

**Construction of Past and Memory of the Present: Identity, Power and
Politics in Medieval India, circa 1200-1500 AD**

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
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By

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I, **Mir Kamruzzaman Chowdhary**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **“Construction of Past and Memory of the Present: Identity, Power and Politics in Medieval India, circa 1200-1500 AD”** submitted by me under the supervision of **Prof. Sanjay Subodh**, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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A part of this thesis has been:

A. Published in the following Publications:

1. Mir Kamruzzaman Chowdhary, “Texts, Ideas and Conquests: A Historiographical Reading of the *Khaza'in al-Futuh*,” in *Journal of Indian History and Culture*, Vol. 30 (December, 2022), pp. 121-153.
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In the present dissertation, an attempt has been made to understand the authorial intentions in attributing meaning to occurrences, predominantly the happenings of medieval Indian pasts. The way in which modern authors perceived medieval history with their personal and ideological inclinations created certain perceptions about the Sultanate of Delhi in particular. Three stereotypes dominate most of what has been written about the early years of the Delhi Sultanate by a section of historians. The first stereotype portrays that a fanatical Islamic force enthused with the zeal of *ghaza* had conquered India to establish Islamic rule in the thirteenth century. The second image equally preposterous is that “Muslims” in India could never assimilate themselves within the greater “Indian-ness” and thus remained “outsiders” in spite of their presence in the subcontinent for over six centuries. The third perception is about the ruling ideas and ideologies of the Delhi Sultanate, which predominantly revolves around three ideas of kingship – the “Islamic”, the “Turkish”, and the “Persianate”. Thus, by re-examining the contemporary sources of that age, both Persian and Indic, the dissertation argues that authorial intentions and political motives played a crucial role in creating perceptions about a particular rule or its ruler. However, it was not a modern phenomenon alone; relatively every age and civilization did play a role in amplifying or constructing specific images of their chosen occurrences or characters.

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Introduction

Historiography is a powerful appliance for portraying the past in the present – the change and the continuity both find their places in the discourses.¹ However, in the process, the historian works as a link between the past and present, and their self-assertions and coercion deeply impact the narratives. By remembering and interpreting, the historian gives meaning to facts and provides it to the present.² Hence, it is not the historical records of past occurrences, but the construction of the past and potential implications attributed to the past happenings by historians reach the present. Thus, the role of the historian is very crucial while past narratives have been interpreted. In some instances, historians get motivated by a particular ideological position that aspires to restore some of the lost dreams of glory and hence perceive history with motives to justify their misplaced authorial intentions. Some of the superfluous and unpleasant historical change develops through these kinds of narratives.

Medieval Indian history is not immune to this. Many events and aspects of medieval Indian history witnessed twists and turns in the writings of the generations of historians during the successive presents. The past acts as a kind of repository of dreams and desires of the present, giving impetus to certain ideological aspects. History can put forward a soothing picture of what “once was” but is no longer available, and it also provides the scope for the historian to revisit the past, challenge the existing narrative, and present a different vision of the unpleasant present. Thus, historiography performs as an influential medium for the expression of ideological assertion. Because, through historical writings, one can attend to certain crucial historical aspects of pasts to justify their ideological position under the guise of a mere accounting of “what was”. Thus, historical writings are used as a vehicle for assimilating legitimacies and authority for an ideology.

¹ Jamal Malik, “Constructions of the Past in and about India: From *Jahiliyya* to the Cradle of Civilization. Pre-colonial Perceptions of India,” in Ute Schuren, Daniel Marc Segesser, and Thomas Spath (eds.), *Globalized Antiquity Uses and Perceptions of the Past in South Asia, Mesoamerica, and Europe*, Reimer Dietrich, Berlin, 2015, p. 52

² Jorn Rusen, “Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography,” in *History and Theory* Vol. 35, No. 4 (1996), p. 8

This dissertation attempts to explore certain aspects of medieval Indian history (c.1000 to c.1500), which have gone through different ideological paths and have left a profound impact on the popular imagination of the present. The role of identity in sultanate political culture, the ideas and ideologies on which the monarchies of Delhi sultanate were established, and the way in which these aspects have been represented in the writing of authors in the successive presents are some of the themes this dissertation attempts to address. The dissertation intends to bring forward “what actually was” by segregating it from that of “what has been portrayed” in the writings of successive generations of historians. Construction of the past – capable of being ascertained or found out in historical narratives needs to be re-investigated.

In recent years and decades, the medieval past of India witnessed a boom in popular interest. This development is playing a significant role in determining the environment in the political sphere as well as shaping the popular imagination regarding medieval history. There is a concerning rise in the popular imagination regarding the relationship between the modern and medieval past of India from which it sprang. Demand is growing in a section of Indian society for a corrected version of India’s history in general, but medieval in particular. This brings the relevance of the study of medieval India to the contemporary political and social discourse, which in turn requires scholarly attention to present it to the reader in its “real” form. Hence, this dissertation intends to demonstrate the need for expertise in the field of medieval Indian history to contemporary society by addressing certain lingering stereotypes that impact popular imagination.

There is a constant threat that too much popular enthusiasm for medieval Indian history may obscure the distinction between the “real” and the “fantasy” about the medieval past. This impending problem gets compounded with the presence of the internet, which, on the one hand, impressively enabled exceptional democratisation of access to knowledge,³ on the other hand, has removed much of the conventional character of academic checks like the peer review process, where the experts of the field of knowledge would make sure that “fantasies” are kept out of the historical narratives. The removal of the traditional “gatekeeper” to knowledge has led to a situation where the line

³ Chris Jones, et al (eds.), *Making the Medieval Relevant: How Medieval Studies Contribute to Improving Our Understanding of the Present*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2020, p. 3

between “opinions” and “facts” are becoming increasingly blurred. It should be remembered that professional historians’ conclusions are based on informed analysis and are subject to rigorous peer reviews. Therefore, a proper historical investigation is needed to present the reader with the “actual” past, differentiating it from the “stereotypes or fantasies” that this dissertation makes an object of its study.

However, this dissertation confined its scope in terms of representation of medieval Indian pasts in the successive present writings from the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, as the study wishes to limit its assertion within the scholarly discourses rather than going into the current political narratives. The dissertation explores exclusively the role of academics from various ideological backgrounds in the creation of public perceptions regarding the medieval Indian past, which are gaining space in the current socio-political discourses. For instance, it is believed that with the establishment of the Delhi sultanate, the sultans started to impose Islam over the Indian population and ran a monarchy based on Islamic ideas and ideologies. Prior to that, the early invasions carried out by various central Asian forces were enthused with the concept of *jihad*, *ghaza*, and *ghazi*.

The Delhi sultanate emerged as one of the dominant dynasties in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries “Islamicate world”.⁴ Halagu Khan (c. 1217-65), the grandson of Chingiz Khan, executed the Abbasid Caliph Mu’stasim Billah (r. 1242-58) and virtually brought the end of the Caliphate and its legitimacy over the “Islamicate world”.⁵ Thus, the Mongols positioned themselves as the dominant force in the Central and Middle Eastern Asian region. This development elevated the position of two monarchies – the Delhi Sultanate in Hindustan and the Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo among the Islamicate world.⁶ Therefore, in the later stage, the colonialists focused a lot on the Delhi Sultanate in their efforts to re-write the history of India. Subsequently, the other scholars

⁴ Islamicate would refer not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims. Massimo Campanini, “Heidegger in the Islamicate World,” in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (2019), pp. 735-740.

⁵ Blain H. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2012, pp. 1-2

⁶ Amalia Levanoni, “The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1994), pp. 373–92; Auer, *Symbols of Authority*, p. 2

regurgitated a lot of colonial-era ideas. Though, of late, the sultanate period has been overshadowed by the mighty Mughals in scholarly as well as political discourses, a considerable stereotypical narrative about Delhi sultans revolves around public imagination, which this dissertation attempts to examine.

However, the dissertation does not give a chronological history of the Delhi Sultanate rather; it focuses on the discontinuous threats of the past that have been remembered in the present (scholarly writings from c.1850 – c.1930). The study kept its prime focus on the construction of the medieval past of India in memory of the present by various ideologically driven academics. Then, the investigation goes back to the contemporary medieval sources to understand the construction and reconstruction to differentiate the “fantasy” from the “facts”. Thus, this dissertation primarily investigates the authorial intentions from the past to the successive presents in creating perceptions or stereotypes about the Sultanate ruling ideas and ideologies.

Past always finds its place in the narrative of the present, fairly in the successive presents. Pierre Nora believes that human memory reconstructs past narratives based on historical traces, which are just simulations of the past that formed through various historical and legendary tales.⁷ He further argues that the present mode of historical perception derives from an imaginative form of consciousness based more on myths than facts.⁸ On the other hand, Hayden White opined that understanding of the past is always constructed and conditioned by the present.⁹ However, when the representations of the past are adjusted to make sense in the present, they can be deployed for contemporary objectives. Gabrielle M. Spiegel opined, “The prescriptive authority of the past made it a privileged locus for working through the ideological implications of social changes in the present and the repository of contemporary concerns and desires. As a locus of value, a revised past held out the promise of a perfectible present for contemporaries.”¹⁰ For instance, the British administrator cum historian Elphinstone (1841) has portrayed the

⁷ Lawrence D. Kritzman, “Foreword” in Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory, Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, Eng. trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p. xii

⁸ Ibid., p. xii

⁹ Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozieky (eds.), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1978, pp. 41-62.

¹⁰ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth Century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 5.

eighth-century conquest of Arab commander Muhammad bin Qasim over King Dahir of Sindh as a victory achieved due to *luck*, not because of Qasim's military tactics or superior army. He wrote:

“Qasim found himself opposed to the Raja [Dahir] in person, who advanced to defend his capital at the head of an army of 50,000 men; and being impressed with the danger of his situation, from the disproportionate of numbers, and the impossibility of retreat in case of failure, he availed himself of the advantage of the ground, and awaited the attack of the Hindus in a strong position which he had chosen. His prudence was seconded by a *piece of good fortune* (italics are my emphasis). A ball of fire thrown by his soldier struck King Dahir's elephant, which panicked and fled from the battlefield. Dahir's troops thinking that their king had given up the battle and fell into disarray.”¹¹

Stanley Lane-Poole (1903) provided a similar kind of description for the same incident.¹² By describing the fourth invasion of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna to northern parts of India in 1008 against Anang Pal [Anandapall], Elphinstone again emphasised on *fortune* being the decisive factor of his victory.¹³ By doing so, he proposed the conjecture that the “Hindu” rulers had every chance of victory, but similar misfortunes often led to their defeats at the hands of the “Muslims”. If we see another narration of the same occurrence, the phenomenon becomes explicit. R.C. Majumdar has noted the event as follows:

“Dahir's brother Mokah joined Qasim and supported him in the battle against his own brother. Yet, in the battle, Dahir fought with valour and the Muslim army was nearly routed. But, in a turn of events, Dahir was hit by an arrow in his heart while he was fighting by sitting on an elephant. His death resulted in the complete defeat of his army.”¹⁴

¹¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India: The Hindu and Muslim Periods*, John Murray, London, 1889, pp. 308-309

¹² Stanley Lane-Poole, *Medieval India under the Mohammedan Rule, 712-1764*, G.P. Putman's Sons, New York, 1903, p. 9

¹³ Elphinstone, *The History of India*, pp. 328-329

¹⁴ R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of People in India, Vol. 3: The Classic Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970 (original, 1954), p. 171.

Here, Majumdar gave less emphasis on the aspect of *luck*, but he noted that the Muslim army was being routed by Dahir's force until he was hit by an arrow. The noteworthy element he brought here is betrayal and deception by his brother Mokah for his defeat. But, if we go through *Chachnama*, the only book which illustrates these events explicitly elucidates that Mokah was not Dahir's brother.¹⁵ He was the Prince of Jortah, a principality which had its adherence to Dahir's suzerainty.¹⁶ However, it is true that Mokah had accepted the offer from Qasim, and to show his allegiance, he refrained from helping Dahir in return for maintaining his position in Jortah. On the other hand, King Dahir's brother was Dahirsiah (also known as Dahirsena), who died even before Qasim arrived in Sindh.¹⁷

Now the question arises, why would these historians misinterpret or misuse the historical narrative? The simplest answer would be that the successive presents provide shape to historical narratives according to their own requirements. The British were facing a constant threat from the aggression of Russia, France and Afghanistan throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In such a situation, it became necessary for them to have control over the north western frontier regions, including Sindh, which was at that time ruled by the Baluchi Talpur Mirs. Apart from this, in 1842, Charles Napier was appointed as the Major of the British army within the Bombay Presidency. Being a deeply religious man, Napier considered annexation of Sindh from the "despotic Muslim" rulers as his Christian duty.¹⁸ He stated that taking over Sindh would replace "war and barbarism with civilisation and peace", so "I see no wrong regulating a set of tyrants who are themselves invaders and over the years nearly destroyed the country" and "God has designed me for this instrument."¹⁹ Subsequently,

¹⁵ However, it should be remembered that the *Chachnama* was composed almost five hundred years after Muhammad bin Qasim lived. It is a product of the early thirteenth century. The nearest contemporary of Qasim's time was Al Baladhuri, who composed the book *Futuh-al-Buldan* and ironically it refers to Qasim only with one verse.

¹⁶ Anonymous, *The Chachnamah: An Ancient History of Sind*, Eng. trans. by Mirza Kalichbeg Freudenberg, Commissioner's Press, Karachi, 1900, pp. 105-106

¹⁷ Anonymous, *The Chachnamah*, pp. 43, 53; Manan Ahmed Asif, "A Demon with Ruby Eyes," in *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2013), p. 19.

¹⁸ William F.P. Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier*, Vol. 2, John Murray, London, 1857, p. 275; Manan Ahmed, *The Many Histories of Muhammad b. Qasim: Narrating the Muslim Conquest of Sindh*, PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, Illinois, 2008, p. 181

¹⁹ Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier*, p. 275

Napier annexed Sindh in February 1843 to the Company and placed it under the administration of the Bombay Presidency.

Similarly, Lord Ellenborough, who served as the governor-general of India between 1842 and 1844, felt a strong urge to make clear the Muslim despotism over the subjugated Hindu subjects of Sindh and Gujarat. By bringing back “the gates of the temple of Somanatha” from Afghanistan, Ellenborough had proclaimed that “the insult of 800 years is at last avenged.” He further declared, “the gates of the temple of Somanatha, so long the memorial of your humiliation, are become the proudest record of your national glory.”²⁰

Both Napier and Ellenborough explicitly presented the previous “Muslim” rulers as tyrants and asked for a history that would unambiguously demonstrate the tyrannical nature of the Muslim regimes of medieval India. Thus, the history of Muhammad bin Qasim became the origin source of communal strife and warfare between Hindus and Muslims. Elphinstone, the former governor of Bombay (1819-1827), in his *The History of India* (1841), traced the origin of Muslim rule in India from Muhammad bin Qasim. He wrote, “Finally after displaying much heroism, King Dahir was killed. His capital was besieged, but Dahir’s wife displaying courage similar to her husband, continued to defend the city. In the end, food supplies ran out, and by sensing an unavoidable defeat, Dahir’s wife, along with the ladies in the city, decided to die rather than to submit to the enemy. They lay on the pyre and, lit it with fire, and perished. After this immolation, the men went out and fought courageously till their death at the hands of the Muslims.”²¹

Elphinstone then goes on to note that, among the numerous captive females in Sindh were two daughters of Raja Dahir. Qasim decided to send those daughters to the Caliph as a gift. Accordingly, these daughters were dispatched to the harem of the Caliph. However, when the eldest one was brought in front of the Caliph, the girl busted into a cry and informed the Caliph that she was now not worthy of his notice as Muhammad Qasim had already dishonoured her before sending her to Baghdad. The Caliph, who was eagerly waiting for the girls after hearing the reports of their beauty, got enraged by the

²⁰ *The Annual Register, or a View of the History and Politics of the Year 1842*, J.G.F. & J. Rivington, London, 1843, p. 257

²¹ Elphinstone, *The History of India*, pp. 308-309

news and took it as an insult to him by Qasim. Subsequently, he called back Qasim from Sindh and was subsequently executed.²²

Through these descriptions, the author intends to highlight the courage and masculine spirit of the “Hindu” women in general and the widow of King Dahir in particular, who showed tremendous courage during the course of the war and marshalled the defence of the city till her death against the “brutal forces of Islam”. Heroic sacrifices of their men were also recorded, and finally, the “intelligence” of the Hindu woman who could deceive the powerful Caliph and take revenge for her father’s death was portrayed. By presenting such characteristics, Elphinstone seems wanted to keep the narrative alive that the Muslims were “foreigners” in India who were responsible for all kinds of atrocities inflicted upon “Hindus”. This phenomenon became explicit when the colonialists tried to cast the Baluchi Talpur Mirs as the “foreign” invaders in the region of Sindh, whereas they projected themselves as the saviour and liberator of the Hindus in India. However, the problematic aspect here is that Elphinstone added an event to a historical narrative with no factual basis. Even R.C. Majumdar of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan series has rejected the description by saying that there is “no basis for this story” of Dahir’s daughters being sent to the Caliph.²³ Moreover, over the years, Elphinstone’s *The History of India* became a key text for generations of historians, particularly nationalist historians of the twentieth century.

In another instance, James M’Murdo, a Captain in the Bombay establishment army, wrote an account of Sindh in 1834. He provided a harsh portrait of each period of Muslim rule in Sindh by tracing back to Muhammad bin Qasim and then returning to the contemporary rule of Talpur Mirs. He noted that Muslim rule was the beginning of the Dark Age for the Hindu subjects. He stated, “Muslims were certainly the most bigoted, self-sufficient and ignorant people on record.”²⁴ With the Muslim rule, Hindus were reduced to the vilest slavery, and no Hindu dared to attempt to rescue himself or his

²² Ibid., pp. 311-312

²³ R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. 3, p. 172

²⁴ James M’Murdo, “An Account of the Country of Sindh ; with Remarks on the State of Society, the Government, Manners, and Customs of the People,” in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1834), p. 244

fellow countrymen from this atrocious state of life.²⁵ Coming to the Talpur Mirs, he observed, “Mirs had no zeal greater than propagating the faith [Islam].”²⁶ He further described the Sindh province as a prosperous commercial hub before Muslim rule but was destroyed and dismembered with the Muslim annexation – a rule of barbarism.²⁷ Richard F. Burton (1821-1890), a Regimental Interpreter posted in Sindh, also observed a similar kind of observation regarding the Muslim rulers’ approach towards the Hindu subjects and how the Muslim rulers had decimated the Hindus. He wrote in 1851, “Sindh was a paradise before the Muslim occupation.”²⁸

Thus, it can be seen that M’Murdo and Richard Burton painted the Muslim rule with all possible negativity and endowed with a reason that the British should free the Hindus from the atrocious rule of Muslim rulers. However, the interesting fact that M’Murdo pointed out was that the Talpur Mirs had “hoarded gold and jewels, which are deposited treasuries of the different members of the government, and, consequently, as these are looked on as private hordes, the money is totally withdrawn from circulation.”²⁹ Hence, it seems that to occupy the strategically and also financially important Sindh, the British were preparing grounds to annex it. In the process, they did not bother to create division between Hindus and Muslims.

By taking a cue from M’Murdo, Thomas Postans wrote a book namely *Personal Observations on Sindh*.³⁰ In the book, though, he intends to explore the culture and customs of the inhabitants of Sindh and their relationship with the British government; on the contrary, he traced back to the Muslim rule in Sindh to Muhammad bin Qasim and primarily focused on ensuing Muslim barbarism upon the Hindu subjects. He wrote, “Broken in spirit, and borne down by oppressions, social, religious, and political, the descendants of the once powerful lords of Sindh have never dared the attempt of shaking

²⁵ Ibid., p. 251

²⁶ Ibid., p. 244

²⁷ Ibid., p. 237

²⁸ Richard F. Burton, *Scinde; or the Unhappy Valley*, Vol. 1, Richard Bentley, London, 1851, pp. 125-34

²⁹ James M’Murdo, “An Account of the Country of Sindh”, p. 241

³⁰ Thomas Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh; The Manners and Customs of Its Inhabitants; and Its Productive Capabilities: with a Sketch of Its History, a Narrative of Recent Events, and An Account of the Connection of the British Government with that Country to the Present Period*, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1843, p. v

off the yoke of the oppressor.”³¹ He further stated, “In India, we have seen the dormant spirit of an injured people rousing itself to reattribute vengeance, flinging off the yoke of Muslim rule.”³²

From the discussion mentioned above, it can be observed that in the early nineteenth century, the company servants cum British historians had brought a narrative of Muslims being oppressive and bigoted; and the Hindus being subjugated and suppressed over the centuries by the Muslims. This approach seems was quite familiar to each other of these historians, if not a coordinated effort. The intention of the colonial officials cum historians become further unambiguous when Elliot and Dowson, in their *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, have made it clear by stating that “our work is to give voice to a hitherto silenced population – the native Hindus of India – who can finally provide the thoughts, emotions, and raptures which a long-oppressed race might be supposed to give vent to when freed from the tyranny of its former masters.”³³

Thus, these early colonialist historians portrayed that faith in Islam was the reason and a trait for the “Muslim” conquests in India. For instance, Elphinstone opined that Muslims were unwaveringly motivated to obliterate the independence of all of India [?] and exterminate the Hindu religion.³⁴ During the warfare against Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who was a great adherent of Islam and a bitter opponent of worship of idols,³⁵ King Anandapal invited all other major north Indian monarchies (kings of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kanauj, Delhi) to join him to save the Hindu *jati*.³⁶ Thus, according to Elphinstone, the invasion of Sultan Mahmud was to impose Islam over the Hindus of India, and the resistance put forward by Anandapal and others was to defend their *dharma* rather than their monarchies. Thus, these wars were given a religious colour by the colonial authors of medieval Indian history.

³¹ Ibid., p. 158

³² Ibid., p. 159

³³ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 1, Trubner and Co., London, 1867, p. xxii

³⁴ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India*, Vol. 1, John Murray, London, 1843, pp. 409, 426

³⁵ Elphinstone, *The History of India: The Hindu and Muslim Periods*, pp. 320-321

³⁶ Partha Chatterjee, “Claims on the Past: The Genealogy of Modern Historiography in Bengal,” in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies, Vol. 8: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p. 37

However, the question that instantly comes to mind is whether there was a concept of an “all of India” as a political entity during the eleventh century. Was Anandapal’s resistance against Mahmud for the *dharma* and *jati*, or was it a fight to protect his monarchy against external aggression (a common phenomenon in the pre-modern political sphere)? Moreover, through these narratives, an impression regarding medieval India has been created that there was constant rivalry between the “Muslim” rulers and their “Hindu” counterparts. The Muslims wanted to establish a religion in which adherence lies with foreign soil; thus, they themselves were the promoters of foreign culture. Thus, the perspective has been created that Muslims remained a “foreign” entity throughout their 800 years of rule in India, who were culturally different from the “native” Hindus of India, whom they subjugated and tortured over the years. Colonial authors like W.W. Hunter,³⁷ F.W. Thomas,³⁸ Murray Titus,³⁹ and so on particularly propagated the idea that the Muslims were “outsiders” during the early stage of modern history writings of India. Certain historians from the later stage reiterated this colonial era idea and pushed forward the narrative to the successive presents. K.M. Panikkar wrote:

“Before the thirteenth century the Hindu society was divided horizontally, and neither Buddhism nor Jainism affected this division. With the arrival of Islam, on the other hand, spilt Indian society into two sections top to bottom and what now come to be known in the phraseology of today as two separate nations, came into being from the beginning. Two parallel societies were established on the same soil. At all stages they were different and hardly any social communication or inter- mingling of life existed between them.”⁴⁰

R.C. Majumdar and Aziz Ahmad also supported this narrative of Panikkar.⁴¹ Aziz emphasised on the conflicting nature of the two cultures and the religious tension

³⁷ W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, Trubner and Company, London, 1876

³⁸ F.W. Thomas, *The Mutual Influence of Mahommadans and Hindus in Law, Morals and Religion during the period of Mahommadan Ascendancy*, Deighton, Bell and Co., Cambridge, 1892.

³⁹ Murray T. Titus, *Indian Islam: A Religious History of Islam in India*, Oxford University Press, London, 1930.

⁴⁰ K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958, p. 131

⁴¹ R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 6, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960; Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964.

between them over the centuries.⁴² According to Aziz Ahmed, “Muslim” impact and rule in India generated two literary growths; one set of writings can be termed as the Muslim epic of conquest, and another can be termed as the Hindu epic of resistance and of psychological rejection.⁴³ He further argued that the two literary growths evolved in two different cultures – the Persian and Hindi. Both cultures not only streamed out from two mutually exclusive religious, social and historical outlooks but also each of these literary trends confronted the other in an aggressive hostility.⁴⁴

Thus, the period from c. 1200- c.1800 has been presented to the reader as a period where the Muslims invaded with the zeal of Islam and established monarchies in Hindustan, which were basically an integral part of the general evolution of the Muslim world, politically speaking an extended limb of the Arab empires.⁴⁵ Though they lived in India, they remained aloof culturally and thus outside the ambit of “Indian-ness”, hence remaining an “outsider”. Jadunath Sarkar opined that “the Muslim community in India as a whole ‘an intellectual exotic’ who felt that he was in India but not of it.”⁴⁶ By discussing the nature of the monarchies of Delhi Sultanate, it has been presented that the rule was basically pietistic.⁴⁷ In contrast, K.A. Nizami believes there was a total separation between the governance and religious institution in the sultanate monarchies. The religious and political wings of the Sultanate were separated, and the state had no legal sanction in Islamic law (*shari’a*).⁴⁸ Nizami noted, “All Muslim governments from the time of Umayyad have been secular organisations, so as the Delhi sultanate had no sanctions in *shari’a*; nay it was a non-legal institution.”⁴⁹ Mohammad Habib also expressed a similar view in his introduction to *The Political Theory of the Delhi*

⁴² Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, p. 73

⁴³ Aziz Ahmed, “Epic and Counter Epic in Medieval India” in *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Sep-Dec, 1963) p. 470

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 470

⁴⁵ B.N. Puri, *History of Indian Administration*, Vol. 2: *Medieval Period*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1968, p. 535.

⁴⁶ Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. 5, M.C. Sarkar and Sons Ltd., Calcutta, 1952, p. 399

⁴⁷ According to Aziz Ahmad the Tughlaq revolution (1320), which overthrew the apostate usurper Khusraw Khan, was to some extent basically pietistic. Aziz Ahmad, “The Role of Ulema in Indo-Muslim History,” in *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 31 (1970), p. 5

⁴⁸ K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, p. 89; K.A. Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1997, p. 21

⁴⁹ Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India*, p. 89.

Sultanate. He wrote, “It was not a theocratic state in any sense of the word. Its basis was not *shari’a* of Islam, but *zawabit* or state laws made by the king.”⁵⁰ Iqtidar Alam Khan went a step further and claimed that the progression of the secularisation of the Indian state started since the commencement of Delhi Sultanate, which become well defined by the sixteenth century and continued to the modern times.⁵¹

However, the study of Nizami essentially espoused the relationship between Turk warrior elites of northern India and the religion of Islam – particularly the connection between the government and the *ulama* class. On the other hand, Mohammad Habib’s *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* is a translation of the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* of Zia al-Din Barani. Hence, many questions remain to be answered adequately, like if the sultanate monarchies were not based on *shari’a*, then what were the ideas and ideologies on which the Delhi sultanate was based? What role did the Turkish identity of the Sultans play in state affairs? Besides these, a discussion is also needed on the relationship between the Indian- born or converted Muslims with the state and *ulama* as well the relationship of the government with the dominant Hindu population.

Therefore, this dissertation attempt for a nuanced reading of the contemporary texts in Persian and vernacular languages to unravel the complex relationship between government institutions and various agencies of that time by exploring medieval identity politics based on “Texts and Knowledge of South Asia”.⁵² The dissertation investigates the competing perceptions represented and reconstructed by the contemporary and scholarship in successive presents regarding certain aspects of the sultanate period. How historical past has been used to give significance to certain ideological perceptions? Particularly how the colonial agenda left its mark on the studies of pre-modern polities in India? How has a section of scholars driven by specific ideological positions empowered some of the stereotypes about the Sultanate of Delhi by using simple narratives from the past? Thus, the dissertation aims to understand the social and political functions of history to unearth “what happened” from “what is said to have happened”.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Habib and A.U.S. Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate (Including a translation of Ziauddin Barani’s Fatwa-i-Jahandari, circa, 1358-59 AD)*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1961, p. vi

⁵¹ Iqtidar Alam Khan, “Medieval Indian Notions of Secular Statecraft in Retrospect,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Jan., 1986), p. 6

⁵² Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters, Daud Ali, *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 3

The dissertation mainly intends to offer a corrective to certain historiographical stains in the study of the Delhi sultanate by analysing the differences between problems of interpretations, representations or misrepresentation by the modern scholarship on medieval India and historical realities which has influenced the socio-political spheres in India over the past century. For instance, the colonial authors, at times, deliberately or unknowingly took bardic narratives⁵³ which are based on popular memory as facts without critical analysis.⁵⁴ It is true that at times popular memory binds communities together and creates socio-political identities.⁵⁵ However, memory has typically been formed through misrepresenting history over the years. Hence, it is essential to distinguish memory from history (discussed in detail in chapter five).

Geoffrey Cubitt thinks, “The past is flexible, but its flexibility at any particular moment is significantly conditioned by its previous history of use.”⁵⁶ Therefore, this dissertation closely reads textual sources from the tenth century to the seventeenth century. This reading demonstrates the different narratives of the same stories and their

⁵³ The bards were that of narrating events about heroes and clans in the form of ballads and epic fragments. This was initially an oral tradition which was taken over and formalized by the *Brahmans* and other literati when they realized that controlling narratives about the past could enhance their authority. The bardic tradition claims a greater derivation from memory than the other two, and therefore tends to be treated as a substratum source of history. It has survived in the long epic poems on medieval heroes and rulers. These compositions of a later period are in the regional languages rather than in the Sanskrit and Prakrit of earlier times. Romila Thapar, “History as a Way of Remembering the Past: Early India,” in Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (eds.), *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, Wiley Blackwell, Chichester, 2014, p. 26; Milton Singer (ed.), *Traditional India: Structure and Change*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1960.

⁵⁴ Colonel James Tod introduced Prithviraj Chauhan to the western world and thus validated the *Raso* epic for later generations of Indians as a credible source material for the Chauhan king. He referred Prithviraj as “the last imperial Rajput sovereign of India”, whose defeat and death introduced the Mahommadan rule in India. Thus, he tried to portray Prithviraj as the all Indian communities [particularly the Hindus] in “pre-Muslim past”. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajput States in India*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1920, p. 38.

Through this kind of narratives a kind of divisive atmosphere has been created who remorse can be felt even today. Tod’s portrayal of Rajput heroics shaped the modern views of Rajputs and their region. The Prithviraj Chauhan Smarak in Ajmer established in 1996 by the government of a particular ideology is the best example of the influence of Tod’s narrative in the present. The Smarak presented Prithviraj as the defender of Hindu way of life against Muslim invaders. Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200-2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 1

⁵⁵ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p. ix

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2007, p. 203.

influence on public perceptions of medieval power, politics, and social equations. However, these stories belong to different genres and different times in the history of India. Yet each one tells the same core story with some additions, omissions, and modifications.⁵⁷ For instance, a kind of continuity can be seen in the process of remembering Prithviraj Chauhan, but it can also be seen that some of the fundamentals of his life story have been typically reworked and carried forward when and where it required in the emerging socio-political contexts of that period.

Similarly, Sultan Alauddin Khalji has been depicted differently in the accounts of different authors with diverse ideological orientations. Therefore, it is essential to understand how history and literature interact while dealing with literary sources in particular. How was the memory of an event represented in the narratives of different genres? What kind of role did patronage context play in transmitting past narratives? Do these transformations tell us anything about the political situation of that era? How can the historical moment in which the narrative is placed shape its narrative? Hence, attempt would also be made to understand how these narratives from the sultanate contexts have left their influence in the minds of the people in the successive presents (discussed in detail in chapter four). Otherwise, there is a serious danger if interpretation has been made with imperfect historical knowledge, and the danger appears not only from deliberate misrepresentation or fabrication but also from a fragmented understanding of past history.⁵⁸

Therefore, the research tries to review the original sources from the tenth century to the seventeenth century to explore certain issues like the reasons of Central Asian forces invaded India and subsequently getting settled here permanently, the ideological basis of their new monarchy in India, and their representation in the contemporary as well as in the later scholarly works. After getting settled, how the literary presentation in the different genres has portrayed its presence in the Indian political arena and its role in the socio-political sphere. Finally, how the sultanate period has been presented to the present by colonial scholarship takes the central space of the study. However, the dissertation does not confine itself to exploring the politics of texts only in terms of their

⁵⁷ Aparna Kapadia, "What Makes the Head Turn: The Narratives of Kanhadade and the Dynamics of Legitimacy in Western India" in *SAGAR: South Asian Graduate Research Journal*, Vol. 18 (2008), p. 88

⁵⁸ G.M. Trevelyan, *History and the Reader*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1945, pp. 21-22

misrepresentation in the colonial era by the colonialist; rather, it also endeavours to understand the way in which the past has been used to derive meaning for the successive presents even during the pre-colonial period.

Just as the historiography of every age, the Indo-Persian historical writings of medieval India were also not free from authorial intentions. The construction of the past occupies a prominent role in every age of its cultural memory as it is equipped with normative properties.⁵⁹ Thus, the dissertation explores the relationship between texts and political powers. It focuses on a comparatively large period from the tenth century onwards to the sixteenth century, which is marked by the domination of different monarchies coinciding with rise and fall – some made Hindustan as home, while some made occasional invasions to Hindustan. During these periods, particularly in the fifteenth century, many regional powers also emerged and played an important role in the political spheres in Hindustan along with the Delhi Sultanate. The sultanates of Malwa, Deccan, and the kingdoms of Mewar and Marwar, emerged as an essential power in South Asia's politics in this era. The relationship between literary texts and political power in medieval India needs adequate scholarly attention. How literary texts, their contents, languages, genres, and producers served the political needs of their patrons. The manner in which composers or writers viewed their protagonists' contribution to the political ideology of that time, the way the latter was projected within and beyond their kingdoms, and how these narratives left their imprints in the successive presents would be discussed in detail.

Over the last hundred years, the medieval has fascinated generations of scholars and even laypersons. The period is crammed with conquests, romantic tales about its certain rulers, architectural achievements, and the only “Muslim queen” who sat on the throne of Delhi, a king whose thought was way ahead of his time, are bound to attract scholarly attention. However, aspects like “self and other” in the medieval and “reconstruction of the past in the successive present” have not been taken for serious scholarly discourse. There are some works which concentrate on the representation or misrepresentation of the medieval past in the present narratives. Prof. Romila Thapar has done extensive

⁵⁹ Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003; Jamal Malik, “Constructions of the Past in and about India”, p. 52

research on the question of identity and the role of the past in the service of the present. Her book *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* has explored the construction of several stereotypes about medieval in the present narratives.⁶⁰ However, this work of Thapar concentrates on the ways in which Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's raids on Somanatha (1026 AD) have been represented and recollected in the literary narratives comparatively later period and in the twentieth century. She demonstrates the interrelationship between an event and the existence of multiple perspectives that grew around it, focusing on "Hindu-Muslim" conflicts. She questioned the received versions of the destruction of Somanatha by Mahmud of Ghazna and various memories that have capsulated to the present, which have remained unquestioned for almost a century and a half.

In another book, *The Past as Present*, Thapar has explained how history has been used in contemporary times, particularly in what has become the debate on Indian identity.⁶¹ She argued that the interpretation of Indian history changed from political to socio-economic in the late twentieth century, where questions such as how a nation formulates its identity gained prominence. This development led to identity politics based on caste and religion. She has challenged the historical trends where the communal interpretation of Indian history has been viewed through religious spectacles, particularly based on Hindu and Muslim identity, by putting them in an antagonistic situation. Thus, she traced back to the pre-Islamic period of Indian history and analysed that India was always a land of diverse beliefs and witnessed a kind of complex relations between the communities. The pre-Islamic identities were not singular but were plural and overlapping in many ways.⁶² The book raises questions concerning historical interpretations to have a rational understanding of the past. She challenged the trends of using the past to legitimise the present because the collective memory can sometimes be historical and anti-historical.⁶³ Thus, in a way, the book explores the interplay of the past

⁶⁰ Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2004. Also see Romila Thapar, "The Tyranny of Labels," in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No. 9/10 (Sep – Oct 1996), pp. 3-23.

⁶¹ Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities through History*, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2014

⁶² Ibid., p. 58

⁶³ Ibid., p. 62

and the present, where the present interprets the past in ways that seek legitimacy for actions in the present, which is against historical methods. It is problematic when the past is treated as the extension (backward) of the present.

In their book *Power, Memory and Architecture*, Richard Eaton and Phillip Wagoner challenged the perception that viewed medieval as the Hindu-Muslim oppositional framework by putting the Deccan plateau as the centre of their study.⁶⁴ The book also addresses one of the most sensitive issues of conquerors' (Muslim rulers) attitude towards the secret and secular places of the conquered (Hindu). They showed how the Qutub Shahi sultanate Golconda drew upon Warangal's Hindu cosmographic plan for their new city of Hyderabad (a blend of both Persian and Sanskrit cosmopolis).⁶⁵ Eaton and Wagner are of the view that during the medieval period, members of the ruling elite engaged with the past to uphold their own political aspirations. They argued that the clashes between the Delhi sultans and the Deccan rulers during the fourteenth century were neither a clash between the Hindu and Muslim nor between north and south; it was a war between Persian cosmopolis and Sanskrit cosmopolis.⁶⁶

Richard H. Davis, in *Lives of Indian Images*, explores how human beings associated with the images made and remade the "biographies" of those images according to their requirements and in altered historical situations.⁶⁷ He traced the changing meanings, the beginning, and representation of stories related to certain icons over a period of centuries. Then he leads his readers to the conclusion that irrespective of religious orientations, the conquerors viewed the secret places, including their icons, as symbols of authority and destroying those places or taking the icon was to validate their supremacy and assert their power over the conquered. Thus, through this study, Davis has tried to relay the message that breaking of idol or taking it away was nothing more than the "trophies of war" for the medieval rulers and hence challenged the lingering perception of religious motive being the driving force for these kinds of actions.

⁶⁴ Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 229

⁶⁶ Cosmopolis is broad social network united by language and political culture.

⁶⁷ Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, p. 11

By illustrating these extensive interpretations, the scholarship of Romila Thapar, Richard Davis, Richard Eaton and Phillip Wagner has tried to challenge the sense of certainty about the significance of past objects and events. However, all these scholars confined their research to specific events, cite of memory or objects to understand the changing meanings of those over the centuries. The way in which different communities had envisaged gods and goddesses in different ways in different times and places has been examined. Thus, these studies primarily focused on the construction, transmission and transformation over a period of time. The lingering stereotypes about the Delhi Sultanate remain from the purview of adequate scholarly attention as a whole.

Drawing on the works of Davis, Thapar, and Eaton, historians like Cynthia Talbot in *Pre-colonial India in Practice* tried to counter the colonial construct that medieval Indian history was a static period without any change or progress.⁶⁸ Taking Andhra Pradesh as a case study for her research, Talbot has argued that medieval India was a period of progressive change characterised by increased agrarian settlements, an extension of commercial activities, and an evolution of a new political system and networks. Thus, she criticised the European authors for their approach towards the medieval, where they see it as a whole – like a rule of Muslim rulers. But, she showed that there were simultaneous historical developments at the regional levels as well. Through this region-centric approach, Talbot countered the British construction of medieval as a dark period in Indian history.

Similarly, in another work, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, Cynthia Talbot has explored how the historical past has been utilised to legitimise the political cause of the present.⁶⁹ The work primarily focused on the idea of Prithviraj Chauhan and its development over the ages in later literary narratives. Talbot tries to decipher the multiple layers of stories, illustrations, and impressions of Prithviraj Chauhan that had been constructed in public memory over the centuries. She examined the literary and historical narratives that had developed through different stages of writings, like the Prithviraj in *Prithviraj Raso* of Jayanaka, then in Col. James Todd's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* and finally, the

⁶⁸ Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Religion and Identity in Medieval Andhra*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001.

⁶⁹ Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200-2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016.

image constructed in the present-day politics in Rajasthan. However, the greater focus of this book remains on the warrior community's heroic ethos and how heroic symbols have been used for political purposes. She argued that the older configuration of cultural symbols continues to seep into and colour newer meanings by situating memories of Prithviraj in their appropriate social, political and geographical contexts.

In a similar endeavour, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, James W. Laine, explored the construction and development of various legends around Shivaji Bhosale.⁷⁰ Laine traced the history of Shivaji from being a charismatic and successful warlord to a major component of anti-Islamic rhetoric and nationalist icon in contemporary India over the last three hundred years. The relationship between the Hindu and Muslim during pre-modern India, the place of Maharashtrian identity in it, and how the story of Shivaji has been retold over the years and gradually incorporated into an aggressive parochial identity concerns Laine's study. Thus, Laine tried to understand various rhetoric that has been used to create the imagery of Shivaji, like "Shivaji challenged the foreign (Muslim) power to free his people and establish indigenous (Hindu) rule"⁷¹ and become a symbol of exclusivist Marathi identity.

Ramya Sreenivasan, in *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, explored multiple narratives about Padmini/Padmavati, the fourteenth-century Rajput queen, which has been told and retold over the centuries in historical as well as in the popular memory in contemporary South Asian societies.⁷² She investigated the popular perceptions and legends constructed around a single figure – Padmavati. The role of literary production in creating Padmavati's image remains the prime focus of the book. How the political changes had impacted creation, circulation, and the range of meaning it achieved over the years has been thoroughly discussed. Thus, Sreenivasan tried to understand the transmission and construction of the Padmavat story from a historical figure to a legend concerning socio-religious, political and linguistic boundaries.⁷³

⁷⁰ James W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003.

⁷¹ Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, p. 7; Arshia Sattar, "Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India by James W. Laine," in *History of Religions*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2006), p. 167

⁷² Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in India c. 1500–1900*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2007.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 12

However, all these work mentioned above primarily focus on specific historical figures. Legends and stories created around these figures are discussed and tried to present the differences between the myths and facts of these individuals. Besides these, historians like Audrey Truschke,⁷⁴ Fergus Nicoll,⁷⁵ Thomas De Bruijn⁷⁶, and Rajeev Kinra⁷⁷ have also brought new perspectives to medieval Indian historiography through their biographical works on certain medieval Indians and tried to explore the myths around these characters. In *Dara Shukoh: The Man Who Would Be King*, Avik Chanda is of the opinion that, even after 300 years of passing away, Dara Shikoh attracts the imagination of many as a person who would be a great ruler due to his attitude of tolerance towards other faiths. Chanda further tells that a profound investigation, on the other hand reveals a complex and multi-faceted personality of Dara who would fail to deal with the innumerable intricate conflicting forces of that time.⁷⁸ Thus, these works have focused on the construction, transmission, and transformation of a particular medieval persona's character over time from medieval to modern in terms of their role in politics and religious affairs. The way in which certain stereotypes had been created around specific mediaeval characters had been explored in the books mentioned above.

On the other hand, Manan Ahmed Asif has taken a single text to understand the changing historical narratives about the text *Chachnama* over the centuries in his *A Book of Conquest*.⁷⁹ The book undertook a vital theme about early medieval Indian history, which is the myth that Hindus and Muslims are historical enemies. Asif demonstrated the ways in which the previous scholars, particularly the colonialists, had perpetually chosen, chopped, derided, ridiculed, and ignored parts of the text of *Chachnama* to perpetuate their own agendas. Asif also tried to place the *Chachnama* within the broader Arabic historiography to understand the nature of the book. He showed that while the Arabic

⁷⁴ Audrey Truschke, *Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King*, Stanford University Press, Stanford: California, 2017.

⁷⁵ Fergus Nicoll, *Shah Jahan: The Rise and fall*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2018.

⁷⁶ Thomas De Bruijn, *Ruby in the Dust: Poetry and History in Padmavat by the South Asian Sufi Poet Muhammad Jayasi*, Leiden University Press, Leiden, 2012.

⁷⁷ Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2015.

⁷⁸ Avik Chanda, *Dara Shukoh: The Man Who would be King*, Harper Collins India, New Delhi, 2019.

⁷⁹ Manan Ahmed Asif, *A Book of Conquest: The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia*, Harvard University Press, London, 2016.

conquest literature often centred on the plot of the story and descriptions of the conquering land and regions, the *Chachnama* focused on “inner turmoil, deliberation, doubts, and planning of the campaign.” Thus, Asif challenges the narrative that *Chachnama* is a war book.

However, Manan Ahmed Asif has confined his research only to the particular text by reexamining it to understand the myth that Hindus and Muslims are historical enemies – one of the dominant narratives of the present. In contrast, the present dissertation intends to investigate the “self and other” in a larger historical and political context from tenth to the sixteenth centuries by examining texts from Indo-Persian as well as vernacular sources. Moreover, the work of Manan Asif is not the first of its kind. Scholars like Aparna Kapadia,⁸⁰ Janet Kamphorst,⁸¹ and Ramya Sreenivasan⁸² have also done extensive works on medieval texts and their role in building identity. However, all these works are confined their study to a particular region or a specific text. Therefore, this dissertation aims to comprehensively analyse the Sultanate of Delhi regarding its ruling ideals and ideas and textual representation of “self and other” in both Indic and Indo-Persian works. Then the ways in which authorial intentions played a role in creating narratives both in past and present will be adequately analysed.

Furthermore, the prominent book to understand the concept of identity politics in a historical context is *Representing the Other?: Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims* by B.D. Chattopadhyaya.⁸³ The book presents an understanding of meaning embedded in the primary sources to examine the concept of “other”. However, the book is not about the relationship between Hindus and Muslims; rather, it only examines literary and epigraphic texts which share some similarities in order to find out how well they convey the attitudes of a group of people towards a newcomer into the Indian society in various capacities. Thus, it explores the perspectives of a group towards “other” from the literary

⁸⁰ Aparna Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth Century Gujarat*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018; Kapadia, “What Makes the Head Turn,” pp. 87-100.

⁸¹ Janet Kamphorst, *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*, Leiden University Press, Leiden, 2008.

⁸² Ramya Sreenivasan, “Alauddin Khalji Remembered: Conquest, Gender and Community in Medieval Rajput Narratives,” in *Studies in History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2002), pp. 275-296.

⁸³ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Centuries)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998.

expressions. It has contested the idea that had viewed the early invasions to India as a threat to the Indian culture, and to resist this aggression, Indians had put forward a “collective resistance” or “cultural resistance”. Chattopadhyaya objects to the continuous historiographical trends in which Hindu and Muslim are truncated by obliterating other types of differences.⁸⁴ He thus analyses the fundamental historical changes⁸⁵ to understand the multiplicity of terminologies used by contemporary authors to denote the “outsiders”.⁸⁶

The book primarily deals with the early medieval period (later part of the ancient period till 1200 AD), whereas this dissertation evaluates the formation of the concept of “other” concerning the Sultanates monarchies in the scholarship of British colonial authors. Besides this, Chattopadhyaya examines the Indic sources (Sanskrit) for analysing the concept of “other”. Likewise, of late, Audrey Truschke, in her *The Language of History*, also dealt with the question of “other”.⁸⁷ It showcases the historical consciousness of the Hindu and Jain authors in pre-modern India and their approach towards the “Muslim” rulers in particular and Islam in general. Like Chattopadhyaya, she has also analysed a range of Sanskrit literature and inscriptions composed between the late twelfth and eighteenth centuries.

How the “Muslim” Indo-Persian authors have viewed the “other” in their writing has not been studied by Chattopadhyaya, which this dissertation intends to explore. It was Aziz Ahmad who, in a 1963 article, “Epic and Counter Epic in Medieval India”, tried to examine how the two different languages (Sanskrit and Persian) belonged to two different cultures (Hindu and Muslim) had viewed each other in their writing.⁸⁸ However, Aziz Ahmad has confined his work to analysing four texts composed between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The *Khaza'in al-Futuh* and *Deval Rani wa Khizr Khan* by Amir Khusrau, which Aziz termed as the epics of conquest and *Hammira Mahakavya* by Nayacandra Suri and Padmanabha's *Kanhadade Prabandha* identified by him as epics of

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 20

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 20

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 27

⁸⁷ Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Muslim Past*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021.

⁸⁸ Aziz Ahmad, “Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (1963), pp. 470-476.

resistance were taken for the study. In contrast, this study tries to understand the way in which medieval ideals and ideas of kingship were described by colonialist scholars and how far these descriptions were distant from “the facts”. Then, how far the “motivation” for invasions attributed to medieval monarchs by colonialists was disparate from the “truth” will also be explored. Finally, the representation of others both in Indo-Persian and Indic scholarship of the Sultanate period will be analysed to see the misrepresentations of those by modern English scholarship.

Like B.D. Chattopadhyaya and, Romila Thapar, Alok Parasher has explored the history of how the “other” has been perceived and represented in the past in India.⁸⁹ However, all these works deal exclusively with Ancient Indian history. Another prominent book on understanding the concept of “other” is Gyanendra Pandey’s *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*.⁹⁰ Pandey has described the sectarian politics and sectarian strife during the colonial period in the region of eastern UP and western Bihar (particularly the Bhojpuri-speaking areas). He primarily analysed sectarianism as part of communalism to understand the exclusivist trends that have been evident in colonial writings. Pandey has traced back the Hindu-Muslim relations at an earlier stage and how this has been presented in contemporary writings by examining the communal tension from the 1930s to 1940s to evaluate the “intentionalism” that had changed and left its imprint on communalism.

Some other important works on Hindu-Muslim relations in the medieval past of India are “Hindu-Muslim Relations under the Vijayanagara Empire,”⁹¹ *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*,⁹² *Beyond Hindu and Muslim*,⁹³ and

⁸⁹ Romila Thapar, “The Image of the Barbarian in Early India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 13 (1971), pp. 408-36; Alok Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders Upto AD 600*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi. 1991.

⁹⁰ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

⁹¹ S.N. Shivarudraswamy, “Hindu-Muslim Relations under the Vijaynagara Empire,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 66 (2005-2006), pp. 394-398.

⁹² Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2003

⁹³ Peter Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity Narratives from Village India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000.

Beyond Turk and Hindu.⁹⁴ All these works have great scholarly value in their particular area of interest as they choose for their research. Yet, it seems that historians typically are inclined to rely profoundly on Hindu-Muslim narratives alone whenever they perceive Indian society in terms of the approach of the Delhi sultanate administration towards their subjects. Hence, a few questions emerge, like was the Delhi sultanate a homogeneous entity? How would the ethnic identities, like Turkish, Persianate, and Hindustani Muslim, play their role in their approach towards each other? Besides these, till now, no works have put the question of “other” in the medieval period, particularly concerning the Sultanate of Delhi, in terms of its construction in the modern period, deliberately or due to the overshadowing of the period by mighty Mughal Empire at a later stage. How a historian assesses the impacts of historical occurrences and the events that have been represented in various contemporary and later sources needs to be explored. How these representations have changed over the period of time also requires adequate attention.

Apart from these, how the contemporary medieval authors from diverse backgrounds viewed the “other” in their writings will also be explored. Why would the medieval authors, both Hindu and Muslim, vilify the “other” in their writings? Was it solely for the purpose of receiving religious acclaim or getting a reward from the ruler? Or were there other reasons for writing such pieces of scholarship? Therefore, this dissertation concentrates on not only the creation of the perception of “other” by the colonialist authors but also endeavours to explore how the successive presents from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries viewed the “self and other” in their writings.

However, despite having such potential for debate, discourse and deliberation, as it is clear from the questions mentioned above and wide-ranging source materials in both Indo-Persian and vernacular languages, the Sultanate period has remained comparatively understudied.⁹⁵ Hence, this dissertation stands out from these existing studies as it focuses on the construction of “other” in the successive presents, along with tracing the various stereotypes that had been created over the centuries through texts and passed to

⁹⁴ David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, University Press of Florida, Miami, 2000.

⁹⁵ Off late Peter Jackson and Sunil Kumar attempted to rewrite history of Delhi Sultanate, but their work is largely considered as political history. P. Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999; Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of Delhi Sultanate, 1192-1286*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007.

the present, which this study intends to understand by placing those in historical context. By searching for the answer to the questions posed above, the dissertation aspires to review the significant stages of development of the clichéd narratives about the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi and the ideas and ideologies on which the monarchies of the Sultanate were based, then the textual representation of “self and other their” in competing narratives from the medieval period to the modern times (nineteenth and twentieth century) to provide an account of how it really was in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries.

In recent years a predisposition can be seen in the society where on the basis of “self” and “others”, enemies are being constructed, and to justify this narrative of “othering” of a particular section of the society, historical rationalisations are used. The medieval characters are brought to the apprehensive debate revolving around the modern nation-state. Some of these characters are being boxed into stereotypes, while others have been appropriated into patriotic symbols. Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap, and Shivaji are a few characters from the past which have created a great impact on the memory of the present. They have been cast as a representative of the “Hindu” people in their age-old struggle against foreign oppression – the rule by the “Muslim” rulers. Thus, the whole medieval period has been termed as the “dark age” in India’s glorious past. This is what should most inflame the scholars of the modern era.

The colonial historians were the first to perceive medieval Indian history through bifurcated lenses that discretely differentiated India into two halves – the Hindu and Muslim India – in time, space and society.⁹⁶ In this process, they did not hesitate to demonise the “Muslim” rule in India. James Tod has described the invading “Muslims” as “barbarous, bigoted and exasperated foes.”⁹⁷ Hence, Peter Gottschalk has opined that the British imperial rule in India through their administrative mechanisms, such as census and representational politics for Indians along with their literary projects of re-writing history, had consciously or unconsciously brought the communal dynamics at the centre

⁹⁶ The British historian James Tod also fueled this imagination further, who has routinely described Prithviraj as the last Hindu emperor. However, this is also true that the medieval Indo-Persian historiography also treated Prithviraj’s defeat as a major milestone in the Turkic/Muslim conquest of North India as it opened the gateway for further conquest of the subcontinent. Yahya ibn Ahmad Sirhindi, *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*, translated by K.K. Basu, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1932, p. 4.

⁹⁷ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, pp. 199-200.

of Indian historiographical narratives.⁹⁸ Subsequently, by the late nineteenth century, when Indians first began to envisage themselves as a nation surprisingly appropriated some of these colonialist narratives that were in line with their approach towards the past.⁹⁹ The nationalist scholars often traced back to past historical figures like Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap Singh, Shivaji and so on as counterweight to the colonialist narrative of “Hindus being effeminate and cowardly.”¹⁰⁰ However, in this process, they sometimes resorted to sources of unconvinced characteristics like ballads and bardic narratives (discussed in chapter five).

Besides this, in the post-independence period, a section of scholars similarly appropriates medieval warrior heroes, but this time its message is aimed at “South Asian Muslims” and the medieval rule where the “Muslims” were at the helm of affairs; rather than the British.¹⁰¹ The medieval monarchies and their rulers, who happened to be Muslims, are being showered with different stereotypes like they were Islamist, tried to impose Islam on the Hindus, fought for Islam (*ghaza*), and so on. Hence, it is essential to understand how these stereotypes were thought of and were appropriate in the minds of the present.

Therefore, this dissertation closely reads textual sources from the tenth century to the seventeenth century to excavate various layers of meanings attributed to medieval rule in India by successive presents. This reading exhibits the diverse narratives of some of the stories narrated by authors from different backgrounds. However, these stories belong to various genres and different times in the history of India. Yet each one tells the same core story with some additions, omissions, and modifications.¹⁰² Hence, this dissertation attempts to understand how these stories left their influence on the successive presents from the tenth to the twentieth century.

⁹⁸ Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim*, p. 24.

⁹⁹ Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, p. 1

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 1-2

¹⁰¹ Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, Shihabuddin Ghori, Alauddin Khalji, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb are some of the medieval Indian monarch who been portrayed as villains. Even “Hindu” figures like Jaychand, who aligned with the invading central Asian forces, have been portrayed as a betrayer. The word ‘jaycandi’ meaning “treacherous” has entered the vocabulary of modern Hindi. R.S. McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p. 360

¹⁰² Aparna Kapadia, “What makes the head turn,” p. 88

This study focuses on the history and representation of the “power struggle” between the medieval Indian forces and “invaders”. How these events of history have been represented in Indo-Persian and Indic sources are the main focus of the thesis. The coming of the “Muslims” in India started an era of history writing, which was very alien to the local scribes. However, the local scholars continued to record their version of occurrences in the political sphere and in the court in regional languages. Thus, it can be seen as a different set of representations of the same events of medieval India. The thesis makes an attempt to understand the many social and political functions of “identity” in medieval Indian history and tries to delineate “what happened” from “what is said to have happened.” Therefore, this dissertation argues for a re-casting the Sultanate histories outside of colonialists, nationalist and postcolonial paradigms. Thus, the study examines not only the reconstruction of accounts of Sultanate ideas and ideals but also tries to understand the afterlives of the constructed narratives in political and cultural memory within their historiographical, literary, and political context.

As the study is based on the re-reading of literary works of medieval India, I read these works within the political and cultural framework of their production and literary genres within which they position them. How, in various political circumstances, the question of “outsider”, “we and other”, “treacherous”, and so on are looked into in various Indic and Indo-Persian sources are the central theme of this research. The way in which various authors, writing on the basis of their ideological beliefs and socio-economic interests, have viewed their contemporary as well as bygone occurrences, including the phenomenon of “self and other”, would be examined. Significantly, the phenomenon of “self and others” cannot be treated as a homogenous aspect. Even in the Sultanate regime, regional and ethnic variations can be witnessed, which this dissertation also aims to explore. Thus, one needs to visualise the Sultanate of Delhi as a multi-layered political landscape. On the one hand, the monarchs of Delhi treated the local rulers as the “other” and tried to motivate their soldiers with an assortment of communally oriented rhetoric; on the other hand, local rulers also used diverse tactics to rally their subjects behind them.

The dissertation begins with an introduction, where the theoretical basis of the study, followed by a review of existing studies and literature to understand the research

gap has been presented. Then the need to study this topic is dealt in the analysis of the purpose of the study, and a brief explanation has been given regarding the scope of the study. Then the introduction delineates a brief overview of the five core chapters of the dissertation. Finally, it gives a sketch of the conclusion drawn from the wider implications of my arguments.

Chapter one deals with the contemporary writings on medieval (from nineteenth to the twentieth century) and their role in creating the “other” and attributing certain stereotypical stigmas to the Sultanate of Delhi regime. The past is always understood and shaped via the lance of the present.¹⁰³ The way in which presuppositions and ideological commitment of authors left their influence on medieval Indian historiography and its influence upon the generations to come remains the central theme of this chapter. How and under what circumstances has the past been presented? And for what uses and ends have such histories been constructed? What was the role of the historians in society and in the political circle through which lances they viewed the past? How far has the political alignment of the author influenced his perception of the past? The chapter argues that a popular sense of history is not engaged in a day or two; it has to be constructed in bits and pieces from the academic wisdom of earlier generations. Till now, the whole question of production and process of reception of academic knowledge or historical narratives on the medieval Indian past, particularly the Sultanate of Delhi, has not yet been discussed satisfactorily. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate how the Sultanate of Delhi has been presented and represented in different sections of academic circles over the decades and centuries.

The chapter further explores the ideological commitment and presuppositions of different schools of scholars in their persuasion of the medieval Indian past. Persian remained their principal source through which they perceived the medieval, and these sources received much of the narrative spin at their hands. By tracing back to the Islamic historiographical tradition, the chapter tried to understand how the colonial authors misunderstood or misrepresented certain aspects of Persian sources in the Indian context. They had perceived history as a process of restoration and recovery of the glorious past of India. They were of the view to provide glimpses of the “golden age” – the greatness

¹⁰³ Chris Jones, et al (eds.), *Making the Medieval Relevant*, p. 16.

of the Indian people, their rule. Of course, Muslims were kept out of this “Indian people”. In the process, myth and fact become unintelligible from each other. They believed the medieval Indian past was the period when the “outsiders” were at the helm of the affairs. Thus, this chapter explores the process in which different stereotypes were created about the medieval Indian past in general and the Sultanate of Delhi in particular.

The chapter two has been devoted to analysing certain stereotypes related to the early Delhi Sultanate period. The chapter starts with inquiring into the aspects of how the stereotypes of Muslims being “foreigners” or “outsiders” got constructed and remained alive in the memories of successive presents. Then the chapter turns to investigate the motivating factors for early Central Asian invasions of northern India. Whether the invasions of Ghaznavids and Ghurids were part of *ghaza* or there were multiple factors played their part in those conquests. To understand these aspects, the chapter traces back to the Central Asian socio-political situation of the tenth to twelfth centuries. Subsequently, the chapter deals with the early Ghurid invasions in northern parts of Hindustan. The chapter further explores whether the Ghurid Empire was created on the basis of *ghaza* or *jihad* as it is commonly assumed that “*ghaza*” played a central role in this process. Would it be possible to establish legitimacy solely based on sword over a vast majority of the subjects who were not from their faith, in case the invasions were part of *ghaza*? Then the chapter explores the way in which the early Delhi sultans tried to achieve their legitimacy to rule in India. By searching the answer for these questions, the chapter subsequently aims to understand the concept of Holy War (*ghaza*) in Ghaznavid and Ghurid Sources. The role of contemporary Islamic intellectuals, scholars and court chroniclers are also discussed in terms of their role in bestowing the title of *ghazi* to certain rulers of that time and describing a war as *ghaza*. Apart from this, the chapter explores Ghaznavid invasions (eleventh century) and early Ghurid expansion (twelfth and early thirteenth century) to understand can these wars be, in any case, called the revival of *ghazi* Ideology. Then, the chapter focuses on did the *ghaza* ideology play any role in creating the “Muslim empire” in India. Finally, the chapter explores who the *ghazis* were and the kind of role they played in the state formation during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Islamic world in general and in Hindustan in particular.

The third chapter starts with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. It investigates the ideas and ideologies on which the Sultanate of Delhi was administered. Some historians called the Sultanate the foundation of “Islamic rule – a theocracy” in India.¹⁰⁴ To counter this narrative, another section of historians has pushed forward the Turkish identity as the central aspect of the Sultanate.¹⁰⁵ Of late, another set of scholars has argued that the Delhi Sultanate was a Persianised polity in terms of its political and courtly culture.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the chapter explores the nature of the ideological basis on which the Delhi sultanate was standing. Most of the Delhi sultans were of Turkish background, but they preferred Persian as their *lingua franca*. Now a few obvious questions arise: why would the Turkish rulers prefer the Persian language as *lingua franca* and culture over their own Turkish and promote these? What happened to the “Turkishness” of a ruler once they ascended the throne and then transferred that authority to their offspring through dynastic succession? Did the ‘Turkish identity’ have any role to play in the politics and culture of the early Delhi Sultanate?

By searching for the answer to these questions, the chapter moves to explore the differences between the *shari’a*-based rule and the Persianate kingship. Subsequently, the chapter investigates the impact of Persianate political culture in the Islamicate world during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, including its role in the Delhi sultanate. How and why the sultanate rulers used Persian imagery to create a distinct culture in their court in Delhi has been investigated. The Sultanate of Delhi cannot be studied in isolation from that of the present-day Central Asian and eastern Iranian regions. The early Delhi sultans carried their genesis from central Asia, and culturally they seem to be more oriented to the Iranian/Persian customs though they were Turks by origin. Therefore, to have a clear view of the political systems of the Sultanate of Delhi, it is essential to look back to the political systems and ideas on which its rulers searched their references for administrative ideas. The Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Ghurids generally acted as reference points for the Delhi sultans in their search for a ruling ideology.

¹⁰⁴ Aziz Ahmad, “The Role of Ulema in Indo-Muslim History,” p. 5; A.L. Srivastava, *The Sultanate of Delhi (711-1526 AD): Including the Arab Invasion of Sindh; Hindu Rule in Afghanistan, and Causes of the Defeat of the Hindus in Early Medieval Age*, Shiva Lal Agrawala & Company, Agra, 1950, p. 282.

¹⁰⁵ A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India: A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi, 1206-1290 AD*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 1, 4

¹⁰⁶ Richard M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2020.

Besides these, the chapter also examines the role accorded to kings in a broad Sunni vision *shari'a* and in the Persian kingship to understand the ideological basis of monarchies in the Sultanate. During the medieval period, the Abbasid caliphate was considered the epitome of the *shari'a* vision of kingship in the Islamic world. Therefore, it's essential to examine how the Caliphate left its mark on the political system of the Delhi Sultanate because many of the Delhi sultans also had received investitures (*manshui*), titles and robes of honour (*khil'ats*) from the Caliphs of Baghdad. It is also noteworthy that despite being Turkish by origin, the Delhi sultans preferred the Persianate culture over their own Turkish. Thus, the chapter traces the genesis of Persianate¹⁰⁷ political culture and how it reached India to understand why the early Delhi sultans favoured it. Finally, the chapter investigates the Turkishness of the Delhi Sultanate.

Chapter four discusses how the pre-modern thinkers recounted the medieval pasts and how did they viewed the “self” and “other” in their narratives. It also explores what purposes these narratives served for their readers. The chapter explores the authorial intentions of contemporary medieval scholars to understand their role in producing certain “absurd” narrative about Delhi Sultans. Along with Arabic and Indo-Persian sources, the vernacular sources of that time are also used in this chapter because vernacular sources are a tradition that is defined by writing about “other”, a time-honoured way of writing about “self”.¹⁰⁸ How did the vernacular intellectuals think about the Delhi rulers who happened to be Muslims? Did they always conceptualise the Muslim rulers as “other”? These are a few questions which this chapter intends to explore adequately. Apart from these, the chapter also examines whether the Delhi sultans could administer their monarchies exclusively based on the might of the sword. Delhi's “Muslim” sultans developed a relationship with an intermediary class, who happened to be predominantly Hindu by faith. Hence, now the question arises: if the Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic state (*dar-ul-Islam*), where would the intermediary class be placed in it?

¹⁰⁷ “Persianate” is also known as the “Perso-Islamic”. The Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana in the ninth and tenth centuries was instrumental in laying the foundations of a new kind of Islamic polity and culture, later dubbed Persianate.

¹⁰⁸ Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Muslim Pasts*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021, p. xxiii

Is it only because the head of the state happened to be Muslim by faith, does that qualify it to be a *dar ul-Islam*?

Chapter five explores the way in which cultural myths are appropriated for different ideological and political purposes by analysing two sets of war narratives composed in both Persian and Indic sources. These texts can be termed as the “Books of Conquest versus the Book of Resistance”. The books of conquests are written in Indo-Persian, mostly belonging to the *futuh* genre. In contrast, the books of resistance were written in Indic languages. These war narratives primarily represent battles and wars fought by the Delhi Sultans with various regional rulers of that time. In the Sultanate period, there were states within the state (semi-independent and tribute-paying principalities) and smaller principalities in the northern Indian territories. These states, smaller yet with considerable power, aspired to achieve significance. Thus, chapter five investigates the relationships of these polities with Delhi Sultans (at times war and sometimes peace) and their representation within the vernacular (Indic) texts – particularly, how these narratives have viewed the “Muslim rulers”. The perpetual misuse or reuse of these Indic narratives in the successive presents also has been discussed by analysing who wrote these books, why and for whom? What were the purposes of these war narratives? How far were these books factual? Or were these written only for psychological boost? Then, the chapter discussed the relationship between the war narratives and their patronage contexts to understand the power equations among the ruler, the ruled and the competing monarchies. Thus, the role of identity in politics promulgated in the texts has been discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter tries to juxtapose and corroborate these vernacular war narratives with the Persian sources of that time to shed light on rhetoric and realities.

Finally, the dissertation ends with the conclusion of the study, which addresses the consequences of discussions in all the chapters. Thus, the dissertation attempted to make sense of the influence of the past in the successive presents and the relevance of the present in the construction of the past. The way in which modern historians approached medieval Indian history with purpose has been unearthed in this chapter. Then, finally, the concluding sections show how the past “that has been presented to us” was different from that of the past that “actually was”.

CHAPTER 1

Cultivating the Past in the Present: The Construction of the “Other”

In the historiographical discourse of Indian history, the way in which historians of modern times played a role in constructing certain historiographical narratives, particularly for the medieval Indian past, has not yet been taken as a serious theme in the academic discussion. According to Sumit Sarkar, introspection about their own responsibility in creating perceptions regarding pasts has not been too common among Indian historians.¹ However, in the last few decades, there has been a growing consensus among historians that “history” as a form of knowledge about the past is itself an object worthy of study, not simply from the already established philosophical and theoretical traditions on the subject, but at more mundane level as well.² Nevertheless, there are pertinent questions which require scholarly attention. For instance, how and under what circumstances has the past been presented? And for what uses and ends have such histories been constructed? What was the role of the historians in society and in the political circle through which lenses they viewed the past? How far has the political alignment of the author influenced his perception of the past? Therefore, this chapter intends to explore the development of historical writing in modern India in terms of thinking and the scholarly approach of historians towards the medieval past of India.

The responsibility of a certain section of historians in creating public perceptions, too, requires adequate attention. A popular sense of history is not engaged in a day or two; it has to be constructed in bits and pieces from the academic wisdom of earlier generations. Geoffrey Cubitt has opined, “The past is flexible, but its flexibility at any particular moment is significantly influenced by its previous history of usage.”³ Contemporary historiography is a kind of re-remembering process with new context and new configurations, which has its own significance.⁴ Hence, this dissertation tries to understand the reconstruction of history over the generations through texts. Till now, the

¹ Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p. 1

² Daud Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 1

³ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory*, Manchester University Press, New York, 2007, p. 203

⁴ Indra Sengupta and Daud Ali (eds.), *Knowledge, Production, Pedagogy and Institution in Colonial India*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2011, pp. 3-7; William R. Pinch, “Same Differences in India and Europe,” in *History and Theory*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1999), pp. 389-407, here, p. 395

whole question of production and process of reception of academic knowledge or historical narratives on the medieval Indian past has not been discussed adequately. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate how the sultanate of Delhi, in particular and medieval India, in general, has been presented and represented in different sections of academic circles over the decades and in the last century.

The consciousness of past events within a community plays an essential role in creating identity, moulding future generations and expressing the way in which a nation identifies itself and understands its roots. This is where the role of historians becomes significant as they are the one who provides shape to an idea regarding the past occurrences and eventualities. For example, historians of the early twentieth century who were greatly influenced by the Indian national movement and enthused with nationalism tend to see everything of the past with a nationalistic perception. A difference in explanation of the same event is a perfect example of authors' ideology as the driving force of their writing. The 1857 incident in Indian history has been treated differently by both the Indian and British authors according to their ideologies. While for some of the nationalists, it was the first "war of Independence"⁵, but for colonialists, it was a mere "mutiny" by a section of the English East India Company soldiers.⁶

Therefore, this chapter investigates how the present draws on the past, not necessarily always for a better understanding of the past, but to use the past to legitimise the present. In contemporary times, the past has not only been reconstructed but has also been used to give legitimacy to the way a society wants to re-order itself.⁷ According to Ashis Nandy, the western intellectual had viewed the world into two categories in terms of its historical sense – the "historical (those living in history)" and "ahistorical (those living outside the history, like whose past has been predominantly constructed by the

⁵ Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, The Publications Division, Delhi, 1957, pp. viii, 411; Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2014 (First published 1909).

⁶ John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857 – 1858*, 3 Volumes, W.H. Allen and Co., London, 1876; Sir Charles Napier, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, Bosworth and Harrison, London, 1858; T. Rice Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny and of the Disturbances which Accompanied It Among the Civil Population*, McMillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1904; Reginald G. Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, John Murray, London, 1894.

⁷ Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities through History*, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2014, p. 3

myths)”. The ahistorical societies did not have a recorded past in a method defined by the west. India, China, Africa, South America, and Slavic states are generally kept under this category.⁸ So, the colonialists took the burden of writing their history. In this process, they did a lot of construction and reconstruction of the “ahistorical” pasts. They misinterpreted certain things intentionally or unintentionally, which passed over time to the next generation and created a popular perception about the past. Hence, this chapter explores how the historical evidence from the medieval period has been interpreted in the last two centuries and, consequently, how these readings are being viewed in recent decades.

The writing of modern Indian history started in colonial times by the colonialists.⁹ It was the colonialist writers who established the patterns of the Indian past that have been passed to us as we know it today. Colonial scholars and administrators in the second half of the nineteenth century were the first to bring India under modern historical scrutiny.¹⁰ This brought a mammoth shift in the practice of recording the past. The colonialist writers were greatly influenced by the nineteenth-century European trends of history writings where the construction of national pasts had replaced narratives related to many local and community ones. This had begun among the German intelligentsia in the eighteenth century and naturally intensified when almost all of Europe was swiftly conquered, if but briefly ruled, by the Napoleonic Empire.¹¹ It spread over the other parts of the world as well with the European colonisation. Along with their military occupation, they brought the trends of history writing as well, which was more centralised in its approach, where they concentrated on the dominant storyline and neglected the other narratives.

According to Thomas R. Trautmann, the conquest of India by the British provoked a few questions to the forefront, which they needed to answer, like – who are the Indians?

⁸ Ashis Nandy, “History's Forgotten Doubles,” in *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May, 1995), pp. 44-47

⁹ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, p. 23; Thapar, *The Past as Present*, p. 9

¹⁰ Dud Ali, “The Idea of Medieval in the Writing of South Asian History: Contexts, Methods and Politics,” in *Social History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2014), p. 384

¹¹ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2019, p. 118

What are their positions in the state? And what relation can they aspire with the British? These three questions had defined the approach the British took towards the Indians in their administration as well as in their writings history.¹² To answer these questions, they brought the racial theory of Indian civilisation. For the ancient period, they argued that there was a clash between the light-skinned civilising invaders (Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines.¹³ During medieval, it was the central Asian Turko-Afghan who invaded the “Indians” and finally the British invasion took place which is to free the “Indians” from the Turko-Afghan dominance. This theory is so strong that it has its resonance even today. Many Indian authors and historians accepted this theory and argued in favour of this. Thus, it seems by following this pattern of invasion theory, the colonialist had satisfied their sectarian motif¹⁴, which was necessary for their relevance in the Indian minds. Though they noted that both Aryans and the Muslims were invaders, the Aryans could assimilate with the Indian culture, while the Muslims remained an “aloof” community.

However, the Indo-Persian historiography had a profound effect on the colonial authors in their search for Indian pasts. When the British came, the Persian language had already gained a sub-continental influence during the Mughal period. In the beginning years, Persian remained the principal source for the colonialists through which they approached to India’s past.¹⁵ Therefore, it was the Persian sources which was used by the colonialist to provide the narrative spin for much of early British writing,¹⁶ which in turn percolated into school textbooks and print magazines and thus into the emerging public sphere in colonial India.¹⁷

Tarikh-i-Ferishta or *Gulshan-i-Ibrahim*, also known as *Nauras-nama* written by Muhammad Qasim ibn Hindu Shah, better known as Ferishta, was the first Persian work which was translated into English by an Englishman.¹⁸ It was probably the earliest widely

¹² Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 3

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4

¹⁴ Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, p. 23

¹⁵ Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, p. 30

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30

¹⁷ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, p. 50

¹⁸ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, Trubner and Co., London, 1875, p. 121

available Persian source to colonial historians among all the major Persian histories.¹⁹ Many of the colonial historians have written highly about this work. Henry M. Elliot has argued that “this work is by common consent, and undeservedly, considered superior to all the other General Histories of India.”²⁰ One of the early British historians, Colonel Mark Wilks, in his 1820s book *Historical Sketches* has repeatedly mentioned Ferishta as the “accurate Ferishta”.²¹ Thus, the *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* was considered as the first authentic General History of the “Mohammedan period in India”. The book was first translated into English by Alexander Dow in 1768.²² In 1829, John Briggs had superseded Dow’s text with his three-volume translation of the same book under the title *Rise of the Mohamedan Power*.²³ Subsequently, Briggs’s translation was amply used by John C. Marshman and many successors.²⁴ In his book *History of India from the Remote Antiquity to the Accession of the Mogul Dynasty*, Marshman used the lone Indian authorship, which is *the History of Mohammedan Power in India, till the year AD 1612* by John Briggs, a translation of *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*.²⁵ Briggs also published a lithographed Persian text in 1831, and Avril Powell believes that this edition was widely used by many subsequent Indian textbook writers.²⁶

Now the question is why *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* would attract so many early colonial historians? According to H.M. Elliot, Ferishta’s account was composed of with all the possible sources available to him at that period of time and it was the only general history of the Mohammedan period which provided information about the minor ruling houses as well.²⁷ Ferishta was free from prejudice and partiality in his narration as he did not flatter

¹⁹ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, p. 54

²⁰ Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, p. 207

²¹ Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India: In an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore*, Vol. 1, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 13, & 183

²² Alexander Dow, *History of Hindostan: From the Earliest Account of Time to the Death of Akbar*, 2 Volumes, T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, London, 1768.

²³ Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit and the Mughal Court*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 217–221 and 309

²⁴ John C. Marshman, *History of India from the Remote Antiquity to the Accession of the Mogul Dynasty*, 1842

²⁵ Avril A. Powell, “History Textbooks and the Transmission of the Pre-colonial Past in North-Western India in the 1860s and 1870s,” in Daud S. Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, pp. 96-97

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97

²⁷ Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, p. 210

the prince in whose reign he lived. Besides these, he did not hesitate to record the uncomfortable truth, unlike other historians of his time – like he even recorded the Muslim atrocities upon the Hindus.²⁸ Thus, with its precise dates, the clear succession of rulers, and in the matter of facts, it established itself as key framing text for English histories as soon as they began to write, and is still frequently consulted by historians.

Like many of his predecessors, the Perso-Indian historian Ferishta had also structured his narrative of the history of Hindustan. It starts with the first Prophet of Islam, Adam and ended with the conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni.²⁹ The introductory chapter has been divided into two sections – “On the beliefs of the people of Hind” and “History of the Mohammedan Power in India”. In the first section, Ferishta discusses about the notion of time among the Hindus (the four-*yuga* cycle of Indic cosmology) and their understanding of the earth and then goes on to discuss about the Indian beliefs, its prominent kings, and then of the division of the earth among the sons of Nuh (biblical Noah) after the great flood.³⁰

The primary source for Ferishta for this section was the *Mahabharata*, translated by Abul Fazl, the court chronicler of Mughal Emperor Akbar.³¹ In the introduction’s second section, Ferishta narrates Islam’s rise in Hindustan and its prominent rulers. This section was a much more closely dated and largely dynastic history of various rulers of the subcontinent. He used thirty-five different sources (historical accounts of his predecessors) to narrate the history of “Muslim” rule in India.³² Thus, Ferishta divided his much-celebrated work into two major sections – the history of “Muslim” rule in India and the “pre-Muslim” history of India.

According to Sumit Guha, this chronological frame was soon adopted by early British historians as the basis for a division of South Asian history into “Hindu”, “Muslim” and “British”.³³ This periodisation of Indian history has been percolated to the

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 210-211

²⁹ Muhammad Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. trans. by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of Mohammedan Power in India: Till the Year AD 1612*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1908, pp. liii – lxxxi & 1-29

³⁰ Ibid., pp. liii – lxxxi

³¹ Ibid., p. liii

³² Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, p. 210

³³ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, p. 54.

Indian academic circle in such a way that even today, it has been accepted with a minor modification where the “Hindu” period has been renamed as ancient and the “Muslim” period as medieval. However, the sense among the commoners has already been created that the medieval period was the rule of the Muslims in India, who had done nothing good for the “Hindus” and only inflicted atrocities on them. On the contrary, it can be seen that the medieval states were existing with fluctuating geographical boundaries. There were a number of monarchies that existed in the Indian subcontinent, whose rulers happened to be Hindus, along with the Sultans of Delhi.³⁴ However, by taking Ferishta’s periodisation on its face value, the colonialist authors seem to have misunderstood the trends in “Islamic historiography”.³⁵ Therefore, it is essential to clarify how the English historians have misunderstood Ferishta’s narrative and percolated a misconception in the Indian popular imagination, which has its impact even today.

