



HISTORY OF INDIA-V
(c. 1550 -1605)

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Course Contents

Page No

Course Introduction

THEME I : SOURCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Unit 1 : Indo-Persian Histories and Persian Literary Traditions

Unit 2 : Indic Literary Traditions and European Sources

THEME II : INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Unit 3 : Regional and Local Polities

Unit 4 : Timurid Antecedents

Unit 5 : Afghan Polity

Unit 6 : Mughal Conquests: Warfare and Alliances

Unit 7 : The Nayaks

THEME III : CONSOLIDATION OF MUGHAL RULE

Unit 8 : Historiography on State

Unit 9 : Ideas on Kingship

Unit 10 : Administrative Structure

Unit 11 : Administrative Institutions: Mansab and Jagir

Unit 12 : Composition of Nobility

Unit 13 : Fiscal System

THEME IV : ECONOMIC PROCESSES

Unit 14 : Agrarian Economy and Agrarian Relations

Unit 15 : Exchange Economy: Money and Currency

Unit 16 : Towns, Cities and Growth of Urban Centres

THEME V : IMAGINING THE SACRED

Unit 17 : State and Religion

THEME VI : LITERATURE AND TRANSLATIONS

Unit 18 : Patronage of Literary Culture

Guidelines for Study of the Course

In this Course we have followed a uniform pattern for presenting the learning material. This starts with an introduction to the Course underlining the significant developments in chronological order and covers 4 major themes with coverage of 19 sub-themes or Units. For the convenience of study, all the Units have been presented with a uniform structure. Objectives as the first section of the Unit have been included to help you find what are you expected to learn from the study of the Unit. Please go through these objectives carefully and keep reflecting and checking them after studying a few sections of the Unit. Introduction of the Unit introduces you to the subject area covered and guides you to the way subject matter is presented. These are followed by the main subject area discussed through sections and sub-sections for ease of comprehension. In between the text, some self-check exercises have been provided. We advise you to attempt these as and when you reach them. These will help you assess your study and test your comprehension of the subject studied. Compare your answers with the answer guidelines provided after the summary. The keywords and unfamiliar terms have been provided at the end of each Unit, which have been marked in bold in the text. At the end of each Unit under Suggested Readings we have also provided a list of books and references. These include sources and books which are useful or have been consulted for developing the material for the concerned Unit. You should try to study them. We have also included instructional videos for an enhanced understanding by the students. Please try to watch these videos, they will help you in understanding and learning the subject matter in an all-inclusive manner.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth century there emerged three major Islamic empires in the Asian Continent? the Ottomans (Asia Minor; modern Turkey; 1300-1923), the Safavids (Iran; 1501-1722), and the Mughals (India; 1526-1857). All the three empires started showing signs of decline in the eighteenth century. Safavid Iran (Shia) and the Ottomans (Sunni) shared the intense rivalry. In contrast, the political relationship between the Safavids and the Mughals remained more or less peaceful. Distance could possibly be the major contributing factor. However, all the three took refuge for legitimacy to different realms: Ottomans looked towards the Caliphate; the Safavids (Shah Ismail) claimed themselves to be the descendents of the seventh Imam; while the Mughals took pride in the Turco-Mongol lineage. For the Safavids, India was the land of opportunities, often literati and men of arts and warriors found here refuge for fortunes. Mughals hardly shared any meaningful interaction in Central Asian affairs, and never encouraged the designs and ambitions of the Safavids and the Uzbeks for a possible Ottoman-Uzbek alliance against the Shia Safavids.

In contrast, the Central Asia of late fifteenth and early sixteenth century was chaotic and marred by constant warfare. It remained the cockpit of constant struggle among the Persians, Uzbeks and the Turks during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Another factor that further aggravated the chaos was the law of inheritance that hindered the very base of the centralized polity, what Stephen Dale (2004: 68) has rightly underlines that, the 'Turco-Mongol states were plagued by two inherent problems: the ambiguity of political succession and the related custom of allotting territory to sons of aristocratic and royal lineages.' This created parcellization of the empires into fragments in Central Asia and often resulted into fratricidal fights and anarchy.

Mughal story in Central Asia was no different. Abu Said Mirza, grandfather of Babur, had divided his empire on Chaghatai lines: His eldest son Sultan Ahmad Mirza was assigned Samarqand and Bukhara, Mahmud Mirza was parted with Hissar, Kunduz, Badakhshan and Khutlan, Ulugh Beg got Kabul and Ghazna; while Umar Shaikh Mirza, father of Babur, received the possession of Farghana. The entire struggle that the young Babur of twelve had to face in Central Asia was the fallout of this parcellization. Though the Mughals in India had forsaken the idea of parcellization (except the singular experiment of Humayun, which ultimately terribly failed and Humayun had to lose his empire to the Afghans.), failed to resolve the 'ambiguity of political succession'. It became blatantly evident towards the closing years of Akbar's reign resulting into Salim's (Jahangir's) rebellion against his father. It marred the Mughal empire throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and resulted in a serious fratricidal wars of succession towards the closing years of Shahjahan's reign, even resulted in the imprisonment (if not the murder) of Shahjahan.

Against this backdrop of the Turco-Chaghatai inheritance and legacy that Babur embarked upon and finally succeeded in establishing Mughal footholds in India. For Babur, Hindustan was 'a remarkably fine country', a land of opportunities, though, 'different world' compared to his homeland.

Theme I primarily deals with literary traditions. It focuses on Persian and vernacular literary traditions and their significance as important source material to understand the historical developments of the period. **Theme II** begins with political conditions of India on the eve of Babur's invasion (**Unit 3**). Here we have also attempted to trace the background of the new ruling elite i.e. the Mughals in Central Asia (**Unit 4**). At the same time we would also be touching upon transition from the Afghans to the Mughals and finally the establishment of the Mughal empire in India, early problems and issues faced by the nascent Mughal state, particularly the Mughal clashes with the Afghans (**Unit 5**). It traces the emergence of the Afghans under the Lodis and later the re-establishment of the Afghan power (The Second Afghan Empire) under Sher Shah Sur. Against this backdrop **Unit 6** takes you to the consolidation of the Mughal empire under Akbar through warfares and alliances; Akbar's relations with autonomous chieftains and his policy towards them. The present Unit would also be discussing in detail Mughal policy of Central Asia and Persia and the Mughal expansion in the northeast. We have already discussed the growth of the Vijayanagara empire in our Course **BHIC 107**, here our focus would be to analyse the establishment of the Nayaka kingdoms in South India as a result of the weakening of the Vijayanagara polity (**Unit 7**).

Theme III takes you to the consolidation part of the Mughal empire, beginning from the conceptualization of the ideas on kingship, shaping of the Mughal sovereignty (**Units 8 and 9**), its administrative structure (**Unit 10**), etc. The evolution of mansab and jagir systems, the twin pillars of the stability and strength of the Mughal empire, are underlined in **Unit 11**. An in depth analysis of the fiscal resources of the empire, particularly its taxation system are elaborated in Unit 13.

Theme IV broadly focuses on the economy of the Mughal empire. Nature and pattern of agrarian economy and agrarian relations are detailed out in **Unit 14**; while exchange economy and money and currency system is the concern of **Unit 15**. The centralized structure of the Mughal empire that led to an unprecedented growth of urban centres is the focus of **Unit 16**. The Unit also details out the nature and pattern of the urban growth and the urban economy during the medieval period.

A discussion on Mughal rulers' sacred spaces is central to **Theme V**. Here, our prime focus is Akbar's religious world-view ? How Akbar defined and shaped the Mughal religious space vis-à-vis the subject. His idea of bandagan-i dargah, establishment of Ibadatkhana, declaration of mahzar and finally Tauhid-i Ilahi that crystalised Akbar's religious ideas. We have also deliberated upon Akbar's attitude towards Jains, Shias, ulama and the Jesuits.

The Course ends with a detailed discussion on the patronage given to Indic literary traditions of the subcontinent in the sixteenth century (**Theme VI**). It underlines the interaction of the vernacular traditions at Imperial and sub-Imperial levels. It highlights to what extent fusion of Persian and Sanskrit traditions led to the emergence and flourishing of new literary styles. Unlike the common belief that the Mughal courtly culture was predominantly Persianate, you would find the lively presence of Sanskrit and vernacular literary traditions and the vibrant 'multicultural' world of the Mughals. And 'we must recognize that Mughal power and sovereign imagination often operated entirely outside Islamicate culture and Persian literary productions' (Truschke 2016: 62).

Our emphasis in developing the Courses has always been on continuity and changes. Therefore, the present Course **BHIC 109** has to be studied in unison with our Course **BHIC 112**. One cannot study the sixteenth century (**BHIC 109**) in isolation, without understanding the developments in the seventeenth century (**BHIC 112**). We have kept in **BHIC 109** those features/institutions which got firmly established by Akbar's period (sixteenth century); while those which emerged prominent during the seventeenth century we have covered them in **BHIC 112**. We have not discussed Mughal-Rajput and Mughal-Deccan relations in **BHIC 109** instead, a comprehensive analysis of the two is provided in **BHIC 112**. Similarly, trade and commerce, commercial practices, Mughal art and architecture, courtly culture, etc. we have broadly analysed in **BHIC 112**. However, major administrative institutions, composition of nobility, Mughal fiscal structure, mansab and jagir all this formed the core of our discussion here in **BHIC 109**.



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Theme I Sources and Historiography



Time Line
Persian Sources

- Abul Fazl
- Nizamuddin Ahmad
- Bayazid Bayat
- Abul Qadir Badauni
- India Collections
- Official Documents
- Indic Literary Traditions
- Sanskrit Literature
- Brajhasha Literature
- Rajasthani Literature
- European Sources

Jesuit Accounts
Father Mouserrate

Ralph Fitch

Handwritten Persian script at the bottom left of the page.



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The Ladies of Krishna's Harem are shown the Sacrificial Horse, A Folio from *Razmnama*

Author: Bhagwan, 1598

Photograph Source: British Museum; <http://legacy.lclark.edu/~campion/hist259/paint2.htm>

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_12076_f017r&_ga=2.44228452.1955518749.1508058994-1313856845.150805899

Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Ladies_of_Krishna%27s_Harem_are_shown_the_Sacrificial_Horse.jpg

UNIT 1 INDO-PERSIAN HISTORIES AND PERSIAN LITERARY TRADITIONS*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Persian language and literature on the eve of Mughal advent in India
- 1.3 History writing in Persian: Form, method, and objective
 - 1.3.1 Memoirs and other biographical writings as history
 - 1.3.2 Universal and dynastic histories: Abul Fazl
- 1.4 *Insha-navisi* or the art of drafting
- 1.5 Official Documents
- 1.6 *Akhlaq* literature
- 1.7 Persian translations of Indic works
- 1.8 Summary
- 1.9 Keywords
- 1.10 Check Your Progress Exercises
- 1.11 Suggested Readings
- 1.12 Instructional Video Recommendation

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The study of this Unit would enable you to:

- understand the growth and development of political culture introduced in India,
- find out the interface of the Persian scholars with Indic literary traditions,
- know how did the autobiography tradition develop in the Persian historiography,
- assess the process of the continuation of the *tawarikh/tarikh* tradition with its salient features,
- examine the changing ethos of the poetic compositions of the period,
- appraise the growth and development of *insha* tradition,
- identify new literary genres like *safarnama* and *akhlaq*,
- underline the growth of *maktab-khana* and its interface with the Sanskrit literary tradition

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The period of our study marks major historical transformations that were shaped by political, economic, social, religious, and technological factors existing between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in north India. You will read how those changes announced the beginnings of the 'early modern' phase in Indian history. Persian culture was introduced with the Ghaznavid invasions of north India. A significant cultural shift is seen in this period as Persian acquires the status of lingua franca that bridged across the multilingual and multi-religious diversities in India. It also linked the subcontinent with the eastern Islamic world as well.

