

CHAPTER - XII

NOBILITY UNDER THE SULTĀNS AND THEIR PRINCIPAL NOBLES : 1458-1526.

Constitution of Nobility :-

The nobility of Sultān Mahmūd Begada consisted of Rajputs, Persians, Turks, Abyssinians, Egyptians and probably a Russian too.

Ahmad Shāh, after the foundation of an independent Sultānate of Gujarat, undertook a systematic reduction of Rajput chieftains and his task was carried on and completed by his grandson Mahmūd Shāh. The Rajputs, who submitted and some of them converted were given high posts in the administration.

Malik Gopi who, though a Brahmin himself, was appointed his wazīr, is an example of this unorthodox policy of this Sultān.

Rāy-i-Rāyān was a Rajput noble of Sultān Mahmūd Begada. Details about him are not available. The Persian chroniclers mentioned him only once. Most of the gates and localities of Ahmedabad are named after the nobles of the Sultāns of Gujarat. Hence, we might be right in assuming that the Raipur Gate and the locality adjoining

to it could have been named after him.

Malik Ayāz, who was brought from the slave market of Constantinople to Gujarat, was probably a Russian. The services that he rendered in keeping away the Portuguese from the sea-coast of Gujarat, during the reigns of Sultān Mahmūd and Muzaffar Shāh II were unique.

Dāwar-ūl-mulk, a pious noble, was of Quraish origin. He was posted against the Rajput Garasias of Ambaran,¹ and of the neighbouring territories, during the last years of his life.

Malik Sh'bān and Malik Hajī Qālū were formerly slaves and we do not know about their origin. The Sikan-dar has referred them as the trusted nobles. They were trusted counsellors of the Sultān. Sultān Mahmūd when in the beginning of his reign faced the rebellion of some nobles, these nobles remained loyal to him and guided him in the right direction to face the rebellion.

Khudāwand Khān was the brother-in-law of Sultān Mahmūd and so he occupied a responsible position among the nobles of the Sultān. The Sultān did not like him in the later years of his reign because he initiated an

1. Ambaran is now in Nawanager in Saurashtra.

unsuccessful conspiracy against him in 1480.

Malik Bahā-ud-dīn and Daryā Khān, were the companions of the Sultān from his childhood. They exercised a good deal of influence during this period.

The nobles who were the kinsmen of Sultān Mahmūd, held important post in the kingdom and they ranked the highest among the nobles. The next in order were the nobles of Quṛāish origin and after them the converted Rajputs, for the Rajputs have been mentioned frequently by the chroniclers. This is not true for the whole of Mahmūd Shāh's reign.

Mahmūd Begada, though staunch Muslim, was a considerate Sultān wherever he found an able man he gave him a suitable position. Hence, we could see that ^{his} nobles, viz. Malik Ayāz, Malik Sārang and Malik Gopi, though of different origin, occupied important positions in his reign.

Functions of Nobility :-

Administration was not divided into civil and military spheres in this age. The whole kingdom was divided in units big and small, known as "Thanas". It seems that no major changes were made in the rural administration during the Sultānate period.

Firishah informs us that Sultān Mahmūd divided his kingdom into five "Thanas". They were, (a) Dwarka and Sankhodhar, (b) Songhier near Abu, (c) Godhra in Panchmahals District, (d) Mahim in modern Bombay, (e) Ahmedabad.² Here, it is difficult to explain the exact meaning of the word "Thana". These divisions, were based on strategical rather than on administrative considerations.

The nobles were appointed on each of these "Thanas" and were entrusted with the duty of its administration and defence. Thus, both the administrative and military powers were vested in them. They maintained their own forces but before proceeding against enemy they had to seek the permission of the Sultān. The Sultān had full authority over their forces and he ordered them to join him with their contingent, whenever it was needed.

The nobles in charge of various "Thanas" had to follow instructions from the Sultan in matters of administration.

The main civil function of the nobles, it seems, was to maintain peace and order, to collect revenue in their respective territories. Due to the paucity of historical material, it is not possible to give an account of the other duties of the nobles.

2. TF- Trans (B) IV, p.62 TA - Trans (De) III, pp. 253-264.

Military duties :-

The power of the Sultāns rested in their military strength. Hence, they paid great attention to it. This was their chief concern. Though the army was divided into different batches, each under individual nobles, the over all control remained with the Sultān. The soldiers under the different nobles, were more loyal to their immediate masters than to the Sultan. This can be proved by an instance which occurred in the beginning of Sultān Mahmūd's reign. Some of the nobles revolted against the accession of Mahmūd. At this time, the soldiers under the nobles remained loyal to their immediate masters.

It seems that besides their origins, the relative status of nobles, was also determined by the troops under their control. Hence in disputes regarding succession powerful nobles formed parties, each sponsoring its own candidate. The early difficulties of Sultan Mahmud were the result of ^{such rivalry among the nobles} this. Whereas, Muzaffar Shāh II escaped these initial difficulties probably because, no rival claimant on the throne set himself up.

