CHAPTER II

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The extraordinary position of W.H. Moreland as a major figure in Indian historiography rests as much on his methodology, as it does on his works which represent altogether a new and a different field of historical studies. For not only did Moreland introduce a new theme, viz., economic, in medieval Indian historical writing, but in the process vital dimensions were added to the methodology of his chosen field with certain techniques practically never used before. In fact, the modern techniques which Moreland employed in his works, his sound analysis of the Indian records from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, the progressively increasing emphasis on the Rankian "Cult of the Document", that was also an essential pre-requisite for objectivity and the frequent use of the statistical method, were uncommon in the contemporary scene of Indian historiography.

However, a study of the methodology worked out by Moreland also requires an understanding of several trends in Indian historiography. Thus while the source material relating to the medieval Indian period existed in abundance, the same could not be said about its ancient counterpart, and for all its high sounding claims to the existence of a highly developed civilization as far back as the third millennium B.C., the absence of historical texts till the first millennium A.D. remains the weakest point in the reconstruction of the history of ancient period. Notwithstanding the fact that every important Hindu Court maintained archives and genealogical records of its rulers, it was in Kashmir, the peripheral region of the subcontinent where the tradition seems to have been best maintained.[1] Therefore the earliest and authentic evidence of historical awareness in the pre-Muslim times comes as late as the twelfth century A.D. from the hill-Kingdom.

of Kashmir, where Kalhana composed his Rajatarangini in Sanskrit. While C.H. Philips points out that "contact with peoples possessing a stronger historical sense than is discernible in India, for example, with the Islamic, Central Asian, and Chinese peoples, may well have encouraged the growth of historical writing in Kashmir";[2] A.L. Basham attributed it to the persistence of Buddhism in the Kashmir Valley with its greater historical sense than Brahmanism. [3] In any case, Rajatarangini surprisingly, reveals that the conception of history, as well as the advanced ideas of historiography were not entirely unknown amongst the Indians also. Kalhana had a highly developed, almost modern conception of history and the technique of historical investigations, which in turn, "have given rise to some speculation that there existed at the time a powerful tradition of historiography in which Kalhana must have received his training".[4] Possessed of a critical mind, he not only examined thoroughly the previously existing chronicles on the history of Kashmir in the light of original sources, but placed as much importance on other sources also like coins, inscriptions, deeds, old monuments, traditions, accounts of eye-witnesses and contemporaries.[5] Despite his frequent lapses into myths and legends, Kalhana had an unbiased approach to historical facts and history writing. Even the merits of historical impartiality were recognised by Kalhana who pointed out that an important requisite of a true historian was, to have a detached mind, free from bias and prejudice. Thus, that historian alone was worthy of praise who like a judge keeps free from love (raga) and hatred (dvesa) while recounting the events of the past.[6] Indeed the work proves that

the ancient Hindus were not entirely devoid of historical sense. Unfortunately, not only the advanced ideas of historiography as exhibited in the Rajatarangini but even the very idea of writing history seemed to have vanished with Kalhana. It was the advent of Islam and subsequently the establishment of Delhi Sultanate that "signalled the introduction into India of historiography as a deliberate form of cultural expansion with a conscious interest in what actually happened in the past".[7] In fact, "Muslim historiography was, indeed, a novel gift of the Persianised Turks to contemporary Indian Culture.... The plethora of historical chronicles in medieval India is in striking contrast to their paucity in the earlier period".[8] The change was noticed by the British writers on medieval India also. Thus Professor Dodwell wrote, "The advent of Islam begins a great series of Indian chronicles.... The Muslim chronicles are far superior to our own (English) medieval chronicles. They were written for the most part not by monks but by men of affairs, often by contemporaries who had seen and taken part in the events they recount.... The Muslim period is one of vivid living men whereas the Hindu period is one of shadows".[9] In striking contrast with the Hindus, the Muslim invaders were endowed with a keen sense of history, which was "continually refreshed from Arab, Turkish and Persian sources and expressed in numerous writings in Persian which differed little in subject matter or idiom from already established forms of historical writings in the Muslim countries outside India".[10] Accordingly like their counterparts elsewhere, the Muslim historians of the Sultanate period wrote in the conviction that

an ideal history of the Muslims was laid up in heaven to illustrate which was their primary task. History for them was not a process, but rather a sequence of events, often isolated and without obvious relationship to which meaning was given by God.[11] "As good Muslims they adopted a pious, didactic purpose in revealing the ways of God to men and as good subjects they set up their rulers as agents or symbols of the divine purpose. By recording the good and bad deeds of the rulers, the Muslim community as a whole and the rulers in particular, were to be encouraged, advised and warned".[12] Their assumption that the only significant history is of the Umma or community and that in what the Umma has done God's hand is to be seen, in the final analysis, makes historiography in the Sultanate period as theocratic in nature.[13]