The Mughals were native speakers of a Turkish dialect called *Chaghatai turki*, but their preferred mode of public communication for administrative, literary, and cultural expression was Persian. In this Unit you will learn why and how Persian became the dominant language of the Mughal Court and communication. These changes underscore an altered worldview. An expression of new ways of perceiving the world is illustrated in the writings of Indo-Persian historians of Mughal India who started recounting the past events in terms of human actions rather than divine intervention. This, however, does not mean that Mughal historians absolutely ignore divine involvement, but that element of fatalism is far less in comparison to the writings of earlier Turko-Afghan historians. Thus, historiography shows 'secular' concerns as it shifts away from the more religious and didactic outlook.

Another important feature of Indo-Persian historiography is noticed in the writing of memoir or autobiography that focused on the individual's self-narrative. The previous patterns of recording history (*tarikh/tawarikh*) continued; however, events were now described with awareness of an altered worldview that reflected the new secularism of the day. Besides works on history other kinds of prose and poetic compositions incorporated the changing ethos of the sixteenth century. A special position is assigned to the Persian translations of Indic works that were mainly inspired by the new imperial ideology that moved away from the normative discourse of the *shari'a* in sultanate times to concerns for governance of a multicultural society in India.

The carriers of this cultural and literary transformation were the Persian knowing intellectuals and scribes, and their courtly patrons, who came from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds rooted in Iran, Central Asia, and India. These aspects explain the urbane and cosmopolitan features in the Indo-Persian literary practices of those days. In this Unit you will also learn about the culture of the scribes (*khuttab*) and secretaries (*munshis*), who were authors or compilers, some were appointed as high officials, and many were employed in the Mughal secretariat (*dîwân al-rasâ'il* or *dîwân al-inshâ'*). The Indo-Persian literary traditions in the sixteenth century cultivated a distinct style called the *sabk-i hindi*. Official orders, court histories, poetry, philosophical and mystical concepts, tales of love, wonder and travel, were diffused throughout the subcontinent. In the absence of the printing press in India, the principal means for disseminating ideas among the urban literati was through debates and circulation of handwritten manuscripts. The case of Indo-Persian manuscripts merits special attention because these were extraordinary works crafted on handmade paper, with elegant calligraphy and exquisite illustrations. You will also learn that manuscripts were not merely visual representation of written words, but also self-representations of the patron.

1.2 PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ON THE EVE OF MUGHAL ADVENT IN INDIA

When Babur laid the foundation of the Mughal rule in India in 1526, Persian language was in use for more than five hundred years by diverse sections of the Muslim elites including administrators, literati, and piety minded in the northern, western, eastern and Deccan regions of the Indian subcontinent. It will be useful to take a brief survey of the early history of Persian literary milieu, including history writing in Persian, in India and account for the historical processes that created a large and varied body of Persian texts in the subcontinent between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries (Please see **BHIC 107 Unit 1**).

The Ghaznavid (997-1187) invasions of northwestern India in the early eleventh century mark the expansion of the Muslim dynasties and ‘Persianate’¹ culture in India. The Ghaznavids were ethnic Turks and Persianized slaves (*ghulams*) of the Iranian kings of the Samanid dynasty (819-999) of Bukhara (southern Uzbekistan). When the Ghaznavids established their independent dynasty, they continued to observe the administrative and cultural practices of the Samanids who, along with other dynasties) had patronized the Persian Renaissance² (c. 900-1100) that represented traditions of mixed cultural heritage of the pre-Islamic Iran (before Iran was conquered by the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century) and the Arab Muslims. The linguistic dimension of this cultural movement was marked in the tenth century by the emergence of the ‘New Persian’ language - a hybrid of the indigenous Middle Persian of Iran, and Arabic vocabulary and script brought to Iran in the seventh century. The ‘New Persian’ (henceforth, Persian) was patronized by the Samanids as the medium of literary expression and official bureaucracy. The ancient Iranian traditions of absolute kingship, justice, bureaucratic norms, cultural pluralism in ethnic and religious matters, art and architecture, literary ethics, and history writing were compiled along with ideas of the Arab-Islamic world. For example, the Samanids patronized Bal’ami’s Persian rendition of Tabari’s universal history of the Muslims *Ta’rikh al-rasul wa’l-maluk* (*The History of Prophets and Kings*) written in Arabic. The poet Firdausi had started composing the *Shahnama* (*The Book of Kings*) including the legend of Alexander the Great in this great Persian epic of pre-Islamic Iranian history and mythology, under the Samanids. According to the historian Richard M. Eaton, Bal’ami had appropriated the legacy of early Islamic history for the Persianate world, and Firdausi did the same for legacies of pre-Islamic Iran and Greek imperialism by giving Alexander the Great his Persian ancestry. Such texts included features of the ‘Perso-Islamic’ worldview, presented in prose and poetic compositions, that were circulated by itinerant bards who traveled in search of kingly patronage. With the arrival of paper technology in the eighth and the ninth centuries, the literati and scribal communities accelerated the movement of texts, often along the military, trading, and pilgrimage circuits. In the multilingual and multireligious world of Central

1 ‘Persianate’ is a neologism coined by the historian Marshall G. Hodgson

2 The British Orientalist Edward G. Browne had coined the term ‘Persian Renaissance’ as a cultural movement that refers to the zenith of Persian literary activity noticed first in the tenth century in Central Asia and Khurasan (north east Iran). This literary activity spread across the entire Persian speaking world and reached its’ climax in the eleventh century under the Ghaznavid sultans.

Asian, Iranian, and Afghan communities people adapted to Persian because, unlike Arabic or Turkic, Persian did not have any ethnic or religious associations. These factors explain to us how Persian emerged as a powerful medium of connecting diverse ethnic groups, courts, literati, artists, scribes, Sufis, and merchants during these centuries. Even after the Mongol ravages of Central Asia and north Iran in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries Persian continued as a powerful language of the courts and everyday use in this region.

The Persian literature produced at the court of the Ghaznavid sultans defined the themes and styles of composition that would be instructive for later generations of Persian scholars in India. This corpus included Firdausi's (940-1020) epic poem the *Shahnama* (*The Book of Kings*) completed in 1010 under Mahmud Ghazni; a large body of Persian panegyric and lyrical verses written by court poets like Farrukhi, Manuchehri, Sanai, Sa'd-i Salman and other poets; and Abul Fazl Baihaqi's *Tarikh-i Baihaqi* (*The History of Baihaqi*). Another work of great value for Indian history was conceived in the Ghaznavid province of Punjab, but was an exception to the Persian literary corpus, is Abu Raihan Biruni's *Kitab al Hind* (*The Book of India*) which is a study of the north Indian Brahmanical culture and natural history written in Arabic language. With the establishment of the Ghaznavid capital in Lahore Persian speaking emigrants from the larger reaches of the eastern Islamic world settled in north India in search of trade, adventure, and patronage. The émigré rulers, administrators, scholars, literati, clerics, merchants, and Sufis were ethnically diverse but culturally integrated into the Persian traditions epitomized by Bukhara and Ghazni. In India, Lahore became the new hub of Persian literary production as poets like Abu'l Faraj Runi and Mas'ud Sa'd-i Salman wrote lyrical verses in Lahore. According to Professor Schimmel, Sa'd-i Salman introduced the Sanskrit genre of the *barahmasa*, poems describing the seasons and the months of the year, in Persian. This is an early example of the 'Indo-Persian' literary culture as it expresses how Persian language was appropriating the Indic traditions within its fold. It is at Lahore that the Sufi Shaikh Ali bin Usman Hujwiri Jullabi wrote the *Kashf al Mahjub* (*Unveiling of the Veiled*), an early Persian treatise on Sufism that included elements of biographical notes (*tazkirah*) and records of Sufi discourses (*malfuzat*). These works may not be directly concerned with history writing but these are extremely important sources for the study of many social, intellectual, political, religious, and cultural aspects of the early stages of sultanate formation in India.

Although, the beginnings were made by the Ghaznavids the roots of Persian culture were embedded in north India by the Ghurids (1148-1206). After acquiring Ghazni in 1173-1174 Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam of the Ghurids began raiding India through the Gomal Pass with his Turkish slaves and Khalji Afghan commanders, and captured Uchchh and Multan (1175), Lahore (1186), territories in the Gangetic Plains, Ajmer, and Bengal (1203). The Ghurids announced their capital at Delhi (1192), and this city continued to be the seat of authority and cultural patronage for the different ruling families in the period of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1398). Various forms of prose literature, including genealogies (*shajarah*), historiographies (*tarikh*), ethical treatises (*akhlaq*), advice literature (*nasihat*), biographies (*tazkirah*),

conversational discourses (*malfuzat*), collection of letters (*maktubat*), epistolography (*insha*); and poetic compositions in diverse forms – *qasida*, *masnavi*, *ghazal*; along with a body of official documents recording administrative orders, were composed in India on literary formats defined in the Persian oeuvre. A considerable aspect of literary patronage included narratives of history.

Some important aspects of Indo-Persian history writing in Persian in India during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may be summarized here. Firstly, works on historiography encapsulate two distinct cultural traditions expressed in the term ‘Perso-Islamic’. This term conveys an awareness of the pre-Islamic and Islamic Persian history; and it frames events against the backdrop of the history of Islam to cultivate the normative values of Islamic religion. This aspect, for example, may be illustrated through one of the earliest prose texts on Islamic history and genealogy the *Shajarah-i ansab* (*The Tree of Genealogies*, 1206) of Fakhr-i Mudabbir, written under the patronage of the Ghurid Sultan Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam. The *Shajarah* accounted for 139 genealogies after Adam down to the Ghurids. The purpose of genealogies was to show kinship relationships and universal history of Islam in the design of a genealogical tree. Later, Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani used the *Shajarah* in his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* (*The Nasirian Tables*, 1259) to give his Ghurid patrons an Iranian ancestry, and a connection to the Abbasid Caliphs to garner political legitimacy. Further, while ideas of absolute kingship and justice were themes drawn from legendary Persian kings like Jamshid, Nushirwan and Faridun; at the same time historians used the imagery of *ghazi* sultan to eulogize their Muslim political patron. These elements from pre-Islamic Persia and sacred history of Islam were frequently used to impress upon the reader the universal, transregional, and cross-cultural elements in the narrative strategies in history writing in Persian in India.

The element of moralizing is clearly mentioned in the writings of Ziyauddin Barani (1285-1357). He wrote that the chronicles of history, such as his own *Tarikh-i Firozshahi* (*The History of Firozshah*), were a companion to *hadis* (Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) and had a didactic purpose. History, therefore, must be written with the view to teach moral lessons based on the precepts of Sunni Islam. While the *Tarikh* reflected the Islamic stream of the Perso-Islamic practice; Barani’s *Fatawa-i Jahandari* (*Rulings on Temporal Government*) presents a blending of Islamic and Persian concepts. Written by inter-mixing historiographical and advice (*nasihat/andarz*) literary styles, this treatise poses Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna’s advice to his sons on the duties of Muslim rulers. The author lamented the corruption of ideals of Islamic polity since after the days of the first four Caliphs and submitted that it would be impossible to rule according to the Islamic precepts. Barani, therefore, delivered a pragmatic solution to Indo-Muslim rulers to follow the culturally inclusive practices of pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs and balance the interests of their Muslim subjects as well.

A different kind of historical writing is available in the compositions of Amir Khusrau. The Indian born Turk Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) whose self-proclaimed title *Tuti-ye Hind* or ‘Parrot of India’ embodies his extraordinary talent as innovator of Persian literary and musical traditions in India. Khusrau’s oeuvre was not

formatted on the Ghaznavid and Ghurid courtly literature of writing panegyrics in *qasida*. Nor did Khusrau write in the annalistic mode of historians like Juzjani. His main contribution lies in experimenting with literary styles like *iham* (double entendre) and *khayal* (poetic imagination); narrative events styled in the *masnavi* format and written from a historical perspective; and a new style of epistolography. Nevertheless, narratives in poetic frames are useful for reconstructing aspects of courtly life, Sufi devotionism, and the historical evolution of Perso-Islamic culture during this period.

