Despite an abundance of contemporary historical source material on Medieval Indian History in the form of chronicles, royal autobiographies, biographical works, official and non-official histories, private letters, administrative manuals and plenty of hagiological literature, not much attention has been paid by historians in the United States to this period of Indian History. While going through a list of works on American historical scholarship on India, a significant facet which comes to light is the shift directly from Indology to studies in Modern India.

In recent years, however, a few renowned American historians like Anne-Marie Schimmel, Robert Eric Frykenberg, John F. Richards, Gavin Hambly and their students have done some good work. It deals with the establishment of trade and maritime relations between Mughal India and the West — mainly Portugal and Spain, the Mughal Emperor Akbar’s relations with the early Jesuits, Aurangzeb’s religious and Rajput policies, Mughal administration of Golconda, Urbanization in Medieval India, Sufism and Muslim Culture.

Muslims have always had a great sense and awareness of history which can be traced right back to Prophet Mohamed. Soon after the inception of Islam works began to be composed on the lives of the Prophet, the Caliphs, Sultans
and nobles. Islam "presented the believer with a whole compass of universal history, from the Creation to the coming of Islam and predicted the future as culminating on the Day of Judgement. The very idea that on the Day of Judgement, a man would be rewarded or punished for his good or bad deeds, necessitated the existence of history, to study the past, discern mistakes, and rectify them for building the future."¹ Muslims also believed that "the Prophet conveyed his teachings through examples which act as guidance and warnings... Ibr and Hadis, frequently found in the Holy Book connote 'illustrative examples'. Man was urged to consider the past as evidence, allusions and examples, through which he could pass from the appearance of things to the knowledge of the unseen. The Community was urged to view past events, both reported and experienced as indications, that should awaken its moral sense and enhance its ability to act according to the demands of God: to discern the ever present design of the Creator, Ibr meant both negative admonition and positive direction for future action."²

Islam stressed upon the significance of chronology and Muslims have always been conscious of the importance of maintaining a record of the past. In order to understand and

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2. Ibid.

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interpret the Quran, historical knowledge was indispensable. Initially, historical works were written exclusively in Arabic, the language of the Quran and of the intellectual classes. But from the second half of the tenth century, with the revival of Persian nationalism and Persian renaissance, the Arabic tradition was weakened and historical works began to be written in Persian too. The Turkish dynasties of Central Asia adopted Persian language and culture, and when the Turks established their rule over India in the eleventh century, they also introduced the Persian tradition of historical writing into this country. While the Arabs had a wider concept of history which laid greater emphasis on age and nation, the Persians were more interested with the history of kings and the court.

Therefore, "a huge mass of historical literature consisting of general, dynastic, and regional histories, biographies and memoirs, was produced." 3 These Persian works have served as the main source for the history of Medieval India. Contemporary historians of the Delhi Sultanate wrote on diverse topics "like general histories of the Islamic world, prose eulogies of the Sultans, panegyrical sketches of their patrons and didactic history." 4

Medieval historians took their vocation seriously and held history in high esteem. Zia-ud-din Barani is generally regarded as the greatest and most perspective of the contemporary medieval historians. He defined history "as the knowledge of annals and traditions of prophets, caliphs, sultans and other great men of religion and government. He emphasized history's didactic religious purpose. Narration of socio-economic changes was peripheral." Other renowned historians of the period were Shams Siraj Afif, Hasan Nizami and Amir Khusrau. Afif's history of the reign of Furuz Shah Tughluk is noteworthy for broadening the horizon of history and giving readers a panoramic view of the age of Firuz Tughluk with all its Islamic glory.

Unfortunately, these early medieval historians could not be objective in their approach to the subject mainly because of the age in which they lived. Most of them were connected with the royal court, enjoying the benevolence of the Sultans. Therefore, it was natural for them to feel beholden to their patrons and write mainly for reward for pleasing their benefactors, "for the edification of their contemporaries and the future generations, for

5. Ibid., p. 179.
preserving the memory of the achievements of Muslim rulers and for justifying the ways of God to man." Their works showed pre-dominant traces of religious bias, Islam was glorified and everything was attributed to divine providence. In other words, history remained largely theocratic. Medieval Indian historiography remained centered mainly around the kings and nobles, ignoring the life and conditions of the common people. It also had little understanding or appreciation of the socio-economic factors that cause vital changes in societies and the rise and fall of dynasties.