For the medieval period the chronicles of court historians form the main source of historical information, written in the tradition of Iranian or Persian historiography. As compared to the Arabs, the outlook of the Persian historians was narrow. In fact, the Arab and Persian traditions of historiography were diametrically opposed to each other in content, technique and approach. "The conspectus of an Iranian historian revolved round the King and the sceptre.... While they enjoyed describing the pomp and panoply of a ruler both in peace and in war, they considered any reference to the common man or his problems as derogatory to the art of history-writing. They usually dedicated their

[11] C.H. Philips, ed. Historians of India, Pakistan And Ceylon, Introduction, p. 6. However, Mohibbul Hasan, ed. Historians of Medieval India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1968, Introduction, points out that "The historical writings of the period reveal that the medieval historians....were conscious of change and of relationships between ideas, events and institutions of one reign with those of another", p. xii.
works to the ruling monarchs. The psychology that operated in the compilation of such books of history was to present a ruler's activities in a way that flattered his vanity by extracting admiration from all those who happened to glance through it.\[14\] The Arab historians, on the other hand, had an entirely different approach to history and history-writing. They "viewed the historical landscape from all possible angles, the Court, the hut, the cottage, the market and the masjid and recorded all sorts of events pertaining to political, social, religions and cultural life. Like the camera of a TV operator, the Arab historian moved all around and recorded all aspects of individual and community life. He disdained writing the history of a ruler, instead he wrote the history of an age."\[15\] However, the Persian mind, nurtured in Sassanid traditions, converted history of the age into the history of the Kings. As pointed out by K.A. Nizami, "Medieval Indian historiography was born in the swaddle - clothes of Iranian traditions. The Sultans of Delhi, who derived their ideals of kingship, court etiquette, customs and ceremonials from the Iranian source, could hardly ignore this method of glorification. They were Turks by race but Iranian by culture."\[16\] Most of the historians during the Sultanate period were courtiers or officials who wrote on the orders of their rulers or in expectation of gaining royal patronage. Hence their outlook was limited to the Court and they "aimed at writing the history of rulers, and at equating this with the history of the age."\[17\] Thus, they tended to become courtly flatterers of their royal patrons. Their narratives tended to ignore the life and conditions of the common people, though human factors such as, court intrigues, administrative measures and foreign policies of kings and nobles certainly figure in their works. But "what the

\[14\] K.A. Nizami, "Psychohistory and Medieval Indian Historiography", Islamic Culture, Vol. LXI, April 1987, p.3.
\[15\] Ibid., p. 4.
\[16\] Ibid., p. 5.
medieval historians lack most is an understanding of the social and economic forces that bring about vital changes in societies and fall of the kingdom''.[18] Even Ziya-ud-din Barani emphasized that history should not be about the 'base and lowly', otherwise it would lose its moral effect.[19]

As regards the methodology followed by the historians during the Sultanate period it has been well observed by a modern historian that "the methods of Muslim historiography in India underline its status as matrix rather than die in Muslim cultural life''.[20] The methods were similar to those of Hadith Study according to which, "History is what reliable reporters have stated''.[21] Since history was written from 'authority', it was neither to be questioned nor interpreted. Thus history became merely a repetition of something that one already knew, rather than a discovery of something hitherto unknown. Consequently the historian became merely "a scribe rather than a researcher, his work one of transmission rather than creation''.[22] As pointed out by K.A. Nizami, "Exaggeration, over-praise and hyperbolic assessments, thus became essential ingredients of this approach''.[23] Thus the aim of historiography in the Sultanate period was primarily to glorify Islam, to present the past as a succession of deeds, events and episodes involving the great and powerful of the Muslim community, a task which

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
the Muslim historians performed with great zeal and rhetoric.