Another aspect of Persian history writing in this period concerns the element of reasoning for events that shape human existence. In the perception of the medieval historians the causation of historical events was largely ascribed to the element of fate (*taqdir*) with minimal role for human agency.

Persian in the wake of Timur

Timur's military ventures in northern India displaced the political authority of Delhi (1398) and this, undoubtedly, weakened patronage given to Persian literary works. What was the status of Persian in the post-Timurid period (c. 1398-1556), which is referred to as 'twilight of the Delhi Sultanate' and the 'long fifteenth century'? On the one hand, it is the opinion of some historians, the period between the death of Firuz Shah Tughlaq (d. 1388) and the accession of Akbar to the throne (1556) is marked by dearth of Persian texts, signifying a 'crises' for Persian in the Indian milieu. On the other hand, scholars are also of the opinion that in this period Indian Persian became further rooted in the Indian socio-cultural environment. While Persian was the language of the new Muslim political elite in north India and the Deccan, the indigenous language registers, Sanskrit and the other spoken languages, remained significant mediums of expression for political and administrative, religious and devotional, literary and philosophical discourse. Further, this period is noticed for transcultural (Perso-Indic) and multilingual activities which initiated literary and historiographical trends that mature under the Mughals.

As the focus of politics shifted from Delhi to the regional sultanates and Rajput kingdoms, we do not see any large imperial histories that were written from Delhi. Instead, we have modest political histories compiled in the new sovereign states which were once subservient to Delhi. Many scholars, merchants, and artisans had migrated from Delhi and taken refuge in the smaller regional states in Malwa, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Kalpi, and the Deccan. This created the circumstance for regional rulers to patronize local histories in the style introduced by the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. A case in point is Muhammad Bihmad Khani's *Tarikh-i Muhammadi*, a history of Kalpi that drew on Juzjani's idea of universal history of the Islamic world, using genealogy to trace the present patron back to the origin of the Islamic community. In the Deccan, the rulers of the Bahmanid Sultanate (1347-1527) were great patrons of Persian culture. It is here that Abdul Malik Isami (d. 1399) wrote a verse history the *Futuh as Salatin* (*The Victories of Sultans*), which he modelled on Firdausi's *Shahnama*, and projected Mahmud of Ghazni as an ideal Persian king; and linked the founder of the Bahmanid dynasty Alauddin Bahman Shah to Mahmud for marking a historiographical linkage with the founder of Muslim rule

in India. In this way the regional sultanate of the Bahmanids assumed a legitimate place in the world of Muslim Persianized monarchies.

Another feature of this century is the growing indigenization of the Persian language in India. This aspect is evident from the production of Persian lexicographic works in India that are multilingual and contain words from Arabic, Turki, Syrian, Greek, Latin, Pashto, and *Hindavi*, in the lemmata or dictionary entries and the synonyms and terms used in their explanations. These lexicographic works were of two kinds – the *lughat* and the *farhang*. The *lughat*, is a simple dictionary in which the words and their equivalents are given in one or several languages. While the *farhang* is an explanatory dictionary of the Persian language that describes the knowledge, culture, and the resources of literary language. Several such dictionaries were compiled in north India during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the various locales of the regional sultanates. Stephano Pello, a scholar of Persian language and history, has argued that production of such normative texts in the regions peripheral to Delhi indicates the literary status of their patrons in the Persianate world.

These dictionaries were used for language instruction, especially poetic education by explaining compositions with archaic words, references to historical and mythical personalities, geographical locations, allegories, and multilingual vocabularies. In this sense of presenting terms from various languages Persian has been addressed as a ‘hyper-language’. Some examples include: the *Adat al fuzala (Instrument of the Scholars)*, compiled in 1419 by Qazi Badruddin Muhammad Dihlawi called ‘Dharwal’. He was a native of Delhi who travelled to Jaunpur and then settled in Dhar in Madhya Pradesh. The *Farhang-i zafanguya u jahanpuya (The eloquent and world-seeking dictionary)* compiled by Badruddin Ibrahim before 1433 is one of the first Persian dictionaries to cover a large number of words (5,170 words), the first to use the principle of alphabetization, and the earliest Persian dictionary with multilingual words. It provides a detailed statistics of the foreign loanwords in Persian and is the first attempt at classifying them. Another work, the *Sharafnama-yi Maneri* was compiled in 1473 by Ibrahim Qiwamuddin Faruqi of Bihar for Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty of Bengal. This dictionary describes details on grammatical outlines on Persian and Turki. In the absence of any books on Persian grammar this lexicographic work was used for teaching. The transregional movement of the lexicographers and their texts indicates the deepening of Persian learning among the military, courtly, scholarly, and religious elites in north India.

The dictionaries were organised thematically or alphabetically, with specific sections devoted to words from other languages like Arabic, Turki, *Hindavi*, etc. The earliest Persian dictionary that was compiled in India is the *Farhang-i Qawwas* and it had only eight Hindi terms. Later dictionaries contain a separate section on *Hindavi* words, arranged thematically concerning proper names of people, places; kinship terms, words related to time, astronomy, medicine, botany, agriculture; terms for implements, weapons, toys, clothing; and music. The presence of *Hindavi* terms in Persian dictionaries explains the diverse nature of contact between the two cultures summarised in the term Indo-Persian and indicates how the Persian language undergoes a process of acquiring vocabularies from diverse regions of

India. For example, the *Farhang-i lisan-i shu 'ara* (*The Dictionary of the language of poets*), composed in 1378 contains several terms related to everyday life, like *bheli* (Hindavi for 'bran') as equivalent of Persian *tagazhdana*; *gudgudi* (Hindavi for 'tickle') to explain Persian *ghilghilich*; *dhakka* (Hindavi for 'push') to explain Persian *asib* (blow; misfortune). These aspects explain historical processes described by the scholars like Simon Digby and Stephano Pello as 'linguistic indigenization of Persian' and 'provincialization of Persian' in India that sowed the seeds for its phenomenal growth under the Mughals.

In the pre-Mughal centuries (c. 1000 – 1500), there is great diversity of political, economic, social, and cultural factors that stimulate large and varied styles of texts in different language registers, namely, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Apabhramsha, and the vernacular called *hindavi* or *bhakha* (this was the term used for spoken languages in north India in the Persian sources). In fact, the range of Sanskrit language was extraordinary as it sprawled across the South Asian region, and beyond, to create a cultural zone of the 'Sanskrit cosmopolis'.³ At the same time, literary compositions, in written and oral format, were being shaped in the vernacular or the languages spoken in various regions of the subcontinent as well. The vernacular literature included works on genealogies, biographies, panegyrics for patrons, devotional literature, and governmental records in the regional courts located in northern India and the Deccan. The cultural spaces occupied by the Arbo-Persian, Sanskrit, and vernacular languages, and the social contexts of their interlocutors were not in isolation from each other. In fact, there was constant movement, dialogue, and dissemination of ideas, amongst their interlocutors. Some speakers being proficient in application of more than one, or several tongues.

The movement across linguistic cultures impacted literary output in significant ways. Firstly, in the vernacular literature new styles appear in the form of adaptations of classical genres of Sanskrit and Persian literature.⁴ Secondly, regional histories and panegyrics were also written in Sanskrit and Persian. Thirdly, literary production involved works of translation from Sanskrit into Persian and vernacular languages⁵, generally commissioned under political patronage. An early example includes Zain al Abidin's, (the sultan of Kashmir, r. 1423-74) Persian translation of the Sanskrit text of *Kathasaritasagara*. Fourthly, as has been discussed above, Persian became firmly rooted in the Indian environment, and may be further illustrated with the earliest Persian grammatical writing in Sanskrit, like the *Yavananamamala* (1364), that was written by a Jaina scholar Vidyaniyata working at the court of Firoz Shah Tughlaq.

³ 'Sanskrit cosmopolis' is a term coined by the Sanskritist and historian Sheldon Pollock to define the idea of cultural space, during the fourth to the fourteenth centuries, that was occupied by common texts, ideas and themes derived from the Sanskrit texts, and shared by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups of people, who circulated the shared ideas about aesthetics, polity, kingly virtues, learning, and universal dominion not by force of arms but by emulation.

⁴ An example of Persian adaptation in vernacular form is the Hindavi Sufi romance or *premakhyān* (love story). The earliest text of this genre is the *Chandayan* written by Maulana Daud in 1379. The poetic format of the *premakhyāns* is derived from the Persian lyrical style of the *masnavi* while the characters of the story are based in the local environment and speak in the vernacular dialect of *Awadhi*.

⁵ For example, Vishnudas transcreation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* into the vernacular, Bangali.

The post-Timurid period has been described by literary historians as a period of slowdown for Persian literary culture in India. These scholars have also suggested that the waning fortunes of the Persian literati and literature during the fifteenth century are revived under the extraordinary patronage received from the new ruling dynasty of the Mughals who settled in northern India by the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The above survey of Persian literary culture and history writing in the regional or provincial kingdoms, however, creates an alternate scenario for Persian as it became rooted in the multilingual, multicultural environment in north India and the Deccan, and became the base for Persian to assume a dominant position under the Mughals.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Discuss the growth of Persian language and literature on the eve of Mughal advent in India.

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- 2) Which normative texts were produced in the regions peripheral to Delhi and what does their production indicate?

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1. Fill in the blanks:

- i) Mughals were native speakers of.....
ii) Under the Mughals scribes were known as.....
iii) Mughal secretariat where records were preserved and compiled was known as
- iv)was a distinct Indo-Persian literary style developed during the sixteenth century.

1.3 HISTORY WRITING IN PERSIAN: FORM, METHOD, AND OBJECTIVE

During the Mughal period beginning from Zain Khan's *Tuzuk-i Baburi* and Khwand Mir's *Qanun-i Humayuni* to *Tarikh-i Shah Alam* by Munna Lal huge amount of chroniclers' accounts were produced. However, here we would be discussing only a few major political works and chroniclers with a special focus on Abul Fazl Allami.

During Akbar's period historical literature was produced at an amazingly large scale. Akbar commissioned *Tarikh-i Alfi* to commemorate the Islamic millennium. It covers the period from 632 down to Akbar's reign. The book was commissioned in 1582

and completed in 1592. Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad wrote *Tabaqat-i Akbari*. Its chronogram provides the date 1592-93 but the narrative runs upto 1593-94. The author died in October 1594. Nizamuddin has divided his *Tabaqat* into nine regions, each is dealt in a separate *tabqa* (section): Delhi, Gujarat, Bengal, Malwa, Jaunpur, Sind, Kashmir and Multan. Author provides interesting information about the cities and *qasbas* of Akbar's empire. He mentions that Akbar's empire consisted of 3200 *qasbas* and 120 cities. He intended to write separately on each of them, a task which he could not accomplish. Badauni penned down *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh* against 'heresies' and 'innovations' of Akbar's reign. He wrote the book secretly to present the so-called 'true' version of the events. The book is written in three volumes. First covers from the age of Subuktigin to Humayun and the Second deals with Akbar's reign. He laments the 'annihilation of Islam' in Akbar's reign. The third volume is in the form of a *tazkira* and provides biographical accounts of *mashaikhs*, *ulama*, poets and physicians of Akbar's period. Badauni provides firsthand information on *Ibadat Khana* proceedings. Badauni has also provided the full draft of *mahzar* of Akbar which is otherwise not found in Abul Fazl. Muhammad Arif Qndahari's *Tarikh-i Akbar Shahi* is valuable to understand the administrative structure of the Mughals, land revenue reforms of Todar Mal and sheds light on the condition of peasantry and their issues under Akbar.

1.3.1 Memoirs and other biographical writings as history

A historical account/biography that is largely written with personal memories falls into the category of a memoir. During the medieval period there are major four accounts which fall into this category 6 Babur's memoirs, *Baburnama*, Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun Nama/Ahwal-i Humayun Padshah*.

