

CHAPTER 2

I Shaikh Abul Fazl

Shaikh Abul Fazl's life can broadly be divided into two phases. The first comprises the period when Shaikh Mubarak and his sons, Faizi and Abul Fazl, were persecuted by the Ulema of the imperial court led by Abdullah Sultanpuri (the Makhdum-ul-Mulk) and Shaikh Abd-un-Nabi; and the second when Abul Fazl and his brother were on the ascendant in Akbar's court. The fact that after prolonged persecution of the family, which included destruction of their prayer house,¹ an attempt on their lives² (and the reluctance of some of the hitherto sympathetic friends to help them)³, Abul Fazl was able to become one of the closest confidants of Akbar without the intercession of influential courtiers,⁴ is testimony to the merit and perseverance of our author.

The story of this persecution has been told at length by Abul Fazl himself and has largely been corroborated by other authors. Shaikh Mubarak was, on all accounts, a very learned man.⁵ Initially he was very orthodox in his personal conduct. Abdul Qadir

¹Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 199. Abul Fazl hints at it vaguely, *Akbar Nama (AN)*, Vol. II, Bib. Ind., pp. 303-304.

²Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari (Ain)*, Vol. II, H. Blochmann (ed.), Bib. Ind., p. 269; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, Zafar Hasan (ed.), Delhi, 1918, p. 434.

³*Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 268, 269-270, 271-272, 273.

⁴*AN*, Vol. II, pp. 303-304.

⁵*AN*, Vol. II, pp. 303, 387; Vol. III, pp. 642-643; *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 261; Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 388, Vol. III, pp. 73-74; Nizam-ud-din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, Bib. Ind., p. 472; Monserrate, *Commentary*, translated by J. S. Hoyland, and annotated by S. N. Banerjee, Oxford, 1922, p. 55; Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhtrat-ul-Khawanin*, Vol. I, Syed Moinul Haq, (ed.), Karachi, 1961, pp. 63-64; Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*, Vol. II, Bib. Ind., p. 584; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

Badauni, who had known him intimately and had a certain amount of respect for him, tells us that if any one entered his assembly wearing a gold ring or silk or red gloves or socks (*moza*) or a red or yellow garment, the Shaikh would ask him to remove it immediately; and if he chanced to hear music even on the roadside, he would turn away.¹ In this Badauni is corroborated by Abul Fazl² and the author of the *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*.³

Later on, however, Shaikh Mubarak gave up orthodoxy and adopted a tolerant attitude towards other religions and sects. Badauni prefers this tolerance as a charge against him.⁴ Father Aquaviva, who had led the first Jesuit mission to Akbar's court, considered him well disposed "to receive the light of our faith"⁵; and Father Monserrate, who had accompanied Aquaviva, says that the priests "were astonished at this old man's wisdom, authority and friendliness to Christianity."⁶ Abul Fazl, indeed, never tires of harping on his father's eclecticism.⁷ However, at what precise stage in his life and through what influences Shaikh Mubarak altered his mode of thinking we do not know.

It was Shaikh Mubarak's association with the Mahdawi movement sometime during the reign of Islam Shah that became the source of his and his sons' misfortune. Abul Fazl does not confirm this association fully; rather, he mentions it as an allegation which the Ulema had preferred against his father.⁸ Badauni however specifically states that during the period of Afghan sovereignty, Mubarak had associated himself with Shaikh Alai.⁹ The leaders of this movement in India, known for their erudition and oratory, challenged the Ulema at the court and refused to accept official patronage themselves.¹⁰ It was when the movement threatened to

¹Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 73-74.

²*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 275.

³*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 584.

⁴Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 73-74, 74-75.

⁵E. Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London, 1932, p. 38.

⁶Monserrate, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

⁷*AN*, Vol. II, p. 388; Vol. III, p. 643; *Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 261-262.

⁸*Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 264-265.

⁹Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 402; Vol. III, p. 74. Also *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*, Vol. II, p. 585.

¹⁰S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, Agra University, Agra, 1965, Chapters II and III.

envelop the imperial armies during the reign of Islam Shah¹ and disrupt the state, that the Ulema could, with the acquiescence of the ruler, launch their counter-offensive.

Apparently, the challenge of Shaikh Mubarak and his sons to the Ulema was essentially intellectual. But it was a challenge strong enough to elicit their retaliation. Abul Fazl gives instances when the confrontation took concrete form. During the reign of Islam Shah, when the Ulema accused Shaikh Alai of heresy and sedition and sought to destroy him, Shaikh Mubarak defended the Mahdawi leader. "From that day, girding up the loins of vengeance, they (the Ulema) accused him (Mubarak) of an attachment to that cause, and on so trifling a point as to whether the coming into being of the mahdi was based on a tradition of one man's authority (or otherwise), they, out of perversity, made such efforts that he was ruined."² On another occasion the Ulema tried to lay their hands on Miyan Abdullah Niyazi. The latter sought Shaikh Mubarak's opinion for his defence and the Shaikh obliged him ungrudgingly. At the court, the Miyan disclosed the source of his argument. "Those shameless, vainglorious men fell into the pit of bewilderment. When they discovered the source of their confusion they were inflamed with jealousy. Similar instances of assistance became known and they contributed to the turbulence of the ignorant."³ On still another occasion the Makhdum-ul-Mulk presented himself at one of the lecture-assemblies of Shaikh Mubarak where he began his "crafty discourse."⁴ Abul Fazl was so inflamed with the Makhdum's remarks that he confronted him publicly. The confrontation reached a stage where the Makhdum was "ashamed and the spectators were amazed. From that day he determined to

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

²*Aln*, Vol. II, p. 265. For the term "ahad" (one man's authority), see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. II, M. Houtsma *et al.* (eds.), Leyden, 1927, p. 859 under "Khabar."

³*Aln*, Vol. II, p. 265, Abul Fazl refers to Miyan Niyazi merely as "one of the Syeds of Iraq" and subsequently as "Mir." J.N. Sarkar's guess is that the Syed in question was Miyan Abdullah Niyazi, *Aln* (tr.), Vol. III, p. 492, fn. It must be Abdullah Niyazi, for his persecution at the hands of the Ulema is attested to by various contemporary sources. See S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements*, etc., pp. 122-126.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 266. The reference to the Makhdum-ul-Mulk is indirect but clear.

avenge his conviction of being an ignoramus.”

As Shaikh Mubarak held his assemblies¹ where he lectured on problems of philosophy and theology,² the Ulema unrelentingly pursued designs for his (and his sons') physical annihilation. For this they had even been able to secure Akbar's sanction.³

In desperation, Shaikh Mubarak and his sons sought the intercession of Shaikh Salim Chishti with Akbar.⁴ Shaikh Salim either did not wish to court the wrath of the Ulema by interceding on behalf of their adversaries or was not particularly agitated over the security of Mubarak. He merely advised him to flee to Gujarat and sent him some money to meet the expense of travel. It was then that Mubarak approached Mirza Koka, Akbar's foster-brother, for the favour of intercession on his behalf. The Mirza praised the learning and resignation of the Shaikh to Akbar and was able to secure a guarantee of safety for him.⁵

It was still, however, a long way from the lonely flights for personal safety to a position of influence at the imperial court. The Ulema had not yet abandoned their plans; and not even the Emperor could openly challenge them.⁶ In fact, it was when Akbar had masterminded his scheme of gradual but sure erosion of the hold of the Ulema on the court, and ultimately imposing on them complete submission to his authority, that he needed the services of men like Shaikh Mubarak and Abul Fazl and, paradoxically, also of men like Badauni.⁷ It was only then that Akbar could pro-

¹Shaikh Mubarak set himself up as a teacher at Agra some time during the reign of Islam Shah, *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 263. For a long time he would admit only a select few into his assembly. From 1569-70, however, the Shaikh became a public teacher, *ibid.*, p. 266.

²*Ibid.*, p. 263; Muatamad Khan, *Iqbal Nama-i-Jahangiri*, Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1870, Vol. II, p. 277; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *op. cit.*, p. 434; Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

³*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 269; Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 198-199.

⁴Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 199.

⁵*Ibid.* Abul Fazl refers to "one of the chief nobles and greybeards of the imperial court" who pleaded their case with Akbar rather brusquely, *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 272. Later on he says, "well-wishers of Truth came to our rescue and men of awakened fortune girt themselves in our aid," p. 274.

⁶*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 203-234; Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 80-83; Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷Akbar made use of both Abul Fazl and Badauni in the discussions at the

vide them with complete security and bestow upon them enormous favour.

Meanwhile, Faizi was emerging as a very talented poet. Word of his merit had reached the Emperor and he was summoned to the court.¹ The Ulema well understood the significance of his arrival at the court; therefore they tried to frighten him into flight. The men sent to fetch him, presumably with some ceremony, instead attempted to raze his house at the instigation of "a group of the wicked, ignoble ones, who were the scorched centres of the sands of envy."²

Faizi's introduction to the court however did not put an immediate end to the difficulties of Shaikh Mubarak and his family. It was not until a few more years had elapsed that peace descended on them.

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Shaikh Mubarak's second son, Abul Fazl, was born on 14 January 1551 (6th of Muharram, 958 H.).³ He expresses regret at having been born after Akbar, but consoles himself with the fact of having lived during his reign.⁴

During his early childhood, Abul Fazl showed signs of precocity. He had the advantage of the constant company of his father who was also his teacher. Abul Fazl claims that when just a child of a little over one year, he could speak fluently⁵ and that by the time he was five he had acquired an unusual stock of information and could both read and write.⁶

Abul Fazl's early education at the hands of Shaikh Mubarak must have been, on the whole, traditional, for such was Mubarak's own learning.⁷ Within the traditional framework, however, our author was able to establish acquaintance with diverse branches

Ibadat Khana to expose the hollowness of the Ulema, *infra*, pp. 47-49 and 96.

¹AN, Vol. II, pp. 303-304. Faizi was summoned to the court in the 12th regnal year, 1567.

²*Ibid.*, p. 304; Badauni Vol. II *op. cit.*, 199.

³*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 276.

⁴AN, Vol. I, pp. 47-48.

⁵*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 276.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

⁷AN, Vol. II, p. 387

of knowledge.¹ Yet he failed to put his heart into this kind of learning. Although he could defeat Makhdum-ul-Mulk in argument,² and on his own restore the moth-eaten half of every page of the gloss of Isfahani at an early age,³ he "gained no deep impression from the school of learning."⁴ Even later on, as he grew mature and wrote the *Akbar Nama*, he showed no particular predilection for any branch of traditional knowledge.

However, even without this predilection, Abul Fazl's mastery over the traditional branches of learning produced in him an arrogance of which he was not relieved till the end of his life. He confesses to this arrogance at many places.⁵ At any rate, he seldom displays any disarming humility in any of his works except in relation to the Emperor (Akbar), Shaikh Mubarak and Faizi. On a number of occasions he contemplated withdrawal into solitary meditation.⁶ But he kept postponing it until his engagements at the court made it impossible for him to do so.

The first 20 years of Abul Fazl's life, which he fervently devoted to studies, sometimes forsaking even his food for days together,⁷ was also the period when he, along with his father and brother, lived constantly under the shadow of the Ulema's terror. It stands to their credit that none of them even *suggested* making a compromise with their ruthless adversaries.

Along with his studies, Abul Fazl took to the profession of teaching some time after he was fifteen.⁸ All this while his restiveness at the limitations of the orthodox sciences grew in magnitude and he contemplated escapades, sometimes into discourses with the lamas of Tibet, at others with the padres of Portugal.⁹

¹ *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 277.

² *Ibid.*, p. 265.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁵ *AN*, Vol. III, pp. 83, 84, 113-115, etc.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 387-388; Vol. III, pp. 84, 113-114; *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 278.

