

MA'WARA'UN NAHAR AS DEPICTED IN THE CHAHAR MAQALA

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To begin with it would be useful to say something about the writer of the Charhar Maqala. His name is stated to be Nizamud-din or Najmud-din Ahmad bin Umar Samarqandi, best known as Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi. He was a native of Samarqand and was associated for about 45 years with the court of Gauri Bamian. He was a contemporary of Amir Moizi and Umar Khayam of Nishapuri. He had visited some important places, such as, Nishapur, Herat and Balkh.

Nizami was a man of learning and was basically a prose writer, besides being a minor poet. As regards his poetry there is nothing of note to his credit. However some fragmental verses has led Dr. Mohammad Moin to describe as mediocre. As a proof a poetic specimen of his is given below:-

در جہاں سے نظامیم ای سے شاہ
کہ جہاں سے زماہنغ اسانند
من بوساد پیش تخت شہم
وآن دو مرویش سلطانتند
تحقیقت کہ در سخنوں امروند
ہر یکے مفتخر خسر اسانند
گرچہ انجوں روان سے سخن گویند
درچہ انجوں خرد سخنوں دانند
من شراہم کہ شان چو دریاہم
ہر دو از کار خود فرودمانند

Apart from being a poet Nizami knew astronomy and had been a physician. But the main thing by which he

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1. So far as his poetic qualities are concerned, Nizami himself quotes the words of one Amir Saifud-din as "full of constant, firm and solid". (See, Nizami, the Chahar Maqala, P. 86).

achieved vast popularity. was his prose work namely ChaharMaqala.²

The Chahar Maqala was written in the year AH 551-52 and dedicated it to a Gauri prince namely Abul Hassan Hisamud-din Ali bin Fakhrud-daula Masood bin Izud-din Hassan.

In fact the apparent title of Chahar Maqala was Majmaun-navadir. But as it deals with the four discourses, it was renounced in favour of the tittle of Chahar Maqala.

The Chahar Maqala consists of an introduction and four other discourses the introduction itself comprises five indivial chapters. The contents of the four discourses are mentioned as under:-

1. Essence of a writer and quality of a perfect writer and whatever is related to him.
2. Quality of science of poetry and virtue of a poet.
3. Science of astronomy, the astronomers knowledge of the subject.
4. Medical Sciences and training of a physician.

In these discourses Nizami sets out to enlighten the capitulations and endowments of four kinds of people, to which in his own words they are described as:

“وی باید ملازم دربار بادشاه باشد”

(They should be the employees of kings)

The Chahar Maqala was written in the style which was prevalent in the 5th. and 6th. century A.H. It is an excellent and magnificent piece of work in Persian literature.

The Chahar Maqala is an commemoration of

2. For details see, Nizami, the Chahar Maqala, PP. 94-95 and 123).

great writers, poets, astronomers, physicians. It is important because it highlights the virtues of renowned personalities such as, Firdousi, Khayam, Ibni-seena, Amir Moizi and they have been empty discussed the first time. In this way the Chahar Maqala has its own importance and has become a great source for moderns like Shiekh S'aidi and Maulana Roomi etc.

From the very beginning of its appearance the Chahar Maqala has appealed to writers and men of learning. It has been mentioned in the Tarikhi-Tabristan Tarkhi-Guzeedah, Nigaristan, Farhang-i-Jehangiri and in biographical account of Daulat Shah Samarqandi.

It is worth while to mention here that in spite of the status accorded to him in literature Nizami's knowledge of history is not thorough. He has committed some historical errors. He mixes the names of famous men with one another arroneougly and does not follows historical events chronologically. But such mistakes were committed even by the scribes.

Ma'warun-nahar³ – the transoxia is basically a name given to a region by the Arabs⁴. Babar Mirza, who himself hails from Fargana has nicely and vividly described the geographical configuration, natural beauty and pleasant climatic conditions of Maurauan-nahar.

The Chahar Maqala is an account of Iran and Central Asia and their geographical features and social, political, religious and cultural history. To present a full account of what has been said is not possible in this chapter. So whatever Nizami relates regarding the above mentioned aspects of mawaraun-nahar will be summarised here.

Regarding the geographical aspects of Mawaraun-nahar, Nizami has not produced a detailed information, though there are some extent aspects. In fact he has

3. That which is beyond or behind the river oxus.

4. A specific belt between the two rivers oxus (Amu Daryh) and (Sur Derya).

mainly given the names of villages and cities⁵, Bazzars⁶, Rivers and Canals⁷, Mountains and deserts⁸, Monestaries, Hamams⁹, gates and forts¹⁰, Patent Offices¹¹, Animals¹², Insects¹³, Fruits and Flowers¹⁴ and Climate.