Babur's memoirs (*Tuzuk-i Baburi/Baburnama*), written originally in Chaghatai Turkish, can truly be called the 'only true autobiography in Islamic literature'. It is an extremely open and frank account of the events. He has presented an absolutely truthful and unbiased account of the events of his period. Babu admits what 'I have said is the plain truth. . . I have spoken the things as they happened. In all that I have written. . . I have in every word most scrupulously followed the truth'. Though Babur died in 1530, his account abruptly ends on 7th September, 1529. It is written in the form of a diary of events. Babur provides a vivid account of his struggle in Farghana and Samarkand and his sojourn to Hindustan; his battles and struggles in India and his victories. He provides the political, military and socio-economic conditions of the region he governed right from his accession (1494). Babur observes the weakness of Indians in the following terms: 'All Hindustan was not at that period subject to a single Emperor: every Raja set up for a monarch on his own account, in his own petty territories'. He also observes the fragile nature of Indian cities and hamlets. He comments: 'In Hindustan, the destruction and building of villages and hamlets, even cities can be accomplished in an instant. Such large cities in which people have lived for years, if they are going to be abandoned can be left in a day, so that no sign or trace remains. If they have a mind to build a city, there is no necessity for digging irrigation canals or building dams. . . They simply make huts from the plentiful straw and innumerable trees and instantly a village or city is born'. However, he was impressed by the presence of innumerable artisans.

He wrote that ‘workmen of every profession and trade are innumerable without end’. He also comments on the hereditary nature of these professions: ‘the same employment and trade have descended from father to son for ages’. His memoir points out Babur as a true naturalist. His keen interest in local environment and physical geography 6 flora, fauna, river systems, animal kingdom is extraordinary. His observation on various kinds of devices used in various regions to lift water for irrigation is amazing, particularly the detailed description of the use of Persian wheel and *charas*. However, Babur could never think of India as his homeland. He always had a longing for ‘garden palace’ of Samarkand and musk melons of his homeland. He comments: ‘Many praise the mango so highly as to give it the preferences to every kind of fruit, the musk-melon excepted, but it does not appear to me to justify their praise’.

Gulbadan Begum was the daughter of Babur from Dildar Banu Begum. Gulbadan’s account is of vital importance for hers were the observations from within and it was she who witnessed the early formation of Mughal sovereignty in India. Babur died when she was just eight years old. She survived through the tumultuous phase of Humayun. She penned down her memoirs to facilitate the history of the period for Abul Fazl’s *Akbarnama*. *Humayun Nama* is full of insights on birth, marriage and other related celebrations. It speaks of activities of the ruler as a human being outside the formal court. Her account is largely based on memory, heard and remembered, nonetheless its an eyewitness account of the *harem* inmates. *Humayun Nama* throws light on Babur and Humayun and provides insights on the life in the Mughal *harem* 6 personal/social relationships of the royalty, internal conflicts/tensions, role of *adab* (rules/etiquettes/royal protocol/conduct). Her account suggests that royal women did enjoy distinct position in matters of marriage and social protocol. It also shows women often played the role of political intermediaries. Account also throws light on the position of *purdah* in the Mughal *harem* during the early period. It appears it was comparatively less strict. It shows that the lady of the *harem* was not the chief queen but was the queen mother who often acted as advisor to the king. Humayun’s regular visits to Dildar Banu Begum testify to it. Truly, Gulbadan Begum’s *Humayun Nama* is a portrayal of ‘lived experiences and socio-political realities’ of the period. Gulbadan’s account not just throws light on the domestic life of the Mughal household but also it suggests the boundaries of the public/private spaces and gender relations vs. political power.

1.3.2 Universal and Dynastic Histories: Abul Fazl

Abul Fazl, younger brother of Faizi and son of the great scholar Shaikh Mubarak Nagauri, was not just the ‘secretary’ of the empire but also was the close friend of Akbar, a rationalist and liberal thinker. He joined Akbar’s court in 1574, a year before *Ibadat Khana* was established. His chief fame rests upon his monumental work *Akbarnama* of which, initially, *Ain-i Akbari*, another seminal work on the statistical account of Akbar’s empire, was its third volume. *Akbarnama* narrative comes to a close in the 46th regnal year of Akbar; in the 47th regnal year Abul Fazl got assassinated by Bir Singh Deo Bundela. *Ain* was completed in the 42nd regnal year, a section on Berar was added in the 43rd regnal year. Later Muhibb Ali Khan brings the narrative upto the end of Akbar’s reign. However, the added portion

was probably written during Shahjahan's reign and appears to have been largely copied from Mu'tamad Khan's account. From Akbar's reign onwards the account becomes an annual chronicle. *Ain* is divided into five books. First deals with the Imperial establishment; second discusses the army; third elaborates on various offices/duties, details of revenue rates, and *suba*-wise statistics; fourth primarily covers Hindu philosophy religion, medicine, customs and manners; while the fifth incorporated the sayings of Akbar. While *Akbarnama* is full of battles and events; *Ain* is written in the form of a gazetteer.

Though Abul Fazl's style of history writing lies within the framework of Persian historiography, Abul Fazl attempted to include Arabic tradition also, nonetheless, as Nizami puts it his intention of including 'people' was 'partial and limited': 'the people were admitted into the charmed circle of a historian's study not as a matter of right, as the Arab historians had done, but as a necessity, because without them a discussion of Akbar's multifarious activities would have remained incomplete and insipid' (Nizami 1982: 153). Nonetheless Abul Fazl used new methodologies to present the political and administrative realities of Akbar's realm to the fore. His *Ain* provides exhaustive details of the genius of Akbar's empire. His details of administrative regulations and topography of the empire and the provinces enriches and widens the scope of history writing. Abul Fazl explained monarchy as light emanating from God (*farr-i izadi*) and sovereign should be a 'just' ruler and work for the welfare of people. For him Akbar was the 'ideal' monarch leading both the spiritual and temporal realms. By the declaration of *mahzar* Akbar reached to the level of a *mujtahid* 'a perfect man', *imam-i Adil* 'infallible leader'. He presented Akbar's reigns as that of peace, prosperity, stability, good governance and a period that of religious tolerance and freedom.

However, limitation of Abul Fazl's writings remains, in his zeal to depict Akbar as an 'ideal' monarch and 'perfect man' and in order to glorify Akbar's achievements he often tend to overlook his weaknesses and failed to use his 'reason' in presenting the facts thus making at times the account 'partisan'. To overshadow Akbar's failures, certain of Akbar's experiments found no place in Abul Fazl's meticulously crafted *Akbarnama*: there is no mention of failure of Akbar's experiment to convert the entire lands of the empire into *khalisa*, nor does he mention that in the 24th regnal year Akbar resumes the grant of *jagirs*. Thus Abul Fazl omitted many facts that did not fit into his scheme of presenting Akbar as an 'ideal' monarch or something that undermined Akbar's position. Thus *Akbarnama* is more a 'story of Akbar'.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) List a few memoirs of the Mughal period. In what ways Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun Nama* is important to construct the social history of the period?

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- 2) Write three lines on *Baburnama*.

3) Name political chroniclers of the Early Mughal period.

4) Discuss the importance of *Akbarnama* as source of history.

1.4 *INSHA-NAVISI* (EPISTOLOGRAPHY) OR THE ART OF DRAFTING

Insha literally means ‘creation’. However, in the medieval period it denotes, specimen documents and drafts, personal letters, state correspondences. They provide firsthand information on the working of administration as well as prevailing socio-cultural condition and ideas during the medieval period. *Insha* writings were largely written in the context of *diwani*. *Insha* literature was directly connected with chancellery practices of the Delhi Sultans and later the Mughals.

There were thus two types of *inshas*, one, written for epistography writings, thus they may not necessarily be real and are model documents meant to impart necessary skills in the art of drafting. *Manazir-ul Insha* of Khwaja Jahan Mahmud Gawan is the example of this type of *Insha*. In other types documents/letters/correspondences are preserved. These second types of *insha* are of great historical significance.

Insha collections of the Mughal period are too numerous, beginning from *Badai-ul Insha* of Hakim Yusufi (1533) to *Nigarmana-i Munshi* of Malikzada (1683). Among all *insha* collections Abul Fazl’s name stands out 6 *Mukatabat-i Allami* (collected by his nephew Abdus Samad) and *Ruqqat-i Abul Fazl* (collected by his another nephew Nuruddin Muhammad. Nuruddin Muhammad also compiled another *insha* collection of Abul Fazl’s brother Faizi, *Lataif-i Faizi/Insha-i Faizi*.

Abul Fazl’s *Mukatabat-i Allami* and *Ruqaat* are collection of Abul Fazl’s letters written to Akbar, members of the royal household (Mughal princes, queens, other notables of the *harem*) and the Mughal bureaucrats. These letters can be divided into three categories:

- i) Letters and *farmans* and official dispatches sent on behalf of the king (Akbar) to the nobles and foreign dignitaries (Akbar’s *farman* addressed to Mirza Aziz Koka, Shah Abbas of Persia, Abdullah Khan Uzbeg, Akbar’s letter to respectable citizens of Mecca, Akbar’s letter to the wise men of the West, etc.);

- ii) Abul Fazl's petitions and representations made to Akbar non issues of state policies and letters written by his colleagues to Abul Fazl;
- iii) Letters of general and miscellaneous nature. Abul Fazl's letters are of immense importance to understand the political, social and religious atmosphere of the period. It provides broader understanding of Akbar's religious outlook as well. It helps us understand Mughal relations with the Shah of Persia, Turkey and the Uzbegs vis-à-vis the northwest frontier policy of Akbar.

Abul Fazl's elder brother Faizi, an erudite scholar, joined Akbar's court at the age of 21 and was adorned with the title *malik al-shuara* in Akbar's court. Faizi's *Insha-i Faizi* is an extremely informative *insha* collection, particularly his five *arzdashts* written to Akbar. One such *arzdasht* Faizi wrote to Akbar in 1591 when he was deputed to Burhanpur. It not only throws light on Akbar's relations with the Farooqi, ruler of Khandesh, Razi Ali Khan but also elaborates in detail the continuation of the Sultnate practice of *sarparda* (creation of royal enclosure in the absence of the emperor where all royal orders presented and dignitaries were welcomed before the symbolic throne created in the *sarparda* suggestive of ensuring the prestige and honour to be accorded to the Emperor, even in his absence. Faizi provided a detailed account of the cities enroute from Lahore to Burhanpur. He also provides graphic account of the production of high quality fruits like papaya and figs in the Burhnpur region. Interestingly, Faizi addresses Akbar as *zil al-Allah* (Shadow of God) and not *farr-i izadi* (light emanating from God). Further, Faizi clearly, in tone with Akbar's religious ideas when Farooqi ruler asked permission to perform *sijda* (prostrate) he was politely refused and was told that *sijda* could only be performed before God. He also mentions about the atrocities of the *faujdar* of Ludhiana; while equally praising the *faujgars* and *karoris* of Sirhind, Thanesar, and Panipat. He also speaks of Gujjars involved in robberies around Delhi. Thus, Faizi's *insha* collection is a valuable source of information to understand the contemporary polity, society and culture.