⁷ *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 277.

⁸ *AN*, Vol. III, p. 84.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84. S.A.A. Rizvi rightly interprets this to mean that "Abul Fazl was no longer satisfied with the religious and spiritual guidance which he could get from a man like Shaikh Mubarak," Introduction to "Munajat-i-Abul-Fazl," *Medieval India Quarterly*, Aligarh, Vol. I, Part III, 1950, p. 118.

Meanwhile, Akbar was founding his Ibadat Khana and was opening a series of discussions with the Ulema. The Emperor had planned to confront the Ulema and later on their detractors as well as other religionists. For this would divide the Ulema and weaken them into submission to imperial authority. In this, in destroying the Ulema, Akbar was able to unite men as opposed to each other as Abul Fazl and Badauni. Abul Fazl had mastered conventional knowledge without fully subscribing to its tenets. He claims always to have been critical of the traditionalists and formalists.¹ Therefore, when mention of him was made at one of Akbar's religious assemblies, he was summoned to the court early in the 19th regnal year.²

Abul Fazl arrived at the court and presented to the Emperor a commentary on the *Verse of the Throne*,³ which, Badauni maliciously alleges, had been written by his father.⁴ Akbar may have received the present graciously as our author claims, but in his urgency to march to the eastern part of India he could not pay any special attention to him. Abul Fazl was not able to enter the Emperor's service then, and it is only on his second introduction to Akbar, later in the year, that he was taken into service.⁵

However, during the expedition to the east and on his way back, at Ajmer, Akbar remembered Abul Fazl⁶ the report of which was conveyed to him by Faizi. Abul Fazl wrote out the draft of a commentary on the beginning of the *Chapter of Victory* to present it to the learned assembly at the Ibadat Khana.⁷ On Akbar's return to Agra, Abul Fazl made his obeisance to him first at the congregational mosque and later at the court. Akbar received him with kindness. "Once," says the author, "in that assemblage of realm and religion (the Ibadat Khana) where hundreds of thousands of sects and schools had gathered together he (Akbar) accosted this perplexed one of life's assembly (Abul Fazl) and described my condition beyond what I was myself conscious of to the special

¹AN, Vol. III, p. 84; *Alm*, Vol. II, p. 277.

²AN, Vol. III, pp. 84-85.

³*Ibid*, p. 85.

⁴Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 198.

⁵AN, Vol. III, pp. 113-114.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷*Ibid.*

guests at the sacred society."¹

At the Ibadat Khana Abul Fazl seems to have led very severe attacks on the Ulema. He is himself reticent in giving details of these discussions and particularly of his role in them. Having contributed his share to the destruction of his enemies he affects innocence on this score.² From other contemporary as well as later testimony, however, it is known that he had led sharp attacks on them.³ For this he had the acquiescence of Akbar and his as well as his father's learning to back him.⁴ His attacks on them became so sharp and devastating that the Ulema finally sought to conciliate him.⁵ He was not however prepared to retrace his steps, having gone so far. Nor was it really in his hands to do so.

These discussions ultimately resulted in the banishment of the chief leaders of the Ulema, particularly Shaikh Abd-un-Nabi and the Makhdum-ul-Mulk, who were despatched to Mecca against their will. One could legitimately suspect Abul Fazl's hand in their exile.⁶

Thus when the chief Ulema and the Mashaikh had attested the Mahzar, the final draft of which had been prepared by Shaikh Mubarak,⁷ and when the leaders of the Ulema had been exiled, to which Abul Fazl had, perhaps, made no small contribution, and when Akbar had read the khutba, in the composition of which Faizi had a significant hand,⁸ the learned father and his sons had done their first job. After this Shaikh Mubarak probably withdrew himself from any association with the court for there is no more reference to him in this context in any one of our sources.⁹ Faizi

¹*Ibid.*, p. 115. Badauni interprets the welcome accorded to Abul Fazl in the Ibadat Khana to the effect that Akbar intended to use him against (literally box the ears of) the Ulema, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 198.

²*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 386-387.

³Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 199, 203, 263; Monserrate, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 56-57; Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70, 71. Abul Fazl also refers to these discussions without specifying the details, *AN*, Vol. II, pp. 388-390.

⁴Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 199, 263.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 263. Abul Fazl also makes an indirect reference to this, *AN*, Vol. II, p. 390.

⁶Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 199; Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁷Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 272.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁹Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, however, states that towards the end of his life

and Abul Fazl, were however, destined to attain very high position in the imperial service.

After the fall of the Ulema the rise of Faizi and Abul Fazl was gradual but steady. Faizi accompanied Prince Daniyal to Ajmer on his visit there as Akbar's proxy in the 25th regnal year.¹

The following year he was made the Sadr of Agra.² In the 28th year he was nominated to assist Prince Salim in the discharge of his functions as the superintendent of the royal marriage and birthday feasts.³ Mirza Khan and Fathullah were the others appointed along with Faizi. In the 30th year Faizi, his brother Abul Barkat and a few others were sent to assist Mirza Aziz Koka in military operations at Bajaur.⁴ Three hundred of Abul Fazl's horses were also despatched with them. In the 33rd year Faizi reached the summit of his glory when he was awarded the title of Malik-us-Shaura (the Poet-Laureate) by Akbar.⁵

Abul Fazl had been initially appointed to the mansab of 20.⁶ Apart from his role in the discussions at the Ibadat Khana the services he rendered to Akbar were more or less of a personal nature rather than political or military. We find him, for example, collecting cow's milk for the children who had accompanied Akbar on one of his visits to Ajmer.⁷ On another occasion, on the eve of the Emperor's march across the Indus to Kabul in the 26th

Shaikh Mubarak became a mansabdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 64. The mansab, however, has not been specified. The very fact that Farid Bhakkari includes an account of Mubarak in his book is significant, for the book, as its title signifies deals only with the nobles of the Mughal empire. Yet the absence of any contemporary testimony to this effect and the not very reliable character of the *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* suggest that Shaikh Mubarak may really have gracefully withdrawn himself from the court in any case since his sons were still there.

¹AN, Vol. III, pp. 316-317.

²*Ibid.*, p. 372.

³*Ibid.*, p. 404.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 476-477.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 535.

⁶Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 206. Abul Fazl does not mention his initial mansab; nor, in fact, does anyone else except Badauni. Badauni's evidence may still be correct, for both he and Abul Fazl joined service almost simultaneously and were given the mansab of 20 each, p. 206, to which, as beginners, they were entitled, p. 190.

⁷AN, Vol. III, p. 251.

regnal year, Abul Fazl was ordered to find out the state of opinion among the amirs regarding the expedition.¹

The year after that Akbar appointed a number of overseers, one for superintendence of trade in each article. Our author was put in charge of the wool trade.²

In the 30th regnal year Abul Fazl was raised to the mansab of 1,000.³ This mansab could not have been granted to him on account of any distinguished military service, for he had not performed any till then. In fact, at that time Akbar seems to have been sceptical of the author's merit as a soldier. Abul Fazl tells us that as the expedition to Swat, under the leadership of Zain Khan Koka (in the 30th regnal year), was not making any noticeable headway, the Emperor considered reinforcement. Abul Fazl promptly offered his services. One morning Akbar accepted the offer and promised to send "some tried soldiers" whose guidance the author was to follow during military operations.⁴ Apparently not quite satisfied with this arrangement, Akbar changed his mind by the same evening. He suggested the casting of lots for a choice between the author and Raja Birbal. The lots favoured Birbal.⁵

In the 31st year Abul Fazl was made co-governor of Delhi, sharing the responsibility with Shah Quli Mahram.⁶ Along with this, our author also kept discharging less formal duties. He was, for example, an investigator along with the Khan-i-Khanan, Azd-ud-aulah and Hakim Abul Fath appointed to enquire into the cause of a rift between Raja Todar Mal and Shahbaz Khan, then governor of Bengal.⁷ In the 34th regnal year, when Akbar set out on his march to Kashmir, Abul Fazl accompanied him.⁸ At Bhimbar, Akbar expressed a desire to visit the summit of the Kajiwar Pass and he ordered that no one should accompany or follow him except a few specified persons. Among the exceptions

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

² *Ibid.*, p. 396.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 477-478. It must have been so managed, otherwise there was no point in casting lots.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

was our author; and he was in august company—that of the Khan-i-Khanan, Zain Khan Koka, Azd-ud-daulah, Hakim Abul Fath, Jagan Nath and Mir Sharif Amli among others.

Meanwhile, on 15 January 1590 (in the 34th regnal year) Abul Fazl's mother passed away at Lahore.¹ No details of this event are mentioned, but the author was understandably grieved.² However, he felt honoured at the Emperor's saying some words of consolation to him. Three years later, on 5 August 1593 (the 38th regnal year) Shaikh Mubarak died.³ Abul Fazl had his parents buried at Agra in their old house.⁴ In the 40th regnal year Faizi also died.⁵

Before the death of his father and brother, however, our author had his son, Abdur Rahman, married at the Emperor's behest to the daughter of Saadat Yar Koka.⁶ The young couple later had a son to whom the Emperor gave the name Bishotan.⁷

Abul Fazl's rise to the mansab of 2,000 in the 37th regnal year⁸ was on the one hand an evidence of the increased confidence Akbar placed in him, and on the other, for that very reason, a signal to many others to take notice of him. Our author states that he "was raised to this high dignity without having performed any (distinguished) service." This he says perhaps out of sheer modesty in relation to Akbar's favour. Yet he indeed had not performed any distinguished service till then except the more or less personal ones. Therefore, when Akbar granted him the mansab of 2,000, when there was no particular occasion for it, it signified only the Emperor's personal pleasure. However, as the Emperor's confidence in Abul Fazl increased, so did jealousy of him in the highest

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 573-574.

² "Hundreds of thousands of eyes were needed for my heart's anguish that in solitude I might weep with each one of them," *ibid.*, p. 573.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 642. Abul Fazl carries the story of his grief up to p. 644. Shaikh Mubarak was 88 or 89 years of age at the time of his death.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 654-655.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 672-673. Abul Fazl's grief was boundless, "I, who am of sewn lips, wept like a child and a tempest of lamentation arose," *ibid.*, p. 673.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 579. When and to whom Abul Fazl himself was married we do not know.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 596.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 610.

quarters of the court. Ultimately, it was his unreserved loyalty to Akbar and Akbar's abounding confidence and generosity towards Abul Fazl that cost him his life.

It is not that Akbar's relations with Abul Fazl remained forever unblemished. There was at least one brief period when relations between them were strained. Abul Fazl tries to explain this away by making vague statements.¹ He says that he had not been attending upon Prince Salim because Akbar had kept him otherwise employed. This had resulted in Salim's annoyance with him which was fanned by his old enemies. This in turn hurt Abul Fazl most and he contemplated putting an end to his life, as he had contemplated on many previous occasions.² He tried to explain matters to the Emperor by saying that he had been misunderstood on account of the envious instigation of his enemies. Soon afterwards, the Emperor relaxed and once again Abul Fazl was rehabilitated in his favour.

Abul Fazl's account of the estrangement between him and Akbar has been considerably oversimplified by him. Fortunately, however, some of our other sources also refer to it in some detail. The *Iqbal Nama-i-Jahangiri* tells us that Akbar had been displeased with Shaikh Mubarak for his writing a commentary on the Quran in which there was no reference to him, and with Abul Fazl for sending its copies abroad without his permission after Shaikh Mubarak's death.³ Badauni also refers to this commentary and states that in the Preface to it Shaikh Mubarak had claimed to be the Reformer of the age.⁴ Further on, the *Iqbal Nama* says that Abul Fazl had committed many an act of presumption in regard to Prince Salim and was therefore excluded from attendance at the court for some days. Later on, however, Akbar rehabilitated him. This story is repeated by Sujan Rai Bhandari with the difference that in his opinion these facts were used by Abul Fazl's enemies to disillusion the Emperor with him.⁵

The version of the *Zakhirat-ul-Khawarin* (followed by the

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 740-741.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 385-386; Vol. III, pp. 115-116, 643, 757; *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 251.