Historical writing underwent a significant qualitative transformation during the Mughal period. The scope of history was considerably widened as a result of the prolific writings of eminent historians of the period: Abul Fazl, Abdul Hamid Lahori and Khafi Khan. Despite many limitations and charges of subjectivity being levelled against Abul Fazl, the court historian, friend and advisor of Akbar, he is justifiably regarded as a historian of extraordinary merit.

In his works Fazl was successful in adopting a national and secular approach to history and also in

establishing a close relationship between history and philosophy. He rejected the traditional conflict theory in Indian history. Abul Fazl saw no "conflict between Hindus and Muslims, but between the forces of stability and disintegration - the former represented by the Mughal Government and the latter by the Zamindars." He laid great stress on archival source material to arrive at a balanced view of historical events and was of the firm opinion that any historical works on India should also include Hindu philosophy, culture and religion.

During the Mughal period, Persian and Arabic traditions were blended harmoniously and chronicles, royal autobiographies, provincial and regional histories, official and non-official histories, private letters, biographies, administrative manuals and compendiums were written on a large scale. Unfortunately, history writing under the Mughals failed to unravel the saga of the progress of society and "most of the published volumes in Mughal history concentrate on government and give all too little information on conditions of life among the villagers who formed more than 80 percent of the total population."8

The process of transformation began in the realm of

7. Ibid.
medieval Indian historiography with the advent of Europeans to India. During this transitional phase historians like Sujan Rai, Bhim Sen, Ghulam Hussain Salim and Ghulam Husain Tabatabai were no longer content with merely chronicling historical events. In their writings "a spirit of systematising and generalising alongwith some concern for causation, howsoever nebulous,"\textsuperscript{9} could be discerned. Also, secular content began to dominate over the theological.

The real innovation in history writing on medieval India took place with the establishment of British Dominion. From the publication of History of Hindostan (London, 1768-72) by Alexander Dow to that of Mountstuart Elphinstone's History of India (London, 1841), a period of about seventy years, the development of British historical writing on Medieval India was closely linked with the "course of contemporary expansion of British rule in India and of the response to the problems created in British public life by that expansion. This close connection of their work with contemporary politics imparts a distinctive character to the historical writing of this period and lends to it a unity which transcends the idiosyncracies of individual historians."\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9} RC Jauhri, "The Writing of Medieval Indian History : Shifting Perspectives," p. 179.

British historical writing on India was deeply influenced by the intellectual and cultural environment of the authors. Broadly, four schools of thought - Romanticism, Evangelicalism, Enlightenment and Utilitarianism, influenced British historical perceptions and writings on India. English historians wrote under the impact of either of the above historical viewpoints. Although the British historians were aware of the superiority of western civilization and institutions, the approach of writers like Alexander Dow, Grant Duff and Mountstuart Elphinstone was on the whole, benevolent. "They were not only interested in wars and conquests, but also administration, social customs, religious beliefs and the influence of Islam on Hinduism."¹¹ They highlighted Indo-Moslem rapprochement and the emergence of a 'nation state' under the Mughals. For their information these late eighteenth and early nineteenth century historians relied on firmans, memoirs and archaeological evidence as well, besides contemporary Persian historical works and the accounts of the European travellers.

Most of the late eighteenth century historians were deeply influenced by Enlightenment. Under its impact history came to be regarded as a secular, nonpartisan, instructive and philosophical discipline. Enlightenment gave great

¹¹ Mohibbul Hasan, ed., Historians of Medieval India, p. xv.
importance to human reason and its watchwords were 'humanity, benevolence and tolerance'. The Enlightened scholars extended their unconditional support to the rule of law and believed in progress.