Among other *insha* collections, *Munshat-i Namkin* of Mir Abul Qasim Namkin (1598), is important to understand the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the period. Abul Qasim served both Akbar and Jahangir. However his *insha* does not contain any correspondences related to Jahangir's period. He joined Akbar's service sometime around 1567 and served in the regions of Salt Range, Sind, Punjab and Gujarat and held Bhakkar in his *jagir*. *Munshat* is perhaps one of the largest of the *insha* collections that survive to date. The section *khatimah* (the concluding part) is of utmost historical importance. It deals with imperial *manshurs* issued to the grandees of the Mughal empire, petitions, *fathnamas* (letters of victory), administrative orders pertaining to various appointments like that of *wakil*, *wazir*, *bakhshi*, *diwan*, *mir adl*, *mir bahr*, *mimar* (incharge of building constructions) etc. Some of the documents pertain to the appointments of religious personnel like *shaikhi*, *sajjadanashini*, and *tauliyat* (trusteeship). *Munshat* contains letter of Shah Tahmasp written to Akbar and Hamida Bano Begum and Abdullah Khan Uzbek's letter to Akbar and Akbar's letter to Shah Tahmasp. *Munshat* is also important from the point that it contains a number of information and correspondences pertaining to the early period of Akbar's reign which is otherwise

not available in other sources in such details. Important among them are two *fathnamas* issued at the time of surrender of Mankot on the occasion of Mughal victory against Sikandar Sur in 1557. Similarly, it contains Akbar's *farman* issued in 1560 at the time of Bairam Khan's revolt. Equally important is the full text of the *fathnama* of Chittor (1568) issued by Akbar. It also provides crucial information pertaining to administrative divisions, Akbar's *dahsala* settlement, *batai*, *ijara*, etc. A *manshur* appointing Shaikh Kabir as Sajjadanashin of the *dargah* of Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariah Multani is important for it sheds light on the presence of deep imperial interference in the institutions of religious importance. The documents pertaining to *niqahnama* mentioned in the *Munshat* throws valuable light on the social institution of marriage and particularly on the rights and position of women. Namkin hailed from a distinguished family of Khorasan so *Munshat* contains a good number of documents related to Central Asia as well. Thus, *Munshat* is of immense importance to understand the development of Akbar's administrative divisions, working of various institutions, and prevalent marriage norms and the position of women in the medieval society.

1.5 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

With sixteenth century records pertaining to official documents becomes richer and help us in our understanding of the period. However, the range of official documents is too wide to count. It includes *farmans* (emperor's orders), *nishans* (orders issued by a prince), *parwanas* (instructions issued by a king to his subordinates), *hasb-ul hukm* (order issued by a minister at the instructions of an emperor), etc. A few among such important documents of Akbar's period are: Akbar's *farmans* issued to Sikh Guru Ramdas; to priests of Chaitanya sect of Vrindavan; grants given to *jogis* of Jakhbar; a number of *madad-i maash* grants (revenue free assignments to religious grantees and the destitutes); *farmans* and *parwanas* pertaining to *madad-i maash* grants in the *pargana* of Batala; Raja Todar Mal's memorandum pertaining to revenue administration; Akbar's *farman* on the excavation of Hansi-Hisar Branch of canal;

Check Your Progress-3

1) What are *inshas*?

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2) Write a few lines on *Munshat-i Namkin* as an important source of history.

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3) Write the importance of official documents during the sixteenth century.

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1.6 AKHLAQ LITERATURE

Akhlaq/normative literature is primarily a form of literature produced on the ethics and art of governance/political theory. *Akhlaq* literature is primarily normative, theoretical and idealistic that articulates the attributes of an ‘ideal’ ruler and his duties. The earliest of such works produced in India were Fakhr-i Mudabbir’s *Adab-ul Harb wa Shujaat* and Ziauddin Barani’s *Fatawa-i Jahandari*. Among the *akhlaq* literature Nasir al-Din Tusi’s *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, written in 1235 CE at the instance of Ismaili prince Nasir al-Din Abd al-Rahim bin Abi Mansur, stands out. Almost all the later *akhlaq* literature produced in India borrowed heavily from Tusi in style. Tusi’s work was widely read and circulated in India. Tusi’s work was among the most favoured books read among the political elites of the Mughals. Abul Fazl mentions Tusi’s *Akhlaq* among the five most favourite books of Akbar and to be read out to him daily.

The earliest of the *akhlaq* treatises associated with the Mughals goes to Babur’s period. It was Ikhtiyar al-Din al-Husaini, the Chief Qazi of Herat and the then *wazir* of Timurid Sultan Husain Bayqara who wrote *Dastur al-Wizarat* dedicated to the Timurid Sultan. However, after the fall of the Timurids at Herat he joined Babur and with revised version of the same which he named *Akhlaq-i Humayuni* he presented that to Babur. Another major *akhlaq* work was produced during Jahangir’s reign by Nur al-Din Qazi al Khaqani’s *Akhlaq-i Jahangiri*. Since the work was produced during Jahangir’s reign we will not be discussing it here. Instead it will form part of discussions in our Course **BHIC 112**.

Akhlaq-i Humayuni articulated on the ‘high ethical ideals of the monarch’ and deliberates upon the ‘laws and forms of governance’. Al-Husaini puts ‘*adl* (justice) and ‘cooperation’ at the highest level and according to him to ensure justice principles of *sharia* and a ‘just king’ is essential and that needs to be achieved not through exercise of power but through ‘affection and favours’:

The affairs of living must thus be administered through cooperation which depends on justice (*adl*). If *adl* disappears, each man will pursue his own desires. Therefore, there has to be an institute (*dastur*) and a balancing agency to ensure cooperation. The *sharia*...serves this purpose. But the *sharia* cannot work without being administered by a just king, whose principal duty is to keep people in control through affection and favours.

Muzaffar Alam 2004: 54-55

For Husaini both ‘Muslims’ and *Kafirs*’ enjoyed ‘divine compassion’ without discrimination:

The man of ideal politics...considers the *riaya* as his sons and friends and has control over his greed and lust through his intellect.

Muzaffar Alam 2004: 56

Emphasis on justice, social harmony and cooperation advocated in the *akhlaq* literature did influence the Mughal ideal of governance. Subjects are addressed as

‘sons and friends’ so the relationship between the king and the subjects was that of ‘paternal love’ that goes in consonance with Akbar’s ideal of *sulh-i Kul*. In Akbar’s code of conducts (*dasturs*) issued to his subordinate officials, *akhalaq* finds its place:

When they are [officials] free from their public work, they should read books written by the pious and saintly, such as those ones on *akhalaq* that cure moral and spiritual ailments...

Muzaffar Alam 2004: 62

Thus *akhalaq* literature is of immense importance to understand the art of governance under the Mughals.

Check Your Progress-4

1) Define *akhlaq* literature.

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2) Name some of the normative writings done during Akbar’s period.

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1.7 PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF INDIC WORKS

Coinciding with the foundation of *Ibadat Khana*, Akbar established his translation bureau (*maktab khana*) in 1574-1575 at Fathpur Sikri and attached it to the royal library. Largely Sanskrit texts were translated into Persian. However, Persian translations of some Arabic and Turkish texts were also carried out. The most notable among them was the Persian translation of *Baburnama* by his illustrious noble Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan. Some scholars point out that his translation project was much more than to pacify Hindus, instead, it was aimed at larger efforts to enhance the status of Persian as official language and language of the ‘common masses’.

The translation project in Akbar’s court probably began in 1575-1576 with the arrival of Shaikh Bhawan, a Brahman convert, to Akbar’s court. The earliest works translated from Sanskrit with the help of Shaikh Bhawan by Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi was *Atharva Veda (Bed Atharban)* sometime before 1583. In 1582 Akbar commissioned the translation of *Mahabharata (Razmnama)* and ordered Badauni to translate the text; later the task was completed by Mulla Shri, Naqib Khan and Sultan Haji Thanesari. Abul Fazl composed the Preface of the Persian text. The task was completed by 1584. Faizi was also asked to complete the poetic version of the *Mahabharata*, but he could not complete the task.

Badauni’s description of the translation of *Mahabharata* throws light on how the

translation project was carried out in Akbar's court. First the Sanskrit text was rendered in 'Hindi' by Pandits/scholars, then it was rendered into Persian. Utmost care was also taken in the accuracy of translations. Badauni had to face wrath of Akbar on account of so-called inaccuracies in the Persian translation of *Mahabharata*.

Badauni also translated *Ramayana*, a project that completed in 1591. Nizam Panipati translated *Yogavastha* (a treatise on *Vedantic philosophy*) as an appendix to *Ramayana* and dedicated it to Prince Salim. Mulla Shri also translated *Harivamsa* (*Haribans*; Genealogy of K[ichGa]) into Persian.

Among the Sanskrit texts of non-religious nature, the most important one translated into Persian at Akbar's court was Bhaskaracharya's *Lilavati*, a work on Arithmetic (*hisab*) translated by Faizi. Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* was translated by Shah Muhammad Shahabadi.

Some of the Sanskrit works were not actually retranslated but were actually the 'retelling of the Sanskrit texts in Persian'. In the category falls Faizi's *Nal Daman*.

These translations points to the fact that in Akbar's translation project it was *Mahabharat* that was central, suggestive of the dominance of Vaishnava traditions, in contrast to Shaivite traditions at Akbar's court. Emphasis and interests in *Upanishadic* philosophy, one finds, could be generated only under Dara Shukoh's patronage (*Sirr-i Akbar*) during Shah Jahan's reign. Lord Rama was idealized as 'model of Hindu monarchs'; even Akbar was depicted as incarnation of Vishnu. It is rightly pointed out by Truschke (2016: 209) that Akbar's translation project helped promoting 'Akbar's vision of royal authority as transcending multiple religious traditions'.

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) List major Sanskrit works translated during Akbar's period.
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- 2) Discuss the role of *maktab khana* in translating the Sanskrit works into Persian.
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1.8 SUMMARY

Under the Mughals series of political chronicles were produced. However, with Abul Fazl a real break occurred. With his emphasis on reason and rational analysis a new dimension in the history writing tradition got added. Besides chroniclers' accounts medieval period is rich in terms of official documents (*farmans, manshurs,*

parwanas, etc.) and *insha* literature. Akbar's period is also marked for a number of Sanskrit works translated into Persian.

1.9 KEYWORDS

<i>Arzdashts</i>	Petitions/situation reports
<i>Farmans</i>	King's orders
<i>Hasb-ul hukm</i>	Order issued by a minister at the instructions of an emperor
<i>Mir adl</i>	Judicial officer; primarily responsible for the implementation of the judgements
<i>Mir bahr</i>	Incharge of river transport, maintained boats, boatmen and sailors, bridges
<i>Mimar</i>	Incharge of building constructions
<i>Nishan</i>	Orders issued by a prince
<i>Parwanas</i>	Orders/Instructions issued by a king to his subordinates

1.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 1.2
- 2) See Section 1.2
- 3) i) *Chaghatai Turki*; ii) *Khuttab*; iii) *diwan-i insha/diwan al-rasail*; iv) *sabak-i Hindi*

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 1.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 1.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 1.3.1
- 4) See Sub-section 1.3.2

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Section 1.4
- 2) See Section 1.4
- 2) See Section 1.5

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Section 1.6
- 2) See Section 1.6

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) See Section 1.7
- 2) See Section 1.7

1.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Alam, Muzaffar, (2004) *The Languages of Political Islam in India c. 1200-1800* (New Delhi: Permanent Black).

Hardy, Peter, (1966) *Historians of Medieval India* (London: Luzac & Co.).

Hasan, Mohibul, (2018 [1982]) *History and Historians of Medieval India* (New Delhi: Aakar Books).

Habib, Irfan (ed.) (1999) *Akbar and His India: His Empire and Environment* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Khan, Iqtidar Alam (ed.) (1999) *Akbar and His Age* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre).

Mukhia, Harbans, (2017[1976]) *Historians and Historiography during the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Aakar Books).

Nizami, K.A., (1982) *On History and Historians of Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).

Truschkey, Audery, (2016) *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (Gurgaon: Penguin Books).