In contrast with the chroniclers of the Sultanate period, who remained pre-occupied in assigning a religious significance to events, the Mughal historians exhibited developing and a lively interest in persons. A humanist flavour, characteristic of the cosmopolitan pattern after the Mughal Court, could be perceived in the innumerable biographical works and official histories that appeared during this period. Thus, "the didactic element in history diminished in the Mughal age, when historians devoted more attention to events, actions and measures taken, political, administrative or military, and of their causes and effects than general morals or vague warnings. The most significant change was the secularisation of history in the Mughal age".[24] But as regards the methodology, the Mughal historians too, like their predecessors do not seem to have evolved any new or better methods of historiography. [25] "The Mughal historians mixed the Iranian ideals with the Mongol traditions of Yasa (Chingiz's legislation) and Yarliq (Personal orders of a ruler), but their basic orientation remained unchanged".[26] Abul Fazl and Ali Muhammad Khan can be singled out as exceptions, for the former as the 'Historiographer Royal of the Mughals' and the latter, as the Diwan of the province of Gujarat, who wrote Miral-i-Ahmad i in 1748, had easy access to State papers which enabled them to base their accounts on them, rather than to rely exclusively on the writings of the past, as the historians before them or their contemporaries had done, who in their reconstruction of the Indo-Muslim history before their time did not look up the original evidence as, documents, remains and inscriptions, all of which

Thus, the historians in the Sultanate and Mughal periods were all courtiers having their vision fixed on the Imperial Court. Some like Minhaj, Barani, Abul Fazl and Badauni were frequently aligned with one faction or another, while others like Afif, Isami, and to some extent Nizam-ud-din sought "to rise above the narrow divisions and represent the interests of the entire nobility in their historical outlook".[28] The common elements in the approach to history of these Court historians, as well as their differences, arose in consequence of the position they occupied.[29] Further, "As members of ruling class at some level or the other, they were not indifferent to the conditions of the common people, except in so far as the latter were ultimately the source that sustained the ruling class, but they were greatly concerned with the stability of the state system".[30]

In fact, this method of writing history followed by the historians of Sultanate and Mughal periods, which involved primarily the study of historians by historians, became the most characteristic feature of the historical works written by the earliest British historians.

[29] Ibid., pp. 170-171. For example, while Minhaj is full of praise for Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud's resignation and piety, Barani contemptuously refers to him as "incompetent" and holds him responsible for the near disintegration of the State during his reign. Similarly, to Barani, Ala-ud-din Khalji was a wholly irreligious Sultan; Isami gives him more credit than to any other, except Mahmud of Ghazni, for bringing glory to Islam in India. To Abul Fazl, the reign of Akbar is the most glorious period in all human history; Badauni considers it a dismal age in every detail.
historians also. It is interesting to note a striking continuity between the native historiographical tradition of the Muslims and that of the European tradition developed and followed by the earliest British writers on medieval India. If anything, this native tradition was reinforced by them. The servants of the East India Company evinced a keen interest in the history of medieval India as they considered the Muslims as their predecessors in supremacy over India. In fact, "In a study of modern historiography on medieval India, English historical writing on the period forms the focal point." Further the "British historians, inspite of Buckle and Lacky and the continental efforts of Riehi, Freytog and Kurchardt, did not attempt to change either the methodology or the form of native Muslim historiography. In general, they rather subscribed to it." While the framework of political narrative was retained, no need was felt to show the process by which evidence was turned into history, as history was written from the testimony of 'authorities' and 'sources'. Thus James Mill, G.R. Glied and Mountstuart Elphinstone largely based the 'Muhammadan' portions in their works on the testimony of Ferishta in the translations of Dow and Briggs. The trend continued even after the edited texts of principal medieval Indo-Persian histories were published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series.

The trend of analyzing the primary sources of medieval Indian history was begun by Elliot and Dowson in their voluminous History of India as Told by its own historians (1867-1877). Despite the shortcomings and technical flaws of the translation arising from the

[34] Ibid.
method of selecting excerpts from the sources", still "Elliot initiated the attempt at a critical study of the sources by prefacing the translation of excerpts from each source with his own evaluation of its worth, a practice continued by Dowson",[36] and subsequently by their successors, viz. Major Raverty, who inserted a chapter on Minhaj in his translation of the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri. Blochmann added a biographical sketch of Abul Fazl in his translation of volume I of the Ain-i-Akbari. Besides, Mrs. Beveridge, and Beni Prasad too followed the trend. Thus, "the convention of introducing an author and his work was firmly set by Elliot and Dowson".[37]

However, even after Elliot and Dowson brought out abridged translations in English and editions of the Persian and Arabic chronicles in their eight volumes, the native trend seemed to continue; the only difference being that the early twentieth century historians like Stanley Lane-poole, Vincent Smith and the authors of the Cambridge History of India, now began to utilise the extensive data compiled by Elliot and Dowson. But otherwise they also "do not appear to have in a marked way made any advance upon the form and technique of historiography as adopted by the medieval chronicles"[38]. However, despite the fact that their works reflected a distinct propagandist slant and confined their attention to the writing of one form of history namely the political, revolving around battles, rebellions, court intrigues, rise and fall of dynasties and achievements of Muslim adventurers, and in one mode, the narrative,[39] and furthermore do not seem to have appreciated the importance of socio-economic forces in history, yet in all fairness to them, it can be said that by a

[37] Ibid., Preface, xiv.
[39] Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, p. 3.
comparative study of the various Persian sources and by editing them more systematically they certainly improved upon the method of writing history.