The work of the Enlightened writers was continued by the Utilitarians "who concerned themselves primarily with the progressive realization of human happiness on earth through the application of human reason to the problems of society." Utilitarianism regarded the state as the main instrument for the social and economic advancement of mankind. It also laid great stress on a rational code of law to bring about any reform. James Mill, the most famous representative of the Utilitarian school, and Henry Elliot were rather critical of India in their writings. In his History of British India (1817), Mill gives a "comprehensive treatment to Indian history as a whole" but suffers from the imperialist urge to reiterate the superiority of British rule and the advantages that accrued from it. "Medieval Indian history was harnessed to divide and fragment Indian nationalism. The whole scheme of periodisation based upon the scale of distinct civilisations, the stress on the political and administrative aspects, highlighting the

12. JS Grewal, Muslim Rule in India : The Assessment of British Historians, pp.2-3.
13. Ibid., p.69.
theocratic and oppressive character of Muslim state in the country, sowed the seeds of communal discord."\textsuperscript{14}

The critique of James Mill and Henry Elliot was so impressive and acceptable that Mountstuart Elphinstone's sympathetic approach and appreciation of Muslim India's poetry, architecture and painting in his \textit{History of India} (1841) failed to change the pre-conceived notions the West had acquired about India. Elphinstone's \textit{History of India} was nonetheless a stupendous success and he came to be regarded as "the best and most readable of Anglo-Indian historians" and also "one of the most experienced and easily the most intellectual of the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Indians."\textsuperscript{15} His work, based on some new and original sources was of an exceptionally high quality combining "a rare union of wide research, profound reflection, and pregnant brevity; his treatment of the characters was masterly; his views of the genius, character and government of the Muslims were judicious and sound."\textsuperscript{16} With Elphinstone the liberal phase of British historical writing on Medieval India came to an end.

H.M. Elliot with his compendious and interesting work, \textit{The History of India, as Told by its Own Historians} -

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} RC Jauhri, "The Writing of Medieval Indian History : Shifting Perspectives," , p. 180.
\item \textsuperscript{15} JS Grewal, \textit{Muslim Rule in India} : The Assessment of British Historians, pp.130-131.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.168.
\end{itemize}
The Muhammadan Period, ed. by John Dowson (8 volumes, London, 1867-77), initiated the second phase of history writing on medieval India. He had a poor opinion of the historians of this period, was contemptuous and prejudiced in his approach towards India and lacked sympathy and understanding of India's medieval phase. Despite that, the volumes are "a goldmine of contemporary Muslim writings on the Muslim period in Indian History."\(^{17}\) Although the translation of certain passages is doubtful and there are disagreements over some of the texts, the work enjoyed a considerable reputation right up to the early decades of the twentieth century. Tremendous labour went into the writing of this monumental volume which consists of "extracts in translation from over one hundred and sixty relevant works, covering a period of about one thousand years; each volume contains a considerable number of erudite appendices dealing with some of the most intricate points connected with the history of the period."\(^{18}\)

As a result of Elliot's legacy, subsequent British historians "ignored the healthier trends and methods of contemporary European historiography and "narrowed down the scope of history to politics and administration, ignoring


\(^{18}\) JS Grewal, Muslim Rule in India : The Assessment of British Historians, pp.169-170.
other aspects of life and failing to understand the workings of human society."\(^{19}\) Though Edward Thomas and W.H. Moreland blazed a new trail by writing about numismatic, agrarian and economic history, their approach to India remained critical. This mood continued to prevail in the *Cambridge History of India* vols III and IV (1928-1937), edited by Sir Wolseley Haig and Richard Burn which treated medieval Indian History in the Indo-Muslim political paradigm.

Indian scholars began to study medieval India based on western methods, in English, during the early part of the nineteenth century. Initially their approach and treatment of the subject was similar to that of the nineteenth century British historians of Muslim India. It was only from the late 1920’s that some Indian historians, influenced by nationalist ideas and having acquired knowledge of the latest trends in European historiography began to adopt new research methodology and open up new areas of investigation. As a result the stranglehold of British historical writing began to crack and India’s history was no longer viewed from the centre. "The early official historians were content with the glamour and drama of political history"\(^{20}\) and ignored the study of society in the provinces, districts and towns.