1.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATION

Abul Fazl: Chronicling Akbar and His India

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ4iRSqg48M>

Mughal Historiography and Sources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qODAcOrYsBg&t=923s>

Mughal Historiography and Sources - I

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2KLMxyWh9Q&t=685s>

Mughal Historiography and Sources - II

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeU25fxsvvE>

Historiography and Sources-2(Persian Sources)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42Tc0UgX2B0>

UNIT 2 INDIC LITERARY TRADITIONS AND EUROPEAN SOURCES*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Indic Literary Tradition: Imperial and Sub-Imperial Transmission
 - 2.2.1 Sanskrit Literature
 - 2.2.2 Brajhasha Literature
 - 2.2.3 Rajasthani Literature
 - 2.2.4 Assam *Burunjis*
- 2.3 European Travellers' understanding of Mughal India
 - 2.3.1 Jesuit Accounts
 - 2.3.2 English Travellers
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Keywords
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Instructional Video Recommendations

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- know the growth of Sanskrit language and literature under the 'Imperial' patronage,
- underline the emergence of Brajhasha as a prominent literary tradition,
- comprehend the evolution of Khariboli/Awadhi in the Awadh region and its major exponents, particularly the works of *Acharya* Tulsidas,
- understand the nature of 'Imperial' and 'Sub-Imperial' patronage received by Indic literary traditions,
- appreciate the commencement and birth of enumerable new literary *genres*,
- identify the importance of *mangal kavya* and *burunjis* and their key contributions to the understanding of the contemporary society and polity of eastern India and Assam,
- observe the significance of Jesuit accounts to understand the polity, society, and religious conflicts and contradictions prevailing during *Ibadatkhana* proceedings, and
- notice the commercial interests of the Europeans and their encounters with the Mughals.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

The present Unit focusses on two distinct aspects of historical source material: one pertains to Indic literary tradition while the other deals with European sources. The Unit's focus is largely sixteenth century and source material beyond 1605 will not largely be the focus of the Unit.

We have devoted two Units that concern the development of Indic-literary traditions during the Mughal period. The 'Imperial' patronage given to Persian is kept out of the purview of both of these Units. The growth of Persian literary tradition is already discussed in **Unit 1**. The purpose of keeping two separate Units on Indic-literary tradition is a) In **Unit 2** our focus would be to discuss those texts that are 'historically' relevant and provide the 'key' information to enrich our historical understanding; b) In **Unit 18**, however, we would be discussing the general growth of the vernacular literary tradition and the patronage it received at the 'Imperial' (Mughal) and 'Sub-Imperial' (regional) level.

Vernacular literature, particularly *virgatha kavya* (heroic poetry) and *aitihāsik kavya* (historical poetry) were of utmost importance. For looking at the historical content of the period in vernacular literature one needs to look deep into the 'textures' of the text what Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Narayan Rao, and David Schulman have phrased it. You would find some panegyrics, some coated in poetic-heroism; while a few convey the factual details of the time.

One needs to keep in mind that literary works are not similar to that of a chronicle, you would find no emphasis on dates and chronology. Nonetheless, they represent the spirit and social climate of the time; throw light on genealogies, biographies, and cultural patterns of the period, etc. Thus, what Busch (2009: 25) argues, vernacular literature 'may be used with sensitivity as a window onto history'.

From the sixteenth century onwards another important element in the source material for South Asia gets added, that is, European travellers' accounts. We have already discussed in detail the coming of the Portuguese in Indian waters in our Course **BHIC 107**. Since our focus is sixteenth century, here, we would largely be discussing those European travellers who visited Akbar's court and their interactions and observations on the contemporary polity, economy, society, and above all their encounters with Indic religious traditions and Islam.

2.2 INDIC LITERARY TRADITION: IMPERIAL AND SUB-IMPERIAL TRANSMISSION

The importance of medieval Indic literary tradition lies in the fact that it served as a link between the local and the Imperial cultural traditions. It served to disseminate and understanding the Mughal court culture/Mughal rule from local perspectives.

2.2.1 Sanskrit Literature

In **Unit 1** we have discussed about translation project of Akbar's court. Therefore, Persian translations of Sanskrit texts are kept out of the scope of the present Section. You must have noticed the 'Imperial' translation project shows unique syncretism and assimilation of Indian and Islamic traditions where (in his introduction to the translation of *Mahabharata* [*Razmnama*]) Akbar is adorned with Hindu gods. Abul Fazl depicted Akbar as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Sanskrit intellectuals at Akbar's court were largely derived from among the Brahmans and the Jains. While Brahmans largely dissociated themselves with the court happenings; in contrast, Jains were very much affected with their surroundings and did write and commented on the parallel happenings of the time/court and also about the culture of the time. Jains did speak of historical events in their *kavyas* (poetry), *charitas* (biographies), and *prabandhas* (narrative poems) which may not necessarily be called a 'pure' historical writing, nonetheless, on certain aspects, they provide such crucial information which is otherwise not available in any so-called mainstream Persian historical writings. Audrey Truschke places Jain Sanskrit writings 'somewhere between accurate reporting and imaginative retelling'. The narratives of these Sanskrit texts centres around Indian kings, Mughal conquests, and even a Sanskrit translation of a portion of *Akbarnama* (*Sarvadeshavrittantasangraha*) is also attempted, probably the solo attempt of a Sanskrit translation of a Persian text.

Under Akbar's patronage, Shantichandra composed *Kripasakosha* (Treasury of Compassion) in c. 1587. Shantichandra elaborates on Akbar's ancestors, his birth, and childhood. He provides a graphic account of the urban landscape of Kabul. He locates Khorasan outside the landscape of India and associated this 'foreign land' with walnuts, dates, and horses. Interestingly, while he puts Babur and Humayun outside India, he emphasises upon Akbar solely responsible for Mughal expansion in the subcontinent. This is in sharp contrast to Jain scholar Rayamalla's writings (*Jambuswanicharita*) where he writes Babur becoming 'lord of Delhi' (*dillisa*). He even provides a vivid account of the Mughal army, particularly the takeover of Gujarat (1570-72). He frames Akbar's conquests as *digvijaya* (conquered all four directions). He even dedicated few verses to Akbar's Fathpur Sikri. He also praises Akbar's compassion (*kripa*). Shantichandra's work suggests the presence of Jain influence under Akbar. He suggests that many concessions were declared by Akbar under Jain influence, abolition of *jiziya*, consideration towards cows, etc. Shantichandra has even compared Akbar with great Jain-patron Chalukyan king Kumarapala. Shantichandra celebrates Jain successes in the Mughal court and himself presented as representative of his community *per se*.

Other Jain Sanskrit works that discuss Jain-Mughal relations are Padmasagar's *Jagadagurukavya* (1589), Jayasoma's *Mantrikaramchandravamshavali Prabandha* (1594), Devavimala's *Hirasaubhagya* (early seventeenth century), and Siddhichandra's *Bhanuchandraganicharita* (a work dedicated to Tapa Gachha leader Bhanuchandra during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir). Padmasagar's *Jagadagurukavya* (1589) is important to understand Mughal rise to power. He keeps Babur outside India (*Bharata*) and Humayun as the first Mughal king and Mughals as an Indian dynasty. It highlights the military exploits of Humayun and Akbar. It throws interesting light on Jain-Mughal conversations during *Ibadatkhana* proceedings. Padmasagara emphasises the fact that the security of the Kabul-Delhi route ensured economic prosperity to the Jain community. He also speaks of prosperity brought by Humayun in the regions of Malwa and Gujarat. Similarly, writing in 1596 Rudrakavi in his *Rashtraudhavamsamahakavya* mentions the clashes of Humayun with Bahadur Shah. However, one needs to be careful in taking the account at the face value. Rudrakavi here wrongly attributes the victory of Bahadur Shah. Jain texts incorporated Muslim rulers within the broad ambit of Indian rulers and do not describe Islam as distinct religious tradition. Devavimala includes in his *Hirasaubhagya* conversations/debates between Abul Fazl and

Hiravijaya on merits of Islam versus Jainism during his visit to Akbar's court during 1583-1585. It also hints at Abul Fazl's inclination towards Jainism. Devavimala's account throws light on Jain-Mughal relations, particularly important is Devavimala's discussion on Hiravijaya acquainting Jain precepts to Akbar. Jain sources record Akbar's conversations with Hiravijaya and Vijayasena (*Vijayaprashastimahakavya*) who asked these Jain scholars to explain the Jain idea of 'God', particularly to explain Brahman's allegations that Jains deny the existence of God which Hiravijaya and Vijayasena explain convincingly their idea of *Arihant* who was devoid of both form and attributes. Similarly, Siddhichandra in his *Bhanuchandraganicharita* applauds Abul Fazl's knowledge of Indian *Shastric* learnings.

Sanskrit sources are of great importance to know aspects of Mughal courtly life on which Persian sources are often silent. Jain scholar Krishnadasa wrote bilingual grammar *Parasiprakashya* (late sixteenth century). In this, he praised Akbar as *avatara* (incarnation) of Vishnu.

Allopanishad (Allah's *Upanishad*; a short text of ten verses) composed by an anonymous writer identifies 'Allah' as 'equipollent' with all Hindu deities. The text uses the phrase *Allahu Akbar* with an intended double meaning 6 'God is great' and 'Akbar is God'. Thus, the text is of extremely crucial to understand Akbar's religious worldview. It identifies Akbar as *rasul* (prophet). Interestingly, *Allopanishad* is discarded in Persian writings, is very much preserved in the Sanskrit copies of *Atharvaveda*.

Persian texts have equally ignored the Sanskrit titles granted to Jain/Brahman literati. It suggests the multi-cultural vibrancy of Akbar's court, which could only be known to us through surviving Sanskrit texts. *Bhanuchandraganicharita*, a biography of Jain scholar Bhanuchandra, written by Siddhichandra mentions that Akbar awarded him the title of *upadhyaya* on account of his intellectual feat. Hiravijaya, the leading Jain scholar was given the appellation *jagadguru* by Akbar. It came to be known to us through the two biographies of Hiravijaya (*Jagadgurukavya* and *Hirasaubhagya*). Similarly, the title *vyotirvitsarasa* conferred on Narsimha in 1600-1601 is known to us through the writings of Narsimha's son Raghunath through his *Muhurtamala*.

Interestingly, Akbar entrusted many Sanskrit titles to his Muslim nobles. Akbar adorned Abul Fazl with the title *dalalhabhana* (pillar of the army) on his acclaimed Deccan campaigns, something which is even ignored by Abul Fazl in his Persian chronicle, and we know about this only through Siddhichandra's biography of Bhanuchandra (*Bhanuchandraganicharita*). Similarly, Devavimala, another biographer of Bhanuchandra, in his *Hirasaubhagya* records that Akbar entrusted the title *savai* upon Vijayasena, a Sanskrit intellectual. Similarly, it records Akbar entrusting Padmasundara's books and establishing a Jain library to Hiravijaya.

Another important Jain scholar of Sanskrit who wrote extensively on Mughal court culture was Rudrakavi. He composed four major treatises *Danasahacharita* (1603), *Khanakhanacharita* (1609) *Jahangiracharita* (1610-1620), and *Kirtisamullasa* (1610-1620). He also composed a history of the Baglan dynasty in 1596. He wrote at the instruction of his patron Pratap Shah of the small principality of Baglana near Nashik which enjoyed autonomy until the 1630s, though brought by Akbar under his sway in the 1570s. Rudrakavi portrays Khan Khanan as a

powerful military general. It provides a detailed account from Baglana kingdom's perspective of the Mughal-Baglana clashes where Khan Khanan was sent to lead the command. It also shows the use of Rudrakavi by Pratap Shah as a diplomat to the court of Khan Khanan to negotiate. Rudrakavi's account highlights the power and influence of Khan Khanan. He also mentions the participation of Pratap Rudra in Akbar's Deccan campaigns (1602) against Ahmadnagar (Malik Ambar). Here, not only he narrates the power of Khan Khanan but also the participation of his sons Iraj and Darab in the campaigns whom he compares with two 'Kamdevas' battling against Shambara.

Thus, it is through Jain, Sanskrit, and other Indic literature that we come to know the vibrant presence of the Indic scholars in the Imperial entourage for which we have almost textual silence of the Persian literati.

Sanskrit inscriptions at Shatrunjaya, a Jain religious centres located in Gujarat also throws light on the vibrant presence of the Jains in the subcontinent during the sixteenth century. 1595 Sanskrit inscription in the Adishvara temple mentions the deeds of Hiravijaya and Vijayasena and their Mughal connections. It speaks of concessions Hiravijaya succeeded in getting from Akbar such as a ban on cow slaughter, abolition of *jiziya* and pilgrimage tax, the establishment of a Jain library, etc. Patan Sanskrit inscription records Akbar banning animal slaughter and prohibited fishing in the Gulf of Cambay. Mughal *farman* confirms the prohibition of fishing in a lake near Fathpur Sikri in the 1580s under Hiravijaya's (Jain) influence.