By the ninth century, Islam achieved a tremendous geographical entity due to its military prowess and people of different cultures and languages were brought within the ambit of Islam, which created an opportunity to start a new intellectual life.³⁶ Along with the political and geographical expansion, the narrative style of its historiography as well witnessed growth among the newly acquired territories. According to Franz Rosenthal, Islamic history primarily concentrates on two branches of learning – one deals with the length of the life and the duration of activities of the Prophet, kings, rulers and religious groups (state), and the second narrates individual circumstances of each personality.³⁷

³⁴ Aparna Kapadia “What Makes the Head Turn: The Narratives of Kanhadade and the Dynamics of Legitimacy in Western India,” in *SAGAR: South Asian Graduate Research Journal*, Vol. 18 (2008), pp. 87-100

³⁵ The term “Islamic historiography” here denotes the historical writings of those authors who were engaged in the study of the early history of Islam during the seventh century, from Prophet Muhammad’s first revelations in AD 610 until the disintegration of the Four Caliph’s in AD 661 and arguably throughout the eighth century and the duration of the Umayyad Caliphate. Historians from the Islamicate worlds, other than the Caliphate based in Baghdad, like the Ghaznavid, the Ghurids, the Delhi Sultanate historians of a comparatively later period too to a considerable extent tend to appropriate the narrative style of these authors in their writings as well.

³⁶ Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1968, p. 31

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39

However, with the universalism of the new faith, there were efforts of universal history as well. Al-Ṭabari (838-923AD) was one of the earliest and pioneers of this genre.³⁸

The Arab-centric Islamic history first got implanted in the Persianate world, and from there, it reached South Asia. The credit for initiating the writing history in the Persian language in India has been given to Muhammad bin Mansur, better known as Fakhr-i-Mudabbir. In his *Sharja-i-Ansab*, Mudabbir provides the historical narration from the Prophet of Islam, his companions, the Prophets mentioned in the Quran, the Islamic, pre-Islamic poets of Arabia, the pre-Islamic ruling dynasties of Iran, the Umayyad, the Abbasid Caliphs, the Islamic jurists, and the regional dynasties who were ruling during the decline of Abbasid Caliphate and then finally the Ghurid sultans to whom he decided to dedicate the book.³⁹ Thus, it can be seen that in Indo-Persian historical writing, the tradition of genealogy played a significant role. Originally, genealogy developed as an auxiliary to study the traditions of the Prophet (hadith) and was gradually incorporated itself as a branch of history and was also adopted into Indo-Persian historiography.⁴⁰

One of the prominent historians of the Delhi sultanate period was Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani also applied both the study of successive generations and the application of a universal time. Juzjani in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (1260) traces the generations from Adam to his own time. He starts his narration with Adam, the first Prophet of Islam to the last Prophet Muhammad by explaining the ancestors of Muhammad, then four orthodox *Khalifas* (Caliphs), descendants of Ali and companions of the Prophet, the Umayyad Caliphate, the Abbasid Caliphate, then the smaller yet important ruling houses of the Islamic world before coming to the Delhi sultanate for whom he was writing the book.⁴¹ It is noteworthy that Juzjani's work was used by all the later authors who covered these periods,⁴² including Ferishta.

³⁸ Julie S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999, p. 9.

³⁹ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography Upto the Thirteenth Century*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 17-18

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 17-29

⁴¹ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty as *A General History of the Mohammedan Dynasties of Asia, including Hindustan, AD 810-1260*, Gilbert and Rivington, London, 1881.

⁴² Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 45-46

Thus, tracing back to the first Prophet of Islam, the Prophet Adam and then providing a brief outline about all previous important rulers before coming back to the narration of the author's contemporary circumstances was a historical tradition that was followed by medieval historians in the Islamicate world. Ferishta might have been following this tradition when he was asked by Ibrahim Adil Shah to write a General history of Hindustan.⁴³ While he was writing the history of Hindustan, he might felt the need to trace the antiquity of the Hindus as well, as it has been a common practice among Muslim historians. Likewise, Ferishta started his narration with a prolonged dedication to his patron, Ibrahim Adil Shah. Then a short first chapter based on a translation of the *Mahabharata* to trace the pasts of the "Hindus" in India. It then moves to a chapter titled "The Rise of Islam in These Lands."⁴⁴ Thus, it seems and as Sumit Guha also suggests that "clearly Briggs derived his title, *History of the Rise of the Mohammedan Power in India*, from there."⁴⁵

Perhaps, it seems the British historians misinterpreted his narrative style and used it as a model for their periodisation of Indian history. This inflicted a profound impact on the popular imagination. The periodisation of Indian history was the beginning of a long process of communal angle to the history of the period when the rulers who happened to be Muslim by their faith were largely at the helm of affairs in the Indian subcontinent. Through periodisation, they have targeted the "Muslim" period as an unjust rule on the majority population of India. For instance, in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, James Todd opined that Rajputs were "the last guardians of Hindu beliefs, institutions, and manners against the rising tide of the Mohammedan invasion."⁴⁶ A careful observation of this comment of Tod reveals that he viewed the early Delhi sultans to be against the Hindu *dharma* or religious beliefs of the Hindus. The Sultans were in

⁴³ In 1593 Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur presented a copy of *Rauzatu-s safa* to Ferishta and remarked that no competent person hitherto written a General History of the Mahommadans in India, except Nizamuddin Bakhi, but that was too brief and imperfect, particularly the portion on Dakshin. So, Ferishta decided to write a comprehensive history of Hindustan; H.M. Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, p. 208.

⁴⁴ Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. trans. by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of the Mohamedan Power in India, till the Year AD 1612*, Vol. 1, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., London, 1908.

⁴⁵ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, pp. 128-129

⁴⁶ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajput States of India*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1920, p. xii

Hindustan to destroy the Hindu belief system. And it was the Rajput who protected the *dharma* against the assault inflicted on the Hindus by the Muslim rulers. Tod has further noted, “Without the Rajput’s protection, much that is important for the study of the Hindu must have disappeared.”⁴⁷

Besides these, James Tod has occasionally referred to Prithviraj Chauhan as the “last imperial Rajput sovereign of India”⁴⁸ and often referred to him as the “last Hindu emperor/king of India”.⁴⁹ This implies that Prithviraj was the representative of all Indian communities prior to the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi. Again the frequent use of “last” reflects that as if Hindus lost administrative authority in India. However, it can be seen that there were many other rulers who still continued to rule in different regions of India. Zia al-Din Barani had noted that when the Balbanid prince Malik Chajju rebelled in Awadh against the sultan Jalaluddin Khalji “the Hindustani Ravats and Paiks (Payaks, Nayaks) collected around him like ants and locust.”⁵⁰ There were several other rulers who were the followers of Hindu faith ruling in different parts of India, and were at least as powerful as Prithviraj Chauhan if not more.⁵¹ Thus, it can be said that the term “last” was part of the constructionist method of the colonialist view, which wanted to segregate the period of dominated by the Turko-Afghan rulers from the rest. It is noteworthy that Prithviraj as the last Hindu emperor still occupies a prominent space in the public imagination. Cynthia Talbot’s recent book, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, has shown how Prithviraj Chauhan has been incorporated into an idea that targets the Muslim population of the subcontinent.⁵²

Cynthia Talbot analysed the way in which James Tod, in his effort to write a coherent history of the Rajputs, had misinterpreted or misunderstood the sources and presented a history which is still having its impact on the popular imagination in Indian society. James Tod used Chand Bardai’s *Prithviraj Raso* extensively for his book as a

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. xii

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. lvii, 61, 218

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 82, 576

⁵⁰ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2015, p. 113

⁵¹ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India from Sultanate to Mughal, Part 1: Delhi Sultanate (1205–1526)*, Har-anand Publications, Delhi,, 1997, p. 24.

⁵² Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200-2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, pp. 1-2

source without a critical understanding of the same. He considered Bardai's account as a valuable eyewitness description and accepted much of its depiction of the elite Rajput customs to being pertinent across Rajputana and narrative about them as genuine history.⁵³ For instance, Tod himself has noted, "I have in contemplation to give to the public a few of the sixty-nine books of the poems of Chand, the last great bard of the last Hindu emperor of India, Prithviraja. They are entirely heroic: each book a relation of one of the exploits of this prince, the first warrior of his time."⁵⁴ But, he missed the point that the bards were supported with grants for their living by the potentates of that time in Rajputana. However, it is momentous that there was a kind of competition among the Rajput kingly lineages for honour and status which acted as a reason for certain amount of autonomy to the bardic families as the Rajput kings would normally desist from offending the bards.⁵⁵ On the other hand, public competition among the bards in mastering the common body of genealogical knowledge would generally produce a comparatively homogenous narrative. Another important aspect of these bardic narratives was that most of these were heroic in nature and were an apparatus for satisfying the patron, though occasionally critical of particular rulers. The early colonial authors failed to recognise these nuances of the "Indic" sources and accepted the structure of memory in them as an authentic source without critical analysis.⁵⁶

Over a period of time, the narrative of the Rajputs in general and Prithviraj Chauhan in particular propagated by Tod, has been inducted into the evolving public memory in the north Indian regions – particularly among Hindi speaking population.⁵⁷ Prithviraj Chauhan Smarak, in Ajmer (1996) is the best example of the popular imagination.⁵⁸ In

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 15-16, 184

⁵⁴ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, p. 82 n1

⁵⁵ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, p. 70; Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, pp. 185-189

⁵⁶ One Gynchandra was James Tod's guru, who collected and interpreted sources for him. However, it was a common practice during the colonial period where the colonial historians would employ Indian experts to collect and interpret sources for them. Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (October 2003), pp. 783-814; Rama Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2012

⁵⁷ Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, pp. 185-89

⁵⁸ The *smarak* inscribed that the Emperor Prithviraj Chauhan prevented foreign invaders opposed to our way of life from realizing their dream of overwhelming Hindustan, unto death. Salute with reverence that

the beginning years of colonial knowledge, when the British notion about the various people and regions of India was still at a formative stage, the assessment of a single individual could have a disproportionately huge impact on knowledge production.⁵⁹ The views expressed by James Tod on Prithviraj Chauhan are bound to have an impression in the minds of future generations of historians. The nationalist historians were greatly impressed by Tod's information on the "valorous Rajputs" and it reflected in the nationalist historiography as well as in the political configuration of modern India itself.⁶⁰ In 1889, a textbook was published by Amrita Lal De, a professor at the Maharaja's College in Jaipur with the intention to "rectify lapses in the knowledge of the students in Rajputana of their own history."⁶¹ Similarly, between 1912 and 1915, a journal, *The Modern Review*, published articles on themes that highlighted the "heroism and valour of the Rajputs," "the duty of the individual to the nation," and "the evils of foreign oppression".⁶² Thus, it can be seen that the early nationalists were significantly impressed by Tod's narratives of Rajputs and amplified the same in their writings.

However, the narrative of Prithviraj Chauhan being the "last Hindu king of India" had already reached to the Bengali intellectuals by the early nineteenth century. Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, in 1808, wrote his famous book *Rajabali* – a narrative prose in Bengali commissioned by the Fort William College in Calcutta for the use of young officials of the Company.⁶³ In the book, Prithviraj Chauhan also finds its mention under the name of Prithu Ray, the last Hindu king of Delhi.⁶⁴ Mrityunjay describes the defeat of Prithviraj as the end of "the Hindu dynasties" and the accession of Muhammad Ghori to the throne at Delhi as the beginning of the rule of "the Yavana emperors".⁶⁵ Thus, it can

embodiment of fame, Prithviraj . . . an archer able to hit (the source of) a sound unerringly, who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the motherland. Quoted from Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200-2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 1

⁵⁹ Jason Freitag, *Serving Empire, Serving Nation: James Tod and Rajputs of Rajasthan*, BRILL, Leiden, 2009, pp. 131–96.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 192

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 181-182

⁶² Ibid., pp. 187-188

⁶³ Partha Chatterjee, "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism," in *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1, (1992), p. 113.

⁶⁴ Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, *Rajabali* (Bengali), Baptist Mission Press, Serampore, 1838 (Fourth Edition), pp. 40-47

⁶⁵ Partha Chatterjee, "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism," p. 117

be seen that the Prithviraj legend had also reached the Calcutta intelligentsia by the 1800s. Partha Chatterjee has remarked the *Rajabali* reflected the historical understanding of educated elite Bengali society at the end of the eighteenth century.⁶⁶ Notably, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar did not differentiate between the myth, history and contemporary information in his narration. All become part of the same chronological sequence; one is not distinguished from another; the passage from one to another, consequently, is entirely un-problematical.”⁶⁷ However, Sumit Guha has termed it as the first “Indian” history – a history written by a person of Indian origin.⁶⁸ However, it seems that Chatterjee is undoubtedly accurate in his observation that the *Rajabali* was not a national history but a hybrid narrative loosely ordered on dynastic lines.⁶⁹

Therefore, it can be argued that James Tod had a significant role in propagating the narrative regarding the Rajputs being heroic in their dealings with the foreigners, particularly the “Muslim” rulers of medieval India who were bent on destroying the *dharma* of the Hindus and it was the Rajputs who vigorously defended it. Thus, whatever Hindu history is left, it is due to the heroic acts of the Rajputs. Therefore, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of Independent India had stated in a “foreword” written to the book *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* by Surendra Nath Sen how James Tod played a crucial part in the British effort to set Hindus against Muslims. Azad wrote, “There is enough material in Todd’s *Annals* to colour the history of the Middle Ages in a way that would poison the relations of Hindus and Muslims.”⁷⁰

Now the question arises, why would James Tod take up such a project of writing a historical piece on Rajputs? Tod’s dedication letter for his book *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* to King George IV, written on June 20, 1829, demonstrates that his political project was to revive the Rajput kingdoms—or restore their “independence” under British

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 114

⁶⁷ Vidyalankar, *Rajabali* (Bengali); Partha Chatterjee, “History and the Nationalization of Hinduism,” p. 117

⁶⁸ Sumit Guha, “Speaking Historically: The Changing Voices of Historical Narration in Western India, 1400-1900,” in *American Historical Review*, October, 2004, p. 1087

⁶⁹ Partha Chatterjee, “History and the Nationalization of Hinduism,” pp. 114–15

⁷⁰ Abul Kalam Azad, “Foreword,” in Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, Publications Division, INB Ministry, Delhi, 1957, pp. xviii; Azad also noted about the role played by another historian of that time Henry M. Elliot in the process of creating divisions by poisoning of initially amicable relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

protection.⁷¹ He was, therefore, remarkably acquiescent to tales of ancient glory and sought to present the *Puranas* as well as bardic annals as types of “Hindu” historical practice, assimilating them to the monastic chronicles of medieval Europe. He wrote, therefore, that the “heroic poems of India constitute another resource for history. Bards may be regarded as the primitive historians of mankind.”⁷² Thus, it can be seen that Tod had largely accepted the traditions of the Rajputs as historical accounts. Whatever might have been his approach towards the sources and his intention for writing the history of the Rajputs, his work has certainly left enormous influence in shaping both colonial and postcolonial historiography in India.

However, Tod was not the only colonial historian who presented a historical account which left its mark on the communal life of the Indian generations to come. Another colonial historian, Francis Younghusband, a British official by profession, has presented in his book *Dawn in India* that “the animosities of centuries are always smouldering beneath the surface between communities (particularly Hindu and Muslim), which blazes periodically into actual hostilities.”⁷³ The root cause for this animosity was that the Muslims in India came with a military invasion – people from different races, different law systems, social habits and different religions – all together, they are from a different civilisation and way of life.⁷⁴ Younghusband further added that “Islam came in with a conquering race, and Moslems were on fire with their new religion. They came in and ruled—ruled for centuries—and ruled with rigour. And they were flaming zealots. They would convert by the sword. They would smash the graven images in the temples. They would purify India of its sensuous luxuriance.”

⁷¹ James Tod’s dedication letter to King George IV reads as “The gracious permission accorded me, to lay at the foot of the Throne the fruit of my labours, allows me to propitiate Your Majesty’s consideration towards the object of this work, the prosecution of which I have made a paramount duty. The Rajput princes, happily rescued, by the triumph of the British arms, from the yoke of lawless oppression, are now the most remote tributaries to Your Majesty’s extensive empire; and their admirer and annalist may, perhaps, be permitted to hope that the sigh of this ancient and interesting race for the restoration of their former independence, which it would suit our wisest policy to grant, may be deemed not undeserving Your Majesty’s regard.” James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, p. v

⁷² *Ibid.*, lviii

⁷³ Francis Younghusband, *Dawn in India: British Purpose and Indian Aspiration*, John Murray, London, 1930, p. 147

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142

Similarly, one more colonial historian, Stanley Lane-Poole, stated that the medieval period of India began by subverting ancient India's long-standing ruling ideas, systems of administration and social customs by a conquering military force – the foreign invaders. The new power had imposed a new set of ruling ideals and also brought into force an unknown language (Persian) and foreign arts to the Indians.⁷⁵ Lane-Poole further noted that the new rulers remained essentially an invading force throughout the medieval period – thus, characteristically, they were an occupant force amongst the antagonistic or at least repulsive population.⁷⁶ Thus, the colonial historians tried to portray that there was a constant existence of “other” in the Indian political arena in particular and in the society as well. There were two distinct groups who could not be assimilated as there was a constant clash of two ideas – the occupants and the subjugated.

Another colonial writer, Robert Sewell, in 1900, established a narrative of Vijaynagara as a bastion of South Indian Hindu culture against alien Muslim invaders. He described the tide of Islamic conquest as overrunning the south until “suddenly about the year 1344 AD, there was a check to this wave of foreign invasion—a stop—a halt—then a solid wall of opposition; and for 250 years Southern India was saved.”⁷⁷ Thus, they tried to put all the blame on the Muslim rule in India for the so-called enmity between the two communities and noted that it was the British who at least had the intention to unite the two communities.⁷⁸ They portrayed the “Hindus” as a peaceful race who were tortured and subjugated by the invading Islamic forces during the medieval period.

The British officials who turned into historians generally viewed the identity of an Indian person with his religion, like Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and so on, before he or she is anything else. They believed that Indians were constantly at war with each other due to their faith. Reasons for this animosity have been identified as the “fanaticism of Muslims” and “superstition of the Hindus” and the juxtaposition of the two faiths.⁷⁹ Thus,

⁷⁵ Stanley Lane-Poole, *Medieval India under the Mohammedan Rule, 712-1764*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1903, pp. 3 & 111

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. iv

⁷⁷ Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire (Vijaynagara): A Contribution to the History of India*, Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd., London, 1900, p. 5

⁷⁸ Younghusband, *Dawn in India*, pp. 150-151

⁷⁹ Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p. 100

the colonialist historiography presented religious prejudice and conflict among different groups of religions as the distinctive features of Indian society – past and present. Morrison has written that “it is useless to enumerate the grounds of differences between Hindus and Muslims; the only thing that matters is that they do, in fact, feel and think themselves as separate peoples.”⁸⁰ Hence, Morrison viewed Hindus and Muslims as separate nations.

By analysing the reasons for the colonial historians’ communal approach to the Indian communities, Vinay Lal has opined that the British scholars had taken European history as a template to understand Indian history, which complicated their perceptions about India’s past. The middle-age European history was a history of constant internecine religious warfare, and when they started revisiting the medieval Indian past, they took it for granted that similar religious confrontations characterised relations between Hindus and Muslims in India, too.⁸¹ However, this approach had left a profound mark on the public imagination in India. Much of Europe’s old (pre-modern) history was about religion. Hence, religious doctrines and practices become their object of study. The historians unapologetically took sides in the debates they were supposedly historicising.⁸² Through history, they were producing ideology. This was true for most of the early British historians who were writing about India. However, Michel de Certeau has argued that old history had no problem in making ideology the object of its study.⁸³

Nonetheless, through these narratives, it was made to believe that Muslims in India are “foreigners” and their loyalty to India is susceptible. Rather, the Muslims failed to do anything noteworthy as a significant contribution to the “essential features” of Indian civilisation, thus remaining outside the boundaries of an “authentic” Indian civilisation.⁸⁴ However, in reality, it can be seen that the central Asian Turko-Afghan rulers lost their character as foreign military occupants over the period of time and got assimilated into

⁸⁰ Theodore Morison, “Muhammadan Movements,” in John Cumming (ed.), *Political India, 1832-1932: A Co-Operative Survey of a Century*, Oxford University Press, London, 1932, p. 104

⁸¹ Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 93

⁸² Partha Chatterjee and Anjan Ghosh, (eds.), *History and the Present*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 8-9

⁸³ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, tr. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 19-113.

⁸⁴ Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 113

the Indian culture, which will be discussed and argued in detail in the forthcoming chapters of this dissertation.

The colonialists not only created a suspicion regarding the “Hindustani” nature of the “Muslim” in India but also tried to delegitimise the whole historiography of the medieval period itself by casting doubt on the historians of that period. The pre-colonial India had a long tradition of written culture from the ancient period onwards. Numerous texts of recognisable historical meaning or worth were deciphered over the time like the Puranic accounts, biographical texts, and genealogies, etc. Historical accounts became much more numerous under the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal Empire. However, the British used these pre-colonial texts as mere “sources” to be evaluated by modern western canons, not as methodological influences.⁸⁵ Thus, they demeaned the historical understanding of the medieval historians of India and cast doubt on their reporting of events.

H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, in their much-celebrated book *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, have declined to accept the medieval authors as historians and termed their works as “most puerile and contemptible kind,” and worst of all, while writing the narratives, these authors exhibited atrocious dishonesty as “they seem to sympathise with no virtues, and to abhor no vices.”⁸⁶ In 1849, Elliot noted that “In Indian histories, there is little which enables us to penetrate below the ‘glittering surface’ and observe the practical operation of a despotic government [Muslim period] which was based on rigorous and sanguinary laws.”⁸⁷ William Taylor by discussing the vernacular compositions, which were in poetic form, has observed that “from the prevalence of poetry in Hindu composition, the simplicity of truth is always almost disguised. The painful result is that the Hindu mind has become familiarised with lying. The truth is insipid. Evidence loses its force.”

In contrast, H. Dodwell believed that the beginning of Islam in India introduced a great tradition of Islamic chronicles. He even accepted that the medieval Indo-Persian

⁸⁵ Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, p. 6

⁸⁶ “Original Preface by Sir Henry Elliot” in H.M Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historian*, Vol. 1, Trubner and Co., London, 1867 p. xxi; H.M. Elliot, *Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohamedan India*, Vol. 1, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1849, pp. xvii-xviii

⁸⁷ H.M. Elliot, *Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohamedan India*, p. xv

chronicles were exceptionally superior to the medieval English scholarship. The “Muslim chroniclers” were largely men of affairs (people associated with administrative matters) and were often contemporaries or even took part in the events that they recounted.⁸⁸ However, Dowell’s view did not get much attraction, instead Elliot and Dowson could generate a lot of interest in their writing. Almost all their contemporaries and successor historians like Stanley Lane Poole, Vincent Smith, Pringle Kennedy, Ishwari Prasad and so on used their work as reference.⁸⁹ Lane Poole wrote “there is no better way than to dive into eight volumes of the priceless *History of India as Told by Its Own Historian*.”⁹⁰ Thus, over the years Eliot and Dowson made their readers believe that the information provided by medieval Indian authors and historians was not factual and that it was the British who could only provide a history based on facts. One of the nationalist historians, K.M. Panikkar was also impressed by this view and opined that prior to the emergence of nationalism, “there existed no historical consciousness,” and it was the European historians and archaeologists who primarily uncovered India’s past.⁹¹ On the other hand, Truschke believes that if one looks at history from that of the Western standard, then there will not be any history except for the west.⁹²

Henry M. Elliot was a company official and pursued a research career alongside by compiling translations from the major Persian histories available to him. However, he had done the job with a defined agenda, where he tried to highlight the virtues of the British rule by painting the darker side of the “Muslim rule in India”. He noted that under the “Muslim rule” in the “Mohammedan Kingdom of India, the fountain of Justice was corrupted.”⁹³ Revenues were always collected with violence and outrage. Villages would be burnt if there were any failure to pay the revenue by the villagers and the inhabitants

⁸⁸ H. H. Dodwell, *India*, Vol. 1, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1936; pp. 22-23; Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2011 (first pub. 1960), p. 12

⁸⁹ Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 2

⁹⁰ Stanley Lane Poole, *Medieval India under Mohammedan Rule*, Preface, pp. v-vi

⁹¹ K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1953, pp. 492-493; David C. Gordon, *Self Determination and History in the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971, p. 61

⁹² Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Muslim Pasts*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021, p. xxvii

⁹³ H.M. Elliot, *Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohamedan India*, pp. xv-xvi

would be mutilated, enslaved and sold into slavery. Thus, the protectors turned into robbers.⁹⁴ On the other hand, with the supremacy of the British government, it could act as a check upon the progress of misrule of the previous “Mohamedan kingdoms of India”.⁹⁵ Hence, he showed that the British had done more good in a short span of time for the “Hindu” population of India than their Muslim predecessors during their tenure as rulers.

This narrative of Elliot on the medieval past of India soon attracted many of the Indian intellectuals as well. Elliot’s agenda of depicting the humanness of British rule through the garish portrayal of the debauchery and viciousness of previous Muslim rulers impressed a few Indian authors. Shiva Prasad wrote a text book in Hindi titled *Itihas Timirnasak* (Hindi), where he discussed the mass execution by the Muslim rulers in lurid details, along with descriptions of how women and children, including the breastfeeding infants, were massacred by zealous Muslim soldiers.⁹⁶ But the noteworthy point here is that in a later stage, Shiva Prasad acknowledged that he was a follower of Henry Elliot.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Shiva Prasad viewed the British rule in India as the period for the renaissance of Jain religiosity and scholarship. Notably, though Shiva Prasad primarily acted as an intermediary between his community and the British administration and as a spokesperson in contexts of *Jaina* principle and Jain collective identity, he would often place himself within the greater Hindu fold to uphold the Hindu orthodoxy.⁹⁸

This shows how far the narrative created by Elliot had penetrated the minds of Indians. On the other side, the Hindu nationalist movement was prepared to acknowledge the colonial description of “Muslim” rule as it suited their narrative against the Muslims. Over the years, the narrative propagated by authors like Henry M. Elliot, Raja Shivaprasad, Amrita Lal De, etc., had steadily ingrained among the people in the

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. xvi

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. xvi

⁹⁶ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, pp. 157-158; Avril A. Powell, “History Textbooks,” p. 110

⁹⁷ Avril A. Powell, “History Textbooks,” p. 110

⁹⁸ Ulrike Stark, “Knowledge in Context: Raja Shivaprasad as Hybrid Intellectual and People’s Educator,” in Michael S. Dotson and Brian A. Hatcher (eds.), *Trans-Colonial Modernity in South Asia*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2012, p. 76

vernacular-using North India.⁹⁹ On the other hand, by the time the “secular” anglophone historians woke up, it was too late to bridge the gulf created among the popular beliefs regarding the conception of the past.¹⁰⁰

The colonial rule wanted to give a new uniformity to the state. In the process, they used history as a legitimization tool in public and national life. The colonialists viewed the pre-twelfth Indian past as a great civilisation which was equal to the Hindu civilisation.¹⁰¹ And this great civilisation was demolished by the Muslim invaders starting at the end of the twelfth century. This harm was not only to its culture and political aspiration but also left its mark on the historical narratives. Therefore, the English East India Company (EIC) sought to portray itself as a rectifier of the damage inflicted by the Muslims on the Hindu subjects.¹⁰² Thus, in one moment the British started a colonial project to excavate India’s past. The excavation tried to investigate the influx of a variety of foreign people, cultures, religions and politics in the sub-continent. Because the British colonialist themselves were part of political incursions in India started by European commercial cum political entities such as the Portuguese, Dutch and French since 1489 AD.¹⁰³ However, the problematic aspect here is that the colonialists placed even the Timurids and the Ghurids as per their incursions. Thus, it seems one reason for the historical excavation was that being the latest “foreigners” to arrive and usurp the political power in India, the British wanted to justify their own position in Indian politics. As most of the early European accounts of Indian historical pasts were based on Persian sources, it is pertinent to look at how the Persian historians and authors perceived the aspect of “Hindu” and “Muslim” in particular and “we” and “other” in general in their narratives. This is one of the essential themes of this dissertation, which will be pursued and examined in detail in the coming chapters.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 76-78

¹⁰⁰ Sarvepalli Gopal (ed.), *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi Issue*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1991.

¹⁰¹ Peter van der Veer, “Monumental Texts: The Critical Edition of India’s National Heritage,” in Daud Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 135

¹⁰² Manan Ahmed Asif, “How the British Convinced Hindus that Muslims were despots and Religious Invaders,” in *Scroll.in* (Sept. 16, 2017), Online access at <https://scroll.in/magazine/850787/how-the-british-convinced-hindus-that-muslims-were-despots-and-religious-invaders>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Thus, it can be seen that colonial historians gave prominence to religious factors over other reasons for occurrences in their narratives about the medieval Indian past. Over the years, these kinds of narratives inexorably assisted in enhancing the differences between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The construction of knowledge about the history of India as a result of the project of uncovering India's past by the colonialist historians not only influenced British governance but also shaped Indian ideas about themselves. In the nineteenth century, the study of the past and present of the non-European civilisations became an integral part of Western historical practice.¹⁰⁴ Francois Furet describes this as the transformation of history to "the genealogical tree of European nations and of the civilisation they bore."¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, during the same period, there were emergent nationalisms across the African and Asian continents. The nationalists of these continents under the dominance of colonial power were impatient to unearth and present their own history because securing claims to antiquity and continuity became a critical proponent of being a nation, particularly in the non-western world.¹⁰⁶ For example, Youssef Choueiri wrote about North Africa, "The intensity of the French assault on the Maghribi cultural and social heritage was met with an equally intense response. Tunisian, Algerian, and, later on, Moroccan historians began to articulate an image of their long-forgotten past in national terms. They used the structure of French scholarship and turned its prototypes upside down."¹⁰⁷

The nationalist historians in India also sought to transform the perception of India being "merely a geographical expression (as Winston Churchill famously described India)"¹⁰⁸ into a nation. For that, having a historical consciousness expressed in a national history became indispensable – a history of unified India.¹⁰⁹ R.G. Bhandarkar stated that

¹⁰⁴ Francois Furet, *In the Workshop of History*, Eng. trans. by Jonathan Mandelbaum, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984, pp. 97-98

¹⁰⁵ Sumit Guha, "Speaking Historically: The Changing Voices of Historical Narration in Western India, 1400-1900," in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (October, 2004), p. 1085.

¹⁰⁶ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, pp. 118-119

¹⁰⁷ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation State*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2003, p. 71; David C. Gordon, *Self-Determination and History in the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971, pp. 133-176.

¹⁰⁸ Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond*, Arcade Publishing, New York, 1997, p. 7

¹⁰⁹ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200-2000*, pp. 118-119.

Indians ought to “look back upon the history of our race to trace with an unbiased mind its progress towards civilisation and observe the phenomenon of its stagnancy, or more truly, its decline and degradation.”¹¹⁰ Thus, they proceeded backwards in search of their “own history” of united India.

However, now the question arises: how did this recovery of their “own history” proceed? According to Daud Ali, with the growing sentiments of nationalism, South Asian scholars aspired to write their own past. But in the process, they often pursued and refined the research agendas propagated by colonialist historians.¹¹¹ For instance, the early nationalist historians followed the colonialist narrative where the glorification of ancient India was at the pinnacle of discourse. The ancient Indian period was overvalued as the best period of Indian history, and then the dark period started with the “Muslim” rule. Vincent A. Smith has opined that India is primarily a Hindu country, and its culture can be summed up with that of Hinduism, which is the Hindu civilisation.¹¹² He further noted that this civilisation has developed over a period of time by uniting people of different types of cultures.¹¹³

Again, the question occurs: where do the “Muslims” and “others” stand in this civilisation? By answering this question, Vincent Smith argues that an Indian Muslim often prefers to align or is in sympathy with an Arab and Persian fellow Muslim than the Hindus of this country.¹¹⁴ It seems that for Smith, the Indian Muslims are not part of the Indian civilisation. They have been effectively portrayed as “other” in the country, whose loyalty to the nation was also put in question by portraying his faith as superior to his commitment to the land where he belongs. Unfortunately, these views on the “Muslim” population of this country are still prominent among the public senses in India. Therefore, in the coming chapters, an attempt has been made to explore the way in which the

¹¹⁰ R.G. Bhandarkar, “Convocation Address, delivered at Bombay University, 1894,” in Narayana Bapuji Utgikar and Vasudev Gopal Paranjape (eds.), *Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar*, Vol. 1, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1933, p. 450.

¹¹¹ Daud Ali, “The Idea of Medieval in the Writing of South Asian History: Contexts, Methods and Politics,” in *Social History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2014), p. 384

¹¹² Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India: From the Earliest Times to the End of 1911*, At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1919, p. x

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. x

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xi

medieval authors of both faiths viewed each other in their narratives in terms of religious identity.

Moreover, Indian nationalist historians like Radhakumud Mookerji took up the theory of Smith that Hinduism is the pinnacle of Indian civilisation and amplified it further. Smith has observed that the political unity in India was achieved under the strong paramount power of the British.¹¹⁵ R.K. Mookerji strongly disagreed with Smith on this view and argued that the fundamental unity of India is much older than the British rule. It is not a recent development or innovation but has a history way back to the remote antiquity. The Hindus enjoyed a historic consciousness from the Vedic age regarding their unity – the best example of this unity was *Bharatavarsha*, which is the ancient expression of India.¹¹⁶ He further emphasised that Hinduism is the foundation on which this unity rested. Thus, Mookerji spoke of exclusively about a Hindu India.

K.M. Panikkar was also in agreement with Smith's view that the Indian civilisation is equal to the Hindu civilisation with an addition that Indian civilisation would remain incomplete until the south and the north are fetched together within the ambit of the "Hindu Civilization".¹¹⁷ Pursuing this train of thought he further argues that "unity of India was a conscious achievement of Hinduism after the great Aryo-Dravidian synthesis had taken place." Panikkar surmises that this synthesis began at the end of the Rig-Veda age and "this creates Indian civilisation".¹¹⁸ The south remained "different racially," although "the composite life of Hinduism and the domination of the Sanskrit language unite both the north and the south in unbreakable bonds, proclaiming the cultural unity of India."¹¹⁹ Thus, Panikkar emphasised on the role of Hinduism in uniting different parts of India. Hence, an effort from the nationalist historians can be seen where they equated the Indian civilisation with "Hindu civilisation" and hence put the "Muslims" and "others" outside the ambit of the civilisation.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. viii

¹¹⁶ Radhakumud Mookerji, *The Fundamental Unity of India (From Hindu Sources)*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1914, pp. xiv & 14

¹¹⁷ K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1954, pp. viii-x; Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011, p. 129

¹¹⁸ Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, p. x

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. x

R.G. Bhandarkar, a prominent early nationalist historian, wrote extensively on ancient India, where the Hindu religion, culture, caste system, etc., was discussed with a lot of interest.¹²⁰ He stated that “all the foreigners viz the *Yavanas*, the *Sakas*, the *Abhiras*, the *Turkus* (Turuskas), the *Magas*, the *Hunas*, and *Gujars* who came to India at different periods got absorbed in the Hindu society.”¹²¹ But, the problem arises when the question of Turko-Afghan invasions of medieval India comes. Bhandarkar’s view got changed drastically regarding the position of “foreigners” in Indian society. He observed, “The foreigners who came to India before the Mohammedan were absorbed so quickly and on such a large scale in Hindu social organisation that in modern society any attempt to decide who Aryan is and who a non-Aryan would be quite futile,” but the Mohammedan were not able to get assimilate with the Indian culture because of their strong religious faith.¹²² At the same breath he also tells that “we must also mix with the Mohamedan who were not absorbed in the same manner as other immigrants earlier.”¹²³ Though being a social reformer, Bhandarkar worked and stood for Hindu-Muslim unity,¹²⁴ this analysis of Indian civilisation, in a way, supported the discourse that Muslims are not part of the Indian civilisation. They are still an “outsider” in the larger scheme of “Indian-ness”. Thus, unintentionally, Bhandarkar also became a reference point for the communalists who viewed “Muslims” in general and the medieval “Muslim rulers” in particular as outsiders in India.

However, this discourse of Muslims being primarily a foreign race did not go unobserved by other nationalists. Jawaharlal Nehru rejected the argument of Smith and fellow nationalist historians and opined that the word “Hindu” means a people, not the followers of a particular religion.¹²⁵ Hinduism is not equal to Indian civilisation – Buddhism and Jainism were certainly not part of Hinduism, in fact, even the Vedic

¹²⁰ R.G. Bhandarkar, *The Early History of the Dekkan: Down to the Mahomedan Conquest*, Chuckervetty, Chatterjee & Co. Ltd., Calcutta, 1928; R.G. Bhandarkar, *A Peep into the Early History of India*, D.B. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Bombay, 1920.

¹²¹ Narayan Bapuji Utgikar (ed.), *Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar*, Vol. 2, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1928, p. 637

¹²² Ibid., p. 637

¹²³ Ibid., p. 637

¹²⁴ Harihar Panda, “R.G. Bhandarkar's Approach to the Social History of Ancient India: The Caste System,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 48 (1987), pp. 135-140 here, p. 138

¹²⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, p. 74

dharma was different from Hinduism. Yet they arose in India and were an integral part of Indian life, culture, and philosophy.¹²⁶ Therefore, it is entirely misleading to refer to the Indian civilisation as Hindu civilisation. In fact, in a later stage during the medieval period, the “Indian culture” got greatly influenced by the impact of Islam.¹²⁷ Talking about the assimilation of foreigners into the Indian culture, Jawaharlal Nehru further observed that the British were the only conquerors India experienced who were never culturally assimilated. They maintained an aloof and conservative distance and discouraged any creative impulse which was Indian.¹²⁸ An Indian Muslim or a Christian is totally Indian culturally, having a different religious faith.¹²⁹

Abul Kalam Azad, another prominent nationalist, while delivering a convocation speech at Patna University in 1947, noted that “from the dawn of history, the Indian mind has been comprehensive and tolerant of every kind of thought. It admitted every kind of faith and accommodated all shades of opinion. New caravans of various peoples and cultures arrived here [in India] and found their resting places. In orbit of social life, no one was shut, be it from any creed or religion.”¹³⁰ Thus, Abul Kalam has given stress to “tolerance” and “acceptance” as the prime component of the “ancient Indian civilisation” and challenged the “exclusivist” theory of his fellow nationalist and communalists for whom the “Muslims” were outside the orbit of Indian culture and treated as “other”. For Azad, anyone who follows this great Indian heritage of tolerance is part of this civilisation.¹³¹

Thus, it can be seen that the nationalist historians largely devoted their labour and energies to studying the ancient Indian past in search of “the unity” for their aspired nation. On the other hand, the colonialists had already envisioned the ancient phase of the Indian past as the high point of Indian civilisation, though for a different reason.¹³²

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 75

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 75

¹²⁸ David C. Gordon, *Self Determination and History in the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton: New Jersey, 1971, p. 48

¹²⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 75

¹³⁰ Abul Kalam Azad, “Convocation Address in Patna University on 21, December 1947,” in Ravindra Kumar (ed.), *The Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, 1947-1948*, Vol. 3, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 105-106

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 105-106

¹³² Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 80, 193

Though historians like Bhandarkar did not believe in the greatness of Indian civilisation¹³³, the theory had already been implanted in the “popular” imagination that India had a great Hindu civilisation and the Muslim rulers had kept it as an “arrested civilisation” for too long during the medieval period.¹³⁴ As Ashish Nandy has claimed the people who still lived without a “history” got easily influenced and had fully developed collective memories parallel to the ones that the new nation-state was seeking to implant.¹³⁵ Therefore, it can be argued that, the discourse around the Indian civilisation and the place of “Muslims” in it were later taken up by the communalists who had a different approach to the medieval Indian past in general and the “Muslim rulers” in particular.

One of the prominent proponents of the communalist view of Indian history can be ascribed to Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi, a lawyer by profession and a novelist and dramatist by passion had formed the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan during the early decade of independent India. This was an educational institute dedicated to the promotion of Indian and particularly Hindu, spiritual and cultural history.¹³⁶ He wanted to write “an elaborate history of India in order not only that India’s past might be described by her sons, but also that the world might get a glimpse of her soul as Indians see it.”¹³⁷ Thus, the idea of “restoration” and “recovery” became a prominent part of Munshi’s design in historical narratives. He firmly believed that the Gujaratis were not sufficiently conscious of the “greatness of their ancestors” so, he made the ‘reconstruction’ of the Gujarati golden age as one of his prime agendas in his literary endeavours.

Munshi started to write historical fiction by the early decade of the twentieth century to showcase the greatness of the Gujaratis, particularly during the period prior to

¹³³ R.G. Bhandarkar, Bankim generally refrains from asserting the superiority of India’s civilization compared to Western civilization. Bankim was somewhat obsessed with the glorious heritage of India’s ancient past. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse*, p. 32

¹³⁴ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse*, p. 154; S. Bhattacharya, “Paradigms Lost: Notes on Social History in India,” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 14–16, (April, 1982), pp. 692–8.

¹³⁵ Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” in *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1995), pp. 44 - 66

¹³⁶ P.G. Shah, “Munshi in the Field of Research,” in Jayantkrishna H. Dave, H. D. Velankar, and et al (eds.), *Munshi Indological Felicitation Volume*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, pp. 1-4

¹³⁷ K.M. Munshi, “Forward,” in R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1: *The Vedic Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2017, p. 7

the incorporation of Gujarat into the Delhi sultanate. In his historical fiction like – *Patan-ni Prabhuta* (The Greatness of Patan, 1916), *Gujarat-no Nath* (Lord of Gujarat, 1918-1919), and *Rajadhiraja* (King of Kings, 1922-1923), Munshi portrays that the early twelfth century was the pinnacle of the regional pride for Gujaratis when Jayasimha Siddharaja (Kumarapala's predecessor), the Solanki ruler brought all of what is now call Gujarat within a single consolidated dominion.¹³⁸ Through these fictional narratives, Munshi brought two significant aspects to the readers – one, he wanted to bring Gujarati's to an awareness of the "greatness of their ancestors" and, contra-wise, of the "demise of their culture under the Muslims".¹³⁹ A.K. Majumdar also expressed a similar view when he portrayed the Chalukyas with pride by terming them as "the virile captains of war" who saved the country from the disorder that followed the end of the Gurjara, Pratihara and Rastrakuta empires of north India.¹⁴⁰ Thus, he portrayed the sultans of Delhi as an element of disorder.

In his novel *Jaya Somanatha* (Victory to the Somanatha, 1937), K.M. Munshi dramatised Mahmud of Ghazni's destruction of the Somanatha temple in or around 1026 A.D. He wrote about it after his visit to the location in 1922 A.D., "The temple which was burned, desecrated, and battered by Mahmud still stood firm a monument to our humiliation and ingratitude. I can scarcely describe the burning shame which I felt on that morning as I walked the broken floor of the once – hallowed *sabhamantap* littered with broken pillars and scattered stones."¹⁴¹ Munshi portrayed Somanatha not simply as a religious site and place of devotion sacred to Siva, but also as a symbol closely identified with the integrity of Gujarat as a social and political unity.¹⁴² Thus, it can be seen that Munshi through his novelistic remembrance often cast the pre-twelfth century Gujarat as a Golden age for the 'Hindus', which the Delhi Sultanate effectively disrupted.

Munshi did not confine himself to fictional writings only. In his foreword to *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* while discussing the periodisation of Indian history, he wrote:

¹³⁸ Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1999, p. 211; Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 91

¹³⁹ Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 91

¹⁴⁰ A.K. Majumdar, *Chalukyas of Gujarat*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1956, p. 1

¹⁴¹ J.H. Dave et al (eds.), *Munshi: His Art and Work*, Vol. 4, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, pp. 89-90; Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1999, p. 210

¹⁴² Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, p. 212

“with the Arab invasion on the mainland of India in the eighth century and subsequent event of Afghanistan passing on to the Turks in 997 AD was the beginning of the end of Ancient India. The Muslims with their lust for power, shook the very foundations of life in India and ruled over it till the eighteenth century until the rise of Hindu power again. This intervening period was known as the medieval in India, when the Hindus had to pass through a period of collective resistance.”¹⁴³

It is noteworthy that Munshi often shifts from his regional narratives to national ones. For instance, Munshi wrote that the raid on the Somanatha temple by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was not just the looting expedition of a medieval Turkish ruler, but a catastrophe that echoes within the Indian (not just the Gujarati) consciousness throughout history. He opined in his *Somanatha: the Shrine Eternal*, “That is why for a thousand years Mahmud’s destruction of the shrine has been burnt into the Collective Sub-conscious of the race as an unforgettable national disaster.”¹⁴⁴

Like Radhakumud Mukherjee and K.M. Panikkar, Munshi also firmly believed that “national culture” is nothing other than “Hindu culture”.¹⁴⁵ For Munshi, the contours and texture of Indian civilisation had been set by the ancient Hindus long before civilisation emerged elsewhere in the world and most certainly before Islam. He writes, “Even before the origin of Islam, a highly complex civilisation and a noble culture had already been flourished in India for centuries.”¹⁴⁶ During the period from BC 150 – AD 320, the Hindu culture first time faced foreign incursion, but it had assimilated the foreigners and its elements in such a way that the Hindu culture re-asserted its values with much more vigour and intensity.¹⁴⁷ Thus, he believed that it is in the crucible of this civilisation that all that is good and just was shaped before barbaric foreigners [the Muslims] sought to leave their imprint.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 4: *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 2nd edition, 1964, p. vii.

¹⁴⁴ K.M. Munshi, *Somanatha: The Shrine Eternal*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965, p. 84

¹⁴⁵ K.M. Munshi, “Foreword,” R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1: *The Vedic Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2017, pp. 7-12; Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 93

¹⁴⁶ K.M. Munshi, “Foreword” in R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and the Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 2: *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p. xii

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xiii

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv

Another prominent historian of the early decades of independent India was Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, who believed the medieval or “Islamic” period was the darkest age of Indian history. He wrote, “The onslaught of Islam, accompanied by a marked decadence of culture and disappearance of the creative spirit in art and literature, seems to mark AD 1000 as the beginning of the Medieval Age.”¹⁴⁹ Thus, for Majumdar, everything represented by the medieval rulers (who happened to be Muslim) was against the interest of India. Majumdar also served as the group editor for *The History and the Culture of the Indian People*, the history series of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. While discussing the basis on which the volumes were organised thematically, Majumdar has stated that the first volume – *The Vedic Age*, represents the “the dawn of Hindu civilisation,” the second volume – *The Age of Imperial Unity*, is “full morning glory, the third volume – *The Classical Age* is “moon-day splendour”, the volume four – *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* is “the shadow of the declining day,” volume five – *The Struggle for Empire* is the “dusk” of Indian civilisation¹⁵⁰ as the central Asian forces entered into the northern part of Hindustan. Volume six – *the Delhi Sultanate*, in Majumdar’s words is “the darkness of the long night, so far as Hindu civilisation is concerned, a darkness which envelops it even now.”¹⁵¹ Thus, for Majumdar, everything represented by the medieval rulers in India are related to the worst things that can happen to the vast majority of Hindustan. However, it is interesting to note that R.C. Majumdar viewed the ancient history of India as the golden period of the history of Indian Hindus and Hindu culture, but at the same time, accepted the absence of historical writing in ancient India.¹⁵²

R.C. Majumdar further argued that Hindus lost their freedom long before the arrival of the Europeans in India when they submitted to Muslim rule. Though Hindus and Muslims had lived together, they did so as separate nations.¹⁵³ He even charged those who had seen a common cause for both the Hindus and Muslims for their uprising against

¹⁴⁹ R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, p. 24

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 29

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 29

¹⁵² R.C. Majumdar, “Ideas of History in Sanskrit Literature,” in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p. 27.

¹⁵³ R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, Firm K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960, p. 5

the British in 1857-58 to evict the colonialists. Majumdar argued that “this was nothing but an auspice of Indian National Congress in their endeavour to create a communal harmony.”¹⁵⁴ He also cast doubt on the “official views” on social and religious matters of medieval India.¹⁵⁵ Majumdar wrote, “so far as medieval India is concerned, there is a distinct and conscious attempt to re-write the whole chapter of the bigotry and intolerance of Muslim rulers towards Hindu religion.”¹⁵⁶

Thus, for Majumdar, medieval India represented a period in history where a force of “outsiders” came and committed the atrocious acts against its people and culture. The era of the golden period ended, and the darkness started, which could only be removed with British colonialism. “Muslims” remained as “outsiders” in his narratives. However, a clear contrast can be seen between the British and central Asian forces in India – one was the coloniser while the other made Hindustan as their home, assimilated their culture with the natives and created a new form of culture here. The language of Urdu is a product of such assimilation. But, for Majumdar, Muslims are more dangerous than the British. Therefore, he did not hesitate to admire the British for getting Hindustan rid of the tyranny of Muslim rule in India – a single achievement in itself for the British.¹⁵⁷

Another well-known historian, A.L. Srivastava, had taken a similar approach to R.C. Majumdar in his writings on the Sultans of Delhi. Srivastava has argued that the Sultanate of Delhi was an element of foreigners in Hindustan who wanted to impose their religion on Indians.¹⁵⁸ Even the government they formed was foreign, whose only administration duty was to collect revenue and maintain law and order.¹⁵⁹ However, in the same book, he noted that sultans like Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq had done a lot of public utility works like the construction of canals, bridges, roads,

¹⁵⁴ R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1970, p. 48

¹⁵⁵ The term “official view” here means that the view that has been largely accepted by the academics in the historical discourses.

¹⁵⁶ Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India*, p. 48

¹⁵⁷ R.C. Majumdar, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Agents, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 19-20; Vinay Lal, *The History of History*, p. 97

¹⁵⁸ A.L. Srivastava, *The Sultanate of Delhi (711-1526): Including the Arab Invasion of Sindh, Hindu Rule in Afghanistan and Cause of the Defeat of the Hindus in Early Medieval Age*, Shiva Lal Agrawala and Company, Agra, 1950 (5th Ed., 1966), p. 80

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129

caravanserais, reservoirs and hospitals.¹⁶⁰ Srivastava further argued that though the Delhi sultans made Hindustan their home, it was only to convert it into an Islamic country – a theocracy where the Quranic injunctions governed the conduct of the ruling authority.¹⁶¹ Taxation was imposed on the basis of *shari'a* and collected *jizyah* – a tax on the non-Muslims prescribed by Islam.¹⁶² The Muslim rulers came to India with a zeal to spread Islam in India as part of *Jihad*.¹⁶³

While discussing reasons for Muhammad Ghori's campaign in India, Srivastava has argued that "he was a pious Muslim and as such, he considered it to be his duty to bring the message of Muhammad to the Hindus of India and to put an end to the idolatry."¹⁶⁴ He noted that the sultans had little sympathy for the religion, culture, tradition and way of life of the people of this country which they held in military occupation. They treated the Hindus with contempt.¹⁶⁵ Thus he tries to explain that the Sultanate of Delhi remained as "outsiders" in India and never became Indianised. He accused Delhi sultans of doing everything to convert Hindus to Islam and termed Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq as the first *ghazi* in India.¹⁶⁶ The maintenance of cordial relations with the Caliphate of Baghdad by some of the Delhi sultans was also considered by Srivastava as part of their Islamic country.¹⁶⁷ Thus, he considered the sultanate of Delhi as "outsiders" and even cast doubt on their intention as a ruler.

Even while discussing the causes for the success of the "Muslim" forces and the defeat of "Indian" rulers, he has given stresses on the religious reason for the victory of Muhammad bin Qasim during the eighth century.¹⁶⁸ Qasim had an army of 50000 (including 6000 cavalries and 6000 camelry), and Dahir had very less number of soldiers.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, Indian rulers were defeated because of political disunity in the empire, internal fights between the rulers, unpopularity of the rulers among subjects

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 184, 212, 218, 211

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 285, 282, 304

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 209

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 11-12, 52, 304

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 72

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 20-23, 25

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 220, 241, 182

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 130

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 11-13, 40, 42

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 14

and finally, the lethargic character of the rulers made the things worse.¹⁷⁰ Thus, he portrays that militarily Indian soldiers were no less in any way than that of the “invader”. In fact, Srivastava has noted that Indian rulers lost not due to the cowardice of the Indian soldiers but due to the lethargic attitude of the monarch.¹⁷¹ He portrayed the Rajputs as ideal warriors, while the “Muslim” soldiers were unscrupulous and treacherous (Alauddin in the battle of Ranthambhor).¹⁷²

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94), a novelist, a litterateur and intellectual of the nineteenth century, wrote extensively on social and political questions as well as the historical past. He wrote a piece in Bengali on the history of Bengal in 1870s namely, “*Bangalar Itihas Shambondhe Koyekti Kotha* (A few words on the history of Bengal)”. He stated, the history of Bengal written by the western authors are faulty and cannot be accepted as such by anyone who claims to be a true Bengali because these histories of the westerners are based on the narrative produced by the Muslim authors of medieval India and only talks about the Muslim rulers (*Badshahs*) of Bengal – their birth, death and what they ate.¹⁷³ For Bankim, the Muslim rulers were anti-Hindu, beef-eater foreigners.¹⁷⁴ So, their history cannot be the history of the Bengalis, and if any Bengali accepts these histories, they are not true Bengali. Therefore, he pressed for “histories” written by the Bengalis. Of course, there were a fair amount of historical writings in Bengali when he wrote this piece in the 1880s, but for him, these were not “true histories” of Bengal.¹⁷⁵

Thus, it can be seen that Bankim Chandra has defined a clear line between the “we” and “other” in his analysis of the history of Bengal. For Bankim, whatever is associated with the Muslim rulers of Bengal cannot be part of the historical narrative of the Bengalis. He insisted that the Bengalis should write their own histories.¹⁷⁶ Bankim even refused to accept that “Muslims” had conquered Bengal fully; rather, for him, they were

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 17-20, 85

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 15

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 42, 162

¹⁷³ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Bankim Rachanavali* (Bengali), Vol. 2, Shahitya Shanshat, Kolkata, 1954, p. 336

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 336-337

¹⁷⁵ Partha Chatterjee, “Claims on the Past: The Genealogy of Modern History in Bengal,” in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies, Vol. 8: Essays in Honor of Ranajit Guha*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, p. 3

¹⁷⁶ Chattopadhyaya, *Bankim Rachanavali*, Vol. 2, p. 337

an occupational force located in certain pockets of Bengal to extort revenues, whereas, in practice, the Bengalis were the practical rulers. To support this argument, he gave the example of the Birbhoom king, Bishnupur king and Bardhaman king.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has tried to present the history of Bengal as different from that of the history of Muslim rulers of Bengal – a clear division between “we” and “other”. In talking about the subjugation of India, Bankim encapsulates into his conception of the cultural failure of the Indian people to face up to the realities of power a whole series of conquests dating from the first Muslim invasion of India and culminating in the establishment of British rule.¹⁷⁸ Thus, Bankim kept both the medieval “Muslim” rulers along with that of the British colonialists. For Bankim, India had been a “subject nation” for seven centuries.

Therefore, medieval rule in the Indian subcontinent by rulers who happened to be Muslim by their faith was seen as an alien rule against the “Hindu civilisation”. In the 1930s, an effort can be seen from the Marathi intellectuals who were trying to connect the Vijayanagara Empire to the Marathi historical imagination. In 1936, the noted historian T.S. Shejwalkar wrote a piece titled “The debt owed to Vijaynagara” by describing that while the great civilisations like Egyptian, Assyrian, Sumerian and Iranian had disappeared from the earth, the Indian civilisation (Hindu civilisation) still lived.¹⁷⁹ This could happen only because when (during the medieval time) the “Muslim” rulers where pursuing to destroy the civilisation, it had a place in the south like Vijaynagara to take shelter. Over the period of time when another great “Hindu empire” was established under the Marathas, three centuries later to that of Vijayanagara, the Indian civilisation could again be brought to further north.¹⁸⁰ Thus, both these empires acted as the protectors for the “Hindu civilisation” against the medieval “Muslim” ruler’s assault on the civilisation, and their contribution has been celebrated even today.

Therefore, it can be seen that Shejwalkar made an explicit effort to connect the two empires, which could protect the Indian civilisation by confronting the “Muslim” rulers.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 339

¹⁷⁸ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Zed Books, London, 1993, pp. 55-56

¹⁷⁹ Sumit Guha, “The Frontiers of Memory: What the Marathas Remembered of Vijaynagara,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (January, 2009), p. 287

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 287-88

For instance, Shejwalkar noted that the Maratha Empire was founded on the principle of creating a kingdom capable of confronting the atrocious Mughal emperors.¹⁸¹ It seems that Shejwalkar's effort was an artefact of the religious politics of the 1930s. It was specifically an effort to construct a Hindu nationalist vision of a beleaguered civilisation holding out against alien powers—explicitly, the Muslim sultanates and, implicitly, the British. In doing so, Shejwalkar had put both the British and the medieval rulers on similar lines.

Another historian, K.M. Panikkar, has opined that the development of modern India is merely an interaction of two cultures – the Brahmanical and Western. Though Islam brought a new creed to India (with the coming of the Ghurids) and lasted for a longer period and, in a measure, is a continuing fact, but it has not had a fundamental significance in Indian society. They failed to assimilate with the non-Islamic forces. Hindus and Muslims lived as parallel societies throughout the ages.¹⁸² Thus, it can be seen that in Panikkar's view, the Hindus and Muslims have always had a cultural divide in society. On the other hand, S.N. Mukherjee is of the view that Brahmanism (Hinduism) was influenced by Islamic traditions, at least in the upper strata of society.¹⁸³ During the medieval period in India, there was a kind of cultural assimilation of Hindu and Muslim traditions in the upper level of society. The elites of both communities shared a common interest in games like polo and elephant fighting. They listened to the same court music, enjoyed similar kinds of miniature paintings and preferred to wear the same type of dresses.¹⁸⁴ Besides these, Persian acted as a *lingua franca* for the people of both communities – again in the upper level of society.

Though it is a readily accepted fact that religion has always played an important role in every society and that it – along with class, ethnicity, gender and linguistic affiliation – provides a modality for determining identity, the communalist view insists on the exceptional place of religion in the construction of identity in India. Thus, the communal analysis of India's history and society has viewed the past from the

¹⁸¹ Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200–2000*, p. 148

¹⁸² K.M. Panikkar, *The Foundations of New India*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963, pp. 11-23, see particularly, 11 & 16

¹⁸³ S.N. Mukherjee, *Citizen Historian: Explorations in Historiography*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1996, p. 108

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 108

perspective of keeping religion as an eminent instrumentality of governance. For them, religion is the fundamental and primordial element of India's identity. The medieval period was no different for them; rather, for them, it symbolised all the negative that could happen to the "Hindus" in India.

It seems that by terming the "Muslim" rulers as "foreigners or outsiders" these historians tried to achieve two aspects – the consolidation of a geographical notion of a nation-state and defining its boundary, which was not a prominent thing in the pre-modern kingdoms and creating an idea of one nation one religion formula. All these accusations on the Delhi sultanate have been discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapters of this dissertation to understand how far these are constructed or misinterpreted.

Nevertheless, it would be unwise to assume that colonial and communal historiography alone dominated the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Historians like Mohammad Habib, R.P. Tripathi, Tara Chand, and K.A. Nizami, et cetera, have viewed medieval Indian history from a secular perspective. At a time when the history of medieval India was perceived and interpreted in communal terms and the "Muslim rulers" were being presented with religious colour, Mohammad Habib provided a new direction to the historical research by emphasising economic and imperialistic considerations.¹⁸⁵ In his article "The Arab Conquest of Sind," Habib stated, "If we are to study the history of the Eastern Institutions, we must carefully distinguish the abstract principles of creeds from the motives actually governing the lives of the mass of their followers."¹⁸⁶ Thus, Habib demarcated the theoretical aspects of Islam from that of what actually had been done by the "Muslim rulers" in the name of Islam. He believed that neither Muhammad bin Qasim nor the Ghaznavid rulers who invaded Hindustan represented the principles of Islam in their political attitude and behaviour. In *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, Habib wrote, "Islam as a world force is to be judged by the life of the Prophet and the policy of the second Caliph (Umar),"¹⁸⁷ whereas the actions of the Delhi Sultans and the Ghaznavids seem quite different from that. Thus, he tried to explain

¹⁸⁵ K.A. Nizami (ed.), *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, Vol. 2, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p. vii

¹⁸⁶ Mohammad Habib, "The Arab Conquest of Sind," in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 3 (1929), p. 77

¹⁸⁷ Mohammad Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin: A Study*, Aligarh Muslim University Publications, Aligarh, 1927, p. 80

that the inspiring motives for these conquerors to invade Hindustan were not Islam; instead, economic reasons played a crucial part in their offensive. Therefore, he remarked that Sultan Mahmud was not fighting for Islam; his prime motive was gold and glory. Otherwise, his outlook on life was essentially secular.¹⁸⁸

Mohammad Habib also vehemently opposed the narrative that Islam began in north western India with the invasion of “Muslim rulers”. In his 1929 article in the *Islamic Culture*, he argued that Islam was already present in the regions of north western India.¹⁸⁹ He mentioned about the presence of Muslims (mainly Arab merchants) at the ports of King Dahir’s territory of Sindh.¹⁹⁰ There was one Arab adventurer, Muhammad Allafi, who served under Dahir much before Qasim’s invasion.¹⁹¹ Thus, Habib has tried to provide a secular understanding of medieval Indian history through his writings. He countered the narrative of “Muslims are being other” in Indian societies. M. Habib analysed medieval Indian history on the basis of his understanding of the spirit of the age. He wrote that “All men are more or less the product of their environment,” hence, the examination or rational criticism of a medieval character should begin with the assessment of the spirit of his age.”¹⁹² Thus, M. Habib has explained that the communal feeling for the “other” communities was not present among the medieval Indian people. However, M. Habib has not evaluated the role of contemporary authors, the Ghaznavids and Indo-Persians, in creating the narrative of the early Central Asian conquests as part of *ghaza* adequately. Except for Zia al-Din Barani and, to a certain extent, Amir Khusrau,

¹⁸⁸ While writing the introduction to the translation of Zia al-Din Barani’s *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, by A.U.S. Khan, M. Habib wrote of the Delhi Sultanate, “It was not a theocratic state in any sense of the word. Its basis was not the *sharī‘at* of Islam but the *zawabit* of state-laws made by the king.” Mohammad Habib, “Introduction” in A. U. S. Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate (Including a translation of Ziauddin Barani’s Fatwa-i Jahandari, circa, 1358–9 A.D.)*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1961, vi; M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, pp. 19, 77-78.

¹⁸⁹ Mohammad Habib, “The Arab Conquest of Sind,” in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 3 (1929), pp. 77-95 & 592-611

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88

¹⁹¹ Anonymous, *Chachnamah*, Eng. trans. Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, At the Commissioner’s Press, Karachi, 1900, pp. 55-56; M. Habib, “The Arab Conquest of Sind,” in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 3 (1929), pp. 87

¹⁹² Mohammad Habib, “Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni,” in K.A. Nizami (ed.), *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, Vol. 2, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p. 66.

the rest remain to be examined for their role in creating the perception of an “Islamic state in India,” which this dissertation aims to explore in the coming chapters.

In his book, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, R.P. Tripathi examined the nature of sovereignty in the Sultanate of Delhi and argued that there were no single concepts of sovereignty among Delhi Sultans. The character of it used to get changed with the different dynasties. While Balban and Alauddin Khalji pushed for a personalised autocratic rule, Afghan rulers like Bahlol and Sikander Lodi followed tribal kinship.¹⁹³ So, the sultanate can hardly be called as “Islamic state” and a “theocracy” because the “Muslim sultans” exercised their power according to “his light and circumstances of the time, whereas a “Muslim state” should be a theocracy”¹⁹⁴ However, as the title of the book suggests, Tripathi had confined his analysis of Delhi sultanate to the aspect of sovereignty, the role of *wazir* in the administration and the method of revenue collection only. He did not venture to examine the attitude of sultans towards non-Muslims and how these aspects have been presented by the contemporary texts, which the present dissertation attempts to scrutinise adequately.

K.A. Nizami challenged the communalist and colonialist narrative of the Delhi sultanate being an Islamic monarchy. In *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Nizami argued that the Delhi Sultanate’s political and military wings were separate from the religious authority.¹⁹⁵ He further argued, “The sultanate had no sanction in *shari’a*; it was not a legal institution. Its laws resulted from the legislative activities of the rulers and the governing class.”¹⁹⁶ After establishing the monarchy, the Turks followed no retaliatory or religious fanaticism in their policies; they handled the situation with political expediency and entered into a series of compromises with the local aristocracy.¹⁹⁷ Hence, it would be unwise to term the Delhi Sultanate as a “theocratic state” which looked upon the non-Muslims with contempt. Moreover, Nizami put forward the narrative that the early invasions from Central Asia were Turkish conquests. In the chapter “Advent of the Turks”, Nizami opined that “any religious or

¹⁹³ R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, The Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, 1936.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 1

¹⁹⁵ K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Idrah-i Adabiyat-i-Delhi, New Delhi, 1961

¹⁹⁶ K. A. Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, 21.

¹⁹⁷ K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India*, p. 87

proselytising fervour did not inspire the Turkish invasions. In fact, Muizzuddin Ghori's first encounter was not with a Hindu raja but with a Muslim co-religionist."¹⁹⁸ However, several questions remained unanswered by Nizami, like what does a "Turkish state" mean concerning the Delhi Sultanate? What role did Turkish identity play on the political spectrum of the Delhi Sultanate? Why did the monarch of Delhi prefer Persian culture and language in their administration and daily life while running a "Turkish state"?

Therefore, in this thesis, an attempt has been made to explore that religion was not the dominant force in terms of governance is concerned in the sultanate period; rather, it was the pragmatism which overcame the ideology of the sultanate of Delhi. The Delhi Sultans were quite acquainted with the reality and acted accordingly in their policies. For instance, Muhammad Ghori issued the same type of coins as Hindu Shahi rulers did during their rule, with pictorial motifs (bull or horsemen) ingrained in them.¹⁹⁹ Along with these, the nature of the Delhi sultanate – like the ideas and ideologies on which the sultanate monarchies were established would be examined.

Moreover, despite these efforts from the "secularist historians", a section of the Muslim historians reacted sharply to the colonialist and "Hindu-communalist" views on the Delhi sultanate. In the process, they also contributed to a considerable extent to creating the perception regarding the "foreignness" of the Indian Muslim. The higher class of Mahommadans had long seen themselves as descendants of the Turko-Afghan conquerors of the medieval period and took great pride in that. Syed Ahmed Khan opined that the "Mahommadans are not the aborigines of this country. They came in the train of former conquerors and gradually domesticated themselves in India."²⁰⁰ In the eastern part of India as well, the idea of a "conquering foreign origin" of Muslims was dominant, especially among the upper-class Bengali Muslims. In the 1870s, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote about the Muslim population of Bengal by claiming that half of the Bengal's population is Muslim; however, the vast majority of them are not descendants of Central Asian or West Asian origin. Rather, the majority of these populations are the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 87

¹⁹⁹ Richard M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, p. 43; Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2009, pp. 111, 119.

²⁰⁰ Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, Medical Hall Press, Benares, 1873, p. 35.

“lower class peasants”, and he contemptuously argued that “it is impossible that the descendants of rulers should become peasants and the descendants of their subjects should become the upper classes.”²⁰¹ The British colonisers, particularly H.H Risley, also expressed a similar view in his ethnographic study of the Bengali population when he claimed that “the majority of Bengali Muslims were descendants, not of former conquerors but of lower-caste Hindu converts.”²⁰² These views triggered a Muslim aristocrat, Fuzli Rubbee, who wrote an extensive reply against these views.

Rubbee, in his book *The Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal* (1895), has primarily argued about two themes – whether the Bengali Muslims were native Hindus or they were the descendants of Muslims of other countries.²⁰³ He claimed a complete foreign ancestry, not only for the aristocratic class but for all Bengali Muslims. Rubbee’s tract on the origins of Bengali Muslims indirectly drew on the genealogical folklore of upper-caste Hindus. After a long rehearsal of how innumerable West Asians were attracted by the wealth and generosity of the Bengal sultans, Rubbee concluded that it can safely, and without any fear of contradiction, be asserted that “the ancestors of the present Musalmans of this country were certainly those Musalmans who came here from foreign parts during the rule of the former sovereigns, and that the present generation of Musalmans are the offspring of that dominant race who remained masters of the land for 562 years.”²⁰⁴ He further argues that even if, for the sake of argument, we admit that the Musalmans of the present time are other than the descendants of those foreign Musalman rulers and settlers, who can then the progeny, be of those foreign Musalmans and where have they gone to? Considering that the descendants of only five Brahmins and five Sudras who (as is said) originally came to Bengal from Kanauj could have multiplied to

²⁰¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Bankim Rachanavali (Bengali)*, Vol. 2: *Upanyas Vyatita samagra Bangla Rachana*, Sahitya Sangshat, Kolkata, 1954 (Bengali, 1361), p. 340

²⁰² H.H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1891; H.H. Risley, *The People of India*, Thacker, Sink & Co., Calcutta, 1915, p. 144; Abhijit Dasgupta, “On the Margins: Muslims in West Bengal,” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 16 (Apr. 18 - 24, 2009), pp. 91-96, here, p. 92; Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, p. 12; Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia, 1200–2000*, p. 132

²⁰³ Khondkar Fuzli Rubbee, *The Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal: Being a Translation of Haqiqate Musalman-i-Bengalah*, Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1895, pp. 4-5

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 53

such an enormous extent that they are to be found everywhere in the country, what impossibility is there in supposing that the descendants of the innumerable and countless Musalmans who came to this country, during long ages, have become more numerous than they.²⁰⁵

Thus, it can be seen that the egoistical Muslim scholars also equally contributed to the narrative that the Muslims in India are “foreigners”. One of the renowned medieval historians, I. H. Qureshi, has argued that India’s Hindu and Muslim communities always had a distinct identity. The Muslims were of predominantly foreign blood, though there were a large number of converts as well. But, he continued, those converts to Islam were absorbed into the Muslim communal life, which was largely influenced by the Muslims of foreign origin.²⁰⁶ To support his argument, he opined that the outlook and the culture of Muslims in India were profoundly influenced by Muslims of foreign origin. The converts were exclusively cut off from their previous culture and identified themselves with Islam. Their day-to-day habits would get changed, including cookery, food habits, dress, furniture, etc., which were moulded upon foreign patterns – like Persian and Central Asian traditions.²⁰⁷ Even in the ruling houses, though a mixture took place with the native blood, the foreign elements were kept alive. Besides these, the Muslims performed traditions like *kufw*,²⁰⁸ which allowed them to keep their foreign identity intact. Muslims usually lived in fortified townships where they maintained a most intimate communal life.²⁰⁹ Thus, he argued that though a large number of natives converted to Islam, over the years, they were absorbed into a culture which was primarily dominated by foreign elements. Since the majority of the aristocracy among the Indian

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 53–54

²⁰⁶ I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi, 1985, p. 84

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 82

²⁰⁸ According to I.H. Qureshi though the *kufw* was never legally enforced in India, but almost universally practiced by the Muslims in India. *Kufw* is a doctrine which encourages marriages between groups which are compatible; the Muslims of the subcontinent have considered it desirable, but a marriage violating it is not ipso facto void or irregular.

²⁰⁹ Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *Administration of Sultanate of Delhi*, Oriental Books Reprint Corporations, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 214-215

Muslims was of the Central Asian region²¹⁰ that culture had shaped Muslim culture in India as a whole.²¹¹

However, as a watchful historian, Qureshi has recognised that South Asian Muslims had not *begun* as a single community; they were initially of diverse geographical origins, spoke different languages, and descended from “different racial stocks.”²¹² Then he explained why all Muslims in the subcontinent— regardless of home language, “racial” stock or location belonged to a single nationality. This process was unique to India and had not happened to the Muslims of West Asia. However, he accepted that this quality of uniformity among Muslims in India was influenced by the Hindus, who, he believed, shared a common ethos.²¹³ This has at once created homogeneity among them and made them distinct from other Muslim peoples without in any way alienating them from the Muslim world.”²¹⁴

Mahdi Ali Khan, the lieutenant and successor of Syed Ahmed Khan at Aligarh, while delivering a lecture in 1873 has remarked about the deteriorating conditions of the Muslim community in India and cited the reason for this as follows:

“[W]hat especially has caused the decline of the unfortunate Indian Muslims has been their adoption of India as a homeland (*watan*), and their forsaking of their original (*asli*) homes. When the Muslims arrived in India, they were very robust, rosy-complexioned, strong and healthy. Their natures (*tabiat*) were free as well. There was some spirit (*josh*) in their hearts as well. They were ignorant of the ties of custom (*rusum*). But when they made India their homeland and joined with those nations (*qawm*) that were inferior to them in strength, courage, freedom, knowledge and livelihood, (nations) in whose

²¹⁰ The dominant foreign element is Central Asian because the conquerors after the tenth century were mostly of Turkic origin.

²¹¹ I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, pp. 82–93, 86

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 88-89

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 91

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92

veins flowed restrictions, slavery to custom, and narrow-mindedness, then they, too, became so.”²¹⁵

Thus, when he says forsaking *asli* homes, he reminds the rest about the origin of the Muslims in India and tried to portray that how the Muslims were superior to the Hindus and if some sort of ignorance and stagnant came to their livelihood, it was due to the contact they made with the native of this land.

It can be seen that an effort has been made even by the Muslim authors who felt more proud to collaborate themselves with the Muslims of foreign origin rather than to accept that a vast majority of the “Indian Muslims” actually are of native origin. Even when they accepted the fact, they tried to portray that the converts were incorporated into the Muslim communal life in such a manner that they got completely cut off from their previous culture. But, in reality, this is not the case. A Muslim from the erstwhile Bengal province would be different from that of a Malayali Muslim in terms of their culture – like dress, food and even their understanding or interpretation of Islam itself. Historically if we see, the Kyamkhanis, a small Muslim group of people that had thrived in northern Rajasthan between c. 1450 and c. 1730, associated themselves strongly with their ancestors, who belonged to a local Rajput warrior clan.²¹⁶ The Kyamkhanis are the best example of Muslims who negotiated with multiple cultural and social spheres. Therefore, in the coming chapters, an attempt has been made to explore the various misrepresentations or misunderstandings regarding the sultanate of the Delhi period in terms of its nature, way of functioning, and relation with the subjects.

Each age’s vision of the past is formed by its present concerns. The ideological stance plays a considerable role in looking back on the past. Hence, the present ideas play a significant role in recollecting the past.²¹⁷ However, over the years, this has largely been done by professional historians, who keep their personal bias aside to present the past as it was. At times a section of the historians cannot be free from their personal

²¹⁵ Faisal Devji, “India in the Muslim Imagination: Cartography and Landscape in 19th Century Urdu Literature,” in *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, Vol. 10 (2014), p. 3; Supriya Gandhi, “Locating Race in Mughal India,” in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (2022), p. 1182

²¹⁶ Cynthia Talbot, *Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative*, in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 2009), p. 211

²¹⁷ J.S. Meisami, “The Past in the Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia,” in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), p. 247

ideological attachment and present the past in a way that its reparations can be felt in the future as well. As it has been discussed, the colonialist historians, a section of the nationalist, the communalist, historians with region-centric ideas and certain Muslim egotistical historians presented the medieval Indian past in a way that it left deep implications in the popular imagination. On the other hand, of late, a section of intellectuals are bent on vilifying the “Muslim” rules in medieval India – their traditions, their administration, and their intention towards subjects other than their own faith are under constant attack. Therefore, a historical study is essential to bring forward the past/plural past that had existed on the basis of hard facts. The medieval administration has been targeted for being revolving around the *shari’a*, *kofr*, *jihad*, and *jizyah*. The rulers were targeted as being “Islamists” who wanted to establish an Islamic country (*dar-ul-Islam*) in India and run a theocracy. In their zeal to establish an Islamic country, they treated the Hindus with contempt and so on. For that reason, in the coming chapters, an attempt has been made to understand the said terminologies and to explore how far these were implemented in the governance of the Delhi Sultanate. If not, then how the perception regarding these actions of the sultans has been passed to the present will also be explored.

CHAPTER 2

Early ‘Islamic’ Invasion: *Jihad*, *Ghaza* and Establishing the Political Legitimacy in Northern India

This chapter focuses roughly from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. This was the period when the Central Asian forces established their power in the north western parts of Hindustan. The chapter intends to challenge certain lingering stereotypes that have held ground in recent decades. One such stereotype is that the twelfth-century to eighteenth-century period is the “rule of foreigners” over India. The general perception and public imagination are that Islam is fundamentally Arabian, hence geographically foreigner to India. This chapter explores how the concept of “Muslim being foreigners” was formulated in the public imagination. How this concept of “foreigners” was viewed in medieval texts?

The chapter traces the introduction of ‘Islam’ in north western India to understand the beginning of “Muslims” in India. This would also help in understanding whether it is justifiable to term the entire period of rule where the ruler happened to be a Muslim as the “rule of foreigners”? Several origin points can be seen for the Muslims in India – both peaceful and aggressive. Here aggressive ones, the so called “Islamic invasions”, have been taken up for discussion as these expeditions have left the most profound mark on the Indian historical discourses. The earliest of these invasions was in the early eighth century to the western parts of Hindustan to the Sindh carried out by Muhammad bin Qasim, one of the commanders of Abbasid Caliphate.¹ The next one was in the eleventh-century under Sultan Mahmud from Ghazna to Gujarat. Then one was under Muizuddin Mohammad of Ghur in the last decade of the twelfth century. Another one was under Babur in the sixteenth century from Kabul to Delhi. These multiple points of origin acted as constant renewals of “foreignness” in the beginning story. However, it is worth paying attention to the fact that, except for Mahmud of Ghazna, and Muhammad Qasim, who was called back to Baghdad due to change of political circumstances in Baghdad, the others settled in India and established monarchies based in India. Thus, it becomes vital to understand how

¹ Manan Ahmed Asif, *A Book of Conquest: The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia*, Harvard University Press, London, 2016, p. 2

certain competing perceptions have been created over the years regarding the “foreignness” of medieval rule in India.

The research intends to comprehend the geography of those monarchies in Hindustan whose ruler happened to be a Muslim to explore the “foreignness” of Muslims in India. Besides this, the chapter would particularly investigate the establishment of Ghurid rule in India and how they achieved the legitimacy to rule over a vast population who were not from their faith. Because would it be possible for the early Turko-Afghans to achieve any legitimacy to rule over a vast population who were not from their faith with the sole might of swords? Hence, these questions are essential to address and counter the stereotypes and perceptions regarding medieval rule in India. Another stereotype addressed in this chapter is that “Muslims” are a homogeneous group, and they took the venture of capturing India as part of their *jihad* or *ghaza* against the “infidels”. Scholars like Jadunath Sarkar have mentioned the early Turkish invasions as the “Islamic Invasion and conquest of Muslims”.² However, the British colonial historian started the trend of portraying the Ghurid expedition in northern regions of Hindustan as part of the Islamic holy war (*ghaza*) motivated by religious zeal.³ In contrast, the contemporary inscriptions and coins did not identify Muizuddin Ghorī and his successors as holy warriors.⁴ However, the contemporary literary narratives did present the early Central Asian invaders to India as the “warriors of Islam”.⁵ Hence, the chapter also investigates the concept of *ghaza* and *ghazi* concerning the Indian invasion. Did the early Turko-Afghan invasions have anything to do with *jihad*?

² Jadunath Sarkar, *Military History of India*, M.C. Sarkar and Sons Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1960, p. 24.

³ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajput States of India*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1920, p. xii

⁴ Richard M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, Penguin Books Ltd, New Delhi, 2019, p. 41.

⁵ The earliest historian to identify Muizuddin as *ghazi* was Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani. It is noteworthy that he was not writing until 1260, six decades after the conquests of Ghorī. More importantly, he was writing in the immediate aftermath of the Mongol catastrophe, which had driven countless traumatized refugees like himself out of Central Asia to the security of India. For him, India was meant as a “Muslim territory”, the *Dar-ul-Islam*, made so by Muhammad Ghorī, who was thus retroactively construed as a *ghazi*. Minhaj-ud Din-Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, Gilbert and Rivington, London, 1881, pp. xxiv-xxv.

The chapter argues that the invasions in India from the eighth century till the sixteenth century were part of multiple causes – political, economic, and circumstantial and for balancing power equations in the Central Asian regions. It was totally pragmatic in nature. During these periods, even the contemporary “Muslim” rulers fought dreaded battles against each other. Though coincidentally, all these invading rulers were Muslim by their faith, yet, ethnically, they belonged to different sects, and every sect had different and competing aspirations. This chapter also argues that all these invasions were not more than political projects for them. It was the later scholarly and literary endeavours that have played the role of painting these invasions as part of *jihad* or *ghaza*.