However, a study of methodological trends in the period preceding Moreland and a study of the methodology used by Moreland would sharply bring out the difference between the two, in form, scope as well as technique. A characteristic feature of the histories produced in the medieval period and also later by the British historians, was the conspicuous absence of the histories of common people, their aspirations and their sufferings. Quite unlike the other historians Moreland chose not only to investigate an entirely new area in history, but he also gave a new direction to historical research and also imparted new dimensions to methodology.

Beginning his career as an administrator appointed to the revenue department who was expected to acquire a thorough knowledge of land revenue administration in India, it was only gradually that Moreland evolved as an historian par excellence. No doubt, several British administrators before him were associated with the revenue work at a time when "service in the revenue line made historians",[40] yet amongst them it was Moreland alone who by his dedicated research rose to be the founder of "a definite school of historical research which has its honoured place in the evolution of historiography in India".[41] Endowed with a flair for historical research, Moreland added a new dimension to the study of an important aspect, viz. economic, of medieval India. His methodology too reveals him to be a true historian, even if, "an official purpose first made him one, and the political feelings for a while dominated him".[42] Moreland's research methodology may broadly be divided into the following : linguistic equipment,

search for original documents, use of statistics, analysis of sources, chronology and his technique to illuminate the present in the light of the past.

A true historian, Moreland realised the importance as well as the utility of equipping himself with several languages, as he wanted to read records in the original. Indeed he learnt Persian, French, Portuguese and Latin [43] with great zeal not merely to arm himself for polemics but to have access to a wider range of sources through them. Thus on realising that a knowledge of Persian was imperative, in fact "indispensable", to extract valuable information from the Ain-i-Akbari and other works of Persian, Moreland went ahead and learnt Persian. He did not hesitate to learn Dutch also at an advanced age when he became aware of the extensive research material lying in the Archives of Netherlands, hitherto untapped by other historians.[44]

The Rankian "Cult of the Document", that influenced English historiography also affected the writings of British historians on medieval India. "While V.A. Smith did recognise the importance of official documents, it was W.H. Moreland who emphasised the inestimable value of the documents for the agrarian history of India".[45]

Moreland's desire to read the documents and records in original came from the realisation that "translations (where they exist) must be used with caution; they may be sufficiently accurate for all ordinary purposes; and yet miss the technical sense of words in which economists are specially concerned, while even standard dictionaries may fail to

indicate the precise shade of meaning intended by a writer of the sixteenth century. It is advisable therefore, to go to the original text wherever possible." [46] He considered knowledge of Persian as indispensable, because he found that in the English versions of the Ain-i-Akbari, the technical force of many expressions was lost. [47] In fact Moreland's long and close association with the revenue department proved to be of immense advantage, as it placed past records within his easy reach. Thus Moreland had every opportunity to explore the settlement reports and revenue records and he claimed to have read almost the whole series of the former at one time or the other in the course of his official duties. [48] That Moreland's research methodology was widening its scope is proved by the fact that after his return to England in 1916, when he was thinking seriously to work on the Mughal agricultural economics, he turned his attention to the works of Abul Fazl, Badauni and others. Then followed the phase when Moreland was increasingly and enthusiastically involved in tapping the Dutch sources. In fact Moreland experienced tremendous excitement at the discovery of Dutch sources of information, as they promised to impart a significant addition to his historical research. Moreland considered some knowledge of these sources as indispensable to the serious students of India working on the Mughal period, for he found that there was scarcely any branch of Indian life - administrative, social and political, which they did not illuminate, apart of course from the valuable information yielded by them regarding the commerce of the period, which was their prime concern. Furthermore, with Dutch sources one could also follow in some cases "the course of Indian public opinion in regard to events of

[47] Ibid.
which the chroniclers tell only the facts". Moreland felt that "the neglect of Dutch sources for this period is all the more to be regretted, because in some respects they are definitely superior to the English. The Dutch merchants were careful to set down in black and white many things which the English were content to take for granted". Moreland found that the extant Dutch accounts of the working of the markets in Agra, Golconda or Gujarat were far superior to anything he found in English. Another important feature of the Dutch sources was that "They explain, far more clearly than the English literature, the early stages in the long development which eventually placed India under the government of a Parliament sitting at Westminster". Besides, Moreland pointed out that the existence of Dutch sources should operate as a warning to students against the temptation to attribute conjectural motives for actions which appear to be unexplained. Anyone who imagines a motive for any European action in India during the 17th century without having studied the Dutch sources may be fairly confident that he is putting a noose round his own neck, to be drawn tight by the first well informed critic whom he meets; and those sources are certainly indispensable to anyone who wants to study the motives which actuated visitors of all Western nations". Thus Moreland found that it were the Dutch not the English, who succeeded to the Portuguese supremacy of the Asiatic seas, and for the greater part of the seventeenth century it were the Dutch who took the largest share in the external commerce of India. While Moreland knew that the English reading students would


