

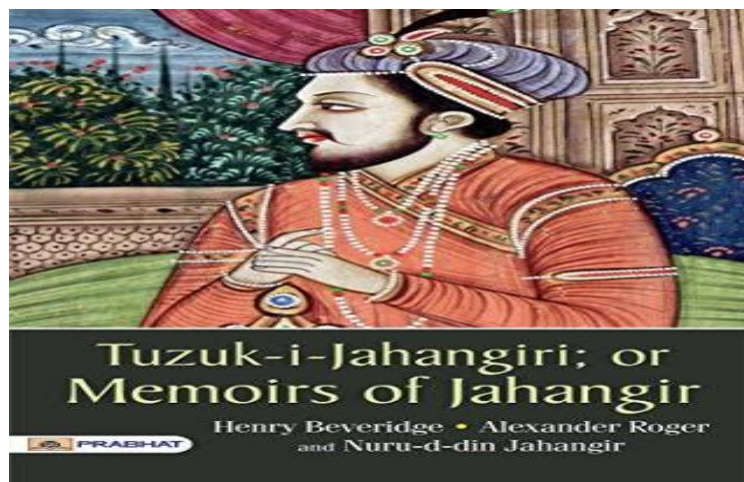
SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL INDIA

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Sources of Medieval Indian History.

INTRODUCTION:

The study of medieval history of India unfolds through its contemporary sources. As history progresses towards medieval era from the ancient past, the abundance of historical materials become evident. There are more in number and richer in content also. Their nature is varied. While many of the chronicles were written by authors who were patronised by the kings and Sultans, many authors and their texts did not have the biases of the court chronicler. Thus as a student of history, we are safely placed to construct a rational history of our past heritage especially medieval India through the multiplicity of contemporary sources.



TYPES OF SOURCES:

The sources of medieval India has been divided into various categories. Apart from the text books and other scholarly treaties written by authorities in the present time, the main bulk of sources comprise of those literary texts and archaeological findings which have survived and have been reclaimed from various places like private colleges films, libraries and excavation sites.

LITERARY SOURCES:

The literary sources have been further divided into religious and non religious sources. **Religious sources** were written by various authors comprising the various existing religions of the contemporary times. In medieval India, this essentially meant Islam,

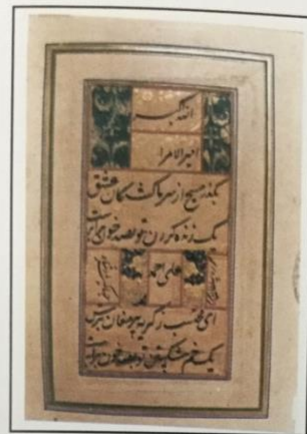
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Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity, though the first two was numerically more than the others. Further the same also consists of the very important Sufi and Bhakti poetries which resonated throughout the length and breath of the subcontinent through several saints and ascetics

The other variety of literary sources comprise of what is usually known as **secular sources**. These consist of biographies, literary works, foreign travellers accounts, royal orders and letters.

RELIGIOUS SOURCES:

These consist of treaties written by religious scholars for the propagation and dissemination of the tenets of religion. In many instances the emperors who were devout Muslims devoted their time in calligraphic copying of the holy Quran . A number of such evidences has survived to the present. Another important variety of sources pertaining to religion consists of the writings of several Sufi and Bhakti saints of medieval India. Saints such as Surdas, Tulsidas, Mirabai, Chaitanya, Vidyapati and Sufi texts like Zakhirat- ul- mulk and preachings of Baba Farid enshrined in the Guru Granth Saheb was extremely popular amongst masses at large.



Specimen of calligraphy by Prince Khurram; Emperor Jahagir, period 17th century A.D.(Album 3 folio 15b)



Specimen of calligraphy by Darashikoh son of Emperor ShahJahan period 17th century A.D.(Album 3 folio 18b)

SELECTED WORKS ON THE LIVES AND TEACHINGS OF SUFI SAINTS:

The lives of the Sufi saints was much revered during this period. A number of authors have devoted much attention to the mystic practices and daily lives of these mystic saints. Fawadul Fawayad by Amir Hasan Siziji, Khair- ul - Mazlis Hamid Kalandar, Akhbar - ul - Akhiyar by Abdul Haq Dehalvi and Gulzaar -i - Awwar by Mohd Ghausi throws adequate light on the life and teachings of the many Sufi saints of the medieval period.

