

"AMIR KHUSRAU" AN EMINENT HISTORIAN

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Abstract

Abdul Hassan Yamin-ud-din Khusrau, better known as Amir Khusrau was born at Patiali in district Etah of U.P. in 1252. He was the disciple of famous sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya. Khusrau is regarded as one of the greatest Persian poet and historian of his age and is said to have written four lakh couplets. He was a prolific writer of prose, poetry and music and was the first Muslim to write in Hindi. His reputation among the historians of his time seems to have been mainly due to his good taste and balanced criticism and patronage of poets. He was also a great singer and enjoyed the title of "Tuti-Hind" or Parrot of India. Amir-Khusrau saw the rise and fall of many kingdoms in Delhi, yet he maintained his association with each successive monarch. The Khilji and Tuglaq rulers treated him with honour and he lived in the court of prince Mohmad, son of Balban. He wrote many books. His famous historical works are: Qiran-us-Saadian, Miftah-ul-Futuh, TuglaqNama, Tarakh-i-Alia etc.

Keyword: Historian, Poet, Historical works, Persian, Courtier, Rulers.

India being one of the greatest civilizations on earth produced great scholars, saints, historians, social scientists, philosophers; poets so on and so forth. Among them Amir Khusrau who was one of the most celebrated poet and historian of medieval India is ranked alongside with Al-Beruni, Abul-Fazul, Faizi, Badayoni, Mohd Qasim Firishta, Zia-ud-din Barni, Qazi-ul-Mulk etc. Persian literature is one of the most treasured gifts in the rich stone house of Indian culture. It was the creative expression of cultural synthesis achieved during the medieval times of India. The coming together of the two cultural streams the India and the Iranians gave rise to the mighty flow of a composite national cultural in different parts of India. The cultural

and historical relations between India and Iran was since from the ancient times.¹The socio political, cultural, historical and friendly relations helped them to present their precious gifts each other such as Kalila-Wa-Demina and Chess. When Chess travelled from India to Iran, it was known as Hashtrang.²

It must be recorded with sense of pride that India has played a dynamic role in the development of Persian language and literature for about 700 years. It in turn produced a galaxy of eminent poets, scholars and writers. The Persian language which was in the hearts of Hindus and the Muslims alike and penetrated into their day to day life could not lose its beauty and charm even today. Persian poets and writers like Roomi, Saadi, Hafiz, Mirza Manohar Tosni, Chander Bhan Brahman, Begum Beragi, Iqbal, Amir Khusrau have always stood for the supreme cause of universal brotherhood and humanism.³Among them Amir Khusrau played a vital and important role in sub-continent. Khusrau who was an acclaimed and outstanding personality of 13th and 14th century was born poet, courtier, writer, historian, sufi and vanguard of composite culture of India. He was court nobles and poet, initially in the court of other smaller nobles and princes, then later permanently at the sultan of Delhi. He was popularly known as Tuti-Hind "The parrot of India". Zia-ud-din Barni, a prominent historian of medieval India rightly points out that "A man with such a mastery overall the forms of poetry has never existed in the past and may perhaps not come into existence before the day of judgement."⁴

The writer of Sher-ul-Ajum writes no Persian of such comprehensive ability has born in India during last 600 years, and even the fertile soil of Persia has produced only three of four such a varied accomplishments.⁵ Here I will only discuss about his historical works in which he gives viewed descriptions. Five rulers and witnessing the rule of several more, he managed to survive the political intrigues of various factions and individuals at work in

Delhi and outside. It is also very essential to India line that Khusrau was not only a courtier but a mystic as well, one of the favourites of the famous saint Nizam-ud-din Aullia. He started his career under Balbans nephew Alud-din Mohammad Kashli Khan at the age of 20 years. Balban was a religious person and lived a holy life in accordance with religious tents. He also showed respect to other religious faiths. He was a great lover of art and literature. Amir Khusrau was a famous scholar in his court. After the fall of slaved dynasty Khusrau worked under the patronage of Khilji and Tugluk rulers. Ala-ud-din was undoubtedly illiterate but he was a great patron of art and education. He had in his court such a great scholars of repute as Amir Khusroo, Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Aulia, Qazi-ul-Mulk"uncle of famous historian Zia-ud-din Barni"etc. Amir Khusroo had written a historical Mathnavi Nuh-Siphir on the name of Kutub-ud-din son of Alaud-din Khilji. In Nuh-Siphir, he claimed that I saw whatever I see with my own eyes – not stories or tales of the past. His ethics of writing are best illustrated by his remarks in his short Mathnavi Mifath-Al Futa.