Bukhara and Samarqand are famous and historical cities of Mawaraun-nahar. Regarding Bukhara Nizami narrates that it was the capital during the reign of samanid's especially under the kings Nuh bin Mansur Samani, Nasarbin Ahmad samani and Amir Mansur bin Nuh Samani. More over it had been ruled by Gaur Khan of Khata. Bukhara has been shown by three main things, i.e. River oxus, Desert Amuy and the Canal Muliyan¹⁵.

It seems that the desert Amuy is situated on the banks of river oxus. Nizami narrates a story that when

5. Bukhar, Samarqand, Chuganian, Khatlan, atfar, Barooneh.

6. Perfume sellers of Herat and street of slave sellers in Balkh.

7. Oxus and Muliyan.

8. Amuy.

9. Hamam of Muliyan.

10. Roodbar, Rezan, Obih and Margisa paid.

11. Situated in Chuganian.

12. Horses of Khau and dogs of Gour.

13. *زر عاكرمه* It is said to be a race of men or demons, who have only one leg and one arm and move by leaping. (see steingass, Persian English dictionary, New Delhi, p.1401)

14. Grapes, Mint, Cumomite and narcissus.

15. These are identified by quoting the poem of Rudhki (d 329 A.H.) which is as

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| یاد یار مہربانے آید ہمے | بوی جوی مولیان آید ہمے |
| زیر پائیم پر نیانے آید ہمے | ریگ آموی و در شمتے راہ او |
| خنک مارا تا میان آید ہمے | آب جھون از نشاط روی دوست |

Mohammad Zakariya Razi on the invitation of Amir Mansur bin Nuh Samani set out for Bukhara and reached Amuy. He writes that

”او (رازی) بیامد تا باموی و چون بکنار جیحون رسید ...“

Else-where Nizami says that about 20,000 people cross the river oxus every year. This has been confirmed by Razi as follows.

من دانم که در (هر) سال بیست هزار کس از جیحون بگذرند و غرق نشوند و من هم نشوم...^{۱۷}

Regarding the climate of Bukhara and Samarqand it is learnt that Bukhara is hot in winter, while Samarqand is pleasant in summer.

Taking into consideration the Chahar Maqala, Mawaraun-nahar, according to Nizami was ruled by sultan Sanjar, Gaur Khan of Khata, Mohammad Khan, Sultan Khizar Ibn Ibrahim of Khakanian and Bugra Khan.

In connection with the Sultan Sanjar's defeat at the hands of Gaur Khan at Samarqand and formation of government in Bukhara, Nizami says that Bukhara was handed over to Atamtgin and Gaur Khan himself returned to Barsanjan¹⁸. To protest against the brutality of Atamtgin

16. Nizami, *The Chahar Maqala*, P. 115.

17. *Ibid.*, P. 115.

18. It seems to be the Capital of Gaur Khan's domination. Barshaja, Barshajan and Barshakhan are names of places between Iran and Turan (see F. sleingass, *Persian English Dictionary New- Delhi P. 175.*)

the people of Bukhara went to Barsanjan and made a complaint against the oppressor.

Sultan Khizar bin Ibrahim was clever and devious and a towering figure of the kingdom. Mawraun-Nahar and Turkistan dispensed with him and khurasan exerted no pressure on him and enacted his friendship deeds and agreements. His grandevr was evident from entourage which accompanied him whenever he would go out for a rider. Apart from the army, other then seven hundred golden and silver pestle would go with him. He was a patron of poets and men of learning. Numerous famous poets were associated with his court.

The samanid princes who ruled Mawraun-Nahar include Amir Nuh bin Mansur samani and Nasar bin Ahamad Samani. They are shown to be present in the chahar Maqala. It is learnt that Alaptgin & Askafi were in the service of Nuh's father and both left the court of Nuh. Because of new arrivals the old courtiers faced hard-ships. On seeing this the Alaptgin came to the fore front. Amir Nuh senthis troops to fight against the Alaptgin. Nizami narrates that the battle which took place between the two is no secret. While recording this episode he shows the popularity and powerfulness of the Alaptgin.

On the other hand, when the Askafi had authority in the court of Amir Nuh bin Mansur Samani. The Makan made arebellion to Ray and Khurasan and sent their notables to Khauer and samank and brought some cities of koomsh under their own control and forgot the samanids. On seeing this the Nuh became afraid, as he (Makan) was formidable and effective and became busy in mending the solution and to nominate his commander in chief Tash¹⁹ with 7000 troops for the task. so that this insurrection come to an end. On the other hand the Makan with 10,000

19. For about forty years he rendered his service in the court of Nuh. He was very intelligent and an experienced old man and had a serene mind. He overcome difficulties and became victorious in wars. He never failed in his designs till his death occurred (see, the Chahar Maqala P.25-26).

warriors clothed in mail were waiting at the doors of Ray. At last when the troops of two sides faced each other, the warriors of Mawraun-nahar and Khurasan came into action. After a fierce battle the army of Khurasan was defeated at the hands of Tash and Makan were slain.