[51] W.H. Moreland, "Dutch Sources For Indian History 1590-1650", *Journal of Indian History*, p. 223.

[52] Ibid., pp. 224-225.
naturally continue to rely mainly on the English sources, his opinion was that they were "likely to form in accurate or distorted views on many important questions if they fail to take account also of the information furnished by the Dutch". In order to bridge the gulf between indispensability and inaccessibility of the Dutch sources Moreland urged the students to learn Dutch, which could be easily picked up by anyone familiar with old British manuscripts. It was indeed his unique achievement to bring before the researchers the historically rich Dutch documents. Whenever Moreland "applied to the Dutch Public Record Office for information on specific points, he was usually furnished with photographs of important documents not included in the Transcripts, hitherto quoted in English" and Moreland pointed out "the existence of this large store of unexplored materials should be borne in mind by all students of the period". And if India wanted to know all that the Hague had to offer, "she must send somebody to examine the collections.... For the present it is a safe rule for students to bear in mind that there is probably something they want very badly, lying waiting for them at the Hague".

It was probably a good grounding in economics which led Moreland to use statistics frequently and with great ease. He believed that precise numbers were "the supreme corrective to fuzzy thinking, for quantitative data alone could give substance to qualitative statements". Moreland was probably the first historian to explore and utilise the wealth of statistical data incorporated in the Ain-i-Akbari. In fact, he described the work as a gold-mine, and as early as 1916, in his first article based on the Ain-i-Akbari namely, "The Ain-i-Akbari - A Possible Base-Line For the Economic History of

[54] Ibid.
Modern India", Moreland brought out the significance of the statistical figures incorporated in the Ain-i-Akbari and suggested that these figures could be used to furnish a real starting point or a base-line for the economic history of modern India.[57] Moreland also worked out a method for illustrating the significance of figures in the Ain-i-Akbari, by which, "a comparison of the state of cultivation in a limited area as it stands today and as it stood under Akbar", was carried out. Thus on comparing the area comprised in the district of Fatehpur (in the United Provinces) in Akbar's time with the present, Moreland found that the cultivation had doubled in Fatehpur since the time of Akbar and there was uniformity in assessment rates[58]. However, Moreland indicated that the figures in the Ain-i-Akbari could not always be used precisely as they stood, and "that anyone who wishes to use them will have to find some critical method of estimating their value, and of eliminating those which are clearly corrupt".[59] For instance, the assessment rates according to Moreland, could be used to indicate the figures which were clearly wrong. Thus in the process of compilation and transcription, a large mistake in the area or in the revenue of a particular pargana might have occurred. In that case, "the rate calculated from those figures will differ widely from the rates of neighbouring pargana except in the single case when errors of the same proportionate magnitude have been made in both figures".[60] However, the chance of the last occurrence, according to Moreland was very small and he found it probable that abnormal rates would indicate most of the large errors in the figures from which they were derived. In order to illustrate his argument, Moreland took the figures for the parganas of the Allahabad district which adjoined Fatehpur on the east and tabulated the data. He

[58] Ibid., pp. 47-49.
[59] Ibid., p.53.
[60] Ibid., p.51.
found, "that the uniformity in assessment rates found in Fatehpur is by no means apparent; they range from 3 to 539 dams per bigah, instead of from 45 to 59, and it is a curious fact that this small group of parganas should afford illustration of so many probable errors".[61] This was certainly an important contribution of Moreland in the detection of errors in the figures of Ain-i-Akbari. He even indicated the possibility of the application of this test or method by assessment rates to the whole area dealt with in the Ain-i-Akbari. [62]

Also a pioneer of comparative study, Moreland's next step was "to provide a method of interpreting the statistics included in Abul Fazl's Account of the XII Subas, so as to render this large body of figures available for the social and economic historian. This was a pioneering attempt and Moreland dismissed the efforts of previous writers as illegitimate. Moreland's method of interpreting the statistics included the following five steps:

(i) determination of the precise significance of the figures;
(ii) selection of methods for eliminating errors. After the accomplishment of these tasks, the next task before the inquirer was;
(iii) to work out the comparative geography of the tract in which he is interested;
(iv) to compare the figures with those of the corresponding modern administrative areas; and
(v) to draw his conclusions from the figures obtained.[63]

When Moreland applied these methods to the figures in the

[62] Ibid., p.53.
Ain-i-Akbari he found a definite picture of the economic condition of India emerging from them.