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But now, besides political history, economic and social history began to receive much attention and a new "school of nationalist historians who see modern Indian history in terms of the rise and fulfilment of the national movement" also emerged.

The earliest Indian exponent of this new school of historiography was Sir Jadunath Sarkar. He is worshipped as a prophet of modern scientific history writing in India. Although a product of Western and British historiography, he overcame the British legacy and rose above it. His ideal was the German historian Leopold von Ranke. Under Sarkar historical research and writing in India was revolutionized. He deviated from the path followed by the imperialist historians of medieval India and opened new fields of investigation by giving a new dimension and fresh outlook to the study of this period of Indian history. J.N. Sarkar was a prolific writer and because of his monumental output comprising "twenty-three insightful monographs, scores of edited and translated volumes, and numerous research papers dealing with Aurangzeb, the fall of Mughal Empire, Shivaji and the Marathas, the Mughal administration, and military history," he is regarded as the 'Columbus' as well as 'Gibbon' of medieval Indian history. Jadunath Sarkar was

21. Ibid.
receptive to the important ideas and new trends in historical research and laid the foundation of a modern school of medieval historiography based on new techniques — The Sir Jadunath Sarkar or the Calcutta School of Historical Research.

Profoundly influenced by Sir Jadunath Sarkar's example, a new generation of Indian historians belonging to the Allahabad, Aligarh, and Marxist Schools, produced an ever - increasing volume of scholarship of the medieval period of our history. Sarkar inspired a galaxy of eminent historians like Muhammad Habib, Tara Chand, Irfan Habib, Satish Chandra, K.M. Ashraf, Athar Ali, Ishwari Prasad, I.H. Qureshi, K.S. Lal, A.L. Srivastava, and a number of their disciples. Political and dynastic history was relegated to the background and the thrust of medieval Indian history is now "on the nature of agrarian economy, jagirdari, nobility, intermediary classes, zamindars and chieftains, peasantry and artisans, trade and commerce with urbanisation and industrial dynamism, socio-economic roots of the Maratha, Sikh, Rajput and Jat risings, nature of feudal relations... technological changes, process of social change and mobility, role of Sufi Saints and their teachings in the socio-economic and cultural developments."23

To meet the challenge of British imperialism, historians at Allahabad projected a unified Indo-Muslim heritage and stressed upon the forces of integration which sustained medieval Indian society in the face of tension and turmoil. At Aligarh too, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan tried to reconcile Islam to the prevailing scientific spirit by concentrating more on the religious and cultural history of Islam, rather than attempting regular history. Combining mysticism with Marxian ideology, Muhammad Habib put forward the argument that economic greed instead of religious fanaticism was the driving force in medieval Indian history. The Marxist school became very popular in the post partition decades and historians like Irfan Habib, K.S. Lal, and Y.M. Siddiqi have undertaken research on the socio-economic and agrarian aspects of the history of Muslim India.

Lately, a wave of new or total history based on the social sciences is making inroads. This school of historians acknowledges that without due respect for political history, it is not possible to write good social, economic or cultural history. This 'New History' seeks to examine "new questions and new problems concerning the material basis of social formations, levels of technology, modes of production and distribution, capital accumulation, surplus economic growth and urbanisation, social process underlying social institutions, toiling masses rather than ruling elite,
regional-local history... without provoking any ideological battle."24

Contemporary Muslim writers, European, travellers, Hindu sources, the accounts of British and Indian historians, have all combined together to give us an insight of medieval Indian history and to keep our interest alive to undertake research on this fascinating period of Indian culture and history.

"For several centuries Islam dominated the subcontinent... and rulers like Akbar, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb in addition to their achievements in the political and administrative field, left a rich cultural heritage. Above all, the history of Muslim rule in India is the story of Islam in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. This led to conflicts, tensions, and assimilations, which make the record of particular interest to students of culture and politics."25 Students and historians in the United States were no exception.