What is more important here is to understand various historical methods employed by Indian literati to express the political happenings of the period. In Bengal, Murari Gupta composed the poetic biography of Sri Chaitanya *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* in Sanskrit which is valuable to understand the growth of Vaishnava movement under Sri Chaitanya.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Differentiate between the writing styles of Sanskrit historical texts produced by the Brahmans and the Jains.

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- 2) Mention representation of Akbar in Shantichandra's historical writings.

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- 3) What is the importance of *Jagadagurukavya* as a historical treatise?

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2.2.2 Brajhasha Literature

Riti (kavya) poets are more known for their *prashastis* (eulogies) compositions to the kings. Keshavadas' *Ratnabavani* (52 verses on Prince Ratnasena; probably commissioned by Madhukar Shah; circa 1570s-1580s) – centres around the Mughal takeover of Orchha – shows how Orchha became the tutelage of the Mughals from the perspective of the local Orchha people, what were their reactions and feelings. The text narrates the story of the valour of the hero of the text, Bundela ruler Ratansen, son of Madhukar Shah, on the battlefield against Akbar's forces. Keshavdas brings out the imminent surrender and defeat of Ratnasen before the Mughal might and the perplexity of Ratnasen to flee or die fighting, finally, Ratnasen dies fighting. His sacrifice, brave combat even bring admiration of Akbar. About Orchha's submission and the Mughal takeover in the Persian sources we hear of only Mughal perspective; here Keshav presents much different perspective than Mughal version; nowhere valour of Ratnasen and the resistance posed by the Orchha kingdom is highlighted. In this perspective *Ratnabavani's* importance as a source of history is immense. However, we have to be cautious about the corroboration of facts. Keshavdas does not mention Ratnasen's fight on behalf of the Mughals in their Bengal campaigns. Thus, local accounts throw light on, 'about the local ways of being historical and of being political in early modern India' (Busch 2009: 27).

Keshavdas' *Kavipriya* also throws light on Keshav's patron king Bundela Raja Indrajit, founding of the Orchha kingdom, Bundela genealogy, courtly culture and court happenings and his lively discussion on six *paturs* (courtesans) – Navrang Ray, Nayanbichitra, Tantarang, Rang Ray, Rangamurti, and Praveen Ray. Keshavdas's *Virasimhadavacharita*, written in the poetry-history *genre* is another important work written in the court of Bir Singh Deo Bundela. It focuses on the deeds of Bir Singh Deo (r. 1505-1627).

Jahangirjaschandrika (Moonlight of the Fame of Jahangir, 1612), which was probably composed under the patronage of Rahim's son Iraj Shahnawaz Khan, written in *prasasti* (eulogy) format, Keshavdas compares Jahangir with kings Dilip and Sagara of the revered Raghu clan of Rama – an attempt to naturalise a Muslim ruler in the Indian setting, a trend which is quite visible in the Sanskrit inscriptions of the Turkish period (in Palam Baoli Sanskrit inscription dated 1276 Balban is mentioned as *Sri Hammir Gayasudin Nripati Samrat*).

Among the nobles of Akbar, Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan emerged as a great patron of art and literature, attracted scholars and literati across central Asia and Persia vis-à-vis Hindustan to his court. Khan-i Khanan was a rare mix of Persian and 'Hindi' intellect – a mixture of cosmopolitan and local tradition. We have already discussed in detail his *Maasir-i Rahimi*, a biographical account written by Abdul Baqi Nahawandi, a Hamadani in 1616. Nahawandi refers to the eulogies of Khan-i Khanan written by a number of Hindawi poets in *sabak-i Hindi* and he expressed his desire to deal with all of them in a separate section, that he could never do so. Thus there is almost silence on the nature of works produced by Hindawi literati in Khan-i Khanan's court. Keshavdas who finally joined the patronage in the Orchha court wrote *Jahangirjaschandrika* for Iraj Khan, son of Khan-i Khanan does contain verses in praise of Iraj Khan, Khan-i Khanan, and his father Bairam Khan.

Gang's (late 16th and early 17th century) almost seventy five *muktak* verses are full of praise of Mughal emperors and Mughal nobility – Akbar, Khan-i Khanan, etc. Gang has criticised Jahangir's act of condoning Zain Khan's act of cruelty of killing of Brahmans in the town of Eknaur.

The use of Brajified Persian in their literary texts indicates the Mughal influence. Busch appreciates the 'special linguistic flexibility' of Braj and to this mixing, she calls it 'Brajification' of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and local words providing 'wonderful twists'. They were not concerned more about the purity of language, instead meant to serve local courts, at times patron soldiers/commanders.

2.2.3 Rajasthani Literature

Bardic literature of Rajasthan is a rich vernacular source to understand and politicise Akbar's personality from the perspective of the 'other'. *Rasos, kavyas, vanshavalis, khyat*, and *vat* are important historical literature available in various dialects of Rajasthan to construct the history of the period. In the bardic literature, Akbar is often addressed as *shriji, sah, nath, aspati* and *chhatrapati*, in contrast, Rajput chiefs were represented as *Hukumi Chakar*.

Among the biographies, one of the earliest such texts is *Dalpat Vilas* written sometime during 1579-1612. The focus of the text is Kunwar Dalpat Singh, son of Raja Rai Singh (r. 1571-1611) of Bikaner. The text is of crucial importance to understand the formative years of Mughal-Rajput relations. The text acquires special importance for the author himself was witness to most of the incidents/events. It highlights the personality of Akbar as a benevolent, kind-hearted at the same time courageous brave emperor in the battle of Panipat. It provides the detailed genealogy of the Rathors of Marwar and also touches upon the Rathor relations with the Surs, particularly Sher Shah Sur, though large portions cover Akbar's period. It informs that Kalyan Mal (r. 1539-1571) received from Sher Shah Bayana, Hissar, Rewari, and Mewat. It also speaks of Sher Shah's Kalinjar siege and his final demise suffered during the siege of Kalinjar. It also informs us of the succession clashes following Sher Shah and Islam Shah's death and the role of Hemu in the Sur polity along with details on the second battle of Panipat (1556). The text provides crucial information on Kalyan Mal-Bairam Khan relations. It was Kalyan Mal who welcomed Bairam Khan after he went into disfavour of Akbar. It presents a Rajput perspective of Akbar's visit to Nagaur in 1570 and Akbar's marriage with Rajput princes of Bikaner, nieces of Raja Kalyan Mal (Bhanumati, daughter of Bhimraj and Raj Kunwar, daughter of Kanhaji). It also records the grant of Jodhpur to Kalyan Mal which Rai Singh swapped with Merta. It indicated that it was not Akbar who took Jodhpur from him, instead, it was Rai Mal's own desire to swap to which Akbar agreed upon. It also highlights clashes and aspirations within the Marwar household, particularly tensions between Rai Singh and his brother Amra.

Another important contemporary bardic account is that of bard-poet Dursa Aadha. He is reported to have been the court poet of Akbar. He composed seventy-five verses in praise of Rana Pratap, his valour, his resistance against Akbar vis-à-vis Akbar's hidden respect towards Rana. However, to use them as historical text one needs to be careful for these are full of later interpolations. It nonetheless provides crucial information that the younger brother of the Rana, Sayat Singh, sided with the Mughals during the decisive battle against the Rana. Dursa also records that

the younger brother of Rana Udai Singh did join Akbar and fought against Rao Surtan of Sirohi from the side of the Mughals and sacrificed his life fighting for the Mughals. Akbar is often portrayed as an incarnation of Hindu pantheons Rama, Krishna, Laxmana by Dursa Aadha (*Git Akbar Badsah-ro* in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*). Dursa Aadha even projected Akbar’s achievements to such an extent that even his success shook the throne of Lord Indra.

Mancharita of Amrit Rai (1585) and *Mancharita Raso* of Narottam (1594), biographies of Man Singh written in Rajasthan in Braj throw light on the activities of Man Singh in Akbar’s period. They highlight the Rajput political culture of the time. Another work of historical nature is the biography of Sujan Singh Hara (1554-1585), *Sujancharita* (1590), a Sanskrit *kavya*, written by Chandrashekhara, a court poet of the Haras.

2.2.4 Assam *Burunjis*

Burunjis (lit. a store that teaches the ignorant) are another important sources that are crucial to understanding the history of pre-colonial Assam. *Burunjis* began appearing in the sixteenth century and are largely written in prose. Initial *Burunjis* were penned down in Ahom dialect, while later they were composed in the Assamese. The earliest *Ahom Burunji* was written in the late sixteenth century. It records the events from the time of the invasion of the Ahom king Sukapha in the thirteenth century. It throws valuable light on the contemporary events, correspondences among the rulers (Ahoms, Jaintia, Kachari, and Tripuri), nature of taxes, reports, etc. *Assam Burunji* provides an account of the establishment of the Ahom kingdom upto the British occupation of Assam in 1826. *Deodhai Assam Burunji* largely discusses the Ahom history from the very establishment of the Ahom rule (568 CE). It is also important for it throws light on the aspects of Ahom society 6 Ahom royal wedding ceremonies, recreations, Ahom burial practices, etc. It also details the origin of the Koch, Jaintia, Chutia, and Nara kings. Another *burunji* of prime importance to understand Mughal-Assam relations is *Padshah Burunji*. It is in Assamese but unlike other *burunjis* full of Arabic and Persian terms. It throws valuable light on Babur, Humayun, Sher Shah, and Akbar. It also contains the career sketch of Raja Man Singh of Amber and Mughal clashes with Koch Bihar rulers. *Kachari Burunji* throws light on Ahom-Kachari relations. Similarly, *Jaintia Burunji* throws light on the kingdom of Jaintias. *Chutia Burunji* discusses the history of the Chutias from 1189 CE to its dismemberment in the sixteenth century.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss Keshavdas’ Ratnabavani as a historical source.
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- 2) What light *Dalpat Vilas* throw on the polity of Shar Shah and Akbar’s period?
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- 3) Discuss the importance of Rajasthani sources to understand the Mughal-Rajput relations.
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2.3 EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS' UNDERSTANDING OF MUGHAL INDIA

In the present Section, we would mainly be focussing on Jesuit accounts and the accounts of European travellers who visited Akbar's court. The chief motives of Jesuit missions were both politico-cum-religious and their missions remain primarily evangelical, while English travellers were primarily motivated to gain political favours to fulfil their commercial gains.

2.3.1 Jesuit Accounts

Early Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar

The earliest Jesuit-Mughal encounters began during Akbar's reign. Father Du Jarric (1566-1617) left behind a rich account of India in his *Histoire*. This could also be referred to as the 'earliest European description of the Mogul [Mughal] empire'. Du Jarric himself never visited India and his *Histoire* is mainly a compilation of Jesuit accounts. But Jarric's account particularly stands out for his faithful recording of the summaries, extracts, and abstracts of valuable letters of missionary fathers written prior to 1610 which are otherwise inaccessible. *Histoire* is a three-volume account and each consists of two Books. We are here mainly concerned with the first volume which deals with India down to 1599, the other two volumes deal with Africa and Japan. Prior to the 1600 account, Jarric's primary authority were Guzman's *Historia*, notes of Father Laertius, Lucena's life of St. Francis Xavier, and material supplied to him by Guerreiro, particularly the letters and Reports of the missionaries. 'Jarric used his authorities with fidelity, either literally translating, or carefully summarising' (Payne 1926: xxxviii).