³*Iqbal Nama-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 457-458.

⁴Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 74.

⁵Bhandari, *op. cit.*, 435.

Ma'asir-ul-Umra) is different from that of the *Iqbal Nama*. It tells us that Abul Fazl's rise to the mansab of 2,000 and Akbar's unreserved confidence in his loyalty and wisdom made even the Prince, not to mention the amirs, jealous of him. "He kept constant company with Akbar, like the setting to a pearl, and nothing was done without his approval. (Therefore, out of jealousy,) some of the discontented ones persuaded Akbar to send him to the Deccan." Moreover, Prince Salim once went to the house of Abul Fazl and saw 40 scribes copying the Quran and a commentary on it. The Prince brought them all, along with the leaves of the books, before the Emperor and thus induced him to doubt the *bona fides* of Abul Fazl. The Emperor thought that Abul Fazl, while inciting him to traverse diverse paths in the field of religion, himself acted differently in the privacy of his house. From then on there was a strain in their intimacy and companionship.¹

However, Abul Fazl's laments over the machinations of his enemies at the court appear genuine. His "enemies" might not have been the source of the Emperor's displeasure with him as he claims; but once they had spotted a breach between the two, they did everything to widen it. That Abul Fazl's separation from Akbar and his despatch to the Deccan were manoeuvred by the amirs is proved by much of the available evidence. Abul Fazl says this in so many words² and in this he is supported by the *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*³ and the *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*.⁴

Abul Fazl never mentions his "enemies" by name, although he keeps wailing over their intrigues against him. The fact that he is unwilling or unable to name them, and the fact that they were influential enough to effect his separation from Akbar, suggest that our author had managed to contract hostility in the highest quarters of the court. His "enemies" most probably included Abd-ur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan⁵ and certainly Prince Salim himself, whose

¹*Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin*, p. 72; *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*, Vol. II, p. 610. The former attributes this story to hearsay.

²*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 748-749.

³Vol. II, p. 610.

⁴P. 435. This separation took place in the 43rd-44th regnal years; by then Badauni and Nizam-ud-din had died. Hence there is no reference to it in their works.

⁵Abul Fazl's covert but strongly worded allusions to the Khan-i-Khanan

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enmity proved, in the end, fatal to the author.

However, the despatch of Abul Fazl to the Deccan in the 43rd-44th regnal years, with the apparent objective of fetching Prince Murad to the court, proved a piece of good fortune for him. In the Deccan he performed excellent service and it is this, rather than his explanations to the Emperor, that must have brought him back into royal favour.

There are numerous positive indications in the *Akbar Nama* itself to the effect that in the later years of Akbar's reign his hold on the structure he had built had begun to loosen.

In the 43rd-44th years of Akbar's reign, the situation in the empire was not exactly promising. Weaknesses in the mansabdari system were coming to the surface and mansabdars were managing to maintain fewer soldiers than was required of them.¹ In the Deccan, Abul Fazl repeatedly speaks of confusion and dissensions within the imperialist camp.² The Khan-i-Khanan was able to exert his pressure in securing the nomination of one or another prince to the Deccan almost at his will.³ Finally, the princes among themselves felt strong enough to defy the Emperor to a small or large extent.⁴

Against this background Abul Fazl served Akbar in the Deccan with unconditional loyalty and considerable military and diplomatic skill and this in the face of hesitation, even resistance to him, in his own camp.⁵ He profusely used gold to break away part of the defending garrisons,⁶ employed his troops to overcome their

suggest that there were no particularly cordial relations, binding one to the other. He accuses the Khan-i-Khanan of wickedness, selfishness and presumption, *AN*, Vol. III, p. 752. The allusion is indirect.

¹*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 671-672; also Blochmann's note on the mansabdars, *Ann*, Vol. I (*tr.*), pp. 251-258.

²*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 754-755, 760-761, 765, 772-773, etc.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 698-699.

⁴"At this time (the 43rd regnal year) foolish and envious talkers represented that Prince Sultan Murad had no intention of coming to the court and they attributed unbecoming speeches to this or that person. They also pointed out improper behaviour on the part of Prince Daniyal who had already hastened off from Allahabad (on being called to the court)," *AN*, Vol. III, p. 745. Salim actually rebelled soon afterwards.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 760-761.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 777-778.

resistance,¹ and used persuasion to convince them of the futility of it all.² The fact that Abul Fazl was about to take the fort of Ahmadnagar when he was stopped by Prince Daniyal from doing so³ is testimony enough to his capability. He pressed his son, Abd-ur-Rahman, into service at Daultabad.⁴

Meanwhile, in the 45th regnal year, Akbar himself marched to the Deccan.⁵ His personal appearance in the Deccan was probably the result of his not being completely satisfied with the conduct of the war there in spite of Abul Fazl's excellent service. As he reached Malwa he recalled Abul Fazl to his presence, presumably for consultations. Abul Fazl was warmly received by the Emperor who on seeing him repeated this verse:

*Serene be the night and pleasant the moonshine
That I may talk with thee on every subject.⁶*

Along with this expression of trust in Abul Fazl's loyalty and capability Akbar raised his mansab to 5,000.⁷ This was possibly not what our author's enemies had expected. And, therefore, when Abul Fazl remarked that "many sate down in the blackness of envy," he could not perhaps be far wrong.

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 760-761, 764-765, 778.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 764-765.

³*Ibid.*, p. 766. Akbar had sent Daniyal to the Deccan after the death of Murad. Daniyal wanted to take the fort himself in order to claim the attendant glory.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 758. It is nowhere mentioned as to when and in what capacity was Abul Fazl's son enrolled in Akbar's service. Nor is his rank at any time during Akbar's reign known. However, during Jahangir's reign Abd-ur-Rahman was granted the mansab of 2,000/1,500 and later on promoted to 2,000/2,500. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (tr.)*, Rogers & Beveridge, Vol. I, London, 1909, pp. 17 and 120-121 respectively. He was given the title of Afzal Khan, *ibid.*, p. 105 and made governor of Bihar, p. 143.

⁵*AN*, Vol. III, pp. 762-763.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 768-769.

⁷The continuator of the *Akbar Nama*, beyond the 46th regnal year of Akbar, states that in the 47th year Abul Fazl was made a mansabdar of 5,000, Supplement to *AN*, Vol. III, p. 805. Sujan Rai Bhandari and Bakhtawar Khan corroborate him; see *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, pp. 427, 436; and *Mirat-ul-Alam*, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, MS no. Farsi Tarikh 51, f. 113a.

Courtesies and consultations over, Akbar kept Abul Fazl employed in military operations. He was put in charge of guarding Khandesh.¹ His brother, Shaikh Abul Barkat, and his son, Shaikh Abd-ur-Rahman, were also commanded to the same duty. Soon afterwards we find Abul Fazl supervising the assault on, and capture of, Maligarh, on the outskirts of the fort of Asir, even as the imperial camp itself was divided regarding the advisability of the assault.²

The fall of Maligarh was a prelude to the taking of Asir. The attack on the latter was also led by Abul Fazl,³ and when the fort fell, its keys were received by his son Shaikh Abd-ur-Rahman.⁴ The surrender of the fort had in fact been negotiated through Abul Fazl.

As Asir was being reduced, there was some commotion in Ahmadnagar. Although its ruler had been defeated, strong local resistance had prevented the Mughals from occupying it. The Khan-i-Khanan was therefore ordered to proceed to Ahmadnagar and Abul Fazl to Nasik.⁵ On the eve of his departure Abul Fazl was granted a robe of honour, a special horse, a banner and a drum.

Meanwhile, Akbar had returned to Agra.⁶ Salim had established himself at Allahabad and was bent on defying Akbar's authority⁷; and this was apparently the primary reason of Akbar's return to the capital. On his return, Akbar recalled Abul Fazl to the court and ordered him to proceed unattended, handing over his soldiers and his charge to his son.⁸

Abul Fazl's journey to the court coincided with Salim's efforts at a reconciliation with Akbar.⁹ Relations between Salim and Abul Fazl had never been very cordial; and the Prince must have been aware of the trust which Akbar placed in our author. Therefore Abul Fazl's return to the court could result in the frustration

¹*AN*, Vol. III, p. 769.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 777-778.

³*Ibid.*, p. 780.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 783-784.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 789.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 773; *Supplement to AN*, pp. 805-806.

⁸*Supplement to AN*, p. 810.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 811; *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (tr.)*, Vol. I, pp. 24-25.

of all Salim's hopes of regaining his father's favour. He therefore made the decision to do away with his adversary.

Abul Fazl was to pass through the territory close to the area controlled by Raja Bir Singh Bundela who was not impervious to Salim's overtures. The Raja was engaged to arrange the elimination of the lonely traveller.¹ At Ujjain, Abul Fazl was informed of the probability of an attempt on his life and was advised to change his route. Later on again, between Sarai Bir and Antri, one of his confidants, Gadai Khan Afghan, advised him to hasten to Antri where he would find supporters and to let him (Gadai Khan) engage the Raja's men. Abul Fazl, with somewhat misplaced bravery,² insisted on going ahead without bothering about precautions. Gadai Khan was still trying to persuade Abul Fazl when Bir Singh arrived and ambushed Abul Fazl and his men. They fought bravely and fell in the field. Abul Fazl's head was severed from the body³ and sent to Salim as a souvenir. For this service Raja Bir Singh received the mansab of 3,000 when Salim became Emperor.⁴

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¹*Supplement to AN*, p. 811; *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (tr.)*, Vol. I, pp. 24-25. The account of Abul Fazl's assassination in the *Supplement to the AN* is substantially based on that given by Muatamad Khan in the *Iqbal Nama-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 486-488. The contemporary account of the incident is, however, given in detail by Asad Beg in the *Risala-i-Tarikh-i-Asad Beg Qazvini*, Br. Mus. Or. 1996, Rotograph, Research Library, Deptt. of History, Aligarh Muslim University. Asad Beg had accompanied Abul Fazl on his way to Agra and had separated from him just before the assassination, pp. 2-3, 7 (the MS is marked in pp and not in ff). He claims to have been one of those who had seriously warned Abul Fazl of his impending doom, p. 3.

²Asad Beg quotes a couplet as his comment on Abul Fazl's stubbornness:
*As Death flutters its wings downwards from the Heavens
 It makes even the sagacious ones blind and deaf.*
Op. cit., p. 4. Sujan Rai Bhandari also quotes this couplet in a modified form and adds another:

*Do not conflict with soldiers greater in number
 For one cannot strike a lance with one's fist.*

Op. cit., p. 433.

³He died on 24 August 1602 (the 7th Rabi I, 1011 H), Asad Beg, *op. cit.*, p. 1. Almost all the authors give different dates for his death. Asad Beg, being a nearwitness to the event, can be accepted as the correct one.

⁴*Jahangir, op. cit.*, Vol. I (tr.), p. 24.

Abul Fazl had the distinction of being forever surrounded by controversy. His rise from practically being an upstart to the holder of the mansab of 5,000, and his becoming the keeper of Akbar's unreserved confidence understandably resulted in the animation of others' jealousy. His loyalty to Akbar was taken for hypocrisy.¹ He, with others, was charged with deflecting Akbar from the sane path of orthodoxy.² Conspiracies were hatched against him at the highest level. And he must have had the satisfaction of holding a place of which the future Emperor of Hindustan was envious.

