positive results of the British conquest and unification of India was the recovery of ancient Indian history on modern lines of historiography.*

- *Modern Indian historiography began with the writings of the scholar –administrators of the English East Indian Company.*
- *The Romantic love of the mysterious and unknown had contributed to a new interest not only in distant races, societies and civilizations, but in distant historical epochs. The Orientalist interest in ancient India needs no further explanation.*
- *Indology may be defined as the scientific study of data relating to Indian history and culture, a study in which little emphasis is laid on the political aspect. The missionaries- particularly the Jesuits had begun the Indological quest long before the British efforts in that direction.*
- *Lawyer, historian, linguist, botanist, civil servant, and literary theorist William Jones had an interest in promoting understanding of and appreciation for Asian languages and cultures that led him to make an original contribution to scholarship unrivalled in his time. Jones was the greatest figure in the Orientalist movement in India.*
- *In 1783, Sir William Jones, arrived in Calcutta as the newest judge on the Bengal Supreme Court. In January 1784, supported by Warren Hastings, Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal- the first organized effort to study the history, society, and culture of India.*
- *The birth of the Asiatic Society was an event of momentous importance. Jones extended to indology the methods of organized scientific research then spreading in Europe.*
- *It was not, however, his translations, but the way he drew the attention of the world in the direction of India's ancient history that made Sir William Jones a seminal figure in the Orientalist movement.*
- *Sir William Jones had some outstanding achievements in Indian history, namely the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages, Jones made an audacious advance to the theory of a common race for the Aryans and discovery of Chandragupta Maurya from classical sources.*
- *Great as were the Orientalist revelations, much of it was fanciful too, and this letter aspect misled some modern Indian historians. The Orientalists, particularly William Jones, had, in the enthusiasm of discovery, romanticized and exaggerated the value of the new revelations, not always warranted by the sources.*

3.1.8. Exercise

1. Write an essay on the contribution of Orientalist to the historiography of India.
2. William Jones was one of the brightest intellectual in the 18th Century world. Discuss.
3. Bring out the contribution of William Jones to the Indological study in India.
4. How Indological pursuit developed among the European? Discuss.
5. Write short notes on the following

a. Sandracottas
b. Indo-Aryan language
c. Orihinal homeland of the Aryan
d. Indology

3.1.9. Further Reading

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UNIT-III

Chapter-II

Colonial/ Imperialist Approach to Indian History and Historiography: James Mill, Elphinstone, and Vincent Smith

Structure

3.2.0. Objectives

This chapter deals with the colonialist approach to Indian history. The lesson will discuss the growth of imperialist writing of Indian history. After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- *trace the origin of imperialist writings of Indian history;*
- *describe the development of Influential works of history in colonial India;*
- *recognize Some other historiographic developments and colonial ideology in historiography*
- *trace the Impact of historical writings in colonial India;*
- *Appreciate the contribution of James Mills, Elphinstone and Vincent Smith for historiographical trend of modern India.*

3.2.1. Introduction

When we talk of Colonial Historiography the first task is to remove a possible source of confusion. The term 'colonial historiography' applies to (a) the histories of the countries colonised during their period of colonial rule, and (b) to the ideas and approaches commonly associated with historians who were or are characterised by a colonialist ideology. In British India the term was used in the first sense and only since independence the second meaning of the term has come into prominence. Many of the front rank historians were British colonial officials, and the term colonial history, when it was used at all, was meant to refer to the *subject* rather than to the *ideology* embedded in that history. Today the ideology is the subject of criticism and hence the term 'colonial historiography' has acquired a pejorative sense. In this chapter, we shall use the term 'colonial historiography' in both of these senses mentioned above.

In a sense colonial history as a subject of study and colonial approach as an ideology are interconnected. The theme of empire building in the historical works of the British naturally gave rise to a set of ideas justifying British rule in India. This justification included, in different degrees in different individual historian, a highly critical attitude towards Indian society and culture at times amounting to contempt, a laudatory attitude to the soldiers and administrators who conquered and ruled India, and a proneness to laud the benefits India received from Pax Britannica, i.e. British Peace. We shall study this ideology in detail later but it is important to note here that lack of consciousness of the ideological dimension was a characteristic of colonial history writing. The influence of Leopold von Ranke and the positivist school of history had, for the major part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, created a belief in the 'objectivity of the historian' and this made it difficult to perceive the possibility of ideological leanings in historians' discourse. The ideological dimension of colonial historiography was brought to the surface only in the post-independence critique of earlier historiography. This critique was launched mainly in India while, as late as 1961, C H Philips of the School of Oriental and

African Studies of London, in *The Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, did not raise the issue at all in a comprehensive survey of historiography.

3.2.2. Influential works of history in colonial India

Before we take up the question of the colonial ideology in historiography, let us try and get a clear idea of the historians we are talking about. In the eighteenth century there were very few genuinely historical works. The British were perhaps too busy fighting their way to the top of the political pyramid in India to devote much attention to history.

One of the notable writers in the historical vein in the eighteenth century was **Charles Grant**, who wrote *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of India* in 1792. He belonged to the 'evangelical school', i.e. the group pf British observers who believed that it was the divine destiny of the British rulers of India to bring the light of Christianity to India which was sunk in the darkness of primitive religious faiths and superstitions. However, this kind of reflective writing on Indian society and history was rather rare in till the early decades of the nineteenth century. By the second decade of the nineteenth century British rule in India had stabilized considerably and was about to enter a new period of expansion. By 1815 in Europe Britain was not only established as a first class power after Britain's victory over Napoleon and France, but Britain had also undergone the first Industrial Revolution and had emerged as the most industrialized country in the world. Britain's confidence in being at the top of the world was nowhere better displayed than in British writings on India, a country she dominated and regarded as backward. This attitude is reflected in the historical writings of the British from the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Three prominent historian of the age, who worked on Indian history were James Mill, Elphinstone and Vincent Smith. **James Mill** wrote a series of volumes on the history of India and this work had a formative influence on British imagination about India. The book was entitled *History of British India*, but the first three volumes included a survey of ancient and medieval India while the last three volumes were specifically about British rule in India.

While James Mill had produced an Utilitarian interpretation of history, a rival work of history produced by **Mountstuart Elphistone** is more difficult to categorise in terms of philosophical affiliation. Elphinstone was a civil servant in India for the greater part of his working life and he was far better equipped and better informed than Mill to write a history of India. His work *History of Hindu and Muhammedan India* (1841) became a standard text in Indian universities (founded from 1857 onwards) and was reprinted up to the early years of the next century. Elphinstone followed this up with *History of British Power in the East*, a book that traced systematically the expansion and consolidation of British rule till Hastings' administration. In India, a more professionally proficient history was produced in the 1860s by J.

Talboys Wheeler. The latter wrote a comprehensive *History of India* in five volumes published between 1867 and 1876, and followed it up with a survey of *India Under British Rule* (1886).

If one were to look for the successor to Elphinstone's work as an influential text book, one would probably turn to the *History of India* by **Vincent Smith** who stands nearly at the end of a long series of British Indian civil servant historians. All the three historians were servants of the British government in India. We will discuss details of these three historians in a separate section.

The political question, however, was assuming increasing importance in the last years of British rule and a historical work more accommodative to the political outlook of the Indian nationalist movement appeared in 1934. This work, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* was different from all the previously mentioned books in that it was written from a liberal point of view, sympathetic to Indian national aspirations to a great extent. The authors were **Edward Thompson** who was a Missionary who taught for many years in a college in Bengal and became a good friend of Rabindranath Tagore, and **G.T. Garratt**, a civil servant in India for eleven years and thereafter a Labour Party politician in England. Given their background, both were disinclined to toe the line laid down by the civil servant historians of earlier days. Thompson and Garratt faced very adverse criticism from conservative British opinion leaders. On the other hand, many Indians found this work far more acceptable than the officially prescribed textbooks. This book, published less than fifteen years before India attained independence, is a landmark indicating the reorientation in thinking in the more progressive and liberal circles among the British; it was in accord with the mindset which made the transition of 1947 acceptable to the erstwhile imperial power. From James Mill to Thompson and Garratt historiography had traveled forward a great distance. This period, spanning the beginning of the 19th century to the last years of British rule in India, saw the evolution from a Euro-centric and disparaging approach to India towards a more liberal and less ethno-centric approach.

3.2.3. Some other historiographic developments

Till now we have focused attention on histories which were most widely read and attained the status of text books, and hence influenced historical imagination and understanding. There were other historical works not of that kind but nevertheless of historiographic importance. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century two great authors wrote on India, though India was really not in the centre of their interest. One was Lord **Macaulay** whose essays on some great British Indian personalities like Robert Clive were published in *Edinburgh Review.* Macaulay's literary style made Indian history readable, though his essays were flawed by poor information and poorer judgment about the 'native' part of British India. It was a great change from the uncommonly dull and censorious James Mill's writings. Macaulay's lasting influence was the establishment of a tradition of writing history in the biographical mode; this was widely

imitated later and hence volume after volume of biographies of Viceroys and the like and histories of their administration.

Sir Henry Maine's contribution was of another kind. A great juridical historian, Maine applied himself to the study of ancient Indian institutions while he was for a short period the Law Member of the Governor-General's Council in India. His *Ancient Law* (1861) and his work on Indian village communities were path-breaking works in history. Maine changed the course of European thinking on the development of law by looking at laws and institutions beyond the domain of Roman law. There were, however, few mentionable contributions by British Indian scholars to follow up Maine's tradition in legal and institutional history. His impact was limited to European scholarly work in the late nineteenth century and perhaps even beyond in the development of sociology in the hands of Max Weber and others.

In the area of legal history the works which British Indian authors produced were of a level different to, indeed inferior to Maine's. Thus for instance **Sir James Fitzjames Stephen**, also a Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, wrote a defence of British administration under Warren Hastings. Edmund Burke, he argued, was wrong in thinking that the punishment awarded to Nanda Kumar by Justice Elijah Impey was a case of miscarriage of justice. This was the subject of Stephen's *Story of Nuncoomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey* (1885). In reaction to this an I.C.S. officer, **Henry Beveridge**, wrote in support of the impeachment and in condemnation of the trial and punishment of Nanda Kumar: *Nanda Kumar: a narrative of a judicial murder* (1886).

Similarly, again in defence of previous British administration, **Sir John Strachey** of the I.C.S., wrote *Hastings and the Rohilla War* (1892*)*. Thus there were legal historical debates about a thing in the past, Warren Hastings and his impeachment and Edmund Burke's criticism of British administration. The site of this kind of debate was history, but the hidden agenda was contemporary – to present British conquest and administration of India as an unsullied record which must not be questioned. In the high noon of the Empire, two prominent authors displayed two very contrary tendencies of historical writing. One was **Sir William W. Hunter**, the editor of a good series of Gazetteers and the author of a pedestrian work on the history of British India. From 1899, he began to edit a series of historical books called *The Rulers of India.* The series lauded the makers of empires in India – mainly the makers of the British Indian Empire, though one or two token Indians, like Asoka and Akbar, were included. The series was endowed with government sponsorship and the volumes found place in official libraries and syllabi. The object was to present history in a popular form and very often included not only solemn moments of resolve to do good on the part of an empire builder, but also cute stories of incidents in their childhood back home. The 'hardboiled types' of empire builders were chosen for immortality in

a biographical form –British civil servants who sympathized with India were excluded — and it was a caricature of the eighteenth century English tradition of writing history as biography.

Sir Alfred Lyall's work, *Rise and Expansion of British Dominion in India* (1894), offers a contrast because he showed great originality in his methodology and interpretation, although one may disagree very fundamentally with the trend of his interpretation. In methodology his originality consisted of the use, in the manner of ethnographers, of his own observation and knowledge of contemporary Indian society, customs, institutions, etc. in order to understand the past events and processes. Thus he went beyond the textual evidence which most historians at that timer depended upon. In his interpretation of Indian history, Lyall projected the story on a very wide canvas, looking at the incursion of the British into India in the light of the entire history of the relationship between the East and the West from the days of the Greeks and the Romans. This wide sweep of history, resembling in some ways Arnold Toynbee's wide-angled global vision of relationship between civilisations, was different from that of most British Indian historians of the nineteenth century. The third element of originality in Lyall was his theoretical position that India and Europe were on the same track of development, but India's development was arrested at a certain point. This was also the view of Sir Henry Maine who wrote that Indian society had a 'great part of our own civilization with its elements…not yet unfolded."

India as an 'arrested civilization' was an influential idea in Europe but in India it had few takers. The nationalistically inclined intelligentsia rejected the view that India was just a backward version of Europe; they believed that India was radically different from Europe in the organisation of her society and state systems, and that India must be allowed to work out a different historical destiny rather than try to imitate Europe. At any rate, while in some matters Lyall's interpretative framework may be questioned, his attempt to look at India as a civilisation merits recognition.

Finally, a noteworthy historiographic development that occurred in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century was the beginning of explorations in economic history. A basis for that had already been laid in the work of many British civil servants who examined economic records and formed broad conclusions about the course of agrarian relations and agricultural history. This they did as district collectors or magistrates responsible for 'land revenue settlement', i.e. fixation of tax on agricultural income in order that Land Revenue may be collected by the government. Among such civil servants an outstanding historian emerged: this was **W. H. Moreland** who examined the economic condition of *India at the Death of Akbar*, published in 1920. This work was followed up with another work of economic history on the period *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1923) and finally a history of *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (1929). To some extent Moreland's approach was flawed by a preconceived notion that the economic condition of India was better under British rule than what it was in medieval times. He

tried to prove this preconception by various means in his works, including his writings on Indian economics in the twentieth century. Moreover, his response to the Indian economic nationalists' critique of British economic impact was far from being adequate. One of his junior contemporaries was **Vera Anstey** who wrote on similar lines; she taught at the University of London and wrote a standard textbook on *The Economic Development of India* (1929). However, her work lacked the historical depth which Moreland attained. Moreland's outstanding contribution was to lay the basis of a new discipline of economic history. However, economic and social history remained marginal to the concerns of the typical colonial historians. This is evident from the classic summation of all the British historians' work on British India in the volume in the *Cambridge History of India* (1929) edited by David Dodwell as well as P E Roberts' textbook, *History of British India* (reprinted often since 1907). Neither Indian economic and social conditions nor indeed the people of India were in focus in such works, their history was all about what the British soldiers and civil servants did in India.

3.2.4. Colonial ideology in historiography

It will be an error to homogenize all of British historical writings as uniformly colonial, since different approaches and interpretative frameworks developed within the colonial school in course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, there were certain characteristics common to most of the works we have surveyed till now. However simplistic it may be, it may be useful to sum up these characteristics:

- An 'Orientalist' representation of India was common, promoting the idea of the superiority of modern Western civilisation; this is a theme recently brought into prominence by Edward Said and others, but the Indian nationalist intelligentsias had identified and criticised this trend in British writings from James Mill onwards.
- The idea that India had no unity until the British unified the country was commonly given prominence in historical narratives; along with this thesis there was a representation of the eighteenth century India as a 'dark century' full of chaos and barbarity until the British came to the rescue.
- Many late nineteenth century British historians adopted Social Darwinist notions about India; this implied that if history is a struggle between various peoples and cultures, akin to the struggle among the species, Britain having come to the top could be *ipso facto* legitimately considered to be superior and as the fittest to rule.
- India was, in the opinion of many British observers, a stagnant society, arrested at a stage of development; it followed that British rule would show the path of progress to a higher level; hence the idea that India needed Pax Britannica.
- The mythification of heroic empire builders and 'Rulers of India' in historical narratives was a part of the rhetoric of imperialism; as Eric Stokes has remarked, in

British writings on India the focus was on the British protagonists and the entire country and its people were just a shadowy background.

- As we would expect, colonial historiography displayed initially a critical stance towards the Indian nationalist movement since it was perceived as a threat to the good work done by the British in India; at a later stage when the movement intensified the attitude became more complex, since some historians showed plain hostility while others were more sophisticated in their denigration of Indian nationalism.

In general, while some of these characteristics and paradigms are commonly to be found in the colonial historians' discourse, it will be unjust to ignore the fact that in course of the first half of the twentieth century historiography out-grew them or, at least, presented more sophisticated versions of them.

In essence, colonial historiography was part of an ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimising British rule over India. The basic idea embedded in the tradition of Colonial Historiography was the paradigm of a backward society's progression towards the pattern of modern European civil and political society under the tutelage of imperial power. The guiding hand of the British administrators, education combined with 'filtration' to the lower orders of society, implantation of such institutions and laws as the British thought Indians were fir for, and protection of Pax Britannica from the threat of disorder nationalism posed among the subject people – these were the ingredients needed for a slow progress India must make. Sometimes this agenda was presented as 'the civilizing mission of Britain'.

What the intellectual lineages of the colonial ideology were as reflected in historiography? Benthamite or Utilitarian political philosophy represented Britain's role to be that of a guardian with a backward pupil as his ward. It may be said that Jeremy Bentham looked upon all people in that light, European or otherwise. That is partly true. But this attitude could find clearer expression and execution in action in a colony like India. Another source of inspiration for the colonialist historian was Social Darwinism, as has been mentioned earlier. This gave an appearance of scientific respectability to the notion that many native Indians were below par; it was possible to say that here there were victims of an arrested civilisation and leave it at that as an inevitable outcome of a Darwinian determinism. A third major influence was Herbert Spencer. He put forward an evolutionary scheme for the explication of Europe's ascendancy and his comparative method addressed the differences among countries and cultures in terms of progression towards the higher European form It was an assumption common among Europeans, that non-European societies would follow that evolutionary pattern, with a bit of assistance from the European imperial powers. This mindset was not peculiar to the British Indian historians. In the heydays of mid-Victorian imperialism the British gave free expression to

these ideas while in later times such statements became more circumspect. In the 1870s Fitzjames Stephen talked of "heathenism and barbarism" versus the British as representatives of a "belligerent civilization". In 1920s David Dodwell's rhetoric is milder, indeed almost in a dejected tone: the Sisyphian task of the British was to raise to a higher level the "great mass of humanity" in India and that mass "always tended to relapse into its old posture …like a rock you try to lift with levers."

3.2.5. Impact of historical writings in colonial India

The above ideological characterisation applies to the dominant trend in historical thinking in the colonial school. But it will be inaccurate to apply this without discrimination. It is well known that among the British officers of the government of British India, as we all know, there were some like Thomas Munro or Charles Trevelyan who were widely regarded as persons sympathetic to the subject people although as officers they served an alien and exploitative regime; there were British officers and British Missionaries (e.g. C F Andrews, author of *Renaissance in India*, 1925) who sympathized with the National Congress; and there were also those, like say Garratt of the Indian Civil Service and later of the Labour Party in England, or George Orwell of the Indian Police Service who were inveterate critics of the empire. It was the same case with the historians. But the inclinations of lone individuals were insignificant in the face of the dominant tradition among the servants of the British Raj. Official encouragement and sponsorship of a way of representing the past which would uphold and promote imperial might, and the organised or informal peer opinion the dissident individual had to contend with. Our characterisation of the ideology at the root of colonial historiography addresses the dominant trend and may not apply in every respect to every individual historian. Such a qualification is important in a course on Historiography in particular because this is an instance where students of history must exercise their judgement about the range and the limits of generalisation. It must be noted that despite the colonial ideology embedded in historiography in British India, the early British historians of India made some positive contributions. Apart from the obvious fact that the colonial historians laid the foundations of historiography according to methodology developed in modern Europe, their contribution was also substantial in providing in institutions like the Asiatic Society and Archaeological Survey of India opportunity for Indian historians to obtain entry into the profession and into academic research. Further, despite an ethnocentric and statist bias, the data collected by the British colonial historians as well as the practice of archiving documents was and remains an important resource. Most important of all, the teaching of history began from the very inception of the first three universities in India at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (1857-1858). This had several unintended consequences.

The history that was taught under colonial auspices was highly biased in favour of the imperial point of view. The textbooks were those produced by the school of colonial historiography. Nevertheless, there was a positive outcome.

First, along with the history of India by James Mill or Elphinstone, Indian students also read histories of England and of Europe and thus were implanted in the minds of the educated Indians the ideas of Liberty and Freedom and Democracy and Equity, as exemplified in European history, the lessons of the Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution, the American War of Independence, the struggles of Mazzini and Garibaldi in Italy, etc. Any one familiar with the early Moderate phase of the development of nationalism in India will see the relevance these ideas acquired through reading history.

Secondly, professionally trained Indian historians began to engage in writing history. Writing history on modern lines with documentary research and the usual apparatus of scholarly work was no longer a monopoly of the amateur historians of British origin. Indians professionally trained began to engage in research, first in learned associations like the Asiatic Society, then in the colleges and universities, and in the government's educational services, particularly the Indian Education Service.

Thirdly, and this is the important part, the history which the Indian students were made to read, the books by British civil servant historians of the nineteenth century, created a critical reaction against that historiography. The first graduate of an Indian University, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, repeatedly reviled the British interpretation and raised the question, When shall we write our own history? Rabindranath Tagore put it most eloquently: in other countries, he wrote, history *reveals* the country to the people of the country, while the history of India the British have gifted us *obscures* our vision of India, we are unable to see our motherland in this history. This reaction was typical of the intelligentsia in India and it led some of the best nationalist minds to search for a new construal of history. Thus there developed a Nationalist interpretation of Indian history, putting to an end the hegemony of British colonial historiography. Writing history became a major means of building the consciousness of a national identity. In the next Unit in this collection the Nationalist School of historiography has been surveyed.

3.2.6. James Mill

James Mill, (born April 6, 1773, Northwater Bridge, Forfarshire, Scot-died June 23, 1836, London, Eng.), was a Scottish philosopher, historian, and economist. He was prominent as a representative of philosophical radicalism, a school of thought also known as Utilitarianism, which emphasized the need for a scientific basis for philosophy as well as a humanist approach to politics and economics. His eldest son was the celebrated Utilitarian thinker John Stuart Mill.

3.2.6.1. Early life and Career

James Mill was one of the countless Scots who, having been trained at home in strict frugality and stern Puritanic principles, have fought their way to success in England. He was born 6th April 1773 in the parish of Logie Pert, Forfarshire. His father, also named James Mill, was a village shoemaker, employing two or three journeymen when at the height of his prosperity. His mother, Isabel Feton, daughter of a farmer, had been a servant in Edinburgh, Her family had some claims to superior gentility; she was fastidious, delicate in frame, and accused of pride by her neighbours. She resolved to bring up James, her eldest son, to be a gentleman, which practically meant to be a minister. He probably showed early promise of intellectual superiority. He received the usual training at the parish school, and was then sent to the Montrose Academy, where he was the schoolfellow and friend of a younger lad, Joseph Hume (1777-1855), afterwards his political ally.

He boarded with a Montrose shopkeeper and remained at the Academy till he was seventeen. He was never put to work in his father's shop, and devoted himself entirely to study. The usual age for beginning to attend a Scottish university was thirteen or fourteen; and it would have been the normal course for a lad in Mill's position to be sent at that age to Aberdeen. He entered the university in 1790, and seems to have applied himself chiefly to Greek and to philosophy. He became so good a Greek scholar that long afterwards (1818) he had some thoughts of standing for the Greek chair at Glasgow.

After distinguishing himself as a Greek scholar at the University of Edinburgh, James Mill was licensed a Presbyterian preacher in 1798. He soon turned to teaching, however, and embarked on historical and philosophical studies. In 1802 he went to London to devote himself to a career in journalism. In 1804 he wrote a pamphlet on the corn trade, arguing against a bounty on the exportation of grain, and in 1806 he began his History of British India, 3 vol. (1817).

Mill became acquainted with Jeremy Bentham, who founded Utilitarianism, in 1808. As Bentham’s chief companion and ally for many years, he adopted Bentham’s principles in their entirety and did more to propagate them and to oppose the beginnings of Romanticism than anyone else. He was a regular contributor (1806–18) to the Anti-Jacobin Review, the British Review, the Eclectic Review, and the Edinburgh Review (1808–13). In 1811 he helped edit the periodical Philanthropist with the English writer William Allen, contributing his opinions on education, freedom of the press, and prison discipline. He also participated in the discussions that led to the founding of London University in 1825. In 1814 Mill undertook to write various articles on politics, law, and education for the six-volume Supplement to the 4th, 5th, and 6th editions of the Encyclopædia Britannica. As reprints they enjoyed a wide circulation in his time. One of the articles, “government,” had considerable influence on public opinion in the 1820s. In

it, Mill concluded that a representative democracy based on wide suffrage is a necessary element of good government. "Government," which was possibly the most succinct statement of the political theory of the philosophical radicals, helped prepare the ground for passage of the first Reform Bill by Parliament in 1832.

In 1819, two years after Mill's History of British India appeared, he was appointed an official in India House, despite his drastic criticisms in the History of British rule in India. He rose gradually through the ranks until he was appointed head of the examiner's office in 1830. The History, his major literary achievement, was the first full historical treatment of the British conquest of India. Mill harshly criticized the British administration of India, and during his 17 years with the India House he helped completely reform the system of government in the colony. However, the History's severe Utilitarian analysis of Indian civilization also popularized among European readers an image of the subcontinent as perpetually backward and undeveloped. Mill never actually visited India.

Mill was also influential in English politics. His writings and his personal connections with radical politicians helped determine the change of view from theories of the rights of man and the absolute equality of men, as promulgated by the French Revolution, to the claiming of securities for good government through wide extension of the franchise. His Elements of Political Economy (1821), an especially precise and lucid work, summarizes the views of the philosophical radicals, based primarily on the work of the economist David Ricardo. In this work Mill maintained: (1) that the chief problem of political reformers is to limit the increase of population, on the assumption that capital does not naturally increase at the same rate as population; (2) that the value of a thing depends entirely on the quantity of labour put into it; and (3) that what is now known as the "unearned increment" of land is a proper object for taxation. The enunciation of the second of these propositions is important in view of the use made of it by Karl Marx. Mill developed Bentham's doctrines by his explanation of the association of ideas. This theory, presented in Mill's Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, 2 vol. (1829), centres on the interrelatedness of mental concepts.

3.2.6.2.James Mill's history on India

The first important history of India came not from the Orientalists but from their great opponent James Mill, an official of the East India Company in London.

Just about this time, between 1806 and 1818, **James Mill** wrote a series of volumes on the history of India and this work had a formative influence on British imagination about India. The book was entitled *History of British India*, but the first three volumes included a survey of ancient and medieval India while the last three volumes were specifically about British rule in India. This book became a great success, it was reprinted in 1820, 1826 and 1840 and it became a basic textbook for the British Indian Civil Service officers undergoing training at the East

India's college at Haileybury. By the 1840s the book was out of date and in his comments its editor H.H. Wilson pointed that out in 1844 but the book continued to be considered a classic.

Mill had never been to India and the entire work was written on the basis of his limited readings in books by English authors on India. It contained a collection of the prejudices about India and the natives of India, which many British officers acquired in course of their stay in India. However, despite shortcomings from the point of view of authenticity and veracity and objectivity, the book was very influential for two reasons. One of these reasons is often recognised: James Mill belonged to an influential school of political and economic thought, the Utilitarians inspired by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham. As an Utilitarian exposition of history Mill's history of India was also at the same time implicitly an Utilitarian agenda for British administration in India. The other reason for the immense influence the book exercised has not been recognized as much as one might have expected. This book perfectly reflected the cast of mind at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which we have noticed earlier, a cast of mind, which developed in the wake of Britain's victory in the Anglo-French wars for hegemony in Europe, and Britain's growing industrial prosperity. James Mill broadcast a message of confident imperialism which was exactly what the readers in England wanted to hear.

Mill predominant motive in writing history was his desire to apply the utilitarian doctrine to the governance of India. He saw in the new Indian Empire a fertile field for utilitarian reforms towards which arguments was to be supplied by the decadent state of life and culture in India. For this purpose he deliberately attempted an evaluation of the Hindu and Muslim government and civilization in India and the evaluation was a sweeping condemnation of both. Begun in 1806 when the author was thirty-three, the History was published in 1818. It made a great impression. The court of Director of the East India Company appointed Mill to a senior post on their London staff. Ricardo prised Mill's work to the skies; Macaulay spoke of it in the house of Commons as the greatest historical work which ahs appeared in our language since that of Gibbon. His Minute on Inidna Education bore its mark. Mill's son, John Stuart Mill, described it as one of the most instructive histories ever written. H.H.Wilson, the leading Orientalist and the severest critic of the History, nevertheless judged it as still " the most valuable work up on the subject which had yet been published. The encomiums of Mill's work showed, more than its quality, the British attitude on utilitarian lines recommended by Mill seemed to suit the aims and needs of British imperialism.