Jarric's account is of great historical importance for it is based on personal observations and experiences. Further, Jesuit accounts may be regarded as 'earliest impression of European writers'. Jarric has reproduced accounts of the three Jesuits missions commissioned to the court of Akbar. The first Jesuit mission to Akbar's court was commissioned at Akbar's request under the leadership of Father Rudolf Aquaviva, along with Father Antoine de Monserrate and Father Francois Henriques. The mission reached Akbar's court at Fathpur in 1580. Though, much prior to the commissioned Jesuit mission as early as 1578 Portuguese Father Pierre Tauero was already present in Akbar's court. The second mission was commissioned under the leadership of Father Edward Leiton along with Christopher de Vega who attended Akbar's court at Lahore in 1591; while the third mission reached Akbar's court in 1595 at Lahore accompanied under the leadership of Father Hierosme Xavier Nauarrois, along with Father Emmanuel Pignero, and Brother Benoist Goes/de Gois.

Jesuits often accompanied Akbar on his campaigns, served as teachers of Akbar's sons. They were entrusted the position of proximity to Akbar during the court

proceedings. The Jesuit account is important for it was based on their personal observations. Jesuit accounts provide a rich commentary on the Mughal princes, nobles, and general living conditions of the people of Hindustan. Their insights on the administrative machinery of Akbar are valuable. Their descriptions of *wazirs*, nobles, *kotwal*, *qazis*, and eunuchs are valuable. Their descriptions on the law and punishment are extremely useful. Their account of the prevalent irrigational device *charas* for lifting water in the areas between Cambay to Lahore is insightful. Jesuit accounts are also crucial to know court etiquettes and court proceeds. Interesting facts are available in the Jesuit accounts about Jahangir's interests in European paintings as a prince who got a number of European paintings painted in his atelier. Detail accounts of Akbar's Deccan campaigns and his clashes with Malik Amber are also provided by the Jesuit fathers who were eye witness to the campaigns. Jesuit fathers, while accompanying Akbar from Lahore to Kashmir narrates a lively account of the kingdom Kashmir. Jesuits also speak of Akbar's inquisitive mind, particularly, his *gung* experiment. Missionary activities and Christian settlements at Agra and in other parts of Akbar's empire, particularly Lahore and Cambay throw interesting light on the liberal attitude of Akbar and Jahangir towards Christians and missionaries. Jesuit accounts also throw light on the open rivalry between the Jesuits and English merchant adventurer John Mildenhall, who visited Akbar's court in 1603. They left no stone unturned to obtain concessions for themselves and for their countrymen. Jesuit accounts also speak about Jahangir's rebellion, Akbar's illness, and finally circumstances leading to Jahangir's accession. Thus Jesuit account is of utmost importance to understand Akbar's period from the perspective of the 'other'. However, often their comments on the religious world view of Akbar are biased. Nonetheless, their observations on political events, literati, common masses, and nobles, etc. are of great value. Payne has rightly observed that in commissioning Jesuit missions Akbar intended to gain political advantages, to keep an eye on Portuguese settlements. Akbar was always vigilant and cautious of Portuguese settlements along the Mughal borders, particularly disturbing for him was the Portuguese advance towards the west coast which restricted Mughal access to the west coast ports. Payne (Du Jarric, 1926: xlvi) has rightly branded Portuguese as 'a very troublesome thorn in Akbar's side'. Further, we should also bear in mind that Jesuits were writing for their Christian readership in mind, where at the backdrop the idea of the superiority of the faith was dominant that the Jesuit accounts demonstrate well.

Father Monserrate

Father Antonio de Monserrate was a Jesuit missionary who accompanied the first Jesuit mission to Akbar's court along with Father Rudolf Aquaviva (leader of the mission) and their Persian interpreter Francisco Henrique. The first Jesuit mission arrived at Akbar's court in 1580.

Father Monserrate's account is a first-hand narration of his journey from Goa to Fathpur Sikri and thence his stay at the Mughal court. He provides a lively account of the cities of India. He praises Surat, its forts, garrisons, merchant activities, and ships of the port town. Monserrate is also full of praise for the fortifications of the cities of Mandu and Gwalior. Father Monserrate records that when he met Akbar he and his two sons adorned in Portuguese attire to honour their culture is suggestive of Akbar's deep respect and receptivity for other cultures. Monserrate provides details of the water supply system of Fathpur Sikri where a tank/dam was ordered to be constructed to fulfil the water needs of the town/palace. Monserrate is also

full of praise for the skilled artisans of the city of Agra. His account of the *Ibadatkhana* proceeds is exhaustive. Monserrate informs that Jesuit Fathers were asked by Akbar to be the teacher of his son Murad. Monserrate's account of the rebellions of 1580 in the regions of Bengal and Bihar is important for it presents the perspective of the 'others'. Father also narrates Christian encounter with the practice of *sati* and their reactions. Monserrate's account is valuable to understand Akbar's personality traits, his interests in hunting, his love to mix with common masses, his generosity, his courtesy and kindness to foreigners, his emphasis on imparting liberal education, judicial system, punishments, postal system, etc. Monserrate also adds to our knowledge the fineries of the administrative structure of the royal household and the court proceeds. His account of the process of the construction of Akbar's new capital Sikri suggests Akbar's interest in the capital building project. Father Monserrate also praises Akbar for particularly keen on ensuring the education of the royal princesses. His account on the working of Mughal mints is vital to understand the working of the Mughal coinage and control that the Mughal rulers applied on the overall working of the stability of the Mughal coinage. Thus, Father Monserrate's account suggests that not only was he a Jesuit missionary, he was also an energetic cosmographer. However, a few matters discussed and analysed by Monserrate one needs to be careful in taking the account at the face value, particularly his discussions on religious affairs, *Ibadatkhana* proceeds, and above all his understanding of the escheat system.

2.3.2 English Travellers

In contrast to the Portuguese and the Jesuits, British encounters with the Mughals began just at the very close of the sixteenth century. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, two English merchant adventurers visited Mughal empire: Ralph Fitch (1583-1591) and John Mildenhall (1599-1606). Mildenhall's account that survives is too brief and largely speaks of Mildenhall's clashes with the Jesuits at Agra and the Mughal court. In contrast, Ralph Fitch provides much more detailed observations of the Mughal environment. Thus, here we will be discussing the importance of Ralph Fitch's account.

In February 1583, much before the Charter of 1600, Newbery and his companions (John Elder, Ralph Fitch, and an expert in gems William Leeds) sailed from London on the ship, 'Tiger'. They reached Goa in 1585 and via Ujjain reached Agra and Later Fathpur Sikri in the very same year. At Fathpur Leeds joined Akbar's services, Newbery decided to make his way back home overland while Ralph Fitch embarked upon exploring Eastern India (Bengal) through a riverine route from Agra to Tanda (in Bengal) via Allahabad Banaras and Patna. From Tanda he marched further to Kuch Bihar thence again he sailed along the Ganges to Portuguese settlements at Hugli and thence to Chittagong and in 1586 he sailed for Pegu and Southeast Asia. He returned from Pegu to Bengal in 1588. This time on his way back to the home he decided to travel long the coast and reached Cochin, thence via Goa to Chaul, and then via Basra, Aleppo he reached back London in April 1591.

Ralph Fitch's observations on medieval Indian cities are noteworthy. Narrating about the vast expanse of Agra and Fathpur Sikri, Fitch compares it with London. He mentions the presence of twelve kilometre long market all along the distance between Agra and Fathpur Sikri. He provides lively discussion on the markets being filled with all sorts of skilled crafts and merchandise. Fitch narrates the presence of brisk trading activities between Agra and Tanda (Bengal) through the

riverine route. Fitch’s observations on the medieval society are also useful. Strangely he speaks of the presence of polygamy among Brahmans. Similarly, he speaks presence of child marriages in Indian society. He informs about the richness of cotton cloth and shashes (turban cloth) of the city of Banaras. He equally applauds the presence of brisk trading activities in cotton, sugar, and opium from Patna to the Bengal region. He also speaks about the presence of rich wildlife, particularly the tigers, along the route between Patna to Bengal. He also praises silk, musk, and cotton of the Kuch Bihar region. Fitch provides details on the medieval trade routes, riverine, coastal and inland routes, and also presence of towns and cities along the coasts and riverine routes, commodities of trade, richness and peculiarities of a particular town. He is full of praise for the presence of finest cotton in the markets of Sonargaon. He is full of praise of pearl fishery of Negapatan and pepper and cinnamon of Calicut His account of the cultivation of pepper in the region is quite detailed. He also speaks of cultivation of nutmeg and ginger in the region. The items of imports into India mentioned by him were largely precious stones of Pegu, musk from ‘Tartarie’. He praises the diamonds of Vijayanagara. He mentions that best pearls were from Behrain. However, like Pelsaert his narration of the houses, the living conditions of the common masses suggests the wide gulf between the lifestyle of the nobility and the masses. He informs that the common masses lived in houses built of straw with little furniture. He also provides the graphic account of the Nairs of the Kerala region.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) What is the importance of Du Jarric’s account as an important historical work to understand Akbar’s relations with the Jesuits?
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- 2) Who was Father Monserrate? Discuss his relations with Akbar.
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- 3) Analyse briefly Ralph Fitch’s observations on India.
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2.4 SUMMARY

The Unit focuses on the importance of Indic literature to understand the historical developments of India of Akbar’s time. To construct the history of the period historians have largely banked on Persian accounts 6 administrative orders and chroniclers’ accounts. Hardly any attention is paid to look into Indic literary sources to analyse the contemporary polity, society, and religious trends of the period. Indic literary accounts are of great value for they represent the perspective of the

‘other’. It is important to know that Indic literary texts attempted to assimilate Akbar, a Muslim monarch into Indic tradition and often they represented Akbar as an ‘Indian’ ruler and mentioned him as an *avatara* (incarnation) of Vishnu. Thus, Indic literary ‘textures’ attributed a Muslim monarch with ‘Hindu’ symbols. In this context Jain and Brahman Sanskrit texts are especially important and help us understand Akbar’s early forays from the perspective of the rulers whom Akbar subjugated; particularly important is Mughal-Orchha encounters described by Keshavdas in his Brajhasha text. Equally significant are *raso*, *khyat*, and *vat* literature from Rajasthan which are valuable to understand Mughal-Rajput relations. To understand the Mughal advances towards the northeast (Assam) *Burunji* literature throw a flood of light on Mughal-Assam relations vis-à-vis the local political formations.

During Akbar’s period, another *genre* of literature becomes available to us with the coming of the Europeans on Indian waters, particularly the Portuguese and the English. Thus Jesuits and English travellers’ visits enrich our understanding of the Mughal empire and Akbar’s court politics based on the observations of the European accounts. In this context Father Monserrate and Ralph Fitch’s accounts are valuable. Through their writings, one gets to know the European perspective of the Mughal empire.

2.5 KEYWORDS

<i>Charitas</i>	Biographies
<i>Farmans</i>	King’s royal order
<i>Kavyas</i>	Poetry
<i>Khyat</i>	Panegyric bardic accounts largely centres around historical personalities/rulers.
<i>Muktak</i>	Freestanding poems; a <i>muktak</i> is generally not part of a larger narrative
<i>Prabandhas</i>	Narrative poems; contain semi-historical anecdotal accounts of prominent personalities of the time
<i>Prashasti</i>	Euology
<i>Raso</i>	Heroic ballads;
<i>Riti (Kavya)</i>	Literally poetry of method; poetry in which primary concepts are defined and explained from the Sanskrit rhetoric (<i>rasa</i> [emotion]), <i>nayikabheda</i> (categories of female characters), <i>alankara</i> (figures of speech). Poets attempted to transform Sanskrit poetic <i>genres</i> into vernacular literary culture. In <i>riti</i> poetry there is emphatic emphasis on <i>shringara</i> (erotic poetry)
<i>Vamshavali</i>	Genealogies
<i>Vat</i>	Short oral narrative

2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1. See Sub-section 2.2.1
2. See Sub-section 2.2.1
3. See Sub-section 2.2.1

Check Your Progress-2

1. See Sub-section 2.2.2
2. See Sub-section 2.2.3
3. See Sub-section 2.2.3

Check Your Progress-2

1. See Sub-section 2.3.1
2. See Sub-section 2.3.1
3. See Sub-section 2.3.2

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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and European Sources**

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2.8 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Historiography and Sources-3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y5eAdxPn3A>



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