Yet no one, except Badauni, challenges his learning.³ It was diverse as well as deep according to the standards of his time. It extended from a study of orthodox Islamic literature to astronomy, to the system of revenue administration in Akbar's empire. Although in the writing of history he did not evolve any new concepts, his *Akbar Nama* is invaluable as a source book of extensive and fairly reliable information. Indeed, for a long time after Abul Fazl was gone, the *Akbar Nama*, which he had intended to leave behind as his memorial,⁴ remained a model for subsequent historians.⁵

A charming trait of Abul Fazl was his enormous appetite. If the information given by the *Ma'asir-ul-Umra* is correct, his daily intake of food was 22 sers exclusive of water and broth.⁶ His son, Shaikh Abd-ur-Rahman, served him as table attendant. The

¹*Ibid.*, Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 199, 263 where he attributes a remark to Abul Fazl to the effect that Akbar's munificence was not ever lasting and therefore he was making the most of it as long as he could.

²Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 211; *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*, Vol. II, pp. 619-620; *Zakhirat-ul-Khawatin*, p. 72.

³Nizam-ud-din Ahmed, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1; Monserrate, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Jahangir, *op. cit.*, Vol. I (*tr.*), p. 24; Muatamad Khan, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 277; Munshi Kazim, *Alamgir Nama*, Bib. Ind., p. 387; *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*, Vol. II, pp. 608-609, 620; Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, p. 67; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *op. cit.*, pp. 337, 434, 436; Malik Zada Munshi, *Nigar Nama-i-Munshi*, Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1882, p. 4. For Badauni's view, see *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 198-199, 204.

⁴*AN*, Vol. III, p. 3; *AN*, Vol. II, p. 247.

⁵The *Badshah Nama* of Hamid Lahori, and of Waris and the *Alamgir Nama* of Munshi Kazim are all modelled after the *Akbar Nama*.

⁶Vol. II, p. 621. Also Farid Bhakkari, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

superintendent of the kitchen stood by as Abul Fazl sat dining. If he helped himself twice from a dish it was cooked the next day also. If any dish were contrary to his liking he would give it to his son for tasting. The son, in turn, would admonish the cook, but Abul Fazl never said anything himself.

A complete list of Abul Fazl's brothers has been appended by the author himself to the *Ain-i-Akbari*¹ as well as the *Insha-i-Abul Fazl*.² Abul Fazl also refers to a son and a grandson as noted earlier. He probably had a sister, for Badauni mentions the death of his brother-in-law, Khudawand Dakkani.³ Abul Fazl himself, however, does not refer to either a sister or a daughter.

1. The *Akbar Nama* is Abul Fazl's monumental work. The author had originally intended to write the *Akbar Nama* in five volumes.⁴ Four of these were to constitute the narrative part, each covering a period of 30 years of Akbar's life. Our author's presumption was that Akbar would live 120 years and that he, Abul Fazl, would survive him in order to be able to complete his account of the Emperor's life. The fifth volume was to be the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Of these, Abul Fazl was able to write only three volumes, two of the narrative part and the *Ain*. The first volume covers "the history of mankind" from Adam to the first seventeen years of Akbar's reign; that is one cycle (qarn or thirty years) of Akbar's life for Akbar was around thirteen years of age at the time of his accession to the throne. The second volume brings the narrative to the close of the 46th regnal year of Akbar. In the first half of the 47th year, Abul Fazl was assassinated. The third volume, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, had practically been written by the end of the 42nd regnal year⁵ with a small addition pertaining to the conquest of Berar which took place in the 43rd year.⁶ After Abul Fazl's death the *Akbar Nama* was continued by one who is most probably known to be Muhibb

¹*Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 280-281.

²*Insha-i-Abul Fazl*, Delhi University Library, MS no. MS 0164, 4J51x, ff. 288b-290a.

³Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 372. Badauni specifically states that Khudawand was the husband of Abul Fazl's sister.

⁴*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 257.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 476-485.

Ali Khan,¹ who brought the narrative to the end of Akbar's reign. Muhibb Ali's *Supplement* was written probably during the reign of Shahjahan. It is largely based on Muatamad Khan's *Iqbal Nama*, though the author attempts to imitate Abul Fazl's style.

Abul Fazl's plan of dividing the work he had finished into three volumes came to be modified some time after his death.² The first volume covering the history from Adam to the first seventeen years of Akbar's reign came to be split into two—one covering the history up to Humayun's death and the second from Akbar's enthronement to the first seventeen regnal years. The second volume in the original plan thus came to be regarded as the third. This modified form of the plan has been adopted by the editors of the published text. The text of the *Ain*, which had originally consisted of only one volume, was also divided by Blochman into two, and by Munshi Nawal Kishore and the Bib.Ind. translators into three volumes.

2. The *Maktubat-i-Allami* or the *Insha-i-Abul Fazl* consists of three parts—the first comprises letters and firmans written on behalf of Akbar by Abul Fazl to rulers and important nobles; the second is a collection of Abul Fazl's petitions and letters to Akbar and the nobles; and the third is a collection of Abul Fazl's comments on the Prefaces and Conclusions of books and other essays on certain subjects purporting to be models in prose style.³

3. The *Ayar-i-Danish* is a revised version of the *Kalilah Damnah*, commissioned by Akbar. It had earlier been translated into Persian by Nasrullah Mustawfi and Maulana Hussain Waiz, but the language of their translation was very difficult and tedious.⁴

4. Abul Fazl refers to a commentary on the *Verse of the Throne*⁵ and another on the beginning of the *Chapter of Victory*⁶ which he

¹H., Beveridge, *AN (tr.)*, Vol. III, pp. 1204-1205; also Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. III, London, 1883, p. 929. For a different view, see C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature*, Vol. I, London, 1927-39, pp. 547-548.

²S.A.A., Rizvi, *Mughal Kallu Bharat—Humayun*, Part I (Hindi), Aligarh Muslim University, 1961, Preface, pp. 40-41.

³*Insha*, f. 3a.

⁴*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 116.

⁵*AN*, Vol. III, p. 85.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 114.

had presented to Akbar on his two introductions to the court. The first of these has probably been lost but a copy of the second has been preserved in the *Insha-i-Abul Fazl*.¹

5. The *Munajat-i-Abul Fazl*,² formally constituted Abul Fazl's invocation to God. But in the course of the invocation, he dwells on the nature of God's existence,³ moralizes on self-control and on the necessity of suppressing one's selfish desire in search of nearness to the Supreme Being.⁴ He also denounces mere formal worship of God and religious dogma and emphasizes the efficacy of personal devotion to God.⁵ Thus Abul Fazl's views on questions of metaphysics as also of dogma have an indirect bearing on religious disputes in Akbar's assemblies.

The language of the *Munajat* is as ornate and tedious as that of the *Akbar Nama*, although the subjects of the two works are entirely different from each other.

6. Abul Fazl has also written the Preface to the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, the history of the first millenium of Islam written at Akbar's behest.⁶ This Preface, however, is not found in the MSS of the *Tarikh*.⁷

7. Abul Fazl also wrote a Preface to the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*.⁸ The translation had been made by Abdul Qadir Badauni, Naqib Khan and Shaikh Sultan Thanasari.⁹

8. Blochmann reports having come across references to two more works by Abul Fazl, but he did not see any copy of either.¹⁰

¹*Insha*, Vol. II, ff. 175b-177a.

²The text of this work has been edited and annotated by S.A.A. Rizvi and published in *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. I, Part III, Aligarh, 1950. Rizvi has also added an Introduction to it, pp. 116-123.

³*Munajat*, pp. 11-12.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 3, 6, 11-12.

⁶*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 116.

⁷C.A. Storey, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 542, fn 2; Rieu, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 117.

⁸Muhsin Fani, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, n.d., p. 327. Fani says Abul Fazl wrote this Preface as a counterpart to his commentary on the *Verse of the Throne*; see also Rieu, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 57-58.

⁹Rieu, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 57-58; H. Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, Vol. I, Oxford, p. 1081.

¹⁰H. Blochmann, "Biography of Abul Fazl," *Ain (tr.)*, Vol. I, p. liv.

The works are entitled *Jami-ul-Lughat* (a lexicographical work) and *Kashkol* (a collection of anecdotes) respectively.

9. Rieu ascribes a Persian translation of the *Bhagwad Gita* independently of the *Mahabharata*, to Abul Fazl.¹

10. Abul Fazl had also abridged the *Tuti Nama* of Zia-i-Nakhshabi, a collection of 52 tales, without, however, reducing the number. The abridgement was done on order from Akbar.²

II. TREATMENT OF HISTORY IN THE *AKBAR NAMA*

BASIC FORM

Abul Fazl begins the narrative part of the *Akbar Nama* from Adam³ and brings it down to the 46th year of Akbar's reign.⁴ To Abul Fazl, this beginning of his work from Adam was no mere medieval formality; on the contrary, by tracing back the descent of Akbar to the earliest human being⁵ the author intended to show that his patron stood at the pinnacle of the progress of humanity.⁶ This is also suggested by his treatment of the narrative in the *Akbar Nama* prior to the reign of Akbar—he hurries through this part, stating occasionally that his main object was to write of Akbar and his reign.⁷ It is only when he comes to the immediate predecessors of Akbar that he is a little more detailed, but he still betrays a constant awareness of the secondary significance of this part to the reign of Akbar.

Abul Fazl takes up the relationship between Adam and Akbar as a mere notion, and elaborates it, as he does with many others. That is, he takes up the notion that Akbar stood at the climax of

¹Rieu, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 59.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 753-754. I have not included the *Ruqaat-i-Abul Fazl* in this list for it is considered by most modern scholars to be a forgery.

³*AN*, Vol. I, p. 52.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 82.

⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 48-49. Significantly, Abul Fazl traces this descent not through the Prophet and the Caliphs but through the rulers of Central Asia.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 62-63, 324.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 120, 323-334, 368-369.

human history and from this he works backwards to Adam. It is significant that assuming a notion as true, and working backwards from it, is a method very commonly applied by Abul Fazl in the conviction that this method will by itself prove the particular assumption to be true.

The division of the *Akbar Nama* is regnal; that is, each reign is treated as a unit. Within the framework of a reign, however, each event forms an individual entity. The order of the succession of reigns as well as of events has been adhered to. As the author comes to the reign of Akbar, the book assumes the form of an annual chronicle. That is, one regnal year becomes the basic unit now, instead of the entire reign. Within the year events are described strictly in the sequence of their happening. Indeed, in order to maintain this sequence, Abul Fazl even breaks the continuity of an event. If the occurrence of an event is prolonged in time, and if meanwhile other events have also taken place, Abul Fazl would begin with describing the first event, snap the thread of its description where other events intervene in point of sequence, narrate those others and then resume his narrative of the first.¹ This

¹Thus, for example, Abul Fazl opens the account of the siege of Mankot during the second year of Akbar's reign, *AN*, Vol. II, p. 50. He gives a brief description of the fort, etc. (p. 51). As siege is laid to the fort, Abul Fazl breaks the narrative of this event to inform us that Bahadur Khan, brother of the Khan-i-Zaman, "who had stirred up sedition and strife in Zamindawar," came and did homage and was pardoned (pp. 52-54). He then gives details of the arrival of Mariam Makani and other ladies of the harem from Kabul (pp. 54-56). Next he describes the Khan-i-Zaman's victory over Hasan Khan Bachkoti (pp. 56-57). Next in line is an account of the victory of Qiya Khan at Gwalior (p. 57). Finally, the author informs us of the marriage of Akbar to the daughter of Abdullah Khan Mughal (p. 57). All this had happened as the fort of Mankot lay under siege. From p. 58 onwards Abul Fazl resumes the narrative of the happenings at Mankot.

Similarly, Abul Fazl commences the description of Bairam Khan's estrangement from Akbar (p. 60). He interrupts it to relate the story of a wild horse who was not beyond Akbar's Divinity-aided control (pp. 60-61). The narrative of the affairs of Bairam Khan is then resumed (p. 62), to be interrupted again to inform us of Bahadur Khan's departure for Multan to put his jagir in order (p. 62). Once again the author comes back to Bairam Khan (p. 62) when he makes a pause, for it was too early for him to relate events which took place later.

From p. 90 to 99 Abul Fazl gives details of the events and of the thinking

however does not fundamentally alter the character of each event as an individual entity. The thread of continuity snapped at one place can easily be picked up at another. In preserving this continuity and the fundamental unity of an event, Abul Fazl's references back and forth¹ are of immense assistance.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* is divided into five books. The first of these deals with the imperial establishment. The account includes the descriptions of the various departments of the imperial household, the imperial mint, and prices of foodstuffs and manufactures. It also deals with the art of calligraphy and painting, the royal arsenal, guns, and the royal stables. Finally, it gives in some detail the prices of building materials and wages of labourers.

Book II deals with the institution of the army, its various divisions, the rules of payment, etc. There is one section on the *sayurgahals* or grants of land and allowances in charity, another on the regulations regarding marriage and a third regarding education. Some of the royal amusements have been dealt with separately. Finally, there is a list of mansabdars holding the ranks from 10,000 to 200, and a list of the pious men, scholars, poets and musicians of the time.

Book III opens with an account of 20 different eras which were operative in different parts of the world at different times. It then proceeds to describe the qualities required of men appointed to some of the posts of the empire like the *faujdar*, the *mir adl* and *qazi*, the *kotwal*, etc. and the functions associated with these posts. There is the description of the four categories of land officially recognized for the purpose of the assessment of revenue.

of Akbar and Bairam Khan respectively which led to the latter's fall. Suddenly he breaks the narrative (p. 99) to describe the steps taken by Maham Anaga for the welfare of the kingdom... and goes on up to p. 100. He then resumes the earlier narrative (p. 100). From p. 101 to 103 he tells us of what had happened to Shah Abul Maali after his escape from Lahore, and returns again to the events concerning Bairam Khan.

Similarly, Abul Fazl informs us of the nomination and despatch of Raja Man Singh and others to fight the last battle with Rana Pratap (Vol. III, pp. 166-167), then breaks the narrative to describe a number of other events and picks up the broken thread again on p. 173.

¹*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 26, 34-35, 44-45, 48-49, 56-57, 84-85; Vol. III, pp. 173, 264, etc.

followed by the tables of revenue rates of crops of the spring and autumn harvests respectively in different provinces for nineteen years (from the 6th to the 24th regnal years of Akbar). The section of the *Ain-i-Dahsala* is followed by the revenue rates promulgated for different areas after the 24th year. Finally comes the account of "the twelve" (actually fifteen) subahs. Mahal-wise revenue tables for each province are prefaced, in each case, by a geographical and economic account of the province followed by a detailed historical note.

Book IV is mainly concerned with the various concepts of the Hindus—astronomical, medicinal, philosophical, etc.—and their customs and manners. Book IV is, perhaps, the weakest part of the entire work. This weakness arises on two accounts—the author has merely copied, at times from defective secondary sources, his information on the various schools of Hindu philosophy, science (particularly medical science), manners and customs, etc.¹ He has not tried to evaluate this information by discussing it with his contemporary scholars; and he does not describe the state of the Hindu society of his own day, which might have made his account more useful to the present-day historian. There is only one exception to this rule where he describes the various tribes amongst the Rajputs of his own day.²

Book V consists of a chapter comprising the wise sayings of Akbar, a Conclusion and a short autobiographical sketch of Abul Fazl.

CONTENTS

The *Akbar Nama*, apart from the *Ain*, contains extensive information on a variety of subjects within the limitations of the narrative of political events. The detailed information in it is related generally to the fields of battle, tactics employed therein, persons in command of forces, etc.³ At times there are brief notices on

¹*Infra*, p. 68.

²*Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 56-57.

³*AN*, Vol. II, pp. 111-113, 124-125, 134-135; Vol. III, pp. 165-166, 425-426,

the history of other countries or territories.¹ Occasionally, too, there are genealogical data of persons concerned with events.²

Apart from battles and similar events, the author appends incidental notes on subjects such as the topography of an area³ or elephants⁴ or astrology.⁵ This kind of information is given only on occasions when Abul Fazl is describing an event of which it forms an element. If he were telling us, for instance, of the Emperor's ride on a particularly difficult elephant, he would incidentally describe the kinds of elephants Akbar used to ride on.⁶ Similarly, if he mentioned the birth of a prince, he would also refer to the horoscopes under different systems prepared on the occasion.⁷

The *Ain*, being altogether different in its character from the narrative part, is specifically meant to be some kind of gazetteer of information. It is in the *Ain* that Abul Fazl fully utilizes his potential as a compiler and editor.

The whole of the *Akbar Nama*, being circumscribed by its own character, generally lacks in incidental reference to men and manners outside the narration of political events centred round the person, and the court, of Akbar.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Abul Fazl has the habit of rarely acknowledging the source from which he derives a specific piece of information. He has, however, given a general account of how he collected the information as a whole⁸:

1. The records of every circumstance and event connected with Akbar were collected.
2. The servants of the court and the old members of the royal

¹*Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 224-227 and 587-592 (Persia), 553-556 (Central Asia), 662-665 (Turkey), 716-717 (Cooch-Bihar), etc.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 21; Vol. III, p. 553, etc.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 208; Vol. III, pp. 432, 512-513, etc.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 222.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 2, 6, 7-9, 345-346.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 346-347, 354-355, 374-375; Vol. III, p. 524, etc.

⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 9-10.

family were subjected to long interrogations by the author and their accounts were reduced to writing.

3. Orders were issued to old servants in all directions of the empire to write out whatever they remembered of past events and send the notes and memoranda to the court.¹ The material thus collected was to be arranged and read out to Akbar and its use was first to be authorized by him. Other details, if Abul Fazl came across them later, could be included by him in the *Akbar Nama*.

4. In the 19th regnal year a record office (literally register of events) was established by Akbar's command where records of events from that year onwards were maintained.

5. Most of the royal orders issued to the various iqtas of the empire since Akbar's enthronement up to the time of Abul Fazl's writing were collected by the author in the original or in their transcripts.

6. Many of the "petitions" submitted by ministers and other high officials regarding events in various parts of the empire and in other countries were collected.

7. Abul Fazl personally exerted himself to collect notes and drafts (of memoranda) from well informed and prudent persons. Apart from these Abul Fazl uses his own testimony as evidence² as also that of his father.³ Occasionally he quotes Akbar himself as his informant.⁴ He is not immune from using even hearsay and dreams of certain individuals as his sources.⁵

Not an inconsiderable portion of the information, both for the narrative part of the *Akbar Nama* as well as for the *Ain*, has been derived from sources which have not been specifically acknowledged. Among these are not only the memoirs written exclusively for his

¹As a result, at least four books were written which have continued to be independent sources of our information. These works are Bayazid Biyat's *Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*; Abbas Sarwani's *Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi* or the *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*; Jauhar Aftabchi's *Tazkirat-ul-Waqlat*; and Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun Nama*. A general study of the first three has been attempted in later pages, *infra*, Chapter 5.

²*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 255.

³*AN*, Vol. II, p. 153.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 145-146, 152, 164, 201-202, 233, etc.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 118, 126, 208, 215, 266, etc.

use but many others. This plagiaristic trait in him has been noticed by Jarrett who remarks, "The sources from which he drew his information are never acknowledged. This of itself would have been of no moment and their indication might perhaps have disturbed the unity of his design had he otherwise so incorporated the labours of others with his own as to stamp the whole with the impress of originality, but he not seldom extracts passages word for word from other authors undeterred by fear, or heedless of the charge of plagiarism."¹ It may, however, be noted that Jarrett's charge refers exclusively to Volume III of the *Ain* where Abul Fazl draws heavily on Alberuni as represented in Persian by Rashid-ud-din.² Taken as a general charge, it would appear to be somewhat exaggerated. Abul Fazl at least changes the words of his sources. Also, he is certainly not alone among contemporary, and even later, historians in making this a practice.

It would be impossible to analyze the entire *Akbar Nama* passage by passage and trace the source of information for each. A few examples, however, would show that the author made great efforts to secure information and has seldom acknowledged the source. In the *Ain*, for example, in the chapter on the literature of the Hindus, Abul Fazl copies the definitions of various forms of expression along with illustrations³ from Viswanath Kaviraj's *Sahitya Darpana*.⁴ The chapter on the Hindu system of the administration of justice⁵ bears close resemblance to the relevant chapter in the *Manusmriti*.⁶ Many of the details of the sarkar of Kabul⁷ have been taken from Babur's *Tuzuk*.⁸ In the narrative part of the *Akbar Nama*, Abul Fazl tells us of an oath of allegiance to Humayun taken by his nobles on condition that he takes a similar oath of allegiance to

¹ *Ain* (tr.), Vol. II, p. vii.

² Karl Jahn (ed.), *Rashid-ud-Din's History of India* (including text), the Hague, 1965.

³ *Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 130-134.

⁴ *Sahitya Darpana*, with tr. and commentary in Hindi by Vimla, Delhi, 1961, Chapter III.

⁵ *Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 146-153.

⁶ *Manusmriti*, Buhler's tr. Oxford, 1886, Book VIII, verses 1-420 and Book IX verses 1-250, 270.

⁷ *Ain*, Vol. I, pp. 590-591.

⁸ A.S. Beveridge, *Babur Nama* (tr.), Vol. I, pp. 310-311.

them.¹ The author's informant in this case is Jauhar Aftabchi.² The story told in the *Akbar Nama* of how Kamran was once publicly insulted in Humayun's court³ is taken from Bayazid's *Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*.⁴

On the other hand, there are cases, although too few to be significant, where the author has acknowledged his source without giving any details. One such reference is to Khwaja Shams-ud-din Khawafi. Abul Fazl mentions his name and quotes his evidence but does not refer to his work, if any. Nor does he specify whether the evidence was oral.⁵

An interesting element in Abul Fazl's use of his sources is the alterations he makes in either the words or the nuances of the evidence. In this he does not spare even official documents. He copies in full, for example, Shah Tahmasp's firman to the governor of Khurasan on the eve of Humayun's arrival there⁶ most probably from Bayazid's work.⁷ In the process of copying, he makes some alterations and even omits some words. He adds, for example, three names to the list of those who were to entertain Humayun and omits the title "Jannat Ashiyani" given by the Persian Shah to his own father. Similarly, he omits the words "Sahib-i-dev-o-pari" from the list of Humayun's titles as described in the firman.⁸

¹AN, Vol. I, p. 302.

²Jauhar, *Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat*, British Museum MS Add. 16711, Rotography, Research Library, Deptt. of History, Aligarh Muslim University, f. 113b.

³AN, Vol. I, p. 282.

⁴Bayazid, *Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*, Bib. Ind., p. 100.

⁵AN, Vol. III, p. 67. From the context it appears, however, that either Khawafi had been interrogated by the author and notes taken of his evidence or that he had written some kind of memorandum for Abul Fazl's use. Abul Fazl quotes him again in the first person, *ibid.*, pp. 301-302.

⁶*Ibid*, Vol. I, pp. 206-213.

⁷*Op. cit.*, pp. 12-31. No other author gives a copy of this firman. Abul Fazl must have copied it from the *Tazkira* unless he had another official copy of it. In any case, Bayazid's copy appears to be authentic, and therefore Abul Fazl's version can safely be compared with it.