In the twentieth century American interest in India was aroused with the publication of Katherine Mayo's Mother India in 1927. This book was the product of Mayo's six-month stay in India. "It was a scalding and horrified recital of

examples of child marriage, extreme caste practices, the plight of the untouchables, backward conditions of health and sanitation."\(^\text{26}\) Katherine Mayo's account was a highly biased one but *Mother India* became a sensation in the United States, in Great Britain, and in India. It became the centre of a storm that raged for half a dozen years... in all three countries."\(^\text{27}\) But these early twentieth century accounts mainly stressed on the exotic fabulousness of India and made no attempts at a serious scholarship of contemporary India.

At the end of World War-II, especially after India attained independence in 1947, the sub-continent became important in the international arena mainly due to its nationalistic fervour and the democratic path it had chosen. For the United States India became "a new repository for the hopes so painfully abandoned in China. Several major newspapers and both major American news agencies continued after the war to maintain correspondents and bureaus in India."\(^\text{28}\) This resulted in enhanced news coverage of India by the United States and new kind of literature on India, commanding a certain amount of serious attention from


critics and readers, came to be written. Some of the widely acclaimed books to be written during the early phase of this new scholarship were Margaret Bourke-White’s *Halfway to Freedom* (1949); Louis Fischer’s *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1950); Eleanor Roosevelt’s *India and the Awakening East* (1953); and Chester Bowles’ *Ambassador’s Report* (1954).

The post World War-II period in the United States also witnessed new opportunities for research and study abroad mainly with the help of Fulbright and Rockefeller grants. Robert Redfield’s "Comparative Civilizations Project" funded by the Ford Foundation from 1951 to 1961 aroused the interest of Redfield and Milton Singer in Indian Civilization. In 1954, Robert Crane of the History Department at Chicago called an informal meeting of faculty members who had an interest in India. Instead of creating a new department for the study of India, it was decided to form an Inter-disciplinary committee to co-ordinate courses on South Asia in the various departments of the University. These efforts of Robert Crane let to the formation of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies at Chicago in 1955. Historians in the United States felt that "history should be alive, potent and dynamic. It should be a constructive force in society; and should be restored to its rightful prominence in the field of social action."29 Using the

inter-disciplinary approach, therefore, a multi-faceted historical research on India was launched.

Amongst the post World War-II generation of historians in the United States, the contribution of Annemarie Schimmel to Islamic Studies is commendable. Born in 1922 in Erfurt, Germany, Schimmel worked as a translator for the German Foreign Office during World War-II. After moving to the United States, she became a professor of Indo-Muslim Studies at Harvard University in 1970. She is proficient in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Sindhi, and has a working knowledge of Latin, Hebrew, Romanic and Scandinavian languages. Annemarie Schimmel has written extensively on Islam and some of her important works are: Mystical Dimensions of Islam (1975); Islam in the Indian Sub-Continent (1980); As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam (1982); Calligraphy and Islamic Culture (1984); And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety, (1985); On India, her works include, A Dance of Sparks: Imagery of Fire in Ghalib’s Poetry (1979); A History of Indian Literature: Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal, ed. by Jan Gonda (1975) and Islamic Literatures of India (1973).

Research on Islam in India has received special attention in recent years. In Islamic Literatures of India Annemarie Schimmel includes almost the entire range of Arabic, Persian and Turkish works written in India since the
coming of Islam. She acknowledges the contribution of Muslims in India to Islamic learning and writes that "the amount of literature - both poetry and prose - composed in Persian in the subcontinent is larger than that produced in Iran proper."\(^{30}\) India's links with the Arab world are traced back to Sumerian times although "Islamisation proper, however, began in the year 711 when Muhammad ibn al-Qasim conquered Sind up to Multan and laid the foundations of the Muslim rule which continued till our day."\(^{31}\)

In her work, *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal*, Annemarie Schimmel sees three distinct periods in the development of Urdu literature in India: the first period from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1700, the second from A.D. 1700 to A.D. 1850 and the third from Ghalib to Iqbal. The writer considers Urdu literature the richest in content and subject matter compared to other literatures of India. Urdu probably developed as a spoken language for general communication in the areas around Delhi, in the Punjab and in the Indian plains. But Persian maintained its place as the language of higher education in Muslim India right up to 1835."\(^{32}\) The spread of Urdu is attributed to the wandering


\(^{31}\) Ibid., p.3.