By the time Moreland brought out his first major work, *India at the Death of Akbar* in 1920 he was convinced that going by numbers was a surer way of arriving at accuracy, especially keeping in view the hyperbolic language used by the contemporary writers. As comparisons were difficult to draw when earlier period was described in 'superlatives', in that situation, the only corrective was "to fix the attention on quantities", and Moreland's attempt throughout was "to arrive at numerical estimates, actual or relative as the available data permit, of the various factors which composed the stream of economic life".[64] Moreland was also the first historian who formed an estimate of India's population at the beginning of the seventeenth century. [65] He was sure that some statistical information was recorded in India at this period, "but we have not access to the original records, and we do not always know the basis on which they were compiled. We have to be content, as a rule, with secondary and partial evidence in the shape of facts stated by contemporary writers, who may have made mistakes in the figures, or may have been misled as to their precise significance.... We have to estimate probabilities and seek for limits within which the truth may lie, data, assumptions and conclusions are alike open to criticism, and.... the reader must bear in mind that .... We are not


travelling on the broad road of modern statistical information, but are trying to find a path through a hitherto untrodden jungle. [66]

Moreland was equally particular in the use of precise chronology. Thus, owing to the incomplete chronology of the pre-Muslim period Moreland did not consider it essential to write the history of the Hindu period. According to Moreland, "the lack of chronological precision is fatal to historical perspective, and the tendency is to present a static and composite picture of more than a thousand years, rather than the developments which occurred during the period. Probably the most hopeful line of work just now would be a concerted attack on the large, and constantly growing mass of dated inscriptions dealing with trade, land-tenures, and other relevant topics; this might conceivably yield in course of time a chronological framework, on which the literary material might be draped". [67] It was for the same reasons that Moreland found that, "for the purposes (of understanding Indian poverty) those three centuries (seventeenth through nineteenth) are much the most important in the whole of Indian history; they cover the transformation from the old India to the new, and the claim can fairly be made that almost every outstanding feature of the existing situation can be adequately explained by the forces which have operated in the interval since Akbar ascended the throne". [68] However later on, when dynastic and military history of the period became tolerably accessible, Moreland was to extend the "historical period" back to the thirteenth century in _The Agrarian System of Moslem India_, (1929).

A striking aspect in Moreland's methodology, which is evident in all his works, was his insistence on the accurate definitions of all terms and their correct meanings, especially in translation. His own experience had taught him to use the translations with caution, as his

dependence on the translations of Blochmann, Jarret and Dowson had increasingly made him aware that they had not fully mastered the terminology in the literature of the period, "but had borrowed from modern practice in India or sometimes from medieval practice in Europe, terms of art or picturesque phrases, which did not always give the precise meaning of the originals and occasionally involved serious misrepresentation".[69] Besides, according to Moreland, dictionaries were also "nearly useless for determining the precise shades of meaning of the words".[70] Thus, he found it essential "to study the terminology afresh; and for this purpose I worked through the printed literature of the period, together with such relevant manuscripts as I found in this country, extracting every passage in which an apparently technical term occurred and then bringing the passages together, and inferring from them the meaning, or meanings, borne by each term at different periods, or in different parts of India".[71] In order to guard against the danger of importing modern ideas, Moreland abstained from translating "some expressions for which no neutral terms suggested themselves".[72] However, what intrigued Moreland was the fluidity of the terminology employed in the literature, "so that both time and place may condition the interpretation of a particular passage".[73] Since the Persian language as it was used in Muslim India possessed a wealth of synonyms, one particular thing appeared under various names. A typical example of this was the meaning of the word mal. Thus for an ordinary writer mal meant "property" or "possessions", but in the military department it

denoted "booty taken in war", while in the jargon of the financial offices it signified "land revenue", so that its meaning in any particular passage had to be inferred from the context.[74] Similarly the fluidity of terminology was well exemplified in the changing meanings of the word Diwan. Thus in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, Diwan meant "Department of Ministry", but by the time of Akbar, it came to denote a person not an institution. As administrative organisation progressed, further developments appeared. Inside the Ministry, each departmental head came to be called Diwan. Outside it, a Diwan, or a revenue officer, was appointed in each province. A further change occurred with the appointment of the East India Company as Diwan of the Bengal province "which established its own court of justice, the Diwani Adalat, and as the result of subsequent developments at the present day Diwani has almost entirely lost its older meaning of revenue administration, and in current use signifies the civil courts of law".[75] In fact one of his notable achievement while writing on a highly technical subject as the agrarian system of Muslim India was his attempt to write in English and "to get away from the polyglot, and often ambiguous jargon in which agrarian topics are commonly treated in India. In order to do this I have had to frame a precise terminology, choosing those names which carry the fewest misleading connotations".[76] Thus careful use of technical words was of great importance to Moreland. In fact, Moreland has provided his works with exhaustive glossaries, which have immense value for the researcher.[77]