⁸The omissions are understandable. "Jannat Ashiyani" was the title by which reference was officially made to Humayun in India after his death; and "Sahib-i-dev-o-pari" was probably considered below the dignity of a Mughal Emperor, Beveridge, AN, Vol. I (*tr.*), p. 431, fn. 2.

At other places Abul Fazl gives in his own language the gist of Akbar's firmans to his amirs.¹ Significantly, he does not include a copy of the Mahzar, the final draft of which had been prepared by his own father in the *Akbar Nama* but merely gives a summary of it in his own language.² The making of the gist of a document and writing it in his own language provided our author with added avenues of altering words and nuances, if need arose. The absence of the text of the Mahzar and its substitution by a summary may illustrate this point. Whereas the actual document, which has been reproduced in Badauni's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*³ and Nizam-ud-din's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*⁴ states, "If in matters of (Islamic) religion there is a difference of opinion among the interpreters (His Majesty) with his penetrating understanding and right thinking could, for the benefit of mankind and for the sake of administering the world, select one of these different opinions and issue an order to that effect which would be binding (on all the signatories),"⁵ Abul Fazl makes Akbar the final arbiter in cases of disputation among all "sects and religions."⁶ This was because when Abul Fazl was writing, Akbar was no longer content to be the "religious head" of the Muslims alone but of all the others as well.⁷

Secondly, the document empowers Akbar to issue any new orders provided that such orders did not contradict the Quran. Abul Fazl does not make even a reference to this clause probably because when he was writing he did not consider Akbar's authority of issuing orders limited by any qualification such as the one imposed by the Mahzar. Thus, to apply the attitudes, formed at the time of writing, uniformly over the entire reign, he tampers with an extremely important official document.

¹AN, Vol. II, p. 31; Vol. III, pp. 351-352.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 268-270.

³Vol. II, pp. 271-272.

⁴Vol. II, pp. 345-346.

⁵Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 271.

⁶AN, Vol. III, p. 270.

⁷Badauni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 286-287. Abul Fazl understandably does not make such a statement but clearly implies it. I owe this point to Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility Under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy (1560-80)," *J.R.A.S.* 1968, Parts 1 and 2.

Another example of how Abul Fazl changes the shades of meaning from that of his evidence may be cited here. In the context of the rebellion of Ali Quli Khan, in the tenth year of Akbar's reign, Abul Fazl refers to a meeting between the rebel and Munim Khan. His source for this piece of information is Bayazid who was one of the very few persons present on the occasion. Whereas Bayazid remarks, "they wept to mourn the death of His Majesty Jannat Ashiyani (Humayun) as they had not met since then,"¹ Abul Fazl, referring to the same, writes, "Part of the time of the meeting passed in hypocritical weeping."²

Abul Fazl rewrites Todar Mal's memorandum concerning revenue administration and even Akbar's remarks thereon in the final version apparently because he considered the language of the original unsuitable to the dignity of his work.³

Limitations like these in Abul Fazl's attitude towards the sources of his information arise out of the framework of his undertaking. Within this framework, however, his attitude registers a great advance over that of the historians of the Sultanate. From his own account of his researches it appears that all the relevant information was first collected in the form of official documents as well as memoirs of persons involved in, or witness to, the events.⁴ Each piece of evidence was then fully investigated and collated with others before being incorporated into the *Akbar Nama*.⁵ For information on each event, Abul Fazl says he took the written testimony of more than 20 persons.⁶ In these testimonies he found many a contradiction and discrepancy. He therefore proceeded by accepting the principal points common to all, and for ascertaining others he depended upon "prudence, truth-speaking and caution."

¹Bayazid, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

²*AN*, Vol. II, p. 259.

³The original memorandum had been copied verbatim in the first draft of the *AN*, British Museum MS Add. 27, 247 (Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. I, London, 1879, p. 247b), f. 332b. See transcript of the variation between the first and the final drafts in Research Library, Deptt. of History, Aligarh Muslim University. The final version carries a paraphrase in a more literary language, *AN*, Vol. III, pp. 382-383.

⁴*AN*, Vol. I, pp. 9-10.

⁵*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 255.

⁶*Ibid.*

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However, whenever Abul Fazl was uncertain of the authenticity of evidence for any piece of information, he submitted it all to Akbar and thus absolved himself of responsibility.

This use of official sources and the rigorous investigation of the authenticity of every piece of information makes *Akbar Nama* a genuine research work within its frame of reference and in the context of the time it was written. That is, it is not the author's purely impressionistic account of events; on the contrary, it is based on a certain authentic spadework and a systematic collection of data.

Yet, when Abul Fazl proceeds to write a "history of the world" with the *a priori* notion that this history had reached its fulfilment in the reign of Akbar, he places severe limitations on his work at the very outset. Add to this the restrictions imposed by what he thought was the ultimate proof of the authenticity of his information—prescription and approval of his sources beforehand by Akbar¹ who was also the final arbiter in cases of disputed plural evidence,² and the final outcome of the author's labours was subject to the Emperor's clearance.³ This makes *Akbar Nama* a purely official history in which Abul Fazl played the role of a distinguished craftsman whose distinction lay in greatly improving upon the earlier achievements of his craft.

TREATMENT OF HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CAUSATION IN THE *Akbar Nama*

History, for Abul Fazl, was "the events of the world recorded in a chronological order."⁴ Unambiguous though the definition is, Abul Fazl adheres to it only in part. Except in a very formal sense, the *Akbar Nama* is not a record of the *events of the world*. Its commencement from the fall of Adam does not entitle it to being called a world history for two reasons—until Abul Fazl comes to the history of the Mughals he picks up some crude notions and

¹*AN*, Vol. I, p. 10.

²*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 255.

³*AN*, Vol. II, p. 392.

⁴*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 280.

presents them as historical facts¹; and the account prior to that of Akbar's reign has been written with the specific objective of setting Akbar's supremacy against a partly imagined and largely distorted historical background. That is, he does not write a history of the world—nor even a mere record of the events of the world—as such. On the contrary, writing under the patronage of Akbar and completely overwhelmed by his glory and that of his court, he feels that this glory is the most resplendent since the beginning of humanity and to prove this he looks back upon what he considers human history from Adam downwards.² To do this he is in great haste as he confesses at places.³ In the process either due to his ignorance or for convenience, he does not mind picking up crude notions and treating them as historical facts.

Thus the vantage point from which he looks back is the reign of Akbar. Every word in the *Akbar Nama* is, directly or indirect-

¹Thus, for example, the story of how Alanquwa, the 22nd ancestor of Akbar, became pregnant by a ray of holy light, *AN*, Vol. I, p. 65. Abul Fazl pleads that such a phenomenon was not beyond the comprehension of those "who had passed the stage of worship of the material causes but was inexplicable to those who had not advanced, their foot further than that stage." The author further remarks, "That day was the beginning of the manifestation of His Majesty the Emperor (Akbar). . . ." Arguments and opinions like these are characteristic of Abul Fazl whenever he has to explain inconvenient phenomena, *infra*, p. 78.

Similarly, the myths regarding Adam, Shis, Enoch, etc., have been accepted by Abul Fazl as true, *AN*, Vol. I, pp. 52-53, 53-54, 54 respectively, and he assigns the date of Adam's birth to 7,000 years ago. (This contradicts his own statement that the tradition that man originated 7,000 years ago is incorrect, *ibid.*, p. 49.)

Indeed, the basic presumption of Abul Fazl that Akbar was the direct descendant of Adam himself through the intervening 52 generations is a crude notion which, for him, is a self-evident historical fact. Similarly, as stated earlier, he had planned to write the history, in four volumes, of Akbar's 120 years, *AN*, Vol. II, p. 257, presuming that Akbar would live as long and that he, Abul Fazl, would keep him company. He did not live long enough to see the presumption belied.

²At times this approach suggests a teleological view of history in that, to Abul Fazl, human history from its beginning appears to have drawn towards its end in Akbar's reign. Actually, however, his method is not teleological for he does not *reach* this conclusion after a study of human history but assumes this as a notion and elaborates it by looking back upon "human history" in the belief that this elaboration proves the assumption to be true.

³*AN*, Vol. I, pp. 120, 323-324, 369-370.

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tly, related either to the Emperor personally or his empire or his reign. Even the notices on the history of other countries, which are interspersed in the book, have been inserted only on the basis of this relationship.¹

Essentially, therefore, the main contribution of Abul Fazl in writing the *Akbar Nama* is the history of the reign of Akbar, including the information contained in the *Ain*, and at best a history of the Mughal dynasty from Babur to Akbar up to the year of writing.

The chronological sequence of events of which Abul Fazl speaks is adhered to only in the last two (printed) volumes of the book. This again is in keeping with the fact that the author has allowed himself to overlook certain forms in the first volume in a hurry to deal with Akbar's reign.

The most significant deviation of Abul Fazl from his own definition of history, however, lies in his explanation of the causation, rather than the mere recording, of events.

Abul Fazl does not formulate any general principles to explain causation in history. He does generalize. But his generalizations are mostly derived from individual events and hence are not comprehensive enough to explain total causation or causal relationship between two or more events or between the structure of state or

¹There are some intimate details of the intrigues in the Persian court from the time of the death of Shah Tahmasp, in 1576, onwards, *Akbar Nama*, Vol. III, pp. 224-227.

The occasion for the insertion of this notice is a reference to the appearance of a comet in that year which could cast no evil influence on India owing to the presence of the divinity-aided Akbar, but which caused immense devastation in Persia where also it had been seen.

The arrival of Shah Abbas, Persia's ambassador at Akbar's court in the 36th year of Akbar's reign, again touches off a short account of the Safavide dynasty, *ibid.*, pp. 588-592.

Similarly, the mention of the arrival of Sultan Quresh of Kashgarh at Akbar's court in the 34th regnal year is followed by an account of the events in Central Asia from the days of Changez Khan downwards, *ibid.*, pp. 553-556.

The death of Sultan Murad of Turkey and the accession to the throne of his son, Muhammad, who had eliminated his 19 brothers starts off Abul Fazl on a short account of Turkey's events, *ibid.*, pp. 662-665. The incident of the Sultan's death is not essentially related to Akbar or his reign except that the news makes him unhappy. Abul Fazl, however, considers this account of Turkey a "digression" from his narrative, *ibid.*, p. 665.

society and the nature of events in relation to that structure.

This may be clearer if we examine one of the chief features of Abul Fazl's style of writing. Abul Fazl treats history as a collection of individual events, and, indirectly, of matters relating to individual persons or institutions involved in these events. Almost invariably he opens his account of events with the remark, "One of the occurrences was. . . ." However, each event in his account is an illustration of certain moral truths or has a moral lesson. Abul Fazl generally prefaces his narration of each event with what may be called a preamble of which the event is meant to be an illustration. Failing that, he narrates the event and proceeds to draw one or another moral lesson from it. The effect of either prefixing or suffixing the lesson is practically the same for the content of the generalization is always the same. To take a few of the innumerable examples:

"Whenever from the good fortune of mankind, the time for collective worship of Truth arrives (the people) repair to the king on account of his high dignity and (thus) he becomes their spiritual leader as well; for a king possesses, independently of any intermediate power, the ray of wisdom and every sign of duality is banished from his heart. At times (the king) observes unity in the diversity of things and at others the contrary of it, for he sits on the majestic throne and is equally detached to joy and sorrow. Now this is the case with the monarch of our age and this book is a witness of it."¹

Or, referring to the corporal punishment awarded by Akbar to a leopard-keeper for having forcibly removed a man's shoes, Abul Fazl remarks, "This signified a warning to the men of the world and a lesson (literally sum or capital) in wisdom to the savages of the desert of ignorance. It became known in that region and (afterwards) no one thought of running away or suffering harm. Peace and tranquillity appeared in the empire."²

Or, "although the able ones may understand the importance of endeavour in the performance of duty, yet the far-seeing sage knows that in most cases the attainment of great objectives is associated with good intentions and appropriate actions of world-

¹*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 159.