3.2.6.3.Sources and Methods

Since Mill had reached his conclusions even before he started work on his History, all that he needed was some kind of evidence. Employed in the offices of the East India Company in Leaden Hall Street, London, he had access to every bit of paper from India. Unfortunately he felt no need to benefit by the advances made by the orinetalists in ancient Indian history. He had only

contempt for William Jones and the other Orientalists who had learnt the Indian languages and drawn up their accounts from primary sources. Dismissing the Orientalist and their testimony, Mill depended on traveler's reports to point out the vast difference between the professions and practice of the Hindus.

In his indictment of the Hindus, Mill contravened all rules of historical methodology. Ignorance, prejudice, the quality of the sources and the manner of their treatment combined to give to his history its particular tone and color. If he felt that the Orinetalist account of the Hindus was exaggerated, he should have applied to it a process of criticism to reveal the concealed truth instead completely dismissing it. For evidence in his indictment Mill relied on Robert More's account which was partial; on Buchanan who had tried and failed to learn Sanskrit and was prejudiced against the Indians; on Tennant, a most superficial observes and aon Tytler who had known Indian society only through the criminal lawcourts. Committed to the view that Hindu society was barbarous Mill was highly selective in the use of evidence. He cited testimony when it was hostile to the Hindus, such as that of Abbe Dubois, the missionary, of Tytler and other men, but ignored favourable testimony. The massive evidence on the character of the Indians, collected in the parliamentary investigation of 1813, on the whole favourable to the Hindus, went unnoticed.

3.2.6.4.Influence of Mill's History

The tremendous influence Mill's History had on British policy towards India could be seen in the numbers of times it went to the press. In 1848, H.H.Wilson, the leading orientalist of the day, produced an edition of Mill with elaborate footnotes, and an extension of the story from 1805 to 1834. The persisting influence of the book can be easily explained. It provided, as P.H.Philips observes, the main basis for Brotish thought on the character of Indian civilization and on the eay to govern India. Mill's History was established as a textbook at Haileybury College from 1805 to 1855, where the company civil service recruits were trained, and where a succession of eminent utilitarian sot close sympathizers held senior teaching posts. Here at Hailebury, Mill's catechism worked. His History had provided the raison d'etre of British rule in India and , trained along lines suggested by the book , the British administrators who came out to India began to entertain illusions of the permanence of that rule. British Indian Administration moved into a phase of imperial dogmatism, and complacency of its achievements in India.

3.2.7. Elphinstone

Mounstuart Elphinstone, a contemporary of James Mill, came out with his work, History of Hindu and Muhammadan India, which conformed to the Hegelian dialectic of action and reaction. It took a more favourable view if Indian society, and showed a more sympathetic understanding of the problems in India. If Mill's history belonged to the Enlightenment school of historiography, which subordinated liberty to happiness, as he thought that the people's need was

greater for food, shelter and clothing, Elphinstone's history belonged to the Romanticist school of thought, which was more humane and less logical. Elphinstone was passionately in love with India, and spent a good part of his life here. He came to Indian in 1805 at an early age of sixteen, served Indian in various capacities from Residentship at Nagpur to Governorship in Bombay, and proved to be a renowned scholar-administrator. Of all the writer he liked Thucidides most, who inspired him so much that in 1826 he had almost decided to be the first great historian of the Marathas. However, he revised this idea, and entrusted the task to his assistant, Grant Duff, who completed his two volumes on A History of the Maharattas by 1825. It is a classic in its own right, and it is useful even today. Elphinstone not only wrote history himself but created the atmosphere of history writing around him. William Erskine, another of his Bombay assistant, took up the translation of the Memoirs of Babar. But more celebrated is the performance of Captain James Todd, whose The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan stirred the imagination of the people.

While James Mill had produced an Utilitarian interpretation of history, a rival work of history produced by **Mountstuart Elphistone** is more difficult to categorise in terms of philosophical affiliation. Elphinstone was a civil servant in India for the greater part of his working life and he was far better equipped and better informed than Mill to write a history of India. His work *History of Hindu and Muhammedan India* (1841) became a standard text in Indian universities (founded from 1857 onwards) and was reprinted up to the early years of the next century. Elphinstone followed this up with *History of British Power in the East,* a book that traced systematically the expansion and consolidation of British rule till Hastings' administration. The periodisation of Indian history into ancient and medieval period corresponding to 'Hindu' period and 'Muslim' period was established as a convention in Indian historiography as a result of the lasting influence of Elphinstone's approach to the issue.

Elphinstone took up as a mission the refutation of Mill's view, although he regarded Mill's history as ingenious, original and elaborate. He was conscious of the fact that Mill had subordinated his history to the enunciation of a principle which was essentially European in concept, but the real history of India could also be written by a direct contact with Indian situation and conditions. In other words it is one thing to write the history of a land, which one has never visited, on the basis of a particular ideology, and altogether a different thing to be in that land for over two decades, watch the flow of its life from a discerning eye, weigh in the balance all pros and cons of a society's culture, and then write its history. Elphinstone seemed to agree with Vico's concept of history that human customs do not fir into the theory of Jeremy Bentham. Therefore, Elphinstone took up the challenge to refute the utilitarian view of history, but his problem was how to excite interest in the English public who were unaware of the Hindu and Muslim periods of Indian history. Therefore, he desired to make this portion an introduction

to the growth of man's mind and culture, as if the bitter pills are to be coated with sugar, and also by making his style condensed and animated, and the reflection striking and profound.

He started his work in 1834 and by 1841 brought it to the period of British conquest of India, which he did not complete, as he found that he could not compete in this firld with either Mill or Macualay. Elphinstone's work remained an authority for the English knowing public on the ancient and medieval periods. There is a lot of difference between the emotional outburst of Mill and the calm and cool logic of Elphinstone, whose writing lacks the intensity of spirit and the animation of personality. But no one deny that Elphinstone's history was more sober, and more sympathetic and an objective interpretation of the early and medieval history of India. The basic difference between Mill's history and that of Elphinstone's is the assumpation on the part of Mill that human nature is the same all over the world, that is could be changed for the better through law and government and that it was the historian's job to demonstrate this; but Elphinstone thought that human nature was not same all over the world, that it varied from region to region and period to period, and that the historian's business was merely to describe human nature rather than enter into value judgements. If Mill had excited challenge among Indian historians to enter into an argumentative mood to resist western attacks, Elphinstone created a more sober, creative and critical mood which prompted Indians to study the problems of their country in right perspectives.

3.2.8. Vincent Smith (1848-1920)

Vincent Artur Smith does not belong to the group of what E.T. Strokes calls Philosophic historians. Smith was born in 1848 in Dublin, the son of a prominent doctor who was also a well known amateur numismatist and archaeologist. Smith joined the Indian Civil Service in 1869, and served in what is now Uttar Pradesh. After retirement in 1900, he taught Indian history at Dublin.

By the time Smith wrote, a vast corpus of new source materials had been brought to light, and the chronology of ancient Indian histoy had been placed on a firmer footing. In 1904 he produced his famous Early History of India incorporating the advances made in the knowledge of India's past. In 1919 appeared the Oxford History of India. In the interval between the two books Smith also wrote The History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon, and several lesser works. Both the Early History and the Oxford History were great successes as standard textbooks in Indian colleges and universities.

3.2.8.1.Pragmatic View and the Subjective Element

Smith shared with the other administrator historians of India, the pragmatic view that those desires of knowing modern India and solving its numerous problems must know its ancient history. In the Early History he aimed tp present the story of ancient India in an impartial and judicial spirit. But he knew well that even the most direct evidence is liable to unconsciousness

distortion, as some degree of subjectivity is inevitable for it is impossible for the historian to altogether eliminate his own personality however great may be his respect for the objective fact.

3.2.8.2.Sympathetic Treatment of Ancient Indian Civilisation

Smith, like Elphinstone, is sympathetic in his treatment of ancient Indian civilization. In his Early India he rejects a view quite common in his day that all that was good in early India owed to the influence of Hellenistic ideas. Western influence on India was very small. He admires the art of India, though not her literature. Failing to realize, as A.L.Basham observes, that canons of taste differ from culture to culture, Smith writes that the Rajput epics are rude, and Bana's Harsacharita, though containing passages of admirable and vivid description, is an irritating performance, executed in the worst possible taste. For Smith, the Gupta period was a time not unworthy of comparison with the Elizabethan and Stuart period in England.

3.2.8.3.Imperial Strain

But the Early History and the Oxford History are primarily political histories, and in this aspect Smith becomes an imperialist historian. Here the impartial and the judicial spirit leaves him. The political moral that he draws from ancient Indian history is starkly imperialist. Out of the 478 pages of the Early History of India covering the period from 600 B.C to A.D 1200, sixty-six are devoted to the Indian campaigns of Alexander. Smith writes "The triumphant progress of Alexander from the Himalayas to the sea demonstrated the inherent weakness of the greatest Asiatic armies when confronted with European skill and discipline. In point of fact, however, King Purushothama or the tribes of northwestern India, whom Alexander confronted, did not possess the greatest Asiatic armies. The classical writer themselves alludes to the Nandas. Smith concedes that Seleukos's treaty with Chandragupta as humiliating to the Greek king. The historian especially admires the India of the Guptas. India had probably never been governed better after the Oriental manner than under Chandragupta-II. The Arthasastra is criticized for its autocratic and Machiavellian character, and its penal code is stigamatized as ferociously severe. Autocracy and despotism- the only political forms known to ancient India- are for Smith, forms which do not admit of development, and for this reason, presumably, India has not developed. But the despotic sway of the British over India has not benevolent and necessary. The paramount lesson of Indian history is the ever present need for a superior controlling force to check the disruptive forces always ready to operate in India. The description in the Early History of India of the condition of northern India after Harsha's death is an unconcealed justification of the continuation of British rule in India. Here Smith gives the reader a notion of what India always has been when released from the control of a supreme authority, and what she would be again, if the hand of the benevolent despotism which now holds her in its iron grasp should be withdrawn.

The Imperialist strain runs through the later Oxford history too. Smith tells us that the desire of the Indians for political unity is shown in their acquiescence to British rule, and in the

passionate outbursts of loyal devotion to the king Emperor. E.B.Havel, a pioneer in the sympathetic study of Indian art and the author of the History of Aryan Rule in India (1918), believed that the Aryans were responsible for all that is good in India, especially the rural democracy of the Ppanchayats, and the rule of law. But unlike other British historians, of India he arrived at a different conclusion. Both Englishmen and Indians being Aryans, England should encourage India's aspirations for self-government under the British crown, for they are in keeping with Aryan tradition. The following passage is Havels criticism of Smith's appeared to early India. It must be peculiarly humiliating to the Indian to be constantly told by their rulers… that freedom has never spread her wings over their native land, that they are heirs to untold centuries of Oriental Despotism Whether intentional or not, no greater spiritual injury can be done to a people than to teach them to despise the achievement of their forefather. To overvalue them can hardly be a mistake.

3.2.9. Conclusion

The term 'colonial historiography' has been used in two senses. One relates to the history of the colonial countries, while the other refers to the works which were influenced by colonial ideology of domination. It is in the second sense that most historians today write about the colonial historiography. In fact, the practice of writing about the colonial countries by the colonial officials was related to the desire for domination and justification of the colonial rule. Therefore, in most such historical works there was criticism of Indian society and culture. At the same time, there was praise for the western culture and values and glorification of the individuals who established the empire in India. The histories of India written by James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Vincent Smith and many others are pertinent examples of this trend. They established the colonial school of historiography which denigrated the subject people while praising the imperial country.

In such accounts, India was depicted as a stagnant society, as a backward civilisation and as culturally inferior while Britain was praised as a dynamic country possessing superior civilisation and advanced in science and technology.

3.2.10. Summary

- *The term 'colonial historiography' applies to the histories of the countries colonised during their period of colonial rule, and to the ideas and approaches commonly associated with historians who were or are characterised by a colonialist ideology.*
- *Some of the famous historians of this phase were like Charles Grant, James Mill, Mountstuart Elphistone, Vincent Smith, Sir Henry Maine, Sir John Strachey and Sir Alfred Lyall etc.*
- *A noteworthy historiographic development that occurred in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century was the beginning of explorations in economic history. A basis for*

that had already been laid in the work of many British civil servants who examined economic records and formed broad conclusions about the course of agrarian relations and agricultural history.

- *Colonial historiography was part of an ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimizing British rule over India.*
- *The basic idea embedded in the tradition of Colonial Historiography was the paradigm of a backward society's progression towards the pattern of modern European civil and political society under the tutelage of imperial power*
- *The books by British civil servant historians of the nineteenth century, created a critical reaction against that historiography. This reaction was typical of the intelligentsia in India and it led some of the best nationalist minds to search for a new construal of history.*
- *This school created an atmosphere which resulted in the development of Nationalist interpretation of Indian history, putting to an end the hegemony of British colonial historiography. Writing history became a major means of building the consciousness of a national identity. In the next Unit in this collection the Nationalist School of historiography has been surveyed.*

3.2.11. Exercises

1. What is colonial historiography? Discuss some of the important works of historians who are generally associated with colonial historiography.
2. Do you think that all the works written by colonial or the British historians on India belong to the colonial school of history writing? Answer with examples.
3. Discuss the basic elements of colonialist ideology contained in colonial historiography.
4. Bring out the contribution of James Mill towards colonial historiography of India.
5. Elphinstone's historical understanding was different than those of James Mill's. Discuss.

3.2.12. Further Reading

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UNIT-III

Chapter-III

NATIONALIST APPROACH AND WRITINGS TO INDIAN HISTORY:

R.G.Bhandarkar, H.C Raychoudhiri, and J.N.Sarkar

Structure

3.3.0. Objectives

In this chapter we intend to provide you an insight into the rise of Indian historian and subsequent growth of Indian historiography during colonial rule. This lesson will briefly discuss the nationalist approach to Indian historical tradition and assess the role of some influential historians of the age. By the end of this chapter you would be able to:

- *explain the aims and objectives of nationalist historians in British India;*
- *describe the ideology and works of nationalist historian on ancient India, Medieval India and Modern India;*
- *distinguish between the nationalist and colonialist historical writings in India;*
- *assess and appreciate the contribution of R.G.Bhandarkar, H.C.Roychoudhiri and Sir J.N.Sarkar for their understanding of Indian history;*

3.3.1. Introduction

This is a simple presentation of a very complex problem, especially because historiography is an aspect both of history and persons, and events and intellectual history. It should also be kept in view that when discussing historical approach of a historian, his or her sincerity and honesty is seldom in question. A historian worth discussing does not write to order or to deliberately serve specific interests. Though it is true that a historian's work may reflect the thinking of a class, caste or a social or political group, he basically writes through intellectual conviction or under the impact of ideas and ideologies. This is why often a historian may transcend the class, caste, race, community or nation in which he is born.

Thus concrete relationship of a historian to a particular approach to Indian history – for example, colonial, nationalist, or communal approach is evolved not by analyzing or 'discovering his motives but by seeing the correspondence between his intellectual product and the concrete practice of the colonialists, nationalists or communalists. Quite often a historian – or any intellectual – is affected by contemporary politics and ideologies. Of course, it is an important aspect of intellectual history to study how and why certain ideas, approaches and ideologies are picked up, popularised, debated – supported and opposed—become dominant or lose dominance, or the ideas arising in one milieu are picked up in another milieu.

3.3.2. Colonial versus nationalist historiography

Nationalist approach to Indian history may be described as one which tends to contribute to the growth of nationalist feeling and to unify people in the face of religious, caste, or linguistic differences or class differentiation. This may, as pointed out earlier, sometimes be irrespective of the intentions of the author.

Initially, in the 19th century, Indian historians followed in the footsteps of colonial historiography, considering history as scientific based on fact-finding, with emphasis on political history and that too of ruling dynasties. Colonial writers and historians, who began to write the

history of India from late 18th and early 19th century, in a way created all India history, just as they were creating an all-India empire. Simultaneously, just as the colonial rulers followed a political policy of divide and rule on the basis of region and religion, so did colonial historians stress division of Indians on the basis of region and religion throughout much of Indian history. Nationalist historians too wrote history as either of India as a whole or of rulers, who ruled different parts of India, with emphasis on their religion or caste or linguistic affiliation. But as colonial historical narrative became negative or took a negative view of India's political and social development, and, in contrast, a justificatory view of colonialism, a nationalist reaction by Indian historians came. Colonial historians now increasingly, day by day, threw colonial stereotypes at Indians. Basic texts in this respect were James Mill's work on Ancient India and Elliot and Dawson's work on Medieval India. Indian nationalist historians set out to create counter-stereotypes, often explicitly designed to oppose colonial stereotypes thrown at them day after day. Just as the Indian nationalist movement developed to oppose colonialism, so did nationalist historiography develop as a response to and in confrontation with colonial historiography and as an effort to build national self-respect in the face of colonial denigration of Indian people and their historical record. Both sides appealed to history in their every day speech and writing. Even when dealing with most obtuse or obscure historical subjects, Indians often relied in their reply on earlier European interpretations.

For example, many colonial writers and administrators asserted that historical experience of Indian people made them unfit for self-government and democracy, or national unity and nation-formation or modern economic development, or even defence against invasion by outsiders. Colonial rule would gradually prepare them – and was doing so – far all these tasks. Moreover, in the second half ot he 19th century, the need for permanent presence of colonial rulers and colonial administration for the development of India on modern lines was sometimes implied and sometimes explicitly asserted. While the utilitarians and missionaries condemned Indian culture, the Orientalists emphasised the character of India as a nation of philosophers and spiritual people. While this characterisation bore the marks of praise, the accompanying corollary was that Indians had historically lacked political, administrative and economic acumen or capacity. Indians should, therefore, have full freedom to develop and practice their spiritualism and influence the world in that respect, the British should manage the political, administrative, and economic affairs and territorial defence of India against foreign aggression, which had succeeded whenever India had an Indian ruler. In fact, in the absence of foreign rule, India had tended to suffer from political and administrative anarchy. For example, it was the British who saved India from anarchy during the 18th and 19th centuries. The colonial writers and administrators also maintained that, because of their religious and social organisation, Indians also lacked moral character. (This view was often the result of the fact that British administration

came into social contact only with their cooks, syces and other servants or with compradors who were out to make money through their relations with the Sahibs). Also, some of the European writers praised Indian spiritualism, because of their own reaction against the evils of the emerging industrialism and commercialism in their own countries.

Many colonial historians also held that it was in the very nature of India, like other countries of the East, to be ruled by despots or at least by autocratic rulers. This was the reason why British rule in India was and had to be autocratic. This view came to be widely known as the theory of Oriental Despotism. Furthermore, these writers argued that the notion that the aim of any ruler being the welfare of the ruled was absent in India. In fact, the traditional political regimes in India were 'monstrously cruel' by nature. In contrast, the British, even through autocratic, were just and benevolent and worked for the welfare of the people. In contrast with the cruel Oriental Despotism of the past, British rule was benevolent though autocratic.

The colonial writers also held that Indians had, in contrast to Europeans, always lacked a feeling of nationality and therefore of national unity, – Indians had always been divided. Indians, they said, had also lacked a democratic tradition. While Europeans had enjoyed the democratic heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, the heritage of Indians – in fact of all people of the Orient or East – was that of despotism.

Indians also lacked the quality of innovation and creativity. Consequently most good things—institutions, customs, arts and crafts, etc. – had come from outside. For example, it was colonial rule which had brought to India law and order, equality before law, economic development, and modernization of society based on the ideas of social equality.

All these colonial notions not only hurt the pride of Indian historians and other intellectuals but also implied that the growing demand of the Indian intellectuals for self-government, democracy, legislative reform, etc., was unrealistic precisely because of Indians' past history. After all, democracy was alien to their historical character and therefore not suitable to them.

3.3.3. Nationalist history of ancient and medieval periods

Many Indians, affected by nationalism, and some Europeans, took up an examination of colonial stereotypes virtually as a challenge from the second half of the 19th century. They did so on the basis of detailed and meticulous research, which has created excellent traditions of devotion to facts and details and of reliance on primary sources in Indian historical discipline.

Indian historians tried to prove the falsity of colonial historical narrative on the basis of analysis of existing historical sources, as also the hunt for fresh sources. Of course, they also were moved by a feeling of hurt national pride. For decades, their work was confined to ancient and medieval periods. The professional historians did not take up the modern period though, as we shall see, the economists did, basically because of two reasons: (a) most of them were

working in government or government-controlled schools and colleges, there was fear that any critique of colonialism would affect their careers; (b) they accepted the contemporary British historical view that scientific history must not deal with recent or contemporary period.

The Indian historians proclaimed the colonial notion of India's tradition of spirituality as a mark of distinction and of India's greatness and superiority over the West, especially in terms of 'moral values' as compared to the essentially 'materialistic' character of Western civilisation. (Paradoxically, this formulation made an appeal to the Indians of middle classes who belonged to moneylending and trading families who daily struggled for acquisition of material goods). At the same time, they denied the Indians' exclusive devotion to spirituality and stressed their prowess in administration and statecraft, empire building, diplomacy, taxation structure, and military organisation, warfare, agrarian, industrial and commercial development. Many historians discovered in India's past diplomatic and political institutions analogous to those of contemporary Europe. They vehemently denied the notion of ancient Indian being inefficient in running a state. They hailed the discovery in the beginning of the 20th century of *Arthashastra* by Kautilya and said that it proved that Indians were equally interested and proficient in administration, diplomacy and economic management by the state. Many glorified Kautilya and compared him with Machiavelli and Bismarck. Many also denied the dominant influence of religion on the state and asserted the latter's secular character. They also contradicted the view that ancient Indian state was autocratic and despotic. The Kings in ancient India dispensed justice to all, they said. Others refuted the view that Indian rulers did not keep in mind the aim of the welfare of the people. Some even asserted the strong presence of the popular element in the state and went even so far as to say that in many cases the political structure approached that of modern democracies. In any case, all of them argued that government was not irresponsible and capricious. There were many limits on autocracy or the power of the rulers. There were many channels through which public opinion became effective. Some even argued that Indian monarchies were limited and often approached constitutional monarchy. For example, the Mantri Parishad described by Kautilya was compared with the Privy Council of Britain. Above all, very often the existence of local self-governments was asserted and the example of democratically elected village panchayats was cited. A few writers went so fare as to talk of the existence of assemblies and parliaments and of the cabinet system, as under Chandra Gupta, Akbar and Shivaji. Quite often, the wide observance by the rulers of international law, especially in the case of war, was also pointed out. They denied the charge that Indian rulers took recourse to arbitrary taxation and argued that a taxation system virtually analogous to that of a modern system of taxation prevailed. K.P. Jayaswal, a celebrated historian of the first quarter of the 20th century, took this entire approach to the extreme.

In his *Hindu Polity*, published in 1915, he argued that the ancient Indian political system was either republican or that of constitutional monarchy. He concluded: 'The constitutional progress made by the Hindus has probably not been equalled, much less surpassed, by any polity of antiquity.' (This was to counter the European view that Greece was the home of democracy). Basically, the nationalist approach was to assert that anything that was politically positive in the West had already existed in India. Thus R. C. Majumdar wrote in his *Corporate Life in Ancient India* that institutions 'which we are accustomed to look upon as of western growth had also flourished in India long ago.' Thus, interestingly, the value structure of the west was accepted. It is not ancient Indian political institutions which were declared to be, on the whole, greater, but western institutions which were accepted as greater and then found to have existed in ancient India.

Colonial historians stressed that Indians were always divided by religion, region, language, and caste, that it was colonialism alone which unified them, and that their unity would disappear if colonial rule disappeared. This also meant that Indians lacked a sense of patriotism and national unity. Nationalist historians countered the colonial view by claiming that cultural, economic and political unity and a sense of Indian nationhood had prevailed in pre-colonial India. Kautilya, for example, they said, had advocated in the *Arthashastra* the need for a national king. This need to assert the unity of India in the past explains, in part, why Indian historians tended to see Indian history as a history of Indian empires and their break up and why they treated the period of empires as period of national greatness. In their view Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Chandragupta Vikramditya and Akbar were great because they built great empires. Interestingly, this led to a contradiction in the nationalist approach during the Gandhian era. On the one hand India was praised as the land of non-violence and, on the other hand, the military power of the empire-builders was praised. One curious result was that Asoka was praised for his commitment to nonviolence by some historians, others condemned him for the same as it weakened the empire against foreign invaders.

The nationalists wrote approvingly of India's culture and social structure. In the bargain they underplayed caste oppression, social and economic denigration of the lower castes, and male domination. Moreover, while rightly emphasising India's contribution to the development of civilisation in the world, they tended to underplay the impact of other cultures and civilisations on India's development. Furthermore, as in the case of political institutions, often the worth of social values and institutions was accepted and then found to have existed in ancient India. Apart from its historical veracity, which cannot be discussed here, the nationalist historians' approach towards ancient India had a few highly negative consequences. (i) Nearly all achievements of the Indian people in different areas of human endeavour were associated with the ancient period, (ii) It was Hindu culture and social structure in its Sanskritic and Brahmanical

form that was emphasised. (iii) Glorification of the past tended to merge with communalism and, later, with regionalism.

In any case the high water-mark of the Indian historical writing on the ancient period of Indian history was reached around early 1930s. Later, it became more and more a caricature of the writings of the earlier period. Nationalist historiography of medieval India developed mostly during the 1920s and after, often to dispute the colonial and communal approaches. Nationalists historians of medieval India repeated more or less the entire nationalist approach towards ancient Indian history. In particular, they emphasised the development of a composite culture in Northern India as a result of interaction among Hindus and Muslims both at the level of the common people and the elite. They also denied the colonial-communal assertion that Muslim rulers remained foreigners even after settling down in the country or that they were inherently oppressive or more so than their predecessors or counterparts in the rest of the world. Above all, they denied that Hindus and Muslims lived in a conflictual situation, ever at each other's throats.

Despite their tendency to glorify India's past and to defend Indian culture against colonial denigeration, many of the nationalists historians also looked for an answer to the question: how could a small trading company, backed by a small country thousands of miles away, conquer such a large country as India with its hoary past and great civilisations. This indicated the beginnings of a critique of Indian culture and social structure, which, in turn, led to initial steps being taken towards the study of social history, especially pertaining to the caste system and the position of women.

The contemporary nationalist critique of colonialism also led to first steps being taken towards the economic history of pre-colonial India. Also as the national movement developed as a mass movement, attention turned in the 1930s towards a study of the role of the common people in history. This trend fructified, however, only after the 1950s.

It may also be kept in view that the historians we are discussing were handicapped by the limitation of their sources. They had to rely mostly on written sources, though epigraphy and numismatics were beginning to make a major contribution. Archaeology was still in its infancy, while the use of anthropology and sociology was negligible. Economics too was seen as a preserve only of the economists.

3.3.4. Nationalist history of modern period

Nationalist historiography flourished mainly in dealing with the ancient and medieval periods. It hardly existed for the modern period and came into being mainly after 1947, no school of nationalist historians of modern India having existed before 1947. This was in part because, in the era of nationalism, to be a nationalist was also to be anti-imperialist, which meant confrontation with the ruling, colonial authorities. And that was not possible for academics because of colonial control over the educational system. It became safe to be anti-imperialist

only after 1947. Consequently, a history of the national movement or of colonial economy did not exist. This is, of course, not a complete explanation of the absence of nationalist historiography before 1947. After all, Indian economists did develop a sharp and brilliant critique of the colonial economy of India and its impact on the people.

A detailed and scientific critique of colonialism was developed in the last quarter of the 19th century by non-academic, nationalist economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. V. Joshi, R. C. Dutt, K. T. Telang, G. K. Gokhale and D. E. Wacha. Several academic economists such as K. T. Shah, V. C. Kale, C. N. Vakil, D. R.

Gadgil, Gyan Chand, V.K.R.V. Rao and Wadia and Merchant followed in their footsteps in the first half of the 20th century. Their critique did not find any reflection in history books of the period. That was to happen only after 1947, and that too in the 1960s and after. This critique, however, formed the core of nationalist agitation in the era of mass movements after 1920. Tilak, Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Subhash Bose, for example, relied heavily upon it. A few historians who referred in passing to the national movement and nationalist historians after 1947 did not see it as an anti-imperialist movement. Similarly, the only history of the national movement that was written was by nationalist leaders such as R.G. Pradhan, A.C. Mazumdar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Post- 1947 historians accepted the legitimacy of nationalism and the Indian national movement but seldom dealt with its foundation in the economic critique of the colonialism. They also tended to underplay, when not ignoring completely, other streams of the nationalist struggle.