SELECTED SECULAR LITERARY SOURCES:

Another significant number of literary sources comprises of literary work, biographical accounts, Foreign travellers accounts, royal orders and letters. Some of the famous secular literary sources, their dates and authors are listed below.

- Chachnama or Fatehnama is an account which throws light to the Arab invasion of Sindh.
- Rajtarangini was written by Kalhana. It is an account of the history of Kashmir.
- Kitab- ul - Hind was authored by Alberuni.
- Tabkaat -I- Nasiri was penned by Minhaz - us - Shiraz throws light on the newly built Turkish empire.
- Tarikh- i- Firozshahi and other books written by Ziyauddin Barni deals with the Khilji and Tughlaq dynasties.
- Padmavat by Malik Mohd Jayasi deals with the contacts of Aladdin Khilji and Rana of Chittor, a powerful Rajput kingdom of Rajasthan.
- Tarikh- us- Sindh was the book of Mir Mohd Masoom.
- Kamilut- Tasarikh by Sheikh Abul Hasan deals with Mohd Ghori's India conquests.
- Taz- ul- Masir of Hasan Nizami elaborates the life and times of Qutubuddin Aibak.
- Tuzuk - i- Babari is an autobiography written by Babur himself.
- Humayunama wasn't written by Humayun's sister Gulbadan Begam. It tells us about his problems and campaigns.
- Tarikh- I Rashidi also gives accounts of Humayun reign.
- Akbarnama and Ain - i- Akbari are famous historical accounts of Emperor Akbar and written by famous author Abul Fazal.
- Tabkat -i - Akbari by Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad deals with Akbar era.
- Muntakhab-ut- Tawarikh by Badayuni is a great text dealing with Akbar the great.
- Tuzuk -i - Jahangiri is an autobiographical account of Jahangir, the great Mughal emperor.
- Tarikh - i - Shershahi by Abbas Khan Sherwani and other texts like Tarikh - i - Shahi by Ahmad Yadgar, Tawarikh-i-Daulat- i - Shershahi by Hasan Ali and Tarikh - i - Farishta written by Farishta throw excellently light on the reign of Sher Shah.

- Padshahnama by Abdul Hamid Lahori and Badshahnama by Mirza Amin Kazwini, Shahjahanama by Inayat Khan, Amal- i - Salih by Mohd Salih are all treaties of the Shahjahan era.
- Muntakhab- ul - Bubav by Khafi Khan and Mirat - i - Alam by Bakhtaran Khan, Tarikh - i Iradat Khan by Iradat Khan, Almgirnama by Mohd Kazim, Zeenat - ul - Tawarikh by Azizullah are all books written by contemporary scholars during the rule of Aurangzeb Alamgir, the last powerful monarch of the Mughal dynasty.
- Zainul Akhbar by Abu Sayeed, Taz - ul - Masir by Hasan Nizami, Tabkat - I - Nasiri by Minhaz, Mulfuzat - i - Timuri, an autobiographical account by Amir Taimur and many other such texts illuminate medieval Indian history. However, one author deserves special attention amongst many for his literary contributions to the traditions of historical writing.

AMIR KHUSRO WRITINGS:

Most of Khusro's writings span the period between 1289C and 1325C. His books Kiran - us - Saden (1289C) describes the meeting Bughra Khan, Mifata - ul - Futuh (1291C) relates to the military campaigns of Jalaluddin Kilji, Malik Chajju revolt and attack on Ranthambhore, Khazain - ul - Futuh is an account of the war campaigns and other administrative accounts of Sultan Allauddin Khilji, and Nuh Sipihar, Tughluqnama are some other important treaties written by Khusro.

Amir Khusro's family was in good relationship with a number of kings such as Kaikubad, Jaluddin Khilji, Alauddin Khilji, Mubarakshah, and Gayasuddin Tughlaq.

REGIONAL ACCOUNTS:

It is also important to note the regional accounts of the medieval Period. A number of such texts are available which throw adequate light on the regional histories. Tarik - i - Bahadur Shahi and Tarikh - i - Tahiri shed light on Sindh, Riyaz - us - Salatin on Bengal, Tarikh - i - Rashidi and Tarikh - i - Kashmir are historical texts on the history of Kashmir. Many other texts are available which throw light on the histories of Gujrat, Gulbarga, Bidar, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur.