²*AN*, Vol. II, p. 157.

rulers. It is obvious to those who have been witness to the great deeds of the past that success does not embrace (one) without initial (unsuccessful) efforts, and until the second attempt the object is not attained. It is because of this that the sinner on the throne of fortune (Akbar) concentrates on every work, which calls for courage, in this delightful fashion and brings to a conclusion every hard job without tears. This is perfectly clear to anyone who knows the events and occurrences of this eternal reign. The conquest of Bhakkar is a fresh instance of this."¹

Now these generalizations are not genuine generalizations, for each of them is related and therefore relevant to a single event. What appears to be a grandiose framework of general principles which forms the background to, or is a derivation from, an event is in reality an inference backwards. That is, Abul Fazl knows the event he is going to describe and makes generalizations on the basis of his knowledge of that particular event. The harangue about the spiritual leadership of the king, for example, is a prelude to Abul Fazl's description of the proclamation by Akbar of the *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* (or the so-called *Din-i-Ilahi*) as is clear from the subsequent pages. Thus this preamble has relevance only to Akbar. There is no evidence to suggest that Abul Fazl would have accepted just *any* king's spiritual leadership even in theory; but he accepts Akbar's both in theory and in practice.

Similarly, the formulation that success is achieved only after an earlier failure is relevant only to the taking of Bhakkar where an earlier attempt had failed.² As such, it is not a principle applicable to all situations at all times.

Significantly, whenever Abul Fazl deals with different kinds of situations, his generalizations are also different. Thus, when at one place he states that there are eight essential requisites of an Emperor—high fortune, rare courage, conquering power, administrative capacity, attention to the cultivation (development) of the territories, purity of intention in promoting the welfare of the holy men, cherishing of the army and restraining it from wreaking destruction,³—he generalizes on the basis of qualities he observed in

¹*AN*, Vol. III, p. 90.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 118.

or could attribute to Babur. But when he remarks that "Kingship is a gift of God" and that among the qualities of a king are inauguration of "universal peace" and "regarding of all sections of humanity and all sects of religions, not one as the mother and another as the stepmother, but with the single eye of favour,"¹ he is not propounding a general theory but is enumerating what he thought were Akbar's qualities as ruler.

Similarly, referring to his detractors and to himself, Abul Fazl divides mankind into four categories, "First, there are the darkened and the contumacious ones who do not listen to reproof and do not convey it from the ear-hole to the heart's chamber. . . . Second, those evil-natured, base ones who fancy their ignorance as knowledge and show off their incurable disease as excellence of health. Third, those seekers after light, with well-constituted nature, who have escaped from the demon castle of envy and the dark pit of ignorance and who seek after health, but who, owing to perverse fate and evil star cannot attain to lofty knowledge and to whom the veiled beauties of wisdom's seraglio but rarely show themselves. Fourth, that illustrious man of happy star, who, along with treasures of knowledge possesses loftiness of soul and great genius, and who, from profundity of perception ever fares forward."² But when he comes to describe the resistance by Akbar's nobles to the institution of the branding of horses, he groups humanity under a single head, "It is not hid under the veil of concealment from judicious observers that man is continually dominated by cupidity and anger The commander withholds from the followers what he has received from the court, and becomes more greedy and the follower sprinkles the dust of disloyalty on the head of his fortune and acts on all occasions as if he were his own master."³

In a number of cases Abul Fazl gives multiple explanations of the same event. For example, referring to Tardi Beg's flight from the fort of Delhi when it was besieged by Hemu, the author remarks, "some of the reckoners-up of registers of deeds regard the coming of Tardi Beg to such disgrace as a kind of expiation for

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, p. 382.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 116.

the disloyalty which he showed to His Majesty Jahanbani Jannat Ashiani (Humayun) at the beginning of the journey to Persia. God forbid! that (merely) this be an expiation for disloyalty. Could a disgrace such as this be placed in the scales of justice as a counterpiece to the shameful act? Since he saw the Lord of the Age, who had been brought for the perfection of the visible and invisible, in the disguise of boyhood, he did not pay regard to him and, being arrogant, wanted to show off his greatness. The world-adorning God inflicted such a punishment on that self-appraiser. Alas! What a short-sightedness this was. Rather, the implementers of the Divine decree enhanced the arrogance and intoxication of Hemu, so that the intoxicated worshipper of conceit would appear great to the eyes of the short-sighted of whom this world is full, in order to show the majesty of the Emperor. Afterwards he was seized and cast down to the dust of shame so that his disgrace might become collyrium to the eyes of the short-sighted."¹

Or, commenting upon the assassination of Bairam Khan, Abul Fazl remarks, "I do not know whether this event is a retribution of his past deeds or if his mind was still polluted by evil thoughts, or if his prayer had been answered or whether the favour of God had relieved that good man from the heavy burden of shame."²

Perhaps in most cases such explanations are mere literary embellishment to the hard core of historical events. But, as the first example above would show, at times they may be used as attempts to explain away inconvenient events or phenomena. This is particularly reinforced by the fact that such of the explanations offered are generally somewhat mystical rather than historical. Abul Fazl often resorts to this kind of mystical reasoning whenever he feels the need to explain, or explain away, inconvenient events or phenomena. He loyally and consistently sticks, for example, to a theory he has built up that during the first four years of his reign Akbar had drawn a veil over his face from behind which he silently judged each individual's character.³ This explains his apparent political inaction during this period. At another place Abul Fazl relates an incident in which the elephant Akbar was

¹*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 30-31.

²*Ibid.*, p. 130.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

riding fell into a ditch. As the animal sought to extricate itself, it tried to get rid of the Emperor's "sacred person." Akbar was saved by some "intrepid, loyal and alert men." Abul Fazl's conclusive remarks on this incident are, "I do not know if this beauty under the aspect of terror displayed itself without the intention of this chosen one so that the far-reaching thoughts of the wicked might be shortened by such (Divine) guardianship, or whether that sovereign of the apparent and the hidden, that king of the visible and the invisible, should, with Divine help and inspiration, knowingly and designedly, exhibit such glory so that by one act might be manifested the blindness of the malevolents and the illumination of the loyal."¹

Now, although, as stated earlier, Abul Fazl does not formulate any fundamental concept of historical generalization, he does explain individual historical events within the framework of certain assumptions which are taken by him as self-evident and self-sufficient truths. He makes an assumption to explain a particular event and then places forward that event as its illustration which he also considers its proof. Alternately, he makes an assumption and elaborates it, the elaboration, to him, being the proof of the genuineness of the assumption. To take some examples:

"Since in the manner of the dispensation of justice and the law of the conquest of territories," he says, "it is necessary that whenever the ruler of a country or the governor of a province engages in his own pleasures and spends his valuable time in gratifying his own lusts and does not attend to the cherishing of his subjects and sympathizing with the oppressed and to overthrowing the oppressors, the Lord of the Age, whom the Almighty has given the power to conquer and has made the king of the world and its people, must, for the sake of thanksgiving to God, strive to uproot that tyrant and to make over the inhabitants of that country to the just-minded and the prudent and consider this as the preamble to election. Acting on this principle, which is founded upon Truth, an order was issued in this fortunate year (5th year of Akbar's reign), when the news of the disturbance and commotion of the intriguing Kashmiris and the injustice of Ghazi Khan, governor of Kashmir, reached the blessed ears (of Akbar), that a force be put

¹*Ibid.*, p. 74.

under the command of Mirza Qara Bahadur, . . . for the conquest of Kashmir. . . ."¹

Or, "assuredly, dominion comes unsought to those rulers with whom increase of territory brings increase of devotion and humility. And what they desire is carried to the height of fulfilment in spite of thousands of obstructions on the way. The account of this great victory is another instance of this."²

Or, "if the majesty of royalty did not exist, how would various disturbances subside? And how would selfishness disappear? Mankind would, under the burden of passion and lust, fall into the pit of destruction; everywhere the world would lose its lustre and in a short time the prosperous world would be rendered desolate. But by the light of the King's justice some follow, with cheerfulness and freshness, the road of obedience, and others, out of fear of punishment, abstain from violence and willingly or unwillingly return to the path of lawfulness."³

Broadly, Abul Fazl makes two sets of assumptions. The first of these is that Akbar's is a semi-Divine personality; at least he is aided by Divinity whether in his action or non-action; that loyalty to Akbar is an essential virtue for everyone; and, that therefore the frustration of an act of rebellion or disloyalty or hostility to Akbar is predestined. This third assumption is, in fact, an inference from the first two.

Abul Fazl is practically obsessed with Akbar's proximity to Divinity. He feels no sorrow at the death of Humayun, for the Creator had so decided in order to give "rejuvenescence to the old world and new order to mankind,"⁴ that is, to place Akbar on the throne. When Akbar promulgated the Ilahi era, that to Abul Fazl was the result of "Divine inspiration."⁵ When "the feeble-hearted were depressed" for want of rain at a particular time, Akbar engaged in prayer and shortly afterwards there was a downpour."⁶ When Akbar plunged his horse into a flooded river (the river

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 774. The victory referred to is the capture of the fort of Ahmednagar in the 45th regnal year.

³ *Ain*, Vol. I, p. 2.

⁴ *AN*, Vol. I, p. 365.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 578.

Mahindri in Gujarat), "by the fortune and miracle of his sacred person" the river became fordable.¹

Abul Fazl pleads for unreserved loyalty to Akbar. In fact, any act not in complete conformity to it, and of course any act contrary to it, is bound to be visited by retribution.² Even among the loyal men there are two types—those who are loyal for the consideration of some expedience; and those who are loyal for the consideration of some expedience; and those who are "noble truth-seekers who illuminate their altruistic hearts with the light of love and stand at the head of the chosen ones of God."³ The second of these types is naturally the superior of the two and, therefore, success comes to it unsought. It is to be noted that loyalty, to Abul Fazl, becomes virtuous only when owed to Akbar even if it involves deserting old friends and allies. Thus Shaham Khan, who had joined hands with the rebels in Bihar in 1580-81, "broke his promise and hoisted the flag of loyalty at Hajipur," and this he did out of "innate auspiciousness."⁴

The third assumption—predestined frustration of a rebellion or of an act of disloyalty or hostility to Akbar—is writ large on almost every page of the two later volumes of *Akbar Nama*. It is significant that, in Abul Fazl's view, only a rebellion against Akbar is bound to be frustrated and not against an Emperor as such, against Humayun, for instance. The success of Sher Shah—whom Abul Fazl insists on considering a mere rebel in that he never addresses him as Sher Shah but always calls him Sher Khan—would militate against the application of this notion to Humayun. But to rebel against Akbar "who has been made great by God and a ruler whom the inhabitants of the visible and the invisible world hasten to obey" is to "strike with one's hand the dagger of death into one's bosom."⁵ Even as a pure logical inference, since Akbar is aided by divinity and since loyalty to him is absolutely essential, any thought or act to the contrary is bound to incur divine wrath. And in this, mere pretence of loyalty would not take one very far, for ultimately the pretence is bound to be detected and, therefore,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 449-450.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 24.

visited by retribution.¹

The second basic set of Abul Fazl's assumptions concerns the nature of men to which he attributes their behaviour and it is to their behaviour that he attributes the causation of individual events in history. To this an exception is generally made where Akbar himself is directly involved in the occurrence of an event, for Akbar is a semi-divine person. Therefore his role falls beyond the pale of ordinary human reason. It must be stated here that Akbar's role in the occurrence of an event is not so explained in every instance without exception. There are examples where his role is explained in terms of his nature or volition.²

But it is only Akbar whose role in the happening of an event is explained in supernatural terms whenever it is so explained. Where an ordinary mortal is involved, his behaviour, to Abul Fazl, is the direct projection of his nature. An individual's nature comprises his innate traits along with his volition. A few examples may illustrate this point:

"At this time. . . a desire to kiss the threshold seized the collar of this fortunate one (Sultan Adam Gakkhar) also. But from his natural savagery he begged that when he is exalted by service he should not be taken to Hindustan along with the sublime cortege and that he should not, by marks of favour of the cherisher of the subjects, be made an exile from his own country."³

Or, "among the dominion-increasing events that occurred in Delhi at this time (the third regnal year of Akbar) was the execution of Musahib Beg, son of Khwaja Kalan Beg. The facts of this case in brief are that his soul was ever filled with hypocrisy and his disposition compact of wickedness. Both in the time of His Majesty Jahanbani Jannat Ashiyani (Humayun) and at the time of the rising of the world adorning sun, His Majesty the Emperor (Akbar), disagreeable actions of his came to light."⁴

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 69, 97-98, 138.