In a very cautious and discriminating manner, Moreland analysed his sources critically. He was exceptional among his contemporary historians in that he did not merely publish new material as he found it, but always edited and annotated the document carefully.

[75] Ibid., p. xv.
[76] Ibid., Preface, v.
[77] For a comprehensive list of the terms used by Moreland in his works see Appendix-B of the Thesis.
Thus, while he recognised the value of Blochmann's translation of the Ain-i-Akbari, he refused to accept it as final and indicated the "urgent need of a careful recension, based on a critical study of all existing manuscripts".\[78\] At the same he also warned that anyone who took the statistical figures "without subjecting them to close criticism is as likely as not to hit on some of these errors, which are by no means always obvious on the face of the record. Before any of the figures can be used, it is necessary to take a large number of them into consideration, and to devise methods by which material errors can be eliminated",\[79\] which would then serve as a key to unlock a treasure-house.

Further in order to ensure accuracy and correct analysis Moreland checked and counter-checked his myriad range of sources. Neither prepared nor satisfied to rely solely upon the Muslim accounts which according to him were mostly panegyrics of court historians Moreland tried to check the Persian references by the accounts of European travellers also. Thus, Moreland believed that the observations of the Dutch and English factors relating to the "relations between States and Subjects are entitled to the respect usually accorded to the views of independent witnesses. They thus fill an important gap in our knowledge, for the Indian literature of our period is written almost wholly from the official standpoint, and presents only one side of the case, frequently in terms coloured by conventional flattery of the rulers: we are dependent on this literature for accounts of existing institutions as seen through the atmosphere of the Court or the Capital, but we must turn to the Dutch and English records to know how these institutions actually worked, and how they were regarded in the towns


and villages of the country".[80] In fact, Moreland even went to the extent of stating that it is among the Dutch sources "that we should look for what is not supported by the English and Portuguese literature".[81] However, Moreland did not accept the Persian sources also without analysing them. Thus, at one place he would consider the official version to be more reliable as compared to that of Badauni and would not hesitate to describe Badauni's "chronicle as reminiscences, or even journalism, rather than history. He selected his topics less for their intrinsic importance than for their interest to himself; but he did not, so far as I can judge, indulge in romance; but he presented the facts he selected, as coloured by his personal feelings or prejudices, in bitter epigrammatic language which presumably gave him satisfaction, but which must not be taken too literally".[82]

In The Agrarian System of Moslem India, Moreland explained his approach to documents in a warning to others who might follow thus: "A student who dips into the records of the period in search of a particular fact will probably be misled; it is necessary to master each record as a whole, interpreting the technical terms with one eye on the future and the other on the past, to take into account both the individuality of the writer, and the locality from which his experience was drawn, to discard pre-conceived ideas as to the meaning, and occasionally to suspend judgement for the time being".[83]

In the true spirit of a historian who believed in continued evolution in the methodology and scope to be the soul of history, Moreland was increasingly conscious of the gaps in his information and anxiously hoped that other scholars would come forward to discover and utilize new documents and records. Thus in his work The Agrarian System of Moslem India, Moreland pointed out that apart from the material

[83] Ibid., p. 160.
furnished by the India Office Records and Indian libraries, "scattered here and there, mainly in private hands, there must be many documents relating to grants, assignments, and other forms of tenure, as well as to certain other aspects of agrarian administration, which, if they could be brought to light, would enable some future student 'to convert this essay into a history, by correcting my mistakes, and filling the gaps in my information'.[84] While Moreland knew that such records existed in abundance, he was also aware that they were perishing year by year. He therefore, appealed fervently to the "local historical societies and similar bodies at work in India to investigate in particular the treasures of the family which have a long tradition of service under the State as ganungos or in other positions in the local administration".[85] He further observed that "Our knowledge of the form and content of Akbar's charitable grants of land has been materially increased by the discovery of a bundle of old papers preserved by a Parsi family in Gujarat, a locality where one could scarcely have set out to search for Mughal documents, and it is still possible to hope for other discoveries of the same kind. The systematic collection and publication of such documents would furnish material of inestimable value for the future historian, not merely of the agrarian system, but of the whole life of the people of India".[86] Moreland himself never claimed to have exhausted all the source material in his research. In fact, he modestly stated that his two major works were only sketches and not definite accounts while in the third work he never claimed "to offer a final treatment of the subject". He believed that "Probably there is still extent in India a body of literature which, when collected and explored, will throw much additional light on some of the topics where I have felt the lack of material most acutely, ...".[87] In his work