Much of the recorded historical past has been woven around the narratives of origins and genealogies.⁶ The origin of Muslims in India has unfortunately been viewed as invasion, oppression, expansion and part of religious zeal – the *jihad* or *ghaza*.⁷ Some historians believe that with the coming of the “Muslim” rulers in north western India, Hindu beliefs were continuously suppressed, and its institutions like the temples were constantly desecrated.⁸ *Hinduism Today*, a quarterly magazine exclusive devoted to promoting the thoughts of Hindu faith, culture and tradition, has written in their 1994 issue that “the most visible symbol of Hinduism is its temples and the Muslim rulers of medieval India targeted these institutions selectively by destroying roughly 60,000 Hindu temples throughout India and constructed mosques on 3,000 sites by 1688.”⁹ The magazine further claims the raids of Mahmud of Ghazna in 1017 AD at Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, as the most famous destruction in Indian history. It also asserts

⁶ Manan Asif, *A Book of Conquest*, p. 1

⁷ A.L. Srivastava, *The Sultanate of Delhi (711-1526): Including the Arab Invasion of Sindh, Hindu Rule in Afghanistan and Cause of the Defeat of the Hindus in Early Medieval Age*, Shiva Lal Agrawala and Company, Agra, 1950 (5th Ed., 1966), p. 80; R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1: *The Vedic Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2017; K.M. Munshi, *Somanatha: The Shrine Eternal*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965 ; A.K. Majumdar, *Chalukyas of Gujarat*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1956 .

⁸ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, p. xii; A.K. Majumdar, *Chalukyas of Gujarat*, p. 1; R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

⁹ “Hindu Timeline,” in *Hinduism Today*, December, 1994 cited in Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Oct. 1995), p. 692

that Mahmud did establish a mosque on the site after destroying the temple as part of his seventeen Indian invasions for holy war (*jihad*) and plunder.¹⁰

However, it seems the number of destroyed temples mentioned in *Hinduism Today* is exaggerated. According to the shreds of evidence found in contemporary and near-contemporary epigraphic and literary sources, the number of temple desecrations during 1192 to 1729 was eighty, whose historicity can be proved.¹¹ On the other hand, the destruction of the temple at Mathura by Mahmud seems true, but the construction of a mosque in the same place is not found in historical accounts. Mohammad Habib has noted that Mahmud ordered to bring down all the temples in Mathura as part of his financial venture.¹² Mahmud obtained 98,300 *misqals* of gold from idols made with the same metal, and around two hundred silver idols were collected, which were not weighted and were taken to Ghazna.¹³ One must not forget that temples during the medieval period also symbolised as cultural centres and were store houses of wealth too. Hence, by targeting or demolishing the temples, the Central Asian forces aspired to achieve a twin purpose – capturing immense moveable wealth stored in temples and simultaneously sending out a message that the power centre has shifted.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the presence of Muslims in India is equated with that of plunder, aggression and suppression of the “Hindus”. Indian Muslims are often portrayed as an expatriate social group that is not indigenous but belongs to a foreign origin. Some historians have countered this argument by describing this as a misinterpretation of the past,¹⁵ mainly blaming colonialism’s impact on identity formation. It is pertinent to mention that the significant scale of conflicts between the two communities began under

¹⁰ “Hindu Timeline,” in *Hinduism Today*, December, 1994.

¹¹ Richard M. Eaton, “Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States,” in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Sept., 2000), pp. 296-297; Richard M. Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India*, Hope India Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p. 37

¹² Mohammad Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin: A Study*, Aligarh Muslim University Publications, Aligarh, 1927, pp. 37-38

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 38

¹⁴ Sanjay Subodh, “Temple, Rulers, and Historians’ Dilemma: Understanding the Medieval Mind,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 62 (2001), pp. 337-338

¹⁵ Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia, and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1969; Harbans Mukhia, “Communalism and the Writing of Medieval Indian History: A Reappraisal,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 11, No. 8 (Aug. 1983), pp. 58-65.

colonial rule.¹⁶ Gyanendra Pandey opined that due to their ignorance about Indian society, the colonial masters had labelled many social conflicts as religious as they failed to grasp the nature of Indian social order and assumed that religion was the fundamental division in Indian society.¹⁷ It is, in fact, questionable whether any Hindu or Muslim identities were present in the socio-political discourses in any meaningful sense in the pre-modern Indian socio-political sphere.¹⁸ According to Pandey, pre-colonial Indian society was fragmented into various castes, sub-castes and local allegiance, which had prevented any larger allegiance from emerging.¹⁹ Therefore, the question of any large-scale religious clash or animosity would not be possible.

Now turning back to the aspect of how the origin story played its part in creating the perception of Muslims being “outsiders”, it can be argued that the “origin story” is important for both the “invaders” and the “conquered” people to have legitimacy for their continuation. At present, the origin story has been brought back to the discourse to undermine the Muslims in India as “outsiders”. By doing this, a section of society gathers pride in them. However, it is true that the romance of origins and the narrative of a unique genealogy provides satisfaction and is fundamental to any modern nation.²⁰ But, the multiple origin stories of the Muslims in India, which is that of invasion, hence, geographically foreign to India, provided the impetus to the narrative of “Muslims” being “foreigners” in India. Along with this, the origin of the Islamic faith, that is in Arabia, thus makes its religious adherence outside the geographical ambit of Hindustan also put the “Muslims” as a target of being “outsiders”.

On the other hand, if we turn back to the invasion period, it can be seen that even the “invaders” tried to create an “origin link” with India to justify their aggression. For instance, in 1021, when Abu Nasr al-Utbi wrote *Kitab-i-Yamani*, he devoted a considerable space in his description to illustrate the conquests of his patrons (Ghaznavid

¹⁶ Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*, University of California Press, 1989.

¹⁷ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990.

¹⁸ C. A. Bayly, “The Pre-History of ‘Communalism’? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1985), p. 202

¹⁹ Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*, p. 199

²⁰ Manan Asif, *A Book of Conquest*, p. 1

r. 994 – 1186) on the frontiers of north western Hindustan (particularly in the regions of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan). While describing the conquest of Amir Sabuktegin against the Hindu Shahi ruler Jaipal, Utbi included a weird incident which brought victory to the Ghaznavid ruler Sabuktegin against Jaipal. The event has been stated by Utbi as follows:

“And when the Amir Nasir-al-din perceived this, he began the work vigorously and marched from Ghazna against Jaipal. They came together upon the frontiers of each state. Each army mutually attacked the other, fought and resisted in every way, until the face of the earth was stained red with the blood of the slain, and the lions and warriors of both armies and nations were worn out and reduced to despair. Then the Sultan *Yamin-ad-Doulah* Mahmud, in this contingency, remarked that all skill and intelligence were unequal to the subjugation of this fort and that all human power fell short against it. And he remarked, further, that in that region, wherein was the encampment of the accursed, the water of spring was pure and bright, whilst free from any unclean substances, but whenever any impure thing was thrown therein a great flash of lightning shone forth, and furious winds arose, and a bitter cold succeeded, so that no one could at all endure to remain there. The Amir Nasir-ad-din, therefore, commanded that they should cast some wine-flasks into the fountain. Immediately a great darkness spread over the land and the bright day became obscured, and the atmosphere, from the sharpness of the extreme cold, drew over itself a grey mist, so that patience could no longer endure such sufferings, and they were near unto the fate of death.”²¹

Interestingly, when after almost five hundred years later from the above incident, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, embarked a journey towards India, he did all he could to find out the volatile spring that Utbi mentioned. He wrote in his memoir:

“It is recorded in books that if any filth or dirt is thrown into a certain spring in Ghazni, a violent storm breaks out at once. I was seen in a history book [*Kitab-*

²¹ Abu Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, W.H. Allen & Co., London 1858, pp. 35-36.

i-Yamini] that when the Ray of Hind²² laid siege to Ghazni, Sabuktegin ordered filth and dirt thrown into the spring. A violent hailstorm followed, and the enemy was repelled. No matter how much I searched for the spring in Ghazni, no sign of it could be found in Ghazni.”²³

As mentioned above, the event shows that while Babur was embarking on a journey towards Hindustan in search of a fortune, he did not have any idea about the space as he had never seen it before. Therefore, he was searching for signs that would allow acquainting him with the new environment. At such a juncture, Utbi's *Kitab-i-Yamini* identified a locality for Babur within the geographical ambit of Hindustan, where there was a battle that was fought between a previous “Muslim ruler” against a “non-believer” monarch where the Muslim ruler was victorious. This allowed Babur to create a link to the region as the place was once under the control of a faithful. Therefore, it seems that by searching the mysterious lake Babur too wanted to associate himself with such a heroic and political pedigree where a previous “Muslim” ruler established his power. Besides this, by searching the “origin link”, he also motivated his soldiers to regain the region again.²⁴ The description mentioned above also provides an understanding that the later conquerors were well aware of their previous conquerors' actions. In this case, Babur was well-versed in the conquest of Ghaznavid ruler Sabuktegin, who invaded India almost 500 years before his invasion. It can also be assumed the “Muslim rulers” who came to India had certain knowledge about their predecessors' conquests and sometimes took inspiration from it for their own success.

²² The Ray of Hind (i.e., India) was “Ray Jaipal,” identified as Gopala of the Rastrakuta dynasty, whose capital was at Badaon, and the event took place around AD 988. H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 4, Trubner and Co., London, 1872, p. 162; C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay, The Dynasty in Afghanistan and North India, 1040-1186*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2015 (first print. 1977), pp. 66-67

²³ Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, Eng. trans. by Wheeler M. Thackston as *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 180; Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, Eng. trans. by Annette Susannah Beveridge as *The Babur-Nama in English (Memoirs of Babur)*, Vol. 1, Luzac and Co., London, 1922, p. 219

²⁴ This leads to the question, whether the conquests of Central Asian forces were directed to non-believer monarchs alone? The answer to the question would be no, as it can be seen that they did not restrain from invading India even when the region was under a monarch whose religious orientation was Islam. For instance, while Timur Land invaded Delhi in 1319, Sultan Nasiruddin Muhammad Tughlaq was ruling over Delhi. Similarly, in 1526, when Babur invaded India, the Afghan Lodis were at the helm of affairs in Delhi.

Thus, it can be argued that whether the Ghaznavids were “Ghazi Sultans” and their invasions of Hindustan were for religious motives or financial requirements are a different aspect for debate, which has been discussed in a later stage in the chapter. But, it is foreseeable that the Ghaznavids achieved a special position in the medieval Islamic world for their patronage to learned men and intellectuals, who produced some of the masterpieces of historical narratives of that era. The later chroniclers drew on the Ghaznavid literary model in their effort to write their own works of history. At a later stage, the army leaders, particularly from the regions of the western Indian frontier and the ottoman Anatolian frontiers, read them as the source of information, inspiration and a model for stimulating a successful career by taking the previous *ghazis* as role models.²⁵ However, in most cases, this was done to uphold the morals of their soldiers to fight against the enemy.

However, I would still argue that while, on the one hand, the origin story was an inspiration and source of information for the invaders, on the other hand, the same origin story became the representation of oppression and suppression for the other group – the conquered one. Therefore, the period between the eighth to twelfth centuries is seen as a period of the growth of “Muslim” power in India by the some; on the other hand, the same period has been viewed as the “decay and decline” of the “Last Hindu Empire” in India by some others.²⁶ The successive origin stories of Muslims in India, from Muhammad bin

²⁵ Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, New York, 2009, p. 2

²⁶ Indo-Persian historiography regarded the Ghurid victory over Prithviraj Chauhan as a watershed event leading to the sovereignty of Muslims over India. Prithviraj, in this reckoning, represented the pre-Islamic past of India that had been superseded by its Islamic rulers. This conception can be witnessed in Minhaj us Jujzani’s *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, where he stated, “Lahore came under the possessions of Sultan-i-Ghazi [Muizuddin Muhammad Ghori] and thus the kingdom of Hindustan came under his sway.” Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 455

Similarly, Abul-Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* has mentioned that with the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan “the choicest portion of Hindustan passed into the hands” of the Ghurid leader Muizuddin Ghori. Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.S. Jarrett, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1891, p. 302.

Likewise, in another Persian account *Akhbar al-Akhyar* (1618 AD), exhibits that “it was from him [Prithviraj Chauhan] that the Muslims seized the domain of Hindustan. Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, p. 152.

Qasim to Zahiruddin Babur, played a considerable role in forming the perception of Muslims as a foreign race in the popular imagination. Whenever these stories of origin have been told in private conversation, bardic tales, school textbooks, academic discourse, and political talks, the reminiscence of the invasion resurfaces in the memory of the successive presents. Though the purpose of academics and scholars is to discuss morals, values, sacrifice and national characters contained in the origin stories, the political figures exploited the same to create narratives of “other” in society.²⁷

Each new arrival of “Muslims” in Hindustan recreated the memory of the past invasion in the minds of the succeeding presents. These renewals of memory kept the perception of Muslims as being “outsiders” among a section of society, who viewed each new arrival of Muslims in India as another war of attrition – an “indigenous” struggle against the conquests and dominations of a “foreign” force. The Indic narratives remembered and re-remembered those stories in their bardic songs (this aspect has been discussed in detail in chapters four and five). Therefore, it can be said that the origin story of Muslims in India represents two diverse narratives – while the Indic narratives saw it as an act of aggression against their culture and *dharma*, the Indo-Persian narratives attributed those to *ghaza*. Thus the origin story profoundly affected the minds of the successive presents as it reflects and recognises a narrative of contemporary violence

However, colonial historian James Tod gave it the religious spin by popularizing the decline of Prithviraj Chauhan as the decline of the last Hindu empire in India, and thus the end of the last protector of Hindu *dharma*. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, p. xii

²⁷ For instance, the sectarian thinker Muhammad Ali Jinnah stated: “The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature[s]. They neither intermarry nor inter-dine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life, and of life, are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Musalmans derive their inspiration from *different sources of history*. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and they have different episode[s]. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise their victories and defeats overlap.” Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, collected and edited by Jamil-ud-Din Ahmed, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Lahore, 1942, pp. 174-180.

Similarly, M. S. Golwalkar was of the opinion that “Ever since that evil day, when Moslems first landed in Hindustan [the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim and subsequently Ghazni, Ghori to Babur], right up to the present moment [1940s], the Hindu Nation, has been gallantly fighting on to shake off the despoilers.” M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, P. V. Belwalkar, Nagpur, 1938, p. 17. Though historically credited to M. S. Golwalkar, current scholarship registers the author of the pamphlet *We or Our Nationhood Defined* as Ganesh Damodar Savarkar with Golwalkar's name appended to the pamphlet. Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Terrifying Vision: M. S. Golwalkar, the RSS, and India*, Viking, New Delhi, 2007, p. xix.

between two “communities”. However, some have accepted these narratives at their face value without critical analysis and insist on avenging the past wrong in the present.

Every event of the present searches its justification in the past. The origin story also became a narrative which was used by both “Hindu nationalists” as well as the “Muslim fundamentalist” to suit their argument. However, a section of the historiography has tried to present the argument where they tried to segregate the “peaceful” existence of Muslims in India from that of the “conquest” presence.²⁸ But, they did not provide any analytical explanation for such a separation. Rather it seems the two are entwined.²⁹ Hence, instead of narratives of arrival, one needs give stress on a constant history of being Muslim in India.³⁰

The colonialist historians exploited these constant renewals of Muslim presence in Hindustan by solely attributing it to the conquests in their writings to portray the Muslims as “outsiders” just like them.³¹ In the later stage, the fundamentalist groups within both in Hindu and Muslim faiths had their contribution to this narrative as well. While one section took pride in it and compared the invaders with *ghazis*, on the other hand, the other section looked into it as a major wrong in the pages in Indian history, which needs to be corrected.

Now turning back to the stereotype, the central Asian Turkish forces, who happened to be Muslims, invaded India and conquered it as part of a religious project to spread Islam and, to a considerable extent, succeeded in it. Therefore, finding answers to a few questions becomes crucial for a better understanding of the early “Muslim invasion” in India. What kind of proximity did the Turkish people enjoy with Islam? What did the term *ghazi* mean to those who used it? Who did bestow the title? And how was one chosen for

²⁸ Tanvir Anjum, “The Emergence of Muslim Rule in India: Some Historical Disconnects and Missing Links”, in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 217-240

²⁹ Mohammad Habib argued in his 1929 essay *Arab Conquest of Sind* that Muslims arrived in India not as conquerors alone but as settlers too. He gave evidence of Arab Muslims serving under even king Dahir before the arrival of Muhammad bin Qasim. An Arab adventurer, namely Muhammad Allafi was in service of Dahir. On the other hand Muhammad Qasim never tried to accomplish by the sword what the sword can never accomplish, and the numbers of conversion during his conquest were negligible. Mohammad Habib, “The Arab Conquest of Sind,” in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 3 (1929), pp. 87, 610-611; K.A. Nizami (ed.), *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, Vol. 1, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, p. 67

³⁰ Manan Asif, *A Book of Conquest*, p. 25

³¹ This aspect has been discussed in details in the preceding chapters one and in introductory chapter of this dissertation.

the title? What kind of role did the concept of *ghaza* play in Central Asian politics and in the frontier regions in India? Finally, how did the pre-modern Muslim authors, in general, and the Ghurid authors, in particular, define the *ghaza*?

The Turks were a tribal people having different clan-based adherences living on the steps of Central Asia.³² They were nomadic people who depended on living from animals requiring pasturage and would constantly migrate from one place to another in intervals to find pasture and grazing lands.³³ This harsh life made the Turks one of the best in military prowess, energetic people with group spirit, which later helped them to carve out independent states in Egypt, Daylam and two Iraqs.³⁴

By describing the virtues of Turks as ideal soldiers, the ninth-century chronicler at the court Mu'tasim Billah, Abu Uthman Amr ibn Baḥr al-Kinan al-Baṣri, commonly known as Al-Jahiz (d.155 AH-255AH) has mentioned that the Turks were the best among all the military serving in the Abbasid forces.³⁵ A Turkish soldier was trained in such a manner that he could shoot on the wing of a bird from horseback. Al-Jahiz emphasised that "If a thousand Turkish soldiers discharge a thousand arrows all at once, they prostrate a thousand men."³⁶ He would always carry all their military equipment – his armour, beast and the harness of the beast. They were skilled in veterinary science, could care for their own horse, and knew how to keep fit. Besides these, they were swift horse runners, as a Turkmen spent more of his life on horseback than he had spent sitting upon the earth. While other contingents advance ten miles, a Turkish contingent would advance twenty miles.³⁷ They were equally intelligent for combat as they were quick to note a weak spot in the enemy camp and would attack there. They were equally loyal and obeyed the order

³² C.T. Harley Walker, "Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan on the 'Exploits of the Turks and the Army of the Khalifate in General,'" in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, (Oct., 1915), p. 654; Osman S.A. Ismail, "Mu'tasim and the Turks," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1966), p. 16

³³ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History: The Classic Islamic History of the World*, Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal, edited by N.J. Dawood, Princeton University Press, Princeton: N.J., 2015, p. 165; Walker, "Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan," p. 680

³⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal, pp. 232, 305

³⁵ The Abbasid army was consisted of five divisions: the Khorasanis, the Turks, the Clients, the Arabs and the Barawys. The Barawys were immigrant barbarians living in Arabian Felix.

³⁶ Walker, "Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan," p. 666

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 666-668

of the commander without an iota of question.³⁸ Thus, the Turks enjoyed having one of the best military qualities – loyalty, bravery, sincerity, intelligence, and skill in military tactics. Mohammad Habib believes that by the tenth century, the Turks had achieved a position among the Muslims similar to that of the *Kshatriyas* of the Hindus; that is, the Turks alone should lead an army.³⁹

Nevertheless, the early Abbasid rulers followed the policy of “leave the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone”⁴⁰ because of their aggressive nature. Al-Jahiz has mentioned that “the Turk would rather obtain a maintenance by violent means than a kingdom freely; he cannot enjoy his food at all unless he got it by hunting or plunder.”⁴¹ Therefore, the term ‘Turk’ itself is derived from the Arabic verb *taraka* meaning “to leave behind”.⁴² However, from the time of Abbasid Caliph Ma’mun (r. 813-833), things started to change. Khorasan became a royal province of the Caliphate during his reign.⁴³ Thus, a new era of caliphate-Turkish relationships began. Many prominent Turkish chiefs embraced Islam. Even while they accepted Islam, the thing which attracted them the most was the concept of *ghaza*, because it allowed them to serve in the Abbasid army, a career that befitted their natural aptitudes, additional pay, and a chance to get a share in the booty.⁴⁴ A ninth-century designated Turkish military commander in the Abbasid army Bugha al-Kabir (also known as Bugha al-Turki and Bugha, the Elder), once stated that he knew no more of Islam than the declaration of the Articles of Faith and *Shahada*.⁴⁵ Their liking for *ghaza* is related to their natural habituation and economic needs.

According to W. Barthold, *ghaza* in tenth-century central Asia was a business of the uprooted poor, who would gather in corporate organisations and join a campaign in search

³⁸ Ibid., p. 672

³⁹ Mohammad Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin: A Study*, Aligarh Muslim University Publications, Aligarh, 1927, p. 9

⁴⁰ Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 14

⁴¹ Walker, “Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan,” p. 675

⁴² Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 14

⁴³ W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, Eng. trans. by H.A.R. Gibb, Messrs. Luzac and Co., London, 1928, pp. 197-98

⁴⁴ Osman Sayyid Ahmed Ismail al Bali, *Prelude to the Generals: A Study of Some Aspects of the Reign of the Eight Abbasid Caliph, Al-Mu’tasim Bi Allah, (218-277AH/833-842AD)*, Ithaca Press, Reading, 2001, pp. 51-52; Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 20

⁴⁵ Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 20

of booty.⁴⁶ However, this narrative of *ghazis* being made up of poor for collecting booty was challenged by D.G. Tor. Her analysis of an older *ghazi* king of the ninth century (the Sistani hero Yakub al Layth) has shown that many of the *ghazi* groups were not entirely made up of the poor and actually boasted of membership among social elites with a close connection to religious circles.⁴⁷ Therefore, there seems to be no single definition of *ghaza* in relation to Central Asian context. Moreover, one thing is clear that the volunteers were not tied to their native country; they were volunteers who offered their services wherever a *ghaza* was in progress and wherever booty might be expected.

Similarly, Al Jahiz also noted that “the Turk does not fight for religion, nor for interpretation of scriptures, nor for taxes, nor for patriotism or jealousy – unless his women are connected, but he fights for plunder.”⁴⁸ Therefore, while they converted to Islam, the concept of *ghaza* served their aggressive attitude as well as providing them with economic stability. It is also noteworthy that in the eighth to tenth centuries, the Muslim warriors’ primary opponents were the pagan Turks of the steppe. Therefore, the Turks who lived within the monarchies like the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Samanid used to fight against the Turks of the steps as independent warriors and as well as official members of the army (some were of noble status) of the said monarchies.

Al-Ma’mun’s brother and successor, Al-Mu’tasim (r. 833–842), started to rely more on Turkish slave soldiers and recruited them in large numbers.⁴⁹ He had observed the unreliability and disloyalty of the Abna’, the Khorasani, and the Arab units that formed the Abbasid army throughout the civil war. During his reign, the Turks became a dominant force in his army in number and rank.⁵⁰ From 813 to 833, the governors of Syria and Egypt were the military leaders recruited from the eastern provinces of the empire,

⁴⁶ Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, p. 214.

⁴⁷ D.G. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ‘Ayyar Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*, Orient-Institute Istanbul, Wurzburg, 2007, pp. 231-287

⁴⁸ Walker, “Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan,” p. 670

⁴⁹ Adam Ali, “Turkish Slaves and Power,” in Andrea L. Stanton (ed.), *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia and Africa, An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1: *The Middle East*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks: California, 2012, p. 117

⁵⁰ Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 17; Daniel Pipes, “Turks in Early Muslim Service,” in *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2, (1978), pp. 85-96

who came to be known as the “Turks”.⁵¹ Besides these, the detribalised Turks were also brought into the Central Asian territories like Samarkand, Farghana and Shash as military slaves (known as *mamluk*). Later on, a large chunk of these slave soldiers was sent to the Abbasid army. The Samanid ruler of Samarkand, Nuh bin Asad, sent a large *mamluk* contingent to Mu’tasim Billah.⁵²

However, the slave system in the Middle Ages in Central Asia was atypical of that of the slavery system of the colonial period. According to Ibn Khaldun, in the Islamicate society the purpose of purchasing a slave was not to enchain him, rather it was to provide appropriate training and education to intensify their zeal and strengthen their military prowess.⁵³ They were trained for military service and spent most of their life as a professional soldier. They were like foster children for their master.⁵⁴ Gradually these soldiers acquired enormous influence in the ranks and files of the military system. Under Caliph Al Musta’in (r. 862-866), a Turkish soldier achieved the position of a *wazir* of the empire and was in charge of the treasury.⁵⁵

After the death of Abbasid Caliph Mu’tasim Billah (r. 833-842), the disintegration of the Caliphate started, which stretched over four centuries. This was the period when the Turkish military achieved commendable success in the Abbasid Caliphate. In the subsequent decades, political disintegration and instability at the centre provided an opportunity for the peripheral provinces to establish semi-independent regional dynasties

⁵¹ Though all of them were not ethnically Turks, but being predominantly so, they came to be referred to as such. The word Turk was generally used more in a political or linguistic sense than in an ethnic sense. Many non Turkish clans and groups had adopted the Turkish language; hence they were also regarded as Turks. According to Juzjani the non Arabic speaking troops from diverse ethnic background were also called as Turks. Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 326

⁵² Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” p. 15

⁵³ David Ayalon, “The Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan. A Reexamination (Part C1),” in *Studia Islamica*, No. 36 (1972), pp. 118-120; Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of Military System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981, pp. 5, 201-202

⁵⁴ Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, p. 84.

⁵⁵ Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 138

carving out from the greater Abbasid Empire.⁵⁶ The Ghaznavids⁵⁷ and the Ghurids were such regional dynasties that sprang out of the Caliphate by taking advantage of its disintegration. Significantly, the military slaves of Turkish origin serving the Samanid state founded these autonomous states.

Thus, it can be seen that the Turks, over the centuries, by serving in the Seljuk Empire and Caliphate in various capacities, from slave soldiers to the post of *wazir* had gained enormous military and administrative experiences. Over the years, this experience enhanced their military prowess and a desire to carve out an independent state for themselves. By analysing the ambitious nature of the Turkish military slaves, Al-Jahiz has opined that “the Turk only fears what is really worthy of fear. He is never induced to desist from pursuit by anything short of despair. He does not leave a small quarry till he reaches a large one; if he can secure both, he is not content with only one of them.”⁵⁸

Apart from this, their tribal social composition was also a catalyst in the military attitude. However, ignoring the role of *ghaza* in their campaigns after their conversion to Islam would be unjustifiable. The concept of *ghaza* might act as a tool for military leaders to galvanise their forces. It could also serve as an instrument to gain legitimacy in the Islamic world, where they wanted to carve out a place. In the chronicles of the Central Asian region, *ghazis* appear as volunteers (10,000, 20,000, or 30,000 in number) accompanying Samanid and Ghaznavid armies on campaigns against pagan opponents, as defenders of cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara in the absence of government troops, and as robber or rebel bands.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the title of *ghazi* was given to numerous princes and generals in command of various expeditions during this period.⁶⁰

Thus, it would be appropriate to get a glimpse of what *ghaza* means and the place a *ghazi* acquires in the Islamicate socio-political set-up. The revival of *ghaza* ideology and

⁵⁶ Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World: A Historical Survey, Part-I: the Age of the Caliphs*, translated by F.R.C. Bagley, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960, pp. 59-61, 68-70, 75-81.

⁵⁷ The Ghaznavid kingdom was founded by Turkish slaves Alptegin (d. 977) and Sabuktegin (d. 997); C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: The Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern India, 994-1040*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 37-44.

⁵⁸ Walker, “Jahiz of Basra to Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan,” p. 675

⁵⁹ Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, pp. 215, 242, 287, 295, 345.

⁶⁰ Ibrahim Kafesoglu, *A History of the Seljuks: Ibrahim Kafesoglu's Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy*, trans. Gary Leiser, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1988, pp. 25, 55

how the Ghaznavid and Muizzi/Ghurid forces utilised the *ghaza* in the Indian frontier regions requires scholarly attention. Finally, how the “Muslim invasion” has been represented in the contemporary Ghaznavid and Ghurid sources needs adequate investigation to understand the politics of that period.

In the second half of the tenth century, *ghazis* left central Asia in large numbers to join the fighting in the south and west. The sponsorship of *ghaza* into India was also done by the Turkish Ghaznavids of Afghanistan in the tenth to eleventh century (999-1161). This movement attracted many *ghazis* from the north.⁶¹ The person who led these invasions was Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. He invaded India on multiple occasions and destroyed prominent religious centres, including the Somanatha temple in Gujarat. He has been presented as a religious bigot whose campaigns in north India in the early eleventh century were to establish the Ghaznavid *jihadi* credential.⁶² Mahmud’s invasions in the public imagination are generally regarded as an alien, brutal and iconoclastic intrusion directed against the “Hindu” population of South Asia for Islamisation. Therefore, looking at the proximity of *ghaza* with Mahmud becomes unavoidable.

In 962, Alptegin carved out a quasi-independent principality at Ghazna from the Samanid kingdom based in Bokhara.⁶³ After his death in 969, his slave commanders Bilkatigin (r. 969-977) and Pirey (r. 977) were at the helm of affairs in Ghazna. However, in 977, Amir Nasiruddin Sabuktegin,⁶⁴ another slave officer deposed Pirey and established the effective Yaminid or Ghaznavid dynasty (r. 977-1186), which would carry arms deep into the region of Punjab.⁶⁵ The son and successor of Sabuktegin, Sultan Mahmud, is this dynasty’s most famous or infamous ruler. He left a profound impact on the minds of Indians throughout the ages - the Muslims adore Mahmud as a saint. At the same time, the Hindus curse him for his attitude towards the “Hindus”. He has been accused of waging a

⁶¹ Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 33, 114

⁶² D.G. Tor, “The Islamization of Central Asia in the Samanid Era and the Reshaping of the Muslim World,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 72, No. 2, (2009), pp. pp. 296, 298

⁶³ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, pp. 11-12

⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that Sabuktegin never used the term Sultan for himself, rather he always used the term Amir or Emir as his designation.

⁶⁵ Peter Jackson, “Turkish Slaves on Islam’s Indian Frontier,” in Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton (eds.), *Slavery and South Asian History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2006, p. 64

religious war against the Hindus of India by bearing the flags of Islam.⁶⁶ Therefore, it is essential to understand the policies of Mahmud towards India. Was it based on his religious bigotry? Or was it pragmatic in terms of the spirit of that age?

After Sabuktegin, his son Ismail ascended to the throne of Ghazna, whom Mahmud deposed in a coup and sat on the throne himself.⁶⁷ Physically, Mahmud was not a man of external beauty; rather, he had average height with well-proportionate limbs, but the smallpox marks on his face placed him in an inferiority complex.⁶⁸ It is said that Mahmud once expressed, “Looking at the face of kings is believed to strengthen the eye-sight of men, but a face such as mine will probably injure the onlooker’s eye.”⁶⁹ Then his *wazir* replied, “Not one in a thousand sees your face, but your moral qualities affect them all. Strive in the path of virtue you will love by all.”⁷⁰ He acted upon it and invaded several countries of his time, including Hindustan, which he invaded seventeen times from 1000 to 1027. These invasions brought fame for him in his country but made him infamous in Hindustan. Thus, it seems that achieving a kind of personal glory might also have played a part in Mahmud’s forty-year-long undefeated military career.

Notably, he not only waged wars on the eastern side of his empire in Hindustan but also fought wars with the rulers on the north-western side of his empire who were from the same faith as his. In the year 390 AH (1000 AD), Mahmud marched to Sistan and besieged Khalaf bin Ahmad in the fortress of Ispahbad. Subsequently, Khalaf had to make peace with Mahmud by offering over 100,000 dinars as a tribute and a promise to make

⁶⁶ Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi, or the History of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni*, The Anglo Sanskrit Press, Lahore, 1908, pp. 3, 8; Mahmud’s army has been called as the “army of Islam” and even his nobles were termed as the “nobles of Islam”.

⁶⁷ Mohamed Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of the Mohamedan Power in India, till the Year AD 1612*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., London, 1908, pp. 27-28; M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 16; Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 45; Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, p. 59

⁶⁸ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 17; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 52

⁶⁹ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 33; M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 17

⁷⁰ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 33; M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 17; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 4

the *khutba* in Mahmud's name.⁷¹ Then in 1010, he attacked Mohammad bin Suri of Ghur, made him a captive, and brought him to Mahmud's court, where Suri sucked a poisoned jewel and died.⁷² Ghur remained subordinate to Ghaznavids till the time of Alauddin Jahansoz.⁷³ Then he conquered the fortress of Hazar Asp and appointed Altun Tash as its governor with the title of Khwarazm Shah.⁷⁴

In 1012-1013 Mahmud's officers Altun Tash and Arslan Jazib conquered Ghazrjistan, and the Sultan compelled the Caliph to hand him over the regions of Khorasan, which were still under Caliph's control.⁷⁵ Then he demanded the city of Samarkand, which the Caliph Al-Qadir Billah turned down, which made Mahmud furious. He threatened the Caliph's ambassador by saying, "Do you wish me to come to [Baghdad] with a thousand elephants in order to lay it waste and bring its earth on the backs of my elephants to Ghazna?"⁷⁶ However, he soon realised that though the Caliph weakened in terms of his military might, he still enjoyed a great deal of influence over the *umma* and could easily shatter the moral foundation of the Ghaznavid kingdom. Hence, he abandoned the plan and later apologised to the Caliph.

However, those expeditions in Hindustan brought him much fame, glory and wealth. His motives behind these invasions would clear the charges that those expeditions were for religious purposes. The Indian invasions of Mahmud seem part of a larger design of him. His real aim was to establish an empire based in Ghazna, and the Indian expeditions were means to that end. As the Ajami princes crowned the western frontiers of his state, the war against Indian royals served two purposes for him. Firstly, it allowed him to gather a large sum of wealth which made his financial position secure, which in turn allowed him to gather a large army. Secondly, he could declare the wars in India as *ghaza*, because, unlike Western frontiers, the rulers in India were not of his faith. By declaring *ghaza* he could get the support of volunteers of Turkish origin from Turkestan and Khorasan.

⁷¹ Abu Sa'id Abd al-Hayy Gardizi, *Zayn al-akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth as *Ornament of Histories: A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011, p. 82

⁷² Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, pp. 49-50; Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 31; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 19

⁷³ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 31

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35

⁷⁵ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 53

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54

According to Mohammad Habib, Mahmud had one hundred thousand regular armies and usually could gather another twenty thousand as volunteers.⁷⁷ Roos-Keppel too mentioned that Mahmud got the support of volunteers (*ghazis*) from Turkestan, Mawar-ul Nahr and Khorasan during his campaign in India.⁷⁸ Similarly, Al-Utbi stated that on one occasion, “nearly twenty thousand men had come from the plains of Mawar-ul Nahr, through zeal for Islam, and they sat down waiting the time for Sultan’s movements, striking their numerous swords, and uttering the shout of the war, God is great!”⁷⁹ Thus, in the name of *ghaza*, volunteers were collected. The *ghazis* were the volunteers whose income depended on the share in the plunder.⁸⁰ These volunteers were extremely eager to win a battle, as only a win would provide them with financial gain. The *ghazis* were an essential constituent in medieval warfare. They provided strength as well as legitimacy to the ruler. Thus, declaring a *ghaza* provided Mahmud with a set of committed volunteers who desperately wanted to win. Even when Mahmud’s father, Sabuktegin, was once on a weak footing against Jaipal; he declared the war as a *ghaza* and called for soldiers from among the volunteers of Islam (*ghazis*).⁸¹ However, unfortunately, these chronicles do not provide any information about the culture of the *ghazis*. They provide exhaustive imagery of wars, but in terms of cultural information, these works confined their narratives to the rulers and their courts.

Besides these, the Indian Rais were not a match for his military skills; the terrains were fertile, allowing his soldiers a regular supply of grain and water during the expedition. Except for the Somanatha expedition, the rests of Mahmud’s invasion of India were in the fertile regions of northern Indian regions. Apart from these factors, it seems Mahmud being a son of a slave officer of the Samanid kingdom and himself a person who usurped the throne from his brother against the wish of his deceased father, urgently

⁷⁷ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 36

⁷⁸ Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, pp. 27, 38

⁷⁹ Abu Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds as *Historical Memoirs of the Amir Sabuktegin and Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, Early Conquest of Hindustan and Founders of the Ghaznavid Dynasty*, The Oriental Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, London, 1858, pp. 363, 335-36, 333, 450.

⁸⁰ C.E. Bosworth, “Mahmud of Ghazna in Contemporary Eyes and in the Later Persian Literature,” in *Iran*, Vol. 4 (1966), p. 85

⁸¹ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 33-42; Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, p. 61

wanted to establish his moral authority. The Indian expedition allowed him to declare these wars as *ghaza*, as these expeditions were in the pagan lands – the *dar-al-kufr*. The victories in these lands would bring fame for him not only in his domain but throughout the Islamic world. It can be seen that special correspondences were sent from the battlefield in India about the progress of the invasion to the court in Ghazna for the nobles and chiefs.⁸² Then the messages of victories (*fathnamas*) were also sent to the *durbars* of the Caliph.⁸³ In 400 AH (1009 AD), Mahmud wrote a letter describing his victories in Hindustan to the Caliph of Baghdad. On receiving the letter, the Caliph assembled a grand congregation and ordered that the message of victory (*fathnama*) must be read from the pulpits of his palace to all the people so that the people might be informed of the exalted victory of Islam in India. The Caliph also instructed his people to thank God for this victory and pray for such further conquests and victories.⁸⁴

Over the years, Mahmud's fame reached such a height that in the year 412 AH (1011 AD), the wise and pious unanimously petitioned Mahmud to make the journey to the house of God (Mecca) a safe passage from some unruly tribes of Arabs as the Abbasid Caliphate lost its glory and power.⁸⁵ Mahmud was the first Ghaznavid and "Muslim ruler" of that period to assume the title Sultan, received a robe of honour from the Caliph Al-Qadir Billah with the title of *Yamin al-Dawla wa-Amin al-Millah* (Right hand of the state and Trusted one of the Religious Community).⁸⁶ Thus, it seems that Mahmud's assumption of the mantle of *ghaza* might also be an attempt to distance his dynasty from its slave origins and to achieve great repute in the contemporary Islamicate⁸⁷ world.

⁸² Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 29

⁸³ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 41; Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, p. 58

⁸⁴ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 62; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 32

⁸⁵ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 62; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 33

⁸⁶ Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth, p. 82; Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, p. 243; Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 36; M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 21

⁸⁷ Here Islamicate world denotes those states whose rulers were associated with the religion of Islam and culturally Islamic norms dominated their monarchy.

The Indian campaigns also allowed Mahmud to make his people prosper back at home, which reduced the chances of questioning his legitimacy as a ruler. Ferishta noted, “The nobility of Ghazna perceived the taste of their king evinces itself in architecture; they also endeavoured to vie with each other in the magnificence of their private palaces, as well as in public buildings which they raised for the embellishment of the city.”⁸⁸ The construction works allowed him to attract the imagination of many. On one occasion, on his return from Hindustan, Mahmud ordered the construction of a magnificent mosque with marble and granite and furnished it with rich carpets and candelabras and other ornaments of silver and gold. The structure was of such beauty that it struck every beholder with astonishment.⁸⁹ This mosque came to be known universally as the Celestial Bride. In the vicinity of this grand mosque, Mahmud also constructed a university along with a library facilitating with numerous books in various languages.⁹⁰ Mahmud constantly needed finances for these exalted constructions, and the Indian expeditions were the source. Before one of his campaigns, he ordered the indispensable sum to be collected within two days, which was actually achieved.⁹¹

Though Mahmud wore the blanket of religion, his personal disposition shows that he loved drinking wine and enjoyed the company of women and music.⁹² Besides, Mahmud had a contingent of Hindu soldiers and even commanders from the non-Muslim background. Soyand Rai was one such commander.⁹³ However, it is noteworthy that in the medieval period, during the course of the war, rulers supported each other not based on religious orientation but to protect their interests. While in 1005 (AH 396), Mahmud attacked Multan, its ruler Abul Fateh Davud sought help from Anandapal and latter sent a greater part of his army to Davud.⁹⁴ During Mahmud’s Thaneswar campaign, Anandapal not only provided a safe passage to the Sultan but also provided a contingent of 2000 horsemen under the command of his brother to serve Mahmud.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 61

⁸⁹ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 463-464

⁹⁰ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 61

⁹¹ Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, Eng. trans. by H.A.R. Gibb, p. 297

⁹² M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, pp. 17, 20-21

⁹³ Ibid., p. 85

⁹⁴ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, pp. 40-41

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 51

Thus, it can be said that Mahmud's expedition in Hindustan were for greed, personal glory, gold, and dynastic legitimacy; they had nothing to do with God. During the period from 900 to 1000 the minor dynasties become dominant force in Central Asian regions with the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate. These dynasties were often embarked on a sphere of invasion and war against each other. These invasions were to establish their legitimacy and to achieve the eminence of Alexander, Faridun, Jamshed, Kai-Kaus, Kai-Khusrau and so on. The court chroniclers used the invasions to portray in favour of their patrons to place them with that of the ancient Persianate heroes. The invasions of Mahmud in India provided this opportunity to his court chroniclers as well and they did place Mahmud in a higher space than he might actually was. However, Mahmud fought Hindus and Muslims when the question of his benefit came. Religion was used as a *posteriori justification* of what had been done by both his court chroniclers as well as he himself. For instance, once, Sultan Mahmud heard that a certain man in Nishapur owned great wealth. The Sultan summoned him and asked, "I heard that you are a heretic and irreligious." The person replied, "In me, there is no fault except that I am wealthy; I possess much wealth, so take all my possessions, but do not put this stigma on me."⁹⁶ The Sultan took all his wealth and gave a certificate under the royal seal in which he wrote, "His principles are those of the Musalmans."⁹⁷ Thus, the worldly gains were the prime concern for Mahmud.

However, his court chroniclers put a great deal of effort into crafting his image as a *ghazi* ruler through contemporary texts.⁹⁸ Let us see how the contemporary sources viewed Mahmud's invasion in their writings. Utbi, Gardizi and Baihaqi were contemporaries of Mahmud (r. 998-1030) and his son Mas'ud (r. 1030-1041). C.E. Bosworth believes that though these scholars were at the service of the Sultans, they maintained a considerable degree of impartiality and objectivity.⁹⁹ On the contrary, a closer look at their work presents a different picture. The way in which these authors

⁹⁶ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 83; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 53

⁹⁷ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng trans. by John Briggs, p. 83; Roos-Keppel, *Translation of the Tarikh-i-Sultan Mahmud-i-Ghaznavi*, p. 53

⁹⁸ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and Frontiers of Islam*, p. 58

⁹⁹ C.E. Bosworth, "Early Sources for the History of the first four Ghaznavid Sultans (977-1041)," in *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (1963), pp. 3-14; C.E. Bosworth, "Mahmud of Ghazna in Contemporary Eyes and in Later Persian Literature," p. 85

reported the encounters between Mahmud and his contemporary Hindustani rulers would bring forward the role of texts in crafting images.

Abu Sa'id Abd al-Hayy Gardizi, who claimed to be present at many military campaigns of Mahmud, has provided detailed description about Mahmud's military campaigns in India. In his *Zayn al-Akhbar* (Ornament of Histories), Gardizi stated the events of the Thaneswar campaign. Gardizi wrote:

“Information reached Amir Mahmud that Thanesar was an important place with large numbers of idols there. The Indians accorded it importance comparable to the position of Mecca for the Muslims, and they venerated the shrine highly. Within the city was a very ancient idol temple containing an idol which was called Chakraswami. When Amir Mahmud heard about this, he felt a strong desire to go there and do some *ghaza*.”¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Utbi has also described the motives of Mahmud behind his campaign to Thaneswar. He wrote:

“It came to the ears of the Sultan that in the country of Thanisar [Thaneswar], there were many of the peculiar species of elephants, which they called Silman. The prince of this country was high among the deceivers and enjoys exalted positions amongst the sinful. So, the Sultan thought good to design this conquest, that thus the standard of Islam might be exalted by victory and extirpating idolatry thereby.”¹⁰¹

Subsequently, Gardizi mentioned Somanatha as well. He wrote:

“A story had been related to him that there was a great city on the shores of the All-Encompassing Sea (sc. the Indian Ocean) called Somanatha which was venerated by the Indians just as the Muslims venerate Mecca. It contained numerous idols of gold and silver, and the idol Manat, which had been transported from the Ka'ba by way of Aden in the time of the Lord of the World (i.e. Muhammad), was there. When Amir Mahmud heard this account,

¹⁰⁰ Gardizi, *Zayn al-akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth, pp. 86-87

¹⁰¹ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 393-394

he became gripped by the idea of marching against that city, destroying those idols, and embarking on a *ghaza*.”¹⁰²

Likewise, Utbi, while describing Mahmud’s campaign to Nagarkot in Lahore, stated:

“After his victories in the west, he returned to Ghaznin for some days’ relaxation. However, his mind turned to the choice of expanded boundaries to spread the glory of Islam. So, he determined to take another expedition to Hindustan to raise the flag of Islam and flags of idolatry and denial of religion might be subverted and overset.”¹⁰³

It shows that Mahmud heard about the idolaters in Ghazna from someone and then decided on his adventure for the *ghaza*. According to these texts, it expresses his intentions: a desire for treasures, religious zeal, and a sense of adventure all at once. Once he reaches the enemy territory, the land of unbelievers, God showed him light during his tough times as these campaigns, according to Gardizi and Utbi, are for the sack of Islam. Gardizi wrote:

“Amir Yamin al-Dawla took up a position that day upon an eminence in order to view Ganda’s army. He saw a whole world of tents, pavilions and camp enclosures, with cavalry, infantry and elephants. His spirits drooped, and he became gripped by regrets, so he sought help from God Most High, asking that He should vouchsafe his victory. That night, God Most High sowed fear and apprehension within Ganda’s heart. The next morning the army of Ganda deserted the place by leaving arms and beasts.”¹⁰⁴

“During his conquest of Bahatih [Bhatia], when Mahmud crossed the river beyond Multan and encamped before Bahatih, he noticed the city walls were so high that only an eagle could reach its height. The fort was surrounded by a moat, like a girdling sea, with a deep and wide abyss. There were elephants as

¹⁰² Gardizi, *Zayn al-akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth, pp. 96-97

¹⁰³ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 339-340

¹⁰⁴ Gardizi, *Zayn al-akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth, p. 91

headstrong as Satan. But, with the grace of God sultan's army snatched a victory for Islam."¹⁰⁵

Through these narratives, Mahmud has been presented as an equal or superior member of a fraternity of warriors and prophets, not merely a descendant of them. Mahmud's image as a *ghazi* king did not derive simply from his military achievements but from the efforts of the Ghaznavids to monopolise the recounting of Sultan's deeds. His image survived because he (through his letters of victory) and his courtiers succeeded in occupying the position of storyteller during Sultan's lifetime. Though Mahmud used religious motives for his political gain, the personification of Mahmud as a *ghazi* king seems to be an effort of later textual prototypes. When Mahmud of Ghazna was established as the supreme ruler of the region, he redirected his energy into India, not out of religious fanaticism or for the propagation of the faith, but out of his desire for loot¹⁰⁶ and glory in the Islamic world.

The next so-called *ghazi* king was Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam, better known as Muhammad Ghori (r.1173-1206), whose Hindustan invasion was compartmentalised for spreading Islam. He invaded the northern regions of Hindustan on multiple occasions from the end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the thirteenth century. He was the first ruler who happened to be a Muslim and aspired to settle permanently in India. However, he was killed on his way back to Ghazna in 1206.¹⁰⁷ Thus, in the following, an attempt has been made to understand the factors responsible for Muizuddin's invasions in India. Was it for Islam? Or was it as pragmatic as Mahmud's invasions showed?

The Ghurids were free, pastoral chieftains in a culturally marginalised and geographically remote place in Afghanistan. They had been converted to Islam only a few generations before they abruptly broke out of their mountain strongholds onto the plains of India.¹⁰⁸ Until the late twelfth century, the Ghurids were the followers of an obscure but zealous Islamic sect, the *Karramiya*,¹⁰⁹ whom the mainline Sunni Muslims considered

¹⁰⁵ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 322-324

¹⁰⁶ Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, pp. 287, 290-291

¹⁰⁷ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. H.G. Raverty, pp. 484-485

¹⁰⁸ C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghur," in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June, 1961), pp. 122-126; Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, 1192-1286*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007, p. 48

¹⁰⁹ *Karramiya* was a sect which had flourished in the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world, particularly in the Iranian regions from the ninth century until the Mongol invasions. The founder of the sect

deviant.¹¹⁰ On the contrary, Juzjani is of the view that the Ghur got converted to Islam during the time of the fourth Caliph Hazrat Ali.¹¹¹ However, the chiefs of Ghur would not remain obscure for long. In the mid-twelfth century, they came to the limelight when they established a multicultural empire on both sides of the Hindu Kush range with an astonishing speed.¹¹² Two brothers co-governed the sultanate during its rapid expansion in the last quarter of the twelfth century. The elder brother, Sultan Ghiyasuddin bin Sam (r. 1163–1203), ruled from the Ghurid capital of Firuzkuh in west-central Afghanistan and focused on first conquering and then governing the Central Asian regions. The younger brother and junior partner in this diarchy Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (r. 1173–1206), ruled Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan and used that city for more than three decades as a base for launching his military and political operations in north India.

The first of these invasions started in 1175 when Muizuddin marched through the Khurram Pass to the middle Indus valley and attacked the Ismaili Muslim community known as *Karamitah* in Multan.¹¹³ Three years later, he advanced into Gujarat, sacking the Siva temple at Kiradu.¹¹⁴ However, it is noteworthy that the brothers did not only attack Hindustan but also conquered regions in Central Asia. The city of Ghazna itself was captured in 1148 and marked their first foothold on the north-western rim of the subcontinent.¹¹⁵ To the west, in Khorasan, they seized from the Seljuqs the cosmopolitan

was Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Karram, a son of a vine tender *karram*, but there is some support for the readings that the name came from Karam or Kiram. C.E. Bosworth, “Karramiya”, in P. Bearman, et al (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0452 (accessed on April 2, 2023)

¹¹⁰ D. S. Richards (Eng. trans.), *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, Vol. 3, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2016, p. 48; Sunil Kumar believes that the Ghurids converted into Islam by the late tenth and early eleventh century. Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 48

¹¹¹ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 302

¹¹² C.E. Bosworth, “The Early Islamic History of Ghur”, pp. 17-118

¹¹³ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 449; Abdul Qadir al-Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. George S.A. Ranking, Darah-i-Adabiya-Delli, Delhi, 1973 (first published, 1898), p. 68; K.A. Nizami, “The Ghurids,” in M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth (eds.), *History of civilizations of Central Asia, Vol. 4: The age of achievement: A.D. 750 to the end of the fifteenth century, Part 1*, Multiple History Series UNESCO Publishing, UNESCO 1998, p. 182.

¹¹⁴ K.A. Nizami, “The Ghurids,” p. 182.

¹¹⁵ S. Jabir Raja, “The Afghans and their Relations with the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1994, Vol. 55 (1994), pp. 784-791.

city of Herat in 1175¹¹⁶ and, in 1201, the oasis cities of Merv¹¹⁷, Tus, and Nishapur.¹¹⁸ Besides these, the Balkh, Talkan, Andkhud, Maimand, Fariyab, Panjdih, Maw-ar-Rud and so on (all Central Asian regions) were conquered by the two brothers.¹¹⁹

Coming back to Indian invasions by Muizuddin, it can be observed that in the beginning years, he was following Mahmud of Ghazna's policy of a century and a half earlier, raiding Indian sites for plunder in order to finance his dynasty's imperial ambitions to the west. But his intentions soon turned to seizing and holding territory in upper India. In 1176 he captured Peshawar and secured the Khyber Pass, giving him direct access to the Indian plains from his base in Ghazna.¹²⁰ In 1181 he attacked but failed to capture Lahore, the capital of the last Ghaznavid sultan, Khusrau Malik (r. 1160–86). The following year he secured his southern flank to India by seizing the Sindi port of Debal. In 1186 he successfully took Lahore, finally extinguishing the Ghaznavid dynasty.¹²¹

Then in 1191, Muizuddin engaged the Chauhan Maharaja, Prithviraj III, at Tarain, 120 kilometres north of Delhi. Here, the Sultan suffered his first defeat and a wound to his arm caused by an Indian spear.¹²² He spent the next year regrouping in Ghazna. There he prepared for a return engagement with Prithviraj, training his cavalymen and their horses to combat the Chauhans by having them attack mock elephants made of mud and wood.¹²³ In 1192 the two armies fought a rematch, again at Tarain, where the Sultan carried the day, and Prithviraj was captured.¹²⁴ Over the next ten years, Muizuddin's troops attacked

¹¹⁶ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 374-77; C. E. Bosworth (ed.), *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*, BRILL, Leiden, 2007, p.154

¹¹⁷ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 378; C. E. Bosworth (ed.), *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*, pp. 401-405

¹¹⁸ Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, p. 36

¹¹⁹ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 378

¹²⁰ K.A. Nizami, "The Ghurids," p. 181-82.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 181-85

¹²² Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 459-464

¹²³ Abd al-Malik Isami, *Futuhu's Salatin or Shahnama-i-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. and edited by Agha Mahdi Husain, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1967, p. 148; Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 466-468

¹²⁴ Owing to the significance of the Chauhan dynasty's defeat at the hands of Muhammad Ghuri, the life of Prithviraj has been the subject of many different telling over the centuries. For a study of these different constructions of his life, and what they tell us about South Asian history, see Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200– 2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016.

and annexed political centres across north India: Meerut, Hansi, Delhi, Kol (modern Aligarh), Benares, Ajmer, Bayana, Ujjain, Badaun, Kanauj, Gwalior and Kalinjar.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, having evolved so quickly from a remote mountain chiefdom to a sprawling sultanate spanning north India, Afghanistan, and Khorasan, the Ghurid leaders shed their former provincial identity and adopted a more cosmopolitan posture, embracing both the substance and the trappings of the Persianate bureaucratic and centralised state.¹²⁶ This included proclaiming their sovereignty at the Friday prayer and using the imperial umbrella (*chatr*) and kettle drums (*naubat*); both of them were Persianate symbols of political authority.¹²⁷ They also discarded the modest title of *malik al-jabal* (King of the mountain).¹²⁸ Ghiyasuddin now grandly styled himself “the most exalted Sultan (*sultan al-a’zam*)” and Muhammad Ghori “the great sultan (*sultan al-mu’azzam*)”.¹²⁹ Notably, during the medieval age in the Islamic world, from Balkan to Bengal, the long-established tradition and shared cultural heritage had recognised designations such as Sultan, Shah and Padishah as the marker of sovereignty.¹³⁰ However, in an Islamic establishment, the ruler had to be subordinate to the Caliphate, though it might be a nominal way.

The Ghurids had achieved some remarkable success within a short span of time. The chapter aims to explore what motivated the Ghurids to appear so suddenly in this manner and what explains their remarkable success. Was it because of their affiliation with Islam and part of their project of holy war – *ghaza*? Or was it because of their political acumen and advanced military techniques? Or is it related to the weakness of the rulership in Hindustan?

With the decline of the Seljuk Turks in Khorasan and the Ghaznavids, the former overlords of the Ghurids created a power vacuum in the region and allowed Ghurids to

¹²⁵ Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 51

¹²⁶ Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, p. 38

¹²⁷ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 378

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 370

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 389, 488

¹³⁰ Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*, Princeton University Press, Princeton: N.J, 2016, pp. 73-85, particularly p. 76; Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Émigrés and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019, p. 1

carve out an independent state for themselves.¹³¹ Although he and his brother Ghiyasuddin shared their kingdom's sovereignty, they governed their respective domains very differently. According to the Ghurid tradition, the ruler had to honour all his male relatives by giving them titles and governorships virtually as autonomous sultans.¹³² Muizuddin ignored Shansabanid's coparcenary rights and refused to share the resources under his control with any of his kinsmen.¹³³ Thus, many of his relatives turned against him. Perhaps it was the fear of an attack from his relatives in Afghanistan that compelled Muizuddin to spend a large amount of his time at his base in Ghazna.¹³⁴ Unlike Ghiyasuddin, who had governed Khorasan, Muhammad Ghuri excluded his clan members from administering the annexed territories in India, preferring instead Turkish slaves (*bandagan-i-Turk*) personally loyal to him. He possessed some thousand Turkish slaves whom he considered his own children.¹³⁵ All his leading commanders during his campaign in India were slaves. Qutubuddin Aibek (Kannauj, Benares, Chandwar), Tajuddin Yilduz, Bahauddin Tughril (at Bayana in eastern Rajasthan) and Nasiruddin Qubachha (in Sindh) were his close associates in his campaigns in Hindustan. Thus, it seems that Muizuddin desired to carve out an independent state for himself, where he would not have to share ruler-ship collateral branches of his clan. Thus, he preferred his slave officials over his kith and kins for a high post in his Empire in India.

Like the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids were also Turkish by origin, and the Turkish militaristic attitude was bound to play its role in their aspirations for conquests.¹³⁶ The Ghurids were rebellious by nature, even when they were a lesser power in the region. They never had been submissive and obedient to any other king except for a brief period to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna.¹³⁷ Their north-western boundary was shared with the

¹³¹ Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, p. 41.

¹³² Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of Delhi Sultanate*, p. 49

¹³³ Ibid., p. 63

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 61

¹³⁵ Irfan Habib, "Formation of Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century," in Irfan Habib (ed.), *Medieval India, Vol. 1: Researches in the History of India, 1200-1700*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2021 (First published, 1992), p. 7

¹³⁶ Tanvir Anjum, "The Emergence of Muslim Rule in India," p. 219; Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981.

¹³⁷ S. Jabir Raza, "Early Ghurids and the Ghaznavids," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 77 (2016), p. 155

Khwarizm Shah and the Ghuzz Turks, who were equally powerful and flourishing.¹³⁸ Muizuddin would certainly face resistance in the North West in case of his aggression in that direction. In contrast, in the Indian subcontinent, rulers were competing and conspiring against each other, making the expedition towards north India strategically safer. For instance, in AH 601 (AD 1204-1205), Muizuddin took a force to Khwarizm, where he faced stiff competition from the Khwarizm Shah and finally he had to withdraw his forces from the gate of Khwarizm.¹³⁹

Multiple factors like the aggressive attitude of the Turks, personal greed for glory, economic aspirations, contemporary political compulsions, defensively weaker northern Indian regions, and so on had acted as the catalyst for the Ghurid forces to invade Hindustan. The governing structure that Muhammad Ghori established in north India would clear the motivation for the conquests further. Shortly after defeating Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192, Muizuddin ordered his slave Qutubuddin Aibek to push further east. This resulted in the conquest of Delhi, with both that city and the old Ghaznavid capital of Lahore placed under Aibek's governorship. The Sultan's other most trusted slaves continued expanding and consolidating Ghurid authority across the Indo-Gangetic plain from their respective bases Tajuddin Yilduz in the strategic zone between Ghazni and the Indus valley, Bahauddin Tughril in Bayana (in eastern Rajasthan) and Nasiruddin Qubacha in Sindh.

However, after annexing these territories or during the annexation, individuals from old lineages were installed as vassal rulers or after a period of intervening campaigns in the neighbourhood.¹⁴⁰ The Chauhan Raja Prithviraj III had been captured in 1192 and soon thereafter put to death. However, his son was installed as a tributary king to the Ghurids, ruling over Ajmer and the formidable hill fort of Ranthambhor.¹⁴¹ Although Prithviraj's brother revolted shortly after the conquest, his son Govindaraja remained loyal

¹³⁸ C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghur," in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June, 1961), p. 116

¹³⁹ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 473-474

¹⁴⁰ A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India: A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi, 1206-1290 AD*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 50-56,

¹⁴¹ Hasan Nizami, "Taj-ul-Ma'asir," in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London, 1869, p. 216

to the Ghurids, for which he was rewarded with a robe of honour.¹⁴² The Chauhan prince reciprocated by sending Muhammad Ghuri a series of exotic golden sculptures forwarded first to Ghazna and then to the Ghurids' court in Firuzkuh in the Afghan highlands.¹⁴³ By such measures, the Chauhan offspring was allowed to continue as the subordinate to the Ghurids.

Likewise, in 1196, the Parihara raja of Gwalior was also permitted to continue ruling at a strategically important fort like Gwalior, albeit as subordinate to the Ghurids.¹⁴⁴ In Banaras as well, the chiefs of the Gahadavala dynasty (in the late eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries) were reinstated in power as tributary kings.¹⁴⁵ Again, in 1201-1202, when the Ghurid armies conquered Anahilapataka (Patan) in Gujarat, and the defeated Raja of the Solanki dynasty (in the mid-tenth to late thirteenth centuries) was permitted to continue ruling that territory as a tributary king to the Ghurids.¹⁴⁶

In the lower rank as well, the skilled, noticeable and impressive military personnel were taken to the Ghurid service at the local level. Juzjani has mentioned about the heterogeneous nature of the Ghurid armies of the Delhi sultanate in the twelfth century and thereafter.¹⁴⁷ The commanders, too, apparently did not hesitate to ally with local chieftains and their subordinates.¹⁴⁸ Fakhr-i Mudabbir has noted that Qutubuddin Aibek sometimes retained local chieftains, the *ranagan* and their subordinates, the *thakkuran*, in his campaigns.¹⁴⁹ They may not have received any space in his court, but they were important allies, especially since the "Hindu" political domain was open to considerable negotiation amongst a myriad of potential allies and competitors.¹⁵⁰ For instance, The Machchlishahr Copper Plate Inscription recorded Harishchandra, the son of Jayachandra

¹⁴² Nizami, "Taj ul-Ma'aşir", in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 2, pp. 219-220; Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2009, p. 111

¹⁴³ Nizami, "Taj ul-Ma'aşir", in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 2, p. 220; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 111, 119

¹⁴⁴ Nizami, "Taj ul-Ma'aşir", in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 2, pp. 227-228

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 223

¹⁴⁶ D.S. Richards (Eng. Trans.) *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from 'al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, Vol. 3, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, New York, 2016 (first published, 2008), pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁷ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. H.G. Raverty, pp. 798, 852-853

¹⁴⁸ Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of Delhi Sultanate*, p. 97

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 97-98

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 112

as the new ruler.¹⁵¹ It shows that, at least at the initial stage, the institutional process of royal grants and ritual recognition of authority suffered no dislocation with the defeat or death of the ruler at Ghurid's hand.¹⁵² Even at the local level of political authority, the landed elites remained in office, assisting the newly established administration. Keeping the local chiefs in the service, the Ghurids might have sought to minimise the disruption of the conquest by establishing continuities with the pre-conquest order, which also helped them to legitimise their rule in India.

The Sultan even issued coins following the Indian standard of weight and metallic purity while keeping the similar iconographic symbols used by the defeated Chauhan rulers after establishing his authority over north India. For instance, the coins issued from Ajmer followed the local pattern of Prithviraj III with only the modification of engraving the name "Muhammad Sam" in Nagari script on the obverse side, whereas in the reverse of the coin the existing horseman motif with the word "Prithvirajadeva" was allowed to carry on.¹⁵³ These coins illustrated a bull on one side and a horseman carrying a spare on the other, a feature that appeared in the coinage of the north Indian dynasties for centuries.¹⁵⁴ However, Muhammad Ghori's name appeared in Devanagari script on the reverse side of those coins, prefaced with the Sanskrit honorific title *Sri*.¹⁵⁵ Significantly, some of these coins even depicted an image of the Hindu goddess Lakshmi on the inverse side, while on the reverse side, the Sultan's name in Devanagari script preceded by either *Sri* or *Hammira*¹⁵⁶ was inscribed.¹⁵⁷

Thus, it can be seen that the Ghurids in India were more pragmatic than zealous in their approach to Indians. By issuing coins with the same weight, metallic purity, Devanagiri script and familiar images of the previous rulers, the Sultans might try not to

¹⁵¹ Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscription of Delhi Sultanate, 1191-1526*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1990, p. 56

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 56-57

¹⁵³ Edward Thomas, *The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, Trubner and Co., London, 1871, pp. 17-18

¹⁵⁴ Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, p. 43; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 111, 119.

¹⁵⁵ Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, *Coins*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1969, p. 85

¹⁵⁶ A Sanskritized form of the Arabic term *Amir*.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 85

disrupt trade and commerce.¹⁵⁸ The new ruling class seems to have realised the conservative instincts of the Indian merchant class, who would resist any new types of coinage. On the other hand, circulating through many hands, the words and images stamped on new coins, the Ghurids could communicate their political ideology to their subjects. Thus, through these coins, the Sultan tried to project an image of political continuity with north India's defeated dynasties and familiarised the new ruling class. Therefore, it can be said that if the Ghurid were a rigid Islamic force, they would not continue with the north Indian coins of that period. Instead, the Ghurid portrayed their political acumen by allowing the economy of that time to move on without creating any hurdles.

In short, the Sultan seems wanted to position himself as an overlord reigning over multiple dynasties in Hindustan. To assert his overlordship and his latest political status in India, Muhammad Ghuri had sent to his subsidiary Indian rulers signet rings with his name engraved in Sanskrit.¹⁵⁹ Thus, Muizuddin effectively established an administrative system where the circle of sovereignty was created with him positioned at its centre. The Sultan appointed local chieftains in his service as intermediaries, which allowed him to have a section of a political ally who legitimised his rule over a vast section of people who did not belong to his own faith. Besides this, after violently annexing so much of north Indian territories, the Sultan was required to legitimise his authority; hence he reappointed kins and kiths of the defeated rulers in the subordinate positions. Thus, it was done with a well-thought-out strategy for the newly formed state to function peacefully. Moreover, if one looks closely, it can be seen that the early raids by the Ghurids were targeted not at monarchies ruled by the kings of Hindu faith, rather the early conquests were targeted at "Muslim rulers" – Ismailis in Multan and the Ghaznavids in Lahore were their first target.¹⁶⁰

Besides these, Mohammad Habib mentioned the "urban revolution", which also played a considerable part in the process of legitimising the Ghurid presence in north

¹⁵⁸ Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 137, 164, 180

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.117

¹⁶⁰ Tanvir Anjum, "The Emergence of Muslim Rule in India," p. 236

western parts of India.¹⁶¹ Habib stated that India during the eleventh century was a country of fortified cities, towns and villages (*mawas*) which were controlled by the higher classes (Thakurs/Rajputs).¹⁶² The lower classes were living outside these fortified places as they were not allowed to enter the gated spaces or even within the *mawases*. They were only allowed to enter the gates at designated times to provide services like supplying commodities and doing cleaning jobs, without which the upper classes would face difficulties.¹⁶³ With the coming of the Ghurid forces, these restrictions were lifted, and the lower-class people were allowed to enter the gated spaces.¹⁶⁴ They even joined the Ghurid army and served the Ghurid interest.¹⁶⁵ Habib further mentioned that during the Mongol invasion of Hindustan, the “post-revolutionary” Indian working class supported the Delhi Sultan Iltutmish and fought vigorously as they did not want to lose their newly found freedom.¹⁶⁶ Thus, according to Mohammad Habib, the invasion of the Ghurid forces brought an urban revolution which freed a large section of the Indian society from social discrimination, which in turn allowed the Ghurids to earn their support to legitimise their rule in India.

Yet, the Ghurids are accused of destroying various temples as part of their zeal for upholding Islamic beliefs over others’ religious thoughts. It is a fact that the Ghurid armies shattered many temples during their invasion. However, Richard Eaton thinks that Ghurid troops desecrated those temples which were patronised partially or entirely by the defeated rulers, which was a tradition even followed by many Indian royals. In pre-modern India, the traditions of desecrating temples were seen as an act of detaching the enemy rulers from the most visible sign of their former sovereignty.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, Richard Davis has shown in his research that even the victorious “Hindu” Kings of the subcontinent routinely despoiled the temples of their vanquished opponents and redeployed sacred relics as signs

¹⁶¹ K.A. Nizami (ed.), *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, pp. 59-84.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 62

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 62-63

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 69, 74

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 77-78

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 71

¹⁶⁷ Richard M. Eaton, “Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States,” in Sunil Kumar (ed.), *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples?: Readings on History and Temple Desecration in Medieval India*, Three Essays Collective, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 93–139

of victory in their temples.¹⁶⁸ Because during the medieval period, religion legitimised the rule, and rulers took to its substance. The authority of the state was vested in ruling dynasties, “state deity” or *rastra-devata* (usually it was Vishnu or Shiva).¹⁶⁹ Therefore, whenever a monarch conquered another ruler, the temples of the defeated was normally looted, refined or destroyed as a mark of detaching the defeated Raja from the most prominent manifestation of his former legitimacy.¹⁷⁰ For instance, a large number of Jain temples at Dhaboi and Cambay, near Anhilwara Gujarat, were plundered by the Paramara king Shubhatavarman of Malwa during the period 1193-1210 AD.¹⁷¹ Similarly, King Harsha of second Lohara dynasty of Kashmir (r. 1089-1101 AD) plundered a number of Hindu temples for replenishing his treasury.¹⁷²

Likewise, the Sultans of Delhi also followed this medieval tradition during their conquests in the Indian subcontinent. Sanjay Subodh argued that if the intention of the Delhi sultans were to humiliate the sentiments of the Hindus by desecrating the temples, why mosques were constructed in the same place where the temple was once standing? For Subodh, it is because, like temple, mosque is also a symbol of purity and an apologist of the medieval state could always argue that construction of mosque in place of razed temple maintained the sacredness of the place.¹⁷³ If the real intention was the only to desecrate the place of worship of the enemy, then it could have been easily left barren or any other structure constructed, which did not maintain the sacredness and sanctity of the place.¹⁷⁴ Thus, the Ghurid onslaught on temples can be seen as part of the rule of the age. Along with wealth, the demolished temple place also provided readymade platform to construct a structure of their choice, in most cases a mosque. Because, the construction of

¹⁶⁸ Richard Davis, “Indian Art Objects as Loot,” in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52 (1993), pp. 22-48.

¹⁶⁹ Sanjay Subodh, “Temples, Rulers and Historians’ Dilemma: Understanding the Medieval Mind,” in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol. 62 (2001), p. 337; Richard M. Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 104

¹⁷⁰ Sanjay Subodh, “Temples, Rulers and Historians’ Dilemma,” p. 337

¹⁷¹ R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 5: *The Struggle for Empire*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p. 70; A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1976, p. 265.

¹⁷² R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 5, p. 99; A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 265

¹⁷³ Sanjay Subodh, “Temples, Rulers and Historians’ Dilemma,” p. 338

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 338

a congregational mosque on same sites where there was a temple served the purpose of giving the message of change of governance as well. The mosque replacing the temple can also be viewed as an intention to replace the authority of a defeated enemy with a new tradition of governance.

Another indictment the Ghurid faces is that because of torture inflicted by them, much Hindu population had to leave their native places and migrate to other regions. John Richards and Kashi N. Singh have explored this aspect of migration in their researches and come to the conclusion that the migration was more of political and economic in nature than religious persecution by the “Muslims rulers”.¹⁷⁵ Juzjani too stated that these migrations were, in most cases, undertaken as part of strategic tactics. For instance, the Sena King Rai Lakshmanasena (written as Lakbmani’a by Juzjani) was advised by the astrologers, Brahmans and counselors of the kingdom (*munajjiman, brahmanan, wa hukma -yi mamlakat*) that since the prophecy of Turkish conquest was at hand, the Rai should agree to transfer himself and all of his people from this territory so that we may remain safe from the havoc of the Turks.¹⁷⁶

Thus, it can be argued that the Ghurid conquest and their establishment of the sultanate were motivated by factors which can rarely be attached to the holy war (*ghaza*). Moreover, these series of victories have been portrayed as a sort of victory of Islam over the infidel lands by a section of the Indo-Persian scholars of that age. Hence, this section of the chapter intends to understand the role of later textual prototypes in creating the image of *ghazi* king. Among the prominent sources from the Ghurid period is Minhaj us-Juzjani’s *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. This work has provided a detailed description of the Ghurid conquest of India, especially in section (*tabqat*) twenty. This piece of work was written during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah of Delhi in 1260. Without *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, our knowledge about the Shnsabani dynasty and Ghurid history in the early Islamic period would be meagre. According to *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, the invasion of Muizuddin was like a Holy war (*ghaza*) of Sultan Salahuddin, who achieved victories over

¹⁷⁵ John F. Richards, “The Islamic Frontier in the East: Expansion into South Asia,” in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1974), pp. 107-109; Kashi N. Singh, “The Territorial Basis of Medieval Town and Village Settlement in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India,” in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 58, No. 2, (1968), pp. 203-220.

¹⁷⁶ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 425

the Christian Franks of Syria and Palestine.¹⁷⁷ He even constantly addressed Muizuddin as the *Sultan-i-ghazi* in his account.¹⁷⁸ Juzjani recorded:

“Like the illustrious and great monarch, Sultan Salahuddin, whose intention was to manifest the true religion, and the Empire of Islam should be victorious. For the purpose, he waged holy war by throwing open the gates of those countries of the infidels. In the same manner, Muizuddin Muhammad Sham also brought victories in the country of Hindustan.”¹⁷⁹

In 1178-79 (574 AH), Sultan Muizuddin marched an army towards Nahrwalah by way of Uchh and Multan, but he was defeated by the Rai (Rae) Bhim Diw [Deo]. In Minhaj-us-Juzjani's words, “the army of Islam was defeated and put to rout,” and the “Sultan-i-Ghazi” returned to Ghur without having accomplished his design.¹⁸⁰ Here it can be seen that Sultan's army was defeated, but the author did not fail to mention him as the *ghazi*. In another instance, describing Gobind Rae [Rai] of Delhi's battle with Muizuddin, Juzjani dramatically narrated the event to portray the greatness of Muizuddin. He noted that:

“When the ranks were duly marshalled, the Sultan seized a lance and attacked the elephant on which Gobind Rae of Delhi was mounted and on which elephant he moved about in front of the battle. The Sultan-i-Ghazi, who was the Haider of the time, and a second Rustam, charged and struck the Rae on the mouth with his lance with such effort that two of that accursed one's teeth fell into his mouth.”¹⁸¹

From the quote mentioned above, if we notice the choice of words of Juzjani, it can be seen that he was trying to portray Muizuddin as a man of some extraordinary magnetism whom God had chosen to establish Islam in the regions of infidels. He was placed in the same line with that of the ancient Persian hero Rustam. However, in the same battle against the Rae, Muizuddin was severely wounded and retreated.¹⁸² Thus, purely a motive

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 214

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 451, 452

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 214

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 452

¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 459-460

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 461

can be witnessed in Juzjani's portrayal of Muizuddin's war against the royals of northern Hindustan as a war of Islam against the infidels (here, the Hindus).

Muizuddin's repeated invasions in the last decades of the twelfth century were not at all concerned with the spread of Islam in India. In 578 AH (1182-83 A.D.) Muhammad Ghori led an army towards Diwal (Dibal) and took control over whole of the territories on the sea coasts of Gujarat. However, instead of annexing the territory into his sultanate, he decided to acquire as much wealth as possible and returned from there.¹⁸³ This shows that Muizuddin's invasions were not in any way to spread Islam or to pursue *ghaza*, as has been demonstrated by Juzjani.

During Muizuddin Muhammad Ghori's second invasion, he sent an embassy to Ajmer so that the Rai (Pithura) submit to him without the intervention of the sword. However, in *Taj ul-Ma'aṣir*, it was portrayed that the Rai was warned to restrain from the path of ignorance, abuse of law, infidelity and darkness.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the author tried to describe the invasion of Ghori as the conquest of Islam. Nonetheless, if we see the subsequent events, it can be seen that, after the victory, the Sultan collected a large amount of booty and left the governorship to Rai Pithora's son.¹⁸⁵ It is noted in *Taj ul-Ma'aṣir*:

“The army of Islam marched forward to Ajmer, where it arrived at the fortune moment and under an auspicious bird, and obtained so much booty and wealth, which you might have said that the secret depositories of the seas and hills had been revealed.”¹⁸⁶

Afterwards, during the conquest of Delhi, the Ghurid army encamped around the city and demanded that “the Rai and the Mukaddams of that country placed their heads upon the line of slavery, and their feet within the circle of obedience, and made firm the conditions of tribute (*malguzari*) and the usage of service.”¹⁸⁷ Here too, the stress was on a tribute and obtaining the service of the local authorities to collect booty and further their invasion. There is no mention of any conversion or initiative to spread Islam.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 453

¹⁸⁴ Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma'aṣir”, in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 2, p. 213

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 216

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 215

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 216

However, if we see the narrative of these wars, the author has portrayed in such a manner that it seems to be a war of religion. For instance, when Qutubuddin Aibek conquered “Benares,” it was described by Hasan Nizami that “with this victory, the impurities of idolatry were purged by the water of the word from that land and the country of Hind was freed from vice and superstition.”¹⁸⁸ Similarly, he described the conquest of Nahrwala in 1195. He wrote:

“The two armies stood face to face for some time, engaged in preparation for fight, and on the night prior Sunday, the thirteenth of the Rabi’ul Awal, in a fortune moment the army of Islam advanced from its camp, and at morn reached the position of the infidels. The army of the idolatry and damnation turned its back in the fight from the line of battle. Most of their leaders were taken prisoners, and around fifty thousand infidels were dispatched to the hell by the sword.”¹⁸⁹

Likewise, Minhaj us-Juzjani too described the victory of Nahrwala as “the conquest of Gujarat”.¹⁹⁰ But, Peter Jackson has disputed this claim by Juzjani on the basis of *Shajarat al- Ansab* of Fakhr –i-Mudabbir and argued that the invasion of Nahrwala in 1197 did not led to any acquisition of territory.¹⁹¹ However, Muhammad bin Mansur bin Said, alias Fakhr-i-Mudabbir has himself perceived the victory of Ghurid forces as the victory of Islam. He wrote, “Infidel towns have become cities of Islam. In place of images, they worship the Most High. Idol temples have become mosques, colleges (*madrasahs*) and hospices (*khanaqah*). Every year several thousand infidel men and women are being brought to Islam.”¹⁹²

Thus, it can be seen how the later literary prototypes played a significant role in creating the narratives of *ghaza*. Most of these wars were waged for pragmatic reasons, like to finance their projects in Ghazna and Ghur. The raiding of Hindustan was a financial necessity; a political annexation and the mass conversion of Hindus were

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 223

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 230

¹⁹⁰ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Eng. trans. H. G. Raverty, Vol. 1, p. 516

¹⁹¹ Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999, p. 19

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 20

probably never envisaged.¹⁹³ However, the judicious court chroniclers and authors serving the Ghaznavid rulers had created a heroic role model – that of the *ghazi* (holy warrior) King in their description of campaigns carried out by their patron in India. For instance, in 1021, Al-Utbi depicted the campaign of Sabuktigin with exaggeration, frightening mystification, and provoking astonishment, without factual emphasis only to portray the greatness of his patron.¹⁹⁴

There were two major trends of historical writings by Perso-Arab scholars in the medieval period: the *adab*¹⁹⁵ and the *akhlaq*.¹⁹⁶ The *akhlaqi* texts were usually written to describe the imperial mannerisms and royal discourses. These works also perceived the political relationships as a cooperation achieved through evenhandedness. These texts elaborate that justice should be promoted by the ruler, who was supposed to be affectionate and favourable, instead of utilising his power to command and seek obedience only.¹⁹⁷ These texts aimed “to provide a philosophical, non-sectarian and humane solution to emergent problems that India’s Muslim society encountered.”¹⁹⁸ In this process, the court chroniclers modelled their patrons after ancient heroes like Faridun, Rustam, Afrasiyab, Kai-Khusrau, Kai-Kaus, and even Alexander the Great was incorporated into the Islamic tradition.¹⁹⁹ The Alexander story reached to the Muslims through Syrian

¹⁹³ C.E. Bosworth, “Mahmud,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2, Vol. 6, BRILL, Leiden, 1991, p. 65.

¹⁹⁴ Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 31-32

¹⁹⁵ The *adab* tradition is prescribed Islamic etiquette and practical norms of conduct with an ethical code involving every aspect of life. Initially, *adab* stood for civility and courtesy, developed some notion of humanitas, but eventually was reduced to the specific meaning of ‘the knowledge necessary for given offices and social functions.