His account of the kings and nobles was based on his personal knowledge and experience. He wrote about Kiak-Bads meeting with Bugra Khan, as he had accompanied Sultan to Awadh. He wrote about Jalal-ud-din's early campaigns and also attended special religious functions. He also wrote about Dull-Rani and Khazir Khan, Ala-ud-din's campaigns in the Deccan and numerous administrative measures, market control, Mongol policy and so on.⁶ He was fully equipped with knowledge, the experience, the narrative excellence and the ability to speak on unpalatable facts in concealed and suggestive manner which a historian of the middle Ages in India basically required symbolically. He depicted the socio-political, cultural and historical conditions of the India in his works. His works especially Miftah-ul-Futuh, Tareekh-Khaziyatul-Futuh and Tugluk Nama entitled the author to be called a historian. Though, Nuh-Suphir, Kiran-ul-Saidin and even Risail-i-Ijaz are no weighting invaluable information of political value. They are the works of solid worth for those working in the field of socio and cultural history.⁷ His political works also constitute a veritable source of information for the social and cultural history of medieval India. They contain wealth of details about Indian birds and animals, clothes, flowers etc., which helps us in reconstructing a picture of social and cultural

life of medieval India.⁸ He lived in the court of Prince Mohammad son of Balban. Mohammad patronized his liberally and on his death, he wrote an "elegy on Mohammad". In Tugluk Nama he described the achievements of Ghias-ud-din Tugluk, the founder of the Tugluk dynasty. After his death his eldest son Juna Khan ascended the throne of Delhi. It is generally that Juna Khan was responsible for the mother of his father. After ascending the throne he assumed the name of Mohammad Tugluk.⁹

Khusraus works become handy as for the factual information with historical relevance is concerned. The later historian Barni quotes him on many occasions to confirm of the major points of view on past event. In many works Barani's assertion was supplemented by the facts furnished of Khusrau. Also Amir Khusrau is eloquent where Barni choses remain silent. For example Barni has not given any account regarding the rising of Tugluk dynasty, but Khusrau has provided detailed information in this regard. Along with this he was also a great poet, father of Qawali and introduced the Gazal style of songs into India. He used 11 metrical schemes with 35 distinct divisions. He wrote in many verses, forms including Gazal, Mathnavi, Qata, Rubai, To-baiti and Tarki-Band. His contribution to the development of the Gazal was significant. Khusrau is credited for the invention of the Sitar. At the time there were many versions of Veena in India. Tahfat-us-Sighr the first Divan contains poems composed by him between the age of 16 and 18. Wast-ul-Hayat, the second Divan, Gurat-ul-Kamal between the age of 34 and 41. Khamse-e-Khusrau (five Mathnavi) contains Matla-ul-Anwar, Khusrau Sheren, Laila Majnoon, Aini-Sikandari and Hasht-Bihisht. Saki-Nama contains horoscope of Kutub-ud-din Mubarak Shah.¹⁰

He saw the rise and fall of many kingdoms in Delhi, yet he mentioned his association with each successive monarch and tried to win his favour through his eulogies. The Khilji and Tugluk rulers treated Amir Khusrau with respect and honor, taking pride in him for his scholarly works and above all his piety and purity of heart. He thus earned the title of "parrot of Hind". Allama Shubli Numani raised Khusrau in such a five way, that they revolutionized the entire world of music. The art reached such a height of perfection that even after the lapse of 700 years, it could not be excelled. Before

Khusro Persian writers like Fakhr-ud-din Mudabir, Minhaj-us-Siraj, Hassan Nizami had confined their narratives to descriptions of battles, conquests and court intrigues of the period. Khusrau shifts over focus to social and cultural aspects. He was the first Indian born historian and wrote from a Indian perspective. His works reflect a strong sense of identity with the country and sultanate. Sunil Sharma argues in his book:

" It should be kept in mind that Amir Khusrau was not engaged in a detached scholarly study of India like that of Alberuni and some of his fanciful ideas must be understood in the context of his creative endeavours and the particular genre into which his work falls as.....".11

Some historians like Peter Hardy not consider him as a historian and blames Khusrau that he had penned down these works for the personal frame. The person, who was known by common folk of North Indian even today, was largely ignored until recently. As a historian Amir Khusrau has achieved what he meant to leave same thing worthwhile and lasting behind him. On the same lines Mohib-ul-Hassan observes:

" One should keep a balance in one's prays and blame should not be unnecessarily severe and deprecatory in one's attitude.....his primary concern was to demonstrate his literary ability and gain lasting reputation and also to get reward for his literary performances.....his contribution are in no way negligible.12

Thus it is clear that he has written what he saw with his naked eye during his lifetime because he was related from the court to the masses and visited almost all parts of the countries. He has not catalogued the events of past like other historians but had presented the situation and events of the country chronologically and very sincerely. He had indeed achieved what he meant to leave something worthwhile and lasting behind him. Thus it is quite explicit and transparent from the forgone description about the works penned down by Amir Khusrau, that he played a decisive and determined role by highlighting the socio-cultural, political and historical history of India into a more refined and pure pattern. After studying thoroughly and shedding light over the works of Amir Khusrau, it is clear that he was a

distinguished historian and be a role model for historians of this era and the future historians.

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