From Akbar to Aurangzeb, he pointed out that "there is still a wide scope for research in the history of this period, not only among the Dutch records, but in literature which is within the reach of Indian students, and which they are in the best position to interpret".[88] What were needed were "men of voracious appetite and unimpaired digestion, who will reduce this mass of material to manageable bulk, and trace out the main lines on which Indian economic activities have developed during the last three centuries".[89] As a matter of fact Moreland's "own digestion seems not to have failed him over the eighteen years before his death, and his painstaking comparison and cross-checking of data on weights, measures, coinage, types of merchandise, and the sources, volume, and markets of cargoes, gave his work lasting value as a source of economic data".[90]

Moreland's technique to illuminate the present in the light of the past arose from his contention that "a knowledge of the past will help to explain the present, will ensure a proper perspective, and will, at the very least, save worthy people from falling into some of the pitfalls by which the subject is beset",[91] and "the past must be studied in order that it may serve its true function as a guide to

better things". Moreland's attempt to illuminate the present in the light of the past had its genesis in his work, *The Revenue Administration of the United Provinces* (1911), where he says that "In order to obtain a clear view of the revenue administration the first great essential is to realise that it is a gradual development. The land revenue was not imposed by the English, nor by her forerunners, the Mughals: the principle that the cultivator of the soil should provide for the greater part of the expenses of the Government seems to have been followed in India from the earliest times...."[93] Moreland's desire to illustrate the present in terms of the past is most vividly visible in *India At the Death of Akbar*, where each chapter is a refutation of some charge levelled against the British. To him the British government was benevolent when compared with the Mughal rule.

Thus while Moreland gave a new direction to the methodology of writing the history of medieval India, his vision however, of the Indian history was undoubtedly influenced by one factor - economic and one standard, the British administration. Moreland's attempt at times was to indicate the British policy, in the economic, agricultural, industrial and administrative spheres, though he progressively seems to out-grow the traditional British viewpoint. In Moreland's conception of the historical process economic factors were fundamental. Convinced of the primacy of economic forces, he believed that in India, agriculture and


\[\text{"The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present. Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insight into the problems of the present.... To learn about the present in the light of the past alone means to learn about the past in the light of the present", p.24.} \]

\[\text{[93] W.H. Moreland, The Revenue Administration of the United Provinces, p.3.} \]
the revenue derived from it was the major economic factor. This strain of thought persisted in all his later writings. According to him the year 1608, when the first English merchant ship, Hector, arrived at Surat under Captain William Hawkins, marked the end of the medieval period and the dawn of the modern age in Indian history.[94] Moreover, Moreland believed that the appearance of the new forces (British) was destined to exercise an increasing and eventually predominant influence on the development of India. However, while Moreland's analysis has been termed as monistic, arrived at by his study of different aspects of economy, yet it cannot be denied that it was this major angle which was lacking in a comprehensive study of the history of the period, from among the varied aspects of socio-cultural history. Despite the fact of Moreland's view of medieval Indian history seems to be partial, he struck a new note in modern historiography by advocating that political history should be studied against the background of physical and economic factors.[95] In fact, the close connection that Moreland perceived between the Indian economic system and administrative system with serious consequences for the life of the various sections of the society was something new in the whole range of the British historical writing on Muslim India.[96]

Thus by his multiple linguistic equipment, his search and study of original documents, the effective use of statistical method, his analysis of sources, providing the proper perspective with due importance to chronology and his technique of illuminating the present in the light of the past, Moreland showed that it was possible to

[94] W.H. Moreland, India At the Death of Akbar, Preface. i. This view of Moreland has been questioned. See Beni Prasad, "India in 1605 A.C.", The Modern Review, Calcutta, January 1921, p.16.
reconstruct the various elements of the economic history of medieval India. Even the often repeated and to some extent justifiable charges, of Moreland using the works to claim superiority for and to defend the British system, of presenting a partial view of history, of confining his outlook to the economic factor, the limited use of Persian sources and his bias in favour of European sources, can hardly take away the value of his having added an altogether new dimension to the then contemporary historiographical scenario.