Bhakti and Sufi preachers in the North and in the Deccan to the Muslim invasions between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries."33

Annemarie Schimmel traces the origin of Urdu poetry proper in India in the years between A.D. 1700 and A.D. 1850 and the person largely responsible for this was Wali Muhammad Nazir Akbarabadi born in Delhi in 1740. Urdu in India came into its own and attained perfection. This is traced in the third phase of Annemarie Schimmel's study. Apart from Ghalib, the contribution of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to the development of urdu is tremendous. He "applied urdu to social goals and made it easy and smooth so that it could translate the common social life and explain scientific purposes."34 Under Sir Sayyid Ahmad Urdu became a forceful and straightforward medium of communication.

Another historian who has made a name for himself for his erudite scholarship on medieval India is John F. Richards. Born in November 1938, Richards received his Ph.D. in 1970 from the University of California at Berkeley. He has taught at a number of universities in the U.S.A., including Wisconsin and Duke. Richards was the recipient of the Foreign Area Fellowship Program for India, Iran and Europe between 1965 and 1968. An American Institute for

33. Ibid., pp.129-130.
34. Ibid., p.225.
Indian Studies grant enabled him to visit India in 1973. He also received the Smithsonian Institute grant during 1984-85. Some of the better-known and widely acclaimed books written by John F. Richards on Medieval India are Mughal Administration in Golconda (1975); The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India (1987); and the Mughal Empire (1986). Besides these, he was the co-editor and author of The New Cambridge History of India, 1:5 The Mughal Empire (1993) and has also been on the editorial board of the Journal of Asian Studies and the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars.

Mughal Administration in Golconda is a detailed study of this Deccan State under the Mughals. In undertaking this arduous task, Richards has relied heavily upon the narrative style and intellectual approach of Sir Jadunath Sarkar even at the cost of being dubbed somewhat old-fashioned. Richards has gone to great pains to study the agrarian system, fiscal organisation and the operation of the revenue system in Hyderabad, besides examining the political condition and the impact of imperial aggression on the Deccan.

John F. Richard traces the rampant chaos that was prevalent in the Mughal administration in Golconda. Due to the state being administered mainly through asignees, the practice of hiring of local troops by nobles, frequent transfers of officials and intense factionalism amongst the Mughal nobility, the administration of Golconda was
oppressive and slack. This resulted in "administrative failure and continuing disorder in Hyderabad was to extract, at the lowest possible cost, funds which could be used to support his field armies engaged in the Maratha wars."35

While studying about the various aspects of Mughal economy, John F. Richards discovered that their "monetary system and the process of imperial monetary integration has not received coherent, systematic study by scholars of the period."36 He found that numismatic studies were invariably undertaken as a part of a general discussion of the imperial revenue administration despite the fact that these two rarely intersect.

Richards, in his work, The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India, stresses upon the fact that "the Mughal monetary system was powerful, flexible, pervasive and long-lived... Imperial mints turned out silver rupees in numbers sufficient for expanding trade and commerce, the meeting of tax demands, as well as for royal and noble hoarding in treasuries and for conspicuous consumption."37

This volume by John F. Richards acknowledges the unprecedented quality and quantitative output of Mughal

37. Ibid., p.2.
coinage which was in circulation over a vast area extending from Kabul to Dacca and from Surat to Madras. "Mughal currency... superceded virtually all preceeding currencies and local and regional coinages...."39 Essays contained in the first part of the book trace the creation of the new monetary order under Akbar while the essays in the second part focus upon the steadily increasing "inflows of New World silver into Mughal India and their monetary consequences in the seventeenth century."40

In The New Cambridge History of India, 1:5, The Mughal Empire (1993), John F. Richards has traced the history of the "magnificent" Mughal empire from its inception in 1526 to its break up in 1720, the date of Muhammad Shah's accession in Delhi. By 1720 the Mughal empire had disintegrated beyond repair and ceased to exist as a centralized, unified entity.