¹⁹⁶ Jamal Malik, “Constructions of the Past in and about India: From *Jahiliyya* to the Cradle of Civilization. Pre-colonial Perceptions of India,” in Ute Schuren, Daniel Marc Segesser, and Thomas Spath (eds.), *Globalized Antiquity: Uses and Perceptions of the Past in South Asia, Mesoamerica, and Europe*, Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH, Berlin, 2015, pp. 51-56.

¹⁹⁷ Jamal Malik, “Constructions of the Past in and about India: From *Jahiliyya* to the Cradle of Civilization. Pre-colonial Perceptions of India,” in Ute Schuren, et al (eds.), *Globalized Antiquity Uses and Perceptions of the Past in South Asia, Mesoamerica, and Europe*, Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH, Berlin, 2015, p. 57

¹⁹⁸ Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India, c. 1200–1800*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 12.

¹⁹⁹ Marin, Manuela, “Legends of Alexander the Great in Moslem Spain,” in *Graeco-Arabica*, Vol. 4, (1991), pp. 71–89; Richard Stoneman, “Alexander the Great in the Arabic Tradition,” in Stelios Panayotakis et al (eds.), *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, BRILL, Leiden, 2003, pp.15–18; Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty pp. 459-460. This aspect has been further discussed in details in chapter three.

sources.²⁰⁰ Over the years, the Alexander story acquired a lasting and resilient tradition in the Perso-Arabic historiography as the epitome of norms and virtues of victory, morality, and immorality. Notably, Alexander was gradually incorporated into the Islamic tradition as a monotheistic champion and was equated to a prophet in Nizami's (1141–1209) *Iskandarnamah*.²⁰¹ These trends became famous and had a long-lasting effect on the Islamic world.²⁰²

Indo-Persian scholars like Amir Khusrau also incorporated the Alexander narrative by portraying “Alexander’s destiny not merely to a universal kingdom, but also to a kingdom of Islam.”²⁰³ The Persianate author described Alexander as the pinnacle of Persianised Islam, who aspired to establish the *din Muhammadi* – the Mohamedan religion everywhere.²⁰⁴ By taking cue from the Alexander story, Amir Khusrau also, in his epic of conquest, the *Khaza'in al-Futuh* portrayed Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296–1316) for his accomplishment in keeping the warring Mongol menace at a distance from north India. Interestingly, Khusrau even compared his patron Alauddin with the first Caliph Abu Bakr (r. 632–634) and Sultanate capital Delhi with the caliphate capital Baghdad for his strong measures against the Hindu landed class.²⁰⁵

Thus, taking inferences from the Islamic icons to show the greatness of Indian rulers who happened to be Muslim was a standard tradition among medieval Indian scholars, which in turn gave the impetus to the perception that the “Muslim” rulers were more aligned with the Persian or Islamic tradition than the Indian. However, it also can be seen that Khusrau was equally proud of India. He has stated:

²⁰⁰ Robert Hillenbrand, “The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol Sahnama,” in M. Bridges and Johann C. Burgel (eds.), *The Problematics of Power: Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, Verlag Peter Lang, Berlin, 1996, p. 203

²⁰¹ Johann C. Burgel, (1996), “Krieg und Frieden im Alexanderepos Nizamis,” in M. Bridges and Johann C. Burgel (eds.), *The Problematic of Power*, pp. 91–107

²⁰² Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and Frontiers of Islam*, p. 2

²⁰³ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in-ul-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Wahid Mirza, National Book Foundation, Lahore, 1975

²⁰⁴ Similarly, in his *A'inha-ye Iskandari*, Amir Khusrau eulogized Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296–1316), who had called himself the “Second Sikandar” (*Sikandar-e thani*), for his achievement in keeping the Mongols out of northern India. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 73–75; Jamal Malik, “Constructions of the Past in and about India,” pp. 57–58.

²⁰⁵ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in-ul-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Wahid Mirza; Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1997, p. 90.

“Greece has been famous for its philosophy, but India is not devoid of it. All branches of philosophy ... are found here. ... In divinity alone, the Hindus are confused, but so are all the other people. ... They worship, no doubt, stones, beasts, plants and the sun, but they recognise that these things are creations of God and adore them simply because their forefathers did so.”²⁰⁶

Likewise, while Minhaj us-Juzjani, Hasan Nizami, Fakhr-i-Mudabbir and so on were describing the Ghurid invasions of Hindustan might be following the trends of the eulogical description of their rulers to place them as per the standard of ancient heroes.

In the medieval period, literature was considered the processor of a somewhat trans-temporal truth value – describing events and human emotion.²⁰⁷ According to Tayyib El Hibri, the pre-modern Arabic and Persian sources were not meant to provide historical facts at all but to provide lessons through their allusive powers.²⁰⁸ Julie Meisami thinks that history for pre-modern authors amounted to the “useable past” material handed down through books that could be reworked based on the contemporary political situation of the given authors.²⁰⁹

Thus, to understand the heroic and *ghazi* traditions, it is necessary not only to take contemporary scholarship into account but also on which background these kinds of literature were set needs adequate attention. The *ghazis* mostly consisted of poor working-class peasants who were primarily interested in acquiring the looted booty after a victory under the leadership of certain kings. However, when these actions were recorded in a comparatively later period, the authors gave a rhetorical spin to the narrative. The rulers also sent regular correspondence from the war front to the court and did play their part in creating the image of a *ghazi* king.²¹⁰ These were primarily done to acquire political positions in the “Islamic world”, moral authority among their followers and to justify their political actions.

²⁰⁶ Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1935, p. 183

²⁰⁷ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, p. 17

²⁰⁸ T. El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al -Rashid and the Narrative of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

²⁰⁹ J.S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999.

²¹⁰ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and Frontiers of Islam*, pp. 65-73

Besides this, in the “Islamicate world”, there was a tradition to preserve the *ghazi* tales in epic form. It can be seen in the Anatolian, the Central Asian frontiers and in the Indian frontiers too.²¹¹ One such *ghazi* was the “Prince of Martyrs,” Salar Mas’ud, the nephew of the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud and general (*sipahsalar*) of a *ghazi* army of Ghaznavids. However, it is noteworthy that Sultan Mahmud reigned in the early eleventh century, while his son Mas’ud focused on the western frontiers of his empire, and during his reign no such expeditions were taken to India. In fact, there was no conquest of India by the Central Asian forces until the early thirteenth century, so it is unclear who this Mas’ud really was. By the late thirteenth century, however, the poet and traveller Amir Khusrau could see his tomb in Bahraich, and in the fourteenth century, it turned into a popular pilgrimage site which was even visited by Ibn Batuta, who recorded the tales he was told of the Martyr’s miraculous deeds.²¹²

The legend of Salar Mas’ud, who was given the title Ghazi Miyan, survives in an early seventeenth-century tradition, the *Mirat-i-Masudi* or “Mirror of Mas’ud” by Abdu’r Rahman Chishti.²¹³ According to its author, this work, besides quoting from extant histories, contains information which had “not found a place in any historical work of repute” and was extracted from a very old book with the aid of “directions he graciously received from the spirit of the departed” and “verified by oral communications with the author’s spiritual visitors.”²¹⁴ It shows the authentic nature of this work, which seems more of spiritual than factual. However, it is undeniable that the *ghazi* achieved a cult status among the followers of Islam of that time. This in turn demonstrates the role of *ghazis* in Muslim popular culture. The *ghazis* were treated as absolute heroes who were ready to sacrifice for the cause of *din* (religion). The rulers usually utilised these emotions

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, “A Note on the Dargah of Salar Mas’ud in Bahraich in the Light of Standard Historical Sources,” in Christian W. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 45-47; Tahir Mahmood, “The Dargah of Sayyid Salar Mas’ud Ghazi in Bahraich: Legend, Tradition and Reality,” in Christian W. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 24-43.

²¹³ Abdu’r Rahman Chishti, “Mirat-i Mas’udi,” in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, Trubner & Co., London, 1869, pp. 513-549.

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp.513-514

by declaring themselves as *ghazis* through their court chroniclers to acquire greater legitimacy among the *umma*.

On the contrary, none of the *ghazi* kings aspired for a mass conversion of Hindus to Islam. According to the history of Utbi, the Ghaznavid *ghaza* demanded the submission of non-Muslims to Muslim rule, the incorporation of their territories into the lands of Islam, and the official renunciation of idolatry by conquered rulers, but the mass conversion was not a central issue.²¹⁵ They preferred to work with the cooperation of local Hindu chiefs. Apart from this, the conquering forces of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid armies were heterogeneous in nature, consisting of Hindus and Muslims.²¹⁶ The Hindu soldiers were never asked to convert.²¹⁷ Besides the Hindus, the Ghaznavid army included “various tribes of Turks, Khalji, Afghans, and the Gozz (sic) troops,” and a force of Arabs is also mentioned.²¹⁸ During the medieval period in the central Asian context, it can be said that the *ghaza* was not the property of a homogeneous group; people from different socio-political backgrounds engaged in it for various reasons – including personal aspirations, monetary gains and so on.²¹⁹ Interestingly, those who used the title *ghazi* considered themselves good Muslims and not the holders of tribal faiths, yet they refrained from viewing their *ghazi* activity as the holy war in its purest sense.

The fundamental difference between *ghaza* and *jihad* was that *ghaza* did not adhere to *jihad*’s legal norms. *Ghaza* was a movement in which people of any faith or origin could join, though it ultimately benefitted the Islamic ideals of the state.²²⁰ Theatrically *ghaza* was related to the war against the non-Muslim monarchs to establish a regime with Islamic values and tradition having in the centre of rule. Whereas the word *jihad*, also

²¹⁵ Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. James Reynolds, pp. 283, 322, 326, 362; C. E. Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (1217),” in J.A. Boyle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 177-80.

²¹⁶ For example, Mahmud had a large body of Hindu troops in his army and there is no reason to believe that conversion was a condition of their service. W. Haig, *The Cambridge History of India, Vol. 3: Turks and Afghans*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1928, p. 27

²¹⁷ C. E. Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (AD 1000-1217),” pp. 177-80.

²¹⁸ D.G. Tor, “The Mamluks in the Military of the Pre-Seljuk Persianate Dynasties,” in *Iran*, Vol. 46 (2008), p. 217

²¹⁹ Linda T. Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” in *Studia Islamica*, No. 91 (2000), p. 134.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 137

generally used for “war” in Islamic legal texts, is derived from the verb *jahad* (present, *yujahid*), meaning to exert great effort or strive to achieve a laudable goal, either by doing something good or by abstaining from doing something bad. Thus, *jihad* has a broader concept that refers to acts related to both oneself and others. A piece of advice to the ruler to abstain from authoritarian rule is considered one of the highest degrees of *jihad*. The Prophet Muhammad said: “The best [type of] *jihad* is a word of truth to a tyrant ruler.”²²¹ According to another *hadith*, supporting one’s parents is also an example of *jihad*.²²² Thus, *jihad* was not merely fighting with swords on the battlefield; rather it contained broader socio-political and personal goals for ethical alleviation. *Jihad* is considered to be a duty incumbent upon all Muslims for both socio-political and moral changes. Another significant difference between *ghaza* and *jihad* is that the former is considered to be an aggressive phenomenon, whereas the latter is associated with defences. For instance, the defence of Muslim cities against invasion by “infidel” armies is considered as *jihad*; in contrast, *ghaza*, refers to an invasion of “infidel” lands by Muslims.²²³

In terms of *ghaza* in the Indian frontiers, it seems it was a construction and later overlay. The motivation for *ghaza* in Indian frontiers mostly factored a cynical manipulation of religion to satisfy their political and economic need.²²⁴ The focus on booty and territorial expansion rather than conversion casts great doubt about the nature of *ghaza*. The politics related to *ghaza* gets further clearer once the sultanate was established in Delhi by the thirteenth century. The use of *ghaza* concept in the Indian frontiers can be broadly divided into two segments – one which was before the thirteenth century and the one from the thirteenth century to the coming of the Mughals. The earlier one was aggressive, while the latter was defensive in nature. However, in both scenarios, the roles of authors were inevitable. In the later period, the kings themselves struggled against the available literary models in order to fit them to their specific needs and then contributed to

²²¹ Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2011, p. 76

²²² According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, seeking to excel in one’s education and work are also examples of *jihad*. Muhammad Hashim Kamali, “Issues in the Understanding of *Jihad* and *Ijtihad*”, in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (2002), pp. 622-623; Radwan A. Masmoudi, “Struggles Behind Words: Shariah Sunnism, and Jihad”, *SAIS Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2001), p. 23

²²³ Linda Darling, “Contested Territory,” p. 140

²²⁴ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, p. 5

this discourse of *ghazi* kings by adding their own texts to the genre. For example, Babur as the *ghazi* was a well-thought-out creation by the ruler himself. The title *ghaza* was either conferred by the “ulama” on the leader of an officially proclaimed *ghaza* or self-awarded for raids into non-Muslim territory.²²⁵

Another major shift in the *ghaza* tradition in the post-Ghurid conquest of Delhi was that it became defensive. The threat from the Mongols was a foremost challenge for the Ghurids to defend their territory in India. By 1200 the Mongols posed a threat on the northern frontiers while pursuing the Khwarizm Shah. By successfully defending the sultanate territories against the Mongols, many of the Delhi sultans acquired the title *ghazi*. Thus, the *ghazis* of the Delhi Sultanate emerged from defending a territory, in contrast to the earlier aggressive notion of acquiring pagan land. Hence, the character of *ghaza* changed from the conquest of India to its defence.

However, in some chronicles, the use of the term *ghaza* was justified by referring that the Delhi sultans effectively defended the *dar-ul-Islam* against the pagan Mongols, which itself is equal to a *ghaza*.²²⁶ The historian Juzjani described all Mongol leaders as “accursed” and saw their irruption as a sign of the end of the world.²²⁷ Thus, theoretically, fighting against the Mongols was no less than *ghaza*. Sultan Alauddin Khalji was declared a *ghazi* for successfully defending the Delhi Sultanate against Mongol invasion.²²⁸ Similarly, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (earlier known as Ghazi Malik) won the title of *ghazi* by his successful defence against the Mongols, and Firoz Shih’s defence of Delhi from a Mongol raid demonstrated his right to rule.²²⁹ Interestingly, in these defensive *ghaza* along with the Muslims and the Hindus equally participated. Thus, it can be seen that in the north Indian frontier context, *ghaza* was as a defensive warfare rather than

²²⁵ Hamdu’llah Mustawfi-i-Qazwini, *Ta’rikh-i-Guzida*, Eng. trans. by Edward G. Browne Luzac and Co., London, 1913, p. 161

²²⁶ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. H. G. Raverty, Oriental Books Reprint Corporations, New Delhi, 1970 (first published, 1881), pp. 1007, 1009, 1039, 1053, 1117, 1123, 1135.

²²⁷ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. H. G. Raverty, p. 935

²²⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2022 (first print, 2015), pp. 195-197

²²⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi,” in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 3, Trubner and Co., London, 1871, p. 226; Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 197-198, 340; Shams-i Siraj Afif, “Ta’rikh-i Firoz Shahi,” in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 3, p. 278.

offensive war and raiding. The political satiation, age of the war and nature of the enemy played a role in *ghaza*. It is interesting to note that fighters came from all over the Muslim world, particularly from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran, as those regions fell under Mongol control to participate in the Delhi Sultans' successful opposition to the Mongols. There were Westerners, however, among the Indian frontier warriors; several of the generals and governors of the Delhi Sultanate were Rumis or Anatolian Turks, and troops were sent from the court of the Caliph in Baghdad.²³⁰

Thus, once the Ghurids settled in India, the nature of *ghaza* got changed. However, most of these warriors were still from central Asian regions. Hence, the *ghaza* in India must surely have been affected by the *ghazi* traditions of the migrating warriors as well as by India's historical circumstances. The other changing nature of the *ghaza* in India was that *ghaza* is not only that of "carrying on holy war" but also "attending to the prosperity of the peasants". Thus, *ghaza* and good administration were longer treated as contrasting impulses but were linked together in praise of good rulers written after the start of the Mongol invasion.²³¹

As a result, it can be argued that the Ghaznavid Mahmud and Ghurid Muizuddin were not the first *ghazi* kings, and neither were they last to adopt the ideology of *ghaza* for their invasion. The Delhi sultans also assumed the title *ghazi* not by showing aggression to a pagan land but by defending the *dar-ul-Islam* against pagan Mongols. Thus, *ghaza* was not only related to invasions. It was the court chroniclers who used the term to define the greatness of their patron. The *ghazi* activity of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids is also known primarily through references in contemporary and later chronicles. The *ghaza* was a political tool to galvanise followers to conquer new regions and acquire booty from the far-flung regions. However, its utility depended on the political circumstances of that time. While it was more or less an aggressive weapon in central Asia, in the Indian context, it somehow took a defensive nature in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

Therefore, while one perceives the *ghaza* in Indian frontiers, one must look into the background of the same in the Central Asian context. Who were the *ghazis*, what was their background, why would they join the *ghaza* and so on? Then how these invasions in the

²³⁰ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. H. G. Raverty, pp. 724, 752, 787, 1117.

²³¹ Ibid., pp. 665, 676, 698

subcontinent were ordered, how they were recorded, and from what sources and by who provide us with an understanding of the concept in its practical uses. The chapter analyses all these aspects and comes to the conclusion that the invasion of central Asian forces in the eleventh and early thirteenth centuries was pragmatic and was driven by multiple reasons, like economic, social and political. The Turks were known for their military prowess, robustness, valour, rowdiness and loyalty. They served in the Abbasid Caliphate and Seljuk Empire's military until the ninth and tenth centuries. However, after the death of Caliph Mu'tasim Billah (r.833-842), the Caliphate's disintegration started and stretched over four centuries. This allowed the Turkish chieftains and military commanders to utilise their martial prowess to carve out independent states. And they did achieve commendable success in the erstwhile Abbasid Caliphate regions by establishing self-governing states. The two regional dynasties, the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids, were the product of this process of disintegration of the Caliphate, founded by erstwhile slave commanders.

Both Ghaznavids and Ghurids served in the military slave system that flourished under the Abbasid Caliphate. The detribalised Turks were brought into the central Asian territories ruled by “Muslim” monarchs as military slaves. They were known as *mamluk*. However, the slave system in the Middle Ages in central Asia was atypical of that of the slavery system of the colonial period. They were trained for military service and spent most of their life as a professional soldier. They were like foster children for their master.²³² Over the years, these slave military commanders became ambitious and longed for an independent state. The Ghaznavids and the Ghurids were the products of this “Turkish militarism”. Thus, the military slave system played a considerable role in the Turks’ emergence as a robust military authority on the world stage. During the tenth to twelfth centuries, several independent states emerged, which were led by the previous *mamluk* soldiers, including the Ghaznavids in Ghazna and Mamluk Sultans in Egypt, Syria and the Levant.²³³

²³² Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p. 89, 116

²³³ Carl F. Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2022; Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal, pp. 232, 305

As a pastoral-nomadic society, the Turks were always on the move for grazing land, which put them in vulnerable situations at times for their livelihood. Thus, the newly found occupation of being voluntary soldiers in the army of ambitious previous Turkish slave leaders provided them with a share in the looted booty, an essential source for their economy. Thus, a large section of the Turks, particularly the uprooted poor, joined any holy war or *ghaza*, which provided them with a share in the booty in return for their services. However, it should also be remembered that during medieval times, Samarkand was a key commercial centre for the slave market, paper manufacturing, and scholarship. Hence, it cannot be ruled out that some of these volunteers (the *ghazis*) might also have engaged in occupations other than fighting.²³⁴ As they did not serve as regular soldiers, only a victory could get them a share in the booty, which made this section of the army more aggressive for a victory. However, it is also noteworthy that these volunteers did not have any attachment to the state or the military commanders for whom they were fighting.

Nevertheless, the astute court chroniclers used concepts like *ghaza*, *ghazi* and *jihad* in a different ways in their narratives to explain those early conquests. They portrayed Ghaznavid and Ghurid expeditions to India as an Islamic project or “Islamic invasion”.²³⁵ However, they did this for certain reasons. By portraying the invasion as *ghaza* the invader wanted to achieve an exalted space in the Islamic world and legitimacy among its followers – particularly the Islamic intellectual communities. For instance, when Al-Utbi, in his *Kitab-i-Yamini*, described the invasion of Mahmud, it was strictly meant for the audience at the court of Baghdad, where sufficiently learned men were his readers.²³⁶ But, in real politics, it can be seen that the rulers took a reconciliatory approach towards the defeated rulers. The conquered people were appointed to crucial state positions and continued the existing system for a while. Even while they used the concept of *ghaza*, they never intended to utilise it in its true sense; it was for a certain section of society – particularly the *ulama* and intellectuals.

²³⁴ Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, pp. 237, 256

²³⁵ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, 2 volumes, Eng. trans. H. G. Raverty; Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma’asir”, in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. 2; Al-Utbi, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds; Gardizi, *Zayn al-akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth.

²³⁶ Ali Anooshahr, “The Ghaznavids of India,” in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2021), p. 441

The role of contemporary authors in creating the *ghazi* image becomes further clear if we pay attention to the fact that the concept of *ghaza* acquired a different character in the Indian context. The *ghaza* is considered an aggressive approach, which has to be carried to the pagan land to spread the message of the Prophet. But, in the Indian context, it was used even for defensive attitudes. Here, the concept of *ghaza* was used for totally opposite manner than its theoretical conception. Thus, *ghaza* was perceived and put forward by the scholars at a later stage according to their convenience. It became a political tool for the rulers, and authors used it to portray the exalted space of their patron in the Islamic world.

Therefore, it can safely be said that the early invasion by the Central Asian forces was carried out for gold for practical purposes and for God for theoretical purposes. As far as the perception of the “foreignness of Indian Muslims” even in the present is concerned, it can be said that both the Muslim fundamentalist as well as the Hindu nationalists played a role in that on the basis of the origin story of Muslims in India (discussed in chapter one). A section of Muslims of modern India also played an essential role by fantasising or trying to adopt whatever have been Arab as good for Islam. Dressings, medium of education and so on are a few examples. On the other hand, the various invasions on regular intervals between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries also impacted the public perception of Muslims as foreigners. In the public imagination, the origin of Muslims was seen as predominately “outsiders”.

Thus, on the one hand, the origin story was an inspiration and source of information for the invaders, the same can be an origin of oppression and suppression of the other group – the defeated. While the period between the eighth to twelfth centuries being seen as a period of the growth of ‘Muslim’ power in India, on the other hand, the same period has been viewed as the ‘decay and decline’ of the ‘Last Hindu Empire’ in India. Hence, even in the present, these stories of origin have been told in school textbooks, containing values, morals and national character, which has left a lasting impression in the memory of the present.

CHAPTER 3

Islamic, Turkish or a Persianate Monarchy: The Ideas and Ideologies of Sultanate of Delhi

The thirteenth century witnessed the emergence of a new power in northern India based in Delhi, which was instrumental in transforming the history of South Asian polities. The three successive dynasties – the Mamluk¹, Khalji and Tughlaq can be considered the founders of the Delhi Sultanate, whose rule covered the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In modern historical writings, this event has been termed as the foundation of ‘Islamic rule – a theocracy’ in India by a section of historians and scholars.² The success of the early Delhi sultans was attributed to the disunity among the “Indian” rulers against the “Muslim” foes.³ In 1974, John F. Richards termed the thirteenth-century conquests by the central Asian forces as the “Muslim expansion into South Asia” and a “cultural encounter between two radically different civilizations, Islamic and Hindu,”⁴ thus, the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi was viewed as a power based on Islamic ideas. He further emphasized that the “Muslim settlement in India to a large extent is a result of incessant raids, invasions and conquests” and viewed the Delhi sultanate as a rule of Muslims and not just a regime whose rulers happened to

¹ The first nine decades of the Delhi Sultanate (r. 1206-1290) has been termed as the Mamluk dynasty. It was founded by Mamluks Qutubuddin Aibek (r. 1206-1210), one of the numerous Turkish slaves whom the Ghurid ruler Muizuddin Muhammad Ghori had acquired and Aibek’s own slave Shamsuddin Iltutmish (r. 1210-1236). During these nine decades the military leadership was provided by the elite corps of Turkish Mamluks. They were at the helm of provincial governorship and also served in the administration as great officials of the state. However, it is to be noted that the military slave or mamluk status bore none of the degrading connotations associated with the other types of slavery. This aspect has further been discussed in greater detail in the later stage of the chapter. Peter Jackson, “The ‘Mamluk’ Institution in Early Muslim India,” in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2 (1990), pp. 340-358.

² A.L. Srivastava, *The Sultanate of Delhi (711-1526 AD): Including the Arab Invasion of Sindh; Hindu Rule in Afghanistan, and Causes of the Defeat of the Hindus in Early Medieval Age*, Shiva Lal Agarwala & Company, Agra, 1950, p. 282; Aziz Ahmad, “The Role of Ulema in Indo-Muslim History,” in *Studia Islamica*, No. 31 (1970), pp. 3-5; Blain Auer, “Civilizing the Savage: Myth, History and the Persianisation in the Early Delhi Courts of South Asia,” in A.C.S. Peacock (ed.), *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2017, p. 393.

³ K.M. Munshi, *History and Culture of the Indian People: The Struggle for Empire*, Vol. 5, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1957, p. xv; R.C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People: The Delhi Sultanate*, Vol. 6, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960.

⁴ John F. Richards, “The Islamic Frontier in the East: Expansion into South Asia,” in *South Asia*, Vol. 4. (1974), p. 91

be Muslims.⁵ Similarly, even the preceding events of this colossal political transformation have also been portrayed with a lot of stereotypical views. By introducing Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, Edward Gibbon has stated that though his empire extended from Transoxiana to Isfahan and from the shores of Caspian to the Indus River, however, his fame and resources came from “holy wars” he waged against the “Gentoos of Hindostan.”⁶

On the other hand, to counter this narrative of the Delhi Sultanate being an Islamic state, historians like K.A. Nizami have pressed forward the Turkish identity as the central aspect of the Sultanate. In *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Nizami has organized the chronology of the period of the Delhi Sultanate in three phases: “India on the Eve of the Turkish Invasion,” “Advent of the Turks,” “Turkish State” and “Early Turkish Sultans of Delhi”.⁷ Andre Wink also presented a similar view to Nizami by presenting the thirteenth century as a history of Turkish conquest.⁸ A similar argument was also put forward by A.B.M. Habibullah, where he categorized the early Delhi sultanate conquests as “Turkish, conquests”.⁹ However, K.A. Nizami had blended all the invasions and military advances of Ghaznavids, Ghurids and the early Delhi Sultans under the category of “Turkish conquests” without going deep into the ethnic diversification of the invading forces. If we go with Nizami’s theory, it presumably means that all the invading soldiers were Turks, or at least their military commanders were Turks. However, the nature of early Delhi sultanate identity was much more complex than this, which this chapter aims to explore in greater detail.

There are shreds of evidence of violent ethnic clashes between different groups of the ruling dispensation in the Delhi Sultanate. With the death of Muizuddin Ghori in 1206, there was a deadly clash between the Ghorian *amirs* and the “Turkish” *maliks* and *amirs*

⁵ Ibid., p. 92

⁶ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 6, Methuen and Co., London, 1898, p. 225

⁷ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Department of History, Muslim University, Aligarh, 1961.

⁸ Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. 2, *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquests 11th-13th Centuries*, BRILL, Leiden, 1997, p. 23

⁹ A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India: A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi, 1206-1290 AD*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 1, 4

for installing a candidate of their choice to the throne. The later seized treasury and the Turkish army slaughtered the Ghorian *umaras/amirs* and *maliks* under the leadership of Tajuddin Yilduz.¹⁰ In another instance, with the death of Sultan Iltutmish, a conflict broke out between the Turk and Tajik *amirs* of the Sultanate as the Tajiks were unwilling to accept Iltutmish's son Ruknuddin Firoz as the new Sultan.¹¹ The dissident faction was joined by the Iltutmish's Wazir, Nizam al-Din Junaydi, who himself was a Tajik by ethnicity.¹² Eventually, the clash ended with the murder of the Tajik officials, including influential officials like Saifuddin Kuji, Alauddin Jani and Izzuddin Salari by the Turk *amirs*.¹³ Irfan Habib termed this conflict as a racial clash.¹⁴ On another occasion, during the rule of Ghiyathi sultan Muiz al-Din Kayqubad (r. 1286-90), the Turkish and Khalji groups fought and which eventually culminated in the execution of the Sultan by a Khalji *amir* Firoz Baghrash Khalji (future Jalaluddin Khalji).¹⁵ However it is noteworthy, C.E. Bosworth has identified the Khaljis as part of the Turkish group itself, and addressed them as "Khalaj Turks".¹⁶ On the other hand, V. Minorsky has presented the Turks and the Khaljis (Khalaj) as distinct groups.¹⁷ Irfan Habib also noted that in India in the thirteenth century, no one spoke of Khaljis as Turks.¹⁸

Of late, another set of scholars has argued that the Delhi Sultanate was a Persianised polity in terms of its political and courtly culture. Richard M. Eaton pioneered the argument in his *India in the Persianate Age 1000–1765*. He revisited the eighth century and argues with great nuance for history with "mutual acculturation" over this period.¹⁹ Eaton detached the issue of religion from his argument and built his theory on the utility

¹⁰ Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Major H.G. Raverty, Gilbert and Rivington, London, 1881, pp. 492-495

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 633-635

¹² Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century", in *Medieval India: Researches in the History of India, 1200-1750*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992, p. 13

¹³ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Major H.G. Raverty, pp. 633-635

¹⁴ Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century," p. 17

¹⁵ Yahya bin Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhindi, *The Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*, Eng. trans. by K.K. Basu, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1932, pp. 56-61

¹⁶ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern India, 994-1040*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 155

¹⁷ V. Minorsky, "The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1940), pp. 417-437, here, pp. 430-431

¹⁸ Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century," pp. 2-3

¹⁹ Richard M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2020.

of Persian as a *lingua franca* in medieval India and how it had worked as an assimilating force for people from different ethnicities and backgrounds. However, the concept of “Persianate” itself remained under-theorized.²⁰ Besides this, there is an ambiguity about the role of Persian as a *lingua franca* and its relationship with the ethnic groups. Like why the “Turkish” rulers would accept Persian as a connecting language? Why would they promote Persian culture over their own Turkish culture both in literature and in courtly etiquette? Moreover, Eaton’s work largely focused on political history.

Therefore, this chapter attempts to counter the stereotypes regarding the nature of the early years of the formation of the Delhi sultanate by addressing a few questions like how the medieval authors had viewed the Delhi Sultanate in terms of its political identity. Did the “Turkish identity” have any role to play in the politics and culture of the early Delhi sultanate? The chapter also aims to explore why the Turkish rulers chose the Persian language as ‘lingua franca’ and promote the Persian language over their own ethnic Turkish language. Why did the Turkish rulers promote the “Persianate” culture over their own Turkish culture in politics and courtly etiquette? What happened to the “Turkishness” of a ruler once he or she ascended the throne and then transferred that authority to their successors through dynastic succession? What are the differences between the *shari’a* based rule and the Persianate kingship? These are some other questions which need to be answered adequately.

However, in searching for the answers to the above questions, it is crucial to examine the ruling ideas and ideas of the newly established polity in Delhi during the thirteenth century. Why had the Persian kingship had such a great impact on the political culture in the Islamicate²¹ societies in general and in Delhi, in particular? How and why the Persian imagery was used by the sultanate rulers to create a distinct culture in their court in Delhi? The Sultanate of Delhi cannot be studied in isolation from that of the present-day Central Asian regions and the Eastern Iranian regions. The early Delhi

²⁰ Manan Ahmad Asif, “Review of India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765,” in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 126, Issue, 1 (March 2021), p. 295

²¹ Deborah Tor has argued that one cannot see a simple dichotomy between the Persianate and Islamicate political ideologies. For her to a great extent these two political cultural modes of expression went through reciprocal process of influence which she referred to as the ‘Islamic acculturation of the ancient Iranian kingly heritage’. Deborah Tor, “The Islamisation of Iranian Kingly Ideals in the Persianate Furstenspieget,” in *Iran*, Vol. 49 (2011), pp. 117

sultans carried their genesis from central Asia and culturally they seem to be more oriented to the Iranian customs. Therefore, to have a clear understanding of the political systems established by Ghaznavid, Ghurid, and Delhi Sultanate rulers it is essential to understand the role accorded to kings in the larger vision of *shari'a* and in the Persian kingship. Hence, this chapter explores the relationship between the Sultanate of Delhi with the Persian kingship and the Caliphate of Baghdad to review how far these political ideologies left their mark on the Delhi sultanate. Thus, the chapter traces the genesis of Persianate²² political culture and how it reached India to understand why the early Delhi sultans preferred the Persianate culture over their own Turkish. Besides this, the chapter also investigates how far the Abbasid Caliphate, which was considered the epitome of the *shari'a* vision of kingship in the medieval world, left its mark on the political system of the Delhi Sultanate, as many of the Delhi sultans had received investitures (*manshui*), titles and robes of honour (*khil'ats*) from the Caliph.

The genesis of the Persian kingship can be traced back to pre-Islamic Persia, where the quest for world dominion was paramount among the rulers in many traditional civilizations.²³ There are a few principal conceptual frameworks that medieval scholars have used to illustrate ideas of Persian kingship. The pre-Islamic rulers from Persia Jamshid and Khusraw have been idealized as perfect Persian monarchs. According to Blain Auer, their names in Persian writings were identical with everything royal and kingly, which are better known as *jamshidi* and *khusravi*.²⁴ These terms are the indicators of the Persian kingship and the essence of monarchy and sovereignty. Jamshid, the son of Tahmuras belonged to the Pishdadian dynasty which is considered the first legendary king of Persia – the greatest and most famous cultural hero.²⁵ He is attributed with many inventions and contributions to the Persian civilization like military weapons, techniques

²² 'Persianate' is also known as the 'Perso-Islamic'. The Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana in the ninth and tenth centuries was instrumental in laying the foundations of a new kind of Islamic polity and culture, later dubbed Persianate.

²³ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p. 38

²⁴ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of Persian Kings: The Origins of Perso-Islamic Courts and the Empires in India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021, p.15

²⁵ Firdausi, *The Shahnama*, Eng. trans. by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., London, 1905, pp. 129, 131

for fabricating textiles, brick-building, medicine, and shipbuilding.²⁶ Most importantly, he has also been credited with structuring Persian society into professions which were also divided into social groups.²⁷ According to the mythological belief, he would control the demons and use their forces in building efforts.²⁸ Thus, Jamshid has been credited with bringing order to disorder and civilizing the savage world. At the peak of his reign, Jamshid ordered that divine honour should be paid to him.²⁹ These aspects in a later stage became a norm for the Persian kingship, which many ambitious rulers aspired to achieve.

Another legendary Persianate king was the Sasanian king Khusraw I (r. 531-579), whose ideas, ideals and courtly culture are known as *khusravi*. He is known as *Anushirvan* – “the Immortal Soul.”³⁰ After ascending the throne, Khusraw wrote letters to all his governors and emphasized on to be righteous in their acts.³¹ However, he declared himself as the agent of God to regulate the affairs of his subjects; thus, his actions are solely responsible to God alone.³² He strengthened the fighting quality of his soldiers³³ and reshaped the military establishment by dividing the authority of Isbahbadh (supreme commander of the armed forces) into four commanders, who were given the responsibility for four zones in his kingdom.³⁴ Then, he declared himself as the supreme authority of the Sasanian military. Besides, this he also curtailed the power of the aristocrats and centralized all the authority to him.³⁵ Thus, in his forty-seven years long reign, he conquered many regions and took up many works of public good as well, like constructing canals, wooden bridges, rest houses and so on.³⁶ He presented himself as an emperor with absolute authority who is responsible only to God for his deeds, yet provided justice to the people, did works of public welfare, and thus provided a golden

²⁶ Ibid. 132-33

²⁷ Ibid., p. 129

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 135-139

²⁹ Ibid., p. 129

³⁰ Al-Ṭabari, *Ta'rikh al-rasul wa'l-muluk*, Eng. trans. by C.E. Bosworth as *The History of Al-Ṭabari: The Sassanid, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids and Yemen*, Vol. 5, State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 128

³¹ Ibid., pp. 146-47

³² Ibid., p. 155

³³ Ibid., p. 150

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 149-50

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 146-47

³⁶ Ibid., p. 157

period to his subjects. These are the qualities that ambitious medieval rulers aspired to acquire in the Islamicate society as well.

The Ghaznavids, Ghurids and many sultans of Delhi tried to espouse the ideas and ideologies of *khusravi* monarchy. They imitated his policies and even adopted the title Khusraw. The last two rulers of the Ghaznavid dynasty assumed the title of Khusraw – Khusraw Shah (r. 1157–1160) and his son Khusraw Malik (r. 1160–1186). Under Khusraw Malik, Lahore in Punjab flourished as the second capital of the Ghaznavid Empire, governed under various governors. One of the Ghaznavid governors in the last quarters of the eleventh century, Prince Mahmud bin Ibrahim was typically addressed as the ruler of India (*Shah-e-Hind*) by one of the Ghaznavid court chroniclers, Mas'ud-e Sa'd.³⁷ Shams-i-Shiraj Afif, one of the finest scholars of the Delhi sultanate, met with the last surviving poets of the Ghaznavid Empire during his lifetime in Lahore.³⁸ In his great collection of anecdotes, the *Jawami al-Hikayat*, Awfi mentions Prince Ibrahim as himself the author of a manual on statecraft, the *Dastur al-wuzara*.³⁹ Also worth mentioning is that during the Ghaznavid period, multiple mints owned by Indian goldsmiths minted silver and gold coins at Lahore and other towns for the Ghaznavid Sultans.⁴⁰ The Ghaznavid rulers had a special elephant corps, which was manned and managed by the “Hindus”⁴¹, and a large number of ordinary soldiers also served the Ghaznavids.⁴² After the death of Mahmud, his son Mas'ud entrusted one Sewant Rai with a huge number of Hindu cavalry to quell those who espoused the candidature of his brother for the throne.⁴³

³⁷ C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay, the Dynasty in Afghanistan and in Northern India, 1040-1186*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977 (reprint, 2015), p. 76; S.A. Arjomand, “Evolution of the Persianate Polity and Its Transmission to India,” in *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 2 (2009), p. 121

³⁸ C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, p. 77; S.A. Arjomand, “Evolution of the Persianate Polity and Its Transmission to India,” p. 121

³⁹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, pp. 77, 127

⁴⁰ “Awfi's *Jawami al-Hikayat wa-Lavami 'ul-Rivayat*, its Importance,” in Iqtidar H. Siddiqui, *Indo Persian Historiography Upto the Thirteenth Century*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2010, p. 72

⁴¹ S. Jabir Raza, “Indian Elephant Corps Under the Ghaznavids,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 73 (2012), pp. 212-222

⁴² Imtiaz Ahmad, “Concepts of India: Expanding Horizons in Early Medieval Arabic and Persian Writing,” in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2004, p. 101

⁴³ Abu'l Fazl al-Baihaki, “Ta'rikh-us-Sabuktegin,” in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historian*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London, 1860, p. 60

As northwestern parts of India was under the direct control of the Ghaznavids and Indians did participate in the military and worked in other branches in the Ghaznavid administration, the culture of Persian kingship was not unknown to them.

In 1182, the last Ghaznavid ruler was defeated by the Ghurids under the skilled leadership of Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (Ghori) and Lahore passed to the hands of the Ghurids. With this transformation, the Ghurids ruler installed his own governor in Lahore and welcomed poets and scholars from the Ghaznavids court to the Ghurid fold. Two eminent personality was Diya al-Din Abdu'r Rafi bin Abul Fath Hwarwi, the author of *Risala Jalaliya*, and Jamal ud-Din Abu Bakr bin al-Musaid Khusrawi, who was considered as the 'Pride of the Poets' at the court of Khusraw Malik.⁴⁴ Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, the renowned medieval scholar who served under the Ghaznavids continued to serve the Ghurids in their new dispensation.⁴⁵ Many judges, prayer leaders, sayyeds, sufis, office holders, military and traders also joined the new administration under the Ghurids.⁴⁶ This event is most remarkable record of transmission of Persianate kingship to India in the city of Lahore.

According to Awfi, one of the characteristics of Ghurid political theory was when the interest of the state is threatened, nobody be it the son of the king, brother or any other relation of the king should be spared and would be harshly punished.⁴⁷ Murder and punishment were morally justified because ambitious nobles or officers would aspire for absolute power at the expense of the Sultan. However, he accepted this precedent was obviously set by the Amirul Mominin (Caliph) Abul Jaffar Mansur.⁴⁸ This is one of the major features of the Persianate monarchy as well. In a Persianate monarchy *siyasat* (capital punishment) and *adl* (justice) were considered as most important qualities of the statecraft.⁴⁹ It can be witnessed that the Ghurids also carried the Persianate political theory in their political culture.

⁴⁴ C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, p. 128

⁴⁵ S.A. Arjomand, "Evolution of the Persianate Polity and Its Transmission to India," p. 125

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 125

⁴⁷ "Awfi's *Jawami al-Hikayat wa-Lavami 'ul-Rivayat*, its Importance," in Iqtidar H. Siddiqui, *Indo Persian Historiography*, p. 78

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 78

⁴⁹ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 122

Now turning to the sultanate of Delhi, two of Ghiyasuddin Balban's (r. 1266–1287) grandsons, Kay Khusraw and Kay Qubad (r. 1287–1290), of the Delhi Sultanate also assumed the names from the legendary kings of Kayanid dynasty.⁵⁰ Amir Khusrau too highlighted the connection of the Ghiyathi *Mamluks* with the Kayanid dynasty of Persia. While Khusrau wrote in praise of his patron Sultan Kay Qubad, he traced his genealogy to the Kayanid crown. Khusrau wrote: "Kay Qubad is the inheritor of the Kayanid crown, the way the crown of his grandfather [Balban] possessed the Kayanid royal glory (*farr*)."⁵¹ However, the claim of Ghiyathis being a descendant of the Kayanid dynasty had been cemented earlier in this dynasty. Balban is known for recalling the memory of Persian kingship in his courtly culture. When two of Balban's officials Adil Khan and Tamar Khan selected a person from a low social status, a son of an enslaved person and put forward his candidature for the post of *khwajgi* (accountant) in front of the Sultan, the Sultan Balban rejected him despite the person being skilled, experienced and an expert in accountancy. Balban justified the act by saying:

"I am a descendent of Afrasiyab, and the lineage of my forefathers is traced to Afrasiyab. Because of the fact, the Almighty has created a characteristic in me that I cannot bear any mean, low-born son of a worthless person in the position of authority and power."⁵²

Thus, it can be seen that Balban claimed descent from Afrasiyab, the legendary king and hero of Turan (Transoxiana). In the *Shahnama*, Afrasiyab is the maternal grandfather of Kay Khusraw.⁵³ From these claims of Balban and his descendent, the form of governance they utilized in their territories can be assumed.

The references of the Kayanid rulers can also be seen in the Bahmanid Sultanate in the Deccan. The Bahmanids considered themselves as the inheritors of the Persianate kingship. Abd al-Malik Isami in his *Futuh-us Salatin* has mentioned that Alauddin

⁵⁰ According to the Persian epic tradition, Kayanids also known as the Kayanian were a dynasty that ruled Iran before the Achaemenids, all of whom bore names prefixed by Kay. The Kayanids are included by all the early Muslim historians, from Abu Hanifa Dinarvi (d. 894-903), Al Ṭabari (d. 839-923), Abu Ali Amirak Balami (d. 992-97), and others down to Mirḳand (d. 1433-98).

⁵¹ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, pp. 16-17

⁵² Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2015, p. 24

⁵³ Ferdowsi, *Shahname*, Eng. trans. by Helen Zimmern as *The Epic of Kings*, Omphaloskepsis, Ames, Iowa, 2000, pp. 286-314.

Bahram Shah (r. 1347-1358) was a leader who was culturally and ideally wrought in the mould of the ancient Persian kingship.⁵⁴ Even the founder of the Bahmani dynasty took the title Bahman Shah by claiming descent from Bahman, the famous son of Kayanid king Isfandiyar.⁵⁵ However, it is interesting to note that the establishment of the Bahmanid dynasty was considered as a battle between the forces of civilization symbolized by the Persianate kingship, in opposition to disorder, confusion, and brutality represented by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the Delhi sultan.⁵⁶ Isami compared Muhammad bin Tughlaq with the Persian demon king Zahhak – a king of the Pishdadian dynasty of Iran who was notorious for his tyranny.⁵⁷ Thus, it can be seen that the Persianization of the courts of South Asian polities had started in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Delhi court of the Ghiyathi dynasty was the epitome of Persianization under Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban. However, this process did not start with the Ghiyathi dynasty alone. It was a long process that spread over different regions in present-day central Asia and then reached the Indian subcontinent. The Persianate political culture had transmitted from Samanid to the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids and finally reached the Sultanate of Delhi.

By the end of the ninth century, in central Asian regions new rulers of Turkish ancestry started to emerge. This development coincided with the disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate. This new development led to the renaissance of Persian royal tradition encouraged by the Iranian vassals of the Caliph.⁵⁸ Istvan Vasary has argued that the Turks had worked for the Iranian Sogdian city-states⁵⁹ as mercenaries in the seventh

⁵⁴ Mahdi Hasan, "Futuh-us-Salatin: Basic Factors in its Composition and Name," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 16 (1953), pp. 185-86

⁵⁵ Abd al-Malik Isami, *Futuh-us-Salatin or Shah Nama-i-Hind of Isami: Translation and commentary*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Agha Mahdi Husain, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1967, pp. 1-14

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-14

⁵⁷ Blain Auer, "Civilising the Savage," pp. 401–404; Abd al-Malik Isami, *Futuh-us-Salatin*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Agha Mahdi Husain, p. 15

⁵⁸ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p. 39

⁵⁹ The Sogdian city-states refer to a number of independent or autonomous city-states in the Iranian region of Sogdia in late antiquity and the early medieval period.

century to defend the cities from the Arab offensives.⁶⁰ C.E. Bosworth has noted that the Turks were gradually integrated into the military service in the Abbasid Caliphate by the mid-ninth century. The Turks served the Abbasid Caliphate as Turkish slave guards and as mercenary in the beginning years.⁶¹ But, steadily, the Abbasid caliph found a new body of troops brought in from outside of the ‘Islamic world’ and who would serve him with single-minded loyalty cut off from their native land. Caliph Al-Mu’tasim (r.833-42) materialized this body of soldiers with faithful servants in his Turkish *ghulams*.⁶² According to Nizam al Mulk, the Caliph al-Mu’tasim had a body of 70000 Turkish *ghulams* under his service, and he appointed many in high positions like governorship because he considered Turks to be the utmost loyal to the master.⁶³

However, Osman S.A. Ismail has argued that “although these troops were commonly referred to as Turks, not all of them were of Turkish origin.”⁶⁴ Among them, there were *Maghariba* groups recruited from Egypt.⁶⁵ The Turks were the largest group in this body of soldiers. With this initiative, many Turks got the opportunity to reach the high ranks of the Abbasid military. Over a period of time, as the Caliphate diminished and became confined to central Iraq, the Turkish army took over political powers in many parts of the erstwhile Abbasid Caliphate.⁶⁶ These polities were established with Turkish slave guards as the nucleus of the system. The Ghaznavid Empire founded by Sabuktegin was one such polity which had culminated indirectly from the disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Istvan Vasary, “Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam: The Qarakhanids versus the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs,” in Edmund Herzing and Sarah Steward (eds.), *The Age of the Seljuqs*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2015, p. 4

⁶¹ C. E. Bosworth, “Barbarian Incursions: The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World,” in C.E. Bosworth (ed.), *The Turks in the Early Islamic World*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2016, p. 3

⁶² C. E. Bosworth, “Barbarian Incursions”, p. 6; Istvan Vasary, “Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam,” p. 4

⁶³ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat Nama*, Eng. trans. by Hubert Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, Routledge, New York, 2002, pp. 60-65

⁶⁴ Osman S. A. Ismail, “Mu’tasim and the Turks,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1966), p. 14

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 14

⁶⁶ C. E. Bosworth, “Barbarian Incursions,” p. 8

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 9

However, directly the Ghaznavid Sultanate was the product of the Samanid Amirate and considered as its successor state in many respects.⁶⁸ The founder, Sabuktegin of Ghaznavid Sultanate, was originally a member of the Samanid military slave institution. The military and civil institutions in the Ghaznavid sultanate were modelled on the Samanid forerunners.⁶⁹ Both Mahmud and his father Sabuktegin started their career as military commanders in the Samanid Empire. The disintegration of the Samanid Empire provided Sabuktegin the opportunity to carve out a kingdom for himself. It is noteworthy that till the end of his rule, Sabuktegin remained in legal and official status as a slave provincial governor serving on behalf of the Samanid Amirs. In fact, Sabuktegin never formally declared his sovereignty from the Samanids, though in practicality, he enjoyed all kinds of autonomy. Even the inscription on his tomb at Ghazna names him as *al-Hajib al-Ajall* (Most exalted commander) and not as Amir.⁷⁰ Significantly, the mighty son and successor of Sabuktegin, Sultan Mahmud, also continued acknowledging the Samanids in his coins at least until AD 999.⁷¹

However, it is interesting to note that the slave soldiers in the Samanid kingdom were trained in Perso-Islamic culture. Hence, when these former slaves rose to high offices rose to high office in the Samanid court they were already acculturated in Perso-Islamic modes of governance, leaving their “Turkishness” behind them.⁷² Thus, the Ghaznavid being the direct product of the Samanid institution were also acculturated in Persian. Then, with the growth of the Ghaznavid empire, both the central and eastern parts of the Iranian world came under a single political authority by providing an impetus to the domination of Perso-Islamic culture on the far eastern frontiers of that world. It was the Mahmud of Ghazna, a former Turkish slave in origin commissioned the complete edition

⁶⁸ C. E. Bosworth, “The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past,” in *Iran*, Vol. 11 (1973), pp. 51-62, here, p. 61. This aspect has been discussed in greater details in the chapter two of this dissertation.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 61

⁷⁰ C.E. Bosworth, “The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids,” in *Iran*, Vol. 6 (1968), p. 36

⁷¹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 41, 44-7; C.E. Bosworth, “The Development of Persian Culture,” p. 36; C.E. Bosworth, “The Titulature of the Early Ghaznavids,” in *Oriens*, Vol. 15 (Dec. 31, 1962), p. 217

⁷² Istvan Vasary, “Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam,” pp. 9-28

of the Persian royal epic Firdausi's *Shahnama* and paid around 100000 *dirhams* of that time.⁷³

The Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud presented himself as the Maecenas and brought scholars of eminence from all over the eastern Islamic world. The fine Persian poets of that time were predominantly invited. The great poets of that time like Unsuri from Balkh, Asjadi from Merv or Herat, Ghada'iri from Ray, Farrukhi from Sistan, and Manuchiri from Damghan were few of the prominent scholars in Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud and Masud's court.⁷⁴ The flow of these men of the pen also brought the ideas and literary concepts from the Persian world to Ghazna. Thus, gradually the Ghaznavid Empire was culturally integrated into the larger Persianate world, particularly with that of the Khorasan and eastern Iranian regions. In 999, the Khorasan was geographically also part of the Ghaznavid Empire under Mahmud.⁷⁵ Thus, Ghazna and eastern Afghanistan gradually developed a culture which was heavily Persianised. By the mid-twelfth century, when the Ghurids had taken over the Ghaznavid Sultanate, they not only succeeded the political empire but also carried forward the Persianate culture because the seed of Persianisation was implanted too deep till that time in the region.

However, Bosworth has stated that though the Ghaznavid Sultans were culturally Persianised in their outlook, ethnically they remained Turks not far removed from their contemporary Central Asian steps.⁷⁶ For instance, in 1029 during the Ghaznavid invasion of Ghur, Prince Mas'ud, the son and successor of Sultan Mahmud, brought an interpreter with him.⁷⁷ This shows that, though the Ghaznavid ruling class culturally incorporated Persian etiquette, yet in their private space they were comfortable with the Turkish language. Nonetheless, it seems while Persian dominated the bureaucracy and the world of scholarship, Arabic was the language of the religious institution, and Turkish continued to be an everyday language for the Sultans and their companions.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the military – the strongest component of a medieval state remained the

⁷³ Edward .G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia: From Firdausi to Sa'di*, Vol. 2, At the University Press, Cambridge, 1956, pp. 135-37

⁷⁴ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 133

⁷⁵ C.E. Bosworth, "The Development of Persian Culture," p. 41

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39

stronghold of “Turkishness”. The Turks from the central Asian steps dominated the larger share of the Ghaznavid army and there was a continuous arrival of new recruits from that quarter, which kept the elements of “Turkishness” alive in the Ghaznavid military institution.⁷⁹ But, in the administrative affairs of the Ghaznavids the Caliphal administrative structure of Baghdad dominated.⁸⁰ Sultan Mas’ud formally accredited the religious and moral supremacy of Baghdad.⁸¹

Therefore, it is essential to see how the Abbasid Caliphate of that period was administered. Iranian political theory entered the Abbasid court through influential Persian advisors like Ibn al Muqaffa, and the Barmaki family⁸², and the ethical and political maxims of Iran became the staples of the new adab courtly literature in Arabic.⁸³ The practice of the ancient Iranian kings was also the subject of the famous *Siyasat Nama* (*Book of Government*) written by Wazir Nizam al-Mulk, a guidebook for the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah.⁸⁴

As has been mentioned, by the ninth century, the Abbasid Caliphate started to disintegrate as its central authority became weak. By taking advantage of these evolving situations, there emerged some small but localized powers having nominal allegiance to the Caliphs of Baghdad and practically acting as autonomous states.⁸⁵ Among these two noteworthy kingdoms were the Buyids (r. 945-1055) and the Seljuqids (r. 1055-1194), who took control of Baghdad and made the Caliph their captive but kept the Caliph as nominal or titular head. As a follower of the Shi’ite religion, the Buyids were thoroughly

⁷⁹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 56-7, 99, 130

⁸⁰ C.E. Bosworth, “The Development of Persian Culture”, p. 36; C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 27-34

⁸¹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, p. 83

⁸² Barmakids or Barmeka were a well-known family of secretaries and viziers during the time of the early Abbasids who comes from the region of Balk, where the Barmak, the ancestor of the family was the high priest of the Zoroastrian fire temple of Nowbahar. Muslim relations with the Balk region go back to the early phase of Islamic conquests during the time of Moawia, but no tie between a member of the Barmakids and a Muslim caliph can be established before the reign of Hesam bin Abd al-Malek (r. 723-42).

⁸³ S. D. Goitein, “A Turning-Point in the History of the Muslim State,” in *Studies in Islamic Institutions*, BRILL, Leiden, 1966, pp. 149-67; H.A.R. Gibb, “The Social Significance of Shuubuiya,” in *Studies of Civilization of Islam*, pp. 62-73.

⁸⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat Nama*, Eng. trans. by Hubert Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, Routledge, New York, 2002,

⁸⁵ Tanvir Anjum, “Nature and Dynamics of Political Authority in the Sultanate of Delhi,” in *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. LIV (54), No, 3 (2006), pp. 29-59, here, p. 31

Persianised in their political and socio-cultural outlook.⁸⁶ They started to adopt ancient Iranian titulature such as the title *Shah-en Shah* (King of Kings) and espoused and accepted Islamised names. Then they also revived ancient ceremonies and practices such as displaying royal insignia like the crown and the throne. Above all, the Buyids introduced the system of divine selection of kingship through a revelation in dreams, miracles, and prophesies.⁸⁷ Thus, the political system under the Buyids became an amalgamation of Sasanian monarchical tradition and the Islamic political system.

On the other hand, the Seljuqids were ethnically Turks and staunch Sunni Muslims in their religious orientation. They abandoned the ancient Persian traditions and brought largely the Turkish tribal system where they ran the state as a sort of “family confederation” – a system in which the ruler would assign portions of his state to other prominent family members as autonomous and semi-independent dominions under his suzerainty.⁸⁸ However, with the execution of Caliph Mustasim (r. 1242-58) by Halagu Khan, the Mongol commander, there was the end of Sunni authority and legitimacy. As Baghdad’s influence (the Caliphate’s base) disintegrated, Delhi and its sultans stood in a newly elevated relationship with the Islamic world.⁸⁹

From the above-mentioned discussion, it can be said that the sultanate of Delhi was an extension of the Ghurid Empire, which itself brought much of its political theory from the Ghaznavids. Though all these rulers of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids belonged to the Turkish ethnicity, they preferred the Persian as their kingly outlook. The Ghaznavids were the direct descent of the Samanid slave institution, who were trained in the Persianate culture. This is one of the answers to why the Delhi rulers, who were Turks by ethnicity, would promote the Persianate culture. It was a process which started in the ninth century, and generation after generation followed it from Samanids to Ghaznavids and then the Ghurids. Therefore, the Delhi sultans too carried this tradition of kingship forward. They constantly brought references from the Persianate kingship and culture of

⁸⁶ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Society*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 121

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 121

⁸⁸ Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. 2: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquests 11th-13th Centuries*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 10.

⁸⁹ Blain H. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in medieval Islam: History, Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2012, p. 2

pre-Islamic Iran to defend their position as a ruler and their policies. In the following sections, an attempt has been made to explore the relationship between *shari'a* and Persian kingship and how the Delhi Sultans pursued them in their policies to understand how the Delhi Sultans used Persian imagery in their political theory.

To break the stereotype, the Sultanate of Delhi was an administration for Islam; it is crucial to see how a sultan's rulings stand concerning the principles of *shari'a*. It has been discussed that the Delhi Sultanate was culturally a successor state of the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids, who were Persianate in their outlook. Therefore, this section discusses the distinct nature of Islamic and Persian forms of political thought. The concept of justice is very dear to both the said political ideas. Hence, let us begin with the justice or *adl* in relation to the Persianate and Islamic monarchies. According to Blain Auer, justice stood at the pinnacle of kingship and was the goal and virtue per excellence for every "Muslim" king during the pre-modern period.⁹⁰ Besides this, it was expected for Persianate monarchs to be compassionate and generous, which were equally considered necessary qualities of rule.⁹¹ For a Persianate monarch, the inspiration for these essential qualities and justice came from the good example of former kings, which the succeeding rulers strived to imitate.⁹²

For instance, Alexander the Great has undergone a symbiotic process of Islamisation and Persianisation over a period of time. The *Alexander legends* were incorporated into the Quran (18:83-102), which had travelled through Greek, Syriac, Armenian and Arabic to reach Mecca and Medina"⁹³ As part of its Persian imperial universalism, Ferdowsi in his *Shahnama* had claimed that the Macedonian king is of a Persian origin. He has been portrayed as the son of a Greek Princess and a Persian emperor.⁹⁴ Another great Persian author of the medieval period Nizami Ganjavi (c. 1141 – 1209), synthesized both the Quranic and Persian impulses regarding Alexander in his

⁹⁰ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of Persian Kings*, p.13

⁹¹ Ibid., p.13

⁹² Ibid., pp.13-14

⁹³ Kevin van Bladel, "The *Alexander Legend* in the Quran 18:83–102," in Gabriel Said Reynolds (ed.), *The Quran in Its Historical Context*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2008, pp. 175–203

⁹⁴ Peter F. Bang with Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, "'Elephant of India': Universal Empire through Time and across Cultures," in Peter F. Bang and Dariusz Kolodziejczyk (eds.), *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 12-13

book *Iskandarna (Sikandarnam)*.⁹⁵ Thus, it can be seen that over a period of time, Alexander (Sikander in Persian) became a symbol of the Persianate monarchy that the later Persianate rulers aspired to copy in their rule.

In the Sultanate of Delhi, Amir Khusrau in his poem *Aina-i-Sikandari*⁹⁶ wrote about the *Alexander legend* by linking it to the history of India by making corrections from that of Nizami Ganjavi's version in accordance with his own context and needs to fit his ideas.⁹⁷ While praising Alauddin Khalji, Khusrau compared him with Alexander in the *Khaza'in al-Futuh* or *Treasures of Victories*, while he noted that "the mirrors of this second Alexander are such that if totally illuminated their appearance could not be contained within the rust-coloured mirror of the sky."⁹⁸ Similarly, Shams-i-Shiraj Afif also drew a comparison between the Alexandrian myth and his version of the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi.⁹⁹ Here Afif has given prominence to the scientific and innovative qualities of Alexander and compared Firoz Shah's scientific achievements with it. Afif praised Firoz Shah Tughlaq for inventing a sophisticated mechanized device, the *Tas Ghariyal* (Gong), a timekeeping machine that operated through an automated system of pulleys and bells that announced the time.¹⁰⁰ For this 'invention' Afif praised Firoz Shah as follows:

"From the times of *Hazrat* Adam to the times of the Holy Prophet, six rulers in the world left behind six mementoes. Kaimurs – Cap, Jamshid – Sword, Faridun – Throne, Kai Khusrau – bowl or goblet of glass, Sikandar – Mirror,

⁹⁵ Abu Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Muayyidi Nizamuddin, *The Sikander Nama-e Bara*, Eng. trans. by H. Wilberforce Clarke, as *The Book of Alexander the Great*, W.H. Allen and Co., London, 1881.

⁹⁶ It is also known as the *Ainai-Sikandari*, was the fourth poem of the *Khamsa* which was an imitation of Nizami's *Sikander Namah* composed by Khusrau in AH 699/ AD 1299-1300 and contains 4450 couplets.

⁹⁷ Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 200-201

⁹⁸ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji: Being the Khaza'in al Futuh (Treasures of Victory)*, D. B. Taraporewala Sons & Co., Madras, 1931, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Shams-i-Shiraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by R.C. Jauhri, Sundeep Prakashan, New Delhi, 2001, p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ Shams-i-Shiraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by R.C. Jauhri, p. 149; Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of Persian King*, p. 69; Public timekeeping devices were quite the fashion in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Roughly a century earlier, in 1206, Ibn al-Razzaz al-Jazari completed his *Kitab fi Marifat al-hiyal al-Handasiyya* or *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* which discusses about another such clock. Ismail bin al-Razzaz Jazari, *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, Eng. trans. by Donald Hill, Reidel, Boston, 1974, pp. 17–93.

Pious Suleman – The Seal. Firoz Shah, through the invention of the Tas Ghariyal, left it as a memento from Khorasan to the Bengal kingdom.”¹⁰¹

It is noteworthy that most of these cited rulers like Jamshid, Faridun, and Kai Khusrau are the symbol of Persianate kingship. These are just a few examples that demonstrate the deeply intertwined processes of how a later ruler tried to imitate qualities from the predecessor – a process in Persianate kingship. Thus, it can be seen that even the Delhi sultans who were ethnically Turks (specifically the thirteenth and fourteenth century Delhi sultans) in the history of that period often emerged in the guise of Sasanian kings and the rulers of the Persian mythic past or at least they were compared with renowned Persian kings as their worthy successor.

In *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, while Juzjani was describing his patron Sultan Iltutmish, he compared the Sultan with the heroes of the Persianate monarchy. Juzjani narrates as “the zealous and steadfast warrior, the patronizer of the learned, the dispenser of justice, in pomp like Faridun, in disposition like Kubad (Qubad), in fame like Ka’us, in empire like Sikandar, and in majesty like Bahram.”¹⁰² Iltutmish is also compared with Ali and Hatim-i-Tai to establish his heroic credentials.¹⁰³ The noted fourteenth-century scholar Zia al-Din Barani in *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* has stated that the sultanate of Delhi under Balban had the Persianate imperial model. He further stated, upon the death of Nasir al-Din in 1266, “Sultan Ghayasuddin Balban, who was included among the Shamsi slaves and was manumitted along with other forty Turk slaves (*Turkan-i-Chihalgai*), ascended the throne; he mostly followed the customs of the ancient kings and adorned his palace and court with the ceremonies of the kings of Ajam.”¹⁰⁴ Balban affectionately named his grandsons after the great Sasanian Kings and celebrated Persian rulers of the past like Kay Qubad, Kay Ka’us, Kay Khusraw and Gayumart. Notably, two of these grandsons of Balban ascended to the throne of Delhi after his demise. According to Juzjani, ethnically, Balban belonged to the Olberli (or Olperli) tribe of the Qipchaq (Khifchak).¹⁰⁵ Thus,

¹⁰¹ Shams-i-Shiraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by R.C. Jauhri, p. 149.

¹⁰² Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 598

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 598

¹⁰⁴ Zia-al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2015 (reprint, 2022), p. 17

¹⁰⁵ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, Oriental Reprint, New Delhi, 1970 (original publication 1881), p. 775

Ghayasuddin Balban, in his transition from soldier to Sultan, “Turkishness” got subsumed into the political structures and cultural expectations of the Persian kingship.

Thus, it can be seen that the sultans of Delhi often turned to the Persianate monarchs to demonstrate their eminence as worthy rulers though they belonged to different ethnic groups. In an Islamicate rule, theoretically, a ruler only seeks guidance from the Quran and Hadith. Justice is one such aspect which has importance in both the Persianate and Islamicate administrations. However, the difference is that while in Islam, the stream of justice flows from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet, in the Persianate rule, the past heroes and their deeds serve the purpose. In fact, in the Persianate kingship, ethical teachings were considered as the virtue of history which was to instruct advice rulers from the past examples about the “ins and outs” of kingship. Being a king also meant to shoulder the countless responsibilities loaded with hazardous tasks and invincible pitfalls. Therefore, a wise king must learn from the examples of their predecessors who excelled in ruling ideas and of course, had a profound respect for providing justice to his subjects.¹⁰⁶

In the Sultanate of Delhi as well, justice or *adl* played a central role in its political ethics. During the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish copper coins were issued displaying prominently the word *adl* (justice) on one side and *shams* on the other side.¹⁰⁷ Nearly all other Delhi Sultans followed this tradition and minted coins by giving prominence to the word justice. Muhammad Tughlaq issued almost a billion coins with the title “The Just Sultan” (*al-sultan al-adil*), as well as “The Just Leader” (*al-imam al-adil*).¹⁰⁸ This shows the importance and prominence given to providing justice by the Delhi Sultans. However, Firoz Shah Tughlaq deviated from this tradition of minting coins with the word *adl* (justice), instead, he preferred the Caliphal titles feature in his coins. Even the immediate successors of Firoz Shah followed his path and the *adl* or justice was not minted in the Sultanate coins during that period. But, that does not mean

¹⁰⁶ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of Kings*, pp. 122-123

¹⁰⁷ J. P. Goenka, Stan Goron, and Michael Robinson, *The Coins of the Indian Sultanates: Covering the Area of Present-Day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 23–24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56

that these Sultans deviated from providing justice. Rather, justice was viewed as the cornerstone of stability in the empire.

Now the question arises from where the ethical norms of justice were extracted. Zia al-Din Barani has pointed out that it comes from the previous kings who were the epitome of justice. For instance, Barani mentions that after the death of Balban mutual animosity emerged between the *amirs* and *maliks* of the sultanate and they started to kill and destroy properties of each other on mere suspicion.¹⁰⁹ By witnessing the disturbance and confusion people started to long for the rule of Balban, who was an epitome of justice. Barani further stated that he himself became disheartened because he wrote a book like *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* that combines both the annals and regulations of governance and according to him the book was so exceptional that “no historians could able to write such a book during the past 1000 years”.¹¹⁰ But, as Balban is not there so Barani lamented, “what should I do and to whom should I complain and before whom I should make a submission to take the trouble of comparing this chronicles with other chronicles and do justice to the great troubles that I have undergone in this regard.”¹¹¹ He lamented and wrote:

“If Jamshid and Khusrau, who ruled over the entire inhabited world, or Nausherwan and Parvaiz, who discharged their responsibilities as rulers so well with the king’s justice, would return to life, I would bring this history to them. As a result of their absolute acquaintance and astuteness, the love that they had for history was such that if they offered me cities for this book, I would not agree and before the thrones of those kings I would boast.”¹¹²

Thus, Barani brought examples from the pre-Islamic Persian kings – Jamshid and Khusrau as the principle model of the just king. The Sasanian king Khusraw was considered as the apogee of impartiality and was contemplated as the most just ruler among the Persian kings. He reportedly played a direct role in providing justice by sitting

¹⁰⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 75

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 76

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 76

¹¹² Ibid., p. 76

personally for the hearing to listen to the plaintiffs and issuing judgments.¹¹³ However, Barani was not alone in bringing forward the heroes of the legendary Persian past in their quest for justice. When Amir Khusrau was describing his reason for writing the *Kiran-us-Sa'dain* noted, "if the king gave me the treasures of Faridun and Jamshid, they would be a poor payment of one letter my desire for this highly decorated book is that my name may remain high in its place."¹¹⁴

Now it might be asked, what was the reason for these authors to invoke the Persian past? Was it only to remind the Sultan to take up the burden of justice? It seems that through these examples these authors tried to create an ethical and moral pressure on the sultans to pay notice to their advices, thus to have an indirect influence over the Sultan's policies. They advised the ruler on issues like when to wage a war or take up a conquest, when to take defensive measures to protect the kingdom, and how much to tax. Besides this, they also hoped to constrain certain actions of the ruler which they believed cruel and unfair. Thus, it seems when these authors invoked the ideal kings of the Persian past by commemorating their great works, it was partially to instruct and partly to pressure the Delhi sultans to obey and observe certain ethical norms of justice. In *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Barani wrote,

"if a king, in spite of his power to enforce his orders, allows mishandling of the helpless, the poor, the infirm, the distressed, the young and ignorant by knaves, rogues, shopkeepers, and shameless and Godless people, if he does not order the necessary inquiries and investigations to be made and does not enforce uniform justice in the dealings of the seventy two communities, then he cannot be considered 'shadow of God' or legitimate ruler."¹¹⁵

Thus, the concept of justice was very dear to the Persianate kingship and the Delhi Sultans too held it in high esteem in their administration. Ibn Battuta (d. 1304-1369) mentioned an instance when Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq was presented before a judge (*qadi*) for a trial where the Sultan was sentenced guilty and was duly punished.

¹¹³ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and A.U.S. Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1961, p. 55

¹¹⁴ E.B. Cowell, "The *Kiran-us-Sa'dain*, of Mir Khusrau," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 29, No. 1-4 (1860), p. 238

¹¹⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and A.U.S. Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 36

Battuta wrote that an Indian noble brought a murder charge against the Sultan by accusing him of wrongfully killing his brother. The Sultan was not only tried by the judge but also declared culpable and was forced to pay blood money for his crime.¹¹⁶ Battuta mentioned about Iltutmish as well, who was very particular about serving justice to his subjects. Hence, he ordered the installation of two statues of lions on the gate of the palace with chains attached to the bells hung on the neck of these lions. Anybody who wanted justice could ring those bells seeking the attention of the ruler.¹¹⁷ The Sultan further ordered that anybody who had been wronged should wear a colored robe; as the inhabitants of that period usually wore white dress. When he saw someone wearing a coloured robe he looked into his petition and rendered him his due from his oppressor.¹¹⁸

However, the noteworthy point of the above description is that the Sultans of Delhi as well as the authors of that period would take references from the pre-Islamic Persian past to carry the burden of justice bestowed on them. On the other hand, in the Islamic ideal of rule, justice stems from God and directed by a Muslim ruler competent of implement the *shari'a*. The source of the justice can be found in the Quran and examples left by the Prophet. According to Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, the Prophet has said that “Justice is God’s balance on earth”¹¹⁹ Muhammad Nazeer Kaka Khel has stated that the main objectives of an Islamic state were to establish and develop a well-balanced system of social justice and equity as prescribed in the Quran.¹²⁰ God or Allah is the ultimate sovereign in the Islamic state based on *shari'a* and no law can be enacted by the ruler that challenges authority or counters the clear commands of the Holy Book the Quran.¹²¹ Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (*Sunnah*) clearly demonstrate that the power to rule and authority is a sacred trust and it should be exercised by the members of the *umma* for implementing the will of Allah and for the betterment of the Muslim

¹¹⁶ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354*, Vol. 3, Eng. trans. by H. A. R. Gibb, the Hakluyt Society: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 692–93.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 630

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 630

¹¹⁹ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 123

¹²⁰ Muhammad Nazeer Kaka Khel, “Legitimacy of Authority in Islam,” in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn 1980), pp. 167-182, here, p. 168

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 168

community at large.¹²² Hence, the authority is legitimate only when exercised within the broad principle of justice and equality set forth by the Quran. Finally, the ruler must be chosen one by the choice of Muslim *umma*.¹²³

Nevertheless, in practical situations, the rule, regulation, authority, power, legitimacy etc. were utilized in different ways based on the contexts, necessities and situations of that period. The medieval authors have provided considerable suggestions in the advice works how a sultanate should run. The sufficient condition for a ruler's authority includes experience and a record of devotion to Islam, possessions of quality of loyalty and gratitude for boons received and humility before God and man.¹²⁴ On the basis of these qualities, Ghayasuddin Tughlaq was accepted as the Sultan of Delhi. After defeating Khusrau Shah, Ghayasuddin was of the view of accepting a young scion of the Khalji family as Sultan. However, his aids and supporters were of the view that such an act would lead to disorder again, which would be dangerous for Islam.¹²⁵

After ascending to the throne, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq made sure that all the daughters of Alauddin Khalji were given in marriage to suitable persons. He adjusted the *amirs* and *maliks* of the previous regime in his administration by offering them *iqtas* and offices. According to Barani Ghiyasuddin treated them as his *khwaja-tash* (fellow servants of the Khaljis). Thus, the Sultan established an administration which was based on reconciliation, equality, justice and a respectful attitude towards the *ulama* and the people.¹²⁶ All these qualities are part of the Persian kingship. Marshal Hodgson has stated that with the fall of the High Caliphate, the aspect of authority and legitimacy are to be found in contract, concept and consensus.¹²⁷ The ruler and certain persons with the capacity to consent on behalf of the Muslim community are seen as meaningful tension

¹²² Ibid., p. 169

¹²³ Ibid., p. 170

¹²⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 3-4; Peter Hardy, "Force and Violence in Indo-Persian Writing on History and Government in Medieval South Asia," in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds.), *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1983, p. 177

¹²⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 258

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 261

¹²⁷ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Vol. 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974, p. 342

and interplay.¹²⁸ The authority arises from an *ijma* (consensus or agreement) which embraces the ruler and other qualified bearers of, or participants in *ijma*.¹²⁹ In the case of Ghiyasuddin as well it can be seen that he was persuaded by a section of the *umma* who was tired of the lawlessness and worried for their *din* (Islam). On the other hand, the ruler also took a conciliatory approach and established a consensus in his administration between the officials of the previous regime and his administration.

The anonymous *Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi*, completed in 1370, cites an Arabic work to the effect that it is *wajib* to fight an *amir* who positively acts to alter the religion of God and to change the *sunna* of the Prophet.¹³⁰ In an Islamic state, the *umma* enjoys the power to alter the ruler through rebellion if he fails to work for the religion. While it is obligatory to obey an *amir* appointed by the *Khalifa* (Caliph), Muslim should also promise loyalty (*bai'a kardan*) to an *amir* who has seized his position by force, to the end that he may take the path of justice in preference to the path of oppression and depravity.¹³¹ In terms of replacing an incumbent sultan or conquering a territory of another Muslim sultan, according to Peter Hardy, Islam permits on the point of establishing justice. If a sultan acts oppressively towards its own subjects, then the other Sultan has a duty to restore justice to those subjects, although they are not his own.¹³² This was the reason offered for Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq's conquest of Lakhnauti in 1353, which was ruled by another Muslim Sultan Shams al-din Iliyas Shah.¹³³ However, when we see the killing of Jalaluddin Khalji by Alauddin Khalji, no Islamic motivation can be found. It was sheer violence for the purpose of acquiring the throne of Delhi. Zia al-Din Barani by describing the killing of Jalaluddin Khalji has noted the act as "dastardly" and "sinful" and described that all the participants of this heinous act – Ulugh Khan, Nuzrat Khan, Zafar Khan Malik Askari, Malik Juna all died within a span of three to four years as the sinner bound to be doomed.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Peter Hardy, "Force and Violence in Indo-Persian Writing," p. 178

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 178

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 171

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 171

¹³² Ibid., p. 179

¹³³ Ibid., p. 179

¹³⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 145

In another instance, the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* provides an account of the rivalry between Shamsuddin Iltutmish, the ruler of Delhi and Nasiruddin Qubachha, the ruler of Multan, Uchch, Sindh and parts of Punjab. The rivalry only came to an end with the death of Qubachha in 1228. Both Qubachha and Iltutmish were married into the house of Qutubuddin Aibek and both were the contender for the throne of Delhi after Aibek's sudden death in 1210. Qubachha assumed the insignia of two umbrellas (*chatr*) and took control over Lahore several times but was defeated every time by the forces of Tajuddin Yillduz (another former Ghurid slave). On the other hand, Iltutmish had taken over Delhi and accepted the *chatr* and *durbash* from Tajuddin Yillduz, an indication of undertaking an allegiance.¹³⁵

Thus, it can be seen that both Qubachha and Iltutmish had served with loyalty and effectively under the same master, married to the same family and claimed the legitimacy to rule over the sultanate of Delhi. While Iltutmish took an oath of allegiance to Yillduz, Qubachha refused it. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how Minhaj-us-Juzjani portrayed that Iltutmish had a greater claim to be successful than Qubachha as a "Muslim" ruler. While introducing Iltutmish, Minhaj termed him as a just sultan and servant of Islam and Muslims.¹³⁶ The second thing that was used by Minhaj was that Iltutmish got the manumission from Muhammad bin Sam (Ghori), the ultimate master of all the Ghurid slave leaders. Thus, Minhaj labelled all the opposition to Iltutmish as *isiyan* and *khuruj* (rebellion). Then he described the defeat of Qubachha as part of God's grace and favour (*inayat ilahi*) for Iltutmish.¹³⁷ Hence, Minhaj has described the rivalry between the two Muslim rulers in such a way that both remained part of the Muslim *umma*, but it was the will of God, getting manumission and the concept of justice that had worked in favour of Iltutmish.

Therefore, it can be argued that, unlike the Islamic tradition, the Sultans of Delhi preferred the Persian past as their reference point to portray themselves as the epitome of justice. However, they twisted it on several occasions to suit their needs and set the political narratives in their favour. However, it is evident that they were not following the *shari'a* rule as the core of their administration, which is a prerequisite for an Islamic

¹³⁵ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 607

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 596-597

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 607-609

state. If we turn to another important aspect of medieval rule – the nature of the administration of the sultanate and the authority of the Sultan would make the argument further tangible.

In a medieval Islamicate state administration, three aspects played crucial roles – the *shari'a*, *siyasat* and the *maslahat*. Blain Auer has described *maslahat* as “general good” or “general welfare” and well well-being of the kingdom in its broader meaning.¹³⁸ Looking after the well-being of the kingdom and its subject was the responsibility of the king, which he performed through two kinds of kingly authorities – the *zawabit* (issued under Sultan’s proper authority known as state law)¹³⁹ and *siyasat* (putting to death by the Sultan if it is necessary for the well being of the kingdom).¹⁴⁰ However, Fakhr-i-Mudabbir has explained *siyasat* quite differently. He stated, “there is no kingship but through men, and no men without wealth, and no wealth without subjects and no subjects without justice, and no justice without governance (*siyasat*).”¹⁴¹

To describe *zawabit* Barani has written that “*zabita* or state laws were the rules imposed as an obligatory duty by the king upon himself for realizing the welfare of the state and from which he never deviates.”¹⁴² The market reform policies adopted by Alauddin Khalji to lower the price of grain can be taken as an example of *zawabit*. Zia al-Din Barani mentioned that the prime goal of this action of Alauddin was to achieve the general good because the Sultan wanted to raise an army to defend the frontiers from the Mongols.¹⁴³ To that end, it is said that he issued eight rules (*zawabit*).¹⁴⁴ Both *zawabit* and *siyasat* were ideally in sync with *shari'a*, but in practice, it was always not the case. The problem arises when the general good (*maslahat*) could be in contradiction to *shari'a*. At times the rulers had to choose between the “general good” and *shari'a*, and

¹³⁸ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 151

¹³⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* p. 64

¹⁴⁰ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 152; Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 58

¹⁴¹ Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 157. Significantly, the term *siyasat* used here is the word from Arabic language which means political authority, whereas the term *siyasat* in Persian is associated with capital punishment.

