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Unit-IV

Topic- **Tabaqat-i-Nasiri**

Online Class Materials

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Tabaqat-i-Nasiri

Tabaqat-i Nasiri, named for Sultan Nasir-ud-Din, is an elaborate history of the Islamic world written in Persian by Minhaj-i-Siraj Juzjani and completed in 1260. Consisting of 23 volumes and written in a blunt straightforward style, Juzjani devoted many years to the creation of this book even providing references for his information. Although a large portion of the book is devoted to the Ghurids, it also contains a history of the predecessors in Ghazna before the Ghaznavid Sebuktigin took power. In compiling his Tabaqat i Nasiri, Juzjani used other books now lost; part of Baihaqi's reign of Sebuktigin, Abu'l-Qasim Imadi's Ta'rikh-i mujadwal and most likely Ibn Haisam's Qisas-i thani. Juzjani's "tabaqat" would initiate the form of writing for dynastic history in centuries to come.

The book contains the history of the Sultans of Delhi, the achievements of the Ghaznavids, the foundation of the Mongol dominion and the destruction of Ismailies. The author has narrated the fact in a plain, straight forward and simple style which induces a confidence in the sincerity of his statements and accuracy of his knowledge. He rarely indulges in hyperbolic eulogisation of his patrons, which had become a fashion of the day. He also does not make an excessive use of rhymed expressions, so prevalent in those days. But, at the same time, his language is fluent and impressive. All this has made the Tabaqat popular and secured for it a high place among Persian prose works. From the historical point of view the book on the whole is not a detailed one but a concise one, and many people get disappointment in obtaining full information.

Tabaqat-i-Nasiri a medieval text by Minhaj-i-Siraj. It is an important source book for the reconstruction of the history of foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal. The history of the first fifty years of Muslim rule in Bengal is found only in this text.

Minhaj's family originally belonged to Jurjan, on the northwest frontier of Ghor. He was born in about 1193 AD and his father was a Qazi of the Ghorid sultans. Minhaj came to India at the age of 34 and by that time he was fully educated according to the standard of the time and had some experience of diplomatic mission. He came to the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha at Uchch, who

appointed him a Qazi. After Sultan Shamsuddin iltutmish had occupied Multan from the hands of Qubacha, Minhaj moved to Delhi.

At Delhi Minhaj found a favourable atmosphere for his genius to flourish and he occupied the posts of Imam, Qazi, Khatib etc and performed his duties efficiently. He came in close touch with the sultans of Delhi, and occupied various posts like principal of madrasas, imam, khatib, qazi and sadr-i-jahan. While holding the office of Qazi of Delhi in the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud he wrote his famous book *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, and dedicated it to the reigning sultan. In 1259 AD in his late sixties, he promises to continue his narratives further if health permitted him, but his hopes were not fulfilled. Either his life soon came to an end, or some portion of his book containing the history later to 1259 AD has not come down to posterity.

Tabaqat-i-Nasiri is the only authentic source for the history of Bengal from the conquest of Muhammad bakhtiyar khalji till 1259 AD, when it comes to an end. Other contemporary sources are a few inscriptions and coins. The *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* is not only a contemporary book, it is important for two reasons. First, the author had come to Bengal and stayed there for about two years collecting materials for his book and also taking interest in the political matters; and secondly, because he devoted a section (*tabaqat*) in his book in discussing the history of the foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal. Besides this particular section dealing with the Khalji Maliks of Lakhnauti (from Bakhtiyar to Ghiyasuddin iwaz khalji), he also discussed the history of Bengal under Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish and his successors. He also devoted sections to the Shamsi Maliks, ie the nobles of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, some of whom acted as governors of Bengal. In fact the history of Bengal from the Turkish conquest upto 1259 AD is available only in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-i-Siraj.

Minhaj met Malik Izzuddin tughral tughan khan at Kara in about 1242 and thence came to Bengal capital lakhnauti. He stayed in Bengal for about two years and witnessed some important events. He joined Tughan Khan in his wars against Orissa, and acted as a mediator between his patron (Tughan Khan) and Malik Tamar Khan Qiran, governor of Oudh when both were quarrelling among themselves for the possession of Lakhnauti. During his stay at the Bengal capital he collected information about Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquests from his surviving associates. He also utilised the information that he could collect from

people at Delhi who took part in battles of the Delhi sultans against the Bengal rulers.

In the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, the author also gives an idea about the development of Muslim society in Bengal. He says that Bakhtiyar Khalji built mosques, madrasas and khanqahs in the capital, and the nobles also followed his example. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji also built mosque and madrasas, he also arranged lectures on Islamic subjects (tazkir), which was delivered by Muslim divines coming from Muslim cultural centres of Central Asia. One such Muslim divine was Jalaluddin son of Jamaluddin Ghaznavi who delivered lectures in the assembly hall of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji.