# Medieval History · GS - I

**Persian literary sources of medieval India reflect the spirit of the age. Comment.**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
|---|---|---|
| 2020 | GS - I | Medieval History |

| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 15 | ~250 words |

## Answer Hint

**Court chronicles; Persian as an administrative language; political history; social and economic life; religious and cultural interactions; historians and travellers; elite perspectives; limitations of literary sources**

## Model Answer

### Introduction

Persian became a major language of administration, scholarship and court culture in medieval India, particularly under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. Persian literary sources provide valuable insights into the political, social and intellectual life of the period.

### How Persian sources reflect their age

- **Political and administrative history:** Minhaj-us-Siraj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* and Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* describe rulers, political conflicts and administrative developments under the Delhi Sultanate.
- **Mughal governance:** Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* and *Ain-i-Akbari* document Akbar's reign, administrative institutions, revenue arrangements and court organisation.
- **Court culture and ideology:** These works reveal ideals of kingship, political legitimacy, imperial authority and the relationship between rulers and nobles.
- **Social and economic conditions:** Descriptions of agriculture, taxation, crafts, markets and urban life help historians reconstruct the material conditions of medieval society.

- **Religious and cultural interactions:** Persian poetry, Sufi literature and translated works reveal exchanges between Persianate traditions and Indian intellectual life.
- **Travellers' accounts:** Amir Khusrau's writings and the observations of foreign visitors, including those who wrote in Persian, provide insights into contemporary society, although their perspectives varied.

**Critical limitations**

Many chronicles were produced under royal patronage and therefore praised rulers or justified political actions. Their elite focus often marginalised peasants, women and lower-status communities. Literary conventions and exaggerations also require critical evaluation.

**Conclusion**

Persian literary sources reflect the political institutions, cultural ideals and intellectual exchanges of medieval India. Their historical value is greatest when read critically alongside inscriptions, coins, regional-language literature and archaeological evidence.

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