Samarqand and Bukhara have their glorious past as centres of learning. In the region of Sultan Mahmood of Ghazna, Bugra Khan was the ruler of Mawraun-nahar some famous learned & noted men were associated with his court. Nizami has not produced their list, but has referred to their presence in the court of Bugra Khan. The court of Sultan Mahmood comprised a wide range of scholars, poets and men of learning. In spite of this an ambassador was sent to Bugra Khan's court for clarification of a question which was already discussed in the court of Mahmood. But they failed to find the satisfactory answer. At last the secretary of Bugra Khan, Mahmood, presented his valuable comments.

Rashidi Samarqandi and Amir Umaq Bukharai were poets and were associated with the court of Sultan Khizar bin Ibrahim of Khakanian. Amir Umaq was the mentor of poets and was a beneficiary from the king. He was very venerable in the council. To remain attached to him was a sort of bindness for others and the same expected from the Ustad Rashidi. Although Rashidi was young he was perfect in poetry. Madam Zainab was a fan of him and all the wives of Sultan were under her command and was a close associate of the king. She had every praise for Rashidi and granted him scholarship till he achieved fame and became the mentor of poets. The Sultan had confidence in him and was the beneficiary of presents etc.

One day in the absence of Rashidi the king asked Amir Umaq to comment on the poetry of Rashidi. He said "good, refined and pure but it needs a bit of salt". Meanwhile Rashidi arrived and the king said that, "I enquired about your poetry from the mentor of poets. He said that it is good but without salt. On this occasion you should also say something. Rashidi at once said, "there is

no salt in my poetry and I do not regret. my poetry is sugar and honey. In this the salt does not suit. Your saying (poetry) is turnip and beans.

O! Thee cuckold salt need you.

Abu Abdullah Rudhki (d.329 A.H.) was associated with the court of Samanids, especially with Nasar bin Ahmad Samani. His most remarkable achievement is the song, which he composed and sang in presence of the above mentioned prince to induce the prince to abandon the charms of Herat and its envious and to return to his native Bukhara which he had neglected for four years. The poem has been recorded by Nizami like this:

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| یادیار مہربان سے آید ہی | بوی جوی مولیاں آید ہی |
| زیر پایم پر نیات سے آید ہی | ریگ آموختی و در شنی راہ او |
| عنگ مارا تا میان سے آید ہی | آب جمون از نشاط روی دوست |
| میزری تو شادمان سے آید ہی | اے بخارا! شاد باش و دیرزی |
| ماہ سوی آسمان سے آید ہی | میرماہست و بخارا آسمان سے |
| سر و سوی آسمان سے آید ہی | میر و است و بخارا بوستان |

Nizami narrates that Amir was so much effected that he descended from his throne, bestrode the horse of the sentinel on duty and set off for Bukhara in such a haste that his boots and socks had to be carried for him as for as

Burana, where he put them on. Nor did he stop any where till he reached Bukhara²¹

While taking into consideration the Chahar Maqala, it throws some light on social aspects of Mawraun - nahar, though not in detail, still we come to know about the customs and traditions, sending messages to distant places, Drass²², currency²³, measuring tools²⁴, singing instruments and Games²⁵ etc.

Every region has its own customs and traditions. Mawraun - nahar also has its own. Nizami points to one of the customs. He says that in Mawraun - nahar there is a custom according to which silver and Gold are to kept in a dish with sugar palm in the court of a king or in other assemblies. These are called "seem taqa" or "Juft"²⁶. جفت

As a tradition in Mawraun - nahar, massages were sent to distant places by birds, especially by pigeons. Nizami narrates that from a battle field such a message was delivered to Nuh bin Mansur Samani by a pigeon through his commander in chief.

After going through the Chahar Maqala, it is learnt that the war was fought traditionally. In the reign of Nuh bin Mansur Samani, a great war, as already stated, was fought between the troops of Mawraun - nahar and khurasan. Though of Nizami's statement we came to know that the

21. Nazmi, the Chahar Maqala, P.52-53.

22. کنش ستار جیب موزہ راین

23. Dinar, Dirham, Seem-i-Nuhi.

24. خروار کیل پنج منی

25. Chess.

26. Nizami, The Chahar Maqala, P.74.

27. Ibid.

king first nominates one as commander in chief of his army. The commander then holds the banner to give the signal for departure so as to reach the battle field in advance. The king also remains on the back of his troops, to give the rope of honour and other presents to his army. Before the war a dialogue through mediators took place to avoid it later on the failure of the talks makes the war necessary.