¹⁴² Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 64

¹⁴³ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyah Ahmad Zilli, p. 185

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 186

many sultans of Delhi preferred the earlier. The literal interpretation of Islamic rule every so often would create hurdle in their policies in a country where the majority of the population did not belong to their own faith. In such a situation the rulers sometimes had to ignore the principle of the *shari'a*. For instance, Alauddin Khalji famously declared in front of his nobles and the *ulama* that “kingship and rule are separate things from the traditions and rules of the *shari'a*.”¹⁴⁵

The same can be witnessed regarding the relationship between the *shari'a* and *siyasat* in the sultanate of Delhi. During one of Barani's conversations with Muhammad bin Tughlaq regarding the use of *siyasat* (capital punishment), the author informed the Sultan based on his knowledge which he gained by reading *Tarikh-i-Khisrawi* on instances when the ruler can issue capital punishment. Barani stated once one of Jamshid's confidants asked him “what kind of crimes need to be punished with capital punishment?”¹⁴⁶ In reply, Jamshid informed there are seven crimes for which capital punishment is appropriate, and going beyond them leads to disorder and chaos. Firstly, if someone apostatizes and persists in it; second, one who kills a law-abiding subject; third, one who is married and still commits adultery; fourthly, treason against the king, which is proven; fifthly, one who rebels and remains engaged in it; sixthly, a subject of the king who enters into friendship with the enemy of the king; seventhly, a disobedient subject, for whom the state suffers.¹⁴⁷

However, notably, the *shari'a* law authorizes the death penalty only for certain crimes which considered heinous, like if a man wrongfully kills another, or apostatizes from Islam, or commits adultery with a married woman.¹⁴⁸ No hadith or saying of the Prophet, or any verse in the Quran and neither any clear tradition from the religious scholars suggests the infliction of the death penalty for crimes like conspiracy and rebellion.¹⁴⁹ However, in practice, medieval Kings including those who claimed to be

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 176

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 313

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 313-314

¹⁴⁸ Michael Mumisa, “Sharia law and the death penalty: Would abolition of the death penalty be unfaithful to the message of Islam?” in Michael Mumisa, Mohammad Habbash, et al (eds.), *Progressive Abolition of the Death Penalty and Implementation of Humane Alternative Sanctions*, Penal Reform International, London, 2015, p. 17

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 1-34

following *shari'a* had often given the death penalty for crimes like conspiracy in order to create an example for those who might think to follow a similar path and to protect their own authority and well-being of their allies and supporters.¹⁵⁰ Thus, it can be seen that though such capital punishments protected the well-being of the kings and kingship and served as a warning to others, but these kinds of punishments were not sanctioned according to *shari'a* law.

Therefore, it can be argued that the sultans of Delhi did not always act in accordance with the *shari'a*; rather they were very pragmatic in their approach. They were well aware of the practical socio-religious positions of their subjects and acted accordingly. Thus, between *shari'a* and *maslahat*, the latter played the larger role in the sultanate rules and regulations. The concept of *maslahat* as a valid method of law finding developed and reached a new level of sophistication in legal discourse among the Islamic scholars in the writing of Al Ghazali (1058-1111).¹⁵¹ Felicitas Opwis has argued that it was Ghazali who developed the concept of *maslahat* as a highly coherent and evolved system of legal theory in comparison to his previous jurists.¹⁵² Ghazali and other contemporary jurists agreed on that the preservation of five essentials of human existence is the purpose of the law from Quranic rulings: the protection of religion (*din*), the value of life (*nafs*), intellect (*aql*), progeny (*nasl*), and property (*mal*).¹⁵³ Thus, they tried to specify the duty of a government which needs to provide these basics to its subjects.

Coming back to the role of *maslahat* and *shari'a* in the sultanate administration we can turn to Zia al-Din Barani, who provides the most comprehensive information regarding the changes undergone during the sultanate of Delhi. Barani is the most perceptive in his thought among the sultanate authors on political writings. S.A. Arjomand has noted that “Barani was explicitly frank in his observance and admitting the possibility of a serious clash between monarchy and the *shari'a* order.”¹⁵⁴ Barani viewed

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 1-34

¹⁵¹ Felicitas Opwis, *Maslaha and the Purpose of the Law: Islamic Discourse on Legal Change from the 4th/10th to 8th/14th Century*, Brill, Leiden, 2010, p. 65; Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of the Kings*, p. 151

¹⁵² Felicitas Opwis, *Maslaha and the Purpose of the Law*, p. 65.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 99-100

¹⁵⁴ Said Amir Arjomand, “Legitimacy and Political Organization: Caliphs, Kings and Regimes,” in Robert Irwin (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 4, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 247.

the *maslahat* or the principle of providing general good as the central requisite of medieval kingship. However, significantly Barani considered *maslahat* as a law that derived from the *shari'a* itself. In the introduction to the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, while discussing the affairs of kings, Barani stated that “if you see the general good (*maslahat*) being cared for then say it clearly.”¹⁵⁵

By describing the kingly qualities of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, Barani has noted that even while he was not a king and was still a *malik*, he acted as a bulwark against the Mongols and emerged as the protector of *din* (religion).¹⁵⁶ In terms of his love for justice is concerned, “if one sought justice from the king, and the implementation of the rules of the *shari'a*, and the rule of commanding good and prohibiting evil, then conditions during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq were such that a wolf would not even look at a sheep and the lion would drink with the deer from the same watering hole.”¹⁵⁷ Thus, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq served the cause of general good for the kingdom and the people.

He further noted that if a ruler thinks it is necessary for his political policy, the ruler could also frame new laws. However, before framing new rules, the ruler must follow four preconditions: first, the new set of rules must not be adverse to the order of the *shari'a*. Secondly, new laws should increase loyalty among the select (noble) and hope among the common (subject), and these laws should not be the source of hatred, burden and trouble. Thirdly, the precedents for these state laws must be discoverable from the religious kings, and their enforcement should not lead to customs and traditions and ways of tyrants. Finally, if something in these states rules against *Sunnah* yet it is quite necessary to enforce, it should be clearer to the ruler as well as to the common people as necessities permitting the forbidden.¹⁵⁸

In one instance, once Qazi (*qadi*) Mughis ud-Din and Alauddin Khalji were discussing the role and reach of *shari'a* in the administration, and the Sultan sought legal advice from the *qadi* on four issues to see if his own actions were within the line of

¹⁵⁵ Blain Auer, “A Translation of the Prolegomena to Ziya’ al-Din Barani’s *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*,” in Alireza Korangy, Wheeler M. Thackston Roy P. Mottahedah and William Granara (eds.), *Essays in Islamic Philology, History and Philosophy*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2016, p. 414

¹⁵⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 271

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 271

¹⁵⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 65–66

shari'a or not. The four questions were: How is a tribute paying (*kharaj guzar, kharaj dih*) Hindu defined in *shari'a*? What kind of punishment has been prescribed in *shari'a* for those officials who take bribes and steal from the account? What would be the share of the Sultan and his children in the government treasury? Finally, he asked the *qadi* about the treasures he brought from Deogir during the period when he was just a *malik* after so much bloodshed, whether this treasure belonged to him or to the *Bait ul Mal* of the Muslims.¹⁵⁹ In response to these questions, the *qadi* asked for safety for his life as these answers were going to offend the Sultan, and after getting assurance for his life, the *qadi* answered. His legal advice made it clear that the Sultan's acts regarding all these four issues were on the fault line of *shari'a*. Then the Sultan reacted by saying,

“For ensuring that there should be no rebellion as many people get killed in it, I decree what is in the interest of the state and for the well being of people. Sometimes harsh measures are necessary to curb the troublers. I don't know whether these regulations are lawful or unlawful (according to *shari'a*); whatever I find in the interest of the state and whatever I see expedient that I decree.”¹⁶⁰

Shari'a laws were not the ultimate to run the administration. Instead, the Delhi rulers found pragmatic ways to govern their state. When *qadi* Mughis ud-Din advised the Sultan to take harsh measures against the non-Muslims as the *shari'a* demanded it, the Sultan laughed at this advice and said “he did not understand any of the things he was told.”¹⁶¹ Contrary to the stereotype that *shari'a* covered all possible cases of law in the sultanate of Delhi. Instead, it is interesting to note that Barani mentioned in his advice in the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* that a ruler should appoint officials to enforce *shari'a*, but these officials should not resort to dissimulation or strained interpretation and they should bring matters directly to the king where *shari'a* laws cannot be enforced.¹⁶²

It seems that the gap in the *shari'a* allowed the sultans the authority to frame rules and regulations according to their own understanding and for the well-being of the

¹⁵⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 176-179

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 180

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 177

¹⁶² Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p, 58

kingdom and the general good of the subjects. However, the authority enjoyed by the Sultan independent from the *shari'a* was legitimized at different levels. According to Michael Cook, the Quran commands the *umma* (followers of Islam) on both collective as well as individual levels to “command the right and forbid the wrong (3:104, 3:110),” and this aspect was frequently used by the authors during the medieval period.¹⁶³ For example, Barani has noted that Ghiyasuddin Balban had made it a central tenant of his testament. Barani writes that during the rule of Balban “the tradition of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong gets entrenched and the rights of Islam reach the dome of the skies.”¹⁶⁴ The Quranic verse 4:91¹⁶⁵ says, “We have given you a clear authority over such people.”¹⁶⁶ Amir Khusrau interpreted this verse and argued that the Sultan enjoyed the power to dictate law based on his authority recognized by God. On the other hand, Asma Afsaruddin opined that *maslahat* was not different from that of *shari'a*, because the goals are the same for both. She further argues that Muslim jurists (*qadi*) treated *shari'a* as a tool for serving the public good, while *maslahat* was just an interpretive lens through which Islamic laws (*shari'a*) was viewed.¹⁶⁷

However, there were circumstances when the *maslahat* or general good could stand in opposition to the *shari'a*. ? For instance, a king acts according to his conscience by considering it as in the best interest of his kingdom, but which might be against the unequivocal rules of the *shari'a*. In such a situation how would the political theory act? After ascending to the throne, Sultan Alauddin Khalji claimed that “kingship is one thing and the traditions and rules of the *shari'a* are altogether a different thing. In accordance with these beliefs, he would do whatever he considered to be in the interest of the governance, whether it was sanctioned by the *shari'a* or not.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, it can be seen that

¹⁶³ Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. xi-xii

¹⁶⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 45

¹⁶⁵ “You will find others who desire that they should have security from you, and security from their own folk. So often as they are returned to hostility, they are plunged therein. If they keep not aloof from you nor offer you peace nor hold their hands, then take them and kill them wherever you find them. Against such, “We have given you clear warrant.” *The Quran*, Eng. trans. by Marmaduke Pickthall, Verse, 4:91

¹⁶⁶ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib as *The Campaign of Alaaddin Khalji*, p. 8

¹⁶⁷ Asma Afsaruddin, “*Maslahah* as a Political Concept,” in Mehrzad Boroujerdi (ed.), *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 2013, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 176

shari'a was not treated as the ultimate form of law in the Sultanate of Delhi. Whereas in an Islamic state rule of *shari'a* is the principle requirement.

Besides these, a pure version of Islamic rule clearly demarcates the social status of Muslims and non-Muslims. The non-Muslims were categorized as *dimmi* (*zimmi*) or protected people within the imperial polity.¹⁶⁹ This in turn increased the theological orientation in governance. Whereas in a Persianate monarchy, all the subjects irrespective of their religious believe had to accept or acquiesce the king alone. An Islamic rule asks its non-Muslim subjects to pay *jizyah*. But, if we see the Delhi Sultans, except a few like Firoz Shah Tughlaq, others were not so eager to collect it. For instance, when one of the prominent scholars Mughis ud-Din Bayana advised Sultan Alauddin Khalji to impose *jizyah*, the Sultan said that any practical thought of imposing the said tax is out of question. However, Alauddin agreed to impose a modicum control on those non-Muslim chiefs within his kingdom who were showing a great degree of authority.¹⁷⁰ It can be assumed that a pure *shari'a* based rule in a region like south Asia would not be practically possible because of its diverse religious subjects.

To surmise, it can be said that *maslahat* played a considerable role in the sultanate of Delhi with few exceptions. When Firoz Shah Tughlaq ascended the throne, he took a more *shari'a*-oriented position on law and authority. He publically announced his displeasure regarding certain innovations and interpretations of *shari'a* that apparently developed under the preceding Sultans of Delhi. Firoz Shah particularly pointed out certain punishments as unlawful and taxes that were previously levied as against the *shari'a* law, which he rejected and abolished. To reverse these so-called “unlawful” acts of previous rulers, he issued a declaration *Futuh-i-Firoz Shahi* by promoting the principles of *shari'a*.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, to a large extent, the *shari'a* law was not a prime aspect of the sultanate administration. The rule of the king mostly ran the administration. The imperial norms and regulations were borrowed from the Persianate kingship, which was valorized and modelled according to the needs of the Delhi court.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 176-177

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 177

¹⁷¹ Blain Auer, “Concepts of Justice and the Catalogue of Punishments under the Sultans of Delhi (7th–8th/13th–14th Centuries),” in Christian Lange and Maribel Fierro (eds.), *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th–19th Centuries CE*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, pp. 247–49.

Regarding the nature of the Sultanate of Delhi, a few questions arise, like what kind of role did “Turkishness” play in the sultanate’s political dispensation? To understand “Turkishness” we need to explore two important components of a medieval monarchy – the military formation and the principle of legitimacy of the Delhi sultanate. How far the Turkish identity left its mark on these aspects would illustrate the nature of the sultanate of Delhi. Hence, let us start with the Ghurids as they were the political forbearers of the Sultanate of Delhi. What was the ethnicity of the Ghurid Sultans? Minhaj Juzjani stated the Ghurids as Sansabani dynasty which originated in the region of central Afghanistan. He further argued that the Ghurids were the descendants of Arab settlers who in the course of time were persianised by the legendary Persian king Faridun.¹⁷² On the other hand, C.E. Bosworth termed the Ghurids as the “eastern Iranian dynasty.”¹⁷³ However, it was their slave soldiers who were at the forefront in the conquest of northern Hindustan. Consequently, again the former Ghurid slave soldiers ruled over the first hundred years in the Delhi Sultanate.

Thus, having a discussion about the formation of military slaves which was the essential component of the Ghurids as well as the early Delhi Sultanate monarchies becomes imperative. The military slaves were of various ethnic backgrounds like Khipchak (Qipchaq) of Jaxartes and Volga; Karah Khitai of Sinkiang (also known as black Chinese); Rumis (Seljuqs or Greeks); Ilbaris (Iltutmish’s own tribe); Turk of Georgia (Turk-i-Garji) and some local from Hindustan as well like Hindu Khan.¹⁷⁴ The slaves were the backbone of the early Delhi sultanate. They held key positions in the administration. Juzjani has provided the details of twenty-five renowned and influential slaves of Iltutmish along with the ethnic background of nineteen of them. For instance, Malik Nusrat-ud-Din Sher Khan was an Ilbari,¹⁷⁵ Malik Saif-ud-Din – a Kifchak,¹⁷⁶ and

¹⁷² Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 303-306

¹⁷³ C.E. Bosworth, “Ghurids,” in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Consulted online on 29 July 2022 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0239>

¹⁷⁴ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 722-802; Irfan Habib, “Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century”, p. 10; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 62-63

¹⁷⁵ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 791

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 788

Malik Nusrat Khan-I Sunkar – a Rumi.¹⁷⁷ Sunil Kumar has also given a detailed list of twenty-five slave soldiers who belonged to different ethnic groups.¹⁷⁸ Besides these, the *Habashi*, literally Abyssinian (African) *ghulams* were also a significant element of the Sultanate military organization.¹⁷⁹ Irfan Habib has noted that Iltutmish had bought his slave soldiers from various sources like slave markets, and from slave traders.¹⁸⁰ Ibn Battuta noted, that while Muhammad bin Tughlaq was in Daulatabad, one of his commanders Nasir al-Din assembled around 40,000 soldiers consisting of Afghans, Turks, Indians, black slaves, Tajiks to take a vow that they would fight for the Sultan till their last.¹⁸¹ Hence, the military of the Delhi sultans were of various ethnic backgrounds. In the *Tughlaq Nama*, Amir Khusrau noted “his troopers were mainly from the upper lands (*iqlim-i bala*, a euphemism for Khorasan and Transoxiana) and not Hindustanis or local chieftains. They included Ghuzz, Turks and Mongols of Rum and Rus and some Khorasani Persians (Tazik) of pure stock (pak asl).”¹⁸²

Tabaqat-i-Nasiri mentions about 3000 Afghan troops serving actively in the sultanate army as part of the cavalry and as foot soldiers.¹⁸³ During the beginning years of Ghiyasuddin Balban’s reign, the *Mewatis* around Delhi created troubles in the city and looted caravans, so Balban cleared the forests around Delhi and established *thanas* there, and made the Afghans as in charge of those *thanas*.¹⁸⁴ Juzjani also mentioned about Afghans that there were a strange and unfamiliar body of soldiers who served under Balban.¹⁸⁵ Awfi has also mentioned about an instance where Sultan Iltutmish deliberately

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 787

¹⁷⁸ Sunil Kumar, “When Slaves were Nobles: The Shamsi *Bandagan* in the Early Delhi Sultanate,” in *Studies in History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1994), pp. 32-36

¹⁷⁹ Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 61-62

¹⁸⁰ Irfan Habib, “Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century”, p. 10

¹⁸¹ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels AD 1325-1354*, Vol. 3, Eng. trans. by H.A.R. Gibb, The Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1971, p. 732

¹⁸² Sunil Kumar, “The Ignored Elites: Turks, Mongols and Persian Secretarial Class in the Early Delhi Sultanate,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009), p. 54

¹⁸³ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 852; Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, pp. 51-52

¹⁸⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, pp. 36-37

¹⁸⁵ Sunil Kumar, “The Ignored Elites: Turks, Mongols and Persian Secretarial Class in the Early Delhi Sultanate,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009), p. 54; Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, pp. 51-52

chose a Tajik to investigate, a delicate task for which, we are told, the ‘impetuosity’ would have disqualified him.¹⁸⁶

Besides the *ghulams* (slaves), the sultanate administration had non-servile groups like the Khalaj, Ghuris, Mongols, Tajiks and of course the non-slave Turkish nobles.¹⁸⁷ According to Ismai, Rukn ud-Din Firoz heavily depended on his Tajik bureaucrats whom the Turkish slaves massacred in the course of the Sultan’s campaign against the rebel Kabir Khan.¹⁸⁸ Juzjani has also made a differentiation between the Muizzi Turks and Qutbi Turks. When Iltutmish ascended the throne the Qutbi *Amirs* gathered in Delhi from all over the kingdom, whereas the Muizzi *Amirs* fled the scene and gathered on the outskirts of Delhi and rebelled against the new Sultan.¹⁸⁹

However, it is tremendously challenging to assess and estimate the composition of the imperial forces of Ghaznavids, Ghurids and the Delhi sultanate army in terms of their ethnic background. Nonetheless, from the sources examined above, it is quite clear that the military forces of the said states were diverse in nature, consisting of personnel from tribes like the Turks, Tajiks, Afghans, Arabs, and Indians. The early Delhi sultanate was not a homogeneous group in terms of their ethnicity; rather, there were a number of ethnic groups with different ambitions. The amplification of their ambitions was also can be witnessed on several occasions when the different groups fought violently against each other. For instance, Juzjani has stated that to oppose the candidature of Ruknuddin Firoz for the Delhi throne, several leaders from different ethnic groups came together. Turkish *ghulam* Kabir Khan, free Turkish noble Alauddin Jani, Ghurid Amir Salari and Junaydi, ethnically a Tajik.¹⁹⁰ During the reign of Raziya Sultan as well Ghurid, Tajik and Turkish *maliks* explicitly expressed their displeasure regarding the rise of *habashi ghulam* Yakut in the ranks of administration.¹⁹¹

Moreover, the diverse character of the army was also a character of the preceding two dynasties of Delhi sultans, from whom they borrowed a lot of their political tradition. For example, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 998-1030) had a special force whose job was

¹⁸⁶ Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 65

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-62

¹⁸⁸ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 640

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 606

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 633-34, 39

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 634-35

to train and manage the war elephants. The members of this special force were mostly recruited from India.¹⁹² Khusraw Malik, the last Ghaznavid monarch, engaged the Khokars of Punjab province, a warrior tribe to fight against the armies of Muhammad Ghorī when he approached Sialkot around 1185.¹⁹³

Still, the fact remains that the early Delhi sultans belonged to the Turkish clan, though they had a diverse military under their command. Can on this basis the Sultanate of Delhi be called a Turkish sultanate? This leads to the question of what happened to the “Turkishness” once a ruler ascended to the throne. Amir Khusrau has provided evidences for spoken Turkish in the Sultanate of Delhi.¹⁹⁴ However, Sunil Kumar has doubted Khusrau’s observation and argued that as Khusrau was seeking patronage from the frontiersmen of Turko-Mongol background, hence might used the language in their private conversation.¹⁹⁵ By analyzing the cultural traditions of the slave commanders Sunil Kumar has noted that “the slave commander might have retained some of his primordial cultural practices, but the fragmented social fabric of his household might have made the cultural reproduction of many steppe traditions very difficult.”¹⁹⁶ Blain Auer also opined that some Turkish soldiers underwent a period of rigorous training that involved the assimilation of Persian and Arabic language and culture. It was the one who assimilated the fastest that would rise in ranks as it helped to connect with the bureaucratic norms fast.¹⁹⁷ Thus, many Turkish soldiers were effectively Persianised over time. Though they were born into a particular ethnic community over time their ethnicity would get modified because of the change in their cultural orientation.

While Juzjani was discussing about Iltutmish, he has discussed about the Sultan’s ethnicity as well. But, once Juzjani passed to converse about Nasir al-Din, the son of

¹⁹² S. Jabir Raza, “Indian Elephant Corps under the Ghaznavids,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, session, 73* (2012), p. 216

¹⁹³ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 454-55

¹⁹⁴ Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of Delhi Sultanate, 1192-1286*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 196-197; Sunil Kumar, “The Ignored Elites,” p. 57

¹⁹⁵ Sunil Kumar, “The Ignored Elites,” p. 57

¹⁹⁶ Sunil Kumar, “An Inconvenient Heritage: the Central Asian Background of the Delhi Sultans,” in Upinder Singh and Parul Pandya Dhar (eds.), *Asian Encounters: Exploring Connected Histories*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014, p. 95

¹⁹⁷ Blain Auer, “The ‘Advent of the Turks’ and the Question of Turkish Identity in the Court of Delhi in the Early Thirteenth Century,” in A.C.S. Peacock and Richard P. McCary (eds.), *Turkish History and Culture in India: Identity, Art and Transregional Connections*, BRILL, Leiden, 2020, p. 98

Iltutmish, he refrained from mentioning any references regarding his Turkish identity playing any role as a characteristic or mannerism that assured him victory.¹⁹⁸ It seems, the sultans after ascending to the throne were not so keen to flaunt their ethnic identity that was Turkish. This might be for two reasons – firstly, as they were commanding a military which was of diverse ethnic background and was ruling over a country where the large population were not even of their faith, and secondly, their education and training was in Persianised culture, which had its deep influence upon them. Besides these, most of the early Delhi sultans were of Turkish slave origin, hence after assuming the throne they might not be so proud of their background. By assessing the Mamluk slave sultans of Cairo, Koby Yosef has argued that “there is no evidence that manumitted *mamluks* were proud of their slave status. On the contrary, manumitted slaves with aspirations made great efforts to repress their servile past by claiming an exalted origin or by creating marital ties with established families.”¹⁹⁹ Sunil Kumar expressed a similar opinion regarding the Turkish and previous slave background of Delhi sultans, which Kumar has termed as “an inconvenient heritage,” but not too big to be insuperable.²⁰⁰

Rather, it can be observed that the Delhi sultans frequently brandished themselves with semblance of past Persian kings from the Sasanian period or even with the mythical Persian rulers of Pishdadian dynasties. Juzjani while describing his patron Iltutmish has recorded that, he was “just and munificent sultan, upright, beneficent, zealous, steadfast warrior, patronizer of the learned, dispenser of justice, in pomp like Faridun, in disposition like Kubad, in fame like Ka’us, in empire like Sikanadar (Alexander), and in majesty like Bahram.”²⁰¹ Here the author has compared his patron with the exalted Kayanid Persian kings like Kay Kubad and Kay Ku’as and with the mythical Persian monarch like Faridun. Juzjani further equated Iltutmish favourably with Ali and Hatim-i-Tai, who were famous for valour, mercy and helping nature in Islamic tradition.²⁰² Thus, Juzjani not only tried to showcase his patron’s exalted kingly nature like that of the famous Persian kings, but also he tried to establish his Islamic credentials by comparing

¹⁹⁸ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 596-627

¹⁹⁹ Koby Yosef, “The Term *Mamluk* and Slave Status during the *Mamluk* Sultanate,” in *Al-Qantara*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2013), p. 7

²⁰⁰ Sunil Kumar, “An Inconvenient Heritage,” p. 102

²⁰¹ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 597-598

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 598

with Ali and Hatim-i-Tai. However, it is significant to note that in the process of acquiring Islamic and Persianate kingly credentials, Iltutmish's ethnic background, which is Turkishness, had been pushed to the vagueness.

Hasan Nizami had also provided a similar representation regarding Qutubuddin Aibek. Nizami invoked the Persian kings of the past to illustrate the qualities of Aibek. He stated that Aibek was endowed with such heroic qualities that even great kings like Naushirwan (Anushirvan Khusraw) and Rustam were to be forgotten.²⁰³ Both of these kings were from the pre-Islamic Persian Pishdadian dynasty and enjoyed tremendous influence on the Persian kingship and statecraft. Nizami further equates Aibek with Khusraw, the great Sasanian king while he called him as the "Khusraw of Hindustan".²⁰⁴ Nizami went to the extent of comparing the Persians and Turks as representatives of civilized and uncivilized respectively.²⁰⁵

Zia al-Din Barani has stated that Ghiyasuddin Balban, again a Turk by ethnicity expressed about pomp and grandeur about his court by saying that "any king who did not maintain his dignity and majesty in the matters of holding court and arrangement of processions like the kings of Iran," the enemies of the state would not be frightened.²⁰⁶ Balban also believed that the Persian courtly culture has its own majesty which would leave its marks on the hearts of subjects.²⁰⁷ Again, being himself a member of the Olberi (Ilbari) tribe of Kifchak (Qipchak) Turks,²⁰⁸ Balban followed the traditions of the "ancient world rulers" – the Persian monarchs of pre-Islamic Iran.²⁰⁹ Prince Muhammad also known as *Khan-i-Shahid* (martyred prince), the eldest son of Ghiyasuddin Balban, was a refined and sophisticated man due to his education in Persian letters. He would adorn his assembly with eminent Persian scholars of that period like – Amir Khusrau,

²⁰³ Hasan Nizami, *Taj ul Ma'asir*, in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London, 1860, p. 209

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 209

²⁰⁵ Blain Auer, "Civilizing the Savage," p. 398

²⁰⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, pp. 20-21

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 21

²⁰⁸ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, p. 796

²⁰⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli p. 21

Amir Hasan, and others. The *Shah Nama*, *Diwan-i-Sanai*, *Diwan-i-Khaqani*, and *Khamasa* of Nizami would often be recited in his assembly.²¹⁰

Hence, the “Turkishness” of the early Delhi Sultans and their offspring would often get subsumed into the political arrangements and cultural prospects of Persian kingship. Rather, they preferred the Persianate courtly culture to denote themselves. Multiple reasons have played its part for this change of attitudes of Delhi sultans towards their own ethnic identity. Being Turkish slave soldiers they were trained and educated in Persianate culture, and the Persian kingship provided the scope for a personified rule, where the interference of the *ulama* would be minimal. On the other hand, they were not very proud of their slave background, which was almost synonymous with that of the Turkish soldiers of that period. All these reasons acted as catalysts for the early Delhi sultans to drift away from Turkishness, their own ethnicity.

The socio-political background has also acted as a reason for promoting Persian over the Turkish. By the ninth century, the Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana had established a new polity that was based on Islamic and Persian cultures – which later came to be known as “Persianate”.²¹¹ The Ghaznavids due to their earlier proximity with the Samanid monarchy accepted the Samanid Perso-Islamic “high culture”, without any attempt to even vaguely embed their own aboriginal nomadic culture into the texture of Islam.²¹² In a later stage, the Ghurids and Sultans of Delhi not only succeeded the Ghaznavid political geography, but also explicitly accepted and promoted the “Persianate” culture in their public domain and courtly culture. On the other hand, Turkic language remained the household language or language of private affairs of the rulers and in the military circles, whereas the currency Turkic folk traditions also survived within the private compounds.²¹³ C.E. Bosworth has also pointed the same in his analysis of the Ghaznavids. Bosworth stated, “unlike many other Turkish dynasties like the Qarakhanids and Seljuqs, the Ghaznavids had spent a considerable period of their life time within the military slave institutions or the cultural ambience of the indigenous Iranian dynasty as

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 41

²¹¹ Istvan Vasary, “Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam: The Qarakhanids versus the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs,” in Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart (eds.), *The Age of the Seljuqs*, I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., London, 2015, p. 1

²¹² Ibid., p. 1

²¹³ Ibid., p. 1

slave warriors which played a formative role in creating space for Persianate culture in their hearts and minds.”²¹⁴

Thus, the social background played a significant role in the medieval Indian politics of Turkishness. The institutionalization of the military slave system in the ninth century shaped the lives of many soldiers of Turkish ethnicity. They were displaced from their homelands and over the period of time acculturated with Persianate culture. But, this process was also beneficial for the Turks as it provided them the necessary exposure in the military organizations. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir has affirmed that,

“It is common knowledge that all races and classes, while they remain among their own people and in their own country, are honoured and respected; but when they go abroad they become miserable and abject. The Turks on the contrary, while they remain among their own people and in their own country, are merely a tribe among other tribes, and enjoy no particular power or status. But when they leave their own country and come to a Muslim country – the more remote they are from their homes and relatives the more highly they are esteemed and valued – they become amirs and army commanders (*sipah salaran*). Now from the days of Adam down to the present day, no slave bought at a price has ever become king except among the Turks; and among the sayings of Afrasiyab, who was a king of the Turks, and was extraordinarily wise and learned, was his dictum that the Turk is like a pearl in its shell at the bottom of the sea, which becomes valuable when it leaves the sea, and adorns the diadems of kings and the ears of brides.”²¹⁵

Apart from these, in the medieval period, Persian was considered as the language of the “men of the pen” and elite section of the society. For any aspiring writer, it was necessary to acquire knowledge in Persian. Amir Khusrau was well-versed in both Arabic as well as in Persian, but his famous works were always written in Persian. As has already been discussed, the early Delhi Sultans were from the background of nomadic warriors and military slaves and they were not so proud of that after manumission and

²¹⁴ C. E. Bosworth, “The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past,” in *Iran*, Vol. 11 (1973), pp. 51-62, here, p. 61

²¹⁵ Cited from Blain Auer, “The “Advent of the Turks” and the Question of Turkish Identity in the Court of Delhi in the Early Thirteenth Century,” in p. 91

ascending to the throne. They were also longing to carve out a space in the elite circle of society. Finally, it was again the ‘men of the pen’, the educated section who were instrumental in keeping the accounts and looking after the everyday administrative affairs both in executives and judiciary of the empire upon which the military leaders and soldiers could aspire for conquests and brought victories. A strong administrative basis provided lasting effects to conquests and invasions.

Therefore, the Delhi Sultans actively promoted the Persian language in public spheres. By analyzing the reasons for promoting Persian by the Mughals, Muzaffar Alam has pointed out that, the specific Indian conditions had to a large extent played a role in promoting Persian as the language of the empire. The non-sectarian nature and liberal features made Persian as an ideal language to deal with the diversity of Indian societies.²¹⁶ The socio-cultural conditions in the pre-Mughal period might not be too different. Besides this, Persian was a predominant language in Central Asian politics as it had served as a *lingua franca* for a variety of religious and ethnic communities that retained their own linguistic and religious identities.²¹⁷ By analyzing classical Persian poetries John Perry has also supported the view of inclusivity of the Persian language.²¹⁸ As most of the early Delhi Sultans were from Central Asian backgrounds and received their education in Persian and Arabic, they preferred Persian as a language of the Public sphere. Though they were born into Turkish ethnicity, culturally they were persianised as has already been discussed in the above sections.

The concept of legitimacy in the Persian kingship might also have attracted the Turkish rulers to follow it. The Persianate political theory conferred them with absolute power, which was not the case in a Turkish system. In Turkish political system the ruler was one among the equals and had to share power with the close relatives and chiefs of the tribe. One of the prominent Turkish dynasties during medieval period was the Seljuqs, who ruled over the territories between parts of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Central Asian

²¹⁶ Muzaffar Alam, “The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (May, 1998), p. 348

²¹⁷ Blain Auer, “Civilizing the Savage,” p. 394

²¹⁸ John R. Perry, “New Persian: Expansion, Standardization, and Inclusivity,” in Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (eds.), *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2012, p. 89

territories and Afghanistan.²¹⁹ Significantly, the administrative set-up and the political structure of the Seljuqs in Iran were not modelled upon that of the Sassanid but remained a kind of a “family confederation,” which can also be called as “collective sovereignty,” or “appanage state” in which the leading members of the paramount family within a polity was obliged to share the authority by having autonomous appanages of domains assigned to them.²²⁰

On the other hand, the Persianate monarchy saw the rulers as a person who received authority directly from God and enjoyed absolute power to run their administration. The system was more personified. It was the Persian culture that viewed the Sultan as the shadow of God, with absolute authority in administering his authority. In contrast, in the Islamic tradition of kingship, the ruler as well as the subjects must adhere to a specific set of religious beliefs embodied in *shari’a* law. On the other hand in Persianate *imperium*, the subjects might not necessarily need to adhere to the values of *shari’a*, which allowed the ruler to navigate the diversity of his subjects in a better way. This seems to be one of the reasons for many Delhi sultans with imperial ambition to embrace the Persianate ideals of kingship over the Islamic rule. As a form of rule, the principle of Persian kingship was considered as having a more practical solution to the real challenge of religious and communal diversity. Juzjani has termed Iltutmish as the “shadow of God in the world” and “vice-regent of God on earth”.²²¹ According to Zia al-Din Barani, kingship is “the lieutenancy of the divinity and deputyship (caliphate) of God.”²²² It can be argued that Barani saw the Caliphate as a mere phase in the history of kingship; it was nothing divine in its own. However, Balban made it clear to his ministers and subjects that in the worldly aspects, royalty is the vice-regency of God.²²³ In *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*,

²¹⁹ Andre Wink, *Al Hind, The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. 2: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest*, BRILL, Leiden, 1997, pp. 9-10

²²⁰ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton: New Jersey, 1991, p.166

²²¹ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Major H.G. Raverty, p. 596

²²² Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 3-4, 11; S.A. Arjomand, “Evolution of the Persianate Polity and its Transmission to India,” p. 127

²²³ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 46; Irfan Habib, “Ziya Barani’s Vision of the State,” in *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1998), p. 26

Barani has noted that “Religion and kingship are twins”²²⁴ Moreover, even though these brothers are twins, they are two separate individuals, with diverse characteristics. Ideally, they would complement each other, but at times act in such a manner which seems conflicting. Therefore, Barani at times got pained by the actions of the Sultans. Barani wrote of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji’s observations on this and noted that “kingship is all deception and display, although externally it has ornamentations and trappings, inside it is weak and contemptible.”²²⁵

In addition to these, there are no references that can be found in the sources produced in the Sultanate of Delhi which addressed the polity as Sultanate of Turks. Instead, these sources provide a sense of where different ethnic groups were working together in the Sultanate administration. Zia al-din Barani, Amir Khusrau, and Juzjani all referred to the *Sultanate-i-Delhi* and never to the *Sultanate-i-Turk*.²²⁶ However, in the regional sources from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries the terminology “Turushka” was used for the Delhi sultanate. In *Prithviraja Vijaya*, the author Jayanaka has used the word *Turushka* to denote people (Muslims) who according to him had polluted the Pushkar Lake, while a *Turushka* woman took a bath in the lake during her menses.²²⁷ Padmanabha in his *Kanhadade Prabandha* noted that one Madhava, the minister in the court of Sarangadeva (king of Gujarat), went to bring the Turak from Delhi to teach a lesson to the king while he was humiliated by the Gujarat ruler.²²⁸ In an inscription at Dabhoi in Gujarat written at around 1200 the Ghurid king has been termed as *turuskaraja*.²²⁹

For both Jayanaka and Padmanabha, a *Turak* or *Turushka* was someone who did not belong to their own category – someone who was an “other” to them. They

²²⁴ P. Hardy, “The ‘oratio recta’ of Barani’s ‘Ta’rikh-i-Firuz Shahi’ – Fact or Fiction?,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1/3 (1957), p. 318

²²⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 111

²²⁶ Blain Auer, “The ‘Advent of the Turks’ and the Question of Turkish Identity in the Court of Delhi in the Early Thirteenth Century,” p. 93

²²⁷ Har Bilas Sarda, “Prithviraja Vijaya” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, (April 1913), p. 262

²²⁸ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar as *India’s Greatest Patriotic Saga of Medieval Times*, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1991, Canto, 1, verses, 14, 38, 55, 57, 60

²²⁹ Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Muslim Past*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021, p. 20

indiscriminately used the term to portray the representatives of the Sultanate of Delhi. Padmanabha in the same description used words like *mleccha*, *daitya*, *asura* to demonstrate the Sultanate army.²³⁰ Romila Thapar believes that terms such as *Musliman* or Muslim were not immediate entrants into the vocabulary of Indian languages after the arrival of Islam. In the early years, various terms such as Arabs, Tajika, Yuvana, Saka, Turshka and *mleccha* were used to denote the outsiders.²³¹ Sultan Qutubuddin Aibek, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq have been mentioned as Saka rulers.²³² Similarly, *Yavana* is used for Firoz Shah Tughlaq.²³³

Even by the native scholars of Central Asia, the terminology ‘Turk’ was not always used to describe the Turk as an ethnic group during the ninth and tenth centuries. Osman S.A. Ismail has noted that during the Abbasid rule soldiers were recruited from the Samarkand region and these soldiers “were commonly referred as Turks, though not all of them were in fact of Turkish origin.”²³⁴ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, one of the most prominent historians of the Delhi Sultanate also used the term “Turk” as a general ethnicon to describe people of non-Turkish origin in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*.²³⁵ Therefore, it would be quite misleading to see the Ghaznavids, Ghurid polities and the Sultanate of Delhi solely as part of Turkishness.

To sum up, the political system or state that emerged in the thirteenth century northern part of India and continued till the sixteenth century was complex. There were complex arrangements between multiple ethnic groups, and rulers used various political theories to maintain their control over the subjects according to their political convenience. The sultanate state was neither an Islamic state (*dar-ul-Islam*), or a Turkish Empire, nor a Persianate monarchy. It was a pragmatic state ruled by the rulers of several ethnic groups whose origins were from the present-day Central Asian region. However,

²³⁰ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto, 1, verse, 122,195

²³¹ Romila Thapar, “The Tyranny of Labels,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No. 9-10 (1996), p. 8

²³² *Epigraphia Indica: Record of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. 12, Superintendent Government Printing, Bombay, 1913-14, p. 23

²³³ M. S. Ahluwalia, “References to the Muslims in Sanskrit Inscriptions from Rajasthan during Sultanate Period,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 31 (1969), p. 162

²³⁴ Osman S. A. Ismail, “Mu'tasim and the Turks,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1966), pp. 12-24, here, p. 14

²³⁵ Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, Vol. 1, pp. 85-86; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 326

the Persianate culture had a larger say in the administration as the Persian was considered as the language of the “men of pen” of that time. The Persianate identity was perpetuated by literate members of the court at Delhi and demonstrated through literature of a historical and epic nature, either in prose or poetry, which engaged with references to the pre-Islamic Persian past. The language of the court was Persian, and it served to bind together the diverse body of soldiers employed in the Ghaznavid armies, at least at the elite levels.

Besides this, the advantages provided by the Persianate culture of kingship, in theory, also attracted the ambitious Delhi sultans. Unlike Islamicate or an Islamic state, the role of *ulama* was marginalized in the administration of a Persianised kingdom. The ruler used his personal discretion in *siyasat* and *zawabit*. Culturally as well, the early Delhi sultans were trained in Persianate traditions of military set up and administration. As most of the prominent early Delhi sultans of the Shamsi and Ghiyathi dynasties (the Mamluks) started their careers as *ghulams* (slaves), the institution itself was Persianised from the ninth century onwards. However, it is quite a different discourse that many see these dynasties (Mamluks) as slave dynasties. Can the *Mamluk* rulers of the Delhi Sultanate be put under the bracket of a slave dynasty leads to another debate because all these rulers were manumitted before or soon after their coronation to the throne. However, the crucial argument here is that the *ghulams* (slaves) were nurtured and trained in such a way that they would remain solely loyal to their master by cutting off from their local roots. As it has been discussed, these slaves were educated in Persian cultural etiquette, so when they became rulers, they carried the Persianised customs and regulations in their public life.

Then the continuity of a political culture that passed through different dynasties of central Asia, like Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Ghurids, to the early Delhi sultanate of northwestern India also played a significant role in its nature as a polity. The Ghurids and the Delhi Sultans followed the Perso-Islamic imperial system similar to that of the Samanid and Ghaznavids followed. The Sultans in India adopted titulature similar to that of the Samanid and even modelled their architectures similar to that of the Sasanian. A great gate (*darwaza*) was constructed by the Bahmani king (a kingdom in the Deccan) Firoz Shah in 1407, and the lofty arches of this *darwaza* or gate were compared with the

celebrated arches of the *Taq-i Kisra* in Ctesiphon, possibly built during the rule of the Sasanian king Khusraw I.²³⁶ The imperial title *Shahanshah* or “King of Kings” was first used by the Buyids of Iran and the Samanids of Transoxiana in the tenth century.²³⁷ The Samanid king Nuh assumed the title *al-malik al-mu’ayyad* in 946 AD.²³⁸ *Al-malik* means the king, and this was the first instance when a Muslim ruler assumed the title king.²³⁹ Nuh’s successor Mansur bin Nuh used the title *Shahanshah* during his reign from 961-976 AD.²⁴⁰ These designations were considered un-Islamic in early Islam, which espoused the theocratic concept of God alone being king and was deeply opposed to worldly kingship.²⁴¹ Al-Bukhai, the most trusted *hadith* has Prophet Muhammad saying that “the vilest (*akhna*) name in the eyes of God on the day of resurrection is a man who calls himself king of kings (*malik al amalik*).”²⁴² Ibn Hanbal, another authority of *hadith* also made it clear that there is no king but God.²⁴³ However, this did not prevent the Delhi Sultans, particularly those of the Khaljis and Tughlaqs from assuming the title of *Shah* (king). All the Khalji and Tughlaq Sultans of Delhi adopted the titulature *Shah* as a formal part of their title, as in Muhammad Shah and Firoz Shah. They followed the tradition of Samanids and Ghaznavids and assumed these titles.

Therefore, though ethnically, the early Delhi sultanate monarchs were Turkish, they preferred a more Persianised form of rule. Nonetheless, the Turkish language and some of the traditions did play a certain amount of prominence, particularly in the private spaces. On the other hand, the Sultans did realize the importance of ulema among the subjects, particularly among those orthodox sections, so at times they apparently showed adherence to Islamic values; however, in practice, the patronage of the regime clearly

²³⁶ Helen Philon, “The ‘Great Mosque’ at Gulbarga Reinterpreted as the Hazar Sutun of Firuz Shah Bahmani,” in Laura E. Parodi (ed.), *The Visual World of Muslim India: The Art, Culture, and Society of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2014, p. 116.

²³⁷ Wilferd Madelung, “The Assumption of the Title *Shahanshah* by the Buyids and ‘The Reign of the Daylam (*Dawlat Al-Daylam*),’” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Apr., 1969), pp. 85;

²³⁸ Luke Treadwell, “Shahanshah and al-malik al-mua’yyad: The Legitimizing of Power in Samanid and Buyid Iran,” in Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri (eds.), *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honor of Wilferd Madelung*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2003, p. 324

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 324

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 329

²⁴¹ Wilferd Madelung, “The Assumption of the Title *Shahanshah* by the Buyids and ‘The Reign of the Daylam (*Dawlat Al-Daylam*),’” p. 84

²⁴² Ibid., p. 84

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 85

supported a non-Muslim religious institution.²⁴⁴ The reasons for this pragmatic nature of Delhi Sultans can be found in the formation of a socio-cultural set of contemporary Hindustan. In contrast, the Ottoman Empire, which was emerging in the frontiers of Anatolia at the same period of time, was engaged in continuous warfare with the Christians, who were equally powerful rulers. These factors, over time, became a self-conscious and politically charged factor and made them conscious of their religious beliefs. Whereas the sultans of Delhi did not have to fight such religiously charged battles in the regions of northwestern Hindustan and thus never considered religion as a politically decisive aspect of kingship.²⁴⁵ Hence, it can be said that pragmatism played the dominant role over all three ideologies of kingship – the Persianate, Islamicate and Turkish, though they used all three of them according to their political requirements and convenience.

²⁴⁴ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, p. 38

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38

CHAPTER 4

Politics of Texts: Understanding “We and Other” and its Implication in the Politics of Delhi Sultanate

This chapter explores the layers of perceptions and meaning given to history by the generations of medieval scholars. The way in which personal motives and presumptions of these authors had played a role in their narratives will also be discussed. However, this chapter does not intend to reconstruct what had happened in the past; rather, it tries to examine various sources by looking into these sources as presenting various perspectives, either directly or by implication. It also tries to understand how these historical narratives were perceived and why it was deviated from the “truth”, if there were any. This chapter attempts to see history as a process where there was a historical event, then subsequent writings on it – the historiography (it can be in various stages), and finally, the “constructed memory” perpetuated by the historians to satisfy their ideological commitment or political motives.

In the narratives of Indo-Persian as well as the Indic writers of medieval India, it can be seen that they had presented each other in their writings with a kind of bitterness. For instance, the Indo-Persian scholar Zia al-Din Barani remarked that “The Muslim king will not be able to establish the honour of the theism (*tauhid*) and the supremacy of Islam unless he strives with all his courage to overthrow infidelity and slaughter its leaders (*imams*), who in India are the Brahmins.”¹ Similarly, the Indic author Padmanabha while explaining the victory of Ulugh Khan, a general of Alauddin Khalji, over a Rajput king, has noted, “The *asura* have done the impossible! They have made the lord of the fourteen worlds (*lokas*) captive.”² Both these authors viewed each other with contemptuous language. Therefore, now a few questions arise why these medieval authors would express such hostility for the people of “other” communities in their narratives? Were the vilification of the “other” communities in their writings – both Indo-Persian and Indic was done for the purpose of receiving religious acclaim? Or were there other reasons to

¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib and Afasr Umar Salim Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate (Including a translation of Fatwa-i-Jahandari, circa 1358-9 AD)*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, n. d., p. 46

² Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar as *Kanhadade Prabandha: India's Greatest Patriotic Saga of Medieval Times*, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1991, Canto, 1, Verse, 122

do so, other than receiving holy acclamation? Therefore, attitudes towards past memories, actual or deliberately constructed, needed to be examined. How a historian assesses the impacts of historical occurrences and the events are represented in various sources – contemporary and later needs to be explored. How these representations had changed over the period of time will also be examined in this chapter.

Therefore, this explore various categories of sources from the tenth to fifteenth centuries, like the Arabic, Turko-Persian and regional sources (Indic) of that time to juxtapose to get a better insight into the past and to understand the context on which these narratives were articulated. Until now, Persian sources have dominated medieval Indian historiography. Of late, however, some deviations from this traditional approach to medieval historical sources can be witnessed. Historians like Aparna Kapadia³, Cynthia Talbot⁴, Romila Thapar⁵, Ramya Sreenivasan⁶, Janet Kamphorst⁷, Allison Busch⁸ and etc. have done some path-breaking explorations in the regional sources to understand the different perspectives on medieval Indian history. Therefore, in this chapter, an endeavour has been made to discuss the rhetoric of “we and other” and its implication on the socio-political ambience in the medieval polity on the basis of literary sources in Arabic, Persian and sources written in various north Indian languages.

Medieval “Hindu – Muslim” relations are an issue of great relevance in contemporary India. In recent years an effort has been made to perceive Indian society through the prism of the “Hindu-Muslim” binary. “Muslims” are being branded as “outsiders,” living as a “guest in India”, and thus should behave in such a manner. Therefore, an exploration of the forms and nature of medieval Indian communal and cultural identities might help in grasping the impulses leading to modern communal

³ Aparna Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth-century Gujarat*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018.

⁴ Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200-2000*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016

⁵ Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2008.

⁶ Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in India, c. 1500-1900*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2007

⁷ Janet Kamphorst, *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*, Leiden University Press, Leiden, 2008.

⁸ Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011.

conflicts. It would also enable an opportunity and a thin expectation of defusing present-day strains among various communities by demonstrating that the past communities were not identical to those of the present.⁹ The past societies and political spectrum had their own complexities, and the monarchs acted in such a way that which, in turn, further secured their position in the polity. In terms of the present Muslim population in India, it can be said that “They have not for centuries been conscious of any foreign affiliations; rather, a large section of Indian Muslims were converts from the lower non-caste groups in Hinduism.”¹⁰

Historical writings are a powerful vehicle for the expression of ideological assertion. Because “it can address the historical issues so crucially at stake and to lend to ideology the authority and prestige of the past, all the while dissimulating its status as ideology under the guise of a mere accounting of ‘what was’.”¹¹ Hence, it is crucial to present to the reader actually “what was” by factually opposing the ideology, which tries to manipulate history for their benefit by creating a divide in the society on the pretence of “popular imagination” as the history. Therefore, this chapter explores the attitude of medieval authors towards the “Muslim” and “Hindu” communities. The chapter begins by exploring the perspective of Arab scholars towards the religions of Hinduism and its followers in India, then it proceeds to understand the approach of Perso-Indian scholars towards Hindus, and finally, how the Indic authors have viewed the “Muslim rulers” and their rule in India would be explored.

Even before the Arab invasion of Sindh in the eighth century or the Central Asian conquests during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Perso-Arabic scholars possessed knowledge about India and its religions. An Islamic tradition is of the view that Hindustan was the first country where idolatry was practised, and from there, it (*budh*/idol) reached pre-Islamic Arabia.¹² Al-Tabari has remarked that the idolatry in

⁹ Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4, (Oct. 1995), p. 692.

¹⁰ Mohammad Habib, “Introduction” in K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, Delhi, 1961, pp. xii-xii

¹¹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, p. 2.

¹² Yohanan Friedman, “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Studies*, Vol. 95, No. 2 (1975), p. 214

India began once Adam, the first Prophet of Islam, was expelled from heaven on an Indian mountain called Budh (Nudh, Nawdh).¹³ Similarly, Hisham Ibn al-Kalbi also stated that after Adam's death, his son Seth (Sith) buried his body in a cave in the mountain of India and, subsequently, another son of Adam, Qabil (Cain), carved for them an idol in the cave, and was, therefore, the first to make (graven images for worship).¹⁴ Another Arab scholar Imam Ibn al-Jawzi has noted that in the time of Noah (Nuh), the water of the flood drifted the idols away from the Indian mountain on which they were placed and swept them to the Arabian coast near Jeddah.¹⁵

Thus, the early Arab scholars had viewed Hindustan as the origin of idol worship and a place where idols are treated with a lot of high esteem. They largely or entirely associated the people of Hindustan with idolatry and as polytheists not only in antiquity but also in historical times. According to Al-Baladhuri, one of Muawiyah's generals, Abdullah Ibn Kais had conquered Sicily in 546 AD and subsequently plundered its wealth, including idols of gold and silver studded with pearls, which were sent to Muawiyah.¹⁶ In turn, Muawiyah sent them to al-Basrah to be carried into India and sold there, intending to get a higher price for them.¹⁷ This description of Baladhuri shows that Muawiyah apparently realized that the merchandise like the gold and silver idols would find a ready market with excellent prices in India only because most of the "Hindus" are idolaters and they can only understand the craft and artistry employed in the making of those statues.¹⁸

¹³ Al Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*, Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal as *The History of al-Tabari*, Vol. 1: *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 291.

¹⁴ Hisham Ibn al -Kalbi, *Kitab al-Asnam*, Eng. trans. by Nabih Amin Faris as *The Book of Idols: Being a Translation from the Arabic of the Kitab al -Asnam*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1952, pp. 43-44

¹⁵ Imam Ibn al-Jawzi, *Tablis Iblis*, Eng. trans. as *The Devil's Deceptions: A Complete Translation of the Classical Text Talbis Iblis*, Dar as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, 2014, pp. 109-110.

¹⁶ Al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Philip Khuri Hitti as *The Origins of the Islamic State*, Columbia University: Longmans, Greens & Co., Agents, New York, 1916, p. 375; Al Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by, Edward C. Sachau as *Al Beruni's India: An Account of the Religion Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Law and Astrology of India about AD. 1020*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., London, 1910, p. 124.

¹⁷ Al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Philip Khuri Hitti, p. 375

¹⁸ Suleyman Nadvi, "Religious Relations between Arabia and India," in *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review*, Vol. 8 (1934), p. 202

The Indians (Hindus) enjoyed a lot of respect among Arab scholars for their knowledge.¹⁹ Sa'id al-Andalusi has opined that Indians are respected for their acquaintance in the field of science and astronomy.²⁰ He mentioned about one Kankah or Mankah, who left India for Baghdad and entered into the service of Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Subsequently, Mankah became al-Rashid's astrologer and over the years, he was assigned the charge of the Translation Bureau, and he translated some of the works of Indian scholars, including Indian books on medicine.²¹ In another instance, as early as 770 AD, a delegation of scholars from Sindh reached Baghdad, where there was a Hindu Pandit, an expert in mathematics and astronomy, who carried the *Brahmasiddhanta* of Brahmagupta (composed in 628 AD) and presented it to the Caliph al-Mansur (r. 754-775 AD).²² The Caliph ordered his court mathematician Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Farazi (796 AD) and Yaqub bin Tariq to translate the book into Arabic.²³

By the end of the eighth century, the powerful *wazir* of the Abbasid Caliphate, Yahya bin Khalid al-Barmaki (c. 786 – 803 AD), sent a scholar to India to gather information about India's culture and religion. The scholar provided a piece of detailed information about the various sects of Hinduism. Subsequently, after seventy to ninety years of this report, Ibn Nadim incorporated the description of this anonymous scholar in his *Kitab al-Fihrist*.²⁴ He also mentioned one Ibn Dahn al-Hind, a *vaid* (loosely translated as a doctor) from India who became in charge of the *Bimaristan* (Hospital) of the Barmak family.²⁵

¹⁹ M.S. Khan, "Presidential Address," in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol. 38 (1977), p. 579

²⁰ Sa'id al-Andalusi, *Tabaqat-al-Umam*, Eng. trans. by Sema'an I. Salem and Alok Kumar as *Science in the Medieval World: Book of the Categories of Nations*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1991, pp. 23-27; Nadvi, "Religious Relations between Arabia and India," p. 132; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Early Arab Contact with South Asia," in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1994), p. 66

²¹ Muhammad bin Ishaq Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, Eng. trans. by Bayard Dodge as *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, Vol. 2, Columbia University Press, New York, 1970, pp. 589-590, 710; Sa'id al-Andalusi, *Tabaqat-al-Umam*, Eng. trans. by Sema'an I. Salem and Alok Kumar, p. 113; K.A. Nizami, "Early Arab Contact with South Asia," p. 64

²² K.A. Nizami, "Early Arab Contact with South Asia," p. 63; M.S. Khan, "Presidential Address," p. 578

²³ M.S. Khan, "Presidential Address," p. 578

²⁴ Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, Eng. trans. by Bayard Dodge, pp. 589-590, 710; Nadvi, "Religious Relations between Arabia and India," p. 120; K.A. Nizami, "Early Arab Contact with South Asia," p. 66; Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastani on the Indian Religions*, Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1976, p. 21

²⁵ Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, Eng. trans. by Bayard Dodge, p. 590

Thus, it can be seen that though the early Arab scholars considered Hindustan as the origin place of idolatry, which is against the core of Islamic values. However, they appreciated and respected the wisdom and knowledge of “Hindus”. Several Hindu *vaid* were called into Baghdad, and they were given the charge of hospitals. Scholars of Sanskrit were also invited to Baghdad, and they were asked to translate works on medicine, mathematics, astronomy etc., into Arabic. Regarding the “Hindu” religious faith, the Arabic scholars’ approach can be seen as complex.

One of the prominent Arabic scholars who studied the Indian Hindu religion and culture in great detail was Abu Raihan Al-Beruni (973-1048 AD). He was born in the region of Khwarizm (present-day Khiva, Uzbekistan) and worked as a councillor of the Ma’amuni family.²⁶ In 1017, when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna conquered Khwarizm, Al-Beruni was brought to Ghazna. He later accompanied Mahmud in his military campaign to India.²⁷ Al-Beruni put great efforts into collecting Indian books and worked closely with the Indian sages and thus acquired first-hand information about India.²⁸ Al-Beruni stated that his approach to searching for knowledge on India was scholarly, informative and non-polemical.²⁹ He completed one of his famous works, the *Tahqiq Mali -’l Hind min Maqula Maqbula fi’al –aql aw Mardhula*, commonly known as the *Kitab al-Hind*, by 1030 AD. He explained that the book was written to enable the readers to mix with the Indians and engage in informed discussion. He has noted that:

“We think now that what we have related in this book will be sufficient for anyone who wants to converse with the Hindus and to discuss with them questions of religion, science or literature, on the very basis of their own civilization.”³⁰

To Al-Beruni, the Hindus were exceptional philosophers, fine mathematicians and astronomers. However, at the same time, he also believed that he was superior to the

²⁶ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. viii

²⁷ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. ix; Yohanan Friedman, “Islamic Thought in Relation to the Indian Context,” in Richard M. Eaton (ed.), *India’s Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2022 (first published, 2003), p. 53

²⁸ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, pp. 23-24

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7

³⁰ Al Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by, Edward C. Sachau, p. 246.

“Hindu” scholars.³¹ He remarked, “I showed them [Hindus] what they were worth and thought myself a great deal of superior to them.”³²

Al-Beruni remarked on the scientific temper and scholarly attitude of the Hindus:

“The Hindus had no men as scholarly as Socrates, both capable and willing to bring sciences to classical perfection. Therefore you mostly find that even the so-called scientific theorems of the Hindus are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order, and in the last instance, always mixed up with the silly notions of the crowd, *e.g.* immense numbers, enormous spaces of time, and all kinds of religious dogmas, which the vulgar belief does not admit of being called into question. Therefore it is a prevailing practice among the Hindus, and I can only compare their mathematical and astronomical literature, as far as I know it, to a mixture of pearl shells and sour dates, or of pearls and dung, or of costly crystals and common pebbles. Both kinds of things are equal in their eyes since they cannot raise themselves to the methods of a strictly scientific deduction.”³³

Though Al-Beruni considered the “Hindus” to be excellent philosophers, good mathematicians and astronomers, yet did not conceal whatever he felt they were not practical and believed something was incorrect with them. It is also noteworthy that Al-Beruni suitably cherished the achievements of the “Hindus” whenever he came across something grand and exemplary in terms of science and practical life. He would take great pain to incorporate the description of the same, even if that would be of no use to himself or his readers. For instance, when he came across a pond at a holy bathing place, Al-Beruni stated, “In this, they [Hindus] have attained to a very high degree of art, so that our people (the Muslims), when they see them, wonder at them, and are unable to describe them, much less to construct anything like them.”³⁴

Regarding the idol worship of the “Hindus”, Al Beruni has seen it from a critical and sympathetic point of view. He opined that initially, all human beings were equally

³¹ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 23; In Volume 1, at page no. 277, Al-Beruni explained further why he thought himself superior to Hindu scholars on astronomy.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 23

³³ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 25

³⁴ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 144

pure and righteous and used to worship only one sole almighty God, but with the passing of time, the dark passion of the crowd had given rise to the difference of religions, including idolatry. He remarked, “The first cause of idolatry was the desire of commemorating the dead and consoling the living, but gradually it developed as practice and finally became foul and pernicious abuse.”³⁵ He further mentioned that in India also, it was those who were uneducated did follow the idolatry because the uneducated people tend to get impressed by the concrete (*mahsus*) as they are not able to grasp the abstract (*ma’qul*) thoughts, which can only be understood by very few who are educated. Hence, Al-Beruni stated:

“those who march on the path to liberation, or those who study philosophy and theology, and who desire abstract truth which they call *sdra*, are entirely free from worshipping anything but God alone, and would never dream of worshipping an image manufactured to represent him.”³⁶

In this way, Al-Beruni reaches the conclusion that the elite educated of all the communities, including the Hindus, worship only one abstract thought of God [Allah?] alone. In contrast, the uneducated people, ordinary people, whichever religion it might, even those who adhere to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam³⁷, need concrete objects of worship, and their religious leaders must take their susceptibilities into account. Therefore, communities like the Jews, Christians, and Manichaeans have introduced pictorial representations into their places of worship.³⁸ Similarly, the “Hindus” also have erected idols in their places of worship for the benefit of the uneducated.³⁹

³⁵ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 24

³⁶ Ibid., p. 113

³⁷ Al-Beruni does not explicitly include Islam among the religions that made concessions to their uneducated adherents and introduced concrete objects of worship into their ceremonies. However, having mentioned in this connection Christianity, Judaism and Manichaeism, he says that an uneducated Muslim also would express his adoration should he be presented with the picture of the Prophet, of Mecca or of the Kaba (Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 111). It is well known that Muslims do not worship the pictures of the Prophet or of his birthplace; it is, however, likely that al-Beruni would include the ceremonies connected with the Kaba in the same category as the “pictorial representations” of the other three religions.

³⁸ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 111

³⁹ Ibid., p. 122

Al Beruni tried to find similarities between Islam and Hinduism.⁴⁰ Beruni even mentioned certain excerpts from *Bhagavatgita* regarding the concept of God among the enlightened Hindus.⁴¹ He also mentioned that Hindus direct their fanaticism against those who do not belong to them as the *mlecchas*. The Hindus considered all foreigners as *mleccha* and restricted the members of their community from establishing any association with them, be it intermarriage or any other social relationship. Even sitting with the *mlecchas* was considered impure.⁴² Hence, Al-Beruni showed a sort of sympathetic attitude towards the “Hindus” regarding their idolatry or at least dispassionately described them. However, when he felt something was inappropriate, according to his understanding, he did not miss to point that too. He argued that there is little substantial difference between Hinduism and monotheistic religious traditions. The differences are on the upper level of the society. But, at the same time, he also pointed out to the reader that while Islam professed egalitarianism, Hinduism practices sectarianism [caste], and while he praised the decency of Muslims, he condemned some of Hindu customs as filthy.⁴³ He also explained the way in which the “Hindus” looked down upon the other communities. Thus, he wrote:

“In all manners and usage, they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs and to declare us to be the devil’s breed, and our doing as the very opposite of all that is good and proper.”⁴⁴

A contemporary of Al-Beruni was Abu Sa’id Abdul Hay al-Gardizi, who wrote an account of several religions in his *Zayn al-Akhbar* (1049-53 AD), including about the religion and customs of Indians [Hindus].⁴⁵ He served the Ghaznavid court, particularly

⁴⁰ Imtiaz Ahmad, “Concepts of India: Expanding Horizons in Early Medieval Arabic and Persian Writing,” in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2005, p. 102.

⁴¹ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, pp. 122-123; Imtiaz Ahmed, “Concepts of India,” p. 102.

⁴² Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, pp. 19-20

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 19-21

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 20

⁴⁵ I have used the English translation of the chapter on Indian religion in Al-Gardizi’s *Zayn al-Akhbar* by Vladimir Minorsky as “Gardizi on India,” in *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3-4 (October, 1948), pp. 625-640.

during Sultan Mas'ud, and said he was present during several of their campaigns to India.⁴⁶ Like Al-Beruni, Al-Gardizi also took a non-polemical and descriptive approach in his search for Indian religious traditions, manners, and customs of the Hindus. He highly regarded the Indians [Hindus] as he noted that “they are skilful, clever and shrewd. They make good and subtle things. From their midst come many sages.”⁴⁷ He also praised the “Hindus” for being accomplished in the field of science, medicine, mathematics, geometry and astronomy. He remarked, “They have medical science the like of which no one has seen in the lands of Islam.”⁴⁸

By discussing the religions of the “Hindus”, he mentioned numerous idolatrous practices among them. However, he refrained from any kind of value judgment. According to his descriptions, the Hindus are divided into ninety-nine divisions, which can be reduced to forty-two varieties, and their basic foundations are fourfold.⁴⁹ Two of these categories were described as monotheistic, who affirm the existence of the Creator and believe in Prophets and Paradise and Hell.⁵⁰ Thus, Al-Gardizi thought at least a section of the Indian [Hindu] communities as part of *Ahl-al-Kitab*, who had believed in a single God and Prophet. However, he did not miss to point out the fact that Hindus for being too fastidious about their alliances with other communities. He remarked that they (Hindus) will not take any match unless it suits their origin.⁵¹ But, he understood is as part of their custom and avoided passing any value judgments.

Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi was another eleventh-century Arabic scholar, who served at the court of Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah (r. 1072-1092) and his successors as a physician, dedicated a considerable space of his book *Taba'i al-hayawan* on the tradition and culture Indian [Hindus] in his account.⁵² Like his predecessors Al-Beruni and Al-Gardizi, Marvazi also provided information about the classification of castes among

⁴⁶ Abu Sa'id Abdul Hay al-Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, Eng. trans. by C. Edmund Bosworth as *The Ornament of Histories, A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands, AD 640-1041*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011, p. 1

⁴⁷ Minorsky, “Gardizi on India,” p. 627.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 628

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 629

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 629-33

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 627

⁵² Vladimir Minorsky translated into English and published a section of *Taba'i al-hayawan* as *Sharf al-Zaman Marvazi on China, the Turks and India, Arabic Text (circa, AD 1120)*, The Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1942, pp. 1-2

Hindus and his interpretation of them.⁵³ However, it seems that Marvazi did not quite understand the status of Hindu Gods and Their *avatars* (incarnations). He considered them as the “Prophets and apostles” of some supreme divinity. For instance, he remarked that Indians [Hindus] had numerous races (castes?) with different religious views. Among them are seven known races, including Brahmans, Kshatriya, and Sudra.⁵⁴ According to Marvazi, “the Brahmans alone believe in the Creator; however, they affirm that God’s apostle unto them was an angel called *Basdiw* (*Vasudeva*), who came to them in human form as an envoy of God without a Book. This *Vasudeva* ordered them to construct an idol of him and worship it.”⁵⁵ For Marvazi, the Hindus, particularly the Brahmans, were believers in God, the Creator, but they were misled by the apostle of God towards idolatry. This way, Marvazi portrayed a sympathetic attitude towards the Hindus.

A prominent theologian of the twelfth century who wrote in Arabic was Abul Fath Muhammad bin Abdul al-Karim Shahrastani (1086-1153 AD). He was born in the town of Shahrastan in the province of Khurasan and had a keen interest in studying *fiqh* from an early age. He wrote *Kitab al-milal wan-nihal* to explore the sectarian division within Islam (*milal*) and to elaborate on major Greek philosophical schools (*nihal*).⁵⁶ A chapter in this book, “Ara al-Hind,” was dedicated to the Indian [Hindu] religion, where he explored the cultural and religious faiths of “Hindus”, including an analytical explanation of idol worship.⁵⁷ Unlike Al-Beruni, Shahrastani never visited India and was not face-to-face with the religion he was writing about. But, the way in which he pursued Indian religion shows his personal concern about it and his own capability to interpret facts. He obtained his information on India from various other Arabic scholars, including Ibn Nadim, Al-Beruni, and Tahir Marvazi, etc.

Shahrastani was the first Arabic scholar to compare the Hindus with the Sabians. He wrote, “Majority of the Indians [Hindus] adhere to the doctrine and method of the

⁵³ V. Minorsky, *Taba’i al-hayawan*, pp. 39-52

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 39-41

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 41

⁵⁶ Bruce. B. Lawrence, *Shahrastani on Indian Religions*, Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1976, p. 13; Bruce B. Lawrence, “Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship,” in *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 38 (1973), pp. 64-65.

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Shahrastani on Indian Religions*, pp. 38-126; Lawrence, “Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship,” p. 65

Sabians.”⁵⁸ Thus, it becomes attractive for a historian to understand how Shahrastani pursued the Hindus. Notably, the Sabians themselves had a long history as a quasi-historical and quasi-theological phenomenon stretching back to the early years of Islam. In the holy Quran, the term “Sabian” has been used thrice, where twice it has been placed with the same contour as the Jews and Christians.⁵⁹ Hence, it seems the Sabians were treated as the “people of the book” – *Ahl al-Kitab* in Islamic tradition.⁶⁰ Therefore, when Shahrastani placed the Hindus as Sabians, it showed his sympathetic attitude towards them as he considered them as monotheistic and did not place them under the category of infidel.

By analyzing the historicity of the Sabians, E.S. Drower is of the opinion that the Sabians were proto-Mandaeans who were settled in the ancient Mesopotamian town of Harran, hence also known as Harrarians.⁶¹ Drower further argued that, until late in the Muslim era, these people adhered to pagan usage, however with the emergence of Islam; they adopted the name Sabian to acquire profit offered by Islam to the people of the book, as Sabians are mentioned in the Quran along with other Semitic religions.⁶² During the pre-Islamic era, these people believed in an angel cum Prophet known as *ruhaniyat*.⁶³ The *ruhaniyats*, according to Shahrastani, were spiritual beings who acted as intermediaries providing access to the wise and productive author of the world.⁶⁴ In “Ara al-Hind”, he mentioned the Hindus were also the followers of *ruhaniyat*, and their principal *ruhaniyats* were Vishnu and Shiva.⁶⁵ Thus, Shahrastani stated, “in the capacity of a *ruhaniyat* (both as a Prophet and angel), they (Vishnu and Shiva) established laws and norms for their followers, but without a written book.”⁶⁶ Hence, it can be seen that

⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Shahrastani on Indian Religions*, pp. 38; Lawrence, “Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship,” p. 65

⁵⁹ The *Quran*, Eng. trans. by Muhammad Taqi ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Muktaba Darul Quran, Delhi, 1985, Surah 2:62, 5:69 and 22:17.

⁶⁰ Richard G. Marks, *Jewish Approach to Hinduism: A History of Ideas from Judah Ha-Levi to Jacob Sapir (12th to 19th Centuries)*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis, New York, 2021, p. 20

⁶¹ E.S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran: Their Culture, Customs, Magic Legends and Folklore*, At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1937, p. xv

⁶² Ibid., p. xv

⁶³ Lawrence, “Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship,” p. 67

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 66

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 69

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 69

Shahrastani tried to explain the Hindus as a community who believe and accepts not only spiritual beings, other heavenly bodies and still worships other idols. So, in this way, Shahrastani expressed a sympathetic attitude towards the Hindus. He refrained from any kind of value judgment and tried to present them as part of *Ahl al-Kitab*.

Thus, the Arabic scholars showered lavish praise on Indians [Hindus] and Indian things like religion, metaphysics and ethics as well. It is noteworthy that all these Arabic scholars Al-Beruni, Al-Gardizi, Marvazi and Shahrastani, were viewing the Indian religion [Hinduism] from an outsider's perspective. They were not permanently settled within the geographical locations in India. Though Al-Beruni and Al-Gardizi served under the Ghaznavid Sultanate and were part of some of their conquests to India, however, most of their life they remained outside Indian frontiers. Besides this, these scholars were primarily interested in Philosophical, scientific, medicinal and astronomical narratives, whose readers were confined to a smaller section of society. In his *Kitab al-Hind*, Al-Beruni emphasized recording socio-cultural, religious history and the history of sciences in India, rather than concentrating on India's military and political history.⁶⁷ Therefore, on one occasion, while explaining his reason for writing the book, Al-Beruni opined that many would not get the opportunity to study such a subject as he took for his *Kitab al-Hind* – religion and philosophy. He wrote: "What scholar, however, has the same favourable opportunities of studying this subject as I have? That would be only the case with one to whom the grace of God accords."⁶⁸

This shows philosophy and religion might not get enough support from the courts and lack enough readers. However, this acted as an opportunity for these scholars to examine the Hindu traditions as an interpreter rather than as a conqueror. As these Arabic scholars studied India and its custom from an outsider's perspective, they tried to understand the religious complexities of Hinduism from a mutual understanding. Thus, they took a sympathetic attitude toward the Hindus or at least attempted to describe facts dispassionately.

However, it would be interesting to see how the early Arabic scholars who were engaged in writing political and war narratives viewed India and "Hindus". Scholars like

⁶⁷ M.S. Khan, "Al-Beruni and the Political History of India," in *Oriens*, Vol. 25/26 (1976), p. 86

⁶⁸ Al-Beruni, *Kitab al-Hind*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Edward C. Sachau, p. 24

Al-Baladhuri, Al-Ṭabari and Al-Uṭbi are some of the scholars whose approach can be studied here. With the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad Qasim in 712 AD provided a new dimension to the Arabic and Persian scholars to see the Hindus and Hinduism. In *Futuh al-Buldan*, Al-Baladhuri has incorporated one full chapter to the early conquests of Sindh and subsequent events there.⁶⁹ However, his interests seem mostly confined to providing names of those commanders and soldiers who defeated the ruler of Sindh. Though occasionally he gave information about the relationship between the Arabs and the “Hindus”, he largely abstained from mentioning social dynamics. He addressed the “Hindus and Buddhists” alike as *Budd* and their temples also as *Budd*.⁷⁰ On one occasion, Baladhuri mentioned that in Multan, there was a famous temple (*Budd*) where many pilgrims visited and inside this temple, there was an image of Prophet Aiyub.⁷¹ Thus, it seems, Baladhuri lacked an in-depth understanding of Indian religions.

By explaining the Arab attitude towards the locals, Baladhuri mentioned that when Muhammad Qasim entered Daibul, he targeted the idol house of the Buddhists there. Qasim fired canons at the temple to compel the people to open the town gate, and once the gate was opened, he stopped the fire.⁷² Next, when Qasim reached Ar-Rur [Alwar], a town in Sindh, the locals opposed him; however, after a month, they conceded the city with an agreement with two conditions: first, the safety of their life and second religious freedom. According to Baladhuri, Qasim accepted the terms as he believed “the *Budd* are like churches of Christians, synagogues of Jews and fire temple of the Magians.”⁷³ Thus, Baladhuri showed that Qasim took a conciliatory approach towards the locals, and they also reciprocated with open arms. He even mentioned that “once Qasim was called back, the people of al-Hind [Sindh] mourned the loss and set up a portrait of him at al-Kiraj.”⁷⁴ Subsequently, once the Arabs lost the territory to the Hindus, they left the mosques for the Muslims and allowed them to assemble and pray for the Caliph.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol. 2, Eng. trans. by Francis Clark Murgotten as *The Origin of the Islamic State*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1924, pp. 209-236.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 220-23

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 222

⁷² Ibid., pp. 217-19

⁷³ Ibid., p. 221

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 224

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 223

The interest of individuals often determines attitudes towards others. The socio-economic and political significance often affects the approach towards others. Baladhuri spent most of his life in Baghdad at the court of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861). His account of the conquest of Sindh seems based on secondary information. On the other hand, he appears to be more concerned about providing names of the Arab commanders and soldiers who played a crucial role in the conquest. It seems Baladhuri wanted to record the contribution of Arabs (his tribesman) towards *jihad* for the later generation to know.⁷⁶ S. Nadvi too opined that the Arab conquerors wished to leave a lasting impression regarding the rule of war and peace as prescribed in Islam, so when they conquered Sindh, its implication can be seen.⁷⁷

During the brief rule of Muhammad Qasim, the “Hindus” were treated as ones who belonged to the *Ahl-al-Kitab*⁷⁸ and taxes were imposed upon them, as upon the Buddhists – only the *jizyah* and refrained from treating them as idol worshipers.⁷⁹ The author of *Chachnama* also noted that Muhammad Qasim showed complete confidence in the Hindu subjects of his newly acquired territory in Sindh. He placed many of the Hindus in important offices and also allowed many of the officials of the previous regime to continue under his command. Qasim even promised that the offspring of these officials would not be dislodged and transferred in the future as well.⁸⁰ Significantly, one of the advisors to king Dahir, namely Siyakar was appointed as *wazir* by Muhammad Qasim in his new administration.⁸¹ Hence, Baladhuri’s account of Sindh leaves a cordial approach towards Hindus.

In contrast, by the tenth century, when the Central Asian Persianised Turks, the Ghaznavids, started to systematically attack and plunder the major urban centres of South Asia, a new era started in the relationship between the “Hindus” and “Muslims”. Now

⁷⁶ Y. Friedmann, “A Contribution to the Early History of Islam in India,” in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1977, p. 309.

⁷⁷ Nadvi, “Religious Relations between Arabia and India,” p. 122

⁷⁸ *Ahl-al-Kitab* is the followers of a religion who has their own sacred scriptures.

⁷⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Political Image and its Application to Historical Fact,” in Speros Vryonis Jr. (ed.), *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 108.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *The Chachnama*, Eng. trans. by Mirza Kalichbeg Fedunberg, as *An Ancient History of Sind*, The Commissioner’s Press, Karachi, 1900, p. 166; Nizami, “Early Arab Contact with South Asia,” p. 60.

⁸¹ Anonymous, *The Chachnama*, Eng. trans. by Mirza Kalichbeg Fedunberg, p. 158.

members of both communities were in direct confrontation not only in the frontiers but into the interiors of Hindustan. Thus, it would be quite fascinating to witness the approach of the Perso-Arabic scholars towards these conquests and the way in which they perceived the “other” communalities in their writings. Their language towards “Hindus” – how far it was rhetorical and how far it was factual requires an adequate investigation.

One of the prominent Ghaznavid scholars was Abu Nasr al-Utbi (961-1036/40 AD). His *Kitab al-Yamini* (c. 1021 AD) provides the dynastic history of the Ghaznavid Sultan Amir Sabuktegin and Sultan Mahmud, including their conquests of India.⁸² By explaining the conquest of his master Sabuktegin against the ruler of Lamghan (positioned to the immediate east of Kabul), Utbi has remarked:

“The Amir marched out towards Lamghan, a city celebrated for its great strength and wealth. He proceeded to the country of the infidel traitor, plundered and sacked the country until it was annihilated. He conquered it and set fire to the places in its vicinity which infidels inhabited, and demolishing the idol temples, he established Islam in them. He marched further and captured other cities as well, and killed the polluted wretches, destroyed the idolatrous and gratified the Musalmans. The news of this victory spread over the Islamic world.”⁸³

Thus, for Utbi, the “Hindus” were the infidels (*kafir*), who were like polluted wretches, so Sabuktegin took it as his duty to eradicate those people by bringing them to the fold of Islam. Similarly, he narrated the campaigns of Sultan Mahmud to the different parts of Hindustan. In 1003, Sultan Mahmud led a campaign to Bahatih⁸⁴ against King Biji Rai. Al-Utbi has described the event as follows:

⁸² Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds as *Historical Memoirs of the Amir Sabuktegin and the Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, The Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, London, 1858.

⁸³ Nasr al-Utbi, *Tarikh-i Yamini*, in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by Its Own Historian*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London 1869, p. 22; Nasr al-Utbi, *The Kitab-i-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, p. 39.