Modern historians have also been divided between those, such as Tara Chand, who held that India has been a nation-in-the-making since the 19th century and those who argue that India has been a nation since the ancient times. At the same time, to their credit, all of them accept India's diversity, i.e., its multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and therefore multi-cultural character. Nationalist historians also have ignored or severely underplayed inner contradictions of Indian society based on class and caste or the oppression of and discrimination against women and tribes. They have also ignored the movements against class and caste oppressions. They have seldom made an in-depth analysis of the national movement, and often indulged in its blind glorification. While adopting a secular position and condemning communalism, they do not make a serious analysis of its character or elements, causation, and development. Quite often, it is seen merely as an outcome of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. They give due space to the social reform movements but do not take a critical look at them, and often ignore the movements of the tribal people and the lower castes for their emancipation. As a whole, historians neglected economic, social and cultural history and at the most attached a chapter or two on these without integrating them into the main narrative.

We may make a few additional remarks regarding nationalist historians as a whole. They tended to ignore inner contradictions within Indian society. They suffered from an upper caste and male chauvinist cultural and social bias. Above all they tended to accept the theory of Indian exceptionalism that Indian historical development was entirely different from that of the rest of the world. They missed a historical evaluation of Indian social institutions in an effort to prove India's superiority in historical development. Especially negative and harmful both to the study of India's history and the political development of modern India was their acceptance of James Mill's periodisation of Indian history into Hindu and Muslim periods.

3.3.5. R.G.Bhandarkar (1837-1925)

Indian scholars of the nineteenth century had concentrated mostly on editing the sources, fixing the chronology or discussing the genealogy of the various rulers. They had yet to establish their claim as sober, critical and creative historians, although one or two like Rajendralkal Mitra and Romesh Chandra Dutt seem to stand out higher. But with Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar Indian historiography enters into a new phase. He was the first Indian historian to apply critical and analytical principles to the writing of history, to utilize different kinds of sources after very scrutiny to deduce logical and scientific conclusions from the data and to adopt an easy and good style. He was a versatile genius whose grasp of Sanskrit and Prakrit was amazing and whose knowledge of philosophy and religion was very profound. He was a thinker in his own right eager to bring about social change and religious reform, as he believed that many of the orthodox customs of his day had no foundation in ancient Hindu religion. He came from a poor Brahmin family of Ratnagiri district, the son of a clerk in the Revenue Department and was educated at Elphistone Institute in Bombay. His favorite subject was mathematics which he studies und3er Dadabhai Naroji. Under the influence of Howard, the Director of Public Instruction, Bhandarkar switched over to the study of Sanskrit and Indian culture in which he gained such proficiency as to be appointed Professor of Sanskrit in the Deccan College, Poona. From 1893 to 1895 he rose to the position of the Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, became a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council in 1903 and was knighted in the Delhi Darbar of 1911.

Bhandarkar's writings have a characteristic features of their own namely thoroughness and precision, fullness of knowledge and versatility, with objectivity and frankness. He was the first Indian scholar to apply western techniques and methods to the study of Sanskrit and Indian antiquities, and he was the first to judge the oriental values with Occidental standards. The fame of Bhandarkar as a historian rest on his two books, the Early History of the Deccan(1884) and A Peep into the Early History of India(1900). Bhandarkar was great liberal and in all his writings there is not a single trace of any anti-British feelings. On the other hand he was a fond admirer of Britain and Germany. He appreciated the Western technique of shifting the historical data, and was perhaps the first Indian to apply Ranke's method to Indian problems. Very clearly he says

that a historian should eschew the tendency to glorify his own race or country, and he should not have as well the negative prejudice of disliking any race or country. Nothing but dry truth should be his object. He should be a judge and not an advocate. Bhandarkar is very fair minded. He likes neither the tone of Vincent Smith, who has an assumed air of superiority for things western nor of those Indian historians who claim needless superiority for thing eastern. Very scrupulously he applied the critical method to sources, and in some respects he was far more critical than many European historians of ancient India. Judging the chronology of the Satavahana fixed by Vincent Smith on the basis of the Puranas, one could easily say that it could hardly stand the test of scrutiny, but on the same subject what Bhandarkar has said has not yet been refuted. Despite his deep religious bent of mind, he never allowed religious views to influence his historical conviction. He never beleieved in the Divine will as the determining factor in history. He was more interested in describing what happened rather than why it happened. As long as we are not fully aware what had happened, we cannot answer the question why it happened. Bhandarkar is one of the very few historians of India who consciously attempted to be objective and were successful to a great degree. He is certainly the Ranke of India.

3.3.6. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri

Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, belonged to that unique band of scholars of Ancient Indian History who lived their lives immersed in the passion of their scholarship. After a brilliant academic career right from his school days in the then East Bengal and then at University of Calcutta, he embarked on a career of teaching Ancient Indian History after his M.A, first in leading colleges of Calcutta and then in Chittagong in Bangladesh.

The legendary Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, the first Indian Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University was quick to spot the extraordinary talent of Hemchandra and offered him a lectureship in the newly founded Post-graduate Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in 1917, which he readily accepted.

From then on there was no looking back for Hemchandra. Recognitions, prizes, doctorate and responsibilities followed acknowledging his scholarship, and he became the head of the department of Ancient Indian History and Culture of Calcutta University in 1936. What Prof Hemchandra Raychaudhuri will always be remembered for is his pioneering work "Political History of Ancient India" with its reconstruction of Ancient Indian History; and other works like "The Early History of the Vaishnava Sect" and "Studies in Indian Antiquities". As well as his great love for teaching and the reverence that generations of students had for him, some of whom became luminaries in their own right.

3.3.6.1.Early Life

Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, one of the internationally acknowledged doyens of Ancient Indian History, was born on April 8, 1892, in the village of Ponabalia in the Buckergunge district of Barisal in the erstwhile East Bengal, now Bangladesh. He was the second son of Manoranjan Raychaudhuri, the Zamindar or dominant landlord of Ponabalia, and Tarangini Devi, who had three sons and three daughters. Sri Manoranjan Raychaudhuri was a highly cultured man and an accomplished classical musician, while Tarangini Devi was a lady of immense curiosity with a rare spirit of enquiry, which surely contributed to the indefatigable spirit of research and scholarship that Hemchandra was endowed with and focused on his abiding passion in Ancient Indian History.

Hemchandra's early education was at the Brajamohan Institution in Barisal, reputed to be one of the best schools of the time. He passed the Entrance, as the then school leaving examination was called, in 1907, standing first among all the students of the then provinces of East Bengal and Assam. After this he came to study in Calcutta (or Kolkata as it is now called) and studied first in General Assembly's Institution (later Scottish Church College) and then at Presidency College from where he graduated in 1911. He stood first among all the Honours Graduates of Calcutta University that year and got the coveted Eshan Scholarship. Once again he stood first in the M.A (History) examination of Calcutta University in 1913 and subsequently became a Griffith Prizeman in 1919, and right from then his interest was in Ancient Indian History. In 1921, at the comparatively young age of 29 years, he was conferred the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) of Calcutta University, for his brilliant thesis on Ancient Indian History, much of which became the basis for his seminal book – "Political History of Ancient India".

3.3.6.2.Carrier: As a Historian

Immediately after getting his M.A. degree, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri joined Bangabashi College, Calcutta, as Lecturer of History and taught there from 1913 to '14. In 1914 he joined the Bengal Education Service and taught History at Presidency College for three years from 1914 to'16. In 1916 he was transferred to the Government College, Chittagong in East Bengal and it was around this time he faced great personal distress and tragedy due to the protracted illness of his first wife and her subsequent untimely death. However, his fate soon took a turn for the better. The legendary, Sir Ashutosh Mookherjee, the first Indian Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, who was adept at spotting extraordinary talent, approached Hemchandra with an offer of a lectureship in the newly created course Ancient Indian History and Culture. Hemchandra readily accepted, resigned from the Bengal Education Service and joined Calcutta University as a lecturer in Ancient Indian History in 1917.

So began a lifelong love affair with Ancient Indian History for Hemchandra. A passion that so consumed him that he would research, read and lecture for up to 18 hours a day! On the

one hand, he expanded the frontiers of knowledge in Ancient Indian History right up to the 9th. Century B.C, by reconstructing history beyond the time of Alexander – that was the accepted documented period of Ancient Indian Historians of the time like the acknowledged authority Vincent Smith – and finding documentary evidence through his study of ancient Indian texts. On the other hand, his lectures on Ancient Indian History, became renowned for bringing alive Ancient Indian History to such an extent that generations of students swore by them, and even students of Medieval History would bunk their classes to attend them! His devoted students included names like Hem Chandra Ray, Nanigopal Mazumdar, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, Tarak Chandra Das, Nihar Ranjan Ray, Dinesh Chandra Sircar, Sudhakar Chatterjee, Nisith Ranjan Ray, Kali Kinkar Dutta etc., who themselves later became luminaries in Indological studies.

Prof. Hemchandra Raychauduri was the epitome of the spirit of the Bengal Renaissance which created several milestones in the fields of ancient literature, philosophy, history and science and subsequently led to the growth of Indological consciousness in all parts of India. Raychaudhuri was at the vanguard of this movement through his path breaking studies and teachings of Ancient Indian History.

His career in Calcutta University that began as a lecturer in Ancient Indian History and Culture in 1917, reached its acme when he was appointed the Carmichael Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in 1937 when he succeeded Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar on the latter's retirement, and a position that he held till his own retirement in June 1952.

Prof. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri's scholarship was universally recognized, not only in India but internationally as well. His published works were characterized by originality, sound judgment and learning, and he never sacrificed critical caution to novel theories and his name was a guarantee for dependable work. In 1946, he was made a Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and later in 1951, was awarded the Society's B.C. Law gold medal for his contribution to the cause of Ancient Indian History and Culture. In 1941, he presided over a section of the Indian History Congress at Hyderabad and was elected General President of the Congress for its Nagpur Session in 1950.

Prof. Raychaudhuri was not a prolific author, and this was because he insisted on quality rather than quantity. He tirelessly served the Calcutta University till his very last days, though towards the end of his tenure he was quite ill. At one time he was the Head of various History and Indological departments of the University, that included his beloved Ancient Indian History and Culture, Sanskrit, Pali, General History and Islamic Studies. Internationally renowned Indologists like Dr. A.L. Basham, the author of the seminal "The Wonder that was India" and even Harold Macmillan, one time Prime Minister of England, whose printing house Macmillan and Co. were the publishers of one of his books, made it a point to visit Prof. Raychaudhuri at his

South Calcutta residence when in India. When he passed away in 1957, India had lost one of the brightest stars in its Ancient Indian History firmament.

Dr. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri was a unique man. Not only a scholar, researcher and teacher of the highest order but a fantastic human. His scholarship and research attracted admiration and accolades from leading internationally renowned historians; his brilliant lectures made him legendary among generations of students, many of them luminaries in their own right; and his caring, affection, approachability and willingness to give time and attention from the smallest child in his family to his post-graduate students, even when chronically ill as he was quite early in his life, made him unforgettable. A man who looked after over 20 members in his extended family, making no distinction between any, and lit the passion for Ancient Indian History in the hearts of countless students.

Prof. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri belonged to a unique breed of academicians. A product of the Bengal Renaissance that was greatly responsible for a revived interest in Indological studies in the country, he was a rare combination of a great scholar, an indefatigable researcher and a spellbinding teacher. However, the greatest contribution he made to Ancient Indian History was his path breaking research that is encapsulated in his magnum opus – Political History of Ancient India - from the Accession of Parikshit to the Extinction of the Gupta Dynasty.

Before Raychaudhuri, the only other definitive work on Ancient Indian History was Vincent Smith's Early History of India. Here Smith practically starts with the period beginning with Alexander's invasion of India in 327 – 324 B.C., though he wrote a few pages on the earlier period from 600 B.C. Prof. Raychaudhuri pushed back the commencement of the historical period to the 9th. Century B.C., when the great Kuru King Parikshit flourished according to the chronological scheme proposed by him.

This was a daunting task as Prof. Raychaudhuri had to reconstruct the pre-Bimbisara period of Ancient Indian History on the basis of a careful analysis of early Indian literary traditions, which he showed contained genuine historical elements. But the indefatigable researcher and scholar that he was, he went through the entire Vedic and Epico-Puranic literature and various other Sanskrit and Prakrit works, as well as Buddhist and Jain texts. Prof Raychaudhuri was probably the only Ancient Indian Historian who was capable of utilizing this stupendous mass of material thus collected to carefully reconstruct this hitherto unrecorded period of Ancient Indian History.

Centrifugal and Centripetal forces

From his research and reconstruction of Ancient Indian History from the 9th.Century B.C. to the extinction of the Gupta dynasty, Prof Raychaudhuri arrived at his distinctive and original central theme of how kingdoms in ancient India that transcended provincial limits were subjected to a struggle between what he called the "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces. The

centrifugal force, he showed, trying to hold the kingdom together and the centripetal force trying to dissolute the kingdom and leading to its extinction.

Prof Raychaudhuri was a passionate votary of truth and facts and did not allow any external influence like nationalism or a pursuit of novel theories to colour facts in any way, as is seen in the works of many historians. For example, Asoka the third Mauryan emperor has been hailed as the greatest monarch of Ancient India by most historians. But Prof. Raychaudhuri while evaluating the achievements of Asoka in great detail, never fails to criticize Asoka's Dharma Vijay, which in some measure (the centripetal force), Prof. Raychaudhuri showed, brought about the downfall of the once mighty empire. "(Asoka) turned civil administrators into religious propagandists," he wrote, "…(when) India needed men of the caliber of Chandragupta and Puru, she got a dreamer. Magadha after the Kalinga war frittered away her conquering energy in attempting a religious revolution … the result was politically disastrous."

This unique combination of adherence to truth, rapier sharp judgment, clarity of thought and depth of knowledge is what sets Prof Hemchandra Raychaudhuri apart.

The second famous work of Prof. Raychaudhuri isMaterials for the Study of the Early history of the Vaishnava Sect. This is regarded as the most definitive source book for all serious students of Vaishnavism.

Prof Raychaudhuri also contributed a number of articles to learned periodicals which were incorporated in his Studies in Indian Antiquities that show the vast range of his scholarship and the clarity of thought.

He also contributed chapters to such works as Dhaka University's History of Bengal Vol I. Even when he was bedridden he contributed an important chapter to the Early History of the Deccan edited by G. Yazdani.

He wrote the Advanced History of India (for undergraduate students) in collaboration with Prof. R.C. Mazumdar and K.K. Dutta.

3.3.7. Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958)

Jadunath Sarkar was born on 10 December 1870 in village Karchamaria, under Singra upazila of Natore district. Son of Rajkumar Sarkar, a zamindar of Karchamaria, he graduated with Honours in English and History in 1891 and stood first class first in MA in English in 1892. He got the Premchand Roychand Studentship in 1897, and his essay, India of Aurangzeb was published in 1901.

For a period of exceeding thirty years he filled the professional chairs both of history and English literature at different places such as Calcutta, Patna, Benaras and Cuttack. Jadunath is the greatest historian Indian has produced. He occupies an outstanding position not only among the historians of Indian but also of the world. His fame rest of the range of subject he chose for history, the technique and treatment he adopted for his research, and for the copious works he

produced over a long and active period of nearly sixty years. He is not a narrow specialist digging himself in one particular area, but a versatile genius whose pen produced remarkable works in biography, topography, easy, art, architecture, religion, economics, statistics, survey, corpuses and military science. Whatever he touched, he turned it into a master piece. The treatment he adopted was of Ranke's technique, where he ignored the general histories as useless and went to original documents letters, diaries and other records which were to a great extent a reflection of the reality of the situation, and not a partisan and prejudiced version of an author personal views and political ideology. As for a rich harvest of historical crops he created a sensation by contributing over fifty works of great merits.

Jadunath was influenced by three formative factors that shaped his historical scholarship. The first was his family background, as he came from an enlightened and illustrious house. His father Rajkumar Sarkar had an excellent library covering a wide range of subject such as English literature, philosophy, art, religion, history and science. These books had almost the same effect on Jadunath as the ancestral library had on Gibbon, namely to thrill and stir his imagination at an early age itself, so that to love and taste he developed became part and parcel of his being all his life. Oreover, Rajkumar Sarkar instilled in Jadunath a passion for history, which touched even the marrow of his bones. Secondly, the European impact on Jadunath was so great that all his heroes were from the West, such as Clarendon, Hunt, Carlyle, Froude, Ranke, Mommsen, Action, Maitland, Macaulay, Gibbon and others. Je picked from each of these stalwarts only such traits which had brought them distinction, used them to sharpen his own intellect. In the light of tremendous advance that had been made in history in the nineteenth century which had witnessed a wonderful transformation from a century of ideas to a century of facts, he developed his historical insight, his critical faculty and his analytical power that was to give new meaning to whatever he undertook./ The whole panorama of how history had passed from the theological to the metaphysical and then to the scientific stages impressed Jadunath with the real nature, spirit, substance and soul of history. Bestowed with a sensitive mind he was quick to realize that historical phenomenon present increasing complexities which could be explained only by a through study of the intentions, motives, susceptibilities and psychology of the actors in the drama, and this requires an intensive search for the matrials. Moreover, he got from European scholarship a few more concept which widened his horizon, from Macaulay the art of presenting events in a style of dazzling beauty, from Carlyle the craft og\f converting truth out of legends, and from Comte the Science of systematitizing history so that it could frame general laws for reorganizing society on more rational basis. In short Jadunath appears to be an Indian edition of European scholarship, and we find him the quintessence of all that is best in western historical thought. The third powerful influence on him was depressed state of affairs in India, so far as history writing was concerned. If the European advance created a positive response in him

understanding what history is, which acted as a thesis, the Indian conditions produced a negative response in him of impressing how hopelessle backward we are in this direction, which xted as an antithesis. The result of these two was synthesis in Jadunath that made him soon dill the gap, so that Indian historiography may be put on a takeoff stage. It was almost a solo exploit that was carried on over sixty long years, but he did not leave the work unfinished.

In 1893, Jadunath joined Ripon College, Calcutta as a teacher in English literature. In 1898, he joined the Provincial Education Service and was posted at Presidency College, Calcutta. In 1917, he joined the History Department of Banaras Hindu University and in 1918 was nominated to the Indian Educational Service and was transferred to Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, to teach both English and History. In 1926, on retirement from government service, Jadunath was appointed Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University. He was offered a second term on 7 August 1928, which he refused.

Jadunath's father was attracted to the Brahmo religion. It is difficult to say how much Jadunath was drawn to it. He had published a summary English translation of the Chaintanya Charitamrutta (17th century) of Krasnadasa Kaviraja. The Brahmos never claimed Jadunath as one of them.

3.3.7.1.Jadunath- As a Historian

Jadunath was against those nationalist Bengali writings which tried to refute the current English view that the Bengalis were cowards. As a result, Jadunath had often been dubbed a supporter of the English. Such a view of Jadunath gained momentum when the British Government knighted him. His words of praise for the English, whom he thought to have been instrumental in bringing progress in India, further strengthened this view.

The historical works of Jadunath can be divided into two broad types. In the first category were his major works, such as History of Aurangzib (5 Vols, 1912-1958), Shivaji and His Times (1919), Mughal Administration (1920), Later Mughals (ed., 1922, 2 Vols.), Fall of the Mughal Empire (4 Vols, 1932-38), Military History of India (1960) etc. The other category included all his translations into English and Bangla of the Persian and Marathi documents as well as innumerable articles in English and Bengali, reviews, forewards etc. His published Bengali articles numbered 148, much less than his English articles which numbered 365. He had only four Bengali books while the number of his English books, including those edited by him, was thirty-one. It is difficult to formulate Jadunath's concept of history since he had rarely written on the subject. It is also difficult to determine why Jadunath veered to the medieval history of India after studying English literature.

In nineteenth century Bengal, two historical concepts were confronting each other. One derived from the writings of English historians from the end of the eighteenth century. The second came from Bengali nationalistic writings, which often created heroes in Bengal and

against which Jadunath had written often. Such writings, particularly against the historicity of the 'freedom fighter' Pratapaditya strengthened the view that Jadunath was pro-English.

Elliot and Dowson influenced Jadunath, but he did not belong to their school. His first book showed that the Muslim historians had not written only on political history, contrary to the claim of Elliot, but on socio-economic aspects of the Mughal Empire as well. In a broader sense, Jadunath had taken the cue from Mill. Jadunath regarded the pre-Mughal Sultanate period as one of darkness. He believed that Akbar had brought a new civilising light in the arts, in administration, in law and order. Interestingly neither Mill nor Elphinstone had termed the Sultanate period as a dark age because they always made a comparison on racial and communal lines.

Although Jadunath had praised Akbar, he chose Aurangzeb for his first major work, thus coming closer to that of Elphinstone. There Jadunath differed from him. The objective of Elphinstone was to show the break-up of the Mughal Empire as a reaction to Aurangzeb's policy, and the rescue of Indian civilisation by the progressively civilised English. Jadunath tried to show in his study of Aurangzeb as in his Fall of the Mughal Empire, that the Mughal Empire fell due to its own internal weaknesses. However he remained silent on the role of the English. It was only after the description of the battle of Palassy that he heralded the English victory as a harbinger of a 'new renaissance... the like of which the world had never seen...'.

Jadunath was equally reticent about the periodisation of Indian history by James Mill. He did not specifically protest against the racial and communal basis of such periodisation, but foresaw difficulties in periods overlapping each other. One of the methodologies of Jadunath was his insistence on the 'evidence', although he was not so profuse or detailed in the notes supporting the evidence. He took great pains to get documents in different languages to establish the 'facts'. Given the situation of the times, Jadunath, like most of his predecessors, established 'facts' of mostly a political and military nature. But the results of his search unearthed several important documents, includingAkhbarat from Jaipur, Baharistan-i Ghayebi, Haft Anjuman and other documents, some of which had remained for so long either in personal collections or in the European archives.

As a matter of fact, Jadunath spent his whole life in collecting such documents, which he often presented in the annual conferences of the Indian Historical Records Commission. He gave almost equal importance to contemporary English and the French documents, and translated portions of the diary of the seventeenth century French merchant Francois Martin. His translation was however heavily criticised by Surendranath Sen. On the other hand, Jadunath had begun to question the value of Sanskrit poems, Maratha documents and Bakhar literature. To Jadunath, the contemporary English correspondences, for example the Poona Residency Correspondences, were more important since they revealed the details lacking in Indian documents.

These European documents helped Jadunath to establish his 'facts'. In his work on the battles, he would take great pains to describe troop movements and identify the exact spots, for which he would take the trouble of visiting the spots again and again. As a result, the descriptions of the battles become far livelier, in which he had used the knowledge of geography unlike other contemporary historians. Often he corrected his earlier identifications. Jadunath was therefore searching for the truth in the 'facts', almost impersonally, but only in those 'facts' which appeared to him from his documents.

Jadunath is remembered for his books, some of which he re-edited in his later years. His Aurangzib and Shivaji narrated the history of the seventeenth century around two individuals while his Later Mughalsand Fall of the Mughal Empire dealt with the personalities and events of the eighteenth century. Aurangzib traced the fall of the Mughal Empire and Shivaji, a contrast, the rise of a nation under a heroic leader. To Jadunath, it was individual leadership which mattered, but actually, these two were tales of the decadence of an empire and the rise of another, the state being the principal object.

The other works almost had the same picture, the decline of both the Mughals and the Marathas and the rise of the English. It was the country and the state that concerned Jadunath in the background of the contrasting forces. Strictly speaking, Jadunath dealt only with the decline of the Mughals and did not go into the details of the decline of the Marathas or the rise of the English, who were kept always in the background, so that their attempts at expansion were not given due attention. This becomes quite clear in his narrative of the fall of Nawab Sirajuddaula in Bengal in 1757, where the internal weakness of the Nizamat, and the weak character of the nawab had been painted in detail. Jadunath supported such analysis by drawing on the later Persian sources written under the aegis of the British officials.

Jadunath was attracted to Vincent Smith's pragmatic concept of history as a view of the past, from which one could learn some lessons. But he was far more concerned with the concept of the progress of civilisation, obviously taken from Mill. The change towards the pragmatic concept came somewhere between 1928 and 1932. By then Jadunath had become conscious about the formation of Indian nationality. That Aurangzib, by his fundamentalist approach, had heightened communal tension, thereby destroying the formation of Indian nationality, in contrast to that of Akbar, an Elphinstonian touch, had been the theme of Jadunath. Later researches of M Athar Ali (Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb, 1966) and Irfan Habib (Agrarian System of Mughal Empire, 1963) had shown that the concept of Elphinstone, taken by Jadunath, was historically inaccurate and that there were administrative-economic reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire. Therefore the theory of the crisis, as seen by Jadunath, caused by moral degeneration and communal politics, would not hold good.

Nineteenth and twentieth century Maratha nationalism had no impact on Shivaji by Jadunath, who, as seen earlier, was against the nationalists for basing their writings on unhistorical facts. Yet a closer reading of Shivaji would give the impression that Jadunath was not immune to Maratha nationalism. However, he felt that the Maratha movement after Baji Rao had undergone a change, when fundamentalist Hinduism had become dominant, whose seeds Jadunath had traced in the administrative set-up of Shivaji. At the same time, he had written strongly against the Shivaji myth.

In the 1952 edition of Volume V of History of Aurangzib, Jadunath had added a chapter entitled 'Aurangzib and the Indian Nation'. Here he had shown that the Hindus were under the domination of the Muslims, although the Muslims were more progressive. The downtrodden majority could not make the nation. Finally, the Muslims looked beyond India and brought their downfall, while the caste system and their conflicts had brought the downfall of the Hindus. At that time Europe was going forward in acquiring and applying technological knowledge that resulted in their conquest of Asia and Africa.

In a broader sense, this is the concept of the progress of civilisation as envisaged by Mill. Each conquest is an affirmation of the progress. By the same token, the Sultanate period should have been seen as such, but Jadunath had categorised it as a dark period. Tarafdar has rightly asked how the age of Akbar had become the bacon of civilisation if the preceding age was so dark. Recent researches have shown that while Akbar had limited his patronage to only two Rajput houses, his successors, Jahahgir and Shah Jahan, had expanded it. Actually compared to Akbar's period, the number of Hindu Mansabdars had increased during the period of Aurangzeb, thus belying the thesis of Jadunath. That Aurangzeb had given generous grants to non-Muslim monasteries, including the Vrndaban monastery of the Vaishnavas, has been shown in recent years.

Even then, one could see that Jadunath believed in the plural society of medieval India, grown out of various influences coming from outside, including those of the Muslim Sufis. But this 'mixed culture' was very limited according to Jadunath. The exchanges between the Hindus and the Muslims had occurred at a lower level and among the lower classes and lower castes. Jadunath believed that improvement would come through progressive English education, but he did not specify it.

In his edition of the medieval History of Bengal Vol. II (Dhaka University, 1943), Jadunath seemed to believe that the English had rescued the Bengalis from oblivion and darkness, a kind of 'reverse nationalism', which did not look at the colonial policies of the English. He was silent on the question of independence of India and in a sense, there was not much difference between him and the English historians. He evaded the questions arising from the fact that the English colonial policy had started soon after the battle of Palashi.

Despite all these, Jadunath has narrated events with extraordinary skill and eloquence. The structure he has given to the decline and fall of the Mughal Empire in his account, with some modifications, has remained intact. The picture of the individual Mughal and Maratha nobles moving towards their final destiny like the characters of a Greek tragedy against the background of the decline, with all their personal conflicts, cowardice, heroism and self-sacrifice, so ably created by Jadunath, has remained unsurpassed even to this day. Jadunath Sarkar died on the night of 19 May 1958. [Aniruddha Ray]

Born into a rich family, Professor Sarcar started his long and illustrious academic career at Presidency College as Professor of English and History in 1898; the following year he was transferred to Patna College. After the plans of Partition were abandoned, he was transferred to the newly established Bihar and Orissa Educational Service. He was often transferred from one university to the other, not because there he was not wanted, but because he was too brilliant, and everyone wanted him.