NON MUSLIM LITERARY TEXTS:

Non Muslim literary texts are fewer in number but are equally important as sources. Prithviraj Raso by Chandbardai was considered to be an authentic source till recent times. But recent researchers have proved otherwise. Prithviraj - Vijay - Kavya and Hammir Mahakavya and the work of Bengali poet Chandrashekhar namely Surjan - Charit - Kavya give a better and more reliable picture of the Chauhan era. Jain texts such as Puratan Prabandh Sangrah and Kavya Sangrah are other non Muslim texts, important for medieval history.

ADMINISTRATIVE TREATIES:

There are a number of texts which illuminate the administrative history of the medieval period of India. Ahkamus Sultania and Siyasatnama by Al - Mawardi discuss the administrative system of the Abbasid and Seljuk King Malik Shah prime minister Nizam - ul - Mulk talks about administration and Political system. Adabul Hab, Fatwa - i - Jahandari, Fikahe- fi - Rojshahi and Fatwa - i - Alamgiri are important texts for medieval period.

MEDIEVAL LITERARY WORKS:

A number of books, texts and poetic compositions have been found which does not shed light on the historical events of the medieval India but are useful because they provide insight into the society and culture of the medieval period. Puranic and literary texts comprise this category. Jawami- ul - Hikayat by Mohd Afi Is a collection of stories from Illutmish time. Vidyapati Thakur's Purush Pariksha and Malik Mohd Jayasi's Padmavat are stories which shed light on the historical narratives of the times.

Other works are Tuhfatuharigar on Balban, Wast- ul - Hayat and Gurrat - ul - Kamal on life of Nizamuddin Aulia.

VERNACULAR LITERARY WORKS:

The importance of vernacular writings cannot be undermined. In this genre Bengal writings of poet Mukundram and Chandidas are notable. Lalla of Kashmir, Guru Nanak of Punjab, Kabir of Uttar Pradesh, Vidyapati Thakur of Bihar and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu of Bengal are notable for their writings.

EXPERIMENTAL WRITINGS:

Kitab - i - Nimatkhana- i - Nasirshahi deals with cuisines and perfumes of the medieval era. Hidayatullah- ur - Rami discusses the use of bow and arrow. Fik-i- Firozshahi is another text of experimental literature.

FOREIGN TRAVELLERS ACCOUNTS:

A very Important source of medieval history are the bulk of travellers coming from outside India. They form the corpus of literature which provides alternative view point to look at medieval history of India.

Al- Biruni's book Kitab - ul - Hind talks about 11th century social life, geography and developments in the field of Arithmetic. Marco Polo was a Chinese traveller who visited India in the 13th century. He has discussed south India in detail. Moroccan traveler Ibn - i - Batuta (1333C) came to India during the reign of Mohd Bin Tughlaq. He was the Qazi of Delhi for eight years. After travelling extensively to many parts of the world he returned to his country and wrote a book called Kitab - ul - Rihala, which is fine treatise for the medieval period of India. 15 th century witnessed a Chinese naval contingent and also traveller from Italy named Nocolo Conti who has given good details of the Vijaynagar empire. Persian diplomat Abdul Rajak has also discussed Vijaynagar empire in his works.

A number of other writers have given much valuable insight into the history of medieval India.

Apart from the literary evidences, medieval history is also full of archaeological evidences which are reliable in nature.

ADMINISTRATIVE CORRESPONDENCE:

Historical evidences also consists of the various administrative correspondences that transpire between the ruler and their officials. Personal letters are also Important for the understanding of medieval history of India. Mahmud Gawan collection of correspondences of waizad 1st and Mahmud 2nd tells us a lot about Indian history.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES:

This variety of historical sources relies on the scientific evidences based on technological innovations and interventions. Coins, inscriptions, edicts and architectural evidences form the corpus of such sources. We shall discuss in detail some of these evidences. The Epigraphica Indica and Epigraphica Karnatika shed valuable light on history. Many books like the Chronicles of the Pathan Kings by Edward Thomas is a numismatical survey of the medieval times.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude the presentation, I would say that evidences for history writing of medieval India is numerous and varied. Lot of biases are also evident but a careful historian weeds the mass of historical evidences to find the actual happenings.