⁸⁴ Mohammad Habib as identified the place as Bhera, which lies on the west bank of Jhelum, under the Salt Range. Mohammad Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin: A Study*, Aligarh Muslim University Publications, Aligarh, 1927, pp. 22-23. On the other hand, Mohammad Nazim pointed out the place as Bhatinda which according to him, the Muslim scholars pronounced as Bhatih or Bhatiya. Mohammad Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1931, pp. 99-100

“The Sultan encamped before Bahatih, as the city was surrounded by a lofty wall, a moat around it like the girdling sea, and was guarded by a heavily armed contingent and war elephants; the Sultan waited outside for three days. Finally, the cry of ‘God is great!’ was raised by the possessors of the faith and, in the name of truth and verity, along with a resolve to win victory for their religion, the sultanate army attacked. The blackness of those infidels was wiped off from the white page of that time. Thus the gale of victory, from the kind care of Providence, began to flow, and the standards of the Sultan and the ensigns of the faith attained satisfaction in exaltation and elevation.”⁸⁵

Through these narratives, Utbi produced a Mahmud who came to the interior of Hindustan without any real resistance, fought for his religion (*ghaza*), defeated the “infidel”, established his religion and then returned with a lot of gold to prosper his people back at home in Ghazna.⁸⁶ Subsequently, while he was explaining the plight of the defeated forces, he remarked that the King was in shock after seeing the deaths of his soldiers and the terror of what had happened. So, he took his own *khanjar* (dagger) and killed himself, and thus relieved his “impure soul” and went to receive the retribution of “denying ones” as deserved by the “inhuman infidel”.⁸⁷

Al-Utbi viewed the “Hindus” with a lot of disdain in his war narrative and portrayed Mahmud’s raids in India as holy war (*ghaza*). For instance, while Utbi wrote about Mahmud’s campaign to Thaneshwar (1011-12 AD), the cause he had given for the conquest was that “the ruler of Tanishar was a deceiver and enjoyed exalted position among the sinful, so by defeating the king, the Sultan wanted to create an example among the universal *Kaffr* (infidel) people and also wanted to send a message to other chiefs and

⁸⁵ Nasr al-Utbi, *The Kitab-i-Yamini*, translated by Rev. James Reynolds, pp. 322-23

⁸⁶ By explaining the expedition of Mahmud to Nardin (Narayan), Utbi has stated that “the Sultan again resolved on an expedition to Hind, and marched towards Nardin, urging his horses and moving over ground, hard and soft, until he came to the middle of Hind, where he reduced chiefs, who, up to that time obeyed no master, overturned their idols, put to the sword the vagabonds of that country, and with delay and circumspection proceeded to accomplish his design. He fought a battle with the chiefs of the infidels, in which God bestowed upon him much booty in property, horses, and elephants, and the friends of God committed slaughter in every hill and valley. The Sultan returned to Ghazna with all the plunder he had obtained.” Al-Utbi, “Kitab al-Yamini”, Eng. trans. in H.M. Eliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London, 1869, p. 36

⁸⁷ Nasr al-Utbi, *The Kitab-i-Yamini*, translated by Rev. James Reynolds, p. 324

deceiver of India.”⁸⁸ Hence, he came with an army “who were educated in the chambers of the sacred war.”⁸⁹ In contrast, the composition of Mahmud’s army was a cosmopolitan institution, kept intact by its *esprit de corps* and loyalty towards their leader, who in turn was loyal to Mahmud.⁹⁰ The Ghaznavid military was composed with bodies of Turks, Indians [Hindu], Afghans, Ghaznavids, as well as Khalji troops.⁹¹ A good number of Indians [Hindus] who served in his military were put under a separate regiment commanded by a Hindu general, who enjoyed a high position among the fellow commanders.⁹² Another Ghaznavid scholar Baihaki in his *Tarikh-i-al-i Sabuktegin* provides information on the presence of “Hindu” soldiers in the army of Mahmud and acknowledged their bravery and sense of loyalty.⁹³ Baihaki mentioned that “Hindu” chiefs like Sewad Rai, Biji Raji, and most famously, Tilak served under the Ghaznavids with numerous Hindu cavalry men.⁹⁴ Mahmud would enrol anybody in his army who possessed good military qualities, irrespective of his faith. Even during Mahmud’s Thaneswar campaign, Anandapal, the Hindu Shahi ruler, provided all the support required to Mahmud by supplying goods and men.⁹⁵ It is also suggested that many “Hindu” poets were in the army of Mahmud.⁹⁶ The mints in Lahore and other towns in that region under the Ghaznavids were owned by Indian [Hindu] goldsmiths.⁹⁷

Despite Utbi’s religious rhetoric, the conquests of Indian territories by Sabuktegin and his more famous son Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 998-1030) were embarked on primarily for material reasons. However, it is true that Mahmud had cleverly utilized religious

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 394

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 396

⁹⁰ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni*, p. 33.

⁹¹ Al-Utbi, “Kitab al-Yamini”, Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 32; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 280.

⁹² M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni*, p. 33.

⁹³ Abu’l Fazl al-Baihaki, “Ta’rikh-us-Sabuktegin”, H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historian*, Vol. 2, pp. 59-60; Ahmad, “Concepts of India,” p. 101.

⁹⁴ Al-Baihaki, “Ta’rikh-us-Sabuktegin”, H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historian*, Vol. 2, p. 60, 127-130; Kanhaiya Lal Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus under the Delhi Sultanate, 1206-1526*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1981, p. 15

⁹⁵ Mohamed Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of the Mohamedan Power in India*, R. Cambray and Co., Calcutta, 1908, pp. 50-53.

⁹⁶ Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus under the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 15

⁹⁷ Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography Upto the Thirteenth Century*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2010, p. 72

rhetoric in his favour.⁹⁸ Mohammad Habib and K.A. Nizami have argued that Mahmud was no crusader; his real aim was to establish an empire in Ghazna, and the expedition in India was just a means to that end.⁹⁹ Similarly, C.E. Bosworth is of the opinion that the Ghaznavid never wanted to settle permanently in India; instead, their regular invasions in India, particularly the raids in temples (which were loaded with movable wealth) were basically to finance their exalted construction projects in Ghazna and to meet the political objectives on the western Ghaznavid frontiers in the Khurasan region.¹⁰⁰ The predatory nature of these raids was also a structural part of the Ghaznavid political economy. They maintained regular armies, who were professionally trained as elite corps of mounted archers. However, these soldiers were purchased as slaves, and had to be equipped with armaments and paid in cash. Therefore, the regular intrusions into India as well as Iran provided the Ghaznavid with the required booty to maintain their troops.¹⁰¹

In contrast, Utbi presented a picture of the Ghaznavid Sultan in such a way that it seems Mahmud as an ideal “Muslim” king who was only fighting to spread Islam and all his campaigns to India was to convert the “Hindus”. Now the question arises why would Nasr al-Utbi provide such a narrative? What was his aim? What did he want to achieve through these narratives? To search for the answer to these questions, we have to explore the socio-political and economic interests of Utbi by analyzing his personal life. He was born in the city of Rayy in 961 AD and had a connection with the Samanid bureaucracy. His relative Abu Gafar Utbi served as *wazir* to the Amirs Abd al-Malik I (r. 954-961 AD) and Mansur I bin Nuh (r. 961-976 AD), while Abul Hassan Utbi was vizier for the Samanid ruler Nuh II (r. 976-997 AD).¹⁰² One of his maternal uncles, also namely Abu

⁹⁸ This aspect has already been discussed in details at chapter two of this dissertation.

⁹⁹ M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, p. 72; K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, Delhi, 1961, p. 75

¹⁰⁰ C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids, Splendour and Decay: the Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040-1186*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977 (Reprint. 1992, 2015), pp. 32, 68

¹⁰¹ C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994-1040*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 78.

¹⁰² Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, p. 45; Ali Anooshahr, “Utbi and the Ghaznavids at the Foot of the Mountain”, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 280-81; Andrew C.S. Peacock, “Utbi’s al-Yamini: Patronage, Composition and Reception,” *Arabica*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2007), p. 503.

Nasr, served as deputy governor of Nishapur.¹⁰³ This uncle helped Utbi to get a job in the Samanid administration, first as a secretary to Abu Ali Simguri, the military commander of Khurasan.¹⁰⁴ Then as chief of the post (*sahib al-barid*) in Nishapur, a post that could serve as a stepping stone to the position of vizier.¹⁰⁵ Thus, he was attached to one of the three prominent “dynasties of wazirs” at Bukhara (the Bal’amis and the Jayhanis were the other two).¹⁰⁶

However, as by the end of the tenth century, the Samanid monarchy started to disintegrate; Utbi served in the Ziyarid administration again as a secretary to Prince Qubus bin Wushmgir and finally the Amir Sabuktigin.¹⁰⁷ He stated that he served with a number of powerful men, who were like “lion warriors” and “noble horses” amongst warriors.¹⁰⁸ However, with the passing away of Sabuktigin in 997 AD, there was a war of succession between two of his sons – Ismail and Mahmud. Utbi supported Ismail, as he noted on an occasion that he acted as a conveyer of political messages and advice to Ismail during the troubling time.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, he had remorse about this decision of him; consequently, in *Kitab al-Yamini*, he tried to rectify that blunder by presenting a favourable cause for Mahmud’s candidature for the throne. He remarked that, unlike Mahmud, Ismail lacked military and administrative quality; hence his wrong policies almost broke the state coffer.¹¹⁰ In contrast, he presented Mahmud in such a way that he seemed as wise, skilful and dedicated to the cause of empire-building. He remarked:

“The Amir Sayf al-Daula [Mahmud’s title] was at a loss how to deal with what had befallen him; for he found gentleness more attractive than crudeness, preferred mending over rending, inclined to blandishment, rather than

¹⁰³ Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, p. 74; Anooshahr, “Utbi and the Ghaznavids at the Foot of the Mountain”, p. 280; Peacock, “Utbi’s al-Yamini,” p. 503

¹⁰⁴ Anooshahr, “Utbi and the Ghaznavids,” p. 281; Peacock, “Utbi’s al-Yamini,” p. 503

¹⁰⁵ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 95

¹⁰⁶ W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, Messrs. Luzac and Co., London, 1928, p. 229

¹⁰⁷ Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, p. 45

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 47; Anooshahr, “Utbi and the Ghaznavids,” p. 281

¹⁰⁹ Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 211-212

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 208-209

contention and complaisance rather than confrontation, choose kindness over harshness, and ‘saved cauterization as a last resort in an illness’.”¹¹¹

Utbi further explained that to avoid any bloodshed among the Ghaznavids, Mahmud wrote a letter to his brother elucidating his qualities which would be beneficial to their emerging empire. But Ismail showed no positive response. Subsequently, while the governor of Jurjan tried to broker peace between the brothers, it was again Ismail who rejected the terms.¹¹² Thus, it seems that after finding himself on the wrong side, Utbi, through *Kitab al-Yamini*, wanted to regain the faith of Mahmud and, therefore, a boost to his falling career. Because, being a member of the *wazir* family of the Samanid Empire, Utbi might also aspire to achieve a high post in the Ghaznavid administration, which would supplement his literary merits. This becomes further clearer when we see that, being a fluent Persian speaker, Utbi decided to write in Arabic. This was done to spread the fame of Mahmud to the Islamic world¹¹³ as he targeted the audience at the Abbasid court in Baghdad,¹¹⁴ the most important location for a “Muslim ruler” to get recognition. Chapter two of this dissertation has already discussed how Mahmud wanted to achieve an exalted space in the Islamic world through literary messaging. It seems Utbi played a considerable role in this process.

The representation of “Hindus” as “enemies of Islam” by Utbi¹¹⁵ was part of a larger political design. Mahmud wanted to carve out a space for himself in the Islamic world. For that, he needed not only territorial victories under his name, which would provide him with both economic resources but also fame, which came through literary representations. Hence, he embarked on a series of expeditions towards India, where he could declare his campaigns as *ghaza*, thus getting the support of volunteers. Because, on the western frontiers of his empire, the Ajami princes dominated, against whom he could not declare a holy war, as they were also from the same faith as his. In this way, Mahmud

¹¹¹ Quoted from Chase F. Richards, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 99

¹¹² Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. 210-211

¹¹³ Peacock, “Utbi’s al-Yamini,” p. 501

¹¹⁴ W.L. Treadwell, *The Political history of the Samanid State*, PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991, p. 10

¹¹⁵ Nasr al-Utbi, *Kitab al-Yamini*, Eng. trans. by James Reynolds, pp. p. 23

utilized religion to his advantage, and Utbi played a part in it through panegyric representation of the victories.

Utbi never visited India, and most of his information regarding the Indian wars was provided by Sultan Mahmud himself through his proclamation of war.¹¹⁶ This further gets clearer if we notice that Utbi, in his account of India, refrained from providing any geographic description of Hindustan, including the locality of the forts conquered by Mahmud. His accounts seem superficial, concentrating more on rhetorical information about Hindus being *kafir* and Mahmud being here to punish them by eradicating them and establishing Islam.¹¹⁷ He rarely mentioned the battle, types of equipment, methods of warfare, and, most notably, the condition of the “Hindus”.¹¹⁸ Thus, it seems Utbi has done this panegyric of Mahmud¹¹⁹ for political and financial favours from the Sultan. On the other hand, Mahmud used it as a tool to assert his influence and gain glory. Thus, it was mutually beneficial for both.

Moreover, the Ghaznavids never seriously explored the prospects of establishing and permanent empire in India (except the regions including Lahore, directly controlled by them from Ghazna for a brief period). They confined themselves to occasionally raiding territories in Hindustan for loot. Therefore, the views expressed by the Ghaznavid scholars might also be considered as views from the outside only regarding the Hindus and their faith. In contrast, the Ghurids were the first Central Asian forces who established a permanent administration in Hindustan. The Ghurids lived on Indian soil and fought for expansion against the local “Hindu” chiefs, and the Indo-Persian scholars based in Delhi observed these developments at a personal level. Therefore, the views of the Indo-Persian scholars would definitely provide a different angle to the aspect of “self and other”.

The first issue the Sultanate monarchies faced was how to treat the non-Muslims under their administration. According to Islamic tradition, the non-Muslims are categorized into three groupings: the *Ahl al-Kitab* or “People of the Book” (those persons

¹¹⁶ Ali Anooshahr believes that Nasr al-Utbi has reproduced the information provided by Sultan Mahmud himself through his victory proclamations. Anooshahr, Utbi and the Ghaznavids,” p. 287; Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis, London, 2009, pp. 65-73

¹¹⁷ M. Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, pp. 4-5

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-6

¹¹⁹ Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1968, p. 177

who believe in the sacred revealed books mentioned in the Quran), *Mushabih Ahl al-Kitab* (people who claim to believe in a divine book, but not mentioned in the Quran; thus it cannot be said with conviction that they are *Ahl al-Kitab*, yet it may be presumed that they are so), and finally the *Kafirs* and *Mushriks* (all others besides the believers of revealed books).¹²⁰ The Muslim jurists agreed that the first two categories of non-Muslims are entitled to enjoy all the rights under an Islamic state unless they settle to pay *jizyah*.¹²¹ But, there was no agreement among the jurists concerning the third category of people.

As has already been discussed above, Muhammad Qasim, the first “Muslim ruler” in an Indian territory, decided to treat the “Hindus” and other non-Muslims in Sindh as *Ahl al-Kitab*. According to *Chachnamah*, after the victory at Bhahminabad in Sindh, Muhammad bin Qasim declared to the locals that “those of you become Musalmans and come within the fold of Islam shall have their tribute remitted, but those who are still inclined must pay a tribute (*jizyah*) to retain the religion of their fathers and grandfathers.”¹²² Thus, Qasim awarded the same status to the Indians [mostly Hindus] as was enjoyed by the people of Book in an Islamic state. From the descriptions of *Chachnamah*, it transpires that Muhammad Qasim fully observed this provision. In another instance, the *Chachnamah* has revealed that one Buddhist monk confronted a Hindu raja by saying, “We know that Muhammad Kasim holds a *Farman* from Hajjaj to grant protection to everyone who demands it. We trust, therefore, that you will consider it fit and reasonable that we make terms with him, for the Arabs are faithful and keep their agreements.”¹²³

Now coming to the Delhi Sultanate, the aspect of treating the non-Muslims created a complex scenario among the scholars. While most of the *fuqaha*¹²⁴ maintained that Hindus

¹²⁰ Nadvi, “Religious Relations between Arabia and India,” p. 123; K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, p. 308

¹²¹ Nadvi, “Religious Relations between Arabia and India,” p. 123; K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, p. 308; The Quran also makes it evidently clear this aspect in Surah 9:29.

¹²² Anonymous, *The Chachnama*, Eng. trans. by Mirza Kalichbeg Fedunberg, p. 165

¹²³ Anonymous *Chachnamah*, Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 1, Trubner and Co., London, 1867, pp. 158-59

¹²⁴ *Fuqaha* is the plural form of *Faqih* which means as a jurist, legal scholar, or expert in Islamic law.

might be considered *Ahl al-Kitab* or *dhimmi*¹²⁵, scholars like Zia Barani advocated harsh treatment for the Hindus.¹²⁶ Hence, it would be crucial to explore the formation of a literary trend where how the “other – Hindus” were viewed would provide insight into the politics of texts in the medieval period. Fakhr-i Mudabbir, who is often described as the initiator of writing history in the Persian language in India, wrote *Adab al-Muluk wa-Kifayat ul-Muluk* (Rules of the Kings and the Welfare of the Subjects) and dedicated it to Shamsuddin Iltutmish (r. 1210-1236 AD).¹²⁷ In chapter 26 of this book, he reviews the principles and practices of Islamic governments regarding their non-Muslim subjects.¹²⁸ He expressed that a “Muslim ruler” must wish for holy war (*jihad*) against the unbelievers and should focus on collecting *jizyah* (poll tax) and *kharaj* (land tax) from the defeated unbelievers and *dhimmis* (*zimmis*).¹²⁹ He also strongly advocated that “A Sultan must secure the property of the believers (Muslims) to its owners, and to see that all taxes other than those ordained by the *Shari’a* should be abolished,”¹³⁰ but at the same time promotes the subjugation of all heretical movements and heretics – the Hindus with their idols and temples.¹³¹ He even prescribed dresses (*jama*), adornment (*zayn*), and deportment (*nishast*), which should be distinct from that of the Muslim population.¹³²

However, it should be remembered that these all were suggestive advice for the Sultanate. How far these pieces of advice were received positively is quite an uncertain subject. In a country where the vast majority of subjects were non-Muslim, any astute

¹²⁵ Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, p.46; Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 85.

¹²⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi: An English Translation*, trans. Ishtiyag Ahmed Zilli, Primus Books, Delhi, 2015 (reprint. 2021).

¹²⁷ E. Denison Ross, “The Genealogies of Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarak Shah,” in T.W. Arnold and Reynold A. Nicholson (eds.), *A Volume of Oriental Studies presented to Edward G. Browne*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 392-413; Agha Abdu’s-Sattar Khan, “Fakhr-i-Mudabbir,” in *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review*, Vol. 12 (1938), pp. 397-404; M.S. Khan, “Life and Works of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir,” in *Islamic Culture: An English Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1977), p. 135; Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 17.

¹²⁸ Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 283; Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, pp. 25-26

¹²⁹ Khan, “Life and Works of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir,” p. 135

¹³⁰ Ross, “The Genealogies of Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarak Shah,” p. 402

¹³¹ Sunil Kumar, “The Value of the *Adab al-Muluk* as Historical Source: An Insight into the Ideals and Expectations of Islamic Society in Middle Period (AD 945-1500),” in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1985), p. 323

¹³² Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 283

Sultan would avoid these recommendations to implement. Instead, it can be seen that people, in general, people enjoyed complete religious freedom.¹³³ A Sanskrit Inscription from Palam (d. 1280 AD) has described the Sultanate rule in Delhi as one of the peaceful and prosperous.¹³⁴ It further stated that “under the rule of Ghiyasuddin Balban, from Gaur (Bengal) to Ghazna, and from Dravida country and Setubandhan (Rameshwaram), everywhere the earth bears the bounty of sylvan spring, as his armies ensure the peace and security enjoyed by all.”¹³⁵ Therefore, Sunil Kumar believes that *Adab al-Muluk* can only be conceived as a piece of advice, which is not envisaged as duties and functions inherent in a certain position but seen as personal responsibility for the moral ordering of the world.¹³⁶ The *Adab al-Muluk* was not a legal text, and though it mentioned collecting *jizyah*, Mudabbir made no specific mention of classifying “Hindus” as *dhimmi* (*zimmi*).¹³⁷

Moreover, it seems that Fakhr-i-Mudabbir aspired for a reward from the Delhi Sultan.¹³⁸ After spending twelve years, he finished writing the book, and then he showed it to his father first, who himself was a learned man of his day. His father was delighted to see the work and said, “The race of benevolent princes, generous ministers, and noble-minded commanders has not, however, quite died out, and happily, this great work may meet with the encouragement it deserves from such a one.”¹³⁹ This reflects the intention of writing such a book. Mudabbir also stated that he belonged to a highly respected Syed family, both from his father’s and mother’s side, with a good connection with the rulers of Ghazna.¹⁴⁰ However, with the fall of the Ghaznavids, they were forced to move to Lahore and settle there, thus falling from the grace of the ruling dispensation, as there

¹³³ Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, p. 91

¹³⁴ G. Yazdani, “The Inscriptions of the Turk Sultans of Delhi – Muizuddin Bahram, Alauddin Mas’ud, Nasiruddin Mahmud, Ghiyasuddin Balban and Muizuddin Qaiqubad,” in *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement (In Continuation of Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica)*, 1913-20, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 35-45

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 43-44

¹³⁶ Kumar, “The Value of the *Adab al-Muluk* as Historical Source”, p. 327

¹³⁷ Peter Hardy, “The Growth of Authority over Conquered Political Elite: The Early Delhi Sultanate as a Possible Case Study,” in John S. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 192-214

¹³⁸ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 18.

¹³⁹ Ross, “The Genealogies of Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarak Shah,” pp. 409-410

¹⁴⁰ Khan, “Life and Works of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir,” p. 129

was no one to obtain them in service.¹⁴¹ Thus, it seems as an aspiring seeker of rewards from a “Muslim ruler”, he wanted to put the ruler in a good light through these narratives. He even elucidated those invasions of Qutubuddin Aibek while he was not the Sultan, with great details and portrayed him as the spreader of Islam.¹⁴² Besides these, he tried to establish the authority of the Sultan in such a way that he even did not hesitate to distort the advice of the Prophet. He incorporated some apocryphal traditions fabricated by later politicians as Islamic and attributed them to the Prophet.¹⁴³ For instance, he stated that the Prophet said, “One, who obeys me, obeys Allah; similarly, one who obeys the Sultan will obey me,” and further remarked, “If there be no Sultan, people will devour one another.”¹⁴⁴

The next prominent Indo-Persian scholar of the Delhi Sultanate was Sadr ud-Din Hasan Nizami. His *Taj ul-Ma’asir* has been considered the first official history of the Delhi Sultanate.¹⁴⁵ In his narrative concerning the founding years of the Delhi Sultanate, Nizami, in his description of the enemies in India, often termed them [Hindus] as the “crow faced (*zagh-chihra*)”.¹⁴⁶ For instance, by describing the Indians [Hindus] during his journey to Delhi, Nizami remarked:

“The crow-like Hindus had intercepted roads, and in the rapidity of their movements exceeded the wild ass and the deer; you might say they were demons in human form and covered with blackness.”¹⁴⁷

He also portrayed the early Central Asian invasions to India as a religious war against the “Hindus”. On one occasion, while Nizami explained the importance of holy war [*ghaza*] and the role played by Muizuddin Ghori and Qutubuddin Aibek in that process, he stated that without the holy war, the fold of the Prophet’s flock could never be increased, and both Ghori and Aibek had played a significant role in that. Nizami stated:

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 129

¹⁴² Rose, “The Genealogies of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah,” pp. 397-402

¹⁴³ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 18

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 18-19

¹⁴⁵ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 55

¹⁴⁶ Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma’asir,” Eng. trans. in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 208, 215

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 208

“During the reign of Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam, the puissant Sultan, the lord of the fortunate conjunction of the planets, the pole of the world and religion, the pillar of Islam and Muslamans, the asylum of princes and Sultans, the destroyer of infidels and plural worshipers, etc., the Khusrau of Hindustan, Abul haris Aibek, the Sultan, and that Almighty God had selected him from amongst the kings and emperors of the time, for he had employed himself in extirpating the enemies of religion and the state, and had deluged the land of Hind with the blood of their [Hindus] hearts, so that to the very day of resurrection travelers would have to pass over pools of gore in boats, - had taken every fort and stronghold which he attacked, and ground its foundations and pillars to powder under the feet of fierce and gigantic elephants, - had made the heads of crowned Rajs crown the top of impaling posts, - had sent the whole world of idolatry to the fire of hell, and had founded mosques and colleges in the places of images and idols.”¹⁴⁸

In this way, Hasan Nizami portrayed Ghori and Aibek as the champion of Islam. Their conquests in India were for spreading Islam by eradicating the “infidels”. They were portrayed as the destroyer of temples in India and building mosques in those places. According to Hasan Nizami, during the conquest of Ajmer (1192), “the army of Islam was completely victorious, and a hundred thousand grovelling Hindus swiftly departed to the fire of hell. In place of temples, mosques, *madrasas* were constructed, and Islamic law was enforced.”¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Nizami remarked that during the conquests of Kohram and Samana, Qutubuddin Aibek “purged by his sword the land of Hindustan from the filth of infidelity and vice, and freed the whole of that country from the thorn of God-plurality, and the impurity of idol worship, and by his royal vigour and intrepidity, left not one temple standing.”¹⁵⁰

From the description of Nizami, it appears that both Ghori and Aibek had come to India for *ghaza* and destroyed numerous temples, killed uncountable “infidels”, constructed mosques and spread Islam. In contrast, it can be seen that the first adversary Muizuddin faced on Indian soil was another “Muslim” monarch who also adhered to

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 209

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 215

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 217

Islamic law (*shari'a*).¹⁵¹ As a matter of fact, if as many people as Hasan Nizami mentioned would have been killed by the Ghurid military during their campaigns in India, then there would have been no human trace in India by the time the military conquests came to an end.¹⁵² Even an orthodox scholar like Barani has admitted that the cooperation of the majority of “Hindu” subjects was necessary to run a smooth administration in the Sultanate of Delhi. It was an impossibility to eradicate polytheism and heresy from India.¹⁵³

Similarly, as mentioned by Nizami, if so many temples were destroyed by the Turkish forces, then hardly any temple would survive. He narrates the destruction of all the temples with righteous satisfaction in Kalinjar;¹⁵⁴ in contrast, it can be seen that most of the temples of that period from the Kalinjar region are still surviving, at least when Cunningham prepared his report.¹⁵⁵ However, the Ghurid forces indeed destroyed some temples, and the reason for the desecration seems more economic than religious.¹⁵⁶ For instance, after overthrowing the Gahadavala king, the Ghurid army proceeded towards Banaras instead of marching to the capital Kanauj.¹⁵⁷ Notably, Banaras was known to have been the city where the defeated ruler kept his treasure.¹⁵⁸ This shows the Ghurid army's intent - that was to collect booty from the defeated ruler. But, Nizami and Minhaj estimated Muizuddin's success on the basis of his service to Islam by spreading its glory

¹⁵¹ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, as *A General History of Mohamedan Dynasties of Asia Including Hindustan, 810-1206 AD*, Gilbert and Rivington, London, 1881, pp. 449-451.

¹⁵² K. A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ Barani mentioned that Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban would often mention about the sermon of Sayed Nur ud-Din Mubarak Ghaznavi, a prominent *ulama* of Sultan Iltutmish's court, in front of his sons, nephews and courtiers about the duties of a Muslim king. However, he would express his anguish over his inability to exterminate the infidels and idol-worshippers as it must remain an unattainable ideal for a Sultan in Delhi. Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 28-29

¹⁵⁴ Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma'asir,” Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 2, p. 231

¹⁵⁵ A. Cunningham, *Reports on a Tour in Bundelkhand and Rewa in 1883-84; and of a Tour in Rewa, Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gwalior in 1884-85*, Vol. XXI, Parts, 1 and 2, The Superintendent of Government Printing for Archaeological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1885, pp. 25, 58-59, and 71-79.

¹⁵⁶ This aspect has been discussed in details in the chapter two of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁷ Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma'asir,” Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 2, pp. 222-23

¹⁵⁸ A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1976, p. 265

in the soil of Hindustan, and they totally ignored the economic perspective of these conquests.

Nizami has given the impression that the Rajput cities fell one after another in front of the Ghurid forces at ease. He wrote, “The Rais and chiefs of Hind came forward to proffer their allegiance”¹⁵⁹ to Muizuddin after his capture of Banaras. But, in reality, it was not so easy. Nizami himself has stated that many Muslim soldiers were killed by the Rajput during the course of the conquests.¹⁶⁰ Contrary to Nizami’s eulogy, the Ghurid forces did face tough challenges from the Rajput warriors. For instance, when in the year 574 AH/1178 AD, Sultan Muizuddin Ghori marched an army towards Nahrwalah by way of Uchch and Multan, the Rai of that state, Bhim Diw [Deo] inflicted a crushing defeat upon Muizuddin in the battle.¹⁶¹ Besides this, the Rajput governments were not immediately overthrown by the Ghurids after the conquests. Rather, they were appointed as subordinates with conditions of tribute (*malguzari*) and military service during need. Muizuddin allowed the successor of Ajmer, Gwalior, Delhi and the Chandella ruler to continue as monarch with tribute-paying arrangements.¹⁶² Besides these, Muizuddin entered into an alliance with the “Hindu” ruler of Jammu against a “Muslim” ruler Khusrau Malik.¹⁶³

Now the question arises why would Hasan Nizami provide this kind of narrative about the early conquests of Central Asian forces in India? To understand the intention for providing such narratives, we need to search for answers to a few more questions like, what kind of socio-political, economic and religious environment these authors come from? What kind of intentions did they keep in mind while writing such narratives? Was

¹⁵⁹ Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma’asir,” Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 2, p. 223

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 209

¹⁶¹ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj-i Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 451-52

¹⁶² The son of late Prithviraj (Rai Pithora) acknowledged the suzerainty of Muizuddin in 1192 and was allowed to rule over Ajmer as a vassal. Two years later he was ousted by the supporter of his uncle, Har Raj (Hari Raj). Similarly, the Rai of Delhi submitted to Ghori and accepted the status of a subordinate to the Ghurid state. Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma’asir,” Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 216; Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 264

¹⁶³ Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 264

it to gain some favour from the ruling dispensation? Or personal religio-political ideologies of authors play any role in it?

First of all, the *Taj ul-Ma'asir* was written to dedicate to a reigning monarch. Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur (his hometown), Khurasan to Delhi with a lot of difficulties facing on the road after his place faced political turmoil due to armed conflict between Khwarizm Shah and Ghurid Sultans.¹⁶⁴ He came to India with the intention of earning good fortune here. He noted, "The wise are rarely regarded in their own country."¹⁶⁵ Whereas Delhi was "the country of mercy and alter of wealth."¹⁶⁶ He mentioned that prior to taking the journey to India, he consulted his religious preceptor Muhammad Kufi, and the latter encouraged him to leave Nishapur and try his luck in India.¹⁶⁷ During his stay in Delhi, the reigning monarch, Qutubuddin Aibek, invited scholars to write the glories of his master Muhammad bin Sam (Ghori), and his victories should be recorded.¹⁶⁸ At this stage, Nizami started writing the history of Delhi Sultans. Thus, it can be seen that he started his narrative to record the glories of the Ghurid Sultan.

To illustrate, in an endeavour to flatter Iltutmish, Nizami strangely had used the royal title "Sultan Shams ud-Dunya wad-Din" while describing his military achievements, even before Iltutmish ascended the throne and was merely serving under Qutubuddin Aibek.¹⁶⁹ Another noteworthy aspect of Nizami's description is that he cleverly almost omitted Bakhtiyar Khalji's (another prominent commander of Muizuddin) campaign achievements in Indian conquests. Even when mentioned him, it is too brief to draw any sketch of his adventurous qualities. In contrast, Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani has provided a detailed description about Bakhtiyar Khalji and his achievements in Indian soil.¹⁷⁰ Does it mean that he only wanted to add the achievements of his patron

¹⁶⁴ Hasan Nizami, "Taj ul-Ma'asir," Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 207; Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 40

¹⁶⁵ Hasan Nizami, "Taj ul-Ma'asir," Eng. trans. in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 207

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 208

¹⁶⁷ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 40; H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 207.

¹⁶⁸ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 208; K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 59; Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 41

¹⁶⁹ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 46

¹⁷⁰ Minhaj ud-Din Siraj-i Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 548-573

and did not want to see other important commanders of Muizzuddin at the same level as that of Aibek? During the course of his writing, Aibek passed away, and it seems he had to amend his narrative after that. He had to incorporate the achievements of his new master, Iltutmish. In the process, Nizami totally omitted the details of the assumption of independence by Nasiruddin Qubachha, the son-in-law of Qutubuddin Aibek in Punjab and Sindh, Ali Mardan Khalji in Bihar and Bengal, about which Juzjani had written in details.¹⁷¹ He even omitted the brief rule of Aibek's son and successor Aram Shah in Delhi, which in a later stage Juzjani has described.¹⁷² Through these omissions, Nizami might try to project that Iltutmish was the heir apparent of Aibek, who legitimately ascended the throne. It is also noteworthy that, Iltutmish married Aibek's third daughter after ascending to the throne, which Nizami did not mention.¹⁷³ The reason for this marriage can be assumed as to legitimise his position as a Sultan of Delhi.

Therefore, it seems these narratives were highly exaggerated, less factual and more allusive, which was prepared more with an eye to broadcast among the potential recruit to the army and to motivate the uninterrupted flow of fighters to the army, which at that period of time mostly came from the Central Asian territories.¹⁷⁴ Hence, it seems Hasan Nizami had written to impress the reader rather than to record historical facts.¹⁷⁵ Being a poet, he was carried away by a flight of imagination while describing the events in India.¹⁷⁶ For instance, while describing the Amber conquest, Nizami described the event as follows:

“the white lily had unsheathed its sword to assault the enemies of the kingdom and faith. The wild growing tulip had opened its mouth to sing the praise of the king of the world with its fiery tongue. You would say that the face of the

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 531-548

¹⁷² Juzjani has categorically stated that Aram Shah was the son of Qutubuddin Aibek. Minhaj ud-Din Siraj-i Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 528

¹⁷³ Minhaj remarked that, while Sultan Aibek passed away, his son Aram Shah ascended to the throne. However, soon Nasiruddin Qubachha rebelled, thus the all the Maliks of Delhi brought Iltutmish to Delhi from Badaon and put to the throne. Then Iltutmish married one of Aibek's daughters and martyred Aram Shah. Minhaj ud-Din Siraj-i Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, pp. 529-530

¹⁷⁴ Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, pp. 265-66; K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 9

¹⁷⁵ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 205

¹⁷⁶ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 41

water lily had been washed with red wine, and it had drunk strong wine from the hand of the cup-bearer of the pearl-scattering cloud.”¹⁷⁷

Thus, Hasan Nizami brought tulip and lily, which grows in Khurasan, Central Asian regions, into the desert of Rajputana in his description. Thus, his description of the “Hindus” might be seen from the perspective of allusions. He even provided allusions to describe the death of Muizuddin.¹⁷⁸

Amir Khusrau is the most significant scholar in the Sultanate of Delhi in terms of his contribution to literature in prose and poems. However, he is one of the most complex characters in terms of his literary approach towards the other communities – the “Hindus”. On the one hand, in *Nuh Siphir*, he praised India for its beauty and held a sympathetic view of the Hindus. On the other hand, in *Khazain al-Futuh*, he wrote contemptuously about the “Hindus”. Amir Khusrau explicitly articulated his opinions about “Hindus” and on Hindustan in his *mathnavi*, *Nuh Siphir*.¹⁷⁹ He wrote highly about Delhi and sang its praise by declaring its superiority over Baghdad, Cairo, Khurasan, Tirmidh, Tabriz, Siphahan, Bukhara, and Khwarizm.¹⁸⁰ He compared Hindustan with Khurasan and wrote that he prefers the climate in India compared to the latter. He also argues that India is a Paradise and it is superior to other countries in terms of its weather, flowers, and fruits.¹⁸¹ He then praises the Indians by explaining that they are superior in science, technology and wisdom over all other nations.¹⁸² Regarding the “Hindus”, Khusrau has expressed a similar view to that of Shahrastani, while he termed them as Sabians. He remarked:

“Though they do not believe in our religion, many of their beliefs are like ours. They believe, for instance, in the unity and eternity of God, His power to create after nothingness, etc., and so are better than the Dualists or those who

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 42

¹⁷⁸ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 206

¹⁷⁹ Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1935; Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing*, Luzac & Company Ltd., London, 1960, pp. 68-93; The English translation of the third chapter of *Nuh Siphir* by R. Nath, *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau (in 1318AD)*, Historical Research Documentation Programme, Jaipur, 1981.

¹⁸⁰ Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, p. 182

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 183

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 183

believe in Father and Son, the anthropomorphist, the Sabians, the materialists or the *Mushabih*.”¹⁸³

He further argues that, though they worship idols, they still believe that these idols are the creation of Gods and part of their traditions which were passed to them from one generation to the other. Thus, it can be seen that Amir Khusrau refrains from making any value judgment regarding the “Hindus”; instead, he tries to place them in the same contour as ‘Muslims’. Khusrau even declared the “Hindus” as being better than Christians and Jews.¹⁸⁴ Khusrau further mentions Sanskrit and its rich literature but remarks that it was the literature of the Brahmans. Even amongst them, not all can claim mastery over this language. Like Arabic, Sanskrit has its grammar, definitions, systems, techniques, rules and literature.¹⁸⁵ He even compared Sanskrit with Arabic and Persian and concluded that Sanskrit though inferior to Arabic, is superior to Persian (Dari).¹⁸⁶ He acknowledged the virtues of Brahmins while he said that Brahmins, by nature, are quiet and do not speak much, so most of their knowledge remains hidden from the world and generally tends to be misunderstood.¹⁸⁷ Thus, Khusrau seems to have an appreciative approach towards the “Hindus” in his *Nuh Siphir*.

Khusrau tried to portray cultural unity in the Sultanate, still keeping the distinctiveness of Muslims in Hindustan.¹⁸⁸ He stressed the “Indianess” of Turks of that time when he said, “I am an Indian Turk, and I can give you a reply in Hindi”.¹⁸⁹ However, if we go through his *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, a different Khusrau can be seen, where he used offensive suffixes for the local “Hindu” rulers who were the adversaries of his patron Sultan Alauddin Khalji. He often described the “Hindu” rulers as “cow worshipping Hindus” and “infidels” while comparing his patron with Mozes, Shuaib.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 183

¹⁸⁴ R. Nath, *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau*, pp. 55-56

¹⁸⁵ Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, “The Idea of India in Amir Khusrau,” in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., p. 125.

¹⁸⁶ Rezavi, “The Idea of India in Amir Khusrau,” p. 125; R. Nath, *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau*, p. 70

¹⁸⁷ Rezavi, “The Idea of India in Amir Khusrau,” p. 126

¹⁸⁸ P. Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 93.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted from R. Nath, *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau*, pp. 17-18

¹⁹⁰ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib, as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, B.D. Taraporevala, Sons & Co., Bombay, 1931, p. 6

The victory of Alauddin Khalji over Gujarat was portrayed as the victory of Islam and the thought of Muhammad over the infidels. Khusrau has narrated the event as follows:

“Then they made the idol-house of Somnath prostrate itself towards the exalted Ka’ba, and when they cast the reflection of the upturned idol-house in the sea, it seemed as if that idol-house first offered its prayers and then took a bath. But they sent one idol, which was the largest, to the royal presence so that it may be renewed the tradition of Khalil by breaking the idols which had lodged themselves at half the way to the House of Khalil and used to waylay the misguided ones. But they sent one idol, which was the largest, to the royal presence so that it may relate to the idol-worshipping Hindus the destruction of these helpless gods hoping that they would say that the tongue of the royal sword interpreted this verse: ‘He broke them up into pieces expect this big one so that they may return to it’.”¹⁹¹

Amir Khusrau further remarked about the aftermath of the battle in Gujarat and demonstrated that the abode of unbelievers, which was the *qibla* of the garbs, had been turned into the city of Islam. The Brahmin Peshwas [local rulers] were removed, and the followers of Abraham [Muslims] were appointed in their places. The staunch Sunni Muslims broke it [Somanatha] with all their might wherever they saw an idol house. Every nook and corner of the place was filled with the *Takbir* [Allahu Akbar] and *shahadat* (evidence) of fighting, and the idols were destroyed. Thus, the land of “infidelity” was turned into a place of customs of Islam. Khusrau also described that the call to prayers sounded so loudly that it was heard in faraway places in Baghdad and Medina. Then, when the *Khutba* was recited in the name of Sultan Alauddin Khalji, it would reach the *Qubba-i-Khalil* and the well of *Zamzam* [in Mecca].¹⁹²

Now the question arises: why is there such a discrepancy in Khusrau’s approach towards “Hindus” and their religion? The answer might be found in his approach towards writing itself. It is noteworthy that the *Khaza’in al-Futuh* was composed in AD 1311–12, during the zenith of Alauddin Khalji’s reign (r. 1296-1316 AD), whereas the *Nuh Siphir* was composed during his old age during the reign of Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah (r. 1316-

¹⁹¹ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza’in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Wahid Mirza, National Book Foundation, Lahore, 1975, p. 26

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 26

1320 AD), the son and successor of Alauddin Khalji. By the end of his career, Khusrau was immensely got influenced by the teachings and humanism of his *Pir*, Nizamuddin Auliya;¹⁹³ thus, his social philosophy might also change. Zia al-Din Barani stated, “Khusrau was among the main disciples of Sheikh Nizamuddin. I have not seen any other disciple so faithful to the master.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the later literary works produced by Khusrau present significant knowledge about the science and philosophy of his time.¹⁹⁵ He seems to become less interested in worldly gains as in *Nuh Siphir*; he occasionally recommended withdrawal from the world and advised to keep a watchful suspicion of material success.¹⁹⁶

In contrast, if we turn back to his youth, it can be seen that Khusrau entered the service of Malik Chajju, nephew of Ghiyasuddin Balban, when he was just twenty as a panegyric. Subsequently, he served Bughra Khan (second son of Balban), Sultan Muhammad (eldest son of Balban), Jalaluddin Khalji, Alauddin Khalji, Mubarak Shah Khalji, and so on.¹⁹⁷ During the medieval period, writing panegyric works was a tradition that the ruling monarchs and nobles patronized. These works created public opinion in the patron’s favour and passed from mouth to mouth.¹⁹⁸ Khusrau was an ambitious person who wanted to become rich, but he was against the idea of becoming wealthy through slow and persistent labour. Hence, he decided to select the only profession of that time, combining the minimum labour and maximum profit.¹⁹⁹ The profession of court poet – a panegyric best suited him. Khusrau lamented and regretted in front of Zia al-Din Barani that if Sultan Muhammad (*Khan-i-Shahid*) had been alive and succeeded his father, Ghiyasuddin Balban, he would have covered him with gold.²⁰⁰ He received an enormous reward from Jalaluddin Khalji.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography*, p. 172

¹⁹⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 221

¹⁹⁵ Mohammad Habib, “Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi”, in K.A. Nizami (ed.), *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, Vol. 1, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, p. 294

¹⁹⁶ P. Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 90

¹⁹⁷ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 41, 66, 69, 72, 109, 122-123, and 221

¹⁹⁸ Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, D.B. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Bombay, 1927, p. 10

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9

²⁰⁰ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 42

The *Khaza'in al-Futuh* was such a panegyric work, where Khusrau praised Alauddin's military victories throughout most of the subcontinent to obtain the reward from the Sultan.²⁰² Alauddin's campaigns were praised with exaggeration and allusions to the greatness of the Sultan. In the process, Khusrau used demeaning language for the enemy (both Hindus and Mongols). To justify the aggression, it was necessary to demonize the enemy. Besides these, every work was presented to Sultan Alauddin, so it was impossible for Khusrau to refrain from eulogizing the Sultan and demonizing the enemy.²⁰³ For instance, Khusrau cautiously omitted the heinous crime that Alauddin Khalji committed by ordering the murder of his uncle and the reigning Sultan of Delhi, Jalaluddin Khalji, which has been recorded by Zia al-Din Barani.²⁰⁴ Similarly, he did not mention about the defeat of Alauddin's forces against the Mongol incursions.²⁰⁵

Amir Khusrau was not only a scholar but also an officer in the Sultanate army. Zia al-Din Barani stated that in 684 AH/1285 AD, Amir Khusrau was taken as prisoner by the Mongols commander Tamar Khan during the battle between Prince Muhammad (Khan-i-Shahid) and Mongols in Multan, but somehow he escaped from them.²⁰⁶ He was also present on the battlefield during Alauddin's campaign to Chitor in 702 AH/1302 AD.²⁰⁷ Being a soldier on the battlefield, he witnessed casualties from both sides, which left an impact on him. He stated about the defeat against Mongols during Balban's reign, "the Muslim martyrs dyed the desert with their blood, while the Muslim captives had their necks tied together like so many flowers into garlands."²⁰⁸ However, it should be remembered that while Alauddin was invading a neighbouring Raja's territory, both

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 123

²⁰² Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib, as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, p. 2; Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, "Indian Sources on Central Asian History and Culture, 13th to 15th Century AD.," in *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1993), p. 56; Aziz Ahmad has categorized *Khaza'in al-Futuh* as a war narrative. Aziz Ahmad, "Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Sep. - Dec., 1963), pp. 470-476.

²⁰³ M. Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, p. 100

²⁰⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. Ishtiyah Ahmad Zilli, pp. 144-147

²⁰⁵ M. Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, p. 104; Agha Hussain Hamadani, *The Frontier Policy of the Delhi Sultans*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 125-126

²⁰⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyah Ahmad Zilli, p. 66

²⁰⁷ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib, as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, p. 48

²⁰⁸ M. Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, p. 16

Hindus and Muslims served in his army.²⁰⁹ While Alauddin went for a *ghaza* to a “Hindu” raja’s domain, he protected his Sultanate’s “Hindu” subjects.

Though a superficial reading leaves an impression that the *Khaza’in al-Futuh* was inspired by bigotry and fanaticism, a careful study reveals that even while writing the praise for Alauddin, Khusrau left his personal melancholy in the verses. For instance, if we re-read the description of Amir Khusrau in the Somanatha campaign by Alauddin’s commander Ulugh Khan in 699 AH/1299 AD, it can be seen that Khusrau was excruciating about the event. He wrote:

“So the temple of Somanatha was made to bow towards the Holy Mecca; and as the temple lowered its head and jumped into the sea, you may say that the building first said its prayer and then had bath. The idols, who had fixed their abode midway to the House of Abraham (Mecca), and there waylaid strugglers, were broken to pieces in pursuance of Abraham’s tradition. But one idol, the greatest of them all, was sent by the *maliks* to the Imperial Court, so that the breaking of their helpless god may be demonstrated to the idol-worshipping Hindus.”²¹⁰

From the above-mentioned quote, it seems that though Khusrau personally was lamenting the destruction of a Holy site, but being a court chronicler whose earnings depended on rewards from the Sultan. It seems Khusrau tried to express his genuine opinion about the destruction under the guise of allusion. It becomes furthermore apparent when we see Khusrau’s description of Alauddin’s campaign in the Deccan, where Alauddin killed numerous people. By writing about the aftermath of the war in Deccan, he wrote, “and you saw bones of men and animal on the earth”.²¹¹ Does it reflect his sadness?

²⁰⁹ Under Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, a Hindu chief who belonged to the Mandahar tribe was honoured with the post of *Vakil-i-Dar* (minister in charge of arranging ceremonies at court). This tradition continued under Sultan Alauddin Khalji as well. A Hindu chieftain, Sadharana, is said to have served as Alauddin’s treasure. Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, “Social Mobility in the Delhi Sultanate,” in Irfan Habib (ed.), *Medieval India – 1: Researches in the History of India 1200-1750*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2021 (first published, 1992), p. 15; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 279

²¹⁰ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza’in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib, as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, pp. 35-36

²¹¹ M. Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, p. 105

It was a literary technique among medieval authors, particularly the court chroniclers, who could not express their feelings in direct narration; they tried to articulate the same through allusions so that it could be hidden from the patron. Khwandamir, in his *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, dedicated a poem to the Badshah Humayun, where he satirically complains about his neglect at the hand of the patron.²¹² Thus, it can be said that Amir Khusrau was born to a Hindu mother and was highly proud of his Indian origin. He has purposefully noted down that he was born in India and India was his home-land. He considered India as the best country in the world, a heaven on earth.²¹³ However, as a court poet serving under different Sultans with different temperaments, he wrote panegyric works due to his urge for rewards. Yet, he tried to portray his displeasure through allusions in his description.

Among all the medieval scholars, Zia al-Din Barani was the most orthodox regarding his opinion on “Hindus”. Two of his works, the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* (1375) and *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, stands out as the most prominent works of the Delhi Sultanate. However, Barani is also infamous for his fanatical approach and hostility towards “Hindus”. He believed that it is the duty of the monarch to establish the “truth at the centre” over the “falsehood, which denotes, wickedness, infidelity, polytheism, disorder and sin” so that Islam, peace, obedience and virtue may prevail and thrive.²¹⁴ Therefore, Barani stressed the essentiality of annihilating the “Hindus”, the followers of polytheism. He remarked:

“The Muslim king will not be able to establish the honour of theism (*tauhid*) and the supremacy of Islam unless he strives with all his courage to overthrow infidelity and to slaughter its leaders (*imams*), in India are the Brahmans. He

²¹² Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, Eng. trans. by Bains Prasad, The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1940, pp. viii, 43

²¹³ D. V. Chauhan, “Sanskrit Influence on Amir Khusrau,” in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 51, No. 1/4 (1970), p. 55

²¹⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* p. 44

should make a firm resolve to overpower, capture, enslave and degrade the infidel.”²¹⁵

Barani further mentioned that the glorification of Islam is a duty for Muslims.²¹⁶ Then he quoted the Prophet: “I have been ordered to fight all people until they affirm ‘There is no God, but Allah’; but when they affirm this, their lives and properties are protected from me, subject to the law of Islam.”²¹⁷ He also advocated that all the strength and power of the King and the Holy warriors of Islam should be invested in holy campaigns against the *kafirs* (infidels). If the King only concentrates on collecting tax (*jizyah*) and tribute (*kharaj*) from the “Hindus” after having power, then there would be no difference between him and the *Rais* of the *Kafirs* [Hindus].²¹⁸ Hence, he wished that the Sultans of Delhi should take a harsh approach towards “Hindus” like “either death or Islam”.²¹⁹ He further argues that, God Himself says that keeping them (infidel, here the Hindus) under submission until they pay the tax (*jizyah*) is the acknowledgement of superiority, and they are in a state of subjection, particularly keeping the Hindus under humiliation is included among the fundamentals of the religion because they are the most incurable enemies of the faith of the Prophet and also because of the Prophet had commanded for the killing of Hindus, plundering their property and taking them in slavery.²²⁰

Barani’s approach towards non-Muslims was too contemptuous where he wished for their annihilation. However, we have to take cognisance of the ultimate result of these wishes of Barani. How far these theories were taken into consideration, if at all, by any of the Sultans of Delhi needs an inquiry to understand the “real” position of “Hindus” in the Sultanate. Barani has himself mentioned:

²¹⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 46; Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 27

²¹⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, “Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi,” in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historian*, Vol. 3, Trubner and Co., London, 1871, p.184.

²¹⁷ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 46

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.46

²¹⁹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Ta’rikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 177

²²⁰ Zia al-Din Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi,” in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historian*, Vol. 3, p. 184; Zia al-Din Barani, *Ta’rikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 176-77

“The desire for overthrowing infidels and knocking down idolaters and polytheists does not fill the heart of the Muslim kings in India. In contrast, the infidels are being treated under the category of payers of tribute (*zimmi/dhimmi*) and they are honored, distinguished, favoured and made eminent. They are being appointed to high posts and offices like the governorship. Muslim kings not only allow, but were pleased with the fact that the infidels build houses like palaces, wear clothes of brocade and ride Arab horses. They live in delight and comfort and take Musalmans in their services and make them run before their horses.”²²¹

From the above quote, it can be seen that non-Muslims were availing all the luxuries in life if they could effort them. But, it also conveys that as if the non-Muslims were compelled to pay the tribute, the poll tax (*jizyah*) for having such a comfortable life. Let’s have a look at the way in which the Indo-Persian scholars perceived the payment of *jizyah* in the Sultanate period. Because the taxation of *jizyah* becomes one of the prime objects for defining the relation between the Sultans and their “Hindu” subjects. The usage of the term *jizyah* and from whom to collect it has rather very ambiguous references among medieval Indian scholars.

Isami, in *Futuh al-Salatin* has mentioned that *jizyah* was purportedly collected even from a Muslim mystic (*darwish*) in the Deccan Sultanate.²²² For Amir Khusrau, *jizyah*, in a general sense, is a kind of tribute payable by the enemy *Paiks* (foot soldiers). He remarked: “It was hoped that the Hindu *Paik* would give up their mischievous activities and when the demand was made for *kharaj* and *jizyah* they should be humble and submissive that when the water of their eyes was wanted, they would offer the greasy and oily substance of their eyes and if their nobles were asked to get out, they would flee and take shelter in the holes of the mice.”²²³ Fakhr-i-Mudabbir recommended two kinds of *jizyah*: one, the tribute payable by the defeated non-Muslims as a price for the termination of warfare, and the second one is an amount levied the Muslim monarch

²²¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* p.48

²²² Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 284

²²³ Syed Hasan Askari, “Historical Matters in Ijaz-i-Khusravi,” in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol. 26, Part. 2 (1964), pp. 14-15.

upon the wealth (including houses, estates and moveable wealth) of the defeated individual infidels.²²⁴ Even Barani expressed that the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence had considered the Hindus as *dhimmi* (*zimmi*). However, he further stated that except for *Imam-i Azam* (Imam Abu Hanifa), other schools of Islamic jurisprudence rejected to treat the “Hindus” as *Ahl al-Kitab* to collect *jizyah* from them.²²⁵

Moreover, there were no unanimous views concerning the collection of *jizyah* among Indo-Persian scholars. By analyzing the land revenue system of Delhi Sultanate, Irfan Habib is of the view that till the period of Firoz Shah Tughlaq’s reign, the land tax was indifferently called *jizyah* or *kharaj-jizya*; and no separate tax under the name of *jizyah* was levied in addition to the land tax.²²⁶ It was during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq that the *jizyah* was levied upon the peasantry as a separate tax.²²⁷ On the other hand, A.B.M. Habibullah opined that the *jizyah* might have been perceived as a forming part of the land tax or tribute collected from the “Hindu” chiefs.²²⁸ Though certain historians had assumed that the poll tax (*jizyah*) was imposed on non-Muslims (particularly Hindus) throughout the Sultanate period,²²⁹ it seems doubtful.

Moreover, it became clearer that the relationship between the Delhi Sultanate and the “Hindus” were not defined by the imposition of *jizyah* alone. Rather, the “Hindus” were an integral part of the administrative system of the Delhi Sultanate. The economic system of the Sultanate was entirely controlled by the “Hindu” upper class, while “Muslim” elites had a predominant influence on the civil and military affairs of the administration.²³⁰ The Hindu money lender flourished under the new regime as they were thriving under the old dispensation. Therefore, Zia Barani has mentioned:

²²⁴ Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 284

²²⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 177

²²⁶ Irfan Habib, “Agrarian Economy,” in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. 1: c. 1200 – c. 1750*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982 (reprint. 1987), p. 67; K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 314-15

²²⁷ Irfan Habib, “Agrarian Economy,” p. 67.

²²⁸ Habibullah, *The Formation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 250

²²⁹ K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis (1290-1320)*, Indian Press Limited, Allahabad, 1950, pp. 184-185; U.N. Day, *Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate (1206-1413 AD)*, Kitab Mahal Pvt. Ltd., Allahabad, 1965, p. 106; U.N. Day, *The Government of the Delhi Sultanate*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1972 (2nd edition), pp. 91-92.

²³⁰ M. Habib and A. U. S. Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. v

“The maliks, khans, and nobles of those days were constantly in debt due to their excessive generosity, expenditures, and beneficence. There was no gold, silver, or savings in their accounts, except some in their public halls. Whenever a malik or a khan held a banquet and invited notables, his agents would rush to the Multanis and shahs, sign documents and borrow money with interest.”²³¹

These money-lenders became so powerful that Sultan Alauddin Khalji had to take measures to curb their influence.²³² Besides these, the “Hindus” actively fought in the ranks of Muslim armies. Barani noted that in 1296 Alauddin Khalji had recruited some two thousand *Paiks* at Kara for his expedition to Deogir.²³³ These soldiers were in Alauddin’s service when he became Sultan later that year.²³⁴ Alauddin’s son Qutubuddin Mubarak Khalji also maintained a body of *Paiks* in his service.²³⁵ Barani further opined that Alauddin was a ruler who had no familiarity with learning and had never been associated with the *ulama*. When Alauddin assumed the kingship, he came to the conclusion that kingship is one thing and the traditions and rules of the *Shari’a* are altogether a different thing; rules and regulations of kingship are concerned with kings and regulations of *Shari’a* belong to the domain of *Qazis* and *Muftis*. In accordance with this belief, he would do whatever he considered to be good for the governance, whether it was sanctioned by the *Shari’a* or not.²³⁶

Zia Barani further mentioned that during those days when Sultan Alauddin was deliberating the matters like how to realize revenue and matters of punishment to the “Hindus”, he asked one of his courtiers Qazi Mughiz ud-Din “how a tribute paying (*kharaj guzar, kharaj dih*) Hindu is defined in *Shari’a*? In response, the Qazi said, “The dignity of the religion of Islam is absolute, and the fallacy of other religions is also true. God Himself says about keeping them under submission until they pay *jizyah* in

²³¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 73

²³² I. H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi (second edition)*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Kashmiri Bazaar, Lahore, 1944, p. 226.

²³³ Zia al-Din Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi,” in Elliot and Dowson (eds.), *The History of India as Told by its own Historian*, Vol. 3, p. 149.

²³⁴ Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p.280

²³⁵ Ibid., p.280

²³⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Ta’rikh i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 175-176

acknowledgement of superiority and they are in a state of submission; particularly, keeping the Hindus under humiliation is included among the requisites of religion because they are the most inveterate enemies of the religion of Prophet and had commanded for the killing of Hindus²³⁷, plundering their property and taking them in slavery.”²³⁸ However, the Sultan laughed at this response and said that he did not understand any of the things that had been apprised to him.

Thus, it can be seen that what might have been presented in the rhetorical accounts, but the real approach to governance was quite different. Hence, the assumption of a section of the historians that the *jizyah* was levied on the Hindu population throughout the Delhi Sultanate seems to be a little overstatement. Peter Jackson has argued that *jizya* was a tax in lieu of military service for the Hindus (Jews and Christians paid the tax in other Islamic polities),²³⁹ whereas, in the Sultanate military system, the “Hindus” were actively serving as soldiers. Hence, the imposition of *jizyah* should not be treated as a parameter for the relationship between the Sultan and his non-Muslim subjects.

Above all, Zia Barani himself was full of admiration for the literary tradition and cultural progress in Delhi. He compared the Delhi scholars with the scholars of Badakshan, Samarkhand, Damascus, Tabrez, Isfahan, Rome and the rest of the world.²⁴⁰ He noted that in every branch of learning, such as traditional sciences (*manqulat*), rational sciences (*maqulat*), exegesis of the Quran (*Tafsir*), jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and principles of jurisprudence (*usul-i-fiqh*), grammar (*nahv*) and so on, some of the writers of Delhi were equal to Ghazali or Razi.²⁴¹ No book was considered meritorious unless it was so recognized by Indian scholars.²⁴² Thus, it can be witnessed that though Zia al-Din Barani had a disdainful feeling for the “Hindu”, but he was very proud of Hindustan.

Now the question arises, what would be the reason for Zia Barani’s hatred towards the Hindus? The answer can be found in his personal life. He belonged to an aristocratic

²³⁷ There is no such commandment of the Prophet. He never came across a Hindu nor made any such comments. It seems the Qazi was putting his thought in pretence of Prophetic saying.

²³⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Ta'rikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp p. 177

²³⁹ Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 285

²⁴⁰ Ahmad, “Concepts of India,” p. 106

²⁴¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 217

²⁴² Ahmad, “Concepts of India,” p. 106.

elite family whose members served in high offices during the Khalji rule in Delhi.²⁴³ Barani also started his career as *mulazim-i-dargah* (servant of the court), serving Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq as an aid or companion.²⁴⁴ However, with the passing away of Muhammad Tughlaq, Barani also fell from the grace of the royal patronage and met with the death knell of his own life of prestige. He noted that after the death of Muhammad Tughlaq, one Ahmad Ayaz rebelled against the new Sultan Firoz Shah in Delhi by putting one infant on the throne. The rebellion was soon suppressed by Firoz's army. However, some influential people around Sultan who was envious of him conveyed to the Sultan about his complicity in the rebellion, and hence he was stripped of all the post and was imprisoned in the fort of Bhatnir.²⁴⁵ He remarked about his dwindling fortune, "In my old age, I have turned to be a contemptible wretch in this world and having been reduced to complete indigence and obliged to knock at the doors (of others), I am faced with ignominy and disgrace."²⁴⁶ He further wrote, "Oh! I had better die earlier than seen these evil days. I have nothing, nor do I get a single penny from any quarter."²⁴⁷

For this dwindling fortune, Barani blamed the two sections of the society – the "low-born"²⁴⁸ and the rational philosophers. He believed that Muhammad Tughlaq, with

²⁴³ His father Muyaiddul Mulk was a *sharif* and later served as *naib* (deputy) of Arkali Khan (second son of Jalaluddin Khalji) and subsequently as the *naib-o-khwaja* (officer in charge) of Baran. His, maternal grandfather, Husahmuddin was a *siphasalar*, and gradually rose to the position of *wakil-i-dar* (chamberlain) in Sultan Balban's court and subsequently the police chief (*shshna*) of Lakhnauti during Balban's expedition to Bengal. Paternal uncle Ala-ul Mulk was rewarded with the governorship of Kara and Awadh by Alauddin Khalji, and then served as the *kotwal* (police chief) of Delhi. Syed Hassan Barani, "Ziauddin Barani" in *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review*, Vol. 12 (1938), pp. 77-80 Irfan Habib, "Zia Barani's Vision of the State," in *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1998), p. 20; Blain Auer, "A Translation of the Prolegomena to Ziya al-Din Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*," in Alireza Korangy, et al. (eds.), *Essays in Islamic Philology, History and Philosophy*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2016, p. 400

²⁴⁴ I. Habib, "Zia Barani's Vision of the State," p. 21; Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 287.

²⁴⁵ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 331-342; S. H. Barani, "Ziauddin Barani", p. 87; I. Habib, "Zia Barani's Vision of the State," pp. 21-22; Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, *Perso-Arab Sources of Information on the Life and Conditions in Sultanate of Delhi*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 160.

²⁴⁶ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 287

²⁴⁷ S. H. Barani, "Ziauddin Barani," p. 87

²⁴⁸ For Barani the range of the definition of low-born extended from nobles whose grandfather was a weaver to the Hindus. However, he contradicts himself when he scornfully admired Balban and his group of forty slaves of Iltutmish as contemptible men and purchased slaves. Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 17- 18

the advice of rationalist philosophers like Maulana Nazm ud-Din, Maulana Alim ud-Din, and Sa'id Ubaid Nazm Intishar, adopted ideas to promote “low-borne” to high offices.²⁴⁹ Hence, Barani assumed that with the promotion of “low-born”, the social equilibrium of the society got disturbed. Therefore, in *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Barani advised the “sovereign of Islam” to take extreme steps to exterminate “the infidel philosophers, who prefer scientific reasoning to tradition.”²⁵⁰ However, being a clever elitist, he knew that his snobby views about the “low-born” would not stand the ground in the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood of mankind and the principle of egalitarianism. Thus, he directed his anger against the “Hindus” and made it a “clash of religions”. He wrote in *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, “How the signs of Islam will be triumphant when idolaters and infidels are allowed to live in all the luxury?”²⁵¹

It clearly shows that Barani wanted to aspire and change the existing order of things in the Sultanate. That also means that the Delhi Sultans were not following any suppressive policy towards the “Hindus” till then. Thus, it seems his psychological condition played a role in his social outlook. The Islamic theology had nothing to do with it. He blamed Muhammad Tughlaq for almost every administrative action of his, yet while he explained his death, his heart began to bleed.²⁵² Because the passing away of the Sultan had also caused irreversible damage to his life, thus, he cried as much for the Sultan; he was crying for himself as well. Therefore, it can be argued that the antagonistic nature of Barani towards “Hindus” was more political than religious. Years of frustration and dismay have played a role in his social outlook. Besides this, the medieval system of “Muslim education”, which was theologically oriented, might influence Barani with the orthodoxy that reflected in his nature.²⁵³ However, if we see his approach towards the implementation of the *Shari'a* law, it poses a different picture of him. He kept aside his personal interest in religion and gave prominence to political realism while he noted that “it was not possible under the existing circumstances of political life to run the

²⁴⁹ K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 130; Siddiqui, *Perso-Arabic Sources of Information*, pp. 154-55.

²⁵⁰ A.B. M. Habibullah, “Re-evaluation of the Literary Sources of Pre-Mughal History,” in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (1941), p. 210.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210

²⁵² K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 132

²⁵³ S. H. Barani, “Ziauddin Barani,” p. 81

administration according to *Shari'a*. State laws (*zawabit*) were necessary, and government cannot be run without them.”²⁵⁴ Thus, it seems he was a pragmatic person, but the loss of position in the Sultanate court deprived him of almost all material goods of life, which made him bitter towards those whom he considered responsible for his fall. He blamed the philosophers of the time, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq and “Hindus” alike, for the so-called deterioration of the social fabric. Hence, his views on “Hindus” were nothing but his personal agony towards them.

Therefore, it can be argued that medieval Arabic and Perso-Indian scholars viewed the “other – the Hindus” from their own socio-political and economic perspectives. Arabic scholars like, Al-Andalusi, Tahir Marvazi and Shahrastani, who were interested in science, philosophy and theology, highly appreciated the “Hindus” in their narratives. They spoke well of India and their possessions, which are Indian, as they expected the benefits by establishing contact with them and trying to learn from them. They were at a lower level of intellectual achievement than the “Hindus” of India and hence praised them. So, they viewed the “Hindus” with a sympathetic view, providing them with the space of a *Mushabih Ahl al-Kitab* and even *Ahl al-Kitab*. However, these scholars formed their views on the basis of secondary knowledge of India and Indians as they had never personally visited India.

Scholars like Al-Beruni, who served under the Ghaznavids, visited India with the conquering army and acquired first-hand knowledge about the place. Being a scholar interested in philosophical and scientific aspects of humanism, Al-Beruni too highly praised the “Hindu”. However, he also mentioned that the Indian sages are not as intelligent as he himself was. Even while Al-Beruni was narrating the faith of “Hindus”, he had taken more of a sympathetic view. He said that as Indians [Hindus] are unable to understand the concept of abstract, so they create some human forms to worship. Can this view be treated as undermining the intelligence of the “Hindus”? Another Ghaznavid scholar Gardizi, however, refrained from value judgment in his narrative of “Hindus”. Rather, he just described various Indian faiths.

²⁵⁴ Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 64-71; K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, p. 13

On the other hand, scholars like Nasr al-Utbi, who was writing political narratives, had aggressively approached the “other” in his description. From being an intelligent community, the “Hindus” become the *Kafirun*. Utbi was patronized by a ruler whose interest depended on exploiting the “Hindus” of India. Mahmud utilised the concept of *ghaza* for his India campaign, and Utbi amplified Mahmud’s cause through his literary representations. Hence, Utbi has seen Indians from an enemy perspective. It was political hostility which assumed the form of religious hostility. However, the Ghaznavids confined their activities to the frontiers regions of Hindustan, except for occasional raids to the interiors. It was during the Ghurid period the Central Asian forces settled into the hinterland. With this shifting political dynamics, there can be seen a change in the language of the scholars of that period. Now the scholars acted deliberately dishonestly at times to eulogise and glorify their patrons, whereas they used contemptuous language for the “Hindus”, obviously, their enemy.

Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, Hasan Nizami and Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani all three were migrants to India during the early phase of the Delhi Sultanate and confined their narratives to descriptions of battles, conquests and court intrigues of the period. They were forced to leave their homeland due to political turmoil and wanted to gain the patronage of Delhi Sultans, and utilised the eulogical narrative for that purpose. On the other hand, Amir Khusrau and Zia al-Din Barani were born and brought up in India. Both were hugely ambitious to get a space in the elite circle of that time. While Khusrau could maintain his status throughout his life by serving under different monarchs of Delhi, Barani fell from the aristocracy with the death of his first patron Muhammad Tughlaq. Both were followers of Nizamuddin Auliya, the mystic saint of Delhi. Khusrau was a clever intellectual who wrote his narrative according to the requirements of his patrons. In *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, he described the victories of Alauddin Khalji and, to do that; he demonized the “Hindus” against whom Alauddin fought. In contrast, in *Nuh Siphir*, which he wrote at the fag-end of his life, he allowed his broader social outlook to reflect which he gained from Nizamuddin. Even in *Khaza'in*, he conveyed his displeasure about Alauddin’s certain policies through an allusive narrative. Contrary to it, Barani could not rise above his orthodox aristocratic nature and allowed it to reflect in his writings. He

blamed the “Hindus”, the rationalist Muslim philosophers and even his patron for the miserable existence he had to live by the end of his life.

All these scholars were driven by their socio-political and economic interests to portray the “other” in their narratives. While some were eulogical in nature, the others were suggestive ideas. The pragmatic Delhi Sultans were not influenced by these suggestions and followed a pragmatic approach towards the “Hindus”. Normally, the suggestive demands of these scholars were rejected by the Sultans.²⁵⁵ Instead, “Hindus” were employed in the Sultanate administration and treated them treated with dignity and honour. During Muhammad Tughlaq’s reign, several “Hindus” were employed at high offices. A “Hindu” astronomer, namely Ratan, was appointed as the governor of Siwistan (Sehwan, Sindh), and another “Hindu” Bharan was the governor of Gulbarga, who was later killed by the rivals.²⁵⁶

When the *ulamas* urged Iltutmish to give effect to the opinion of the majority of the founders of Islamic schools of law in the Sultanate Administration, the Sultan convened a conference and called upon his *wazir*, Nizam-ul Mulk Junaidi, to explain the position. The *wazir* argued that since India had only recently been conquered, and since the Muslims were fewer in number than the Hindus, it would not be wise to attempt a course of action that might lead to disturbances in the society.²⁵⁷ This argument was accepted, and the status quo was maintained. The possibility of imposing the viewpoint of the majority Islamic law was never again raised in the form urged by the *ulama*.²⁵⁸ Alauddin Khalji followed the same policy. “When he became sultan,” Barani records, “he came to the conclusion that polity and government is one thing, and the rules and decrees of Islamic law are another. Royal commands belong to the Sultan, Islamic legal decrees rest upon the judgment of the *qazis* and *muftis*.”²⁵⁹

Therefore, though a kind of scholarly bias can be witnessed against the “Hindus”, it was more symbolic. In contrast, the real politics was different, where the local cooperation from the landed class to the chiefs was a must to run the empire. The Delhi

²⁵⁵ K. A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the thirteenth century*, pp. 315–316; Zia al-Din Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Eng. trans. by M. Habib and A.U.S. Khan, as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 46–52.

²⁵⁶ M. Athar Ali, “Nobility under Muhammad Tughlaq,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 42 (1981), p. 200.

²⁵⁷ S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1964, p. 48.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48

²⁵⁹ H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 3, p. 183

Sultans felt that it would be wise to follow Muhammad Qasim's approach²⁶⁰ to governance by "leaving the people to their ancient belief, except in cases of those who wanted to become Muslims."²⁶¹ Qazi al-Tanukhi, in his *Ktab al-Faraj* has mentioned about Qubachha and stated that both the Muslims and non-Muslims were very respectful towards the Sultan as he had a great concern for people under his rule irrespective of their faith.²⁶² Even rulers like Muhammad bin Tughlaq followed a conciliatory policy towards the Hindus. He tried to bring some social reforms among the Hindus by abolishing practices like *Sati*. Tughlaq also appointed Hindus in high official positions, including the governor of Sindh.²⁶³ When north India got afflicted with a severe famine, Muhammad bin Tughlaq constructed a new town on the Ganges near the worst affected area and gave it a Hindu name – *Svargdvara*, meaning "Gate of Heaven".²⁶⁴ Throughout the Delhi Sultanate period, in rural areas, the Hindu landed aristocracy still occupied a position of prestige and power, and the *muqqadams*, the *chaudharis* and the *khuts* had important roles in the administration.²⁶⁵

In regards to day-to-day affairs in society, according to S.M. Ikram, while Muslims were governed by the *shari'a*, the non-Muslim *zimmis* (*dhimmis*) were subject to their own laws and social organization. The Muslim rulers from the days of the Arab occupation of Sindh accepted the right of the village and caste *panchavats* to settle the affairs of their community. This meant that the Hindu villages remained small autonomous republics, as they had been since ancient times.²⁶⁶ Even in commerce and industry, the Hindu guilds were supreme.²⁶⁷ The Sultanate administration also employed "Hindus" in lucrative positions. One Kamal Mahiyar, a "Hindu" slave, had acquaintance with Malik Alauddin Kashli Khan, the *Amir-i-hajib* and Malik Nizamuddin, the *Vakildar*, who proposed his

²⁶⁰ Muhammad bin Qasim considered the Hindus to belong to the *ahl-al-Kitab*, because according to him indeed the Hindus also had their own set of sacred scriptures. Hence, he imposed same kind of taxes as he imposed on the Buddhists of Sind, like only *jizya* and refrained from treating the Hindus as idol-worshippers; *Chachnama*,

²⁶¹ Schimmel, "Turk and Hindu" p. 108.

²⁶² Siddiqui, *Perso-Arab Sources of Information*, p. 4

²⁶³ Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, pp. 73, 107.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 73

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 109

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 111

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 111

name to Sultan Balban and got him appointed to the *Khawajgi* (accountant) of Amroha.²⁶⁸ Later he was promoted to the rank of a Malik (in the Delhi Sultanate, it meant the second highest grade of officers after the Khans) by Sultan Muizuddin Kaiqubad.²⁶⁹ Similarly, Branjtan (Niranjan), a wrestler, was appointed to the post of *Kotwal* of Delhi under Balban, who drew a salary of one lakh *jital*.²⁷⁰

S.M. Ikram further argues that the Indian Muslims did not start with orthodox Islam in their whole approach. The earlier Sultans of Delhi, like Qutubuddin Aibek and Iltutmish, followed a more realistic path than the *Shari'a* bound laws. Aibek had become the Sultan even before his official manumission, which was against the *Shari'a*. Iltutmish had declared Raziya as his successor (1236), which was also considered against the Islamic tradition.²⁷¹ The contemporary *ulamas* did not object to the prospect of having a female ruler in Delhi. Even the firm believer of Islam, Firoz Shah Tughlaq, whose mother was the daughter of a Bhatti chieftain from Punjab, employed members of his maternal kin. According to Afif, when a conspiracy threatened Firoz Shah's life, he was attended by his uncle, Rai Pheru (Bhiru) Bhatti, who lent him his sword.²⁷²

Ibn Battuta mentioned an incident when a Hindu chief brought a charge against Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq that the Sultan had killed his brother without any cause and asked the Sultan to appear before the Qadi. According to Battuta, the Sultan attended the hearing in person before the Qadi. He reached there without any arm and on foot, having in advance forbidden the Qadi to show him any of the respect or high esteem due to his rank, and remained standing. At the same time, the Qadi gave the judgment against him to give compensation to his petitioner.²⁷³ Though this is an isolated incidence, it makes the inference clear that the Hindu subjects of Delhi sultans had accepted the authority of the Muslim Qadi and did not hesitate to approach the court even while the accused might be a high-ranking official. This incident also reveals that Sultan

²⁶⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 23

²⁶⁹ Shaikh Abdul Latif, "The Indian Elements in the Bureaucracy of the Delhi Sultanate," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 54 (1993), p. 159

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159

²⁷¹ Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 220

²⁷² Shams-i-Shiraj Afif, "Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi," in Elliot and Dowson (eds.), *The History of India as Told by its Own Historian*, Vol. 3, pp. 291-292.

²⁷³ Ibn Battuta *Tuhfat ul Nazar*, Eng. trans. by H.A.R. Gibb as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD. 1325-1354*, Vol. 3, The Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 692-93

Muhammad Tughlaq nurtured and promoted his Hindu subjects and gave equal opportunities for justice.

Ibn Battuta has described Muhammad Tughlaq's interest in Hindu practices and his intimate relations with the *jugis*.²⁷⁴ Battuta further writes about an embassy from the King of China that had come to Hindustan and requested Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq for the grant of permission to build a temple near the mountains called Qarajil (Himalaya) in the Samhal (Sambhal) region, which was allegedly ransacked by the Muslim army.²⁷⁵ In reply, the Sultan wrote to the King that permission for restoration of such temple in an Islamic state (*dar-ul-Islam*) could only be given to those who pay *jizya* (the *dhimmis*) and could not be permitted to those who live in an infidel state (*dar-ul-Harb*).²⁷⁶ Battuta has further mentioned that the Sultan allowed the practice of *sati*, though it was considered against Islamic value.²⁷⁷

The Hindu population in India under the Delhi Sultanate enjoyed certain advantages which were not allowed for people from the other religion. There are multiple instances recorded where the restoration of an old temple or even a grant for the temple was permitted. S. C. Misra has noted that Samra Sah, a resident of Patan, became a trusted counsellor of the first Muslim governor of Gujarat, Alp Khan, and in one instance when Smara Sah had requested the governor to renovate a temple, Alp Khan received the supplicant graciously and not only granted the permission but also ratified it by *Farman* and also gave him a casket of jewels to be used for the pious task.²⁷⁸

However, the scholars presented a different picture in their narrative about "Hindus". The medieval scholars were the product of "Muslim theological studies", and it was obvious for them to get influenced by the Islamic traditions. Thus, along with their socio-political and economic interest, the fear of their religion getting corrupted by the pagan beliefs of "Hindus" also played a role in the narrative about the "others". They were at unease that the Muslim minority in a land tremendously inhabited by the pagan

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 789

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 773

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 773

²⁷⁷ Mahdi Hasan (Eng. trans.), "Introduction" in *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Oriental Institute Baroda, 1953 (Reprint. 1976), pp. xxxi - xxxiii

²⁷⁸ S.C. Misra, *The Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat: A History of Gujarat from 1298 to 1442*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1963, p. 69

(here the Hindus) people might be seduced to infidelity with ease.²⁷⁹ Mihrabi's *Hujjat al-Hind*, an essay that has survived since the end of the fourteenth century, was written with the objective of countering just such renunciation of Islamic beliefs by ordinary Muslims in the countryside.²⁸⁰ On the other hand, the Sultanate of Delhi, founded in a land of non-believers and the early Sultans being themselves from humble origins, had to keep the *ulama* in a good book to justify their actions. To keep the *ulama* satisfied, they had to adopt certain policies which, at least in its periphery, could be recognized as valid by the *ulama* and could be accepted as in compliance with the doctrine of faith. But, at best, the Sultans always tried to follow a cooperative approach to their subjects irrespective of their beliefs.

Apart from these, a sense of insecurity, coupled with a desire for *dar-ul-Islam*, acted as a catalyst for medieval scholars to form their contemptuous views of others. The best example is Zia Barani's *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*. However, this nature of contemptuous language towards "others" is true for all the orthodox groups of any religion. The medieval "Jain" and "Hindu" authors also treated the Muslims with contempt. Hence, looking down upon the other community was not confined to the Indo-Persian authors alone. In the subsequent sections, an attempt has been made to explore the regional texts written in Indic languages to get a sense about the approach of Hindu and Jain scholars towards the "Muslims" and Islam in general and to the Delhi sultans in particular.

Most of the Indic texts are written in poetic forms, so how far these narratives can be treated as historical sources is a matter of debate. According to Annemarie, poems (particularly medieval Indic texts) were though rhetorical, yet reflect some basic attitudes that can be used for understanding the relationship between communities.²⁸¹ Paul Dundas also endorsed this view and argued that the lyrical rhetoric can be contextualised by corroborating with other contemporary sources like poetic biography.²⁸² In the

²⁷⁹ The *ulamas* were mostly concerned by the emerging *sufi* believes in the countryside. They considered *sufi* believes to be against the core of Islamic values – specially the adoption of some yogic trends by the *sufis*; Peter Hardy, "Islam and Muslims in South Asia," in Raphael Israeli (ed.), *The Crescent in the East: Islam in Asia Major*, Curzon Press, London, 1982, pp. 43-44.

²⁸⁰ P. Hardy, "Islam and Muslims in South Asia," p. 43.

²⁸¹ Schimmel, "Turk and Hindu," p. 107.

²⁸² Paul Dundas, "Jain Perception of Islam in the Early Modern period," in *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (January, 1999), pp. 35-46

approaching section, this dissertation would explore how the Indic narratives viewed the “other” that was “the Muslim” raiders of the Sultanate period in their description.