Sir Jadunath believed that although English was indispensable, the importance of Indian languages could not be ignored. He stressed the importance of secondary education, and laid a very strong emphasis on independent thinking: "India cannot afford to remain an intellectual pariah, beggar for crumbs at the doors of Oxford or Cambridge, Paris or Vienna. She must create within herself a source of the highest original research and assume her rightful place at the School of Asia, even as Periclean Athens made herself the School of Hellas."

As a teacher he was so dedicated to his work that he conducted all his classes even on the day of his retirement. Just before his retirement, the Governor of Bengal appointed him Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University.

For a man of his learning and intellect, honours and awards were there for the asking.The Royal Society of Great Britain and Ireland made him an honourary member in 1923; The English Historical Society invited him to become a Corresponding Member in 1935,The American Historical Association of Washington nominated him an Honorary Life Member in 1935, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bombay made him Honorary Fellow. And so many doctorates were showered upon him by various universities that in the end he stopped accepting them. The Panjab University honoured the great historian with the publication of Sir Jadunath Sarkar Commemoration Volume in 1957-58.

In his long career, he wrote over two dozen authoritative books on history, translated Persian historical works and records, translated Tagore's works into English. Professor Sarcar's enormous literary output could be judged by the fact that a list of his works, published in Life and Letters of Sir Jadunath Sarkar runs into 17 pages!

But the Professor had his own share of misery. In a string of personal tragedies, he lost three sons, four daughters, two sons-in-law, and a grandson. As he was advancing in years, his

wife, Kadambini Debi became an invalid. Being a man of iron constitution, he nevertheless carried on writing, and of course reading his favourite authors.

In short Jadunath is the brilliant star on the Indian horizon of historical scholarship. His conception of history was a lofty one. Like Croce he believed it was higher than art, science and philosophy, for it was the foundation for all knowledge. It comprises the gamut of all higher thought, all human experience, faith, belief, morals and manners. Its destiny is truth and accuracy. Its mode of travel is methodical approach. Its journey is through a jungle of errors and fallacies. Its motivating force is the spirit of inquiry and thirst for knowledge. Jadunath illuminated the path of writing history of India, so that other pilgrims in this field need not lose their way. He tells us that crusader in this struggle has to hold fast to his chosen mission undaunted by any difficulties, unmoved by any misfortunes and unshaken by any shocks.

3.3.8. Conclusion

Nationalist historians did, however, set up high tradition of scholarship. They based their writings on hard research and commitment to truth as they saw it. They carefully and meticulously footnoted all their statements. Consequently, their writing was very often empirically sound. Their research advanced our understanding and interpretation of the past. They also contributed to the cultural defence against colonisation of our culture. Simultaneously, most of them contributed to the positive aspects of the modernisation of our society. Many of them also uncovered new sources and developed new frameworks for the interpretation of existing sources. They raised many new questions, produced controversies and initiated active debates. They also inculcated the notion that historical research and writing should have relevance for the present. Even when not going far in their own research, they accepted and promoted the notion that the role that the common people play in history should be a major component of history writing.

Above all, nationalist historical writing contributed to the self-confidence, self-assertion and a certain national pride which enabled Indian people to struggle against colonialism especially in the face of denigration of India's past and the consequent inferiority complex promoted by colonial writers. Nilkanth Shastri and other historians also helped overcome the regional bias – the bias of treating India as coterminous with the Indo-Gangetic plane. In this respect, as in many others, nationalist historical writing in India became a major unifying factor so far as the literate Indians were concerned.

3.3.9. Summary

- *Nationalist approach to Indian history may be described as one which tends to contribute to the growth of nationalist feeling and to unify people in the face of religious, caste, or linguistic differences or class differentiation. This may, as pointed out earlier, sometimes be irrespective of the intentions of the author.*

- *Initially, in the 19th century, Indian historians followed in the footsteps of colonial historiography, considering history as scientific based on fact-finding, with emphasis on political history and that too of ruling dynasties.*
- *Colonial writers and historians, who began to write the history of India from late 18th and early 19th century, in a way created all India history, just as they were creating an all-India empire.*
- *Just as the colonial rulers followed a political policy of divide and rule on the basis of region and religion, so did colonial historians stress division of Indians on the basis of region and religion throughout much of Indian history.*
- *Nationalist historians too wrote history as either of India as a whole or of rulers, who ruled different parts of India, with emphasis on their religion or caste or linguistic affiliation. But as colonial historical narrative became negative or took a negative view of India's political and social development, and, in contrast, a justificatory view of colonialism, a nationalist reaction by Indian historians came.*
- *Many Indians, affected by nationalism, and some Europeans, did detailed and meticulous research, which has created excellent traditions of devotion to facts and details and of reliance on primary sources in Indian historical discipline.*
- *The Indian historians proclaimed the colonial notion of India's tradition of spirituality as a mark of distinction and of India's greatness and superiority over the West, especially in terms of 'moral values' as compared to the essentially 'materialistic' character of Western civilisation.*
- *At the same time, they denied the Indians' exclusive devotion to spirituality and stressed their prowess in administration and statecraft, empire building, diplomacy, taxation structure, and military organisation, warfare, agrarian, industrial and commercial development.*
- *Many historians discovered in India's past diplomatic and political institutions analogous to those of contemporary Europe. They vehemently denied the notion of ancient Indian being inefficient in running a state.*
- *The nationalists wrote approvingly of India's culture and social structure. In the bargain they underplayed caste oppression, social and economic denigration of the lower castes, and male domination.*
- *Nationalist historiography flourished mainly in dealing with the ancient and medieval periods. It hardly existed for the modern period and came into being mainly after 1947, no school of nationalist historians of modern India having existed before 1947.*

- *A detailed and scientific critique of colonialism was developed in the last quarter of the 19th century by non-academic, nationalist economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. V. Joshi, R. C. Dutt, K. T. Telang, G. K. Gokhale and D. E. Wacha. Several academic economists such as K. T. Shah, V. C. Kale and C. N. Vakil*.

3.3.10. Exercises

1. Discuss the differences between the colonial and nationalist historiography.
2. What are the specific features of nationalist historiography concerning ancient India?
3. Write a note on the issues discussed by nationalist historians writing on the modern period.
4. Sir Jadunath Sarkar was an illuminating star in the galaxy of Indian historian. Discuss.
5. Bring out the life and contribution of H.C.Roychoudhiri to Indian historiography.

3.3.10. Suggested Readings

1. Barraclough, Geoffrey. *History: Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences*, 1978.
2. Breisach, Ernst. *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 3rd edition, 2007.
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5. Sreedharan, E., A textbook of historiography, 500 B.C. to A.D., Orient Blackswan, 2000
6. Elliot, Henry Miers, The History of India, as told by its own historians: The Muhammadan period Volume IV, V, VI, VII, VIII Trubner and co., 1871.

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UNIT-IV

Chapter-I

MARXIST APPROACH TO INDIAN HISTORY:

D.D.Kosambi, R.S.Sharma, Romilla Thaper and Irfan Habib

Structure

4.1.0. Objectives

In this chapter we intend to provide you an insight into the origin and growth of Marxist interpretation of Indian history. This lesson will briefly discuss some of the important trends and provide information about some important historians within Marxist tradition in Indian historiography. By the end of this chapter you would be able to:

- *beginning of Marxist interpretations of Indian history;*
- *describe the various aspects of Marxist approach such as feudalism, Indian nationalism and Indian renaissance.*
- *assess and appreciate the contribution of D. D.Kosambi in the Marxist school of historiography in India.*
- *discuss the contribution and role played by R.S.Sharma, Irfan Habib and Romila Thapar in the Marxist interpretation of Indian history.*

4.1.1. Introduction

Marxism is a dominant presence in the field of Indian historiography in the post-independence period. A lot of historians either come directly within its fold or have been influenced by it in certain degrees. It has also influenced most of the trends of Indian historiography in some way or the other. It is, therefore, not possible to give a comprehensive account of all the trends in it and the historians associated with this stream of historiography. However, in this chapter we will try to cover some of the important trends particularly Marxist approach to the ancient and medieval history of India and provide information about some important historians within Marxist tradition in Indian historiography.

4.1.2. Beginnings

The two books which heralded the beginning of Marxist historiography in India were *India Today* by R. Palme Dutt and *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* by A.R. Desai. *India Today* was originally written for the famous Left Book Club in England and was published by Victor Gollancz in 1940. Its Indian edition was published in 1947. In the subsequent period various works on different aspects and phase of Indian history begin. Large numbers of historians interpreted Indian history from Marxist point of view. As this chapter will discuss the Marxist approach to the ancient and medieval history of India we will start the discussion with D.D.Kosambi and the shifting trend of Indian Marxist historiography.

4.1.3. D.D. Kosambi and paradigm shift

Romila Thapar credits D.D. Kosambi (1907-66) for affecting a ‘paradigm shift’ in Indian studies. According to her, such paradigmatic changes had occurred only twice before in Indian historiography. These were done by James Mill and Vincent Smith. James Mill, whose book *History of India* (1818-23) set the parameters for history writing on India, was contemptuous towards the Indian society. He considered the pre-colonial Indian civilisation as backward,

superstitious, stagnant and lacking in most respects as a civilisation. He was an unabashed admirer of the British achievements in India and relentless critic of pre-British Indian society and polity. He divided the Indian history into three parts- the Hindu, the Muslim and the British. This division, according to him, was essential to demarcate three different civilisations. Vincent Smith's *The Oxford History of India* (1919) provided another break in Indian historiography as it avoided the sharp value judgments and contemptuous references to the pre-British period of Indian history contained in Mill's book. He instead tried to present a chronological account of Indian history and focused on the rise and fall of dynasties.

Kosambi viewed history completely differently. For him, Mill's religious periodisation and Smith's chronological accounts of dynasties were of no value. He believed that the 'Society is held together by bonds of production'. Thus he defines history '*as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production*'. This, according to him, is 'the only definition known which allow a reasonable treatment of pre-literate history, generally termed "pre-history"' He further argues that history should be viewed in terms of conflict between classes : 'The proper study of history in a class society means analysis of the differences between the interests of the classes on top and of the rest of the people; it means consideration of the extent to which an emergent class had something new to contribute during its rise to power, and of the stage where it turned (or will turn) to reaction in order to preserve its vested interests.' He describes his approach to history as 'dialectical materialism, also called Marxism after its founder'. However, Kosambi was flexible in his application of Marxism. He argued that 'Marxism is far from the economic determinism which its opponents so often take it to be'. He further asserts that the 'adoption of Marx's thesis does not mean blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times'. He, instead, considered Marxism as a method which could be usefully applied for the study of Indian society and history.

The paucity of relevant data for the early period of Indian history was one factor which prompted him to analyse the broad social formations rather than small-scale events. He thought that the use of comparative method would balance out the absence of reliable historical sources. He, therefore, adopted an inter-disciplinary approach in his studies of Indian society. This enabled him to view the reality from various angles in order to get a full picture of it. These ideas are evident in his four major books : *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956), *Exasperating Essays : Exercises in the Dialectical Method* (1957), *Myth and Reality : Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (1962) and *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (1965). Kosambi's non-dogmatic approach to history is clear when he rejected two key Marxist concepts-the Asiatic Mode of Production and Slavery- as inapplicable to ancient Indian society. Although he accepted the concept of feudalism in Indian context, he denied the

existence of serfdom. According to him, it would be more rewarding to view the early Indian society in terms of the transition from tribe to caste. He argues that the 'pre-class society was organised … into tribes'. The tribes were small, localised communities and 'for the tribesman, society as such began and ended with his tribe'. The beginning and development of plough agriculture brought about a radical change in the system of production. This destabilised the tribes and the clans and gave rise to castes as new form of social organisation. This was an extremely crucial development. Kosambi writes: 'The entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a general society.

This phenomenon, which lies at the very foundation of the most striking Indian social feature, namely caste, is also the great basic fact of ancient history.' Kosambi tried to relate the intellectual and cultural production with the prevailing social and economic situation. Thus, according to him, the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* can be understood only with reference to the feudal society in which it originated. It, therefore, preaches the ideology of the ruling class which emphasised 'the chain of personal loyalty which binds retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor'. Similarly, he considers the Bhakti movement as preaching a sense of loyalty to the lord which, in the earthly sense, translates into loyalty and devotion to the rulers. His detailed study of the poetry of Bhartrihari, the 7th-century poet, reflects a similar approach. He describes Bhartrihari as 'unmistakably the Indian intellectual of his period, limited by caste and tradition in fields of activity and therefore limited in his real grip on life'. In his study of the myths, he contended that they reflected the transition of society from matriarchy to patriarchy.

4.1.4. The Feudalism Debate

As we have seen in the previous section, D.D. Kosambi argued that, contrary to Marx's own statements and to those of several Marxists, the Indian society did not witness a similar progression of various modes of production as happened in Europe. He said that the slave mode of production was not to be found in India. He also rejected Marx's own schema of the Asiatic Mode of Production as inapplicable to India. He, however, thought that there was the existence of feudalism in India, even though he conceived it differently. He was aware that the medieval Indian society was quite different from that of Europe. One of the important characteristics of European feudalism, i.e., manorial system, demesnefarming and serfdom, were not to be found in India. But he explained it as a result of the non-existence of the slave mode of production in the preceding period. He further differentiated between two types of feudalism in India – 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' : 'Feudalism from above means a state wherein an emperor or powerful king levied tribute from subordinates who still ruled in their own right and did what they liked within their own territories – as long as they paid the paramount ruler…. By feudalism from below is meant the next stage where a class of land-owners developed within the village, between the state and the peasantry, gradually to wield

armed power over the local population. This class was subject to service, hence claimed a direct relationship with the state power, without the intervention of any other stratum.'

Kosambi's lead on this issue was followed by R.S. Sharma who made a comprehensive study of feudalism in India in his book entitled *Indian Feudalism* (1965) and in various articles. According to him, there were a decline in trade and increasing numbers of land grants to the state officials in lieu of salary and to the Brahmans as charity or ritual offering in the post-Gupta period. This process led to the subjection of peasantry and made them dependent on the landlords. Almost all features of west European feudalism, such as serfdom, manor, self-sufficient economic units, feudalisation of crafts and commerce, decline of long-distance trade and decline of towns, were said to be found in India. According to R.S Sharma, the most crucial aspects of Indian feudalism was the increasing dependence of the peasantry on the intermediaries who received grants of land from the state and enjoyed juridical rights over them. This development restricted the peasants' mobility and made them subject to increasingly intensive forced labour.

The decline of feudalism also took the same course as in west Europe. Revival of longdistance trade, rise of towns, flight of peasants and development of monetary economy were considered to be the main processes responsible for the decline of feudalism in India. In this schema, the process of feudalisation started sometimes in the 4th century and declined in the 12th century.

This view of the medieval Indian society and economy has been questioned by several historians who argue that the development of the Indian society did not follow the western model. They further argue that such a model of development cannot be universally applied to all societies. Harbans Mukhia, in a thought-provoking article 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?' (1981), questions these arguments at several levels. He begins by arguing that there is no single, universally accepted definition of feudalism. It is because feudalism was not a world-system. In fact, capitalism was the first world system and, therefore, all societies before that had their own peculiarities and profound differences from each other. Thus feudalism 'was, throughout its history, a non-universal specific form of socio-economic organization – specific to time and region, where specific methods and organization of production obtained'. Mukhia defines feudalism as 'the structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lords'. Such a system was specific 'to Western Europe between the fifth or the sixth century and the fifteenth. Feudalism also developed in its classic form in eastern Europe between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century and possibly in Japan during the Togukawa regime in particular'. He considers feudalism as a 'transitional system' which : 'stood mid-way in the transition of the West European economy from a primarily slave-based system of agricultural production to one dominated by the complementary classes of the capitalist farmers and the landless agricultural

wage-earner, but in which the free peasantry also formed a significant element.' On the basis of this definition of feudalism, Mukhia now argues against the concept of feudalism in India. He says that even in Europe the relationship between long-distance trade and the growth or decline of feudalism is not clear. In fact, the trade had differential impact on various European societies. While at some places, as in west Europe, it led to the dissolution of feudal bonds, in east Europe it provided the lords with the power to reinforce and revitalise the feudal ties. In any case, Mukhia argues, it is not sure that there was a very significant decline of trade and towns in early medieval India. Secondly, while in Europe feudalism developed and declined due to changes at the base of society, in Indian case the reason for the emergence of feudalism is seen as the land grants from above. According to Mukhia, it is difficult to accept that 'such complex social structures can be established through administrative and legal procedures'. About the most crucial aspect of feudalism – the dependence of peasantry on the landlords – Mukhia thinks that there is no evidence to prove it in Indian case. He argues that even though the exploitation of the peasantry might have increased, there is no evidence to prove that there was any 'extraneous control over the peasant's process of production'. He thinks that 'forced labour in India remained, by and large, an incidental manifestation of the ruling class' political and administrative power rather than a part of the process of production'. He concludes that the 'primarily free peasant form of agricultural production gradually evolving from post-Maurya times, thus characterized the agrarian economy of ancient and medieval India'. In such a scenario there was no possibility of a feudal system of production in India.

Several of Mukhia's arguments were criticised by Marxist and non-Marxist scholars in this field. Although there was an acknowledgement of the significance of the questions he raised, criticism related to his concept of feudalism, his understanding of the west European experience, his interpretation of Indian history and, particularly, his notion of a free peasant production in India.

R.S. Sharma, in his response, wrote an essay entitled 'How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism?' (1985). While accepting the fact that feudalism was not a universal phenomenon, he argues that this was not true of all the pre-capitalist formations. Thus 'tribalism, the stone age, the metal age, and the advent of a food-producing economy are universal phenomena. They do indicate some laws conditioning the process and pattern of change'. He, therefore, thinks that there was feudalism in India, even though its nature was significantly different. According to him, 'Just as there could be enormous variations in tribal society so also there could be enormous variations in the nature of feudal societies'. He questions the very notion of peasant's control over means of production, particularly land. He maintains that there were multiple and hierarchical rights in the land with the peasant almost always possessing the inferior right. In the areas where land grants were given the grantees enjoyed much superior rights : 'On the basis of

the land charters we can say that in the donated areas the landed beneficiaries enjoyed general control over production resources. Of course they did not enjoy specific control over every plot of land that the peasant cultivated. But there is nothing to question their control over the plots of lands that were directly donated to them by the king, sometimes along with the sharecroppers and weavers and sometimes along with the cultivators.' He further argues that, contrary to Mukhia's arguments, forced labour was also prevalent in many parts of the country. On the basis of various evidences, he asserts that there was feudalism during the early medieval period in India which 'was characterized by a class of landlords and by a class of subject peasantry, the two living in a predominantly agrarian economy marked by decline of trade and urbanism and by drastic reduction in metal currency'.

Irfan Habib introduces another significant element for identifying the predominant mode of production in any social formation. He argues that although the social form of labour defines a particular mode of production, it cannot be considered as the sole determinant. Thus although 'Wage-labour remains the basic form of labour in socialism, but this does entitle us to identify the capitalist and socialist modes'. Similarly, petty peasant production may be found in several social formations. Therefore, another crucial element should be taken into account and that is 'the form in which the surplus extracted from the producer is distributed'. Although Habib is doubtful about the existence of feudalism in pre-colonial India, he considers Mukhia's arguments a little far-fetched. He thinks that Mukhia's points about the existence of a 'free peasantry' and 'relative stability in India's social and economic history' are untenable. Such conclusions, according to him, 'presume a rather idyllic picture of pre-colonial India … for which there is little justification'. In his opinion, 'there were just as intense contradictions here as anywhere else; but that these were different in nature and consequence from the contradictions leading to capitalism in Europe'. Moreover, he rejects the idea of 'exceptionalism' in Indian context. It was also a society with deep internal contradictions, a stratified peasantry and class exploitation.

Burton Stein praises Mukhia for raising an important question, but he points out several inadequacies in Mukhia's arguments. According to him, only the absence of serfdom may not determine the absence of feudalism in India because several other characteristics existed. With focus on south India, he argues that these characteristics were local control and private legal jurisdiction of various powerful men, the existence of independent warrior groups which claimed tributes and weak state forms. Secondly, he also questions Mukhia's proposition about the 'relative stability' of pre-colonial Indian society and economy. Such a notion about stability assumes that for two thousand years there was no change in the means and relations of production. This worries Stein : 'This is indeed stability, not "relative", but quite absolute, a position which ought to trouble him as an historian; it troubles me!' On the role of the state, he rejects the notion of a centralized and bureaucratic state. Instead, he forwards the concept of

'segmentary state', a state whose power was limited. So far as the 'free peasantry' is concerned, he puts more emphasis on peasant collectivities having a mastery over productive forces. He questions the notion of free 'individual peasants as productive agents'. In this sense of collective peasant production and the segmentary, Stein thinks that the period from the 10th to the 17th centuries may be said to be a single social formation in south India.

In his response to these criticisms, Mukhia sticks to his point that capitalism was the first world-system and all the earlier systems were specific to regions and 'did not possess the internal dynamism that would give them the hegemony' over the world. Only most general features such as agrarian economy and surplus appropriation through non-economic coercion could be common about various pre-industrial societies. But it does not take the specificities, such as production process and social organisation of labour, into account. He reemphasises his concept of a 'free peasantry' in pre-colonial India 'whose process of production was free of extraneous control'. We, therefore, encounter a wide variety of interpretations of the medieval Indian society by the Marxist historians who differ quite significantly from each other. In the course of this debate we also come across the rich variety of Marxist interpretations relating to medieval Indian history.

4.1.5. Other trends and historians within Marxist historiography

We have so far discussed the arrival of D.D.Kosambi and shifting paradigm in Marxist school of Indian historiography along with a few trends and the ideas and historians associated with them. Now in this section we will briefly discuss some other trends and historians. In the study of early India, there are several historians working with Marxian methods.

R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, D.N. Jha, B.D. Chattopadhyay and Kumkum Roy are some of them. Their researches have enriched our understanding of ancient India. We have already discussed Sharma's book on *Indian Feudalism*. Apart from this, his study of the lower castes of ancient India, *Sudras in Ancient India* (1958), his work on various topics such as marriage, caste, land grants, slavery, usury, and women contained in his *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy* (1966), his *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India* (1983) and *Urban Decay in India* (1987) are the books which enormously enrich our understanding of ancient and early medieval periods. Similarly, Romila Thapar's works on early India have expanded the scope of historical research related to the period. She has approached the ancient period from several angles and debunked several myths and stereotypes associated with it. Some of these myths related to Oriental Despotism, the Aryan race, and Ashoka's non-violence. Her several books, like *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (1963), *Ancient Indian Social History* (1978), *From Lineage to State* (1984) and *Interpreting Early India* (1992), have increased our knowledge of early Indian history in a refreshing manner.

The history of medieval India has also attracted a fair number of Marxist historians. Nurul Hasan, Satish Chandra, Irfan Habib and Athar Ali are some among them. They have studied the medieval Indian society, polity and economy in detail. Among them, the works by Irfan Habib are particularly remarkable in the range of scholarship and imagination. His study of the Mughal economy, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (1963), has acquired the status of a classic. In this book, he argues that the basic contradiction in the late medieval period was between 'the centralized ruling class (state) and the peasantry'. But there were other contradictions also between the state and the zamindars, between the untouchables and the rest of the society and between the tribes and the encroaching caste peasantry. Among all these, Habib argues, the 'drive for tax-revenue may be regarded as the basic motive force. Land revenue sustained the large urban sector; but the pressure for higher collection devastated the country, antagonized zamindars whose own shares of surplus was thereby affected, and drove the peasants to rebellion'. This book on medieval Indian history was followed by other important contributions in the form of *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* (1982) and his edited book, *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I* (1982). Apart from these, his several books and articles, including *Caste and Money in Indian History* (1987), *Interpreting Indian History* (1988) and *Essays in Indian History : Towards a Marxist Perception* (1995), explore and comment on various periods of Indian history.

The Marxist historians have written on several aspects of modern Indian history and the colonial economy about which we will discuss in the next chapter of this Unit. Apart from these, we can find a significant number of the Marxist historians in the fields of peasant history, labour history and social history.

4.1.6. Some Major Marxist Historians of India

4.1.6.1.Dr. Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi

No single writer after James Mill and Vincent smith has so deeply influenced the writing of Indian history as Damodar Dharmanad Kosambi. Dying rather prematurely Kosambi left behind him besides several papers and articles, the following major works: *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (1956), The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Histoprical Outline (1965), Exasperating Essay: Exercises in the Dialectical Methods, and Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture,* of these, the first two works revolutionized Indian historiography. Although in the above paragraphs we have already discuss the contributions of D.D.Kosambi to Marxist historiography in India, here again we will examine some other aspects of his life and career.

4.1.6.1.1. Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi: Biography and Contribution

Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi (1907-1966) is best known as a mathematician, but he is endowed with a truly Renaissance versatility. His formula for chromosome distance occupies a

central place in classical genetics. His work on coins makes the numis-matics of hoards into an exact science.

An unrivalled collection of microliths, the discovery of a Brahmi inscription at Karle, and of a remarkable number of megaliths with rock engraving form substantial contributions to archaeology. His editions of the poetry of Bhrtrihari and of the oldest known Sanskrit anthology are landmarks in Indian text-criticism.

4.1.6.1.2. Methodology and Techniques:

With the writings of D.D.Koasmbi, a fundamentally new approach to the study of Indian history, scientific methodology, modern technique of interpretation, selection and analysis of basic problems appeared in Indian historiography. Kosambi's work is most refreshing in its range of new material, original discoveries of megaliths, microliths, rustic superstition, and peasant customs. He explains how to gain an insight into the past by examination of the monuments, customs and records. For this, makes an impressive use of scientific methods in many fields like archaeology, ethnography and philology.

4.1.6.1.3. Works of Kosambi:

1. An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (1956, 1975)
2. Myth and Realty: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture (1962)
3. The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline (1965, 1970)
4. Indian Numismatics (1981)

Kosambi's first book, "An Introduction to the Study of Indian History", published in 1956, was a shift from what he professionally stood for. He had little use for a chronological narrative in history since he argued that chronology for the early period was too obscure to be meaningful. For him, history was the presentation order of successive developments in the means and relations of production.

Because of the reliable historical records he argued that Indian history would have to use the comparative method. This meant a familiarity with a wide range of historical works. Kosambi's own familiarity with classical European history is evident in his writings; it also meant the use of various disciplines and interdisciplinary techniques to enable historian to understand the pattern of social transformations.

The knowledge of Sanskrit led Kosambi to a series of etymo-logical analyses which he used to a great effect in reconstructing the social background, particularly of the Vedic period. Thus, he argued that the names of many of the established Brahmanas in Vedic literature and the Puranic tradition clearly pointed to their being of non-Aryan origin.

From the study of gotra he went on to the logical point that the language of the Vedic texts could not have been pure Aryan and must have had an admixture of non-Aryan elements, reflecting the inclusion of non-Aryans as Brahmanas. This theory is now more acceptable to

those who have worked on Indo-Aryan linguistics, on the basis of the linguistic analyses of the texts and language which clearly indicates non-Aryan structures both in syntax and vocabulary.

It was the recognition of cultural survival, which led Kosambi to weave so much material from ethnology and anthropology into his historical narrative. He mentioned that the presence of a tribe, which had once given rise to jati, and of another which became a quasi-guild. He noticed trees and sacred groves, stones making a sacrificial ritual, caves and rock shelters, which may have been occupied successively by prehistoric men, by Buddhist monks and later by practitioners of Hindu cult.

Such places have a remarkable continuity as sacred centres and often provided a greater historical continuity both in object and ritual than many written texts. It is important to clarify that Kosambi was not arguing that religion played a more significant part in Indian culture than has been the case in other cultures, as has been the stand of those who maintain the greater spirituality of the Indian past; but rather, Kosambi's position is that there was a greater survival of the archaic in religious ritual than in other areas of Indian life which speaks of a certain conservatism but at the same time makes it worth investi-gating historically.

4.1.6.1.4. Mode of Production:

Kosambi places emphasis on the mode of production. According to him, "the more important question is not who was king, but whether the people used a plough, light or heavy, at the time. The type of kinship, as a function of the property relations and surplus produced, depends upon the method of agriculture, not conversely." He further says: "Dynastic changes of importance, vast religious upheavals, are generally indicative of powerful changes in the productive basis, hence must be studied as such, not dismissed as senseless flickers on the surface of unchanging substratum." Thus, Kosambi accepts the basic tenets of the materi-alist interpretation of history. Along with the mode of production, we have to reckon with the people mode of reflection as well. "Ideas (including superstition) become a force, once they have gripped the masses; they supply the form in which men become conscious of their conflicts and fight them out; No historian may dismiss or ignore such ideas nor can he be regarded as having fulfilled his task unless he shows why, how and when the grip was secured."

