

Chapter – 45

Abu Rihan Al-Biruni

(973 - 1048 AD)

The real name of Al-Biruni is Mohammed bin Ahmed. His Kunniya is Abu Rihan. He was born in 362AH/973AD, in the outskirts of Khorazam. He was called Abu Rihan al-Biruni because of his Kunniya and birth place. At that time in Khorazam, Aal-Iraq Abu Nasr Mansoor bin Ali was the ruler. The King of Khorazam was the cousin of Al-Biruni. Al-Biruni's early education was taken over by King Khorazam himself.

In order to know the ancient sciences, Al-Biruni desired to learn various languages, and he got mastery over some languages like Persian, Arabic, Greek and Sanskrit. As a result, he came to know several civilizations as well. Beyond linguistics, the major studies he has deeply studied include mainly mathematics, astronomy, astrology, geography and science. He also traveled to different areas in the interest of gaining knowledge.

In 995AD, Al-Biruni arrived in Jarjan from Khorazam. Here he found great favor in the court of Sultan Qaboos. He wrote his first book named "Aathar al-Baqia" and dedicated it to the name of Sultan. After five years, he returned to Khorazam. By 1019AD, the victories of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi reached not only in Khorazam, Ghazni and surrounding areas but also extended to India. Thus, al-Biruni became affiliated with Mahmood Ghaznavi.

Al-Biruni reached to India. He studied the local civilization and ancient sciences of this place. For this, he had to learn the Sanskrit language as well. Al-Biruni translated the Hindu religious scripture Bhagwat Gita into Arabic. Moreover, he authored a well-known book, "Kitab al-Hind" on Hindi Civilization. Here, the Hindu scholars and pundits were so impressed with him that they started calling him as "Vidya Sagar" (*the ocean of knowledge*). Al-Biruni mostly lived in Ajmer city but he also traveled to other parts of India. He lived in most of the cities of the Punjab too. Here he did a lot of work on astronomy. He worked to find the latitudes of Lahore, Jhelum, Sialkot, Multan and Peshawar, and then he explored the height of polar stars from there. Sitting on a hill in the town of Nandna of Jhelum and Pind Dadan Khan cities, Al-Biruni measured the dimensions and the diameter of the Earth. His work was later acknowledged as correct.

Al-Biruni was an expert of astronomy. He invented a bronze ball, known as "Astarlab" to determine the distance or height of the sun and stars. He also calculated the planets rotations around their axis and around the sun. He described all the details of the geographical changes resulting from the solar system. He also authored some 35 research articles on the subject.

In mathematics, the rule of the unit, the ratio and proportion, and the derivation of the unit were proposed by Al-Biruni. The critical book on historical, religious and academic issues, named "Aathar al-Baqia", has been translated into various European languages. Other books by Abu Rihan al-Biruni include "History of Khorazam", "History of Mahmood Ghaznavi", "Kitab al-Tafheem", "Kitab al-Jawahar wa-Al-Mawahar" and "Kitab al-Dastur". He is also the author of the important book "Kitab as-Saidinah " on the subject of wisdom.

Al-Biruni was an astronomer and an excellent Palmist. He used to inform Mahmood Ghaznavi about the future. After the death of Mahmood Ghaznavi, his son Masood Ghaznavi took the throne. During his time he wrote a book on astronomy and astrology, and gave its name as "Qanoon-e- Masoodi", under the name of the same Sultan.

Al-Biruni was not in favor of personal follow up in religion. He studied every religion from the Holy Books and directly in its language. Likewise, he did not blindly march on the subject of history. Not only this, but he considered it essential to test everything on the basis of intellect. An interesting aspect of him was that for almost all his life he was very close to the various Sultans, but he never took any interest in politics. Rather, he remained focused solely on academic pursuits throughout his life..

Al-Biruni was a great scientist, astronomer, astrologer, mathematician, geologist and an expert of languages and history. Of course, he had no comparison in knowledge. Whatever Muslims feel proud for him is less. In Pakistan, to pay tribute to this great intellect, an international conference was held in 1973AD. On this occasion a commemorative postal ticket was also issued by the Government of Pakistan.