B.D. Chattopadhyaya and Romila Thapar believe that the medieval Indic scholars did not use generic terms which are being used today for the “Muslims”.²⁸³ The generic terminologies like *Yavana*, *Mleccha*, *Saka* etc., were used for outsiders, irrespective of their religions.²⁸⁴ In medieval India, scholars preferred ethnic identity over religious identity. The term “Muslamana” was familiarized in India by the thirteenth century, yet they preferred terminologies like *Tajika*²⁸⁵, *Turushka*, *Pathana* etc, to denote “Muslim” rulers of the Delhi Sultanate.²⁸⁶ However, over a period of time, the ethnic term *Turushka* become a generic idiom.²⁸⁷ Nonetheless, these Indic narratives were written to describe the emergence of a foe who threatened the position of their patron. Therefore, it requires an investigation to see how they have presented this enemy in their writings.

One of the prominent medieval texts which reflect the Indic approach towards the “Muslims” was the *Kanhadade Prabandha* by Padmanabha.²⁸⁸ Padmanabha was a Nagar Brahman and constantly invoked the Puranic norms of kingship in explanation of Kanhadade’s resistance to the Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khalji.²⁸⁹ According to Padmanabha, Kanhadade, the Jalore prince, refused Alauddin’s army a passage through his kingdom on their way to the Gujarat campaign (1299 AD). Padmanabha has provided the reasons for the refusal as follows:

“This is not our *dharma*! Where villages will be destroyed, people will be enslaved, where the ears of helpless women will be torn off (for their

²⁸³ Romila Thapar, “Imagined Religious Communities,” in Romila Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 60-88; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?: Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighteenth to Fourteenth Century)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998, p. 28.

²⁸⁴ Aloka Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitude Towards Outsiders Upto 600 AD*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1991; H.P. Ray, “The Yavana Presence in Ancient India,” in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 31 (1988), pp. 311-25

²⁸⁵ References to Tajikas in inscriptions discontinued after the tenth century. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, p. 39

²⁸⁶ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, p. 30

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 30

²⁸⁸ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar

²⁸⁹ Aparna Kapadia, “What Makes the Head Turn: The Narratives of Kanhadade and the Dynamics of Legitimacy in Western India,” in *South Asian Graduate Research Journal (SAGAR)*, Vol. 18 (2008), p. 89; Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar, p. 4

ornaments) ... where Brahmins and cows will suffer, there the Rai will not give free passage (to the Sultan).”²⁹⁰

He further remarked about the battle between Alauddin’s forces and Kanhadade’s force:

“The soldiers of two sides, Hindus and Turks locked in a combat like the one between Gods (*devata*) and demons (*daityas*) in the bygone days, like at Kurukshetra,²⁹¹ where the Hindu forces pursued *asuras* with courage.”²⁹²

As a sovereign ruler of Jalore, it was Kanhadade’s prerogative to refuse the passage to Alauddin Khalji. However, the reason that Padmanabha put forward for the same is the reason for discussion even today. He portrayed Kanhadade as the protector of *dharma* against the “outsider”, who came to attack their land and woman. Here the noteworthy aspect is that during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, the traditionally accepted norms of the time was that in the absence of sufficient resources to assert a ruler’s claims to the kingship, the local chiefs and warlords adopted two other practices as significant markers of their rank: first, the scale of their households and their control over its women, and second, the patronage of poets, scholars, and performers.²⁹³ In this narrative as well, Padmanabha had tried to portray Kānhadade as the protector of women and *dharma*, by showing the “Muslim” ruler in a bad light as someone from whom they needed to protect their women and dharma.

Padmanabha’s portrayal of Alauddin’s army and their atrocious actions are part of Indic literary tradition of that time. It was a kind of Brahmanical tradition of representing the threat from foreign groups, and it was used extensively in the medieval period to describe Muslim conquest.²⁹⁴ In a similar light Padmanabha’s narrative on “Muslims” must be viewed. His deployment of contemptuous tropes like *devas*, *daityas*, *asuras*, *mlecchas* etc., was not only to demonize Alauddin Khalji but also praise Kanhadade by placing him within a tradition of epic and Puranic defenders of territory, property, and the

²⁹⁰ Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Eng. Trans. V.S. Bhatnagar, Canto 1, verses 31-33.

²⁹¹ Ibid., Canto 3, Verse, 77; Canto 4, Verses 258-59, 289

²⁹² Ibid., Canto 3, Verse, 83; Canto 2, Verses 131, 165

²⁹³ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Warrior Tales at the Hinterland Courts in North India, c. 1370-1550,” in Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (ed.), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 246-47.

²⁹⁴ Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self,” pp. 67-98

Brahmanical order – the *dharma*. Thus, for Padmanabha, the battle between Alauddin’s forces and Kanhadade was like the battle of Kurukshetra and a battle between Rama and Ravana²⁹⁵ – a clash between good and evil, where Kanhadade represented good, and Alauddin symbolized as evil.

Kumkum Sangari believes that the Rajput political dynamics of fifteenth-century Marwar were dominated by “ceaseless competitive warfare”, a condition representing both expansions and insecurity among the rulers. This condition reinforced the mutual dependence between ruler and clan and ruler and vassals, which in turn gave added significance to the notion of *kul* (lineage).²⁹⁶ The *Kanhadade Prabandha* was written in such an ambience. The poet, as expected, got influenced by the contemporary situation, a sense of insecurity, which has reflected in his writing as well, while he described the forces of Alauddin the *asura* and *daitya*.²⁹⁷ The book was written at a time when the patrimonial Sonagara domains of Jalore had already been under the control of Afghans when the fortress of Jalore itself passed into the possession of Lohani Afghans by 1394.²⁹⁸ So, it is worth speculating whether these invisible Afghans had been on the horizon of the narrative towards whom Padmanabha directed his indignation as the *asura*, *daitya*, *mleccha* etc.

The historical moment to which a piece of literature belongs can shape it in different ways. The socio-political development of the fifteenth century played a crucial role in the making of Padmanabha’s *Kānhadade Prabandha*. Firstly, by the fifteenth century, most of the territories which were under the control of the Delhi Sultans were started to emerge as states in their own right, owing nominal or no allegiance to the authority in Delhi.²⁹⁹ As a result of this some regional states and many local and sub-regional states in the different parts of the subcontinent gradually started to flex their

²⁹⁵ Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Canto 2, verses, 131, 165, & Canto 3, verses, 77; Canto 4, verse, 259

²⁹⁶ Kumkum Sangari, “Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti,” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, Issue No. 27, 7 July, 1990, p. 1456.

²⁹⁷ Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verse, 122, 195,

²⁹⁸ M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat: Including a Survey of Its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions*, Vol. 1 (from AD. 1297-98 to AD. 1573), Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London, 1932, pp. 12, 50-51.

²⁹⁹ Aparna Kapadia, “What’s Makes the Head Turn,” p. 88.

muscle against imperial rule.³⁰⁰ In these circumstances, territorial rivalries become operative at various levels. The kingdom of Jalore was not only situated between two powerful regional polities – Gujarat and Marwar, but also it faced the wrath of local rival groups such as the Lohani Afghans, who were also important contestants for the Jalore fort. In such a political scenario, when Padmanabha composed the *Kanhadade Prabandha*, his patron, the Chauhan ruler Akheraj was just a mere local ruler of the Rajput lineage. He faced constant threats, not from the immigrant Afghans but also from other Rajput ruling houses. Therefore, a continuous effort on the part of Padmanabha can be seen when he tried to portray Alauddin as the “outsider” who came to destroy the local social fabric. This narrative helped Akheraj legitimize establishing his firm grip on the mind and resources of the people of Jalore. As a descent from Kanhadade, the hero who fought against the might of Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji provided his legitimacy in the region.

Similarly, in the *Prithviraj Rasau*, the poet Chand Bardai had remarked that the “Hindus” had thrown the *mlecchas* by holding their hands and spinning them round, just as Bhima did to the elephants.”³⁰¹ In *Prithviraja Vijaya*, poet Jayanaka stated that the Turushica (Turkish) women bathing in the sacred lake while in their menses polluted the place.³⁰² For both Chand Bardai and Jayanaka, the “Muslims” were iconoclastic, polluted and treacherous people. However, the epic of *Prithviraja Vijaya* seems to have made an error when it confuses the invasion of Gujarat by Mahmud with that of the Ghurid attack of Ajmer. The epic celebrated the victory of a “Hindu” hero, namely Anoraja, who defeated and forced the Turks to retreat. On their return journey, the Turks faced extreme hardships and had to resort to drinking the blood of their horses for survival.³⁰³ Prithviraj bestowed gifts on a messenger who brought the message of the vanquished of beef-eating *mleccha* Gauri (Ghori) army.³⁰⁴ This is obviously an overstated representation of the

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.88

³⁰¹ Chand Bardai, *The Prithviraja Rasau: An Old Hindi Epic*, Part. 2, Vol. 1, edited by A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, J.W. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1886, p. 63

³⁰² Har Bilas Sarda, “The Prithviraja Vijaya,” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1 (April, 1913), pp. 260-262

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 279-80

³⁰⁴ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other*, p. 44; Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2008, p. 124.

plight of Mahmud's army in the desert of Sindh after his raid of Somanatha. Similarly, the information about the defeat of Ghori at the hands of the Raja of Gujarat was equally far from a historical perspective.³⁰⁵ It has been further noted that Prithviraj planned to destroy Ghori and the *mlecchas*, "the beast in the shape of men."³⁰⁶

Likewise, in *Hammira Mahakavya*, the author Nayachandra Suri accused Ghori of burning Hindu cities and defiling Hindu women, who are said to have been sent to this earth "for the extirpation of the warrior caste."³⁰⁷ For Suri, the "Muslim" Ghurid forces were the enemy, and his anti-Muslim hero was Viranarayana, who turned down Jalaluddin Khaljl's offer of an alliance. Suri explained the act of a coalition with the *mlecchas* would have been a disgraceful betrayal of Rajput chivalry, as also does Vagbhata, who seizes the throne of Malwa, and whose son Jaitra Singh has a beautiful queen Hira Devi, who is at times "possessed with a desire to bathe herself in the blood of Muslims" during her pregnancy, "a desire which her husband often gratified."³⁰⁸

Ratipala, as well as Hammir's wives, urge bestowing the hand of Hammir's daughter on 'Alauddin to put an end to the hostilities, and the girl herself requests her father to "cast her away like a piece of broken glass," but Hammira regards giving his daughter away to an unclean *mleccha* "as loathsome as prolonging existence by living on his own flesh". Thus, Hammira's womenfolk, including his daughter, throw themselves into flames to escape dishonour at the hands of the Muslims, and Hammir himself performing *jawhar* throws himself on the Muslim army, but "disdaining to fall with anything like life into the enemy's hands, he severed, with one last effort, his head from his body with his own hands".³⁰⁹

Thus, it can be seen that in the Sanskrit literature, Muslim rulers were frequently addressed with derogatory terminologies like *mlechchha*, *asura*, *datya*, etc. However, as already been discussed in ancient and medieval Indian Sanskrit literature, foreigners were often described as *mlecchas* as a generic term. B.D. Chattopadhyaya also stated that

³⁰⁵ Aziz Ahmad, "Epic and Counter- Epic in Medieval India," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, no. 4 (Sep. - Dec., 1963), pp. 472-473.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 473

³⁰⁷ Nayachandra Suri, *The Hammira Mahakaviya*, trans. and edit. by Nilkanth Janardan. Kirtand, Education Society Press, Byculla: Bombay 1879, p. 17

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 26

³⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 29-47

along with *Mleccha*, *Yavana*³¹⁰ and *Saka* were two other words used for outsiders.³¹¹ Aloka Parasher has explained that the best English translation of *mleccha* is a barbarian who lacks culture and civilization. By the end of the first millennium BC, *mleccha* was applied not only to outsiders but also to indigenous tribes-communities who were not part of the agrarian caste society of Indic civilization.³¹² Hence, Romila Thapar has pointed out that *mleccha* was primarily “a signal of social and cultural difference.”³¹³ At the same time, Cynthia Talbot believed that *mleccha* was a generic category which was applied to anyone who lacked adherence to Brahmanical norms.³¹⁴

It seems the Indic authors were not greatly concerned with the Islamic belief of the Delhi Sultans. *Mleccha* was a generic term which was applied to people who were outside the ambit of Brahminical norms. On the other hand, contemptuous terminologies were utilized for enemy rulers against whom their patron fought. For instance, in *Dvyashrayamahakavya*, Hemchandra has narrated that Mularaja established the Chalukya dynasty with the grace of Shiva, who appeared in his dream and instructed him to fight the Abhira Raja, Ra Grahari, the rulers of Junagadh, and other *datyas* who were looting and killing pilgrims.³¹⁵ Hemchandra further noted that the wicked *mleccha* Abhira king ate beef, was a tyrant and was described as behaving like Ravana.³¹⁶ It seems giving

³¹⁰ The terms “Yona”, “Yonaka” or “Yavana” derived from Ionian lineage, originally referred to the Hellenistic dynasties that controlled large areas of northwestern India and Afghanistan in the second century BC. These Indo-Greeks or Yavanas were displaced by another invading group, the Sakas of Central Asia, in the first century BC. The Shakas soon lost their hegemony over the entire northwest but remained entrenched in the Gujarat region of western India until the fourth century CE. The names Yavana and Saka were revived in a hostile context during medieval India to designate Muslims, along with the characterization of barbarianism. However “mlecchas” was also used probably due to their barbaric behaviour as invaders. Indian languages did not base a distinction on religion early on but after the arrival of Islam to the subcontinent, the term Yavana was used along with Turuka, Turuska, Tajik, and Arab more than *Mussalman* or Muslim for invaders professing Islam as their religion. Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate, 1191-1526*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p. xxii; Aloka Parasher Sen, *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p. 52; Dundas, “Jain Perception of Islam in the Early Modern period,” p. 38.

³¹¹ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other*, p. 30

³¹² Aloka Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders Upto AD. 600*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1991, pp. 45 and 213

³¹³ Romila Thapar, “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (1989), p. 224

³¹⁴ Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self” p. 698

³¹⁵ Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, p. 108.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 108

disdainful terminologies to the “enemy” was a usual practice for medieval authors. Be it the Muslims or the enemy within Hindustan, they addressed these enemies with terms like *mleccha*, *asua*, *Ravan*, etc.

However, the noteworthy aspect here is that these authors were primarily patronised by the ruling dynasties, and they tried to serve the interest of the rulers. For them, the enemy of the ruler always attracted contemptuous terminologies be it “Muslim” or “Hindu”, and eulogized actions of their patron. By doing so, they got their own economic interest served. The best example of it can be seen in the narration of a Jain poet Devavimala Ganin. While Ganin mentioned Abu’l Fazl, the noble and court chronicler of Emperor Akbar, he called him *Sukra*³¹⁷ of the world.³¹⁸ Similarly, in *Hirasaubhagya*, Hiravijaya Suri (1527-1595), the leader of the Tapa Gachha lineage of the Svetambara Jain, asserted that the common vernacular designation for the Muslim was indeed “demon” (*rak-sasa*).³¹⁹ However, the tone began to change once they (the Jain community at large and the Jain poets in particular) began to get a space in the Mughal court. The continuous visits by Jain monks like Hiravijaya Suri to the Mughal court started to soften the stance of the Jain *Munis* (monks) towards the Muslims. To describe the knowledge of Abu’l Fazl, Hiravijaya Suri has remarked that “Fazl is well versed with the inner secret (Upanishad) of all the Sastras of the Yavanas.”³²⁰

In the earlier description, Abu’l Fazl has been compared to *Sukra* (Demon); however, in the later description, he has been accepted as someone with excellent religious knowledge about his own religion and others’ faith. This softness also suggests that there might be an understanding in the Jain community to enter into a formal relationship with the political authorities.³²¹ The Jain authors constantly tried to portray Jainism as superior to Islam in their descriptions.³²² Therefore, it can be argued that

³¹⁷ In Hindu religion, Sukra is the name of a son of Bhrigu, of the third Manu, one of the Saptarishis. He was the guru of Daiyas or Asuras (Demon), and is also referred to as Shukracharya or Asuracharya in various Hindu texts.

³¹⁸ Dundas, “Jain Perception of Islam in the Early Modern period,” p. 36

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 36

³²⁰ Parasher Sen, *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, p. 52; Dundas, “Jain Perception of Islam in the Early Modern period,” p. 38

³²¹ Surendra Gopal, “The Jain Community and Akbar,” in Surendra Gopal, *Jains in India: Historical Essays*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group & Manohar, 2019, pp. 132- 142

³²² Dundas, “Jain Perception of Islam in the Early Modern period,” p. 39

through their narratives, these authors tried to reveal their own politics. The authors usually had certain concerns, which they attempted to communicate through their writings.

To surmise, it can be argued that in the Arabic, Indo-Persian and Indic sources, personal socio-political and economic interests played a role in their narratives regarding the “other”. Besides this, their education was based on theological learning as it was the norm of the medieval age, which also created a sense of insecurity for the beliefs of “others”, which also left its mark underneath in shaping their opinions. The Islamic scholars from antiquity carried a perception that Hindustan is a land where idol-worshipping has its origin, and from here itself, the pagan tradition had spread over the world, including in pre-Islamic Arabia. After settling in India, they were worried about the prospective scenario that in a predominantly pagan land, the handful of Muslims might get easily seduced into paganism. This might also act along their (Indo-Persian) personal interest to be more contemptuous for the “Hindus” over whom they aspired to establish an Islamic state (*dar-ul-Islam*). Obviously, the pragmatic Delhi Sultans did not pay any heed to these wishful suggestions of scholars and took a realistic approach towards Hindu subjects. Many of the “Hindus” were employed in the Sultanate administration as high as governors and accountants. Moreover, the financial dominance of the Sultanate remained under the control of the “Hindu” mercantile community. The money-lending community became more prosperous than under the Sultanate. As a whole, the Sultanate administration at the local level was carried out with the full help and cooperation of the village chieftains (*khuts* and *muqaddams*).

However, it is true that unlike the Mughal empire, where the *Badshahs* (Emperors) were carrying a legacy of Timurlung and Chengiz Khan, hence they were never faced any great challenge to their authority from the *ulama* class or the nobility. In contrast, most of the Delhi Sultans were of humble origin and had to please the *ulama* at times to achieve legitimacy to their authority. Qutubuddin Aibek, Shamsuddin Iltutmish, Ghiyasuddin Balban, Jalaluddin Khalji, and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq were not from any established ruling houses when they assumed the throne in Delhi. Therefore, they had to make compromises to earn the cooperation of the *ulamas*. Yet, monarchs like Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq comprehensively created a division of religion and

politics (administration) during their reign. Therefore, it seems these contemptuous narratives were more rhetorical than having their influence on real politics.

Similarly, the Indic authors had also developed a sense of understanding that the Muslims are a barbarian class who might destroy their *dharma*. What most bothered them was their failure to uphold the Brahminical order or tradition of Hindus, in short, the privilege. This might be one of the reasons for calling the Muslims by the same names as barbarian peoples of the ancient period, such as the *Yavanas* or *Shakas*. Along with this, it seems as Muslims were theoretically against all the core beliefs of Hinduism, which might also turned these “Brahminical writers” hostile to the Muslims as a whole, at least in their narratives. The Muslims were demonized and represented as the demons of ancient myth who engaged in an endless battle against the forces of good. However, the process of incorporating the Muslims into the mythological category of devil/evil and terming them with alternate derogatory terminologies as they did with other foreign groups previously had expunged the distinctiveness of the Muslims. The “otherness” of the Muslims in the writings of the Indic authors continued throughout the period medieval period. The Muslims were also treated as a nonspecific category of Barbarians. Cynthia Talbot believed that these authors had an existing sense of identity, at least among the Brahmin composers of Sanskrit literary texts and inscriptions.³²³ This sense of self worked against the “Muslim” rulers of Delhi. Anthony D. Smith also stated that shared elements unify members of an ethnic group and that the acknowledgement of “foreignness” derives from a pre-existing sense of shared experience.³²⁴

Therefore, it can be argued that these authors had a clear consciousness regarding their particular identity if not “Hindu”, as Brahmin. They wanted to protect it from the aggressive approach of the Muslim rulers in India. Hence, through their writings, they created an environment, at least on an emotional level, where they portrayed the Muslim rulers as demons (*asura*), destroyers of *dharma*. Another feature of these authors was upholding Brahmin supremacy in a hierarchical society.³²⁵ This hierarchy can be maintained through the exclusion of others from the self. Fredrik Barth opined a group

³²³ Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self” p. 699

³²⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Blackwell Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, 1986, p. 49

³²⁵ Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self” p. 699

define themselves primarily by exclusion.³²⁶ This explains how ethnic identities can persist for so long, even when the composition of the group changes.³²⁷ In the case of pre-modern India, it is clear that a persistent core of Brahmin identity-a, definite “we-hood” had existed since ancient times.³²⁸ This feeling of “we-hood” is the reason for creating the “other”.

Therefore, one must understand the difference between rhetoric and reality (real politics) while reading medieval Indian history. Most medieval writings were based on a rhetorical way of narrating events that were sometimes far from reality. This was done in most cases to suit their socio-economic and ideological needs, whereas, in the real world, the political dynamic revolved around realism. Along with the continuation of the “Hindu” mercantile community, the political networks at the local level continued to flourish. New religious and cultural traditions emerged alongside older forms facilitated by the varieties of devotional *Sufi* and *Bhakti* sects, which were more liberal in their outlook and patronized by the elites and populace alike. Similarly, new Kings and Sultans, drawing on the older governance models and kingship of pre-Islamic Persia, gave rise to their own regional variants in Delhi Sultanate.

Nonetheless, a trend also can be witnessed where the Indic poets praised the “Muslim Sultans”. So, what kind of political ethos can we discern from these literary works? In the south of Vindiyas, the two opponent states of Vijaynagara and Bijapur existed with much rivalry. The Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur had strong Persian connections, and it reflected in Vijaynagara in its political organization and ethos, even sharing a name, “Bijapur,” that, like “Vijaynagara” meant “city of victory.”³²⁹ There are inscriptions that show Turks serving Vijaynagara and Brahmins serving Bijapur.³³⁰ A mosque inscription in Vijayanagara calls the building a *dharmasala*, a charitable rest

³²⁶ Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Waveland Press, Illinois, 1969.

³²⁷ John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1982, pp. 3-7.

³²⁸ Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, “Rethinking Indian Communalism: Culture and Counter- Culture,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (1993), pp. 722-37; Wendy Doniger, “Hinduism by Any Other Name,” in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer, 1991), pp. 35-41.

³²⁹ Phillip B. Wagoner, “Sultan among Hindu Kings: Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Nov., 1996), p. 866

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 866

house since a mosque would have been a place of rest for travellers; the merit for building it is assigned to the non-Muslim overlord, the Shaivite King.³³¹ Awfi has mentioned an incident in Cambay [Bombay], where a group of Hindus attacked the Muslims, vandalized their mosque, and killed around sixty Muslim people. After the incident, the *ulamas* approached the local Rai for justice. The Rai personally went to Cambay in disguise as a merchant and inquired about the incident and, after finding out the truth, punished those Hindus involved in the riot. He also ordered the payment of a hundred thousand *balutras* in compensation to the Muslims for the restoration of the Minar and the mosque; in addition, the *Khatib* was bestowed upon four umbrellas (*chitr*), all made of Torque clothes.³³² Thus, reality seems to be different from the rhetoric of literary narratives. Therefore, it would be appropriate to conclude the chapter with the observation made by B.D. Chattopadhyaya that “past simply as past, is an ahistorical notion; the burden of our current malaise, therefore, cannot simply and conveniently be passed off to any past, in any way we chose.”³³³

³³¹ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Presidential Address: Too Little and Too Much: Reflections on Muslims in the History of India” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), p. 958

³³² Siddiqui, *Perso-Arabic Sources of Information*, pp. 25-26

³³³ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, p. 10

CHAPTER 5

Writing Wars: A Search for Authority and Legitimacy by Counteracting against the “Other”

The Sultanate of Delhi and the local dynasties of that period of time were extremely rich in historical writings both in Persian and various other vernacular languages. However, till recently, the historiography of the Delhi Sultanate period was dominated by Persian sources. Even the literary history of South Asia, including the more historically perceptive revisionist version of recent years, has primarily focused on the significant historical changes such as the imperial expansion or the emergence of regional polities.¹ However, of late, historians like Ramya Sreenivasan², Francisca Orsini and Samira Sheikh³, Aparna Kapadia⁴, Daud Ali⁵, Janet Kamphorst⁶, Steven M. Vose⁷, Allison Busch⁸, Audrey Truschke⁹, and so on have started to utilize alternative sources to provide

¹ Sheldon Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003; Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Pre-modern India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006; Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, “A Cloud Turned Goose: Sanskrit in the Vernacular Millennium,” in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1–30; Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2003; Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700–1960*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.

² Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in India, c. 1500-1900*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007

³ Francisca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (eds.), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

⁴ Aparna Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth Century Gujarat*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2018.

⁵ Daud Ali, “Verses at the Court of the King: Shifts in the Historical Imagination of the Sanskrit Literary Tradition during the Second Millennium,” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 32 (1), October 2021, pp. 13-31;

⁶ Janet Kamphorst, *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*, Leiden University Press, Leiden, 2008.

⁷ Steven M. Vose, *The Making of a Medieval Jain Monk: Language, Power and Authority in the works of Jinaprabhasuri (c. 1261-1333)*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2013; Steven M. Vose, “Jaina Memory of the Tughlaq Sultans: Alternative Sources for the Historiography of Sultanate India,” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 32 (1), January 2022, pp. 115-139

⁸ Allison Busch, “Literary Response to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Kesavdas,” in *South Asia Research*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 31-54.

⁹ Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Muslim Pasts*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi, 2021; Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi 2017.

new perspectives to the Sultanate India. They also largely concentrated on the literary articulations of the political relationship between the Delhi Sultans and the regional powers. However, to use these alternative sources properly, it is necessary to have an unambiguous understanding of the mentality of the men who wrote them¹⁰ and for what reason. Therefore, the first question that arises is why did they compose these narratives? Was it for fame, reward, or for pleasing their patrons, or for the edification of their contemporaries and future generations? Or were these to preserve the memory of the achievements of their patrons? Or these had something more than these? These questions require an adequate exploration, which this chapter intends to accomplish.

Wars and battles had long featured prominently in historical consciousness, as moments when the balance of power was seen to have tilted or when aspects of collective identity were shaped. War remains a powerful and enduring theme in literary tradition throughout the historical ages. It has been represented in the literature of different types, periods, and countries. Therefore, conflict, conquests, and resistance are some of the powerful and enduring traditional themes in medieval Indian literary sources – both in spiritual and material writings. These “war narratives” provide not only an account of the battle itself but also reflect on the cultural attitude of the people of that time, including the approach towards gender (particularly women) and how the “other” – the enemy has been treated then.

In “Epic and Counter Epic in Medieval India,” Aziz Ahmad had discussed two sets of historical narratives – the “epic of conquest” written by the “Muslim” scholars and the “epic of resistance” composed by the “Hindu” writers primarily in vernacular languages (in most cases in different dialects of Hindi).¹¹ Aziz Ahmad’s thesis is based on reaction – he believes that though the two genres of literature developed in ignorance to the other writing, yet “one of them was rooted in the challenge asserting the glory of Muslim presence, and the other in the response repudiating it”.¹² However, of late, this thesis of

¹⁰ Mohibbul Hasan, *Historians of Medieval India*, Aakar Books, New Delhi, 1982, p. 1.

¹¹ Aziz Ahmad, “Epic and Counter Epic in Medieval India,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Sep. – Dec. 1963), pp. 470-476.

¹² Ibid., p. 470

Aziz has been challenged by Michael Bednar, who termed it as over-simplistic.¹³ Bednar had refuted Ahmad's assertion that Persian, Sanskrit, and vernacular texts had developed in ignorance of each other and argued that a close reading of all the narratives demonstrates an active exchange between these three distinct literary traditions. However, Bednar also confined his arguments primarily to exploring the literary themes, schema, tropes and socio-cultural background of texts. Thus, by taking a cue from Aziz Ahmad's identification of vernacular sources along with some other addition, this chapter attempts to explore how the concept of "other" has been utilized by the Indic "war narratives" to legitimize the authority and power of their patrons in their particular regions. In other words, it can be said that how the authors of these "resistance epics" have used the "other" – the "Muslim" Sultans of Delhi as a vehicle to achieve their purpose – that is, to attain authority and legitimacy would be discussed.

By the fifteenth century, the important process that was at work in Hindustan was that of the emergence of regional polities. The authority of the Sultanate of Delhi had weakened, and many regional powers started to flex their muscle against the imperial clout.¹⁴ Most of the territories under the control of the Delhi sultans started to emerge as states in their own right, owing nominal or no allegiance to the authority in Delhi.¹⁵ According to K.S. Lal, this process of political disintegration started during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq himself (r.1351-1388), when he failed to reclaim Deccan and diverted his energy and resources in fruitless campaigns in Orissa, Nagarkot and Thatta¹⁶, and his demise in 1388 accelerated the development.¹⁷ Subsequently, the next ten years witnessed multiple civil wars, which ensured different rulers in the throne of Delhi, weakened the status of the Sultanate. After Firoz Shah Tughlaq, his grandson, Sultan Ghayasuddin ascended to the throne. However, he was challenged by his uncle Nasiruddin Muhammad Shah (Firoz Shah's second son) and a cousin Abu Bakr (Firoz

¹³ Michael Bednar, "Mongol, Muslim, Rajput: Mahimasahi in Persian Texts and the Sanskrit *Hamira-Mahakavya*," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 60 (2017), pp. 585-613

¹⁴ Aparna Kapadia, "What's Makes the Head Turn: The Narratives of Kanhadade and the Dynamics of Legitimacy in Western India," in *SAGAR: South Asian Graduate Research Journal*, Vol. 18, (spring, 2008)," p. 88.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 88

¹⁶ K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Delhi Sultanate*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1980, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 1-13

Shah's grandson). After multiple battles, finally, Abu Bakr killed Ghayasuddin and ascended to the throne. Abu Bakr was also soon eliminated by Nasiruddin, but in 1394 he also passed away and was succeeded by Prince Humayun. Within a couple of months, Humayun also died, and he was succeeded by his younger brother Mahmud.¹⁸

In the subsequent period, a kind of tussle can also be witnessed between the Delhi Sultans and their governors and regional chief. The Sultan wanted a centralized authority, while the chiefs and governors asserted themselves against central authority. The Sultanate of Delhi was further shattered in 1398 when Timur swooped down on India and ransacked Delhi.¹⁹ The Sultanate of Delhi virtually ceased to exist for fifteen years after Timur's raid. Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur near Varanasi emerged as Sultanates in their own right.²⁰ The Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan also regained their strength by taking military support from local warlords.²¹ The situation was such that when Bahlul Lodi ascended the throne, his kingdom consisted of only "Az-Dehli-ta-Palam" territory.²² By this time, a number of Indic kingdoms also appeared in the political sphere that incorporated elements of sultanate culture, military, and governance. For instance, the Sisodiya kingdom was firmly established by Rana Kumbha (r. 1433–1468)²³ and the Rathor kingdom that was re-established by Rav Jodho (r. 1438–89) by having the capital at Jodhpur.²⁴ During the confusion after Timur's invasion (1398), Gwalior also became independent under its Tomar ruler, Vira Singh.²⁵ Hence, by the fifteenth century, with a weakened Delhi Sultanate, a number of regional polities emerged in the political landscape of Hindustan.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 5-9

¹⁹ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2004, p. 178

²⁰ K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 61; Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, p. 178.

²¹ Dirk Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput Sepoy: The Ethno-history of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 32-116

²² K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 157

²³ Ibid., p. 67

²⁴ Richard Saran and Norman P. Ziegler, *The Mertyo Rathors of Merto, Rajasthan: Select Translation Bering on the History of the Rajput Family, 1462-1660*, Vol. 1-2, University of Michigan, Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, Ann Arbor, 2001, p. 188

²⁵ K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 49.

Some of these monarchies were in search of the legitimization of their rule. For this purpose, they had given patronage to a number of authors who had left different narratives about the origin and growth of these rulers and their states. These narratives, in turn, became a sort of public perception in later years, which demonized the “Muslim” rule of that time. Though by the 1570s, the political context of Hindustan had changed determinedly with the emergence of a new empire under the great Mughal Akbar, yet these vernacular tales about ambitious warriors continued to exist and circulate in the “folk” and “oral” epic domains.²⁶ So, an in-depth study of these regional sources in a historical context would give us a clear picture of the real story. Moreover, most of these narratives are broadly can be categorized as “war narratives” as they primarily tell the story of the war in which their patrons fought vigorously against the powerful Delhi Sultans.

This chapter examines the varied literary narratives from the vernacular sources about the battles and wars fought by various regional rulers of that time against the Delhi Sultans. These battles had a long-lasting effect on the popular perceptions of north Indian polities throughout the medieval period. Hence, it would be interesting to see how these narratives presented/viewed the “other” in their descriptions. The motives and presuppositions of authors will also be investigated to understand the patronage context and its role in the creation of narratives. The genre in which these narratives belonged would also be examined to understand how the memory of an event gets transformed over a period of time. Therefore, the chapter endeavours to explore the layers of meaning delineated by the authors in their writings. Finally, the chapter tries to juxtapose and corroborate these vernacular war narratives with the Indo-Persian sources of that time to shed light on rhetoric and realities.

The chapter primarily explores three Indic war narratives,²⁷ the *Kanhadade Prabandha*²⁸, the *Muhanat Nainsi ri Khyat*²⁹, and the *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat*³⁰,

²⁶ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Warrior Tales at Hinterland courts in North India, c. 1370 – 1550,” in Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (eds.), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014, p. 245.

²⁷ Here Indic war narrative implies those narrative composed in various Indian regional languages like Hindi, Rajasthani, Gujarati and so on.

²⁸ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar as *Kānhadade Prabandha: India’s Greatest Patriotic Saga of Medieval times*, Aditiya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1991.

composed in different centuries on a particular battle – the battle of Jalore, which was fought between the Sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khalji, and a lesser-known Rajput chieftain Kanhadade and his son Viramde. All these narratives were composed by different authors and belonged to different literary genres as well. It is crucial to examine how a lesser-known battle of the fourteenth century became so popular among the people of the region, which had a profound impact on public memory and was reproduced in different periods by different authors. However, besides these three narratives, the chapter would also explore *Prithviraja Vijaya* (1178-1200), composed by Jayanaka, which discusses the resistance of Rajput rulers to the early “Islamic” invasion; the *Hammira Mahakavya* (1496), which was written on the battle of Ranthambhor by Nayachandra Suri, and *Padmavat* (1540 AD) written by Malik Muhammad Jaisi for the battle of Chittor (1303) as well.³¹ Hence, this chapter tries to trace the trajectories of multiple narrative traditions of the battle of Jalore and locates them within the historical moments to which they were produced and circulated, along with discussing primarily how the “other” has been created to construct a kind of “mental history”³² to define the conception of Rajput valour and sacrifice against the Sultanate of Delhi, which in turn provided them authority and power in their respective reasons.

Between the fourteenth and the mid-sixteenth centuries, Jalore existed on the frontiers of two competing regional powers – Gujarat and Marwar. In this period, when both kingdoms were expanding, members of the Sonagara ruling lineage of Jalore were incorporated into the service of new regional overlords. Besides this, the Lohanai Pathans also created episodic troubles. Once Kanhadade of the Sonagara had influence over the region but gradually lost its power to the Lohani Afghans in the fourteenth century.³³ In

²⁹ Badri Prasad Sakariya, *Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat* (Hindi), Rajasthan Prachyavidya Pratishthan, Jodhpur, 1960.

³⁰ Mahavir Singh Gehlot and Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Viramdev Sonigara ri Vat* (Hindi), Rajasthani Granthagar, Jodhpur, 2018.

³¹ M.S. Ahluwalia, “Historical Biographies of Early Medieval Rajasthan: Khalji Period – A Case Study,” in S.P. Sen (ed.), *Historical Biography in Indian Literature*, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1979, p. 174

³² I have borrowed the term from Peter Robb’s discussion on the history and historians of medieval India, in his introduction to the *Society and Ideology: Essays in South Asian History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p. 6.

³³ M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat: Including a Survey of Its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions*, Vol. 1, Longmans, Greens & Co. Ltd., Bombay, 1938, p. 51

1392 the Rathor ruler of Marwar killed Vishaldeo Chauhan of Jalore.³⁴ For a time, Rani Popanbai, the widow of Vishaldeo, carried on state affairs with the help of a Lohani Afghan, Malek Khurram. But ultimately, a disagreement occurred between the two. Finally, Malek Khurram established his authority over the city and the region of Jalore, which continued for three hundred years.³⁵ However, it seems that by the fifteenth century, Akheraj was able to get rid of the Pathans. An inscription of 1531 AD from Sirohi further confirms the claim as it has referred to the defeat of the Jalore Pathans by Rao Akheraj of Sirohi.³⁶

By the time Akheraj came to power, the principality of Jalore had lost most of its influence in the region. In such circumstances, after regaining the region, Akheraj needed to re-establish the glory and prominence of his ancestors in the area to assert his authority in a region where his territories and his clan's pre-eminence were under threat. Padmanabha composed his narrative at this conjuncture for his patron, Akheraj Sonagara. Akheraj was the fifth descent from Raval Kanhadade Chauhana of Jalore, and the superseding rulers were Viramde, Megalde, Ambaraja, and Khetsi.³⁷ Padmanabha begins his narrative by praising his patron's lineage and the city of Jalore. He compared Jalore as the eighth *Muktikshetra* (the seven others being Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantika, and Puri)³⁸ to show the additional significant influence of Jalore in the region. According to Kumkum Sangari, the political history of Rajput kingdoms in the fifteenth century was one of "ceaseless competitive warfare," a condition both of steady expansion and of insecurity. The constant warfare reinforced the mutual dependence between ruler and clan and ruler and vassals. In this political atmosphere, the notion of *kul* (lineage) acquired added significance.³⁹

Therefore, tracing one's great lineage was a prominent work for the authors of biographies. That is the reason why Padmanabha begins his *Kanhadade Prabandha* by

³⁴ Ibid., p. 51

³⁵ James M. Campbell (ed.), *Gazetteer: Bombay Presidency, Kutch, Palanpur and Mahikanta*, Vol. 5, Government Central Press, Bombay, 1880, p.318

³⁶ Mahamahopadhyay Kaviraj Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod: Mevad Ka Itihas* (Hindi), 4 Volumes, Rajasthani Granthagar, Jodhpur, 1986, reprint, 2017, p. 1096

³⁷ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar, p. vii

³⁸ Ibid., Canto 3, Verse 218

³⁹ Kumkum Sangari, "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, Issue No. 27, 7 July, 1990, p. 1456.

praising his patron's lineage and the city of Jalore. Subsequently, in the narrative, Padmanabha had presented Alauddin Khalji's conquest as driven by his imperial ambitions and his desire for territory. However, the poet's primary purpose was not only to stress on his patron's descent from the older Rajput lineages that had been subjugated militarily by Alauddin,⁴⁰ but also to showcase that before submission, these rulers fought vigorously and sacrificed their lives for the sake of state and *dharma*. In 1299 AD when Alauddin Khalji sent an army to Gujarat, his commanders asked Kanhadade for a passage through Jalore to Gujarat which Kanhadade refused on the pretext of his *dharma* does not allow for this permission.⁴¹ Padmanabha had remarked that Kanhadade told the nobles of his assembly as follows:

“This is contrary to our *dharma*! The King does not give passage when by doing so villages are devastated, people are enslaved, ears of women torn, and cows and Brahmins are tortures.”⁴²

Another narrative on the Jalore battle was composed by Nainsi in the period between *circa* 1648-1660 AD in the court of Marwar for the Rathor rulers. By this time, the Sonigara Chauhan had accepted the overlordship of the Rathor rulers of Marwar.⁴³ Similarly, several of the Rathor chieftains had accepted the service and suzerainty of the Mughals. Thus, there were multiple layers of authority at play. In this critical juncture, the assertion of one's lineage becomes pivotal to prove their legitimacy in the throne or in the position of power. By the seventeenth century, the claim of legitimacy through the genealogical tradition had become an accepted common practice among the Rajputs.⁴⁴ Nainsi was commissioned to write about the genealogy of the Rathor rulers of Marwar. Like Padmanabha, Nainsi also provides detailed genealogies of several ruling houses of Rajasthan and Gujarat, including the Sonigara Chauhan. However, his lists lack the emphasis on the purity of lineage that Padmanabha articulates. Unlike Padmanabha, Nainsi fails to elaborate on the patron's ancestors.

⁴⁰ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Alauddin Khalji Remembered: Conquest, Gender and Community in Medieval Rajput Narratives,” in *Studies in History*, Vol. 18, Issue, 2, (August, 2002), p. 275

⁴¹ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar, Canto 1, Verses 29-31

⁴² *Ibid.*, Canto 1, Verse 32

⁴³ Aparna Kapadia, “What Makes the Head Turn,” p. 92

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93

On the other hand, the *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* was an orally transmitted story. Hence, it cannot be certainly told who its author was. However, in terms of its influence on public memory, it had the largest share among all the three. According to Aparna Kapadia, *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* was more localized and was used to tell to the village audience with the primary purpose of entertainment.⁴⁵ Thus, unlike *Kanhadade Prabandha* and *Muhanat Nainsi ri Khyat*, *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* lacks a single author and a formal courtly patron. Yet, this narrative (*Vat*) had far more outreach than the other two and more influence on public perception.

The disintegrated Delhi sultanate and the emergence of a number of sultanates and kingdoms in Western Hindustan disrupted the regional model of early medieval state formation.⁴⁶ In this changed political scenario, each Sultanate or kingdom had to defend its borders from two to three rival armies and could not engage in large military campaigns for loot. This, in turn, repressed economic expansion since a large fraction of the royal treasury went to military defence rather than to building the economy of the Sultanate or kingdom. Therefore, it can be argued that the emergence of a number of splintered kingdoms and Sultanate created an atmosphere where a cultural competition emerged among the rulers in search for legitimacy among its people. The ruler's search for legitimization through cultural production probably facilitated the spread of fifteenth-century vernacular culture through textual production as well as visual productions such as architecture, miniature paintings, and dance.⁴⁷

The socio-political and historical situation of the fifteenth century played a crucial part in deciding the narratives of Padmanbha's *Kanhadade Prabandha*. The constant

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 94

⁴⁶ The confusing history of India from about 600 to 1200 with its many regional kingdoms and often rather short-lived dynasties falls into a pattern: the major political processes occurred only within the four central regions outlined above, and there was usually one premier power in each of these regions and none of them was able to control any of the other three regions for any length of time. Interregional warfare was mostly aimed at the control of intermediate regions or simply at the acquisition of goods. There was a balance of power which was determined both by the internal strength of the respective regions and the inability of the rulers to extend their control beyond their respective regions. Their military equipment, their administrative machinery and their strategic concepts were all more or less the same. Due to this balance of power there was a great deal of political stability within the regions which fostered the evolution of distinct regional cultures. Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, p. 113-114.

⁴⁷ John Keay made this point by drawing these fifteenth-century regional kingdoms on a map and noting their approximation to modern vernacular language groups and cultural zones; John Keay, *India: A History*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2000, p. 280

warfare in the Rajput region, which threatened the Sonagara lineage and the losing status in the area, acted as a catalyst to appoint a court poet by Akheraj to trace the genesis of his ancestors who once fought against the mighty Delhi sultan. This kind of commissioned work was the usual practice during the medieval period. According to Daud Ali, the new aristocratic society wanted to constitute normative selfhood for its aspiring rulers and aristocrats in the early medieval period.⁴⁸ Conquest, therefore, contained a proactive component in spreading cultural production as dynasties rose and fell. So, I would argue that while in the political sphere, the period from the end of the fourteenth century to the fifteenth century witnessed disintegration, however in the social and cultural spheres it has witnessed progress. All these narratives are the production of these kinds of changing socio-political atmospheres in north-western India in the Delhi sultanate period and enjoyed considerable influence over the mass.

The battle of Jalore was fought in the first decade of the fourteenth century, and all the three narratives the *Kanhadade Prabandha*, the *Muhanat Nainsi ri Khyat*, and the *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* were composed in the subsequent period from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Primarily these narratives have been produced in different branches of the Hindavi language to describe the event of Jalore in the different periods and different genres for different audiences. Therefore, it becomes crucial to understand the relationship between the event (battle of Jalore) and the multiple perspectives that emerged in the later centuries with adequate exploration to understand the dynamism of Rajput political theory. Hence, exploring the changing sociology of patronage of these texts would provide a perspective to understand the motives and presuppositions of the authors. Besides these, how these battle narratives had its impact on the society and memory of the ordinary folks would be discussed.

The patronage context played an essential role in medieval literature production. According to Ramya Sreenivasan, in Medieval Rajput narrative traditions, heroism was defined as an essence transmitted through lineage.⁴⁹ Rajput patrons who wished to assert continuity with antecedents commissioned the writings of “histories” recording heroic

⁴⁸ Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004

⁴⁹ Ramya Sreenivasan, “The ‘Marriage’ of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Turak’: Medieval Rajput History of Jalor,” in *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 7, no. 1, p. 96

episodes from the past. When decedents of particular lineages remembered the exploit of their predecessors, they claimed the heroic essence of the lineage as an instrument for legitimizing their authority over inherited resources – both material and moral, involving both territory and character.⁵⁰

The connection between Padmanabha's celebration of Kanhadade's kingship and his compulsions within a specific patronage context at a particular historical moment becomes clear when we consider representation of other political power of that time in his writing. If we read the source carefully, it can be seen that Padmanabha carefully depicted that Kanhadade fought bravely while the other rulers of that region surrendered or were trounced by the Delhi sultan. However, his patron could not be cowed down so easily. He was shown as the protector of *dharma* and the Brahminical order. For instance, the ruler of Gujarat, who was stronger than Kanhadade in terms of military and resources, lost Somanatha to Nusrat Khan and Ulugh Khan⁵¹, while the Jalore ruler fought vigorously to rescue the Shiva idol which was carried by Ulugh Khan. Kanhadade vowed that "I will take meals only after I have destroyed the *mlecchas* and freed Lord Somanatha from their hands."⁵² Subsequently, all the thirty-six royal clans assembled and decided to give a quick blow to the enemy.⁵³ Padmanabha noted that the Turkish army did not face a tough resistance from the Gujarat ruler.⁵⁴ But, on their return journey Ulugh Khan was intervened by Kanhadade along with Maldeo and gave a crushing defeat to Ulugh Khan. Maldeo made Sadullah Khan and Sih Malik as captives⁵⁵, while Ulugh Khan escaped the scene, but Malik Sadi, a senior official, got killed.⁵⁶

Padmanabha composed the *Kanhadade Prabandha* sometime around A.D. 1455,⁵⁷ nearly a century and a half after the events he described. He, however, chose to write the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 96

⁵¹ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, Verses, 57-71.

⁵² Ibid., Canto 1, Verse, 182

⁵³ Ibid., Canto 1, Verse, 184

⁵⁴ Ibid., Canto 1, Verses, 76

⁵⁵ Ibid., Canto 1, Verses, 217

⁵⁶ Ibid., Canto 1, Verses, 218

⁵⁷ Hiralal Maheshwari, *History of Rajasthani Literature*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1980, p. 53; Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar, p. vii; However, I. M. P. Raeside, has mentioned the date as 1456 AD in "A Gujarati Bardic Poem: The *Kānhadade Prabandha*," in Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell (eds.), *The Indian Narrative: Perspectives and Patterns*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1992, p. 138.

Kanhadade Prabandha in the vernacular Hindavi language of Old Gujarati/Old Western Rajasthani. He, therefore, followed a vernacular literary tradition rather than the Sanskrit literary traditions. The *Kanhadade Prabandha* described Alauddin Khalji's raid against the Somanatha temple and his siege and conquest of the Jalore fort in southern Rajasthan. As the name suggests, the narrations belong to the Prabandha genre. According to Deven Patel, Prabandha are a collection of quasi-historical narratives.⁵⁸ By the mid-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Prabandhas took shape as more as textualized biographies which were composed about well-known poets or kings.⁵⁹

The *Kanhadade Prabandha* describes Alauddin Khalji's raids against the Somanatha temple and his subsequent siege of the Jalore fort. Padmanabha began the narrative with Alauddin's military raid of Gujarat in 1299 AD. He noted that "at that time, the ruler of Gurjaradhara was Sarangadeva. He humiliated Madhava Brahmana, and this very fact became the cause of conflict. Madhava, who was the favourite Pradhana of the Raja, was inconsolably offended. He gave up food and vowed that he would not take meals on the soil of Gujarat till he had brought the Turks there...."⁶⁰ Padmanabha has explained this episode as the demise of *kshatriya dharma* in Gujarat as the king humiliated a Brahmin Pradhana Madhava by killing his brother and taking the latter's wife into the royal *harem*.⁶¹ However, at the same time, Padmanabha has noted the action taken by Madhava as *Pap* (sin) and universally condemned him for inviting Alauddin to Gujarat. He has stated that by inviting the *mleccha* Alauddin Khalji, Madhava has committed a sin, which can only relate to his previous birth.⁶² Thus, Padmanabha invoked the Puranic tradition in his narrative.

The author Padmanabha put the blame of Alauddin's expedition on the shoulder of a disgruntled minister Madhava, who provided information regarding Kanhadade and Viramde, which allowed Alauddin to defeat them. By doing this, Padmanabha makes Alauddin's victory less effective and Kanhadade's defeat less humiliating as the defeat was for a reason of cheating from within. However, this might be a standard practice for

⁵⁸ Deven M. Patel, *Text to Tradition: The Naisadhiyacarita and Literary Community in South Asia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014, p. 54.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 159

⁶⁰ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Eng. trans. by V.S. Bhatnagar, p. 2.

⁶¹ Ramya Sreenivasan, "Alauddin Khalji Remembered", p. 277.

⁶² Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verse, 15

medieval battle narratives. Padmanabha mentioned that when the Turks attacked the city of Patan, the “Turak brought forward Madhava Muhta as he knew ingress and egress of the town. With Madhava’s help, the Turkish troops entered the town, sacked it and surrounded the fort.”⁶³ In *Padmavat* also it can be seen that when a minister, the Brahmin Raghav (Raghu) Chetan abuses his magical powers to deceive the king of Chitor, Ratansen, he was expelled from his post. Padumavati seeks to placate the humiliated Raghav with the gift of her priceless bangle, but the vengeful Brahmin goes to the court of Alauddin in Delhi and describes her beauty to the Sultan. Alauddin lays siege to Chitor and demands the surrender of the queen; Ratansen refuses but offers to pay tribute instead.⁶⁴

Two hundred years after Padmanabha’s composition, in c. 1648-1660 AD, the story of Kanhadade’s fight with Sultan Alauddin Khalji was retold by Nainsi. This story belonged to a different genre from Padmanabha’s Prabandha. Nainsi composed it in *Khyat* – a clan history including lists of rulers’ names, descendants, and descriptive stories about significant events relating to the clan’s history or lineage. Muhnai Nainsi was from a family of Marvari Osvals. The Osvals are Mahajans who are named after Osian or Oslam, as it is called in the *Vigat*, a village thirty miles north-northwest of Jodhpur and most of the Osvals were Jains by faith.⁶⁵ Nainsi descended from a long line of administrators who had served the rulers of Marwar in various capacities at least since the time of his great-grandfather in the mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁶ Most of Nainsi’s career coincided with Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathor of Marwar (r. 1638- 1678). Early in his professional life, Nainsi was posted successively as the administrative head (*hakim*) of various administrative districts (*Parganas*) throughout the kingdom.⁶⁷

Nainsi apparently served Jaswant Singh well, and in 1658 the Maharaja rewarded him with the office of the home minister, one of the highest administrative posts in the

⁶³ Ibid., Canto 1, Verses, 60-61

⁶⁴ Aziz Ahmad, “Epic and Counter Epic”, p. 475; Ramya Sreenivasan, “Warrior Tales in Hinterland Courts in North India”, p. 259

⁶⁵ Munshi Hardy Singh, *The Castes of Marwar: Being Census Report of 1891*, Books Treasure, Jodhpur, 1990 (Second edition), pp. 128-130

⁶⁶ Manorsinh Ranavat, *Itihaskar Muhanot Nainsi Tatha Uske Itihas Granth* (Hindi), Rajasthan Sahitya Mandir, Jodhpur, 1981, pp. 16-46.

⁶⁷ Norbert Peabody, “Cents, Sense, Census: Human Inventories in Late Pre-colonial and Early Colonial India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Oct., 2001, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), p. 825.

kingdom.⁶⁸ Nainsi remained home minister for eight years until 1666, when Jaswant Singh removed him from office for reasons that remain unclear and put him in prison, where he later “committed suicide.”⁶⁹ Nainsi’s narration of history typically charts the emergence to power in the district of the dominant Rathor clan. It also relates various struggles for supremacy within the dominant clan as well as political relations with the Mughals and with rival clans of Rajputs elsewhere in Rajasthan.⁷⁰ Nainsi’s account is closely modelled on Abul Fazl’s epic late sixteenth-century survey of the various provinces of the Mughal Empire, the *Ain-i-Akbari*.⁷¹

Khyat is one of the branches of Bardic historical prose literature. The word *khyat* is used where the long history of a dynasty or a person is given.⁷² G.H. Ojha has pointed out that a historical prose is called *khyat* in Rajasthan. It appears that the word *khyat* has originated from the Vedic word “Akhyat” or “Akhya”.⁷³ These words were used in the sense of “to be famous,” “to be enlightened” and “to say about”.⁷⁴ Achal on the other hand has noted that the word *khyat* has come from the word “khyati” which means fame.⁷⁵ Thus, the *khyats* were mostly composed to narrate the biographical history of a person or a dynasty. These works were commissioned by the patron. This itself tells about the nature and character of these narratives. According to R.P. Vyas, in Rajasthan the *Khyats* were mostly written under the patronage of the rulers who were keen to perpetuate the memory of their exploits in various fields.⁷⁶ Thus the *Khyats* has biographical sketches of various rulers of the dynasties of the patrons, collectively and individually.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 819

⁶⁹ Richard Saran and Norman P. Ziegler, *The Mertiyo Rathors of Merto, Rajasthan*, p. 16

⁷⁰ Norbert Peabody, “Cents, Sense, Census,” p. 825

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 825

⁷² R.P. Vyas, “Biographical Sketches in Rajasthani Literature,” in S.P. Sen (ed.), *Historical Biography in Indian Literature*, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1979, p. 181

⁷³ Ibid., p. 181

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 181

⁷⁵ Shiv Swaroop ‘Achal’, *Rajasthani Godya Sahitya, Udbhava aur Vikasa*, Sardul Rajasthani Research Institute, Bikaner, 1961, p. 21; R.P. Vyas, “Biographical Sketches in Rajasthani Literature,” p. 181

⁷⁶ R.P. Vyas, “Biographical Sketches in Rajasthani Literature,” p. 181

Viramde Sonagara ri Vat, was probably composed in the early eighteenth century.⁷⁷ The *Viramde Sonagara ri vat* is Rajasthani literature belonging to the *Vat* genre, an oral storytelling tradition. This genre mainly prevailed among the village folks and was served the purpose of entertaining the audience. The storyteller enjoyed the liberty to addition and omissions according to his wish to make the story more entertaining. Thus, the *Vat* had several authors who added to the story depending on the situation. However, these stories have a long-standing impact on the memory of ordinary folks as these stories tell the narration about the historical events. For instance, Lindsey Harlan's ethnographic research has found that even today, the women from the elite Rajput society believe that Rani Padmini's story is historical, and they idealize Padmini as an idol of Rajput womanhood.⁷⁸

The emerging regional autonomy and elite patriarchy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries used the institution of marriage and the ideal Rajput womanhood as part of their political need. Hence, warrior and chronicler alike of that period accepted the necessity of entering into politically viable contracts through the exchange of daughters. In the medieval political order, marriage was integral to maintaining and consolidating state power. The polygamous family was the means by which military and political alliances were forged within the internally competitive ruling elite. Marriage relations were part of a system of gaining land, influence, power, honour, status, and alliances.⁷⁹ Hence, marriage alliances were keenly observed and recorded by medieval authors. Matrimonial alliances were used as a tool to gain legitimacy and strength as well. In this section of the chapter, an attempt has been made to see how the role of marriage in general and women in particular in the war narratives has been portrayed. Besides this, how the literary and historical genres have utilized the women for political economy and how a woman does being treated or placed in the idea of "other" would be discussed.

It can be seen that in almost all the Indic war narratives, a woman is playing a prominent role. In medieval political space, matrimonial alliances reflected the changing

⁷⁷ Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Rajasthani Sahitya ka Itihas (History of Rajasthani Literature)*, Mangal Prakashan, Jaipur, 1968, p. 60

⁷⁸ Lindsay Harlan, *Religion and Rajput Women: The Ethic of Protection in Contemporary Narratives*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1992 (reprint. 1994): pp. 182-204.

⁷⁹ Kumkum Sangari, "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti," p. 1466.

status of the Rajput clans within the political hierarchy.⁸⁰ Having power above women was treated as a constructive aspect of political authority in the household as well as in the larger social structure or in the wider community.⁸¹ In *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Padmanabha has dedicated an entire sub-plot where the “love relation” between Piroja (Firoja), the daughter of Alauddin Khalji with Viramde, the son of Kanhadade has been narrated. The daughter of Alauddin Khalji fell in love with Viramde and wanted to marry him. However, in the beginning, Alauddin opposed it, but due to his affection towards his daughter, he accepted the suggestion and offered his daughter’s hand to Viramde. But, Viramde rejected the marriage as it would bring shame to his Rajput lineage and clan.⁸² However, Piroja recognized her previous existence as a “Hindu” and was married to Viramde in her last six births, so she aspires to marry Viramde in this seventh birth as well. Thus, when Viramde was martyred in the battle against Alauddin Khalji, Piroja wished to marry the dead body of Viramde and she does that. Finally, the story ends with the death of Piroja committing *sati* (the Hindu practice of the widow’s immolation in the funeral pyre) with her husband’s body.

However, if we go deep into the narration, it can be seen that Padmanabha presented the entire episode in such a manner that the caste hierarchy of Chauhan and the prestige of their *kula* (lineage) can be protected and glorified. In the Hindu caste (*varna*) system, the discrete character of caste is maintained by the enhanced valuation that members of a caste place on their own customs, ritualized practices, and genealogical heritage.⁸³ In the caste ladder or *varna* system, marrying a woman from the lower caste would diminish their caste hierarchy.⁸⁴ Thus the poet creates a situation where his patron could reject the marriage offers of the Delhi sultan.⁸⁵ However, at the same time, by making the character Piroja take her life⁸⁶, the author also tries to protect the purity of

⁸⁰ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Alauddin Khalji Remembered,” p. 285

⁸¹ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Warrior-Tales at Hinterland Courts in North India, c. 1370 – 1550,” p. 248

⁸² Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 3, Verses, 133-136

⁸³ Dipankar Gupta, “Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes,” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, No. 48 (Dec. 1, 1984), pp. 2049-2053, here, p. 2051.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2049-2053

⁸⁵ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 3, verse, 247

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Canto 3, verses, 119-20

Chauhan *kula*. Thus, Padmanabha cleverly attempted to boost the image of his patron as high as Alauddin Khalji by portraying the marriage alliance.

In another work of that period, *Hammira Mahakavya* noted that Ratipala (Hammira's treacherous minister) sets forth the rumor that Alauddin desires to marry Hammira's daughter and will withdraw from Ranthambhor if his request is acceded to. The princess Devala Devi informs her father Hammira that she will agree to marry the Saka king (*Sakendra*) for the sake of the kingdom.⁸⁷ But the king angrily rejects her offer because marriage with the *Saka* king will pollute their lineage and thus constitute a transgression of his *dharmā*.⁸⁸ Thus, it can be seen that control over women was a key aspect in the Rajput tradition of political structure. The point that can be noted here is that the marriage was rejected as it was a proposal for a king of other origins – the *Saka* king.

Besides this, another aspect of the marriage in Rajput tradition was that of performing the political needs as well. The offering of daughter customarily by the defeated to the winner was a token of political submission. For instance, Rana Kumbha (r. 1433-1468) conquered Hamirnagar and married the daughter of its chief.⁸⁹ In 1730 Maharaja Abhay Singhji of Jodhpur proceeded to attack his neighbour, the Rao of Sirohi. The Rao lost several towns to Abhay Singh and finally offered his submission as well as his daughter in marriage.⁹⁰ The emperor Akbar had a series of marriage alliances with the Rajputs during his rule “as a means of building and consolidation local support”.⁹¹ Thus, it appears that marriage played a crucial role among the medieval Rajput rulers to settle political hostilities and also to build new alliance.

Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as has been noted above, the Sultanate of India witnessed decay and the northern Indian polities engaged in large scale military conflict with each other. In these circumstances, the importance of political alliances negotiated through marriages would certainly have grown. In this political

⁸⁷ Nayacandra Suri, *Hammira Mahakavya*, edited by Nilkanth Janardan Kirtand, Education Society's Press, Byculla, Bombay, 18789, Canto 13, verses 106--14.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Canto 13, verses 123--124

⁸⁹ Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod: Mevad Ka Itihas* (Hindi), Vol. 1, p. 335.

⁹⁰ Frances Taft Plunkett, “Royal Marriages in Rajasthan,” in *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1973), p. 70

⁹¹ Frances Taft Plunkett, “Honor and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal Rajput Relations,” in Karine Schomer, Joan L. Erdman, Deryck Lodrick, Lloyd I. Rudolph (eds.), *The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity*, Vo. 2, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p. 221.

context, the *Kanhadade Prabandha* was composed, and here the offer of the daughter for marriage was made by Sultan Alauddin. Thus, Padmanabha wanted to portray the greatness and political importance of his patron with this narration.

Preserving the caste hierarchy and political stature was crucial in the medieval political sphere in north-western Indian chiefdoms. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed another development – the formation of new caste groups. Diverse groups began to claim an exalted *kshatriya* status and a place in the larger *varna* hierarchy.⁹² The repeated claims of Padmanabha that the Sonagaras belonged to the pure *varna* and they were like “royal-swans (Rajhansa)”, beautiful and imperative.⁹³ It explains how Padmanabha perceived his patron in his writing. The author did it perfectly to reiterate the purity of the protagonist’s lineage. The lot of Piroja and Viramde is the perfect example of this. First, it demonstrates the “real” superiority of the Jalore ruler since the Sultan’s offer of a marriage alliance is rejected, and his daughter is repeatedly discarded.⁹⁴ He scornfully rejects the proposal as the *Patisah*’s trick to obtain their land (*des*).⁹⁵

In his *Khyat*, Nainsi also noted that Alauddin Khalji’s elder daughter wanted to marry Viramde, the son of Kanhadade. Alauddin Khalji tried to convince her that she was a Muslim and he a Hindu. But she was adamant and stopped eating and drinking. Then the Badshah asked Viramde, he protested, but when the Badshah insisted, he realized that he would have to be cunning, so on the pretext of going to Jalore to prepare for the marriage, Viramde left and started preparing for war. When the Badshah realized that he had been deceived, he too prepared for war. Ultimately an expedition was sent against Kanhadade, and Jalore was brought under the possession of the Sultan.⁹⁶

Similarly, it has been mentioned in *Viramde Sonigarari Vat* that the Sultan sent a letter to Kanhadade, and both Viramde and Kanhadade paid a visit to Delhi. Viramde was asked to stay back in Delhi. It is during his stay in Delhi, Viramde came in contact with

⁹² Aparna Kapadia, “What Makes the Head Turn,” p.88

⁹³ Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verse, 9

⁹⁴ The rejection of the marriage proposal by Viramde articulates the poem’s awareness of the politics of such marriages.

⁹⁵ Padmanabha, *Kānhadade Prabandha*, Canto 3, verse 132

⁹⁶ Badri Prasad Sakariya, *Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat (Hindi)*, Vol. 1, Rajasthan Prachyavidya Pratishthan, Jodhpur, 1960, p. 201.

Shah Begum (Piroja/Firoja in *Kanhadade Prabandha*), the daughter of Alauddin, and she fell for Viramde.⁹⁷ Shah Begum wanted to marry Viramde. Alauddin also tried to convince him but in vain. Then one day, Viramde escaped from the palace and reached Jalore. This made the Sultan angry and ordered his army to advance towards Jalore to conquer the fort.

In the battle, Viramde got injured and was captured by the Sultanate army. He did not salute or pay respect to the Sultan. Viramde said “the dignity of a Rajput is upheld when he follows his *kshatriya dharma*, and we abide by it. We follow six philosophies and the Brahmin. Our lips which have chanted Shri Ram will never utter the *Kalma* mantra of the demons. But, at present, I shall bear whatever the almighty God has destined.”⁹⁸ After hearing Viramde, the Sultan said, “we had conferred to marry you according to Hindu ritual, but you have forced us to perform Nikka (marriage according to Muslim ritual). The God is one, and there are two different ways to approach him.”⁹⁹ Then Aladdin ordered to call the Qazi for the marriage, it was at this point Viramde untied the cloth from his wound, and he breathed his last. When this news reached Shah Begum, she requested the Sultan to marry with the dead body as Viramde was her husband in her last six births. Accordingly, she put a *tika* on the forehead of Viramde and performed *Jauhar* in the same pyre of his body.¹⁰⁰

Thus, all the three Indic poems have narrated the Viramde-Piroja episode with some omissions and additions according to their convenience. However, the significant aspect is that of Piroja’s past lives. The trajectory of the character of Piroja is that she has been appropriated into the Rajput fold. In the narrations, Piroja marries Viramde because she was his wife in six earlier births.¹⁰¹ In those earlier incarnations, she was the daughter of the kings Jaicand, Ajaypal, Mahangrai, Yogade, Jaital, and Palhan. In contrast, Viramde has been the son of Bapal, the son of the lord of Kasi, Kelhana, the son of Vasudev, then

⁹⁷ Mahavir Gehlot, and Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Viramdev Sonigara ri Vat (Hindi)*, Rajasthani Granthagar, Jodhpur, 2018, p. 101.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 110

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 111

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 111

¹⁰¹ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 3, verses, 192 - 204

of Manikrai, Prthvirai, and Somesar in his fourth, fifth and sixth incarnations, respectively.¹⁰²

The names of these kings indicate that both Piroja (Firoja) and Viramde are located in the lineages of kings of northern and western India, identified under the umbrella category of “Rajput”. In each of these earlier incarnations, Piroja has ended her life by immolating herself on the pyre of her dead husband, on the banks of the Yamuna.¹⁰³ Thus, it exhibits her persistent obedience to wifely virtue (*sati-dharma*). As the poet comments, the love between Piroja and Viramde has survived the span of several successive lives. Such enduring love will thus transcend even the boundaries of distinct communities (*jati*).¹⁰⁴ Even when rejected by Viramde, Piroja considers herself wedded to him. Therefore, when the Jalore prince dies in battle, she instructs her servant to bring back his decapitated head from the battlefield. After cremating his head ceremonially, she immolates herself in the same pyre on the banks of the Yamuna once again.¹⁰⁵ The Sultan’s daughter has thus proved her *sati-dharma* once again. The Rajput order triumphs even as the Rajput kingdom itself is conquered.

Thus, it can be argued that these fifteenth-century texts were written at a time when multiple regional sultanates existed. They had utilized Muslims as a carrier to promote an emerging Rajput identity. The authors of *Kanhadade Prabandha* and *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* had transformed the Muslims (Piroja) into the paragon of Rajput identity by making her commit *sati* and remembering her past lives (rebirth a concept of Hindu belief) as an ideal Rajput woman. However, they simultaneously praised and celebrated the protagonist for rejecting her, as marrying her would bring shame to the Rajput lineage. The marriage would pollute the *kshatriya dharma* of the Sonagara Chauhans, as she belongs to the “other” – the *turak* community. But, at the same time the author made Alauddin to offer his daughter’s marriage with Viramde, which itself is a sign of defeated ruler.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the narrative has played the role of a psychological resistance to the Sultanate offensive. Though a women of “other” have been incorporated into the ideal

¹⁰² Ibid., Canto 3, Verses, 195-200

¹⁰³ Ibid., Canto 3, Verse, 208

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Canto 3, verse 206

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Canto, 3, verses, 208 209, 210

¹⁰⁶ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Alauddin Khalji Remembered,” p. 285

Rajput ideological set-up of being a Rajput Ideal woman, this was done to create a situation/atmosphere where the hierarchy of Rajput being displayed over the “other” – the Sultan of Delhi.

Other prominent themes of the narratives were the showcase of Rajput valour and sacrifice and the protector of *dharma*. According to Norman P. Ziegler, a Rajput warrior (most of the rulers who faced the wrath of the central Asian “invaders” were Rajputs in the early years) was morally bound with three “Rajput warrior code” or Rajput *dharma*: avenging the death of one’s father, fulfilling one’s morally appointed task or duty of fighting and dying in the service of one’s overlord, and to abstain from killing warriors belonging to the same clan (*gotra*).¹⁰⁷ Thus, sacrificing life for the sake of state was significant in Rajput traditions. Sacrifice was part of their Rajput *dharma* or ethics. This *dharma* was felt to be an inborn moral code for the conduct, which each individual inherited by birth, along with an innate potential to fulfil it.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, fulfilling these conducts would enable one to maintain their rank and increase it gradually within the order of caste and achievements of salvation.¹⁰⁹

In medieval Rajput narrative traditions, heroism was defined as an essence transmitted through lineage.¹¹⁰ Rajput patrons who wished to assert continuity with heroic antecedents commissioned the writing of “histories” recounting such episodes from the past.¹¹¹ When descendants of particular lineage remembered the exploits of their ancestors, they claimed the heroic essence as an instrument for legitimizing their authority over inherited resources – both material and moral, involving both territory and character.¹¹² Therefore, in this section of the chapter, we will explore how the Rajput lineage’s superiority has been portrayed in the Indic war poems. Besides this, their valour, sacrifice, and portrayal as the protector of the Rajput *dharma* will also be adequately explored.

¹⁰⁷ Norman P. Ziegler, “Some Notes on Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period,” in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, p. 196.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 196

¹⁰⁹ McKim Marriott, “Interpreting Indian Society: A Monistic Alternative to Dumont's Dualism,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Nov., 1976), pp. 189-195, here p. 192

¹¹⁰ Ramya Sreenivasan, “The ‘Marriage’ of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Turak’” p. 96

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 96

¹¹² Ibid., p. 96

All the war narratives have portrayed one standard narration: having fought bravely with Alauddin's forces, the protagonists die. It shows their courage, valour, and bravery, which were distinguished characteristics of a Rajput lineage. In *Kanhadade Prabandha* and *Munhat Nainsi ri Vat*, the main protagonist is Kanhadade and he gets martyred in the battle which was fought to keep the *dharma* intact. Subsequently, his son Viramde also dies in the same battle. These sacrifices confirm the pre-eminent status of the Sonagara lineage. Thus, true to its nature, the court-commissioned book explains its best to portray the bravery and courage of his master. It tries to show Kanhadade as the merits that he has earned in his last births – *Punya*.¹¹³

In *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Madhava, the disgruntled minister of Karna Baghela¹¹⁴ who invited Alauddin Khalji to Gujarat, has been universally condemned by the author Padmanabha. Padmanabha has noted that by inviting the *mleccha* Alauddin Khalji, Madhava has committed a sin, which can only relate to his previous birth.¹¹⁵ However, according to Padmanabha, the ruler of Gujarat was Saranagadeva.¹¹⁶ Whereas in *Viramde Sonigarari Vat*, Panju, the swordsman (he taught Viramde) got offended by the treacherous act of one of Viramde's attendant Bijadiya and reached Delhi and sought help from Alauddin Khalji.¹¹⁷

Panju started to stay at Alauddin's palace. One day, Alauddin Khalji asked Panju, "is there anybody in my kingdom who can use swords like you?"¹¹⁸ Panju replied that Viramde, the son of Kanhadade of Jalore is quite superior to him. Thus, even from a treacherous person like Panju, the author is made to accept the courage, valour, and warlike qualities of Viramde. The author further makes it sure that even during the battle, all Beg's weapons and the Turkish army got exhausted. The Turkish military said, "They both (Viramde and Kanhadade) are killing us without a weapon, and we are helplessly witnessing all this".¹¹⁹ Thus, the bravery and courage of the protagonists were portrayed in the narratives, whereas for the cause of the battle, treachery was given prominence.

¹¹³ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verses, 224, 236

¹¹⁴ M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, p. 2

¹¹⁵ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verse, 15

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Canto 1, verse, 13

¹¹⁷ Mahavir Gehlot, and Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Viramdev Sonigara ri Vat (Hindi)*, pp. 99-100

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 100

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 109

However, the historical description of that time tells different facts. Having established himself in the Delhi throne exclusively and suppressing the so-called refractory elements in the empire as well as in the frontiers, Alauddin Khalji began to think of subjugating the independent parts of the country.¹²⁰ In the medieval period, to maintain order in the ranks and file of the sultanate army, one of the practices was to keep engaging the soldiers in wars. The successful wars provided them booties that were one of the resources for the state (imperial coffer) and earnings for the army. A soldier got *khums* (one-fifth of the looted booty) in the sultanate period.¹²¹ During Alauddin Khalji's period, a special officer was appointed known as Naib Ariz, whose duty was to prepare an inventory of the booty for proper rendering of the account to the Sultan.¹²² Thus, it can be said that during the earlier period, conquest and expeditions were frequent and income from it was one of the main sources for the imperial treasure. A military campaign was not only for state expansion or for the annexation of rival kingdoms, but a victory provided legitimacy as well as funded additional campaigns. The Delhi sultanate was no different from it.

Besides these, Zia al-Din Barani has noted that "the conquest of all the parts of the Hindus was essential to keep the Delhi throne safe."¹²³ He further stated that, the *Kotwal* of Delhi Ain-ul Mulk has advised Alauddin Khalji,

"two important tasks and one of these was to ensure that the territories of Hindustan are fully obedient and submissive such as that Ranthambhore, Chittor, Chanderi, Malwa, Dhar and Ujjain and in the eastern side river Sarju, Siwalik and Jalor, Multan and Damrela and from Patiala to Lahor and Depalpur be reduced to obedience such that even the words of rebellion and sedition not come to the tongue of anyone."¹²⁴

In the Delhi sultanate period conquest and war was used as a strategic tool. Besides this, the region of Gujarat was very fertile and cash-rich; hence the medieval Delhi sultans had

¹²⁰ K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis (1290-1320)*, Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, 1950, p. 82.

¹²¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2015 (reprint. 2021), p. 154.

¹²² U.N. Day, *The Government of the Sultanate*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993, p. 100.

¹²³ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 164

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 164

an eye on the region of Gujarat, while Rajasthan was on their way to Gujarat. Therefore, strategically it was important to keep Rajputana under subjugation to have a safe passage to the region of Gujarat. Thus, raiding a region would not holdup for some like Madhava or Panju to invite Alauddin Khalji. In 1195, Qutubuddin Aibek had raided and plundered the area of Anhilwada (present-day Patan of Gujarat) and returned with a large amount of booty.¹²⁵ Throughout the rule of Baghelas (r. 1242-1299), the Delhi sultans constantly troubled the region.¹²⁶ Therefore, it does not matter whether Madhava, the disgruntled minister of Karan Baghela, or Panju, the aid and attendant of Viramde (as described in war narratives) invited Alauddin or not, does not matter. So, it can be told certainly that the raid of Alauddin in Somanatha in 1299¹²⁷ was purely for loot because Isami has noted in his account that “soldiers not satisfied with plundering, dugout and carried away the hidden underground treasures by Gujarat people.”¹²⁸

Alauddin Khalji pursued his agenda of securing the frontier and collecting resources to keep his standing army. So, subjugation of Jalore was his part of his ambition to have a great empire. It had nothing to do with Panju or Madhava. However, even if they invited it might not have a serious impact on Alauddin’s decision regarding the invasion. The political and economic need was the prime reason. Moreover, one interesting fact is that prior to the battle, Kanhadade submitted to the Delhi sultan and also visited his court. Both Padmanabha and Nainsi fail to provide any reasons for their hero Kanhadade’s journey to Delhi to pay homage to Alauddin on his own accord, profess unflinching obedience for four years.¹²⁹ Because giving way to the enemy without a fight is against the Rajput valour and was considered an insult. Thus, these authors silently skipped or twisted their hero’s submission to the Delhi sultan.

Even while describing the defeat, the poet Padmanabha creates a situation where Kanhadade lost to the incarnation of Shiva,¹³⁰ not to any other human being like

¹²⁵ Hasan Nizami, *Taj-ul Ma’asir*, in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, Trubner and Co., London, 1869, pp. 228-231.

¹²⁶ K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis, (1290-1320)*, p. 83.

¹²⁷ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli, p. 154; K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, p. 85

¹²⁸ K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis, (1290-1320)*, p. 86

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 137

¹³⁰ Aparna Kapadia, “What Makes the Head Turn,” pp. 90, 93

Alauddin Khalji and the eventual death of Kanhadade in the battle confirms his status as an ideal warrior king. In *Viramdeo Sonigara ri vat*, Viramde got injured in the battle; even then, he tied his wound with a piece of cloth and kept fighting. After Viramde got exhausted, he was captured by the Sultanate army. Even after his capture he talked to Sultan Alauddin Khalji with equal terms, where Viramde describes the importance and value of *kshatriya dharma* for Rajputs. He refused to salute Alauddin Khalji and tells that dignity is very dear to the Rajputs and for this they can go to any extent.¹³¹ He blatantly informs the Sultan that Rajputs only believes in Shri Ram and can never place their faith in any other religion. However, as he is a captive now, he is willing to bear the consequences of whatever the God has destined for him.¹³²

In Padmanabha's *Kanhadade Prabandha* it has been noted that while Alauddin offered his daughter to Viramde, he asked the messenger of Alauddin, "is this how your master wants to conquer a region without a fight?,"¹³³ and refused the marriage by telling that if he agrees then the prestige of thirty six Rajput clans would be shamed.¹³⁴ The messenger retunes and informs Alauddin that Viramde holds no fear of you; the Chauhan is proud and hostile.¹³⁵ Thus, the respective hero of our authors achieved the ultimate sacrifice for their land, people and *dharma* without compromising in front of an *asura*¹³⁶ like Alauddin and Viramde was described as the protector of the pride of Chauhan in particular and Rajputs clans in general.

Even while describing the birth of Viramde, the authors of *Viramdeo Sonigara ri vat* made it sure to portray Viramde not just as a human being but as a person who had his origin from supernatural power. The narrative begins with the hunting trip of Kanhadade, the Sonagara ruler of Jalore being getting lost in the wild, and he is accompanied only by his attendant Bijadiya.¹³⁷ At night they reached a temple in the midst of the forest and took shelter in it. Miraculously a stone sculpture of the temple transfigured itself into an *Apsara* (celestial damsel). The *Apsara* approached Kanhadade

¹³¹ Mahavir Gehlot, and Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Viramdev Sonigara ri Vat (Hindi)*, p. 110.

¹³² Ibid., p. 110

¹³³ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 3, Verse, 132

¹³⁴ Ibid., Canto 3, Verses, 133-136

¹³⁵ Ibid., Canto 3, Verse, 145

¹³⁶ Ibid., Canto 1, verse, 122, 195

¹³⁷ Mahavir Gehlot, and Purshottam Lal Menariya, *Viramdev Sonigara ri Vat (Hindi)*, pp. 15, 93

for marriage, and the two got married. From this marriage, their child Viramde took birth.¹³⁸

Subsequently, in the narrative, when Kanhadade's daughter Veeramatibai's marriage was fixed with Rao Lakshmansingh of Jaiselmer, she was not happy with the wedding. During their journey after marriage from Jalore to Jaisalmer, Veeramatibai saw one young man was taking bath in the river, so she sent one of her attendants to the young man with the message that "Veeramati is the daughter of Kanherdeo Sonigara, and is married to Rao Lakshamnsingh. The only fault is that Veeramati has undergone the marriage ritual. If you can dare to consort her, she can enter your seraglio?"¹³⁹ The young man was Nimaba, Son of Shiva Rthod of Dhinla. Nimba accordingly attacked the chariot of Lakshmansingh and took Veeramati with him. However, in the process, the attendant of Veeramati, namely Rajadiya, got killed. When Kanhadade heard of this scuffle, both Kanhadade and Viramdeo accepted fate as "the Rawal Lakhmansingh was a timid and while Nimba had proved his bravery, so they accepted him as Veeramati's husband."¹⁴⁰ Thus here also, the characteristics of bravery, courage, and manly-hood were given preference by the author as Kanhadade and Viramde accepted the incident of Veeramatibai being abducted by Nimba with ease. At the same time, they did not like the timid nature of Lakhmansingh.