4.1.6.1.5. Agriculture Pattern:

At a wider anthropological level one of the clues to understand the Indian past was the basic factor of the transition from tribe to caste, from small, localized groups to a generalized society. This transition was largely the result of the introduction of plough agriculture in various regions, which changed the system of production, broke the structure of tribes and clans and made caste the alternative form of social organization.

This process Kosambi traced in part from the evolution of clan totems into clan names and then into caste names. The agency through which plough agriculture was introduced would

therefore become the major factor of control in caste society. This society he saw as the Brahminical settlements in various parts of the country. These led to the assimilation of local cults into the Brahminical tradition as is evident from the various Puranas and Mahatmyas. But equally important is his contribution to the sanskritization of local folk cults with the incorporation of Brahmin priests and rituals, the association of epic heroes and heroines, and by the inclusion of such cults in Sanskrit mythology.

4.1.6.1.6. Marriage and Family:

Kosambi attempts an anthropological functional analysis in which he argues that it reflects the institution of sacred marriage in prehistoric societies as well as the ritual sacrifice of the hero by the mother goddess. One of the frequent strands in his explanation of myth was related to his belief that societies were matriarchal in origin and many gradually changed to patriliny and that myths, therefore, reflect the transition from the one to the other. Bride-price is also for him a survival of matriliny. The insistence on a transition from matriarchy to patriliny in every case is not now acceptable since many societies are known to have been patrilineal from the beginning.

4.1.6.1.7. Socio-economic Formations:

Kosambi also refers to the agrarian technology in the Indus Valley. He assumed that it was a culture without the plough, that the river bank was cultivated with a harrow, and that the seasonal flood water was utilized for irrigation with dams and embankments helping in retaining this water and the river silt for a longer period.

The decline of the Indus civilization is attributed to the Aryans who destroyed the agricultural system by breaking the embankments, which, he maintains, is symbolically referred to in the Rig-Veda descriptions of Indra destroying Vrta, and releasing the waters.

Plough agriculture and iron technology, when introduced into the Ganges valley, led ultimately to the growth of urban centres as well as the recognizable forms of caste. Recent views would include as causal factors in this development the role of changes in crop patterns with a dependence on rice agriculture, the diversity of irrigation systems, and the use of labour in the new technologies and the range of control over these factors by different social groups.

An evident departure from the orthodox Marxist pattern of historical periodization is Kosambi's refusal to apply either the Asiatic mode of production or the slave mode of production to early Indian history without modification of a major kind. For Marx, the Indian past conformed, by and large, to what he called the 'Asiatic mode of production' characterized by a static society, absence of private property in land, self-sufficient villages, lack of a commercial economy and state control over the irrigation system.

Although he and Engles recognized derivations from this pattern, they saw this as a contrast to what was prevalent in Europe and argued that historical stagnancy in India was

broken by the arrival of colonialism. Elsewhere, he has argued for the existence of the tenant and of the landowning peasant. He did concede that from the end of the Gupta period there was a relative increase in self-sufficiency.

He also argued that the lack of a sense of history and the power of myth further reduced individuality. A static mode of production could not have co-existed with a form of feudalism since the latter breeds its own contradictions.

The feudal mode of production Kosambi accepts as relevant to pre-modern Indian history, although even here he makes his own distinction between what he calls, 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below'. Feudalism from above was his character-ization of the changes which came about in the late first millennium AD subsequent to the Gupta period.

Incidentally, he has little time for the Gupta period and is justifiably contemptuous of the nationalist historians who described it as the golden age of Hindu revivalism. The changes noticeable in the post-Gupta period were mainly those of an increase in the granting of land with a greater frequency of transition from tribe to caste through the introduction of plough agriculture, a decline in trade and commodity production which adversely affected the growth of urban centres, the decentralization of the army and a concentration of wealth at local courts.

With this was associated the spread of Bhakti cults whose emphasis on loyalty and devotion he saw as a characteristic feature of feudal society.

The backwardness of technology allowed an easy conquest of northern India by those with a more advanced military technology. Changes in the ruling class did not substantially affect the nature of feudalism in India and it continued until the coming of colonialism.

4.1.6.1.8. Political System:

The Mauryan monarchy, which controlled the Indian sub-continent, was a feasible political system according to Kosambi because of the expansion of the village economy through Sudra agriculturalists being settled on state lands and by the deportation of prisoners-of-war who were used for the same purpose. He argues against the use of slavery in production in early India.

The decline of the Mauryan Empire is attributed to economic crisis, the details of which are debatable. Double economic pattern indicated an economic crisis. Inability of the Mauryan polity to survive must be attributed to causes, which in part were certainly economic, cannot be doubted.

In the post-Mauryan period the role of guilds and artisans as donors to the Buddhist Sangha in the light of expansion and diffusion of trade is also visualized. The emergence of occupational jatis in urban areas can frequently be associated with this development.

4.1.6.1.9. Myth and Reality:

The essays, in Kosambi's book on Myth and Reality, are based upon profound study of library sources and carefully planned field work – a unique combination not to be found

elsewhere. Fresh data and logical interpretation cast fresh and novel light on the origins and development of Indian culture.

Kosambi has raised and solved questions of vital importance to all those interested in the study of Indology. The date of Karle caves; the background of Kalidas' plays; the significance of the great Pandharpur pilgrimage; the economic, cultural and historical basis of the Goan struggle for reunion with India – these are a few of the many fascinating problems analysed by the Kosambi.

4.1.6.1.10. The Culture and Civilization in Ancient India:

The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline is a strikingly original work of Kosambi. This is the first real cultural history of India. The main features of the Indian character traced back into remote antiquity as the natural growth of a historical process.

4.1.6.1.11. Caste in the Ancient India:

In his book entitled, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India, Kosambi felt that there is a need to study rural and tribal society in India. He says that the main feature of Indian society, seen as its strongest in the rural part, is caste. This means the division of society into many groups which live side by side, but often do not seem to live together.

Members of different castes cannot inter-marry by religion, though the law now permits complete freedom in this respect. This great advance is due to the bourgeois mode, because of which caste has begun to disappear in the cities, except for political and economic cliques.

This stratification of Indian society reflects and explains a great deal of Indian history, if studied in the field without prejudice. It can easily be shown that many castes owe their lower social and economic status to their present or former refusal to take food production and plough agriculture. The lowest castes often preserve tribal rites, and myths. A little higher up we see these religious observances and legends in transition, often by assimilation to other parallel traditions.

4.1.6.1.12. The Villages:

Not only caste but the emphasis upon village life is also given by Kosambi in his writings. India is still a country of peasants. Agrarian development is extensive, though still with primitive technique. Most of the land is over-grazed and over-farmed after two thousand years of cultivation. The yield per acre is abysmally low because the methods are primitive and holdings too small to be economic.

The main feature of the land is the lack of transport. This means that a significant part of the production is local and locally consumed. It is precisely this backward, inefficient and local nature of production that has allowed so many older tribal groups to survive, albeit upon the verge of extinction. The whole rural economy is dominated by the seasonal rains, i.e., the monsoon.

4.1.6.1.13. A New Definition of History

The greatest impediment to any study of ancient India is the lack of reliable records and a dependable chronology to go on. For this reason, Kosambi tells us, the direct procedure of history writing in the old European tradition would be futile. Kosambi now made his definition of history as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production. The definition implies a definite theory of history known as dialectical materialism or Marxism, a classic statement of which appears in Karl Marx's preface to his Critique of Political Economy. Certainly, say Kosambi, "this is the only definition known which will allow a reasonable treatment of preliterate history, generally termed pre-history."

4.1.6.1.14. The Comparative Method

To reconstruct ancient Indian history Kosambi employ combined methods or the comparative method and interdisciplinary technique of investigation. Seeing that India abounded in living survival of the dead past he would notice material relics of that past laid bare by archaeology- houses, grave-goods, instruments of production and utensils of household use, groves, stones marking sacrificial rituals, caves and rock shelters, then the religious and social practice even modern Indians and finally primitive human types. From such primary sources which no library can provide, he would work back to the productive relations and social organization of people of bygone ages. Certain types of joint burials for him indicated whether the society represented was in the matriarchal, patriarchal and the pre-clan stage. Tribal clusters living in and around highly developed areas and cities suggested to him the absorption of tribes into all strata of a caste society. The red pigment still adorning the vast segments of country side deities in India is a relic of the long vanished blood sacrifice. Caves and rock shelters may have been occupied successively by prehistoric men. Buddhist monks and practioners of Hindu cults. And even highly educated Indians today do not suspect that some of the religious and social rites they practice have behind them millennia of continuity.

Kosambi turned his knowledge of Sanskrit and etymological analysis in that language to good account in restructuring the social background of the Vedic period. Since the language of the Vedic texts pointed to an admixture of the Aryan and Non-Aryan elements, he thought it likely that non-Aryan must also have been taken to the fold of the Brahmans whose original seven *gotras* must have been of mixed Aryan and Non-Aryan priest. He philologically equated the Hittite Khatti with the Sanskrit Kshatriya and the Pali Khettiya. Knowledge of mathematics enabled him to weigh with the utmost precision large numbers of punch-marked coins which were in use between 500 to 100 B.C. Kosambi's extensive field work on microlithic sites and artifacts enabled him to mark the routes which herders, pastoralists, and incipient traders would have taken across the western Deccan in the prehistoric period. Geographically, topographical and geomorphological pointers guided him to indicate some of the urban sites and Buddhist

monastic centres especially in the western Deccan during the first millennium AD. The study of cultural survivals using ethnological and anthropological material is best illustrated in the opages of *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History.*

4.1.6.1.15. Assessment

The limitation of Kosambi's thought and analysis are marginal to the serious quality of his work. Kosambi presented a view of ancient Indian history which sought answers to the fundamental questions of how and why Indian society is what it is today. In attempting to provide answers to such questions he provided a theoretical framework which was not a mechanical application of Marxism. He did not accept the Marxian notion of the Asiatic mode of production in relation to the Indian past, and as for the feudal mode of production, he made his own qualifications so far as Indian history was concerned. Based as it was on dialectical materialism, Kosambi's frame was hammered out of his proficiency in handling a variety of sources, and originality of thought. Fresh evidence may well lead to a reconsideration of his influence is bound to priest much longer.

4.1.6.2. Ram Sharan Sharma: The People's Historian

4.1.6.2.1. Early Life and Career

Born in Bihar's Barauni village (Begusarai district) on September 01, 1920, Professor Ram Sharan Sharma had his early education in a rural milieu. Later, he went to the Patna University to do his graduate and postgraduate studies. After a short stint of teaching in colleges of Arrah and Bhagalpur (1943-46), he joined the renowned Patna College as a Lecturer in 1946 and rose to become Professor and Head of the Department of History of the Patna University in 1958. He continued to hold that position till 1973, when the University of Delhi offered him professorship and headship of its history department.

He retired from active service there in 1985. Though a widely travelled person, both in India and abroad, he never forgot his *mula* (roots) and actively worked for the upliftment of his village. He was particularly concerned about the need of educational facilities for all, and specially for the education of women. He was instrumental in inspiring the local people to create a library in the village. The peasant leaders of the National Movement such as Pandit Karyanand Sharma and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and progressive and irrepressible Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayana had considerable formative influences on his persona. As a result, he became simplicity personified. Amongst the numerous Awards and Honours bestowed upon him, the Professor H.K. Barpujari National Award [for his seminal work *Urban Decay in India, circa 300 to 1000* (1987)] and the V.K. Rajwade National Award (2002) for his 'lifelong service and outstanding contribution to the study of ancient and early medieval history' by Indian History Congress (IHC) stand out prominently. He was also an active member of the National

Commission of the History of Sciences in India and UNESCO Commission on the history of Central Asian Civilizations.

Before accepting the offer of professorship and headship of the history department of the University of Delhi in 1973, Professor Sharma had already created a distinctive identity of the same department in Patna University during his 15-year tenure (1958- 1973). He laid special emphases on restructuring of syllabi of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in History (cf. *Proceedings of Seminar on Undergraduate Teaching in History*, edited by him, 1968). No wonder, immediately after reaching Delhi, he tried to harness the enormous pool of talent lying scattered over scores of constituent colleges of this illustrious university. It is remarkable that he realized very early that the undergraduate teaching of the discipline in these colleges was its distinctive feature and also the greatest asset. Prof. Sharma strongly believed that every person possesses some or the other positive quality and that opportunities should be created for him/her to concretize it. He was invariably spot on in identifying talent and harnessing it. He was a great institution builder – a quality that is well represented in the way he shaped the academic programme and administrative structure of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) as its founder Chairman (1972-77). Much of that has survived till this day.

4.1.6.2.2. Works : Method, Concerns and Orientation

In his long academic career spanning over nearly six decades, R.S.Sharma, produced several seminal works (over twenty monographs, more than a hundred seminal essays and book reviews, and several edited volumes) on social, economic, political and cultural histories of ancient and early medieval India. Cumulatively put, all his writings tend to bring out the dynamics of ever changing social formations through the several millennia of India's historical developmental processes.

Whichever area of human activity that Professor Sharma chose to write about – political, social or economic processes, forms of property, women and *varna,* – their inter-links and links with productive processes interested him the most. In his keenness to understand the unfolding of historical processes, he evaluated many theories and models available to a historian. In his 1975 he recalled: "The obsession of some social anthropologists with kinship, caste, rituals, language, social customs, etc. – problems of superstructure – has given rise to several theories…Many of these models may be useful for static societies but lose their validity for dynamic societies. The *jajmani* system, for example, may explain the social and economic relations of the feudal phase but not of the pre-feudal phases…[Theories of] Sanskritisation and of Great and Little Tradition touch only the outer cultural veneer and make little difference to the study of socio-economic formation. Much is being made of the elite theory…but the simple historical truth that by and large the literati and the intelligentsia are the subordinate ally of the ruling class in class societies cannot be overlooked…"

Having discarded such fashionable paradigms, Prof. Sharma made a strong case for the application of historical materialism to the study of early Indian history. His steadfast conviction in the dialectics of modes of production and the society's ability to produce surplus enabled him to undertake a multi-pronged analyses of the state of the shudras and women, different stages of economy, landmarks in the evolutionary processes of state formation, rise and fall or urban centres, emergence and dissemination of feudalism and other phenomena.

Thus, he wrote in 1983: "Mode of production involving the theory of surplus leading to class formation continues to be the best working hypothesis, notwithstanding countless assertions to the contrary. The effort to eliminate class and surplus has introduced 'elite', 'status', 'hierarchy', 'decision-making', etc. in their place. The theory of surplus is rejected on the ground that people do not produce more on their own but are compelled to put in more work or more people are mobilized for work. Whatever motives be assigned for producing more – and this will differ from society to society – almost all types of serious investigators admit that only extra produce can support whole time administrators, professional soldiers, full-time priests, craftsmen, and other similar specialists who do not produce their food themselves. The argument that people were compelled to produce more would imply the existence of an organized coercive authority such as the state or at least a protostate represented by a strong chief, but it would not negate the idea of surplus."

Though a Marxist in his methodology and orientation, Professor Sharma was neither a strict doctrinaire nor a propagandist nor even an apologist for any political ideology. He had the conviction to take on the orthodox Marxists. Marxism for him was not a substitute for thinking but a tool of analysis that required considerable skill to unfold historical processes. No wonder, he could comment on S.A.Dange's understanding of historical development in terms of a uni-linear progression in his *India From Primitive Communism to Slavery* (1949) thus: "The book shows more schematicism than scholarship". With such a focus, 'people' acquired a totally different connotation in Prof. Sharma's writings and 'people's histories' coming out of his pen were qualitatively different from several volumes of Indian history that came out with such evocative titles as *New History of the Indian People* in the 1940s (under the auspices of the Bharatiya Itihas Parishad) and *The History and Culture of the Indian People* in the 1950s and the 1960s (the famous Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Series).

These series failed to bring 'people' into the focus. No wonder, developments in Indian society, polity, economy, arts, religions and literature, etc through the millennia affecting millions of toiling masses remained compartmentalised and also somewhat mere adjuncts of the dynastic history framework in these ventures. Writing in 1966, Sharma lamented that very little attention was being paid to the mode of production in ancient India, which, in the materialist view, determines the relations of production – economic, social and political. Although some

works of B.N.Dutt, G.F.Ilyin, D.D.Kosambi and Walter Ruben following the materialist view had appeared in the 1940s and the 1950s, it was significant, he pointed out, that none of those writings were mentioned in the bibliographies appended to the volumes of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* Series mentioned above.

In contrast, 'people' for Professor Sharma meant the real producers of wealth, and, therefore, the real makers of history. 'People' were seen as indispensable components of productive forces and not passive subjects in an 'empire'. He must have learnt this lesson very early in his career, for, he had been a witness to the many peasants' and workers' movements during the struggle for India's freedom. In his own inimitable method, Prof. Sharma retrieved the voices of the most marginalised people and communities.

The alleged neglect of caste by Marxists has often been commented upon. It is well known that D.D. Kosambi, striking a discordant note from the general tenor of Marxist perspective on caste, gave it a very conspicuous place in his overall framework of history writing when he treated caste as an ideology. Professor Sharma, too, in his overall orientation of identifying different stages of social formations through the several millennia of early Indian history, always kept his eyes on the mutations in the caste system. The whole gamut of his works focussed on social process. Very early in his career, fathoming and explaining strategies of social exclusions worked out by dominant classes became his passion, which he nurtured and sustained all through. Long before the Subaltern Studies volumes purporting to be 'history from below' became fashionable in the 1980s and thereafter, he had already got his *Shudras in Ancient India*: *A Social History of the Lower Order Down to c.AD 600* published in 1958, which soon acquired such an iconic status that Prof. Sharma acquired a nickname 'Shudra Sharma'! It was indeed one of the early manifestations of his commitment to people of India to which he remained hooked till his last breath.

Gandhiji had euphemistically called the shudras as *harijans* (people of the God) and the present day terminology of *dalits* lumps them all in a single basket. In contrast, Professor Sharma's pioneering study of the shudras unhesitatingly described them as the 'labouring class' and simultaneously focussed on their different layers. Further, it not only investigated the vicissitudes of their material conditions (changes therein studied in time sequence indicated on the basis of archaeology and inscriptions) but also attempted to reflect on complexities of their economic and social relations with members of the higher and highly privileged *varnas*. The *raison d'état* of the unconventional nature of this study lies in the host of challenging and uncomfortable (at least to the established power centres of the time) questions raised by Prof. Sharma. Some of these included: What led to the formation of the shudra community? If the shudras were meant for serving the three higher orders, can they be categorised as slaves? Was ancient Indian society a slave society? How far does the ritual status of the shudras correspond to

their economic status? Did the reforming religious sects bring about any fundamental change in the position of the lower orders? Did the role of these labouring class in the economic system undergo any change over the centuries? How did the shudras react to their servility and disabilities? Why are social revolts comparatively absent in ancient India? Answers provided by him to these questions have occupied the centre-stage in the debates on early India's social history in the last more than six decades. Apart from convincingly demonstrating the absence of signs of a 'slave society' (as understood by orthodox and straight-jacketed doctrinaire Marxists), this monumental monograph on India's toiling masses underlined the dynamics of Indian society and demolished the myth of its alleged static and vegetative character.

Here we were told about how a tribal society disintegrated and, in the process, a differentiated class society (expressed in terms of *varnas*) came into being (its parallel in the realm of political structure would be the transformation of tribal polity into a territorial state as shown in the complementary monograph *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (1st ed. 1959) ; and we also read that with the transformation of agrarian order (coming into existence of landed intermediaries) more and more disabilities were being imposed on the members of this 'labouring class' (the shudra *varna*). The present day 'cultural nationalists/purists' who are rooted in the 'brahmanical' world view of early Indian history and seek their sustenance from the 'Glories of India's ancient path' mode, always hounded out Prof. Sharma for such reconstructions. For them, the Rigvedic society being considered as 'tribal' and denting of the image of the 'Golden Age of the Guptas' were acts of sacrilege.

Sharma's *magnum opus Indian Feudalism 300-1200* (1st ed., 1965) has been another landmark monograph that challenged the age-old notions about stages in the development of structures and processes of power centres in the early Indian society. It's not that the generation of historians preceding him or even his contemporaries were not familiar with the vocabulary of 'feudalism', 'feudal lords', 'vassals' and 'feudatories', etc. *Indian Feudalism* presented feudalism not as a jargon for defining parameters of mere political authorities but as a definite marker in the evolution of Indian society. Focussing on the changing order of land rights – hierarchy of landed intermediaries/ beneficiaries emerging between the real tillers of the soil and the state and such new stake holders in land being endowed with numerous fiscal, administrative, judicial and policing powers – Prof. Sharma could mark the beginning of the 'medieval' period in Indian history with the emergence of this feudal social formation. This new formation was particularly noticeable for the subjection, exploitation and immobility of all forms of labour – both agrestic and artisanal.

Ever since these formulations were first presented in the early 1960s, there have been numerous debates, critiques and alternative paradigms. Barring some sophisticated semantic duels, no substantive argument has emerged in the last nearly five decades that questions the

essence of the material bases of the feudal social formation rooted in changes in the landed agrarian order. In a scathing critique, it was once argued that Sharma was "obstinate", insensitive to criticism, "repeating his views innumerable times – almost verbatim often and hardly developing them" and that under the impact of the feudalism thesis the "historiography of the period is still in utter disarray" . Only someone who is thoroughly unfamiliar with the numerous writings of the last several decades seeking to refine the feudal construct – writings of not just R.S. Sharma but many others exploring the phenomenon at regional level as well –could be audacious enough to make such accusations against Sharma.

It is surprising that Wink completely ignores Sharma's writings of 1974 and 1987 which were published well before his monograph. The former ('Indian Feudalism Retouched') had categorically stated: "What has been stated…is not the final word on Indian Feudalism. For the period AD 600-1000 we need detailed studies of agrarian economy, trade and handicrafts, currency system, and the role of towns, on regional basis. For the later period it may be necessary to explain the long continuity of the closed economy under the feudal set-up and the stages through which this economy began to erode". The 1987 publication, too, was clearly an exercise in filling one such desideratum. It is no less startling that Wink makes such baseless accusations despite being familiar with Sharma's participation (through his contribution 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?') in the famous 'Feudalism Debate'.

It is often argued that the materialist reductionism of Marxism underplays religion and culture. It is not just that this is one of the elements of 'vulgar Marxism' but the problem lies precisely in taking religion outside the domain of culture. Why do we often see the formulation 'religion *and* culture'? Numerous contributions of Professor Sharma, like those of D.D. Kosambi, try to take the bull by its horns, demolish the myths surrounding the nature of materialist reductionism and define contours of religious histories afresh. Significantly, both of them did not study religions as part of the so-called superstructure (again, against the basic grain of orthodox Marxist frame) or accord it any particular hallowed and autonomous status. Instead, for them, it was an integral part of the larger and dynamic cultural process involving an interaction between historical contexts and the development and influence of ideas and institutions of social, political and economic orders of the day. Apart from R.S. Sharma's analyses of some Vedic rituals, as will be seen below, other examples of his writings on religions and people's religiosities along these lines may be seen in his analyses of the birth of Tantrism and Buddhism, and suggestions for handling such popular beliefs as *tirtha yatras* (pilgrimage tours), *vratas* and *utsavas* (fasts, feasts and festivals).

Exponents and newly initiated enthusiasts of the so-called 'feminist' writings on early India have sometimes contended that Professor Sharma paid scant attention to the concerns of women in ancient Indian society. It needs some recalling that the earliest attempt to bring the

gender issue into focus by these 'feminist' enthusiasts was made only in 1988 when the 'Altekarian paradigm' (reference to A.S.Altekar's *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation: From Prehistoric Times to the Present Day*, first published in 1938) that had dominated writings on women for about half a century, was thoroughly dissected. But more than two decades before that, in 1966, Prof. Sharma had published several perceptive essays on promiscuity in ancient India, proprietary rights of women, linkages between women and shudras in *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy.*

Subsequently, delivering the General President's Address at the Indian History Congress, he lamented over the fact that the role of women in the process of production had not received the attention of scholars. That he was constantly mulling over the issues concerning and confronting women is evident in the essay on 'Historical Aspects of Sati' which did not form part of the first edition of his *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* published in 1983 but was included in its second revised edition of 1995. Still later, in 2003, he shared his views on the village society on the basis of his observations and personal experiences in his native village of Barauni and its neighbourhood. The essay entitled 'Rural Relics of Communal Sharing and Social Inequality' is particularly noticeable for providing insights about discrimination against women – they could even be subjected to forced labour — on account of *varna* ordering in those geographical spaces.

Prof. Sharma's commitment to the cause of dissemination of scientific history was boundless. He was not just a class room preacher. He took his craft into the public domain and like a true activist, ceaselessly fought the communal, obscurantist, casteist, and fascist forces throughout his life. He literally led from the front. When such forces withdrew his *Ancient India* (textbook for XI-XII classes) in 1977 (the book was subsequently restored), he came out with *In Defence of "Ancient India"* (1978) attacking those forces. His *Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya* (1990) and *Ramjanmabhumi-Baburi Masjid: A Historians' Report to the Nation* (in cooperation with Professors M.Athar Ali, D.N.Jha and Suraj Bhan, 1991) made a strong case against the exponents of the "Rama Temple" (under the now demolished Baburi Masjid) at Ayodhya. No wonder, the Government of India sought his views on the more recent controversy about the Rama Setu project as well. Earlier, he had been instrumental in getting a resolution passed at the IHC against the Emergency.

During six decades of his active academic career, Prof. Sharma had written so prolifically not for adding many letters against his name, but to spread scientific historical consciousness amongst his readers. The fact that his first book (*Vishwa Itihas ki Bhumika*, in two volumes, 1951-1953; its revision and translation into English is in process) was published in Hindi when he was merely in his early thirties; and that he deliberately got almost all his works translated

into Hindi and other Indian languages are indicators of his concern for making his writings available to the maximum possible readers in their own languages.

4.1.6.2.3. Sharma's use of varied texts

The works of Professor Sharma show his mastery over all genres of texts-epigraphic, literary, numismatic and archaeological. This competence is not very common. It enabled him to demolish many myths created by imperialist-colonialist historiography as well as by the cultural chauvinists of more recent times, and made scientific study of ever changing Indian society in all its dimensions possible. Even the most familiar texts acquired a very radical purpose and tenor in his writings. Epigraphs, for example, did not interest him for reconstructing minutiae of succession struggles or mere genealogies of political powers. Instead, they were made to yield vital details about socio-political and economic structures, changing land rights, etc. Same holds true of material antiquities unearthed during archaeological explorations and excavations. His use of such finds from more than a hundred sites spread across the whole length and breadth of the sub-continent for working out different phases of urban centres in early and early medieval India was equally innovative. *Urban Decay in India, circa 300-1200* is an exquisite example thereof, which also shows the way to read section drawings making the navigation easy even for a novice.

The tiniest of all texts, *viz.,* metallic coins were also not seen by Prof. Sharma as mere items of curiosity. He saw in them the stamps of society. Unlike most of the professional numismatists or historians using these texts, Professor Sharma was not interested in their taxonomies based on mere cataloguing of their 'types' and 'varieties'. At a seminar on 'Coins as a Source of Economic History of Ancient India' held at the Patna University in 1969, he said: "Coins will not carry much meaning for historical reconstructions unless we identify the ancient sources of gold, silver and other metals; explain the abundance and paucity of coins, determine the area and period of circulation, and above all calculate the volume of coins in the context of time and space. At the moment all our ideas about the quantities of coins are impressionistic and subjective. It is time that by developing and applying objective tests and methods and by asking new questions we find the volume of coins and the part they played in the economic life of the people." As an illustration of avoiding simplistic constructions and need for understanding complexities of the functioning of metal money, Prof. Sharma drew attention to wider networks of commercial relations that involved trading in such items as silk, cotton fabrics, workings in precious stones and their imitations (as in the case of beryl) and sugar. His essays on rates of interests and usury, though largely based on literary texts, also had a bearing on the functioning of monetary economy . He argued that factoring in such dynamics helps us in understanding the use of particular metal (specially if it is precious one such as gold or silver) for minting of coins in a specific region and at a specific time.3 The manner in which various texts were invoked by

Prof. Sharma shows that he did not suffer from any tunneled vision. He wasn't dismissive of any genres of texts. He was a veritable exponent of an holistic analyses of diverse texts, without being too credulous about any of them and all the time being sensitive to place them in specific temporal and spatial contexts. Commenting on the literary texts used for writing his monograph on the shudras, he wrote: "Although the texts belong to different periods, they repeat *ad nauseam* the same formulae and terminologies, which make it difficult to detect changes in society; hence special attention has been paid to the study of variants. Many of these texts cannot be understood without the aid of the commentators, who not unoften project the ideas of their own times into earlier periods."

Thus, even myths and rituals with which ancient Indian texts are replete, were duly considered to be an important source for the reconstruction of social history. If pure Sanskritists were keen to see them in symbolic manner, Prof. Sharma would draw historical inferences in such symbolisms. For him, the fertility rites, for example, underscored the importance of the production of plants, animals and human beings. He contended that the operation of rituals in day-today life shows that they originate in reality, and change with changes in real life. Wading through the five different versions of the *ratnahavimshi* ceremony delineated in the later Vedic texts, he could show that this ritual was 'the product of a developed political, social, and economic organisation in which tribal and matriarchal elements were being submerged by class, territorial and patriarchal elements, leading to the emergence of differentiated organs of government…' Similar exercise was undertaken in respect of the *devasuhavimshi* ceremony as well which enabled him to identify some persisting tribal and primitive aspects of the later Vedic polity. The interdependence of emerging institutions and ideas and the compatibility of the one with another was duly underlined through such an approach. The remarkable blend of archaeological and literary texts in his *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* is true example of the holistic approach mentioned above. Constant dialogue with himself and other professional colleagues, and his ability to listen to others were hallmarks of his method. That explains the constant polishing and updating of his works, most of which ran into several editions. A comparison of the themes, arrangement thereof and contents of various essays in his 1966 publication entitled *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy* with two editions of his *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* (first published in 1983 and revised 2nd ed., 1995) would clearly show Professor Sharma's unceasing eagerness to rethink and refine his writings. Equally arresting is his ability to say the most sophisticated and complex things in simple words, without using jargons. In simplifying the complex concept of 'historical materialism' as 'no production no history' and epitomizing the 'vigour' and 'persistence' of equally complex caste system in India in terms of '*beti-roti*' relationships (governing restrictions regarding marriage, food-sharing and social intercourse).

He displays his phenomenal skill of saying things simply and clearly without caring to be seen as indulging in fashionable 'discourses'. His *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* is a classic example of this trait. But long before that, and referring to the current craze for peddling of 'models', he wrote thus in 1975: "For comprehending and explaining the past in India we naturally look for models and typologies, but the intellectual market in social sciences, like any other market, is flooded with 'western' commodities…what is needed is not only an awareness of the various models that are being peddled in the field but also their careful examination, otherwise we would just become middlemen and paraphrasers. Professor Sharma has been a colossus. It would be difficult to fill the void created by him.

4.1.6.3. Romilla Thapper

4.1.6.3.1. Early life and Career

Romila Thapar born 30 November 1931 is an Indian historian whose principal area of study is ancient India. Romila Thapar was born of a well-known Punjabi family and spent her childhood in various parts of the country, as her father was then in the army. She took her first degree in India from the Punjab University and her doctorate at London University in 1958. She has taught Ancient Indian History at London University, Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Her keen interest in understanding how societies disintegrate or integrate and how relationships change over time, led her to history and historiography, and she went on a scholarship to School Of Oriental and African Studies. Working with the famous indologist Dr. A.L. Bhasham, she earned a Ph.D on the Mauryan era, in 1958.

An interesting aspect of Prof. Thapar's work spanning four decades is her ability to constantly expand the horizons of her concerns, but still produce a consistently high quality of research output, as Sanjay Subhramaniam, a Professor at Oxford comments. A teacher throughout her life, generations of historians underwent rigorous training at Delhi University and later for two fulfilling decades at Jawaharla Nehru University. One of the founder members of the JNU's famed Centre for Historical Studies, Prof. Thapar, along with a galaxy of historians was able to expand the quests and concerns of History and move it beyond the narrow confines of chronicling events.

In her own words, the tenure at JNU led her, "To think of new ways of projecting history, where our courses would reflect interdisciplinary methods of investigating the past. If at all I can take credit for anything, it is for those students who are now teaching history and conducting historical research themselves". Students vouch for it. It is like entering the tiger's den, says one. But if you are good, she is the greatest ally you could have, says another who did her Ph.D. under Thapar.

Professor Thapar's works range from Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas (1961) to The Aryan: Recasting Constructs (2008). Professor Thapar has been a visiting professor at Cornell University, the University of Pennsylvania and the College de France in Paris. She was elected General President of the Indian History Congress in 1983, as well as Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 1999.

Professor Thapar is also an Honorary Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and holds honorary doctorates from the University of Chicago, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, the University of Oxford and the University of Calcutta. In 2004 the US Library of Congress appointed her as the first holder of the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South.

4.1.6.3.2. Research Interests:

Her research into early Indian history has been part of the shift from treating ancient history as Indology to establishing it as a Social Science. The two themes on which I have worked are: the social and cultural history of early India which involved asking new questions of textual data and integrating some archaeological sources as well, in attempting to understand the correlation of society, economy, and religion; the second theme has been historiography, both the modern perspective of writing the history of early India, as well as the manner in which history was recorded in the early past.

4.1.6.3.3. Works

After graduating from Panjab University, Thapar earned her doctorate under A. L. Basham at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London in 1958. Later she worked as Professor of Ancient Indian History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she is Professor Emerita.

Thapar's major works are Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations, Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History (editor), A History of India Volume One, and Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300.

Her historical work portrays the origins of Hinduism as an evolving interplay between social forces. Her recent work on Somnath examines the evolution of the historiographies about the legendary Gujarat temple.

In her first work, Asoka and the Decline of the Maurya published in 1963, Thapar situates Ashoka's policy of dhamma in its social and political context, as a non-sectarian civic ethic intended to hold together an empire of diverse ethnicities and cultures. She attributes the decline of the Mauryan empire to its highly centralized administration which called for rulers of exceptional abilities to function well.

Thapar's first volume of A History of India is written for a popular audience and encompasses the period from its early history to the arrival of Europeans in the sixteenth century.

Ancient Indian Social History deals with the period from early times to the end of the first millennium, includes a comparative study of Hindu and Buddhist socio-religious systems, and examines the role of Buddhism in social protest and social mobility in the caste system. From Lineage to State analyses the formation of states in the middle Ganga valley in the first millennium BC, tracing the process to a change, driven by the use of iron and plough agriculture, from a pastoral and mobile lineage-based society to one of settled peasant holdings, accumulation and increased urbanization.

Among her other publications are: *A Study of the Emperor Asoka, Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas (1961, 1973), From Lineage to State (1984), Indian Tales, The Past and Prejudice, Exile and the Kingdom: Some Thoughts on the Ramayana (1978), Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations (1978), The History of India (1990),Interpreting Early India (1993), History and Beyond (2000).*

4.1.6.3.4. Recognition and honour

Thapar has been a visiting professor at Cornell University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the College de France in Paris. She was elected General President of the Indian History Congress in 1983 and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 1999. Thapar is an Honorary Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. She holds honorary doctorates from the University of Chicago, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, the University of Oxford, the University of Edinburgh (2004) the University of Calcutta (2002) and recently (in 2009) from the University of Hyderabad. She was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2009.

In 2004 the U.S. Library of Congress appointed her as the first holder of the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South. In January 2005, she declined the Padma Bhushan awarded by the Indian Government. In a letter to President A P J Abdul Kalam, she said she was "astonished to see her name in the list of awardees because three months ago when I was contacted by the HRD ministry and asked if I would accept an award, I made my position very clear and explained my reason for declining it". Thapar had declined the Padma Bhushan on an earlier occasion, in 1992. To the President, she explained the reason for turning down the award thus: "I only accept awards from academic institutions or those associated with my professional work, and not state awards".

She is co-winner with Peter Brown of the prestigious Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanity for 2008 which comes with a US$1 million prize.

4.1.6.3.5. Views on revisionist historiography

Thapar is critical of what she calls a "communal interpretation" of Indian history, in which events in the last thousand years are interpreted solely in terms of a notional continual

conflict between monolithic Hindu and Muslim communities. Thapar says this communal history is "extremely selective" in choosing facts, "deliberately partisan" in interpretation and does not follow current methods of analysis using multiple, prioritised causes.

In 2002, the Indian coalition government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) changed the school textbooks for social sciences and history. Romila Thapar, who was the author of the textbook on Ancient India for class VI, objected to the changes made without her permission that, for example, deleted passages on eating of beef in ancient times, and the formulation of the caste system. She questioned whether the changes were an, "attempt to replace mainstream history with a Hindutva version of history", with the view to use the resultant controversy as "election propaganda." Other historians and commentators, including Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar, Irfan Habib, R.S. Sharma, Vir Sanghvi, Dileep Padgaonkar and Amartya Sen also protested the changes and published their objections in a compilation titled, Communalisation of Education. In turn, the historians were accused of offending the sensibilities of some religious and caste groups by their formulations of history.

Thapar's appointment to the Library of Congress's Kluge Chair in 2003 was opposed in an online petition bearing more than 2,000 signatures. Journalist Praful Bidwai criticized the petition as a "vicious attack" by communalists who are "not even minimally acquainted" with her work. A number of academics sent a protest letter to the Library of Congress denouncing the petition as an attack on intellectual and artistic freedom. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) supported her appointment by calling her "a liberal with a scientific outlook".

During the 2006 Californian Hindu textbook controversy, Thapar joined Michael Witzel in opposing changes proposed by US-based Hindu groups to the coverage of Hinduism and Indian history in school textbooks. She contended that while Hindus have a legitimate right to a fair and culturally sensitive representation, the proposed changes included unscientific, religious-based material that distorted the truth and pushed a political agenda.

4.1.6.3.6. Ideology and Interpretation

Thapar has an interest in the social and cultural history of ancient India. The increasing interest in the historiography of the early period is an indicator of the awareness of the role of ideology in historical interpretation. She has also used comparative method to study similar societies with the evidence both literary and archaeological sources. Other sources include linguistic, ethnographic and other fields of Indology.

4.1.6.4.Irfan Habib

4.1.6.4.1. Early Life

Irfan Habib was born on 12th August, 1931 in Baroda (now Vadodra) Gujrat in a very aristocrat family of learned scholars. His father Professor Mohammad Habib was a well known historian and a professor in department of history in Aligarh Muslim University. Irfan Habib’s

grandfather, Mohammad Naseem was a famous lawyer in Lucknow and a staunch supporter of Aligarh Movement and female education. His mother Sohaila Tayabji was daughter of Abbas Tayabji and grand-daughter of Justice Badruddin Tayabji.

Abbas Tyabji was an Indian freedom fighter from Gujarat, who had served as the Chief Justice of the (Baroda) Gujarat High Court. He was son of son of Shamsuddin Tayabji and nephew of Justice Badruddin Tayabji. He was a key ally and supporter of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel during the 1918 Kheda Satyagraha, and the 1928 Bardoli Satyagraha. He was also a close supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. In 1919-20, Abbas Tyabji was one of the members of the Committee appointed by the Indian National Congress to review the charges against General Dyer for the Amritsar Massacre, which occurred during the fight for independence from the British. Tyabji became the national leader after leading major protests against the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi in May 1930. He was married to Amina Badruddin Tayabji, daughter of Justice Badruddin Tayabji. Justice Badruddin Tayabji was First Indian to be called to the English Bar (1867), and then the first Indian barrister in Bombay. He entered public life after three years at the Bar. Along with Kashinath Telang and Pherozeshah Mehta, he formed the "Triumvirate" that presided over Bombay's public life. Justice Badruddin Tayabji was President of the 3rd session of the Indian National Congress in 1887 which was held in Madras. He was one of the founders of the Anjuman-i-Islam, his brother Camruddin being President. He was Justice of the Bombay High Court from 1895, acting as Chief Justice in 1902, the first Indian to hold this post in Bombay.

4.1.6.4.2. Education and Career

Irfan Habib started his education in Aligarh Muslim University and completed his B.A. in 1951 securing first position and a gold medal and M.A. in History in 1953 with honors and joined as Lecturer in Department of History in Aligarh Muslim University at a very young age of 22 years. He obtained his D.Phil. degree from New College, Oxford. His research “Agrarian System of Mughal India” was well taken by the research community was published in form of a book in 1963. He was appointed as “Reader” in 1960 and “Professor” in 1969 in the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University. His major publications including, Agrarian System of Mughal India, Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist perception and Atlas of the Mughal Empire gave his due place in the academic community. He is also the editor of Peoples History of Indian Series, besides having edited UNESCO publications and Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume I. He has authored and edited number of books, over hundred research papers on various fields of Indian and world history. Prof. Irfan Habib has worked on the historical geography of Ancient India, the history of Indian technology, medieval administrative and economic history, colonialism and its impact on India, and historiography. Amiya Kumar Bagchi describes Habib as "one of the two most prominent Marxist historians of India today and at the

same time, one of the greatest living historians of India between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries."

Prof. Irfan Habib had served as Chairman of Department of History of AMU from 1975 to 1977 and from 14th June, 1984 to May 1988. He had also served as Coordinator of Center of Advance Studies (CAS) in Department of History, AMU Aligarh from 1975 to 1977 and 14th June 1994 to 13th May 1996. In 1986, Prof. Irfan Habib was appointed as Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) New Delhi, India. He served as its Chairman from 9th September, 1986 to 1st July 1990. He had also served as President and Vice-President of Indian History Congress in 1981 and 2006 respectively. Indian History Congress is India's largest peer body of historians. He delivered Radhakrishnan Lecture at Oxford in 1991. In 1998, he was elected as Corresponding Fellow of British Royal Historical Society, a unique honor earned by his scholarly contribution, recognized by the international community. Prof. Irfan Habib, formally retired on 30.08.1991 has remained associated with the Aligarh Muslim University for all these years without a break, displaying unusual academic interest and scholarly activity that stand out as a model par excellence for everyone. Prof. Irfan Habib remains a towering personality fully wedded to the secular values of the Indian Republic. He has illuminated the minds of millions of Indians by his in depth, path breaking erudition of Indian History with a new insight that was so refreshing to the promotion of secular ideals in India. The nation has bestowed on him the coveted civilian title “Padma Bhushan” in 2005. In December 2007, Aligarh Muslim University appointed Prof. Irfan Habib as Professor Emeritus in the department of History. The presence of such a brilliant scholar in the Aligarh Muslim University will add to the academic glory of the institution. He will remain a beacon light for teachers and students of History for several years to come.

4.1.6.4.3. Historical contribution

As a historian, he has few peers. His research on The Agrarian System of Mughal India, published in the 1960s, immediately became a classic. Recognition as a fearless exponent of Marxist historiography rained down on him. His initial work pertained to the medieval era of Indian history. He has ceaselessly produced tracts on aspects of this historical period, each of which bears the stamp of his intellectual depth and clarity of writing. His mind and interest did not, however, long stay confined to any particular, narrow phase of events and occurrences. He soon spread out; nothing from the very ancient period to the outer fringes of modern Indian history has escaped his attention. The point has to be emphasised over and over again: whatever he has written has been the product of scholastic endeavour of the highest order: reasoning, primary data not unraveled in the past, application of such data towards formulating credible hypotheses, and the entire corpus built, stone by stone, into a magnificent edifice which can be held in comparison only with other products emanating from Irfan Habib's mind and pen. It is the

combination of quantity of output and quality of excellence which has enabled his works reach the reputation of being the other word for supreme excellence.

Inevitably, he has attracted attention as much within the country as outside. Honours have come to him easily. What is of stupendous additional significance, his interpretation of data, building of premises based on such data and expansion of the underlying reasoning, have never strayed away from their Marxist foundation. He has been unabashedly Marxist in his scholastic activities, and has never made a secret of his intellectual and emotional inclination. No run-of-the-mill braggart, his output, every line of it, every expression of his format, has spelled out his faith and belief. Ours is a hide-bound society; it breathes reaction from every pore. Nonetheless, it has been unable to either bypass or be indifferent to Irfan's towering scholarship. Not only has he been accorded the highest academic distinction in an educational institution which has its fair share of retrograde thoughts and demeanour. Even the country's administrative establishment could not fail to take cognisance of his intellectual prowess. Thus the Chairmanship of the Indian Council of Historical Research was offered to him. He held this position for well over a decade, and it was no vacuous adornment of a throne. He used the opportunity to wonderful effect, guiding and counseling historical research at different centres of learning in the country. The result shows in the secular advance in the quality of history teaching and writing in the different Indian universities.

But research interests have not held back Irfan in a narrow mooring. Alongside his individual research activities and the scholastic work he has encouraged around him, his focus of attention has continued to be his students. He has lived for his students , and it would be no exaggeration to claim that he is prepared to die for them. A little facetious research will prove the point: about half of his colleagues on the faculty of history in the Aligarh Muslim University happen to be his former students. It would still be a travesty to infer that he built his students in his own image. He has been a radical thinker, a weather-beaten socialist prepared to combat all ideological challenges, and yet his catholicism as a teacher is by now a legend. Even those whose stream of thought is not in accord with his wave-length have nonetheless found in him the most painstaking teacher who would not deny a student, any student, what he, rightfully or otherwise, can expect of a teacher. Irfan's style of exposition has an elegance of its own: he is an accredited socialist, and yet his command of language, and the manner in which he puts it across, have the hallmark of the legatee of a benign, civilised aristocracy. Maybe in this matter his heredity has been a natural helper.

That does not still tell the entire story of his dazzling career. It is possible to come across scores and scores of arm-chair socialists and radicals whose faith has not nudged them into political activism. From that point of view too, Irfan Habib is all together out of the ordinary. He has been, for nearly three decades, an accredited member of a revolutionary political party; he

has not concealed this datum from any quarters. Quite on the contrary, that identity has been his emblem of pride. He has been prepared to serve the cause of the party whenever called upon, without however compromising or neglecting his academic responsibilities. It is this blend of intense - if it were not a heresy, one could say, almost religious - belief and fearless participation in political activism which has marked him out in the tepid milieu of Indian academia. His activism, one should add, has widened beyond the humdrum sphere of political speech-making and polemical writing (although, even in his absent-mindedness, his polemics has never descended to the level of empty rhetoric). Irfan's social conscience has prodded him into trade unionism, what many academics would regard as waywardness of the most shocking kind. Irfan could not have cared less for such snobbery. He has also encouraged his students to combine radical thought with political engagement. He has been at the forefront of organisers of teachers' movements. To cap all, he has been the main inspirer and mobiliser of the non-teaching employees of his university and elsewhere. He has suffered on all these accounts including, for a period, suspension from his university. This was an outrage, and social pressure forced the university to revoke its insensate decision.

To fail to mention his relentless opposition to communal revanchists of all genres will be an unpardonable omission. Muslim fundamentalists have made him their favourite target; of late, Hindu communalists have joined the ranks of this motley crow d. Irfan has not for one moment cowered before this rabble. A quiet, tranquil person in his natural disposition, there is a reservoir of fire in him which has been continuously directed against society's reactionary scum.

4.1.7. Conclusion

The Marxist historians have contributed enormously to Indian historiography. In all field of Indian history, whether we divide it by periods or by topics, the Marxist historians have made significant contributions. In several areas, their works have changed the course of historiography. The Marxist historians do not form a monolithic bloc. As we have seen in our discussion of several trends, there are wide divergences of views among the Marxist historians. However, there are certain common elements among them.

The history of the dynasties was replaced by the history of the common people. More emphasis was now given to the study of economy and society in preference to the political history. The study of broad social and economic systems such as feudalism and colonialism were undertaken and the social, economic and political changes were considered not in the light of the actions of individual statesmen, but in terms of the working out of economy and conflicts between classes. At the level of methodology, Kosambi’s works introduced an interdisciplinary approach to history which encompassed literature, archaeology, linguistics, anthropology, numismatics and statistics. Moreover, the Marxist historiography has made interpretation and explanation more important than narration or description.

4.1.8. Summary

- *Marxism is a dominant presence in the field of Indian historiography in the post-independence period. A lot of historians either come directly within its fold or have been influenced by it in certain degrees. It has also influenced most of the trends of Indian historiography in some way or the other.*
- *The two books which heralded the beginning of Marxist historiography in India were India Today by R. Palme Dutt and Social Background of Indian Nationalism by A.R. Desai. India Today was originally written for the famous Left Book Club in England and was published by Victor Gollancz in 1940.*
- *D.D. Kosambi (1907-66) affected a 'paradigm shift' in Indian studies. He considered the precolonial Indian civilisation as backward, superstitious, stagnant and lacking in most respects as a civilisation. He was an unabashed admirer of the British achievements in India and relentless critic of pre-British Indian society and polity.*
- *Kosambi viewed history completely differently. For him, Mill's religious periodisation and Smith's chronological accounts of dynasties were of no value. He believed that the 'Society is held together by bonds of production'. Thus he defines history 'as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production'.*
- *Another important Marxist historian R.S. Sharma made a comprehensive study of feudalism in India in his book entitled Indian Feudalism (1965) and in various articles.*
- *R.S Sarma opined that there were a decline in trade and increasing numbers of land grants to the state officials in lieu of salary and to the Brahmans as charity or ritual offering in the post-Gupta period. This process led to the subjection of peasantry and made them dependent on the landlords.*
- *According to R.S Sharma, the most crucial aspects of Indian feudalism was the increasing dependence of the peasantry on the intermediaries who received grants of land from the state and enjoyed juridical rights over them. This development restricted the peasants' mobility and made them subject to increasingly intensive forced labour.*
- *In the study of early India, there are several historians working with Marxian methods. R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, D.N. Jha, B.D. Chattopadhyay and Kumkum Roy are some of them. Their researches have enriched our understanding of ancient India.*
- *The history of medieval India has also attracted a fair number of Marxist historians. Nurul Hasan, Satish Chandra, Irfan Habib and Athar Ali are some among them. They have studied the medieval Indian society, polity and economy in detail.*

4.1.9. Exercises

1. Write a note on the Marxist historiography of Indian feudalism. Discuss the differences between various Marxist historians on this issue.
2. What is the role of D.D. Kosambi in the development of Marxist historiography in India?
3. Write a note on the conflicting views on 'Indian Renaissance'.
4. Give an account on the contribution of Prof. RS.Sharma to Indian historiography.
5. Elucidate the historical ideas of Prof. Romila Thaper.

4.1.10. Suggested Readings

1. D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1956, 1985).
2. Romila Thapar, 'The Contribution of D.D. Kosambi to Indology', in Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts : Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi, OUP, 2000).
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UNIT-IV

Chapter-II

MARXIST WRITINGS ON MODERN INDIA: MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS

Structure

4.2.9. Objectives

In this chapter we intend to provide you an insight into the Marxist school of historiography in India. This lesson will briefly discuss some of the important trends and assumption developed within Marxist tradition in Indian historiography. By the end of this chapter you would be able to:

- *rise and growth of Marxist approaches of Indian history;*
- *describe the various aspects of Marxist approach such as feudalism, Indian nationalism and Indian renaissance.*
- *assess some major formulations of Marxist historiography*
- *discuss the major Marxist Assumption in Indian History*
- *elucidate some major problems of Indian history and their Marxist interpretations.*

4.2.10. Introduction

As already mentioned in the last chapter Marxism is a dominant presence in the field of Indian historiography in the post-independence period. A lot of historians either come directly within its fold or have been influenced by it in certain degrees. It has also influenced most of the trends of Indian historiography in some way or the other. In the last chapter we have discussed Marxist interpretation of ancient and Medieval Indian history and some of the noted Marxist historians on that phase of Indian history. In this chapter we will examine the growth of Marxist approach to the various aspects of modern Indian history and try to provide information about some important historians within Marxist tradition in modern Indian historiography.

4.2.11. Modern India and Marxist Historiography

Marxist historical works on Indian history comprehensively covers most aspects of Indian society, economy and politics under colonial rule. It applies Marxist analysis to various developments in the colonial economy, to the problems of peasantry, to the national movement and to the communal problems. In the subsequent paragraphs the chapter will discuss various historical works on modern Indian history from Marxist point of View.

4.2.11.1. R.P. Dutt's *India Today*

The two books which harbinger the beginning of Marxist historiography in India were *India Today* by R. Palme Dutt and *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* by A.R. Desai. *India Today* was originally written for the famous Left Book Club in England and was published by Victor Gollancz in 1940. Its Indian edition was published in 1947.

So far as R.P. Dutt's *India Today* (1940, 1946) is concerned, it is considered as the first major works on Marxist interpretation of Modern India. R.P. Dutt took Marx's articles of 1853 as his starting point and made extensive use of the grievances against British rule in the economic and political spheres raised by nationalist spokesmen, from Dadabhai Naoroji

onwards, to draw a detailed picture of Britain's exploitation of India. The book then gave a narrative of the National Movement, in which its bourgeois leadership, including Mahatma Gandhi, was heavily criticized for its acts of omission and commission, its readiness to compromise with British imperialism and failure to mobilize the masses even when opportunity beckoned. While some of RP Dutt's formulations need to be reviewed, the importance of the work as an ideological weapon for Indian Communists cannot be underestimated. Moreover it corrected the CPI's tilt towards the Pakistan demand in the most persuasive manner.

Dutt squarely holds colonialism and capitalism responsible for the poverty of the country. The process of plundering the resources of the country started quite early and was responsible for funding the capitalist development in Britain and other countries of Europe: 'The conquest of India by Western civilisation has constituted one of the main pillars of capitalist development in Europe, of British world supremacy, and of the whole structure of modern imperialism. For two centuries the history of Europe has been built up to a greater extent than is always recognised on the basis of the domination of India.'

Dutt divides the entire period of imperialist rule in India into three phases, a periodisation which, with certain modifications, has now become conventional, particularly among the Marxist historians. The first phase belonged to the merchant capital 'represented by the East India Company, and extending in the general character of its system to the end of the eighteenth century.' Then came the domination by industrial capitalism 'which established a new basis of exploitation of India in the nineteenth century'. The third phase is that of financial capitalism which started in the last years of the 19th century and flourished in the 20th century. The phase of merchant capitalism was characterised by the monopolistic hold of the East India Company over the Indian trade. This was facilitated by its increasing territorial control from the second half of 18th century. Apart from this monopolistic control, Indian wealth was also plundered directly by the colonial state and privately by the servants of the Company. The massive wealth transferred through this plunder made the Industrial Revolution possible in England. This started the search for a free market for the products of English industries. Thus India had to be transformed 'from an exporter of cotton goods to the whole world into an importer of cotton goods'. The monopoly of the East India Company had to be abolished now and this was achieved in phases and after 1858, the rule of India was transferred to the British Crown. This started the process of turning India into an uninhibited market for the British goods.

After the First World War (1914-1918), a new stage of imperialism was inaugurated in India. Although the older forms of getting 'tribute' and seeking India as a market British goods still continued, there was now an emphasis on capital investment in India. According to Dutt, it was clear that 'by 1914 the interest and profits on invested capital and direct tribute considerably exceeded the total of trading, manufacturing and shipping profits out of India. *The finance-*

capitalist exploitation of India had become the dominant character in the twentieth century'. He further talks about the 'stranglehold of finance capital' and its rising volume and concludes : 'Modern imperialism … no longer performs the objectively revolutionising role of the earlier capitalist domination of India, clearing the way, by its destructive effects, for the new advance and laying down the initial material conditions for its realisation. On the contrary, modern imperialism in India stands out as the main obstacle to advance of the productive forces, thwarting and retarding their development by all the weapons of its financial and political domination. It is no longer possible to speak of the objectively revolutionising role of capitalist rule in India. The role of modern imperialism in India is fully and completely reactionary.'

Another area of Dutt's concern was Indian nationalism. On the revolt of 1857 his view is that it 'was in its essential character and dominant leadership the revolt of the old conservative and feudal forces and dethroned potentates'. This is a view which is supported even today by several Marxist historians. Thus it is only from the last quarter of the 19th century that Dutt traces the beginning of the Indian national movement.

