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THE GENERAL CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF ABU RAYHAN BIRUNI'S WORK "INDIA"

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Abstract

This article describes Abu Rayhan Biruni's intended purpose in writing the work "India", as well as its general content and objectives. In addition, the chapters of the work are analyzed, and brief information about them is provided. The article introduces some of the views of world scholars on the work and provides information about its translations into various languages and its translators. Furthermore, the scholar's own thoughts regarding his work are also presented.

Keywords: Indian people, religion, value, calendar, astrologer, astronomy, "India", religious studies, religious tradition.

Introduction

Starting from the end of the 9th century and lasting almost until the beginning of the 13th century, a period of high cultural development and major political changes took place. These developments and transformations were so profound and world-shaping. Adam Mez, a 19th-century Swiss Orientalist and historian, analyzed this period thoroughly and termed it the Muslim Renaissance[1]. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was one of the active participants in and shapers of this Muslim Renaissance. The original name of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni is Abu Rayhan



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Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni al-Khwarazmi. Al-Biruni was born on September 4, 973, in Kath, the ancient capital of Khwarazm. He passed away in December 1048 in Ghazna[2]. Al-Biruni worked in various fields of science: astronomy, geography, history, mathematics, and geometry. Furthermore, al-Biruni was among the first Muslim scholars to lay the foundations for the study of religions other than Islam.

Main Part

During his stay in India, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni communicated directly with Indian scholars, philosophers, and priests, and learned Sanskrit, which was considered the scientific language in India. He analyzed Indian scientific works written in Sanskrit. He presented the scientific results of these investigations in his work "India", written in 1030[3]. It suffices to say that in "India", al-Biruni mentions nearly 180 Indian works, a large portion of which pertains to Indian astronomy. In this work, the scholar provided detailed information about the culture, philosophy, religious views, customs, history, holidays, and beliefs of India.

Discussion and Results

The scholar wrote many treatises related to India; seven of them are mentioned in the book "India", and it is presumed that their actual number was even higher[4]. A portion of them is dedicated to exact sciences. In terms of content, they cover topics such as the numeral system used by Indians, Indian concepts regarding solar and lunar eclipses, concepts like "lunar mansions", "fixed stars", and "astrology".

The polymath's largest work recounting the history of Indians—"India"—also contains information related to exact sciences. In it, primary attention is directed



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toward the analysis of Indian astronomical books: Chapter 14: "Surya-Siddhanta", "Vasishtha-Siddhanta", "Paulisa-Siddhanta", "Romaka-Siddhanta", and "Brahma-Siddhanta"; Chapter 15: the system of measurement units among Indians; Chapter 16: written on calculation; Chapter 18: geographical description of India, distances; Chapter 19: astronomy and measurement of time; Chapters 20 and 21: astronomical and geographical issues; Chapters 32-45: calculation of time; Chapters 45-48: astronomy; Chapters 49-53: concepts of "chronology"; Chapters 54-55: astronomy; Chapter 56: lunar mansions; Chapter 57: times of heliacal risings of stars; Chapter 59: astronomy; Chapter 60: discusses lunar eclipses.

The work "India" was first translated from Arabic into German and published in 1888 by the German Orientalist Eduard Sachau, who conducted extensive source-critical studies. The translation of the work into Russian was carried out in 1963 by A.B. Khalidov and Y.N. Zavadovsky. The translation from the Arabic text into Uzbek was completed in 1965 and published under the translation and editing of A. Rasulev, Yu. Hakimjonov, G. Jalolov, and A. Irisov.

Regarding his work "India", Abu Rayhan al-Biruni explicitly states at the beginning of the book that his work is not critical and that he is interested in presenting facts as provided by the Indians themselves. Al-Biruni says: "I do not cite their arguments to refute them, as I consider them incorrect. My book is nothing more than simple historical facts. I present to the reader the theories of the Indians as they are, and to show the relationships between them, I mention similar theories of the Greeks in connection with them"[5].