²*AN*, Vol. II, pp. 68, 97, 141, 234-235; *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 50 where, in fact, the author theorizes that divine assistance notwithstanding, the ruler (the reference here is to Akbar) must depend upon "right design, just thinking and suitable action."

³*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 63.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

Or, "when Adham Khan had become victorious by the good fortune of the Emperor, the intoxication of his innate lust increased and the cap of his pride was set awry by the wind of arrogance, the source of which is ignorance and folly. His brain deteriorated and whatever advice Pir Muhammad Khan, his disinterested mentor, gave him proved vain."¹ (Abul Fazl goes on to describe the steps Adham Khan had taken to treat himself as the independent ruler of Malwa after his victory there.)

The explanation of the causation of historical events in terms of human nature in *Akbar Nama* is based on the second set of assumptions which have been mentioned above. Abul Fazl divides men, from the point of view of their behaviour, into three categories:

Men who are good in every way.

Men who are wicked and invariably act wickedly.

Men who are essentially good but are surrounded by or are susceptible to evil influence.

This categorization is obviously a moral one. That is, Abul Fazl judges an individual's actions as moral actions. But a close examination of the basis of this categorization would bear out that in essence Abul Fazl equates political action with moral action.

Abul Fazl has written only of political events which have a direct or indirect relevance to Akbar's reign. Any reference outside the purview of political events is purely incidental and is subordinate to the latter. Thus he has written of men who have a positive or negative role to play in these events. Indirectly, it may be an individual's relation or attitude to the Emperor and his dominions. The basis of Abul Fazl's division of men into three moral categories is therefore their political behaviour and their attitude towards the Emperor (Akbar) and his empire.

It may be suggested that Abul Fazl's assumptions, though not logically proved by him as genuine, have a practical, historical validity in the context of the second half of the 16th century in India. This was the period when the Mughal empire was growing not only in territory but also in its intrinsic strength. The old administrative and political institutions were being so modified as to give to the Mughal empire a "steel frame"—the mansabdari system—

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

which sustained the growth of the empire both internally and externally in this formative period. This process of growth, supported as it was by the above-mentioned institutional structure, could be carried on only if political power was centralized in the hands of the monarch. Inversely, centralization of power would also be the result of this process.

In this context, when Abul Fazl, who had reason enough to align himself with Akbar intellectually as well as practically, places deliberate emphasis on Akbar's semi-divinity, it becomes understandable, for in essence it suggested wielding of unreserved political power. Abul Fazl could also understandably consider loyalty to Akbar essential and moral and hostility destructive and immoral. And on this basis he could categorize an individual's political behaviour as his moral behaviour.

STYLE

Abul Fazl believes that he has broken new ground in the style of history writing, distinct from the ornate verbosity and fantastic literary notions of most of the earlier authors and many others of his own day.¹ The claim is supported by the author of the *Ma'asir-ul-Umra*.²

Even a cursory reading of *Akbar Nama* would make it obvious that its author's claim to linguistic simplicity and easy style is untenable. If ornate verbosity there was, this book symbolizes it. Through the five revisions of his work³ Abul Fazl appears to have selected each word very self-consciously and, with great diligence, constructed an elaborate literary edifice. Having done that, he sits back, as it were, to admire his own creation.

On the whole, Abul Fazl's style is very impersonal, unmodulated and uninteresting. Even the intermittent insertion of verses, apropos the medieval style, was made only in the fifth (and final) draft and that probably at the insistence, at least the suggestion, of others.⁴ As

¹*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 381.

²*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 622.

³*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 256.

⁴*Ibid.*

such, the verses retain the character of a superimposition and fail to get integrated into the texture of the narrative.

Two of the translators of the *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* respectively are agreed in their evaluation of Abul Fazl's style. Beveridge is understandably impressed by the amount of industry that went into the writing of *Akbar Nama* and the accuracy of the information it contains. But, he remarks, "Abul Fazl is not a picturesque writer, nor are his reflections profound or affecting. Very seldom does he make an interesting remark. He has not the charm of Herodotus, nor the outspokenness and raciness of the crabbed, bigoted and sinful Badauni. He seldom tells a story without spoiling it."¹ Jarrett, writing in a similar vein, remarks that Abul Fazl's "annals have none of the pregnant meaning and point that in a few masterly strokes exalt or brand a name to all time and flash the actors of his drama across the living page in scenes that dwell for ever in memory... His narrative affects a quaint and stiff phraseology which renders it often obscure and continues in an even monotone, never rising or falling save in reference to the Emperor whose lightest mention compels the adoring prostration of his pen, and round whom the world of his characters and events revolves as its central sun. Whatever its merits as a faithful representation, in a restricted sense, of a reign in which he was a capable and distinguished actor, it lacks the interesting details and portraiture of the life and manners of the nation which are commonly thought to be below the dignity of history but which brighten the pages of Eastern historians less celebrated than himself and are necessary to the light and shade of a perfect picture."²

Yet the division of *Akbar Nama* into two groups, the narrative part and the sort of gazetteer that the *Ain* is, did mark a new pattern in the style of history writing. Unfortunately, the *Ain* as a model was largely ignored by later historians, but the narrative part of *Akbar Nama* continued to provide a prototype for many of the later works.³

A significant feature of this work is the complete absence of eulogium for the saints. Abul Fazl is aware of the convention of

¹Beveridge's Introduction, *AN*, Vol. II. (tr.), pp. x-xi.

²Jarrett's Preface *Ain*, Vol. II (tr.), annotated by J.N. Sarkar, Bib. Ind., pp. vi-vii.

³*Supra*, p. 71, fn 3.

paying one's respects to them; still he refrains from following this convention, ostensibly because by praising Akbar, who was himself the personification of all that was noble and divine, he had praised the saints who had gone by.¹ This explanation, however, does not strike one as convincing. It is possible that, as in the later part of Akbar's reign, at the time when Abul Fazl was writing, the Emperor had given up many rituals and had abandoned even his earlier almost annual visits to Ajmer,² our author got the clue and refrained from recording any encomia for the saints.

A still more significant feature of the work is the complete absence of any religious fanaticism or what might today be called communal rancour. The explanation lies in part in the maturing of the state policy with regard to religion by the time Abul Fazl had started writing and in which he had played no small role himself. Unfortunately for today's historian, Abul Fazl accepts the policy in its mature form and applies it uniformly over the entire reign of Akbar, and this inhibits a reconstruction of the process of its evolution.³

One may be forgiven some speculation regarding another part contributing to Abul Fazl's "secular" stance. It is interesting to note that unlike the other medieval historians, who open their books with the praise of God, the Prophet and the Caliphs, gradually reaching down to the reigning sultan, Abul Fazl traces the descent of Akbar from Adam through a secular lineage—that of the rulers of Central Asia.⁴ This is particularly significant in view of the fact

¹AN, Vol I, pp. 8-9.

²Narrating the events of the 18th regnal year of Akbar, Badauni tells us, "Since he (the Emperor), out of his excessive faith, considered the paying of annual visits to Ajmer essential. . . ." *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 173. Again, writing of the 24th regnal year he states, "On the 8th of September, 1579 he, Akbar, set out for Ajmer. After that to this day (when Badauni was writing) when fourteen years have passed he has not turned his rein towards that direction," *ibid.*, p. 272. Abul Fazl, writing of the 25th regnal year explaining why Prince Danyal was sent to Ajmer as Akbar's proxy, remarks, "The visiting of the tombs of the departed men of awakened heart he (Akbar) considers an instance. . . of shallowness," AN, Vol. III, pp. 316-317.

³A refreshingly new though still tentative attempt to explain the various phases in the evolution of Akbar's religious policy has been made by Iqidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility Under Akbar. . . ."

⁴AN, Vol. I, pp. 48-49.

that Akbar's reign had witnessed the completion of the first millenium of Islam which could have created considerable temptation to associate Akbar with the revival and rejuvenation of the Faith. That Abul Fazl resists this temptation attests to his consciousness that Islam was not the only source of culture and that besides religion, whether Islamic or any other, there were other, secular, sources contributing to human thought and civilization. It is possible that his familiarity with contemporary Europe's emerging secular culture to an extent shaped his own thinking. He makes references to the discovery and capture of the New World (*alam-i-nau*) by the Europeans¹ and to European painting.²

Yet the fact that Abul Fazl's interpretation of Akbar's reign has a large semi-mystical element in it sharply brings forth the limitations of the new intellectual awareness at Akbar's court. The weaknesses of the Islamic heritage were recognized, but in the absence of any marked scientific and technological development in society,³ the role of physical sciences as a component of any alternative ideology was missed altogether.

Beveridge began translating the *Akbar Nama* with the impression that Abul Fazl was a "shameless flatterer" of Akbar and the impression persisted with him to the end.⁴ That Abul Fazl was conscious of the possibility of such a charge against him is obvious from his repeated attempts at denying it.⁵ The very style of the *Akbar Nama*, whereby in the description of each event the author tries to build up a literary climax, is suggestive of his exaggerations in Akbar's favour. In most of the battles of Akbar or his men against rebels or other opponents (and the accounts of these form the bulk of *Akbar Nama*) Abul Fazl tries to exaggerate the strength and determination of the latter in order to inflate the significance and the glory of the Emperor's, or his agent's, victory. A more

¹*AN*, II, p. 26.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 116. I owe this point to a discussion with Irfan Habib.

³For the rate of technological development in medieval India see Irfan Habib, presidential address, section II, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Varanasi session, 1969), Patna, 1970 and "The Technology and Economy of Mughal India" being the Dev Raj Chandra Memorial Lectures, Delhi, 1970 (mimeo).

⁴Beveridge's Preface, *AN* (tr.), Vol. III, p. ix.

⁵*AN*, Vol. I, p. 348; Vol. II, p. 114; Vol. III, p. 259.

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interesting case is the author's own. In order to play up the light and guidance he had received from Akbar, he overly emphasizes his conceit and unassailability before he came into contact with the Emperor.¹

It must however be said to the credit of Abul Fazl that the extensive research which he had carried out for writing the *Akbar Nama* marks, up to his time in India, perhaps the most advanced attempt at writing a comparatively authentic history. To this day, even though his notions may appear extremely naive and his assumptions utterly invalid, his work remains a landmark in the history of medieval Indian historical writing.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 386-397; Vol. III, pp. 83-84, 113-114.

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¹*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 388-392; Vol. III, pp. 83-84, 113-114.