

MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Medieval Indian historiography is also referred to as the Muslim history of India as it started with the Muslim conquest of Hindustan. Before coming to India, the Muslim conquerors were in close contact with the Arabs and Persians, from whom they inherited the consciousness of history writing. Medieval history in India follows the methodology of Arab history which involves the technique of Isnad to check the veracity of every source.

The Arabs had contacts with the rich historic tradition of Greece and Rome. In India although the writers were influenced by medieval historiography in general, they had their own form of subject and spirit. Medieval history writings regarded Persian history as the model to follow in India.

One of the important aspects that led to the encouragement of history writing during the period was the honoured place given to the court poets during the period.

Medieval Indian history can broadly be divided into two phases that is:

1. Sultanate period
2. Mughal period

During both these phases historical works were produced mainly under the patronage of Kings although there were independent writings also. The Princes and members of Royal families were expected to have a good knowledge of history and this naturally led to the continuation of recording events year after year. Some of the principal features of mediaeval Indian history are:

- 1. The emphasis was given to eye witness accounts.*
- 2. There was a gradual shift from poetry writing to prose writing.*
- 3. Religious themes and propagation of Islam was given more emphasis by every Muslim historian.*

4. *Since the historians were patronized by kings there for the focus was mainly given to political history and aspects related to the glorification of the king with less emphasis on the social economic condition of the common people.*
5. *History was mainly narrative with less regard for research from a certain creativity or objectivity.*
6. *A large category of writing pertains to biography and autobiography.*
7. *With the expansion of the kingdom importance was given to the regional histories, particularly reports on provinces which would help in the administration.*
8. *Since the Islamic world followed the dating system links to 622AD as a starting year therefore problems in chronology could have been avoided in mediaeval Indian history writing.*
9. *In the Mughal period the art of history writing became more refined and they began to use elements of modern historical methodology.*
10. *The Mughals gave more attention to the social economic and cultural aspects of history which included music, drama, dance and architecture.*
11. *A significant development of Mughal period was the effort made to free history from religion. the sultanate period had focused much on the promotion of Islam but in the Mughal period it was of quite less emphasis. Therefore in the Mughal period to some extent history writing became more secular.*
12. *The new style of writing which was largely independent of court now encouraged impartial history writing.*
13. *The scope of history writing went from being nearly political to include various aspects of history of medieval India.*

There were certain works which may be classified as being distinct from the Sultanate and Mughal period in India:

i. Hagiographies: writings on the life of saints and became popular particularly with the Sufi saints. This type of work also gives information on the social economic and political life of the common people.

ii. Wasiat Nama: which was generally written at the time of a date of the ruler in which a certain advice was given by the ruler to the successor. for example Humayun was given advice to respect and be just and kind to all his subjects in the Wasiatnama of Babur.

iii. Didactic history:

-another class of book which aims at educating ruler on his duties and responsibilities and also on governing the kingdom.

iv. Most historical works written in cross belong to the category known as *Manaqib*.

The historical works written in prose during the mediaeval India includes official historical government records, local and provincial history, non official records, biography and collection of letters. Some of the well known works of this period are Abul Fazal's Akbarnama. With the arrival of Muslim objective, approach to history writing was attempted although it didn't attend the modern standard of historical writing yet many of the methodology in Isnad was a major contribution of the mediaeval period which was definitely much advance then ancient Indian history writing. It can be said that from historical literature of myths and legends in ancient Indian historiography, historical writing in India shifted to a more logical approach.