The premier organisation of this movement was the Indian National Congress which was established in 1885. According to Dutt, although the Congress arose from the 'preceding development and beginnings of activity of the Indian middle class', it was brought into existence through British official initiative as a safety-valve. In detail Dutt writes about the role of Hume and his alarm at the impending rebellion. Hume then contacted the officials of the colonial government and pleaded with them to help establish the Congress to stall the insurgency against the British rule. Dutt is, therefore, sure that : 'the National Congress was in fact brought into being through the initiative and under the guidance of direct British governmental policy, on a plan secretly pre-arranged with the Viceroy as an intended weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.'

However, it soon grew out of its original subservient nature due to pressure of populist nationalist feelings. Thus, from 'its early years, even if at first in very limited and cautious forms, the national character began to overshadow the loyalist character'. It gradually became a strong anti-colonial force and started leading people's movement against colonial rule. Dutt based his analysis of nationalism on its varying class base over the years. Thus 'in its earliest phase Indian nationalism … reflected only big bourgeoisie- the progressive elements among the landowners, the new industrial bourgeoisie and the well-to-do intellectual elements'. Then rose the class of the urban petty bourgeois who made its aspirations felt in the years preceding the First World War. It was only after the War that the Indian masses- peasantry and the industrial working class- made their presence felt.

However, the leadership remained in the hands of the propertied classes who were quite influential in the Congress. These elements were against any radicalisation of the movement and,

therefore, tried to scuttle it before it could become dangerous to their own interests. He is particularly harsh on Gandhi whom he castigates as the 'Jonah of revolution, the general of unbroken disasters … the mascot of the bourgeoisie' for trying 'to find the means in the midst of a formidable revolutionary wave to maintain leadership of the mass movement'. Thus the Non-cooperation Movement was called off because the masses were becoming too militant and a threat to the propertied classes within and outside the Congress : 'The dominant leadership of the Congress associated with Gandhi called off the movement because they were afraid of the awakening mass activity; and they were afraid of the mass activity because it was beginning to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were still in fact closely linked.'

A similar fate befell the Civil Disobedience Movement which was 'suddenly and mysteriously called off at the moment when it was reaching its height' in 1932. Dutt thinks that this dual nature of the Congress could be traced to its orgins : 'This twofold character of the National Congress in its origin is very important for all its subsequent history. This double strand in its role and being runs right through its history : on the one hand, the strand of co-operation with imperialism against the "menace" of the mass movement; on the other hand, the strand of leadership of the masses in the national struggle. This twofold character, which can be traced through all the contradictions of its leadership, from Gokhale in the old stage to his disciple, Gandhi, in the new … is the reflection of the twofold or vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, at once in conflict with the British bourgeoisie and desiring to lead the Indian people, yet fearing that "too rapid" advance may end in destroying its privileges along with those of the imperialists.'

This was the foundational statement of Marxist historiography on Indian National Congress, the leading organisation of the Indian national movement, for quite some time to come. Most of the subsequent works of the Marxist historians on nationalism were in some measures influenced by it. A.R. Desai's book, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism,* has been a very popular book and several editions and reprints of this book have been published since its first publication on 1948. It has also been translated into many Indian languages. It is another thoroughgoing account of the colonial period and the rise of nationalism from a Marxist perspective. As Sumit Sarkar writes in the 'Foreword' to a new edition in 2000 : 'For fifty years, it has served generations of students all over the country as an introduction to modern Indian history, and one which for many also provided a highly accessible illustration of Marxist historical method'.

In a single volume this book provides us a synoptic account of the various aspects of economy, society and politics of colonial India. It particularly focuses on the rise of nationalism in India. Desai traces the growth of the national movement in five phases, each phase based on

particular social classes which supported and sustained it. Thus, in the first phase, 'Indian nationalism had a very narrow social basis'. It was pioneered by the intelligentsia who were the product of the modern system of education. Desai considers Raja Rammohan Roy and his followers as the 'pioneers of Indian nationalism'. This phase continued till 1885 when the Indian National Congress was founded. It heralded a new phase which extended till 1905. The national movement now represented 'the interests of the development of the new bourgeois society in India'. The development in the modern education had created an educated middle class and the development of the Indian and international trade had given rise to a merchant class. The modern industries had created a class of industrialists. In its new phase, Indian national movement 'voiced the demands of the educated classes and the trading bourgeoisie such as the Indianization of Services, the association of the Indians with the administrative machinery of the state, the stoppage of economic drain, and others formulated in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress'. The third phase of the national movement covered the period from 1905 to 1918. During this phase 'the Indian national movement became militant and challenging and acquired a wider social basis by the inclusion of sections of the lower-middle class'. In the fourth phase, which began from 1918 and continued till the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the social base of the national movement was enormously enlarged. The movement 'which was hitherto restricted mainly to upper and middle classes, further extended … to sections of the Indian masses.' However, according to Desai, the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of those who were under the strong influence of the Indian capitalist class : 'It was from 1918 that the Indian industrial bourgeoisie began to exert a powerful influence in determining the programme, policies, strategies, tactics and forms of struggle of the Indian national movement led by the Congress of which Gandhi was the leader.'

Two other significant developments during this period were the rise of the socialist and communist groups since the late 1920s, which tried to introduce pro-people agenda in the national movement, and the consolidation of communalist forces which sought to divide the society.

The fifth phase (1934-39) was characterised by growing disenchantment with the Gandhian ideology within the Congress and further rise of the Socialists who represented the petty bourgeois elements. Outside the Congress various movements were taking place. The peasants, the workers, the depressed classes and various linguistic nationalities started agitations for their demands. Moreover, there was further growth of communalism. However, according to Desai, all these stirrings were not of much consequence and the mainstream was still solidly occupied by the Gandhian Congress which represented the interests of the dominant classes. These two books, particularly the one by R. Palme Dutt, laid the foundations of the Marxist historiography on modern Indian history.

4.2.11.2. S.A. Dange's *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*

S.A. Dange's *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*, 1949, embodied an attempt to show how ancient Indian texts offered evidence to sustain Engel's *Origin of the Family, & c.* It was an exceptionally weak work, but it had the merit of provoking a long review from D.D. Kosambi in which he insisted that Marxists must make use of the critical method in analysing sources and pay proper attention to the historical contexts and archaeological evidence.

4.2.11.3. EMS Namboodiripad's *The National Question in Kerala*

In 1952 was published EMS Namboodiripad's *The National Question in Kerala*. It was a careful study of the society of the region, its specific features and the emergence of the national movement in Kerala and the struggles of the exploited and the oppressed. While describing the economy of Kerala as "feudal-colonial", Comrade EMS paid much attention to the caste system, and saw "the struggle for the equality of all castes" as a necessary prelude to "the struggle for economic and political democracy". In many ways it remains a classic work.

4.2.11.4. Some other Important historians and their works

Marxist historians have been greatly interested in the economic impact of colonialism. **Bipan Chandra** comprehensively examined the early nationalist critiques of British economic exploitation of India in a magisterial work, *The Rise and Growth of Economic, Nationalism in India (1966).* **Amiya K. Bagchi** later on studied the process in Eastern India in his *Colonialism and Indian Economy*, 2010. As for the Tribute, or drain of wealth from India to Britain, **Utsa Patnaik** and **Amiya Bagchi** in *Perilous Passage*, 2006, have made important theoretical and statistical contributions towards understanding its scale and consequences. **B.B. Chaudhuri's** *Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal, 1757-1900* (1964) is a comprehensive study of the impact of colonialism on the agriculture of an important region. Irfan Habib, *Indian Economy under Colonialism* (1858-1914) in the People's History of India series is also an important work in this respect. The National Movement has received much attention from Marxist historians, and it is not possible here to survey their studies of its various phases and regional forms. For a narrative that takes into consideration various aspects of interest to Marxists one may mention Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India (1885-1947)*, pub. 1983. E.M.S. Namboodiripad's *History of the Freedom Struggle* (1986) is a major effort after R.P. Dutt's *India Today*, of forty years earlier, to survey the entire history of the National Movement and appraise the tactics and strategy of its leadership.

There has been another aspect of the work of Marxist historians, which needs to be mentioned. This is the defence of the scientific method and resistance to communal and chauvinistic distortions of History. Here strictly professional scholars as well as liberal historians are often on the same side as we are. While the doyen of Marxist historians, Professor R.S. Sharma, has been a leading figure in this struggle, Professor Romila Thapar through her writings

has made a signal contribution to the presentation of a rational approach to our history. The role of the Indian History Congress also deserves to be recognized. The struggle is not only important for the political reason that communalism has to be opposed at all levels, but for the equally valid reason that the Marxist approach cannot flourish without History being investigated on rigorously scientific lines.

4.2.12. Indian Nationalism and Marxist Historiography

Earlier, we discussed the views of R.P. Dutt and A.R. Desai on Indian nationalism. They analysed it as a movement which was mostly dominated by the bourgeoisie. Although various classes, including the peasantry and the working classes, participated in it, its basic character remained bourgeois. This view of national movement remained quite common among the Marxist historians for quite some time. However, over the years, several Marxist historians began to disagree with this paradigm for understanding Indian nationalism.

Bipan Chandra mounted a major critique of this view and this criticism became more comprehensive over the years. In his very first book, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (1966), he pleaded for according certain autonomy to the ideas as significant vehicle of action and change. Even though he accepts that 'social relations exist independently of the ideas men form of them', he feels that 'men's understanding of these relations is crucial to their social and political action'. Moreover, he argues that the intellectuals in any society stand above the narrow interests of the class in which they are born. It is 'sheer crude mechanical materialism' to sort out the intellectuals only on the basis of their class of origins. It is because the intellectuals are guided 'at the level of consciousness, by thought and not by interests'. Thus the Indian nationalist leaders were also, as intellectuals, above the interests of the narrow class or group they were born in. This does not mean, however, that they did not represent any class. They did represent class interests, but this was done ideologically and not for personal gain. As Bipan Chandra puts it : 'Like the best and genuine intellectuals the world over and in all history, the Indian thinkers and intellectuals of the 19th century too were philosophers and not hacks of a party or a class. It is true that they were not above class or group and did in practice represent concrete class or group interests. But when they reflected the interests of a class or a group, they did so through the prism of ideology and not directly as members, or the obedient servants, of that class or group.'

On the basis of his analysis of the economic thinking of the early nationalist leaders, both the so-called moderates and the extremists, Bipan Chandra concludes that their overall economic outlook was 'basically capitalist'. By this he means that 'In nearly every aspect of economic life they championed capitalist growth in general and the interests of the industrial capitalists in particular'. This does not mean that they were working for the individual interests of the capitalists. In fact, the capitalist support for the Congress in the early phase was negligible.

Nationalist support for industrial capitalism derived from the belief of the nationalists that 'industrial development along capitalist lines was the only way to regenerate the country in the economic field, or that, in other words, the interests of the industrial capitalist class objectively coincided with the chief national interest of the moment'. Thus, Bipan Chandra abandons the instrumentalist approach espoused by Dutt and Desai.

This was a major change in perspective in the historiography of the Indian national movement. However, despite this change in perspective, Bipan Chandra remained anchored to several points within the paradigm developed by R.P. Dutt. In an essay presented at a symposium at the Indian History Congress in 1972 and published in his book *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* (1979), his arguments come remarkably close to the traditional Marxist perspective developed by R.P. Dutt on Indian nationalism. In this article entitled 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity', he still criticizes the narrow perspective which dubs the nationalist leaders as bourgeois in an instrumentalist sense that they were following the commands of the capitalists. In his opinion, the early nationalist leaders were trying to unify the Indian people into a nation. Their basic objective was 'to generate, form and crystallize an anti-imperialist ideology, to promote the growth of modern capitalist economy, and in the end to create a broad all India national movement'. This view corresponded with the perspective developed in his earlier book on economic nationalism. But there were other points where his arguments resembled those of Dutt and Desai. Firstly, he interprets the 'peaceful and bloodless' approach of struggle adopted by the nationalist leadership as 'a basic guarantee to the propertied classes that they would at no time be faced with a situation in which their interests might be put in jeopardy even temporarily'. This understanding of non-violence was the same as that of Dutt and Desai.

Secondly, the relationship between the Indian masses and the nationalists always remained problematic. For the moderate leaders, the masses had no role to play. Even the extremists, despite their rhetoric, failed to mobilise the masses. Although the masses came into nationalist fold during the Gandhian period, they were not politicised and the lower classes of agricultural workers and poor peasants in most parts of country were never politically mobilised, 'so that the social base of the national movement was still not very strong in 1947'. And even when they were mobilised, the masses remained outside the decision-making process and the gulf between them and the leaders was 'unbridged'. According to Bipan Chandra : 'Above all, the political activity of the masses was rigidly controlled from the top. The masses never became an independent political force. The question of their participation in the decision-making process was never even raised. The masses were always to remain … "passive actors" or "extras" whose

political activity remained under the rigid control of middle class leaders and within the confines of the needs of bourgeois social development. Herein also lay the crucial role of the way non-violence was defined and practiced by Gandhi.'

Thirdly, the nationalist leaders in all phases of the movement stressed that the process of achievement of national freedom would be evolutionary, and not revolutionary. The basic strategy to attain this goal would be pressure-compromise-pressure. In this strategy, pressure would be brought upon the colonial rulers through agitations, political work and mobilisation of the people. When the authorities were willing to offer concessions, the pressure would be withdrawn and a compromise would be reached. The political concessions given by the colonial rulers would be accepted and worked. After this, the Congress should prepare for another agitation to gain new concessions. It is in this phased, non-violent manner that several political concessions would be taken from the British and this process would ultimately lead to the liberation of the country. On the basis of his analysis of the social base, the ideology, and the strategy of political struggle, Bipan Chandra concluded that the nationalist movement as represented by the Congress was 'a bourgeois democratic movement, that is, it represented the interests of all classes and segments of Indian society vis-à-vis imperialism but under the hegemony of the industrial bourgeoisie'. This character remained constant throughout its entire history from inception to 1947. Even during the Gandhian phase, there was no change. In fact, according to Bipan Chandra, 'the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the national movement was, if anything, even more firmly clamped down in the Gandhian era than before'.

In a later book, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947* (1988), Bipan Chandra has decisively moved away from the views of Dutt and Desai on Indian national movement. In this book, co-authored with some other like-minded scholars, he applies the Gramscian perspective to study the national movement. Most of the propositions regarding the Indian National Congress developed in the earlier quoted article are now dropped or revised. The Congress strategy is no longer seen in terms of pressurecompromise- pressure. It is now viewed in terms of Gramscian 'war of position' whereby a prolonged struggle is waged for the attainment of goal. As Bipan Chandra puts it : 'The Indian national movement … is the only movement where the broadly Gramscian theoretical perspective of a war of position was successfully practised; where state power was not seized in a single historical moment of revolution, but through prolonged popular struggle on a moral, political and ideological level; where reserves of counter-hegemony were built up over the years through progressive stages; where the phases of struggle alternated with "passive" phases.'

This struggle was not overtly violent because the nationalist leaders were seized of the twin agenda of forging the Indian people into a nation and to undermine the colonial hegemony. Through their prolonged struggle they wanted to expose the two important myths about the

British colonial rule that it was beneficial to the Indians and that it was invincible. The Gandhian non-violence is also to be considered in this light. According to Bipan Chandra, 'It was not … a mere dogma of Gandhiji nor was it dictated by the interests of the propertied classes. It was an essential part of a movement whose strategy involved the waging of a hegemonic struggle based on a mass movement which mobilized the people to the widest possible extent.'

The national movement was now conceived as an all-class movement which provided space and opportunity for any class to build its hegemony. Moreover, the main party, the Congress, which led 'this struggle from 1885 to 1947 was not then a party but a movement'. He criticises the various schools of historiography on India for their failure to address the central contradiction in colonial India which was between the Indian people and the British colonialism. Although he still considers that 'the dominant vision within the Congress did not transcend the parameters of a capitalist conception of society', he has made a clear break from the conventional Marxist interpretation of the Indian national movement and it appears that any study of Indian nationalism has to take his views into account.

Sumit Sarkar is another Marxist historian who is critical of Dutt's paradigm. In his first book, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (1973), he terms it as a 'simplistic version of the Marxian class-approach'. Contrary to the assertion by Dutt that the moderate phase was dominated by the 'big bourgeoisie' while the extremist phase by the 'urban petty bourgeoisie', he thinks that 'a clear class-differential between moderate and extremist would still be very difficult to establish, and was obviously nonexistent at the leadership level'. According to him, this version of Marxist interpretation suffers from the 'defect of assuming too direct or crude an economic motivation for political action and ideals'. He instead prefers to analyse the actions of the nationalist leaders by using Trotsky's concept of 'substitutism' whereby the intelligentsia acts 'repeatedly as a kind of proxy for as-yet passive social forces with which it had little organic connection'. He also uses Gramscian categories of 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals. According to Antonio Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist activist and thinker, the 'organic' intellectuals participate directly in the production-process and have direct links with the people whom they lead. The 'traditional' intellectuals, on the other hand, are not directly connected with either the production-process or the people. However, they become leaders of particular classes by ideologically resuming the responsibility of those classes. According to Sarkar, the leaders of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal 'recruited overwhelmingly from the traditional learned castes, and virtually unconnected after the 1850s with commerce or industry … may be regarded perhaps as a "traditional" intelligentsia in Gramsci's sense'. This view is quite close to that of Bipan Chandra in which he emphasises the role of ideology in the formation of the early nationalist leaders. Sumit Sarkar, however, considers that even though the nationalist leaders were not directly linked with the bourgeoisie, they 'objectively did help to at least partially clear

the way for the independent capitalist development of our country'. He emphasises this point further in his article 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism' (1985). Here the objective stance of the Swadeshi Movement in favour of the bourgeoisie gets transformed into direct intervention by the bourgeoisie and the subjective position in the interests of the capitalists by the leaders of the Civil Disobedience Movement. By studying the social forces involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement and the developments leading to the Gandhi-Irwin pact, he concludes that there was 'the vastly enhanced role of distinctively bourgeois groups, both in contributing heavily to the initial striking power of Civil Disobedience and ultimately in its calling off'. He qualifies his statement by saying that Gandhi was 'no mere bourgeois tool in any simplistic or mechanical sense' and that he can hardly be considered as 'a puppet' in the hands of the capitalists. He, however, insists that the Gandhian leadership had 'a certain coincidence of aims with Indian business interests at specific points' and 'an occasional significant coincidence of subjective attitudes and inhibitions with bourgeois interests'.

4.2.13. Intellectual history: Debate on Indian renaissance

The role of the intellectuals in shaping the public opinion and leading the people is beyond doubt. What is more contentious is the extent of their influence and the reasons for this limitation. One such phenomenon which attracted wide interests among both the Marxist and non-Marxist scholars was the 'Bengal Renaissance' which is sometimes equated with the 'Indian Renaissance'. It is because a cluster of contemporary intellectuals became associated with various movements of ideas mostly derived from western sources. Since the colonial presence in Bengal had been the longest, we find there the earliest manifestations of such interests among the local intelligentsia and their thoughts had countrywide influence over the years. The point which is under debate is the nature of this intellectual movement which is named after the Italian intellectual experience of the 15th and 16th centuries as the 'Renaissance'.

Among the Marxist historians Susobhan Sarkar was the first to analyse 'this flowering of social, religious, literary and political activities in Bengal'. In his essay, 'Notes on the Bengal Renaissance', first published in 1946, he declared that the 'role played by Bengal in the modern awakening of India is thus comparable to the position occupied by Italy in the story of the European Renaissance'. This 'modern' movement arose because the 'impact of British rule, bourgeois economy and modern Western culture was first felt in Bengal'. Thus the modernity brought into India by the British 'produced an awakening known usually as the Bengal Renaissance'. It generated such intellectual force that 'For about a century, Bengal's conscious awareness of the changing modern world was more developed than and ahead of that of the rest of India'. Such a rosy picture of the 19th-century intellectual activities has now been seriously questioned. The concept of Bengal, or Indian, Renaissance has come under criticism.

The critics point out that, unlike the European Renaissance, the range of the 19thcentury intellectual ferment was rather limited and its character was rather less modernist than was earlier assumed. The 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' dichotomy cannot be applied as the so-called 'Renaissance' intellectual was a deeply divided personality. The break with the past was severely limited in nature and remained mainly at the intellectual level. Most of the intellectuals did not have the courage to implement even at their own individual levels the principles they preached. And those like Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, who publicly campaigned for their ideals faced continuous failures. In most cases, the same traditional scriptural authority was sought to derive sanction for their policies and practices against which the intellectuals launched their ideological struggle.

Moreover, this intellectual movement remained confined within an elitist Hindu framework which did not include the problems and realities of the lower castes and Muslims. The social forces, which could have given the ideas a solid base and moved them in the modernist direction, were not present. The colonial power remained the ultimate guarantee for the implementation of the reforms proposed by the thinkers. However, the colonial state was not much interested in taking radical measures for the fear of alienating the traditionalists who formed the great majority. This led to frustration among the enthusiasts for the reforms and the movement in general retreated and declined by the late 19th century. Some of the Marxist historians who have criticized the concept of the 'Renaissance' in Indian context are : Barun De in the articles 'The Colonial Context of Bengal Renaissance' (1976) and 'A Historiographic Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India'; Asok Sen in his book *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones* (1977), Sumit Sarkar in his articles 'Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past' (1975), 'The Complexities of Young Bengal (1973), and 'The Radicalism of Intellectuals' (1977), all the three articles now collected in a book *A Critique of Colonial India* (1985); and K.N. Panikkar whose various essays on this theme from 1977 to 1992 have been collected in the book *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony* (1995).

4.2.14. Conclusion

The Marxist historians have written on several aspects of modern Indian history and the colonial economy. Apart from these, we can find a significant number of the Marxist historians in the fields of peasant history, labour history and social history. In this way the Marxist historians have contributed enormously to Indian historiography. In all field of Indian history, whether we divide it by periods or by topics, the Marxist historians have made significant contributions. In several areas, their works have changed the course of historiography. The Marxist historians do not form a monolithic bloc. As we have seen in our discussion of several trends, there are wide divergences of views among the Marxist historians. However, there are certain common elements among them.

The history of the great men was replaced by the history of the common people. More emphasis was now given to the study of economy and society in preference to the political history. The study of broad social and economic systems such as feudalism and colonialism were undertaken and the social, economic and political changes were considered not in the light of the actions of individual statesmen, but in terms of the working out of economy and conflicts between classes.

4.2.15. Summary

- *The first major Marxist work on modern India was R.P. Dutt's* India Today *(1940, 1946). R.P. Dutt took Marx's articles of 1853 as his starting point and made extensive use of the grievances against British rule in the economic and political spheres raised by nationalist spokesmen, from Dadabhai Naoroji onwards, to draw a detailed picture of Britain's exploitation of India.*
- *S.A. Dange's* India from Primitive Communism to Slavery, *1949, embodied an attempt to show how ancient Indian texts offered evidence.*
- *In 1952 was published EMS Namboodiripad's* The National Question in Kerala. *It was a careful study of the society of the region, its specific features and the emergence of the national movement in Kerala and the struggles of the exploited and the oppressed. In many ways it remains a classic work.*
- *A major break-through for the Marxist understanding of ancient Indian history came with D.D. Kosambi's* Introduction to the Study of Indian History *(1956). Kosambi avowedly proclaimed his allegiance to the Marxist method, but he insisted that the periodization scheme in which slavery preceded feudalism could not apply to India.*
- *Marxist historians have been greatly interested in the economic impact of colonialism. Bipan Chandra comprehensively examined the early nationalist critiques of British economic exploitation of India in a magisterial work,* The Rise and Growth of Economic, Nationalism in India *(1966).*
- *As for the Tribute, or drain of wealth from India to Britain, Utsa Patnaik and Amiya Bagchi (the latter's work summed up in his* Perilous Passage, *2006), have made important theoretical and statistical contributions towards understanding its scale and consequences.*
- *The National Movement has received much attention from Marxist historians, and it is not possible here to survey their studies of its various phases and regional forms. For a*

narrative that takes into consideration various aspects of interest to Marxists one may mention Sumit Sarkar, Modern India (1885-1947), pub. 1983. E.M.S. Namboodiripad's History of the Freedom Struggle (1986) is a major effort after R.P. Dutt's India Today, of forty years earlier, to survey the entire history of the National Movement and appraise the tactics and strategy of its leadership.

- *There has been another aspect of the work of Marxist historians, which needs to be mentioned. This is the defense of the scientific method and resistance to communal and chauvinistic distortions of History.*
- *There are various spheres in which Marxists are in debate with opposing ways of perceiving history.*

4.2.16. Exercises

- Write a note on the Marxist historiography of Indian nationalism. Discuss the differences between various Marxist historians on this issue.
- What is the role of D.D. Kosambi in the development of Marxist historiography in India?
- Write a note on the conflicting views on 'Indian Renaissance'.
- Give an account on the contribution of R.Palme Dutta to Indian historiography.
- Elucidate the Marxist Ideology on Indian Freedom struggle.

4.2.17. Suggested Readings

1. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1956, 1985).
2. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (Calcutta, Manisha, 1940, 1979).
3. A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay, 1948, 2000).
4. Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1966, 1991).
5. Bipan Chandra, et al, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947* (New Delhi, Penguin Books, 1988)
6. Ramesh Chandra Sharma, et al, *Historiography and Historians in India since Independence* (Agra, M G Publishers, 1991).
7. E. Sreedharan (2004). A Textbook of Historiography, 500 B.C. to A.D. 2000. Orient Longman.

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UNIT-IV

Chapter-III
SUBALTERN APPROACH TO INDIAN HISTORY
Ranjit Guha

Structure

4.3.0. Objectives

The chapter deals with origin and growth of a new approach in the historiographical trend in India that is the subaltern school. The chapter will emphasise on the methods and modes of historical writings developed under the aegis of subaltern school in Indian historical writings. The objectives of this unit are to.

- *defining the Subaltern Perspective through Subaltern Studies:*
- *trace the origin and growth of subaltern studies;*
- *examine the idea of subaltern perspective in Indian history;*
- *analyse the inchoate quality associated with the subaltern perspective*
- *trace the various aspects of Elite vs. Subaltern discourse.*
- *assess the role and contributions of Ranjit Guha for the emergence and growth of subaltern school of Indian historiography.*

4.3.1. Introduction

The *Subaltern Studies* is the title given to a series of volumes initially published under the editorship of Ranajit Guha, the prime mover and the ideologue of the project. He edited the first six volumes of the *Subaltern Studies*. The next five volumes are edited by other scholars associated with the project. Right from the beginning the *Subaltern Studies* took the position that the entire tradition of Indian historiography before it has had elitist bias. The historians associated with the *Subaltern Studies* declared that they would set the position right by writing the history from the point of view of the common people. In this chapter we will discuss the various positions taken by the writers associated with the *Subaltern Studies* as well as the criticism of the project by historians and others working in the area of Indian studies.

4.3.2. Beginning of the Idea

The *Subaltern Studies* was proclaimed by its adherents as a new school in the field of Indian history-writing. Some of the historians associated with it declared it to be a sharp break in the tradition of Indian historiography. A group of writers dissatisfied with the convention of Indian history-writing became part of the collective and contributed for the volumes. It, however, also involved historians and other social scientists not formally associated with the subaltern collective. Besides the articles published in the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, these writers also wrote for many other journals and edited volumes as well as published monographs which are today associated with subaltern themes and methodology. Starting the venture with the help of those whom Ranajit Guha termed as ‘marginalised academics’, the *Subaltern Studies* soon acquired vast reputation both inside and outside India for the views they professed as well as for intensive research on subaltern themes. Initially planned as a series of three volumes, it has now become an ongoing project with eleven volumes in print till date. Apart from these volumes, Ranajit Guha has also edited one volume of essays taken from the various earlier volumes for the

international audiences. In some of the recent volumes the *Subaltern Studies* has included themes from non-Indian Third World countries also.

The term 'subaltern' has a rather long history. It was initially applied to the serfs and peasants in England during the Middle Ages. Later, by 1700, it was used for the subordinate ranks in the military. It, however, gained wide currency in scholarly circles after the works of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader. Gramsci generally used the term in a broader connotation of 'class' to avoid the censorship of the prison authorities as he was in jail and his writings were scanned. Gramsci had adopted the term to refer to the subordinate groups in the society. In his opinion, the history of the subaltern groups is almost always related to that of the ruling groups. In addition, this history is generally 'fragmentary and episodic'. Ranajit Guha, however, in the Preface to *Subaltern Studies* I, did not mention Gramsci's use of the term, even though he referred to Gramsci as an inspiration. Instead, he defined it as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*: 'The word "subaltern" in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, "of inferior rank". It will be used in these pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.'