After ten years of this episode, while Kanhadade was having his second daughter's marriage, Nimba was also invited to the wedding. After receiving the invitation, Nimba said, "you have addressed me as a Rajput, that is grace on your part, but swordsman Panju is to be sent to fetch me, and then I shall reach and present my salutation."¹⁴¹ Accordingly, arrangements were made for Nimba and Veeramati. While they participate in the marriage, Bijadiya, the son of Rajadiya who got killed during Nimba's attack on Lakshmansingh's chariot, asked Viramde for revenge. Viramde told Bijadiya that as he is their relative, he cannot do anything personally, but Bijadiya could take his revenge.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 15, 93

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 95-97

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 97-98

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 98-99

Subsequently, Bijadiya attacked Nimba and killed him. This betrayal made swordsman Panju angry, and he left the place on a steed.¹⁴²

Thus, the book explains its best to portray the bravery and courage, sacrifice, sense of justice of his master. It tries to show Kanhadade as the merits he earned in his last births – Punya.¹⁴³ Padmanabha carefully depicted that Kanhadade fought bravely and protected the *dharma* and the Brahminical order, while the other rulers of that region surrendered or were trounced by the Delhi sultan. Further, he describes the forces of Alauddin as the *asura* and *daitya*.¹⁴⁴ The book was written at a time when the patrimonial Sonagara domains of Jalore had already been under the control of Afghans. The fortress of Jalore itself passed into the possession of Lohani Afghans by 1394.¹⁴⁵ So, it is worth speculating whether these invisible Afghans on the horizon of the narrative towards whom Padmanabha directed his ire as the iconoclastic, polluting, and treacherous *turak*.

Another epic showing the courage, heroism and bravery of Rajputs is the *Prithviraja Vijaya*, composed sometime after AD 1178, but before AD 1200 by a Kashmiri poet, Jayanaka.¹⁴⁶ In this narrative the *turak* or Turkish invasion was portrayed, which was bravely defended by the brave Rajput rulers of that time. The author accused the Mlecchas (Muslims) of confiscating charity land and unleashing terror and oppression on the Brahmins. Even the *Turushka* (Turkish) women were condemned for taking bath in the sacred lakes of Pushkar while in their menses.¹⁴⁷ Thus, it can be seen that the author Jayanaka viewed the Ghurids as a hazardous threat to the established social order and rituals.

However, it seems that the narrative has confused the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazna with that of the invasion of Muhammad Ghuri.¹⁴⁸ The author had celebrated the

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 100

¹⁴³ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verses, 224, 236

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Canto 1, verse, 122, 195,

¹⁴⁵ M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. 1 pp. 12 & 50-51.

¹⁴⁶ Har Bilas Sarda, "The Prithviraja Vijaya," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 8, (April, 1913), p. 261.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 262

¹⁴⁸ According to R.B. Singh, the invader was Bahram Shah, the king of Ghazni (1117-1158 AD) in R.B. Singh, *History of the Chahamanas*, Nand Kishore and Sons, Varanasi, 1964, pp. 138-139; On the other hand H.C. Ray has stated it as an unrecorded instance of Muslim invasion of India from the Yaminis of Lahore, in H.C. Ray, *Dynastic History of Northern India*, Vol. 2, At the University Press, Calcutta, 1936, p. 1074

victory of the Rajput hero Arnoraja, who completely vanquished the Musalmans into the desert, where for want of water they had to drink the blood of horses.¹⁴⁹ Large numbers of them in heavy armour were killed by the heroes of Ajmer.¹⁵⁰ It seems to be quite exaggeration if it were to be the army of Mahmud of Ghazna, but this is one of the characteristics of the vernacular war narratives, where they portray the “other” with the utmost contempt. According to Peter Robb, people justify hierarchy by inventing differences, or putting a value upon them, so as to equate them with inferiority and superiority.¹⁵¹ The same can be witnessed in these narratives, as the authors constantly tried to justify the hierarchy of the Rajput *dharma* when they portray the Delhi sultans as *mleccha*, *asura* and so on.

By describing Muhammad Ghori, the *Prithviraja Vijaya* introduces him as “the beef-eating *mleccha*”. While the author Jayanaka describes the war between Ghori and Prithviraj, he narrates: “when these fiends in the shape of men (*mlecchas*) took possessions of Nadul (Nadole), the warriors of Prithviraja took up their bows and the emperor vows to lay Ghor’s glory to dust.”¹⁵²

Hence, it can be argued that though these narratives enjoy a tremendous impact in the popular imagination, particularly in the region of Rajasthan, because they tell the story of sacrifice, courage, protection of *dharma* and so on. But, to tell the story of courage and bravery, the authors needed an equally powerful “other”, because by defeating the powerful enemy, the hero enjoys tremendous power and authority, or even in the case of a defeat against a “powerful enemy” it provides the defeated hero with the status of sacrifice, valour and courage. Hence, the portrayal of “other” with lot of contempt becomes very crucial in these narratives.

The construction of a shared past is vital for creating a sense of unity, particularly in situations where other commonalities are lacking.¹⁵³ In recent decades a trend can be seen where the “Muslims” are being depicted as the implacably alien substance that the

¹⁴⁹ Har Bilas Sarda, “The Prithviraja Vijaya,” p. 273

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 274

¹⁵¹ Peter Robb (ed.), *Society and Ideology*, p. 10

¹⁵² Har Bilas Sarda, “The Prithviraja Vijaya,” p. 279

¹⁵³ Cynthia Talbot, “The Story of Prataparudra: Hindu Historiography on the Deccan Frontier,” in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (ed.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2000, p. 282.

“Hindu” or Indian body politic cannot be digested. According to Cynthia Talbot, identity formation is a twofold procedure wherein one hand stress is given on unity of the in-group while simultaneously a boundary has been drawn against “outsiders”.¹⁵⁴ Padmanabha was a Nagar Brahman and constantly invoked the Puranic norms of kingship in explanation of Kanhadade’s resistance to the Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khalji as it has been seen in the above discussion. Kanhadade refused to allow a safe passage through his kingdom to Alauddin’s armies on their way to the Gujarat campaign. He has given the reasons for the refusal as his *dharma* does not permit a safe passage to the Sultan Alauddin as this would lead to the suffering of his people including women and slaughter of “cows”.¹⁵⁵

As a independent ruler of Jalore, Kanhadade enjoyed the power to refuse safe passage to any other ruler through his kingdom/chiefdom, but by invoking *dharma* Padmanabha seems to achieve a greater goal, that is to portray his patron as the protector against an “outsider” assault on their faith and women by Alauddin Khalji. During the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, the traditionally accepted norms of their time were that in the absence of adequate resources to assert their claims to kingship, the local chiefs and warlords adopted two other practices as significant markers of their rank: first, the scale of their households and their control over its women, and second, the patronage of poets, scholars, and performers.¹⁵⁶ Padmanabha also tried to portray Kanhadade as the protector of women and *dharma* in this narrative. Thus, showing the “Muslim” ruler in a bad light as someone from whom they needed to protect their women and *dharma*.

Cynthia Talbot has opined that the terms of the description of Alauddin Khalji’s oppression in *Kanhadade Prabandha* are entirely standard.¹⁵⁷ It was a kind of Brahmanical tradition of representing the threat from “foreign groups”, and it was used extensively in the medieval period to describe “Muslim conquest”.¹⁵⁸ As it can be seen, the battle between Kanhadade and Alauddin has been portrayed by Padmanabha as an

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 283

¹⁵⁵ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 1, verses 31-33.

¹⁵⁶ Ramya Sreenivasan, “Warrior Tales at the Hinterland Courts in North India,” p. 246-47.

¹⁵⁷ Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Oct., 1995), p pp. 67-98

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 67-98

exemplary epic battle like that of the battle of Kurukshetra, between good and evil.¹⁵⁹ Padmanabha's deployment of these tropes not only serves to demonize Alauddin but also praise Kanhadade by placing him within a tradition of epic and Puranic defenders of territory, property, and the Brahmanical order – the *dharma*, whereas Alauddin Khalji is the demon (asura) who came to destroy, their land and *dharma*. The final battle between Santalsih and the Sultan is like the battle between Ram and Ravan, between the Devas and *asuras* or *daityas*.¹⁶⁰ Here Alauddin has been termed with all abusive words like *asura*, *daitya*, *mlechchha*, and so on.

However, this constant effort of “othering” was not done only by the regional authors; the Persian sources also tried to portray the locals with derogatory connotations. Let's go through the contemporary *Khaza'in al-Futuh*. It can be seen that he constantly defamed the local rulers with derogatory suffixes like – “cow worshipping Hindus” and infidels while comparing his patron with Mozes, Shuaib¹⁶¹, and so on.¹⁶² The victory over Gujarat was portrayed as the victory of Islam and the thought of Muhammad over the infidels. Khusrau noted:

“Then they made the idol-house of Somanatha prostrate itself towards the exalted Ka'ba, and when they cast the reflection of the upturned idol-house in the sea, it seemed as if that idol-house first offered its prayers and then took a bath. But they sent one idol which was the largest to the royal presence so that it may be renewed the tradition of Khalil by breaking the idols which had lodged themselves at half the way to the House of Khalil and used to waylay the misguided ones. But they sent one idol which was the largest to the royal presence, so that it may relate to the idol-worshipping Hindus the destruction of these helpless gods hoping that they would say that the tongue of the royal sword interpreted this verse: “He broke them up into pieces expect this big one so that they may return to it.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Padmanabha, *Kanhadade Prabandha*, Canto 4, verse, 259

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Canto 2, verses, 131, 165, & Canto 3, verses, 77

¹⁶¹ Jethro is the father in law of Mozes.

¹⁶² Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji (Treasures of Victory)*, B.D. Taraporewala, Sons & Co., Bombay, 1931, p. 6

¹⁶³ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Dr. Wahid Mirza, National Committee for 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau, National Book Foundation, Lahore, 1975, p. 26

Amir Khusrau further demonstrates that the “abode of unbelief like that which was the *qibla* of the garbs now became the city of Islam. Instead of the Brahmin Peshwas, the followers of Abraham became Peshwa. The staunch Sunni Muslims broke it with all their might wherever they saw an idol-house. On every side was heard the *Takbir* and *shahadat* of fighting, and the idols also pronounced *shahadat* (evidence) of their own destruction. Behold an allusion to mosque and *khutba*. In the old land of infidelity, the call to prayers sounded so loudly that it was heard in Baghdad and Medina, and the musical recital of the Alai Khutba was so prolonged that it reached the Qubba-I Khalil and the well of Zamzam.”¹⁶⁴

While describing the campaign of Nusrat Khan and Ulugh Khan to Somanatha, which was ordered by Aladdin Khalji, Khusrau has recorded that:

“Then from sphere the great Khan led his army to the encircling ocean and arranged his army in a circle around the idol-house of Somanatha which is the center of the Hindus’ worship, and pitched his khatti lance in that center at such height that the collar of the sky was nearly rent by the point of its spearhead, and the Islamic flag was raised up right at the edge of the earth’s orb became bent, and the bows formed by the two parts of the army circle shot their straight arrows right through the cores of the infidel’s hearts, and these points were split into two by the straight arrow like a circle which is divided into two parts by the diameter.”¹⁶⁵

Thus, it can be seen that though the political reasons for the campaigns were different, but both the rulers and the authors commissioned to record the events tried to portray these as part of their religious projects. While the Islamic authors portray their patron as the spreader of Islam, thus enjoys being the favorite Islamic ruler. On the other hand, regional authors used the same events to twist and with a few additions made the event to prove that their patrons fight against the devils, *asuras* who came to destroy their land, *dharma*, ritual and social order of that time. They had to ultimately sacrifice their life for the just cause to protect their socio-political orders. This sacrifice, courage, bravery and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 26

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 27

the family lineage provided the lesser known rulers legitimacy and authority in their particular region.

However, though these regional “war narratives” are based on historical events but, they were not composed with an intention to record ‘historical facts’. Yet, these narratives enjoyed considerable influence among its readers and served the purpose for its patrons and authors. But, it is equally important to know the perspective of the Delhi sultanate, about the campaign of Jalore. Hence, it is crucial to go through the contemporary Persian sources as well. The event of Jalore was an essential occurrence for the Sonagari Chauhans as it had changed their course of history. However, if we go through *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, which is today, the sole contemporary account of these events provides a different perspective than the *Kānhadade Prabandha*, *Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat* and *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat*. Amir Khusrau composed the *Khaza'in al-Futuh* in 1311-12 A.D. The book is a panegyric work more than history, where Khusrau praises Alauddin Khalji's military victories throughout most of the subcontinent.¹⁶⁶ In *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, it has been noted that the fortress was taken in Rabial, 708/ August-September, 1308 and the Raja Satal Deo (Dev) was killed. Siwana was renamed as Khairabad and was put under the charge of Malik Kamal al-Din Gurg.¹⁶⁷ Thus, *Khaza'in ul Futuh* mentions Jalore just as a passing reference, which shows the gravity of the importance of this campaign for the Delhi sultanate.

In *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Khusrau has provided detailed information regarding Alauddin Khalji's building projects, social and economic reforms in Delhi, along with the Sultanate victories during Alauddin Khalji's reign. It can be seen that Amir Khusrau has primarily discussed Alauddin's victories and conquests, putting them into four categories. Firstly, Khusrau describes Alauddin's defence mechanisms against the Mongol threads and his public construction works. Secondly, he noted about Khalji's victories against the Mongols. Thirdly, he illustrates the Delhi sultan's conquests in the western Hindustan like Gujarat, Malwa and Rajputana region. Fourthly, he explains the Deccan conquests. But, if we see his description about Alauddin's campaign in the region of Rajputana, he gives only passing references.

¹⁶⁶ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, p. 2

¹⁶⁷ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in ul Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Wahid Mirza, pp. 38-40

Another important Indo-Persian account that mentions about Alauddin's victories is the work of Ferishta.¹⁶⁸ According to Ferishta, the raja of the Rajput principality of Jalore Kanhar Deo (Kanhadade) presented himself in 1305 at the Sultan's court and had sworn allegiance to the Sultan.¹⁶⁹ Ferishta further noted that by 1306 the relationship between Kanhar Deo and Alauddin Khalji broke down and sent an army to conquer the principality. However, the battle was prolonged, and the Sultan had to send reinforcement after six years under Kamaluddin Gurg, who finally took control of the fort on 12th April 1312.¹⁷⁰

In *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Zia al-Din Barani has noted that at the beginning of the third year of the accession of Sultan Alauddin Khalji, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan were nominated for the expedition of Gujarat.¹⁷¹ They ransacked entire Gujarat, including Naharwala, and the Gujarat ruler Karan Rai fled and took shelter with Ram Deo of Deogir.¹⁷² They ransacked the Somanatha temple and took idols from there, and sent them to Delhi. However, during their return journey from Gujarat, soldiers had rebelled against Ulugh Khan regarding the issue of *khums* and they killed Malik Aazz-ud Din. Ulugh Khan somehow escaped the rebellion.¹⁷³ However, Zia al-Din Barani does not explicitly mentions about the battle of Jalore.

Describing the above incident of rebellion by the soldiers, Amir Khusrau has mentioned that officers within the Sultanate army began to collect the Sultan's share of the booty. Four Mongols, who had recently converted to Islam, rebelled briefly, causing Ulugh Khan to flee before regrouping his officers and re-establishing his command over the army. The four Mongol Muslims fled and eventually sought refuge in the Ranthambhor fort. Upon returning to Delhi and learning of this rebellion, Sultan Alauddin Khalji sought to punish the four Mongols and the Hindu rulers who protected

¹⁶⁸ Mohamed Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. trans. by John Briggs as *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India till the Year AD 1612*, Vol. 1, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., London, 1906, pp. 361-362.

¹⁶⁹ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. trans. by John Briggs, pp. 361-362; Abdul Qadir Al-Badaoni, *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by George S.A. Ranking, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1990 (reprinted), pp. 265-266.

¹⁷⁰ Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. trans. by John Briggs, pp. 370 – 371.

¹⁷¹ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, p. 154

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 154

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 154-155

them.¹⁷⁴ Then he goes on to discuss the raid on Ranthambhor. This shows how important the event of Jalore was for the Turks. The Jalore campaign was not a magnificent event for the Delhi sultanate. It was just another event or victory for them, which did not attract any special description even in a panegyric account like *Khaza'in al-Futuh* which was commissioned only to pen down the victories of the Alai Sultan.

But, as mentioned earlier, the *Kanhadade Prabandha* does not mention any such interaction as has been mentioned in *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*. Contrary it shows that Alauddin sends an envoy to Kanhadade for passage through his principality. However, as it has been discussed, the *Kanhadade Prabandha* was a later work composed after 150 years from the actual event that got influenced with contemporary socio-political aspects and reflected in its narratives. From the fifteenth century onwards, the newer Rajput lineages consolidated their power and established legitimacy by claiming genealogical descent from the past ruling lineages whose power had been destroyed by Alauddin Khalji. This is the period when the memory about Alauddin Khalji began to be transformed. The *Kanhadade Prabandha* was one such work.

On the other hand, *Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat* was written almost after three hundred years of the actual event. By this time political scenario further changed, and the Rathor rulers of Marwar, who were by now, become a significant ruling power in the region. They were important regional feudatories of the Mughal, whose dominance was imposed throughout the Rajputana region in the sixteenth – seventeenth centuries. Thus, unlike his predecessor Padmanabha, Nainsi was careful enough and did not portray his hero to challenge the imperial authority in Delhi. Instead, Nainsi adapted a method of putting assertion on their own historical past and traditional values, thus the *Khyat* was produced, and the author produced a legacy that proves the Rathor as the one who enjoys Rajput values.

To conclude, it can be argued that in the medieval period, war was one of the prime sources for the imperial coffer and to support the newly established standing army of Alauddin Khalji. On the other hand, the political situation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought many regional polities back into power, who then wanted to establish themselves in their particular region. They were in search of authority and legitimacy,

¹⁷⁴ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in ul Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Wahid Mirza, pp. 43, 47, 55

which they wanted to earn by patronizing literature in vernacular languages. Moreover, the constant warfare reinforced the mutual dependence between ruler and clan and ruler and vassals. In this polity, the notion of *kul* (lineage) acquired added significance. The need for lineage cohesion and familial solidarity based on kinship was persistent since these were the coordinates of military success.¹⁷⁵

In the regional polities that emerged out of the Delhi Sultanate's fall, Indic and sultanate practices blended, producing a variety of distinctive cultural traditions. As the centre of political action shifted from Delhi to military competition between the regions, the rulers and local elite also sought to validate and consolidate their rule through cultural productions like literary texts, architecture, and painting. Thus, there were a number of war narratives available in various Indic languages from this period. However, these narratives served different purposes and were not only meant for describing the events. Almost all the narratives tell largely the same core story of the war, sacrifice, valour, protection of *dharma*, and the role of women in wars. Besides these, there was always an "outsider", who threatened their idea of ruler-ship, ritual, and social order. The patronage context and the ideological compulsions of authors compelled them to make additions and omissions.

Kanhadade Prabandha was composed during the mid-fifteenth century, while *Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat* was written later in the seventeenth century. The *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* was composed much later than the above narratives. All the three narratives belonged to different socio-political atmospheres, and their impact can be seen in their narratives. It can be seen that the hero of *Kanhadade Prabandha* challenged the imperial authority of Delhi directly, while Kanhadade and Viramde fought Alauddin Khalji's forces at the Jalore battle. However, Nainsi's *Khyat* does not directly challenge imperial authority. By the seventeenth century, northern India came under the Mughal authority. The Rathors of Marwar, patron of Nainsi, also accepted the Mughal suzerainty. In this changing political scenario, Nainsi's account does not directly challenge the central authority. Instead, his account tries to go back into the historical past of Rathors, including the Soniagara Chauhans, and brought brave and courageous lineage of the Rathors.

¹⁷⁵ Ramya Sreenivasan, "Alauddin Khalji Remembered," p. 284

The third narrative, *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* was an oral tradition that was primarily used to entertain the audience. This account gives more prominence to Viramde than Kanhadade, and its emphasis mostly remains on the love affairs between Viramde and Shah Begum (Piroja/Firoja), the daughter of Alauddin. The story neglects Alauddin's early campaigns of Gujarat in general and plundering of Somanatha in particular, while in *Kanhadade Prabandha*, this raid was the prime cause of the battle of Jalore. Rajasthan always valued and glorified their past, which was full of valour and courage. They not only cherished it but also passed those legendary tales from one generation to another. The *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat* is one such narrative, which was part of Rajasthan oral tradition.

Identities are constructed and have no substantial basis outside the manipulation of perceptions.¹⁷⁶ It seems the writers of these narratives tried to impart a view to influence perceptions and behaviour in their readership. They had presented their ideological and political thoughts rather than representing the past. They appear to be cognitive rather than representation in their portrayal of their past. However, having a motive behind writing texts was not confined to the vernacular sources only. By assessing Abul Fazl and his works, K.A. Nizami has argued that:

“Abul Fazl was something more than a mere conventional historian. He was the creator of a cult, essentially Rexcentric but having religion also within its orbit. An erudite scholar and an intelligent philosopher that he was, he deftly wove Akbar's ‘unspoken wishes’ into the matrix of a philosophic system. Handling his subject as a literary artist, he put the ‘incantation’ as well as the ‘connotation’ of words to their maximum use and where ‘plain truth’ was found unsavoury; he overawed his reader's intellect by conducting him into a labyrinth of high sounding words.”¹⁷⁷

Even in *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Zia al-Din Barani has stated that if he were to disagree with what had Minhaj ud-Din Siraj has written in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, he would be committing “an act of unmannerliness and hardihood” and it would be throwing doubts and suspicions among the readers of the *Tabaqat*; on the other hand if he writes what had

¹⁷⁶ Peter Robb (ed.), *Society and Ideology*, p. 3

¹⁷⁷ K.A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1983, p. 142

Minhaj has written about religion and state, then it would be superfluous of the study of Minhaj's writings.¹⁷⁸

In these discussed narratives as well the author had the motive to create legitimacy for the patrons, which he discovered in the past by including ancestors' achievements and mistakes, kingly endorsements, texts and the story of the origin of the client. If we study carefully by juxtaposing with contemporary historical sources, it can be seen that these narratives were composed with motives and presuppositions to suit the requirements of their patrons. However, it is true that these narratives were not composed with the intention of recording "historical facts", rather, these were literacy works that spoke of historical events and they should be viewed from that perspective.

According to Cynthia Talbot, identity formation is a twofold procedure where in one hand stress is given on unity of the in-group while simultaneously a boundary has been drawn against "outsiders".¹⁷⁹ The Ghurids brought with them a new language (Persian, Turkish and Arabic) and a new religion (Islam), which was still largely unknown in the most part of the Indian subcontinent. Besides this, the Turkish also brought with them a new theory of kingship which was different from that of the ruling ideas and ideologies of Indian rulers. Therefore, the Indian rulers not only perceived the Delhi Sultanate as a potent military threat, but also a menace to their *dharma*, ritual, social order and ruling ideas as a whole. Hence, the regional vernacular authors tried to portray the differences between them and the Turkish ruler-ship through these narratives.

K.M. Munshi has opined that the introduction of the Turkic rule is considered the end of civilization and a rupture in Gujarat's heroic history.¹⁸⁰ Hence, it seems that the vernacular writing expresses that feeling through their narratives. Through these writings a kind of intellectual resistance was provided to the Sultanate dominances. These narratives have vastly echoed the psychology of the Indic resistance, and the reactions in

¹⁷⁸ Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 13-14; Peter Hardy, "Approaches to Pre-modern Indo-Muslim Historical Writing: Some Reconsiderations in 1990-1991," in Peter Robb (ed.), *Society and Ideology*, p. 54

¹⁷⁹ Cynthia Talbot, "The Story of Prataparudra: Hindu Historiography on the Deccan Frontier," in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds.) *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, University of Florida, Gainesville, 2000, p. 283

¹⁸⁰ K.M. Munshi, *The Glory that was Gurjara-Desa, AD 550-1300*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1957.

the narratives were mostly popular rather than learned. With these narratives, the authors were in pursuit to construct a common past for creating a sense of unity, particularly in a situation where other commonalities are lacking.¹⁸¹ Thus, the war narratives not only served to establish authority and bring legitimacy to the patron, but left a lasting impact in the popular memories that still have its influence.

¹⁸¹ Cynthia Talbot, "The Story of Prataparudra: Hindu Historiography on the Deccan Frontier," in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (ed.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2000, p. 282.

Conclusion

The discipline of history is eagerly sought after not only by academics but even by ordinary people who equally aspire to know it, while the men in positions of power vie for it. Yet, everyone sees history according to their own interests. On the surface level, history is no more than information about political events, dynasties and imperative occurrences of the remote past. Therefore, unearthing the “truth” of past occurrences requires deciphering the inner meaning or exploring the contexts of past events. A historical “truth” is a subtle explanation of the causes and origin of past occurrences and to understand the “how” and “why” of those past events. Hence, the fourteenth-century philosopher Ibn Khaldun has opined that the “event-centric histories of dynasties and stories of past occurrences are not more than mere forms without substance, blades without scabbards; a knowledge that must be considered ignorance, because it not known what of it is extraneous and what is genuine.”¹

Therefore, this dissertation has tried to explore the way in which the early medieval past was perceived, recorded and presented by the early modern historians from the different ideological orientations in India, in contrast to what “actually it was”. They largely reconstructed history by recording what was reflected in the contemporary medieval texts without tracing the contexts or origin of those happenings. The role of authorial intentions – like the socio-political and personal interests of medieval authors as deciding factors in shaping their narrative has not been discussed in a comprehensive manner. Medieval scholars often had written in response to specific circumstances and intended for particular audiences. In contrast, the early modern historians perceived the medieval past to strengthen their ideological positions rather than to understand history “as it was”.

Nonetheless, in recent decades, historians like Mohammad Habib, K.A. Nizami, Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, Harbans Mukhia, J.S. Grewal, and so on have called attention to the “present-centred” nature of the medieval Indian history and the ideological orientation of scholarship in reconstruction. However, these scholars have

¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2005, p. 7

pursued the authorial intentions while dealing with a broader historical context. They did not exclusively explore it in particular. Besides this, off late, a growth of study on medieval Indian history can be witnessed where contrasting perceptions about the past have been discussed. However, most of these studies are tailored around important historical figures, individual authors, single texts, or manuscripts. The representation of the Sultanate of Delhi, particularly in terms of its ruling ideas, ideologies and political dynamism presented by the early modern scholars contrary to how it really was, largely remained unexplored.

The present does not always necessarily perceive the past to understand it. Rather, it often revisits the past to legitimise the deeds or ideas of the present. The colonialist project of rewriting Indian history was the best example of this process. The British needed to legitimise their rule in India by entering the political sphere. To achieve this, they delegitimised the preceding monarchs from whom they snatched the power. They portrayed the previous rulers, who happened to be Muslims, as cruel and despotic, who committed enormous atrocities upon the Hindu subjects, and themselves as messiahs of the Hindus. The colonial administrators considered the “liberation” of the “Hindus from the despotic Muslim rulers” as a Christian duty”.² Thus, in 1842, Lord Ellenborough brought back “the gates of Somanatha temple” from Afghanistan and declared it as “the revenge taken by the British of 800 years of insults committed by Muslims to the Hindus”.³ The early colonial scholars faithfully amplified the narrative in their endeavour to rewrite the medieval history of India.

The colonial historians promulgated the religious identity as the core of medieval Indian “Muslim” rulers’ ruling ideology. James Tod pressed forward the theory that the Rajputs were the lone Indian community who fought heroically against the Muslim rulers to protect Hindu *dharma* against the Muslim onslaught, who solely came to India to proliferate Islam by annihilating Hinduism and Hindus.⁴ For Tod, the “Muslim” rulers were less of a monarch and more of a propagator of Islam who intentionally victimised

² William F.P. Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier*, Vol. 2, John Murray, London, 1857, p. 275

³ *The Annual Register, or a View of the History and Politics of the Year 1842*, J.G.F. & J. Rivington, London, 1843, p. 257

⁴ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajput States of India*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1920.

the “Hindus”. Similarly, James Mill, in his *The History of British India* (1817), propounded that the history of India is basically a history of two communities – the Hindus and Muslims, who are distinctly separate and constantly in conflict.⁵ Thus, the British version of Indian history tried to whittle down every cause to a single one – the religious differences by reducing or minimising other reasons.

In their venture to record the history of India, colonial historians seldom bother to misinterpret certain aspects of the past intentionally. It is also true that occasionally, due to a lack of understanding of the context and language of the source, colonial scholars unintentionally passed certain perceptions to the next generations. In *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, James Tod used the bardic narratives as sources without getting into the nuances of the same. Nearly all medieval bardic narratives were heroic in nature and were an apparatus for satisfying the patron, though occasionally critical of certain rulers. However, Tod accepted the structure of memory in the Bardic narratives as an authentic source.

While reading the Perso-Arabic and Indo-Persian sources, the colonialists demonstrated a lack of critical understanding of those sources. In India, Qasim Ferishta’s *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* or *Gulshan-i-Ibrahim* was the first Persian source the colonialists came across and translated it as the *History of Hindostan* by Alexander Dow.⁶ Ferishta composed his account by following the Islamic universalism genre of writing history by placing it in the Indian context, where he traced the “pre-Muslim” historical era of Hindustan till the Ramayana and Mahabharata period, just as the Persian and Arabic historians would trace back to first Islamic Prophet Adam, before coming to record the accounts of the deeds of his patron Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bahmani Kingdom.

However, being unaware of the Islamic tradition of history writing, the Dow mistook it as a periodisation of Indian history and pressed forward it in his translation. Thus, the colonialists had demarcated Indian history as the “Hindu, Muslim and British period”. Through this demarcation of Indian history, they also wished to portray that

⁵ James Mill, *The History of British India*, Vol. 2, James Madden and Co., London, 1840; J.S. Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India: The Assessments of British Historians*, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 69; Romila Thapar, *Our History, Their History, Whose History?* Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2023, p. 44

⁶ H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 6, Trubner and Co., London, 1875, p.121; Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, pp. 6-7

during the “Hindu period”, India was flourishing, while during the “Muslim period”, the Sultans inflicted atrocities upon their “Hindu” subjects and pushed them into destitution. Under British rule, the “Hindus” had been freed from those atrocities. In 1842, Charles Napier declared himself as the saviour of the Hindus of Sindh from the clutches of atrocious Baluchi Talpur Mirs.⁷ Moreover, it is a fact that, throughout the medieval period, several monarchies ruled by “Hindus” had not only survived but also flourished and later aligned with the British in their imperialistic endeavours.

Besides these, in their venture to “discover” the Indian past, the colonialists transported the European method of history writing to reconstruct Indian history, where a national theme dominated the narrative by subverting narratives related to many local and community ones. Likewise, in India, they encountered the medieval “Muslim” rulers as the dominant force in Indian political spheres and by virtue of that, their administrative language, the Indo-Persian, gained prominence among the colonialists as the major primary source for reconstructing the Indian past. Thus, they would often take the version described in the Indo-Persian sources as historical (at times intentionally to suit their ideological compulsions) without making an effort to understand the inherent absurdity prevalent in their literal meaning. Over the years, the distorted narratives about medieval Indian history at first percolated to the British commissioned school textbooks and print magazines, gradually creating a strong influence among the ordinary people who could read and write.

Subsequently, the early nationalists were, to a large extent, impressed with the colonialist view, particularly with that of the glorious ancient histories of India, which was subverted by the invading Muslim monarchies. To resist the colonialist rule, the early nationalists recalled the country’s achievements in the past, from which they drew confidence and inspiration. Unfortunately, the “inspirational past” for the early nationalists did not include the accomplishments of the medieval period (where the dominant monarchs happened to be Muslim by their faith) in a significant manner; instead, they often promoted medieval history in communal lines. For instance, at Calcutta University, the study of Indian history was devoted mainly to “Rajput history”, “Maratha history”, and “Sikh history” to portray the valour of Indians, who obviously

⁷ Napier, *The Life and Opinions*, p. 275

fought against the oppressive rule of the Mughals.⁸ A prominent early nationalist scholar, Nilakanta Shastri, emphasised the cultural supremacy of the Brahmins and sometimes considered the Hindus more tolerant than Muslims – a cliché that became popular among the communalists in the years to come.

Thus, religious identity was ushered into the nucleus of medieval Indian history. By taking a cue from the colonialists, the communalists perceived the medieval past of India as a period of “darkness” – an intervening period in the glorious Indian civilisation, where Hindus were dominated by the “Islamic rule”. They equally considered the British as well as the medieval “Muslim” rulers as usurpers, yet for them, the British were a kind of “liberator” who rescued the Hindus from the darkness of “Islamic rule” – the subjugated period for “Hindus”. They gave the foreign label to both British and “Muslims”, though the latter settled permanently in India and became an integral part of the social, economic and cultural fabric.

Thus, during the early years of the development of the modern historical discourse of India, everyone manoeuvred the past to meet the demands of the present. With the collective efforts of these ideologically driven narratives, the perception about medieval Indian rule has been created that the monarchs of Delhi, who happened to be Muslims by their faith, were infused with the ideology of *jihad* and *ghaza* and thus invaded India to convert it from *dar-ul-harb* to *dar-ul-Islam* – an Islamic theocracy. Hence, after the conquest, they established a ruling ideal and an administration which threatened the existence of the faith of the “Hindus”. Their administration has been targeted for being revolving around the *shari’a*, *kofr*, *jihad*, and *jizyah*. Though they lived in India, they remained “outsiders” due to their adherence to different faiths and cultures and unwillingness to integrate into larger “Indian-ness”.

However, a section of the “Muslim” intellectuals equally contributed to amplifying these stereotypical narratives. The higher class of Muslims had long viewed them as descendants of the Central Asian conquerors and took great pride in that. They felt contented to associate themselves with Muslims of foreign origin and spurned the fact that a vast majority of the “Indian Muslims” were converts and were of native origin. Even while they accepted it, they claimed that the converted Muslims were incorporated

⁸ R.S. Sharma, “Communalism and India’s Past,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 18, No. 1-2 (1990), p. 7

into the “Islamic culture” in such a manner that they lost their connections in totality with their previous culture. In contrast, it can be witnessed that the Indian Muslims are culturally quite diverse. A Bengali Muslim has a unique mannerism than that of a Malayali Muslim or, as a matter of fact, a north Indian Muslim. All these people have distinct dress, food and even their understanding or interpretation of Islam. Even historically, the Kyamkhanis, a small Muslim community from northern Rajasthan, associated themselves strongly with their ancestors, who belonged to a local Rajput warrior clan, even after their conversion.⁹

Nonetheless, by propagating these “perceptions”, colonialist historians seem to achieve a dual benefit. In order to justify their autocratic rule in India, the British historians tried to prove that Indians had always been accustomed to despotic rule throughout their history. Thus, the British brought the “Muslim” rulers to the centre stage of the whole of the medieval period as despots and portrayed themselves as “liberator” of the “Hindus” from the dominance of “Muslims”. Unfortunately, many accepted this notion, including a section of leading Indian intellectuals who welcomed the British rule as a blessing.¹⁰

Thus, over the years, some lingering stereotypes started to occur in the historiographical discourse of medieval India. Three stereotypes dominate most of what has been written about the early years of the Delhi Sultanate by the colonialists and amplified to a certain extent by the early nationalists and communalists. The first stereotype portrays that a fanatical Islamic force enthused with the zeal of *ghaza* had conquered India to establish Islamic rule in the thirteenth century. The second image equally preposterous is that “Muslims” in India could never assimilate themselves within the greater “Indian-ness” and thus remained “outsiders” in spite of their presence in the subcontinent for over six centuries. The third perception is about the ruling ideas and ideologies of the Delhi Sultanate, which predominantly revolves around three ideas of kingship – the “Islamic”, the “Turkish”, and the “Persianate”.

To counter the communal perceptions, the “secular” historians often and largely pushed forward the economic requirement as the determinant reason for early Central

⁹ Cynthia Talbot, “Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 2009), p. 211

¹⁰ Sharma, “Communalism and India’s Past”, p. 7

Asian invasions. However, a careful re-analysis of contemporary sources – both Indo-Persian and Indic, reveals that in contrast to the perception of early Central Asian invasions to India being driven by the zeal of *ghaza*, it can be witnessed that multiple causes partook in as determining factors. Broader changing socio-political dynamics in Central Asia and the Arab world and the personal ambitions of emerging powers of those regions exert influence on early invasions to India.

Searching for the beginning of conditions is crucial to understanding the real intent of historical events.¹¹ Thus, if we look back, both Mahmud and Ghorī (the prominent invaders to India) were Turks – a nomadic clan-based population living on the steps of Central Asia. They were in regular migration for grazing lands, which sometimes brought them into confrontation with other powers. This constant struggle turned them into a militaristic community full of energy and group spirit. Therefore, the early Arab dynasties tried to leave the Turks alone until and unless they created any problems. But, the policy was reversed during Abbasid Caliph Mu'tasim Billah (r. 833-842), who started to recruit them into his army as slaves. Steadily, many of the Turkish slaves acquired higher positions in the Abbasid military, including that of a *wazir* at one point in time.

By the tenth century, the Abbasid Caliphate started to disintegrate, which allowed many local rulers to establish autonomous monarchies, theoretically accepting the Caliph's suzerainty. The Buyids, Seljuks and Samanids were a few such monarchies. The Turkish slaves also served under the Samanids in various capacities, including governors of provinces, who later defied the Samanids and declared autonomy. Both the Ghaznavids and Ghurids were the product of this Turkish slave institution.

Notably, during their conversion to Islam, most Turks were primarily influenced by the concept of *ghaza* and *shahada* alone. The *ghaza* acted as a two-way phenomenon for the Central Asian Turks – the poor saw it as a means to earn booty to support their hash life, while the elite used it to galvanise support for their political projects, which was to ensure success in the invasion. Though *ghaza* is theoretically a religious terminology, in practice, it was used for political gains. Both Mahmud and Muizuddin maneuvered *ghaza* for political benefits. Mahmud, being the second son of Sabuktigin, was not the first choice to the throne. He deposed his brother Ismail to acquire power. Mahmud was not a

¹¹ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 7

man of external beauty and suffered from an inferiority complex, which he wished to compensate by earning glory for himself and his state. Hence, to legitimise his position and gain his people's goodwill, he started exalted construction in Ghazna and brought renowned scholars of that time to his capital by financially supporting them. This necessitated a lot of economic expenditure, which could only be met by acquiring resources from invasions.

India was appropriate to meet all of Mahmud's requirements. Along with providing economic resources, the victories in India spread glory throughout the "Islamic world" and strengthened his position. However, it is a fact that Mahmud used *ghaza* for his invasion of India. To wage wars, Mahmud required a constant flow of warriors to his empire. By declaring his invasions as *ghaza*, Mahmud achieved two targets – firstly, he could congregate the necessary demand of soldiers (the *ghazis*) from faraway places in the Turkish-speaking regions, and secondly, the support of the volunteers legitimised his position on the throne. The *ghazis* were an important component of medieval warfare in the Islamic world who, apart from providing military strength, also bestowed legitimacy to the ruler.

Unlike Mahmud's western frontier (ruled by the Azami rulers), India was predominantly led by non-Muslims and thus allowed Mahmud to declare his wars as *ghaza*. Besides this, compared to the Azami rulers, the Indian Rais were not a match for Mahmud's military tactics and strength, which made his conquest easier. Thus, it can be safely said that Mahmud's invasions of India were political in nature for his personal glory and economic resources. However, he used the blanket of religion to meet his ends. This becomes further clearer if we see Mahmud's invasions to his western frontiers, where he did not declare those wars a *ghaza*, because those wars were not against non-Muslims. Now, the question arises: if Mahmud was fighting to spread Islam, why would he engage in wars against the people of his faith? Significantly, Mahmud even threatened the Caliph, the symbolic head of all Muslims of the world of that time, to demolish his capital, Baghdad, when the Caliph refused to act according to his interest.

Another product of the Caliphate military slavery system was the Ghurids. Two brothers, Ghiyasuddin and Muizuddin, co-governed the Ghurid state. In the beginning, like Mahmud, Muizuddin Ghorī also followed the policy of raiding and looting Indian

territories to finance their empire in its expansion to the western frontiers. However, soon, things took a different shape. According to the Ghurid traditions, the ruler had to honour all his male relatives by giving them titles and governorships virtually as autonomous sultans. Muizuddin did not appreciate this tradition and refused to share the resources he controlled with any of his relatives. This turned many of his relatives against him. Perhaps it was one of the reasons that compelled Muizuddin to spend considerable time in his base in Ghazna. He preferred Turkish slaves over his relatives to govern the state, unlike his brother Ghiyasuddin.

Unlike Mahmud, Muizuddin desired to carve out an independent state in India where he would not have to share power with his relatives. Hence, he preferred his slave officials over his kinsmen for a high post in his Empire in India. Again, the defensively weaker northern Indian monarchs provided the opportunity for Muizuddin to invade India. Moreover, post-conquests, Muizuddin often appointed people of defeated houses to power by positioning himself as the overlord. Appointing local persons to the high offices by the central authorities was a practice followed by all pre-modern monarchs as it allowed them to have greater control over local affairs. Thus, Muizuddin effectively established an administrative system where the circle of sovereignty was created with him positioned at its centre. The Sultan appointed local chieftains in his service as intermediaries, which allowed him to have a section of a political ally who legitimised his rule over a vast section of people who did not belong to his own faith.

Thus, like Mahmud, multiple reasons worked behind Muizuddin's invasion of India. A desire for an independent state, personal greed for glory, economic aspirations, contemporary political compulsions, and defensively weaker northern Indian regions were a few. The religious motives had nothing to do with it. The governing structure was the best example of this. Moreover, if one looks closely, it can be seen that the early raids by the Ghurids were targeted not at monarchies ruled by the kings of Hindu faith rather, the early conquests were targeting "Muslim rulers" – the Ismailis in Multan and the Ghaznavids in Lahore were their first target. In short, Muizuddin wanted to position himself as an overlord reigning over multiple dynasties in Hindustan, independent from his kinsmen back in Ghur.

To attain their political interests, both Mahmud and Ghori resorted to *ghaza*. A successful *ghaza* provided an exalted position in the “Islamicate world” and moral authority among their followers, which justified their political actions. Therefore, these rulers often promoted their victories against a non-Muslim monarch as *ghaza*. On the other hand, the court chroniclers carefully crafted the *ghazi* image of their patron. For instance, Mahmud used to send *fatḥnamas* from the Indian battleground to his capital, Ghazna, as well as to Baghdad, the most important place in the Islamic world.¹² These letters were read out among the audience in the palace as well as in the marketplace to spread the glory of the victories. Afterwards, Nasr al-Utbi used these *fatḥnamas* to write his account of Mahmud’s Indian expeditions and praised him for being a *ghazi*.

The authorial intention in creating the *ghazi* image becomes further evident when we consider its manoeuvring in the Indian context. The *ghaza* is regarded as an aggressive approach, which has to be carried to the pagan land to spread the message of the Prophet. But, in the Indian context, Indian Sultans were bestowed with the title *ghazi* for successfully defending their territory against the Mongols. It seems the contemporary scholars maneuvered *ghaza* and the title *ghazi* as a political tool for the rulers and used it to portray the exalted space of their patron in the Islamicate world. It should be remembered that, in pre-modern societies, “the dynasties and governments served as the marketplace, attracting the product of scholarship and craftsmanship. The products of these markets were generally shaped by the interest of the controller of the market – that was the ruler.”¹³ Therefore, one must be carefully examining these “products” while admiring one or choosing the other.

Thus, though the invasions by Mahmud and Ghori were carried out for gold for practical purposes, religion was used as a *posteriori justification* of what they had done. Mahmud’s image as a *ghazi* king did not derive simply from his military achievements but from the efforts of the Ghaznavids to monopolise the recounting of the Sultan’s

¹² Sending the *fatḥnamas* (letters of victories) from the war zones to the capital of their kingdoms was a tradition practiced among the medieval “Muslim” rulers. Zia Barani mentioned that during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Balban, his sons Khan-i-Shahid Muhammad and Mahmud (Bughra Khan) often scored victories over the Mongols on the north-western frontiers and would send *fatḥnamas* to the capital Delhi describing their victories. Zia al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. by Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2022, p. 49

¹³ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 23-24

deeds. He was portrayed as an equal or superior member of a fraternity of warriors and prophets, not merely a descendant of them. Moreover, the *ghazi* image of Mahmud survived due to the collective efforts of Mahmud himself (through his letters of victory) and the chroniclers of his court, who occupied a dominant position in the Islamicate world as storytellers during the Sultan's lifetime. Thus, it can be said that though Mahmud used religious motives for his political gain, the personification of Mahmud as a *ghazi* king seems to be an effort of later textual prototypes.

Similarly, exploring the perception that the Ghurids established an "Islamic state" in India, it can be seen that contemporary Indo-Persian scholars played a considerable role in creating the stereotype. Though a section of modern intellectuals had countered the perception by putting forward two ruling ideologies – the "Turkishness" and "Persianate" being the norm of Delhi sultanate kingship, both these thesis has reasonable oversights. The idea of "Turkishness" primarily revolves around the ethnic identity of the monarch alone and does not try to understand the role of various other ethnic groups within the Sultanate administration. On the contrary, the thesis of the Delhi Sultanate being a "Persianate" monarchy remained insufficiently theorised.

A micro-analysis of contemporary sources of that period reveals that "pragmatism" played the dominant role in the Delhi Sultanate's ruling ideas and ideologies. Rather, the Delhi sultans created a ruling ideal of their own, amalgamating all three kingships – the Persianate, Islamicate and Turkish with Persian culture having the dominant share. The Delhi Sultanate, in fact, was an extension of the Ghurid Empire, which itself brought much of its political theory from the Ghaznavids. Thus, being the product of the Samanid slave institution,¹⁴ both the Ghaznavids and Ghurids were trained in Persianate culture in their personal etiquette and administrative ideas. Therefore, despite being Turks by origin, they preferred the Persian as their kingly outlook over their own ethnic ideals of kingship. As a matter of fact, Mahmud and his son Mas'ud annexed Persianate regions like Marv, Balkh, Heart, Ray Sistan, and Damghan to their empire, which culturally integrated the Ghaznavids into the larger Iranian world. Subsequently, when the Ghurids

¹⁴ By the ninth century the Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana had established a new polity that was based on Islamic and Persian cultures – which later came to known as "Persianate". Istvan Vasary, "Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam: The Qarakhanids versus the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs," in Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart (eds.), *The Age of the Seljuqs*, I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., London, 2015, p. 1

captured Ghazna, they acquired the Ghaznavid political legacy and carried forward Persianate culture. Nonetheless, the use of the Turkic language and the currency of its folk traditions were confined to household and military circles.¹⁵

The early Delhi Sultans followed the same policy. In public spheres, many of the Sultans espoused the ideas and ideologies of the Persianate Khusravi monarchy and appreciated the Kyanid dynasty.¹⁶ Contemporary scholars often compared the Delhi Sultans with the Sasanian kings and the rulers of the Persian mystic past and tried to portray them as worthy successors of those great kings. Even while pronouncing justice, the Delhi sultans frequently referred to Persian monarchs. In Islam, the stream of justice flows from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet, whereas in the Persianate rule, the past heroes and their deeds serve the purpose. The Delhi sultans followed the latter tradition.

Besides Persian cultural education, several other factors also greatly favoured Persianate ruling ideals over the Turkish ones for Delhi Sultans. Most of the early Delhi Sultans (Shamsi and Ghiyathi – also known as *Mamluks*) were of Turkish slave origin (*ghulam*), and it seems after ascending to the throne, they were not so keen to flaunt the slave identity. Though there is no evidence for the argument, equally, there is no evidence that manumitted *Mamluks* were proud of their slave status. Rather, many of them made great efforts to repress their servile past by claiming an exalted origin or by creating marital ties with established families. For instance, Balban claimed his ancestry from Afrasiyab. Similarly, Juzjani compared his patron Iltutmish with the exalted Kayanid kings like Kay Kubad and Kay Ku'as and with the mythical Persian monarch like Faridun.¹⁷

Furthermore, the early Delhi Sultans were commanding an army and an administration which were composed of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. During the early years, often violent clashes erupted between groups belonging to different ethnic identities to install a ruler of their choice to the throne. Hence, the dominance of

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1

¹⁶ A pre-Islamic Persian monarch, Khusraw presented himself as an emperor with absolute authority, who would be responsible only to God for his deeds.

¹⁷ Minhaj-ud-din Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty as *A General History of the Mahommadan Dynasties of Asia, including Hindustan, 810-1260 AD*, Gilbert and Rivington, London, 1881, pp. 597-598.

any ethnic ideas and ideals over the other would not be taken with good spirit by various ethnic groups. In contrast, the Persianate culture was already an accepted norm of kingship among the large section of Islamicate world and thus was acceptable among all ethnic groups belonging to the Islamic faith. Additionally, during the medieval period, in Islamicate society, Persian was considered the language of the “men of the pen” and elites.¹⁸ Any aspiring writer would necessarily acquire knowledge in Persian. Thus, the largest section of the educated people was trained in Persian, and it was them who were instrumental in keeping the accounts and looking after the everyday administrative affairs both in executives and judiciary of the empire upon which the military leaders and soldiers could aspire for conquests and brought victories. Hence, Persianate culture obviously obtained preference over “Turkishness” in the Delhi sultanate.

On the political sphere, the Persianate ideal of kingship provided absolute authority in the hands of the monarch, where the ruler was considered as the representative of God on earth, thus only answerable to God, not to any other human beings. On the contrary, in Islam, the ruler is one among the *umma*, where the subjects enjoy the power to alter a ruler through rebellion if he fails to work for the people and their *din*. In Turkish kingship, the monarch had to share his power with close relatives. Furthermore, the traditions followed and prescribed by the Prophet and the four pious Caliphs did not allow a “Muslim ruler” to treat the royal treasury as his personal coffer; rather, it should be treated as a public resource. For personal usage, a ruler could take a salary as equal to his well-equipped troopers, which was 234 *tankas* a year in the Indian context.¹⁹ Alternately, the ruler could also take the salary equivalent to his highest-paid officer or an amount which was required to maintain his dignity, which can be substantially higher than the salary paid to his highest officer; not more than this would be justifiable in the eyes of the Islamic tradition.²⁰

Thus, by following Persianate kingship, the Delhi Sultans could establish a state which revolved around his personal authority by marginalising the interferences of

¹⁸ Persian developed as the language of educated by the eleventh and twelfth century under Samanids and Seljuk Turks. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 1A, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 150.

¹⁹ Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1961, p. 143

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143

ulemas. Then, most of Delhi Sultans indulged in extravagant lifestyles at the expense of the royal assets, which they treated as their personal treasury. This makes it perspicuous that the Delhi Sultans were not following the *shari'a* rule as the core of their administration. Instead, they often resorted to *zawabit* rule, which was considered a secular law where the ruler framed state regulations on the basis of political expediency and logical explanations. Notably, even the orthodox Indo-Persian scholars supported the *zawabit* as the need of the hour.²¹ However, they argued that the utilisation of *zawabit* should be as an auxiliary to the *shari'a*²² because all aspects of governance were not possible to bring under the ambit of *shari'a* alone. Nonetheless, it shows that *shari'a* had never been the dominating aspect of sultanate administration, and thus, it cannot be termed as an “Islamic state”.

Similarly, the “Turkishness” of the early Delhi Sultans and their offspring often got subsumed into the political arrangements and cultural prospects of Persian kingship. Though Sultans preferred the Persianate courtly culture to denote them, multiple ethnic groups had their presence in the administration and military of the Delhi Sultanate. Definitely, the Persianate culture had a larger say in the administration as the Persian was considered as the language of the “men of pen” of that time. The Persianate identity was perpetuated by literate members of the court at Delhi and demonstrated through literature of a historical and epic nature, either in prose or poetry, which engaged with references to the pre-Islamic Persian past. The language of the court was Persian, and it served to bind together the diverse body of soldiers employed in the Sultanate armies, at least at the elite levels.

On the other hand, Arabic remained the language of religion. The Islamic theological learning was provided in Arabic. Thus, the political system or state that emerged in the thirteenth century northern part of India and continued till the sixteenth century under various dynasties had a complex cultural orientation. The sultanate state was neither an Islamic state (*dar-ul-Islam*) nor a Turkish Empire nor a Persianate monarchy; it was a pragmatic state which moulded its ruling ideology according to its needs. The Sultan kept a tight hold on administrative affairs and integrated people of

²¹ Ibid., pp, 117-72

²² Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India, c. 1200-1800*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2004, p. 40

various ethnic groups including “foreign people” implacably into their own system. Thus, by drawing on the older governance models and kingship of pre-Islamic Persia, the Sultans had given rise to their own regional variants of kingship in Delhi. The reasons for the pragmatism of Delhi sultans can also be attributed to the socio-cultural formation of medieval Hindustan. Unlike the Ottoman Empire (another “Muslim” power emerging in the frontiers of Anatolia during the twelfth century), which had to engage in continuous religious warfare with the Christians of Greece by making them self-conscious of their religious beliefs and politically charged, the Delhi Sultans never had to fight such religiously charged battles in Hindustan and thus never considered religion as a politically decisive aspect of kingship.

Despite the Delhi Sultans being pragmatic in their approach to governance, the stigma of Islamists got formulated about many of them. For this formulation, along with the colonialist historians, the contemporary medieval scholars’ approach is also reasonably responsible. In medieval India, a large section of the scholars were either directly or indirectly associated with the ruling house. Pre-modern historians were equally selective in sharing details of occurrences according to their interests. They were often guided by their personal interests in pursuit of historical narratives. Absurdity was inherent in the writings of these scholars. Sensationalising of reporting and utilisation of allusions to make stories entertaining was part of the writing methods of medieval Indo-Persian and Indic scholars. They were often guided by their personal interests or tried to amplify the interests of their masters while recording past occurrences or contemporary events.

The early Delhi sultanate scholars like Fakhr-i-Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami often portrayed the victories of Qutubuddin Aibek and Iltutmish as the “victory of Islam” over “infidelity of Hindus”. They depicted the early Central Asian invasions as *jihad* or *ghaza* and used contemptuous words to define the “Hindus”. Mudabbir wrote that a “Muslim ruler” must wish for holy war (*jihad*) against the unbelievers and should focus on collecting *jizyah* (poll tax) and *kharaj* (land tax) from the defeated unbelievers and *dhimmis* (*zimmis*).²³ Similarly, Hasan Nizami stated by explaining the battle at Ajmer

²³ M.S. Khan, “Life and Works of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir,” in *Islamic Culture: An English Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1977), p. 135.

(1192): “The army of Islam was completely victorious, and a hundred thousand grovelling Hindus swiftly departed to the fire of hell. In place of temples, mosques, *madrasas* were constructed, and Islamic law was enforced.”²⁴

Thus, these authors created a narrative that seemed like the Delhi Sultans’ rule was for vengeance against the Hindus. However, most of these narratives were highly exaggerated and used to flatter their patron. Both Mudabbir and Nizami migrated from Central Asia to India in the hope of a good life, which they wished to attain by receiving the ruler’s favour. They wished to earn the goodwill of the ruler by carefully crafting their patron’s image as an exalted “Muslim” figure among the Islamic world. Nizami strangely used the royal title “Sultan Shams ud-Dunya wad-Din” for Iltutmish even before Iltutmish ascended the throne and was merely serving under Qutubuddin Aibek.²⁵ Furthermore, Nizami had willfully omitted information about the succession of Aram Shah to Iltutmish in an attempt to portray Iltutmish as the natural successor to Aibek. This information would remain unknown to us if, in a later period, Minhaj ud-Din Siraj Juzjani did record it.

The authorial intentions of Indo-Persian become transpicuous once we see Amir Khusrau’s approach to history. In *Nuh Siphir*, Khusrau took a moderate approach, praising “Hindus” for their excellence in science, technology and wisdom. Even while describing Hinduism, he refrained from value judgment. However, in *Khaza’in al-Futuh*, he took a harsh approach to the “Hindus”. He often described the “Hindu” rulers as “cow worshipping Hindus” and “infidels”. The victory of Alauddin Khalji over Gujarat was portrayed as the victory of Islam and the thought of Muhammad over the infidels.

A careful study, however, reveals that the *Khaza’in al-Futuh* was composed in AD 1311–12, while Khusrau was in his prime age during Alauddin’s reign. Khusrau was an ambitious person who wanted to become rich and wished to achieve it without persistent labour. Hence, he selected the only profession of that time, combining the minimum labour and maximum profit – the job of court poet, a panegyric. Khusrau praised Alauddin’s military victories throughout most of the subcontinent to obtain the reward

²⁴ Hasan Nizami, “Taj ul-Ma’aşir,” Eng. trans. in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. 2, p. 215.

²⁵ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography Upto the Thirteenth Century*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2010, p. 46.

from the Sultan. He praised the victories with exaggeration and allusions to the greatness of the Sultan. Along with praising, Khusrau even cautiously omitted the heinous crime that Alauddin Khalji committed by ordering the murder of his uncle and the reigning Sultan of Delhi, Jalaluddin Khalji – a fact that Zia al-Din Barani has recorded.²⁶ Similarly, Khusrau refrained from mentioning the defeat of Alauddin's forces against the Mongol incursions. Hence, the demeaning language used for the non-Muslims (both Hindus and Mongols) by Khusrau must be understood from the context of authorial bias.

Significantly, perhaps Sultan Alauddin Khalji read those works written by his court chroniclers. Barani mentioned that Alauddin personally had gone through several volumes of Kabir al-Din's *Tarikh-i-Alai* and *Fathnama* as well.²⁷ So, it would not be an impossibility that Alauddin might also have read those works written by Amir Khusrau. Therefore, it would be an impossible task for Khusrau to narrate something against his patron. Yet, it seems Khusrau tried to express his personal melancholy in some verses in *Khaza'in al-Futuh*. He wrote that after conquering Gujarat, Alauddin's *maliks* sent one of the idols of Somanatha, "the greatest of them all", to the Imperial Court so that the breaking of their *helpless God* [italics are to give emphasis] may be demonstrated to the idol-worshipping Hindus."²⁸ Thus, by describing God as helpless, Khusrau might personally be lamenting the destruction of a Holy site, but being a court chronicler, he was unable to express his feelings. On the other hand, the *Nuh Siphir*, Khusrau wrote in his old age, during the reign of Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah, who, unlike his father Alauddin Khalji, was not so ambitious. By then, Khusrau was also greatly influenced by the teachings of humanism of his *Pir*, Nizamuddin Auliya. This changed his social outlook, which was reflected in *Nuh Siphir*.

Another prominent Sultanate Indo-Persian scholar was Zia Barani, who is considered the most orthodox among all because of his opinion expressing the essentiality of annihilating the "Hindus", the followers of polytheism. Yet again, the reasons for these extreme views are hidden in Barani's personal interests. Being a member of an aristocratic family, Barani anticipated a prosperous life. As expected, he

²⁶ Zia Baranai, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. trans. Ishtiyag Ahmad Zilli, pp. 144-147

²⁷ Peter Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 152–153; M. Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau*, pp. 100–102

²⁸ Amir Khusrau, *Khaza'in al-Futuh*, Eng. trans. by Mohammad Habib, as *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji (Treasures of Victory)*, B.D. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Bombay, 1931, pp. 35-36

started his career as *mulazim-i-dargah* (servant of the court) serving Muhammad Tughlaq. But with the passing away of Muhammad Tughlaq, Barani fell from the grace of the next Delhi Sultans and was forced to live in impoverishment. Barani blamed the “low-born” and the rational philosophers for his dwindling fortune. He believed that due to the advice of some rational philosophers, Muhammad Tughlaq offered services to “low borne” and thus disturbed the existing social equilibrium. However, being a clever elitist, he knew that his snobby views about the “low-born” would not stand the ground in the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood of humankind and the principle of egalitarianism. Thus, he directed his anger against the “Hindus” and made it a “clash of religions” in the Delhi Sultanate. Years of frustration and dismay have played a role in his social outlook.

Moreover, most of Zia Barani’s views were suggestive advice for the Sultan. It seems that through these pieces of advice, he tried to create ethical and moral pressure on the sultans to pay notice to him. In real politics, these views had no substantial influence. It becomes explicit once we notice Barani’s approach towards implementing the *shari’a* law in the Delhi Sultanate. Being an orthodox mullah, he was supposed to uphold the rule of *shari’a*; rather, he advocated for *zawabit*, with the precondition that it should be in accordance with *shari’a* and not stand against it. Pragmatism made Barani realise that in a state where the large populations are non-Muslim, the implantation of *shari’a* would not be practical. Yet, the loss of material possessions after Muhammad Tughlaq’s death made him bitter, particularly towards the non-elites and the rational scholars, whom he considered responsible for his fall. Moreover, his emphasis on high birth, heredity and class can be viewed as a non-religious feature of his political theory, though it was aristocratic or elitist in nature. Nonetheless, he even expressed his disgust about the role of Sultans as he witnessed the prosperity of “Hindus” and the poverty of “Muslims” in the Delhi Sultanate.

Besides their personal interests, several other causes were also responsible for the authorial biases of Indo-Persian scholars in India. They were the product of “Muslim theological studies” and obviously were influenced by Islamic traditions. The Islamic scholars from antiquity carried a perception that Hindustan is a land where idol worshipping originated. Thus, the orthodox section of the Sultanate regime, including a

section of Indo-Persian scholars, were at unease that being the minority in a land tremendously inhabited by the pagans (here the Hindus), the Muslims might be seduced to infidelity with ease and thus their religion might get corrupted. Therefore, they viewed “Hindus” as an enemy of their faith and certainly placed their wishful thinking about annihilating the “Hindus”. Zia Barani expressed that polytheism and infidelity prevalent among “Hindus” would lead Muslims to forsake God as, just as the “Hindus” had already done it. On the other hand, the audience of the Indo-Persian scholars included those of the Central Asian aspirants (seeking military jobs), and the narratives ensured the flow of military aspirants from the region to Delhi, at least in the early years of the Sultanate.

However, these all were either wishful thinking of orthodox scholars or in the form of advice, which the Sultans hardly followed. Though, the early Delhi Sultans (Qutubuddin Aibek, Shamsuddin Iltutmish, Ghiyasuddin Balban, Jalaluddin Khalji, and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq were not from any established ruling houses when they assumed the throne) were from humble slave origins and tried to maintain a certain level of cordial relations with the *ulamas* to gather legitimacy for their actions, second generation monarchs like Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq comprehensively created a division of religion and politics (administration) during their reign. The early Delhi Sultans, at times, adopted certain policies which, at least in its periphery, could be recognised as legitimate by the *ulama* and could be accepted as in compliance with the doctrine of faith. But, at large, they tried to maintain policies that accommodate every section of the administration in various capacities.

Shamsuddin Iltutmish argued that, in terms of strength, Muslims were like “salt in a dish” in India among the large majority of Hindus, and thus, any policy to force the “infidels” to accept Islam by waging war would be futile. Ghiyasuddin Balban usually kept the theologians and theorists at a distance by terming them mere seekers after narrow worldly gain. Alauddin Khalji, though he enjoyed discussions with the *ulemas* regarding governance policies as described in *shari’a*, in practice, followed the policy that best served the interest of enhancing his power. Muhammad Tughlaq appointed them to high positions in his administration instead of degrading the Hindus. Firoz Tughlaq also showed considerable interest in Hindu traditions and monuments despite having some religious leanings. Thus, in reality, the “Hindus” were an integral part of the

administrative system of the Delhi Sultanate. At the local level, the “Hindu” landlords established the authority of the Sultans. The economic system of the Sultanate was entirely controlled by the “Hindu” upper class, while “Muslim” elites predominantly controlled the civil and military affairs of the administration.

Thus, the contemptuous narrative on the “Hindus” by a section on Indo-Persian scholars seems more of an authorial bias without having any substantial factual basis. The aspect becomes further explicit if we turn back to how Arabic scholars of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries viewed “Hindus”. Scholars like Al-Andalusi, Tahir Marvazi and Shahrastani, having an interest in science, philosophy and theology, appreciated Indians [Hindus] for their knowledge and even expressed a sympathetic approach towards Hinduism (placed Hinduism as *Mushabih Ahl al-Kitab* and even *Ahl al-Kitab*) because they expected the benefits of establishing contact with Indians. Then, scholars like Al-Beruni, serving the Ghaznavids, visited India with the conquering army, yet viewed “Hindus” exceedingly well in his narrative. Al-Beruni was also interested in the philosophical and scientific aspects of humanism. In contrast, Nasr al-Utbi, another Ghaznavid scholar writing political narratives, viewed the “Hindus” with much contempt. He often referred to “Hindus” as *Kafirun*. Being patronised by the Ghaznavids, Utbi penned down the narrative suitable for his master’s interests. As has been discussed earlier, Mahmud’s interests were served by invading India by utilising *ghaza* for that purpose.

Therefore, though a kind of authorial bias can be witnessed against the “Hindus”, it was more symbolic. The real politics was different – the local cooperation from the landed class, who were predominantly Hindus, was crucial for the smooth functioning of the Sultanate. Throughout the Delhi Sultanate period, particularly in rural areas, the Hindu landed aristocracy enjoyed significant power and prestige and played an important role in the administration. Thus, the Delhi Sultans tried to follow a policy where they left the “Hindus” to their belief, except in cases where someone willingly converted to Islam.²⁹

²⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Political Image and its Application to Historical Fact,” in Speros Vryonis Jr. (ed.), *Islam and the Cultural Change in the middle Ages*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 108.

This phenomenon of authorial bias was not confined to Arabic and Indo-Persian scholars alone; the Indic writers of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries also equally demonstrated their share of biases, while composing the historical narratives. The Delhi Sultans were often described and compared with “demons/*asuras*” of ancient myths, against which the Indic monarchs fought a war to save *dharma*. Thus, they portrayed the Sultans as not only a threat to their territory but to their faith as well. However, most of the Indic scholars just pressed forward their patron’s wishes, that was, to construct normative selfhood by creating narratives of the ancestral greatness of their patron.

By the fifteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate weakened, resulting in many regional powers emerging in various parts of Hindustan. The new states were searching for authority and legitimacy, which they wanted to earn by patronising literature in vernacular languages. Notably, in the medieval Rajput literary traditions, “heroism” was often defined as an essence that transmits through lineage. Hence, almost all the narratives tell essentially the same core story of the war, sacrifice, bravery, protection of *dharma*, and the role of women in wars. To display these heroic qualities, there was a need for an equally powerful or even gigantic enemy. Thus, the Indic scholars often produced the Delhi Sultans as the enemy of their patrons, who threatened not only their territory but also their idea of kingship, ritual, and social order.

Apart from legitimising their patron’s authority, these Indic authors were also concerned about protecting the Brahminical norms in the society, which was challenged by the coming of the Central Asian forces in India. The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate saw the beginning of a new language (Persian) and a new religion (Islam) in India, which was still mostly unknown in the significant parts of the subcontinent. Islam was considered a religion that was theoretically against all the core beliefs of Hinduism. Thus, for the Indic scholars, upholding the Brahminical tradition of Hinduism was crucial as that would ensure their privilege as well in society. The Sultanate also brought with them a new theory of kingship which was different from that of the ruling ideas and ideologies of Indian rulers. Therefore, the Indic scholars not only perceived the Sultans as a potent military threat but also a menace to their *dharma*, ritual, social order and ruling ideas.

Interestingly, the Indic scholars used Muslims in general and the Sultans in particular as the carriers to promote the Rajput ideals of kingship. In *Kanhadade Prabandha* and *Viramde Sonigara ri Vat*, Sultan Alauddin's daughter Piroza/Firoza was portrayed as the paragon of Rajput identity by making her commit *sati* and remembering her past lives (rebirth, a concept of Hindu belief) as an ideal Rajput woman. The authors also portrayed that, though Alauddin Khalji offered Piroza's hand to Viramde, which the latter promptly refused, as it would pollute the *Kshatriya dharma* of the Sonagara Chauhans. Thus, by rejecting Piroja, Viramde protected the *Kshatriya dharma*, and at the same time, by offering Piroja, Alauddin revealed his weakness. Thus, these narratives worked as a kind of psychological resistance to the Sultanate offensive. Apart from this, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also witnessed the development of the formation of new caste groups. Diverse groups began to claim an exalted *Kshatriya* status and a place in the larger *varna* hierarchy. The said narrative of Piroja and Viramde might also be seen in that context.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to note that these Indic narratives were not composed to record "historical facts" but were literacy works that spoke of historical events. These narratives were to impart a view to influence perceptions and behaviour in their readership in favour of creating legitimacy for the patrons, which the authors often discovered in the past by including ancestors' achievements and mistakes, kingly endorsements, texts and the story of the client's origin. They had presented their ideological and political thoughts rather than representing the past. These narratives were composed with motives and presuppositions to suit the requirements of their patrons. But, significantly, the process of incorporating the Muslims into the mythological category of devil/evil and terming them with alternate derogatory terminologies as they did with other foreign groups previously had expunged the distinctiveness of the Muslims.

Remarkably, despite their particular authorial intentions, the medieval Indic authors hardly used religious terminologies to denote either the Delhi sultans or the "Muslims" in general. They often used terminologies like *Turushka*³⁰, *Mlecchas* and *Yavanas* for the "Muslims". An inscription issued by a wealthy Hindu merchant of Delhi in the fourteenth

³⁰ The term *Turushkas* was initially used for the Central Asian Turks who came to India, however, later extensively used to mean Muslims who settled in India. Thapar, *Our History, Their History, Whose History?*, p. 53

century described the then Delhi Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq as *Turushka*, *Mleccha*, and almost an ideal ruler.³¹ Notably, no trader would have dared to use a derogatory term for a ruler in the medieval age. Thus, the term *Mleccha* could only imply that the Sultan had no caste identity – a person outside the caste system.

The identity in the medieval period was primarily geographical and ethnic in nature, not religious. People were defined mainly by their place of origin, residence, class and style of ruler-ship, not by the faith or religion they followed. For instance, Amir Khusrau wrote, “I am an Indian Turk, and I can give you a reply in Hindi”.³² Thus, he emphasised on his ethnic identity over his religious identity. Likewise, the twelfth-century Indic scholar Kalhana referred to Kushans as *Turushkas* in his *Rajatarangini* (1148).³³ Significantly, the Kushans were neither Turks nor followers of Islam, yet Kalhana labelled them as *Turushka* because they came from the same region as the twelfth-century “Muslim” Turks. It shows that ethnic identity prevailed over religious identity in twelfth-century India. Similarly, a fourteenth-century text, *Sarva-darshana-samgraha*, categorically placed the *Turushkas* along with the *shramanas* (Buddhists, Jains, Charvakas) since they all were, in principle *nastikas* – non-believers in the deity.³⁴ Though the term “Muslamana” was familiarised in India by the thirteenth century, the Indic scholars preferred terminologies like *Tajika*³⁵, *Turushka*, *Pathana*, etc., to denote “Muslim” rulers of the Delhi Sultanate.³⁶

This is where the complications started. Colonial scholars like James Tod not only presented the Indic sources in a way that seemed every description of the Indic narratives as “facts” but also brought the religious identity to the core of medieval social and

³¹ Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate, 1191-1516*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 30-31

³² Amir Khusrau, *Nuh Siphir*, Eng. trans. by R. Nath as *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau (in 1318AD)*, Historical Research Documentation Programme, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 17-18

³³ Kalhana Pandita, *Kings of Kashmir: Being a Translation of the Sanskrit Work Rajatarangini*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. by Jogesh Chunder Dutt, Trubner and Co., London, 1879, pp. 116, 206, and Vol. 2 published by I.C. Bose & Co., Calcutta, 1887, pp. 76, 79, 317

³⁴ Thapar, *Our History, Their History, Whose History?*, pp. 93-94; Madhava Acharya, *The Sarva-darshana-samgraha*, Eng. trans. by E.B. Cowell and A.E. Gough as *Review of the Different Systems of Hindu Philosophy*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., London, 1900.

³⁵ References to Tajikas in inscriptions discontinued after the tenth century. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?: Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eight to Fourteenth century)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998, p. 39

³⁶ Ibid., p. 30

political discourse. It seems the colonialists either failed to grasp the authorial intentions of medieval scholars or intentionally overlooked this aspect of medieval Indian scholars in order to prove a point rather than to arrive at an understanding of the past. Notably, some of the Indic poets praised the “Muslim Sultans”. So, what kind of political ethos can we discern from these literary works? Yet the colonialists were the ones who wrote the first modern history of India, which still has its implications in Indian societies in the form of stereotypes.

One such stereotype against the Muslim rulers of medieval India is that they were unusually violent. It should be remembered that violence was a recurrent, regular feature of pre-modern Indian kingship irrespective of the religious faith of the rulers – be it Hinduism or Islam. Kings were all violent. Battles were often turned into occasions for sorting out not just one confrontation but a variety of conflictual and uncertain relations. Hindus often fought for the Muslim rulers and vice versa. Will those conquests still be considered “Islamic conquests” where a Hindu holds the sword for a “Muslim” ruler? Significantly, nobody ever conquered all of India (geographically as we know it today).

In fact, invasions were part of the political norms of the pre-modern period. The aftermath of an invasion often witnessed new socio-economic interests and new cultures. This does not justify invasions but just suggests a less negative effect. As Mohammad Habib has pointed out, the Central Asian invasions brought significant social and economic changes in Indian societies through urban and rural revolutions. However, the colonialists constantly focused on the invasion itself and blacked out more historical changes in the Indian society and economy during the sultanate period. Thus, the colonialists had left such a mark on the Indian historiographical discourse that even after many years passed, the dust of raids vanished, but a section of the intellectuals still tried to place the medieval marauders along with the British colonisers. The British and the Central Asian Turko-Persians started to be viewed in the same categories.

Thus, it can be said that during the earlier period, conquest and expeditions were frequent, and income from it was one of the main sources of the imperial treasure. A military campaign was not only for state expansion or for the annexation of rival kingdoms, but a victory provided legitimacy as well as funded additional campaigns. The Delhi Sultanate was no different from it. In medieval Indian politics, gaining and holding

on to power was not enough; it needed to be portrayed for the subjects, vassals, nobles, and enemies. So, medieval Indian rulers also needed to display their authority by performing certain rituals or, at times, by destroying the opponent's centre of power. There seems to be a claim of a single "Islamic conquest" of India. However, if we see historically, a number of Indo-Muslim dynasties have reigned over different parts of the Indian subcontinent over the centuries. Some came from "outside" the subcontinent, while the rest were born and brought up here.

To conclude it can be argued that every civilisation is formed with diverse conditions containing varied elements to which historical elements may be related and with which reports and historical materials may be checked. Notably, every age shapes their past based on their present concern. Thus, the recording of the history arises out of the needs of the successive present. Most of the medieval Indian chronicles – be it Indo-Persian or Indic significantly contain eulogies to highlight the conquests and legitimise the newly establishing monarchies. Historians in the successive presents did play a significant role in producing and sustaining ideas of power, justice and ideologies of the contemporary monarchies.

However, it would be unfair to consider medieval historiography as "propaganda" in any familiar sense of that word. Rather, those narratives should be treated in a broader sense as part of a particular understanding of the past on contemporaries and on posterity. The "rhetorical" elements and the "absurdity" prevailing in those historical narratives were part of a totally different attitude to history and its purpose at that age. Again, it would be a mistake to undermine their credentials as writers of history who lacked methodological rigour. It should be accepted that these medieval scholars provided the foundation on which the medieval history of India can be glanced at. Therefore, to understand the medieval, one must begin with questions and then impartially marshal through shreds of evidence before producing any answers, which the colonialists lacked and left a legacy of Indian historiography, which long influenced the public perception in a divided manner. Thus, the re-investigation must navigate through understanding the relationship between the texts, patronage contexts, politics, and historical development of the period in the Sultanate capital Delhi and regions.

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TEXTS, IDEAS AND CONQUESTS: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL READING OF THE *KHAZA'IN AL-FUTUH*

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Abstract

The literal meaning of Khaza'in al-Futuh is treasures of victory - a contemporary account of the conquests of Alauddin Khalji. The Khaza'in al-Futuh is important for this historiographical study for two reasons - firstly, it shows the epic of conquest style through its thematic emphasis on the glorification of the Turk against the 'Hindu' and it acts as an unconscious rival of 'the epic of resistance'. Secondly, this is the only account of Amir Khusrau which was written in prose form. Even though modern historians have taken up this celebrated work of Khusrau for consideration, most have looked at it to find answers for their own problems.¹ According to Gabriel Spiegel, historiography is the crossroad of history and literature.² Therefore, while doing a

historiographical reading, one needs to take both narratives as well as the literary tradition in which the narrative has been placed, into contemplation. Hence, this paper has attempted to explore the Khaza'in al-Futuh by placing it within the Perso-Arabic historical traditions of conquest literature to understand how far the narrative can be categorised as a 'book of conquest'.

Keywords: *Futuh, Fathnama, Literary Tradition, Gharat, Fitna*

In his much celebrated article "Epic and Counter Epic in Medieval India," Aziz Ahmad had discussed two sets of historical narratives – the 'epic of conquest' written by the 'Muslims' and the 'epic of resistance' composed by the 'Hindus', primarily in vernacular language (in most cases in different dialects of Hindi).³ Ahmad has identified the *Khaza'in al-Futuh* as a 'book of conquest'. However, he did not mention his reasons for categorising the *Khaza'in* as a conquest narrative. Though the word *futuh* itself literally means victories, yet, for a profound understanding of the text, the present paper tries to place it within the Arabic and Persian tradition of conquest narratives to explore how far the *Khaza'in al Futuh* can be placed within the Arabic *futuh* or Persian *fathnama* tradition of literature.

Both medieval and modern scholars on medieval Indian history have held Amir Khusrau in high esteem as one of the greatest poets and intellectuals. Zia al-Din Barani has noted that

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Conquest, Resistance, and Trajectories: Historiographical Reading of an Indic War Poem – The *Kanhadade Prabandha*

Mir Kamruzzaman Chowdhary

The *Kanhadade Prabandha* describes Alauddin Khalji's raids against the Somanatha temple and his subsequent siege of the Jâlôr fort. Padmanabha began the narrative with Alauddin's military raid of Gujarat in A.D. 1299. He gave the cause of this raid as follows:

“At that time, the ruler of Gurjaradharâ was Sârangadeva. He humiliated Mâdhava BrâhmaGa, which became the cause of conflict. Mâdhava, who was the favorite Pradhâna of the Râjâ, was inconsolably offended. He gave up food and vowed that he would not take meals on the soil of Gujarât till he had brought the Turks there.”¹

Thus, the poet put the blame on the shoulder of a disgruntled noble who was sacked from his job by the king. However, at the same time, Padmanabha laments the demise of *khatriyan* dharma in Gujarat, where the king killed Madhava's brother and took the latter's wife into the royal harem.² However, Madhav, who invited Alauddin to Gujarat, has been universally condemned by Padmanabha. He has noted that by inviting the *mlechchha* Alauddin Khalji, Madhava has committed a sin, which can only relate to his previous birth.³

Between the fourteenth and the mid-sixteenth centuries, Jâlôr existed on the frontiers of two competing regional powers, Gujarat and Marwar. Besides this, the Lohanai Pathans also created episodic troubles. Once Kanhadade of the Sonagara had influence over the region but gradually lost its power to the Lohani Afghans in the fourteenth century.⁴ In 1932 the Rathod ruler of Marwar killed Vishaldeo Chauhan of Jâlôr.⁵ For a time, Rani Popanbai, the widow of Vishaldeo, carried on state affairs with the help of a Lohani Afghan, Malek Khurram. But, ultimately, a disagreement occurred between

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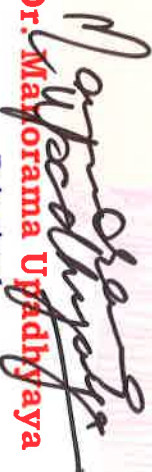
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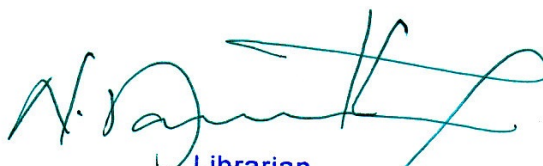
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