

TARIKH-I-FIROZSHAHI AS A SOURCE OF HISTORY (PART-1)

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TARIKH-I-FIROZSHAHI

Ziauddin Barani(1285-1357) was a Muslim historian and political thinker who lived in Delhi Sultanate during Mohammed –bin-Tughlaq and Firuz Shah's reign. He was best known for composing Tarikh-I- Firozshahi. It was a major historical work of Medieval India. He was born in aristocratic Muslim family in 1285 in which his father, uncle, and grandfather all working in high government post under Sultan of Delhi.

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After his education Barani also came to occupy important position under the Khaljis. Later he became a courtier of Muhammad bin Tughlaq where he stayed for more than seventeen years. Mohammad Bin Tughlaq held him in high esteem for his wide knowledge of history and scholarship and showered liberal royal favors on him. The Sultan often seek advice on various crucial problems. However, under Mohammad bin Tughlaq's successor Firozshah, he was completely neglected. He was not only deprived of the various honors but also thrown in prison. During the last days of his he was reduced to extreme poverty and died a destitute.

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Barani was a great scholar. Apart from cultivating interest in law and philosophy he took keen interest in history. He dwells on the uses of History. He looks upon history as a panorama of human activity unfolded before man to guide his faltering steps in life's journey. A study of history gives a rare insight into human affairs and helps him to distinguish between good and bad and to learn from the experience of others. Barani also makes a reference to the qualities of a good historian in the introductory chapter of Tarikh-i-Firozshahi. According to him truthfulness, impartiality, honesty and fearlessness are some of these qualities. He also insists that a historian should

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be correct in his statements and should avoid exaggerations or hyperboles, which is a unusual quality of the poets. Barani is usually credited with eight historical works, most of which cannot be traced at present. The two most well-known works of Baruni are Tarikh-i-Firozshashai and Fatawa-i-Jahandari, which provide valuable information about the History of that period. He completed his work “Tarikh-i-Firozshahi” in 1357 and dedicated the same to the ruling Sovereign. It may be noted that the book does not exclusively deal with the reign of Firozshah. It begins with Balban and ends with the sixth regnal year of Firozshah. His account of Balban is based on what he learn about him of Balban.

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It is based on what he learn about him from his ancestors, the events pertaining to the reign of Sultan Julahuddin to the sixth year of the reign of Sultan Firozshah are based on his personal observations. He gives a graphic account of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and clearly pinpoints his various virtues and vices. While on the one hand he shows great admiration for the intellectual accomplishments, scholarship and qualities of head and heart of Mohammad bin Tughlaq on the other hand he also criticize the Sultan's capricious temper and high handedness.

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However, while narrating the events of the reign of Mohammad bin Tughlaq Barani does not present the various events in their chronological order. Barani himself was aware of this shortcoming in his work and said : “I have written in this history the principle of Sultan Mohammad’s administration and have paid no heed to the sequence and order of events”.

(To be continued)