In other words, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni tries to understand Indian culture from its own unique perspective, allowing them to speak for themselves. The striving to record facts as they are, without any preconceived judgments, is one of the most essential aspects of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's methodology. In this sense, it can be



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argued that Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's approach to studying religious traditions closely aligns with modern methodologies.

In his fundamental work titled "India", he provided detailed information about the culture, philosophy, and religious views of India. Al-Biruni created this work through long-term scientific research in India and direct communication with Indian philosophers and priests.

Below, al-Biruni's reflections on Indian philosophy and religious views are analyzed, attempting to interpret his teachings based on an objective approach. Furthermore, his evaluations of the Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga philosophical schools are analyzed and re-examined from the perspective of contemporary religious studies.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni approached Indian philosophy scientifically. In his works, he paid special attention to maintaining scientific objectivity. He deeply analyzed various directions of Indian philosophy, including the Vedanta, Samkhya, and Nyaya streams. Al-Biruni studied Indian philosophy not merely to convey information, but also to compare it with Greek philosophy and Islamic thought. In this regard, he expresses the following thought in his work:

إن الفلاسفة الهنود قد تكلموا في ماهية الكون وأصله ومصيره، وهم في ذلك يشتركون مع فلاسفة اليونان“
 "Indian philosophers discussed the nature, origin, and destiny of the universe, and in this regard, they share commonalities with Greek philosophers on certain essential issues."

While expounding the views of Indian philosophers on matter, spirit, and divinity, he also compared the place of these concepts in Greek philosophy and Islamic theology. For instance, al-Biruni compares the principles of cognition through reason and evidence proposed in Nyaya philosophy with Aristotelian logic, highlighting the similarities between the two (Al-Biruni, "India", 1030, Istanbul, 1958, p. 122).



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[7] "إن مبدأ الاستدلال في النيايا الهندية يقارب مناهج الاستدلال عند أرسطو" "The methods of deduction (logical reasoning) in the Indian Nyaya school are close to Aristotle's methods of deduction."

Describing Indian religious traditions, al-Biruni also analyzes their metaphysical and ethical foundations. Interpreting divine concepts worshipped by Hindus such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, he reveals their fundamental religious-philosophical significance.

In his view, the concept of divinity is interpreted differently in Indian philosophy. For example, Vedanta philosophy recognizes a single ultimate reality (Brahman), whereas Samkhya posits the existence of material and spiritual principles. Analyzing Upanishadic texts, al-Biruni expounded their monistic teachings. Furthermore, interpreting the ideas of karma and samsara (rebirth) in Indian philosophy, he analyzes the ethical and cosmological foundations of these concepts. According to him, these ideas constitute one of the core principles of Indian philosophy, directly influencing an individual's moral choices and lifestyle.

In the process of comparing Indian philosophy, al-Biruni explores not only Greek and Islamic thought, but also Zoroastrian and Buddhist teachings. He pays particular attention to Hindu views on karma and reincarnation (rebirth), emphasizing the connection of this idea to the meanings found in the philosophies of Plato and Pythagoras.

Moreover, al-Biruni compares the main ideas of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism with Indian philosophy. Comparing the Buddhist concept of nirvana with the concept of moksha (मोक्ष) in Indian philosophy, he analyzes their mutual interconnection. Similarly, he compares the idea of the struggle between good and evil in Zoroastrianism with the dualistic principles in Vedanta philosophy.



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Conclusion

The great thinker Abu Rayhan al-Biruni saw the development of the country and the prosperity of the people as inextricably linked to the advancement of science and technology. Emphasizing that every specialist must rely on experience in their reasoning, have a clear objective in their research, labor continuously, identify and rectify shortcomings, and fight against superficial views in the pursuit of truth while gaining knowledge, he rejected all kinds of fabrications. Striving earnestly for unity in society, he promoted an atmosphere of harmony and brotherhood among nations. Strongly condemning destructive wars that bring calamity to humanity, he called people toward peace and tranquility. Today's generation should also follow this example.

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