A little later, at the end of his opening essay in the volume, he further clarified this term: 'The terms "people" and "subaltern classes" have been used synonymously throughout this note. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the "elite".'

The Subaltern historians made a radical departure in the use of the term from that of Gramsci. Even while accepting the subordinated nature of the subaltern groups, they argued the history was autonomous from that of the dominant classes.

4.3.3. Development of the project

Now there is a general and clear acknowledgement of basically two phases in the career of the Subaltern Studies. Phase I consists of :

a) Concern with the subaltern, i.e., lower, exploited classes;
b) Criticism of the elite, i.e., exploiting classes; and
c) Influence of Gramscian thought and Marxist social history and an attempt to work within broader Marxist theory.

In the second phase, there is a clear shift from these concerns. Now :

a) There is an increasing engagement with textual analysis, a shift away from exploring the history of the exploited people, and more engagement, even though critical, with elite discourses; and
b) Marx and Gramsci are jettisoned in favour of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and other postmodernists and postcolonialists.

4.3.3.1.First Phase : Elite vs. Subaltern

The Subaltern Studies asserted itself as a radically new form of history-writing in the context of Indian history. It was initially conceived as a series of three volumes to be edited by its eldest protagonist and the prime mover of the idea, Ranajit Guha. The idea was seemingly informed by Gramscian thought. A deliberate attempt was made to break from both the economic determinism of a variety of Marxist theory as well as the elitism of bourgeois-nationalist and colonialist interpretations. A group of writers similarly dissatisfied with the convention of Indian historiography joined the collective and contributed essays for the volumes. It, however, also involved historians and other social scientists not formally associated with the subaltern collective. Although basically concerned about India, the *Subaltern Studies* project was first conceived in England by some Indian academics, Ranajit Guha being the principal motive force behind it. Right from the beginning it was set against almost all existing traditions of Indian historiography. In what can be called as the manifesto of the project, Ranajit Guha, in a vein reminiscent of the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto* ('The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle'), declared in the very first volume of the *Subaltern Studies*, that 'The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism.' Both types of historiography was said to derive from the ideological discourse of the British rule in India. Despite their differences, both shared certain things in common and the most important of these was the absence of the politics of the people from their accounts. In his view, there was now an urgent requirement for setting the record straight by viewing the history from the point-of view of the subaltern classes. This standpoint as well as the politics of the people was crucial because it constituted an autonomous domain which 'neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter'. The people's politics differed from the elite politics in several crucial aspects. For one, its roots lay in the traditional organisations of the people such as caste and kinship networks, tribal solidarity, territoriality, etc. Secondly, while elite mobilisations were vertical in nature, people's mobilisations were horizontal. Thirdly, whereas the elite mobilisation was legalistic and pacific, the subaltern mobilisation was relatively violent. Fourthly, the elite mobilization was more cautious and controlled while the subaltern mobilisation was more spontaneous.

The *Subaltern Studies* soon became the new 'history from below' which did not try to fuse the people's history with official nationalism. It, therefore, attracted the attention of the scholars who had become disenchanted with the nationalistic claims as embodied in the post-colonial state. Largely influenced by Gramsci in its initial phase in trying to discover the radical consciousness of the dominated groups, it was pitted against the three main trends in Indian historiography-colonialist, which saw the colonial rule as the fulfillment of a mission to

enlighten the ignorant people; nationalist, which visualized all the protest activities as parts of the making of the nation-state; and Marxist, which subsumed the people's struggles under the progression towards revolution and a socialist state. The aim of the project was manifold :

a) To show the bourgeois and elite character of Congress nationalism which was said to restrain popular radicalism;

b) To counter the attempts by many historians to incorporate the people's struggles in the grand narrative of Indian / Congress nationalism; and

c) To reconstruct the subaltern consciousness and stress its autonomy. Considering the non-availability of evidences from subaltern sources, it was a difficult task. To overcome this, the subaltern historians endeavoured to extract their material from the official sources by reading them 'against the grain'.

Subaltern Studies was conceived in an atmosphere where Gramsci's ideas were making significant impact. Eric Hobsbawm, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall were incorporating Gramsci's ideas into their works. Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, on the other hand, were developing a favourable critique of Gramsci. Other influences were that of the new social history, written by Western Marxist historians such as Henri Lefebvre, Christopher Hill, E.P.Thompson, Eugene Genovese and others, who emphasised the necessity for considering people's point of view. Thus the objective of the *Subaltern Studies* was proclaimed to 'promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies and thus help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area'. (Ranajit Guha, 'Preface' to *Subaltern Studies I*.) Guha, in the Preface to vol. III, stated that what brought the subaltern historians together was 'a critical idiom common to them all – an idiom self-consciously and systematically critical of elitism in the field of South Asian studies'. He further asserted that it was in the opposition to this elitism that the unity of the subaltern project lay: 'We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography and the social sciences for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project. There is no way in which it can express itself other than as an adversary of that elitist paradigm which is so well entrenched in South Asian studies. Negativity is therefore the very *raison d'etre* as well as the constitutive principle of our project.'

On the political side, the international and national scenes of the late 1960s and early 1970s had become radicalised and questions were being raised on the established and conventional ideas. The conventional political parties, from the Right to the Left, came for criticism and much emphasis was placed on the non-conventional political formations and activities.

The Subaltern historians, disenchanted with the Congress nationalism and its embodiment in the Indian state, rejected the thesis that popular mobilisation was the result of either economic conditions or initiatives from the top. They claimed to have discovered a popular domain which was autonomous. Its autonomy was rooted in conditions of exploitation and its politics was opposed to the elites. This domain of the subaltern was defined by perpetual resistance and rebellion against the elite. The subaltern historians also attributed a general unity to this domain clubbing together a variety of heterogeneous groups such as tribals, peasants, proletariat and, occasionally, the middle classes as well. Moreover, this domain was said to be almost completely uninfluenced by the elite politics and to posses an independent, self-generating dynamics. The charismatic leadership was no longer viewed as the chief force behind a movement. It was instead the people's interpretation of such charisma which acquired prominence in analysis of a movement or rebellion.

Shahid Amin's study of the popular perception of Mahatma Gandhi is a revealing example. In his article, 'Gandhi as Mahatma', deriving evidences from Gorakhpur district in eastern UP, he shows that the popular perception and actions were completely at variance with the Congress leaders' perception of Mahatma. Although the mechanism of spread of the Mahatma's message was 'rumours', there was an entire philosophy of economy and politics behind it- the need to become a good human being, to give up drinking, gambling and violence, to take up spinning and to maintain communal harmony. The stories which circulated also emphasised the magical powers of Mahatma and his capacity to reward or punish those who obeyed or disobeyed him. On the other hand, the Mahatma's name and his supposed magical powers were also used to reinforce as well as establish caste hierarchies, to make the debtors pay and to boost the cowprotection movement. All these popular interpretations of the Mahatma's messages reached their climax during the Chauri Chaura incidents in 1922 when his name was invoked to burn the police post, to kill the policemen and to loot the market.

Earlier historians were criticised not only for ignoring the popular initiative but, equally seriously, accepting the official characterisation of the rebel and the rebellion. Ranajit Guha, in his article 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency', launched a scathing attack on the existing peasant and tribal histories in India for considering the peasant rebellions as 'purely spontaneous and unpremediated affairs' and for ignoring consciousness of the rebels themselves. In his opinion, 'Historiography has been content to deal with the peasant rebel merely as an empirical person or member of a class, but not as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion. The omission is indeed dyed into most narratives by metaphors assimilating peasant revolts to natural phenomena : they break out like thunder storms, heave like earthquakes, spread like wildfires, infect like epidemics.' He accused all the accounts of rebellions, starting with the immediate official reports to the histories written by the left radicals, of writing the texts of

counter-insurgency which refused 'to acknowledge the insurgent as the subject of his own history'. Gyan Pandey, in 'Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism, 1919-1922', argued that peasant movement in Awadh arose before and independently of the Non-cooperation movement and the peasants' understanding of the local power structure and its alliance with colonial power was more advanced than that of the urban leaders, including the Congress. Moreover, the peasant militancy was reduced wherever the Congress organisation was stronger.

In Stephen Henningham's account of the 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces', the elite and the subaltern domains were clearly defined and distinct from each other. Thus, 'the great revolt of 1942 consisted of an elite nationalist uprising combined with a subaltern rebellion'. Their motives and demands were also different : 'Those engaged in the elite nationalist uprising sought to protest against government repression of Congress and to demand the granting of independence to India. In contrast, those involved in the subaltern rebellion acted in pursuit of relief from privation and in protest against the misery in which they found themselves.' He further contends that it was this dual character of the revolt which led to its suppression. David Hardiman, in his numerous articles, focused on subaltern themes and argued that whether it was the tribal assertion in South Gujarat, or the Bhil movement in Eastern Gujarat, or the radicalism of the agricultural workers during the Civil Disobedience Movement, there was an independent politics of the subaltern classes against the elites. Similarly, Sumit Sarkar, in 'The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy', argued the Non-cooperation movement in Bengal 'revealed a picture of masses outstripping leaders'. He stated that the term 'subaltern' could refer to basically three social groups: 'tribal and low-caste agricultural lablurers and share-croppers; landholding peasants, generally of intermediate caste-status in Bengal (together with their Muslim counterparts); and labour in plantations, mines and industries (along with urban casual labour).' These groups might have divisions among themselves and include both the exploiters and exploited in their ranks. However, he argued that : 'the subaltern groups so defined formed a relatively autonomous political domain with specific features and collective mentalities which need to be explored, and that this was a world distinct from the domain of the elite politicians who in early twentieth century Bengal came overwhelmingly from high-caste educated professional groups connected with zamindari or intermediate tenure-holding'.

Thus we see that in these and in many other essays in the earlier volumes, an attempt was made to separate the elite and the subaltern domains and to establish the autonomy of subaltern consciousness and action. Although there were some notable exceptions, such as the writings of Partha Chatterjee, this phase was generally characterised by emphasis on subaltern themes and autonomous subaltern consciousness.

4.3.3.2.Second Phase : Discourse Analysis

Over the years, there began a shift in the approach of the Subaltern Studies. The influence of the postmodernist and postcolonialist ideologies became more marked. While the emphasis on the subalterns may be associated with Guha, Pandey, Amin, Hardiman, Henningham, Sarkar and some others, the postcolonialist influences were revealed in the works of Partha Chatterjee right from the beginning. His influential book, *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World* (1986), applied the postcolonial framework of Edward Said which viewed the colonial power-knowledge as overwhelming and irresistible. Such themes were also evident in Chatterjee's articles in the volumes of the Subaltern Studies even earlier. His later book, *The Nation and its Fragments* (1995), carries this analysis further. Many other writers in the Subaltern Studies slowly abandoned the earlier adherence to Marxism. There was a bifurcation of intellectual concerns in their ranks. While some of the Subaltern historians still stuck to the subaltern themes, a larger number began to write in postcolonialist modes. Now there was a clear move from the research on economic and social issues to cultural matters, particularly the analysis of colonialist discourse.

Subalternity as a concept was also redefined. Earlier, it stood for the oppressed classes in opposition to the dominant classes both inside and outside. Later, it was conceptualized in opposition to colonialism, modernity and Enlightenment. The researched articles on themes concerned with subaltern groups decreased in number in later volumes. So, while in the first four volumes there were 20 essays on the subaltern classes like peasants and workers, in the nest six volumes there were only five such essays. There was now an increasing stress on textual analysis of colonial discourse. Consequently, the discourse analysis acquired precedence over research on subaltern themes. The earlier emphasis on the 'subaltern' now gave way to a focus on 'community'. Earlier the elite nationalism was stated to hijack the people's initiatives for its own project; now the entire project of nationalism was declared to be only a version of colonial discourse with its emphasis on centralisation of movement, and later of the state. The ideas of secularism and enlightenment rationalism were attacked and there began an emphasis on the 'fragments' and 'episodes'.

There is also an attempt to justify this shift and link it to the initial project. Thus the editors of Vol. X of *Subaltern Studies* (Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu) proclaim that 'Nothing – not elite practices, state policies, academic disciplines, literary texts, archival sources, language – was exempt from the effects of subalternity'. Therefore, all the elite domains need to be explored as the legitimate subjects of Subaltern Studies.

Gyan Prakash has argued that since the Indian subalterns did not leave their own records, the 'history from below' approach in imitation of the Western model was not possible. Therefore, the *Subaltern Studies* 'had to conceive the subaltern differently and write different histories'. According to him, it is important to see the 'subalternity as a discursive effect' which

warrants 'the reformulation of the notion of the subaltern'. Thus, 'Such reexaminations of South Asian history do not invoke "real" subalterns, prior to discourse, in framing their critique. Placing subalterns in the labyrinth of discourse, they cannot claim an unmediated access to their reality. The actual subalterns and subalternity emerge between the folds of the discourse, in its silences and blindness, and in its overdetermined pronouncements.' The subalterns, therefore, cannot be represented as subjects as they are entangled in and created by the working of power. Dipesh Chakrabarty goes even further in denying a separate domain not only for the subaltern history, but the history of the Third World as a whole : 'It is that insofar as the academic discourse of history – that is, "history" as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university – is concerned, "Europe" remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian", Chinese", "Kenyan", and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe". In this sense, "Indian" history itself is in a position of subalternity : one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.'

The second phase of the *Subaltern Studies*, therefore, not only moves away from the earlier emphasis on the exploration of the subaltern consciousness, it also questions the very ground of historical works as such, in line with the postmodernist thinking in the West.

4.3.4. Critique

There has been wide-ranging criticism of the *Subaltern Studies* from many quarters. Right from the beginning the project has been critiqued by the Marxist, Nationalist and Cambridge School historians, besides those who were not affiliated to any position. Almost all positions it took, ranging from a search for autonomous subaltern domain to the later shift to discourse analysis, came under scrutiny and criticism. Some of the earlier critiques were published in the *Social Scientist*. In one of them, Javeed Alam criticised *Subaltern Studies* for its insistence on an autonomous domain of the subaltern. According to Alam, the autonomy of the subaltern politics is predicated on perpetuity of rebellious action, on 'a consistent tendency towards resistance and a propensity to rebellion on the part of the peasant masses'. Whether this autonomous action is positive or negative in its consequences is of not much concern to the subalternists:

'The historical direction of militancy is … of secondary consideration. What is primary is the spontaneity and an internally located self-generating momentum. Extending the implications of the inherent logic of such a theoretical construction, it is a matter of indifference if it leads to communal rioting or united anti-feudal actions that overcome the initial limitations.' In another essay, a review essay by Sangeeta Singh and others, Ranajit Guha was criticised for presenting a caricature of the spontaneous action by peasant rebels. In Guha's understanding, it was alleged, 'spontaneity is synonymous with reflexive action'. Since 'Spontaneity is action on the basis of

traditional consciousness', Guha's whole effort is said to 'rehabilitate spontaneity as a political method'. Moreover, Guha, in his assertion about the centrality of religion in rebel's consciousness, approves the British official view which emphasises the irrationality of the rebellion and absolves colonialism of playing any disruptive role in the rural and tribal social and economic structures.

Ranjit Das Gupta points out that there is no precise definition of the subaltern domain. Moreover, the subaltern historians 'have tended to concentrate on moments of conflict and protest, and in their writings the dialectics of collaboration and acquiescence on the part of the subalterns … have by and large been underplayed'. The rigid distinction between the elite and the subaltern, ignoring all other hierarchical formations, was criticised by others as well. David Ludden, in the Introduction to an edited volume (2001), writes that : 'Even readers who applauded Subaltern Studies found two features troubling. First and foremost, the new substance of subalternity emerged only on the underside of a rigid theoretical barrier between "elite" and "subaltern", which resembles a concrete slab separating upper and lower space in a two-storey building. This hard dichotomy alienated subalternity from social histories that include more than two storeys or which move among them;… Second, because subaltern politics was confined theoretically to the lower storey, it could not threaten a political structure. This alienated subalternity from political histories of popular movements and alienated subaltern groups from organised, transformative politcs….'

Rosalind O'Hanlon offers a comprehensive critique of earlier volumes of *Subaltern Studies* in her article 'Recovering the Subject'. She argues that, despite their claims of surpassing the earlier brands of history-writing, 'the manner in which the subaltern makes his appearance through the work of the contributors is in the form of the classic unitary self-constituting subject-agent of liberal humanism'. Among the Subaltern historians, particularly in the writings of Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Stephen Henningham and Sumit Sarkar, there is 'the tendency to attribute timeless primordiality' to the 'collective traditions and culture of subordinated groups'. She finds an essentialism at the core of the project 'arising from an assertion of an irreducibility and autonomy of experience, and a simple-minded voluntarism deriving from the insistence upon a capacity for self-determination'. This leads to an idealism, particularly 'in Guha's drive to posit an originary autonomy in the traditions of peasant insurgency. He does at times appear to be approaching a pure Hegelianism'.

Christopher Bayly, in 'Rallying around the Subaltern', questions the project's claim to originality. According to him, the Subaltern historians have not made use of 'new statistical material and indigenous records' which could substantiate their claim of writing a new history. Their main contribution seems to be re-reading the official records and 'mounting an internal critique'. Thus, the only distinguishing mark which separates the Subaltern Studies from the

earlier and contemporary 'history from below' is 'a rhetorical device, the term 'subaltern' itself, and a populist idiom'. Bayly thinks that 'the greatest weakness of the Subaltern orientation' is that 'it tends to frustrate the writing of rounded history as effectively as did "elitism"'.

Sumit Sakar, who was earlier associated with the project, later on criticised it for moving towards postcolonialism. In his two essays, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies' and 'Orientalism Revisited', he argues that this shift may have been occasioned due to various reasons, but, intellectually, there is an 'attempt to have the best of both worlds : critiquing others for essentialism, teleology and related sins, while claiming a special immunity from doing the same oneself.' Moreover, such works in Indian history have not produced any spectacular results. In fact, 'the critique of colonial discourse, despite vast claims to total originality, quite often is no more than a restatement in new language of old nationalist positions – and fairly crude restatements, at that.' The later subaltern project became some sort of 'Third World nationalism, followed by postmodernistic valorisations of "fragments"'. In fact, the later *Subaltern Studies* 'comes close to positions of neo-traditionalist anti-modernism, 0notably advocated … by Ashish Nandy'. Even earlier, according to Sarkar, there was a tendency 'towards essentialising the categories of 'subaltern' and 'autonomy', in the sense of assigning to them more or less absolute, fixed, decontextualised meanings and qualities'. Sarkar argues that there are many problems with the histories produced by the subaltern writers and these arise due to their 'restrictive analytical frameworks, as Subaltern Studies swings from a rather simple emphasis on subaltern autonomy to an even more simplistic thesis of Western colonial cultural domination'. Such criticism of the *Subaltern Studies* is still continuing and the Subaltern historians have responded to it with their own justification of the project and counter-attacks on critics.

4.3.5. Response

The subalternists took some time before reacting to the critiques. In vol. IV, Dipesh Chakrabarty's reply to some of the critiques was published. But before that, in the Preface of the same volume, Ranajit Guha railed against the criticism by those whom he called 'the vendors of readymade answers' and academic 'old rods' who supposedly posed as the 'custodians of official truth entrenched within their liberal and leftist stockades'. He peremptorily dismissed the criticism by those scholars 'who have lived too long with well-rehearsed ideas and methodologies. Chakrabarty's reply was more detailed and well-argued. He questioned the intentions of some reviewers. For example, the charge of both Hegelianism and positivism against Guha seemed contradictory. It was because, he says, ' "Idealism", "positivism", etc. are not used in the essay as simple, descriptive terms; they are terms of condemnation as well'. In reply to the charge of ignoring the colonial contexts or any outside influences on the politics and consciousness of the subalterns, he said that 'this alleged "failure" is actually our conscious

refusal to subordinate the internal logic of a "consciousness" to the logic of so-called "objective" or 'material" conditions'. He further asserted that : 'The central aim of the Subaltern Studies project is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiative.' It was because, as shown by subaltern historians, 'in the course of nationalist struggles involving popular mobilization the masses often put their own interpretations on the aims of these movements and proceeded to act them out'. Besides Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash has been a most vocal defender of the project. He praises the project as part of the 'post-foundational' and 'post-Orientalist' historiography of India. He argues that the Subaltern historians have been able to rescue their writings from the clutches of elite historiography: 'the significance of their project lies in the writing of histories freed from the will of the colonial and nationalist elites. It is this project of resisting colonial and nationalist discursive hegemonies, through histories of the subaltern whose identity resides in difference, which makes the work of these scholars a significant intervention in third-world historiography'.

In another article, Gyan Prakash outlines the reason for a shift in the position as the *Subaltern Studies* project developed and he defends this change. He supports the later developments as it 'has turned into a sharp critique of the discipline of history'. Gyan Pandey, writing 'In Defense of the Fragment', argues against most of the writings on communal riots in India. He states that in these versions, 'The "fragments of Indian society – the smaller religious and caste communities, tribal sections, industrial workers, and activist women's groups, all of which might be said to represent "minority" cultures and practices – have been expected to fall in line with the "mainstream" … national culture'. It is because since the nineteenth century the state and the nation have been the 'central organizing principles of human society'. Similarly, Ranajit Guha, in 'The Small Voice of History', accused the modern historiographical tradition of being statist. He argues that, 'the common sense of history may be said generally to be guided by a sort of statism which thematizes and evaluates the past for it . This is a tradition which goes back to the beginnings of modern historical thinking in the Italian Renaissance.'

Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his 'Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalsim', criticises the Marxist historiography for being influenced by 'a certain form of hyper-rationalism characteristic of colonial modernity'. He further argues that now 'post-structuralist and deconstructionist philosophies are useful in developing approaches suited to studying subaltern histories under conditions of colonial modernities'. The fact that there was a shift in the position is also sometimes denied. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that from the very beginning, the *Subaltern Studies* was different and 'raised questions about history writing that made a radical departure from English Marxist historiographical tradition inescapable'. He says that right since its inception the *Subaltern Studie*s followed the postcolonial agenda and was not

in tune with the 'history from below' approach : 'With hindsight it could be said that there were broadly three areas in which Subaltern Studies differed from the "history from below" approach of Hobsbawm or Thompson…. Subaltern historiography necessarily entailed (a) a relative separation of the history of power from any universalist histories of capital, (b) a critique of the nation-form, and (c) an interrogation of the relationship between power and knowledge…. In these differences … lay the beginnings of a new way of theorizing the intellectual agenda for postcolonial histories.' Thus, in their responses to the critics, the writers associated with the Subaltern project sought to defend their works as part of the post-Marxist, post-colonial and poststructuralist streams of historical thinking.

4.3.6. Ranajit Guha and his Contribution

Ranajit Guha, perhaps the most influential figure in postcolonial and subaltern studies, is also the founding editor of Subaltern Studies. He taught history for many years at the University of Sussex, England and also served as Professor of History, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, and Canberra. Guha's works have deeply influenced not only the writing of sub-continental history but also historical investigations elsewhere, as well as cultural studies, literary theories, and social analyses across the world. Guha used subaltern historiography as a method for his study of peasant insurgency.

Some of the important works of Ranjit Guha are: *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of the Permanent Settlement, Elementary Aspects of Insurgency in Colonial India, Subaltern Studies (edited volumes 1 to 10),* etc.

Guha tried to write the history of subaltern from the subaltern's perspective. Then and then alone would it be possible to notice the kind of role that the majority of the population, the silent majority if you wish, played in directing the courts of history. Inevitably, the issue is who was dominating whom and who revolted against the domination and in what kind of manner came to be central importance in these studies.

4.3.7. Conclusion

In India the *Subaltern Studies* began in the early 1980s as a critique of the existing historiography which was accused by its initiators for ignoring the voice of the people. The writers associated with the project promised to offer a completely new kind of history in the field of Indian studies. Judging from the reactions from the scholars and students in the early years, it seemed to have fulfilled this promise to some extent. It soon received international recognition. In the early years, encompassing six volumes, edited by Ranajit Guha, the *Subaltern Studies* made efforts to explore the consciousness and actions of the oppressed groups in the Indian society. However, there was another trend discernible in some of the essays published in it. This trend was influenced by the increasingly important postmodernist and postcolonialist writings in the Western academic circles. In the later years, this trend came to dominate the works of the

writers associated with the *Subaltern Studies*. This trend was marked by a shift from the earlier emphasis on the subaltern themes. Sometimes the scepticism became so extreme that it questioned the need for the writing of history itself.

4.3.8. Summary

- *The Subaltern Studies is the title given to a series of volumes initially published under the editorship of Ranajit Guha, the prime mover and the ideologue of the project.*
- *The historians associated with the Subaltern Studies declared that they would set the position right by writing the history from the point of view of the common people.*
- *The Subaltern Studies was proclaimed by its adherents as a new school in the field of Indian history-writing. Some of the historians associated with it declared it to be a sharp break in the tradition of Indian historiography.*
- *The term 'subaltern' has a long history. It was initially applied to the serfs and peasants in England during the Middle Ages. Later, by 1700, it was used for the subordinate ranks in the military. It, however, gained wide currency in scholarly circles after the works of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader. Gramsci generally used the term in a broader connotation of 'class' to avoid the censorship of the prison authorities as he was in jail and his writings were scanned.*
- *The Subaltern historians made a radical departure in the use of the term from that of Gramsci. Even while accepting the subordinated nature of the subaltern groups, they argued the history was autonomous from that of the dominant classes.*
- *The Subaltern Studies asserted itself as a radically new form of history-writing in the context of Indian history. It was initially conceived as a series of three volumes to be edited by its eldest protagonist and the prime mover of the idea, Ranajit Guha.*
- *The Subaltern Studies became the new 'history from below' which did not try to fuse the people's history with official nationalism. It, therefore, attracted the attention of the scholars who had become disenchanted with the nationalistic claims as embodied in the post-colonial state.*
- *The Subaltern historians, disenchanted with the Congress nationalism and its embodiment in the Indian state, rejected the thesis that popular mobilisation was the result of either economic conditions or initiatives from the top. They claimed to have discovered a popular domain which was autonomous.*
- *Earlier historians were criticised not only for ignoring the popular initiative but, equally seriously, accepting the official characterisation of the rebel and the rebellion. Ranajit Guha, in his article 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency', launched a scathing attack on the existing peasant and tribal histories in India for considering the peasant rebellions as*

'purely spontaneous and unpremediated affairs' and for ignoring consciousness of the rebels themselves.

- *The second phase of the Subaltern Studies, therefore, not only moves away from the earlier emphasis on the exploration of the subaltern consciousness, it also questions the very ground of historical works as such, in line with the postmodernist thinking in the West.*
- *There has been wide-ranging criticism of the Subaltern Studies from many quarters. Right from the beginning the project has been critiqued by the Marxist, Nationalist and Cambridge School historians, besides those who were not affiliated to any position.*
- *Ranajit Guha, perhaps the most influential figure in postcolonial and subaltern studies, is also the founding editor of Subaltern Studies. Guha's works have deeply influenced not only the writing of sub-continental history but also historical investigations elsewhere, as well as cultural studies, literary theories, and social analyses across the world.*

4.3.9. Exercises

1. What do you understand by the term 'subaltern'? How did the *Subaltern Studies* begin in India?
2. Discuss the two phases in the development of the project of the *Subaltern Studies*.
3. Do you think the differences between the two phases are fundamental in nature? Answer with examples.
4. What are the basic points of criticism directed towards the *Subaltern Studies*? What is the response of the Subalternist historians?
5. Write an essay on the subaltern philosophy of Ranjit Guha.

5.3.10. Suggested readings

- *Subaltern Studies*, 11 volumes (1982-2000).
- David Ludden (ed.), *Reading Subaltern Studies : Critical History, Contested Meaning, and the Globalisation of South Asia* (Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001).
- Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London and New York, Verso, 2000).
- Vinay Lal, 'Walking with the Subalterns, Riding with the Academy : The Curious Ascendancy of Indian History', *Studies in History*, 17, 1 (2001).
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, '*Subaltern Studies* and Postcolonial Historiography', *Nepantla : Views from South*, 1:1, 2000.
- Gyan Prakash, 'Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism', *The American Historical Review*, December, 1994 (99, 5).

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