John F. Richards follows the conventional narrative style but uses new archival source material and scholarly monographs for this well written and researched volume. He has stressed on the dynamism of Mughal rule, "their institutional innovation in land revenue, coinage and military organization, ideological change, and the

40. Ibid., p.8.
relationship between the emperors and Islam," all of which contributed to their success. The Mughal emperors inspired awe and respect. They had tremendous foresight, vision, military capability and "Mughal success was the product of hard driving, active rulership...."42

Various factors contributed to the success of the Mughals. Firstly, the emperors identified themselves completely with India and encouraged the emergence of a composite Indo-Muslim culture. In addition, from time to time the rulers appealed to their followers for military support in the Jihad against the "cinfidels" and "the idolatrous Hindus of the sub-continent."43 This "imperial dynamism" not only consolidated the Mughal Empire but also led to the economic prosperity of the country. Besides taking steps to develop trade and industry, "the Mughal land revenue system was engaged in a continuing campaign of political socialization. Its aim was to transform armed, often truculent, parochial warrior - aristocrats, into quasi-officials. By entangling local aristocracies in the revenue system imperial officials were also engaging the

42. Ibid., p.1.
43. Ibid.
zamindars, even remotely, in a broadly shared imperial culture.  

Unfortunately reversal and decline, set in and was visible in every sphere after Aurangzeb's death and had reached a point of no return by 1720.

Urbanization in Medieval India attracted the attention of the American historian, Gavin R.G. Hambly, who wrote a book entitled Cities of Mughal India: Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, (New York, 1968), tracing the growth of these three paramount medieval cities. The theme contained in this book was revised and updated for publication in 1982 under the title "Towns and Cities: Mughal India," included in the Cambridge Economic History of India Vol. I, C 1200-1750 edited by Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib.

Despite the fact that the majority of the people of India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lived in villages, the urban bases in India were bustling with activity and Indian cities and towns "fulfilled diverse and overlapping roles. The longest were thriving centres of manufacturing and marketing, banking and entrepreneurial activities, intersections in a network of communications by land and water which crossed and recrossed the sub-

44. Ibid., p. 284.
continent...." Medieval Indian cities, especially those predominantly engaged in textile manufacture and weaving, were extremely prosperous economically.

In the course of his research, Gavin Hambly has identified four distinct types of urban centres: (a) cities which primarily performed administrative roles, eg. Delhi, Agra and Lahore; (b) those cities which were predominantly engaged in commerce and manufacture, for example, Patna and Ahmadabad; (c) cities like Benaras and Mathura, which were centres of pilgrimage and lastly (d) came "those centres which developed and flourished because of some distinct manufacturing technique, craft, skill or local commodity which ensured their ongoing prosperity," for instance, Bayana (Indigo), Khairabad and Daryabad in Awadh (textiles).

Although extensive and varied source material was available, the task before Gavin Hambly was not easy. Early European travellers and writers of Medieval India concentrated mainly on commercial matters and have hardly left behind any demographic and statistical data upon which the historian could rely. Due to political stability in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the number of towns and


46. Ibid., p.435.
cities mushroomed. Unfortunately, to most European travellers medieval Indian cities appeared to be badly planned, having a "low standard of housing, the general lack of amenities and the striking contrast between the affluence of the ruling elite and the squalor which seemed to characterize the daily life of the mass of the population." 47

Further, the contribution of the noted American historian, Robert Eric Frykenberg to Indian history is prodigious. His work transcends medieval Indian history and he has written extensively on various aspects of Modern India as well - especially the history of South India.

Frykenberg, whose parents were American Missionaries in India was born in Ootacamund, South India, in June 1930. This probably accounts for his deep - rooted affinity towards this country. Fellowship grants from the Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie Foundations, and a Fulbright scholarship, enabled him make frequent trips to India and to travel extensively within the country in the quest for archival source material. Some of Frykenberg's important works are: Delhi Through the Ages : Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society (1986); Guntur District, 1788-1848 : A History of Local Influence and Central authority in South India (1965); Land Control and Social Structure in

47. Ibid., p.440.

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Indian History (1968); Today's World in Focus : India (1968); India's Imperial Tradition (1976); Land and Peasant in South Asia (1976); Studies of South India : An Anthology of Recent Research and Scholarship (1986).

Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, edited by Robert Eric Frykenberg consists of eleven essays read out by renowned American and Indian scholars during the course of three seminars held in 1964 at Wisconsin, Washington (Association for Asian Studies) and Berkeley. All the essays focus upon the agrarian system of India, the unbridgeable gulf between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and the unequal distribution of life's necessities. There is one essay entitled "Zamindars under the Mughals" by Prof. S. Nurul Hasan.

India's agrarian structure has aroused considerable interest among learned scholars because "perhaps nowhere have the various conditions of man and land been interlocked for so long as in the subcontinent of India." Forty-eight percent of India's population lives in rural areas and despite the availability of adequate fertile land, a majority of Indians still live below the poverty line. The reason for floods, famine and scarcity cannot be attributed

purely to ecological conditions. "If fault must be found, much of it lies with man."49

To give a boost to India's agricultural potential, Frykenberg recommends that agriculture be modernized and cheaper chemical fertilizers, better seeds, implements and storage facilities be provided. Unfortunately, a majority of Indians in rural areas have "long struggled under various forms of land bondage and debt. For centuries... there have been layer upon layer of landholders and tax officials below whom there have more layers of subholders and revenue collectors. And at the bottom have been the hosts of manual laborers ready to do a day’s work in return for a day’s food."50 Due to centuries' exploitation, the toiling masses have not been able to progress and in most cases still continue to live in absolute servility.

A mammoth task confronts any historian or social scientist wishing to delve into the maze of Indian agrarian structure, or unravel overlapping terminologies, or "attempt to classify and differentiate between myriad varieties of zamindars, jagirdars, and ryots, whether great or small...."51 This volume by Frykenberg aims "to highlight some of the significant new aspects of and approaches to

49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., p.xiv.
51. Ibid., p.xv.
questions of social structure and land control in India.\textsuperscript{52}

In order to achieve this, there is a need for more accurate terms and concepts to fully understand the phenomena and conditions being described. Secondly, new methodological tools and analytical models need to be developed based on "(1) ideas of movement, namely, about process and causation; and (2) ideas of "structural relativity," that is, of dynamic relationships of social entities moving within a defined structural whole."\textsuperscript{53} The author suggests that this could perhaps be attained by first clearly defining and then interrelating the three basic elements: land, labor and lord. In this manner, it is hoped that theories and conclusions can be simplified.

A few other books on Medieval Indian History which have been written after painstaking research are: \textit{North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801}, by Richard B. Barnett (1980); \textit{Akbar and the Jesuits, an Account of the Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar} by Du Jarric Pierre and translated into English by CH Payne (1926); \textit{The Rajput Rebellion Against Aurangzeb: A Study of the Mughal Empire in Seventeenth Century India}, by Robert C. Hallissey (1977); and \textit{The Peacock Throne: The Drama of Mughal India}, by Waldemar Hansen (1972).

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, p.xvii.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, p.xx.
The latest noteworthy work on Medieval India is The Formation of the Mughal Empire by Douglas E. Streusand (Delhi, 1989). This book is based on the historian’s Ph.D. dissertation and covers the reign of Akbar between 1556 and 1582 and "analyses the nature and development of the Mughal policy" which made it possible for Akbar to subjugate Northern India and establish a "new type of regime" within a relatively short span of twenty six years.54

Streusand has attributed the success of Akbar in consolidating the Mughal Empire and raising its status to unprecedented heights to the evolution of a "new set of administrative institutions and practices, a new conception of kingship and the constitution of government and society, a new military system, and new norms of political behaviour."55 The Mansabdari system and Akbar’s religious code are seen by Streusand as part of the Emperor’s policy of political conciliation and sagacity to achieve his goals. It is this "pattern of political behaviour and institutions" that are studied by Streusand in a coherent manner and the author seeks to remedy the earlier defects in the American historiography of Medieval India where "historians studied political events, the development of governmental institutions and military history in separate compartments."56


56. Ibid., p.1.