The nobles had to be ready, whenever they were called for military service. They also advised the Sultan on military problems. For instance, the nobles advised Sultān Mahmūd to go on the campaign against Champaner

(1480) and this was accepted by him. But the Sultān rejected the advice of the nobles to escape from the fort for his safety, when some of the nobles revolted against him (1458). Similarly, Muḥaffar Shāh II delayed in sending reliefs for Nizām-¹ul-mulk, when the latter was attacked by Rana Sanga of Chitor, on the advice of the nobles. Thus, the military duties were important but how they were performed, largely depended on the personality of the ruler.

It took a strong and dominating ruler to keep them in control. We may see this illustrated in the contrast between the reigns of two rulers viz. Sultān Mahmūd Shāh and Sultān Muḥaffar Shāh II. During the reign of Sultān Mahmūd Shāh though the nobles were divided but they were not powerful enough to challenge the authority of the Sultān. While in the later reign, we find that the Rajput nobles, under Malik Sārang and Malik Gopi, formed their own group and Malik Ayāz disobeyed the orders from the Sultān, when the royal army was at war with the Rana Sanga of Chitor (1522).

Another instance, equally important may be cited. Sultan Muḥaffar Shāh's three sons, viz. Sikandar Khān, Bahādur Khān and Latīf Khān, were supported by rival groups of the nobles.³ It seems that the dispute had been solved

3. (contd.)

when Sikandar Khān was proclaimed as the successor, but later he was assassinated and Bahādur Khān was declared the Sultān.

These nobles who had supported the successful claim^oment, were rewarded, immediately after their accession on the throne, both Maḥmūd Shāh and Muzaḥaffar Shāh appointed those nobles who had supported them. While those who were opposed to it were either removed or given minor positions.

Therefore, from the above discussion it is possible to conclude that the Sultāns administered their military affairs with vigilance and care.

The Principal nobles of the Sultāns :-

The author of Mirāt-i-Sikandarī has given us a detailed account of the important nobles of Sultān Maḥmūd. Their memory is still preserved in the names of several wards and suburbs of Ahmedabad, and also the beautiful mosques which their piety led them to erect. However it

5. (contd) Prince Sikandar was favoured by Imād-ūl-mulk Khushqadam. Prince Bahādur Khān was supported by Khudāwand Maḥṣad 'Alī, Tāj Khān Narpāli and Majlis-i-Sami Fath Khān Baluch (Prince of Sind)

must not also be forgotten that the elaborate additions made by them to the architecture of the capital and to the environs in general, were also the result of royal patronage and influence.

Malik Ayāz Sultānī :-

The Portuguese travellers Jao De Barbosa gives an account of the early career of Malik Ayāz Sultānī.⁴ It appears that Malik Ayāz was a Russian. The Turks captured him and took him to Constantinople and had sold him there as slave to a merchant, who traded with Damascus, ~~Bahy~~^{Sya} and the east. This merchant brought him to Sultān Mahmūd. Malik Ayāz distinguished himself and became important noble during the reigns of Mahmūd Shāh and Muzaffar Shāh II.

He was a man with valour and skill and proved invaluable to his masters. Sikandar writes that one day during an expedition against the ruler of Malwa, a hawk flying overhead, let fall its droppings on Mahmūd Shāh. This was taken as an evil omen by Ayāz, who was close by the Sultan and so shot it down with an arrow. The Sultān was delighted and granted him freedom on the spot.⁵

4. Duarte Barbosa visited Gujarat in A.D. 1515. His work is an important source book for this book.

5. MS - Trans (F) pp.82-84. cft. M.L. Dames - The Book

It appears that Malik Ayāz won the favour of Sultan Mahmūd about 1482-1484. This was the troubled period during which Sultān Mahmūd had to intercept the Malwa army, in their effort to come to the aid of Raval Jaysingh of Champaner Pavagadh. At this time the Gujarat army attacked the territory of Raval Jaysingh.

Malik Ayāz as a Governor of Div :-

As a mark of further favour, Malik Ayāz was appointed in charge of the town and island of Div. Further we find him also mentioned as the governor of Sorath. During his office in Div, he by his admirable policies made the town celebrated for its trade. With the result that he soon amassed wealth, even after paying a good amount of revenue to the Sultān. As Governor of Div, he exercised almost a regal sway and did much to fortify and beautify the island. He erected its fort, later on reconstructed by the Portuguese when they became the master of the place. He built a tower in the sea on an under water rock and from it drew a massive iron chain (the Sankal Kot) across the mouth of the harbour, so as to prevent the Portuguese ships from entering. Malik Ayāz further constructed a substantial bridge over the narrow channel which separates island from the mainland "During

5. (contd.) of Duarte Barbosa (Hak.Soc.) I, pp. 130-131 n.

the reign of Malik Ayāz", says Sikandar "no Firangi ship dare enter a port of Gujarat. Now-a-days not a vessel dare leave a port (2611) of Gujarat without a pass from the Firangis, except perhaps, from Surat and then only by the boldness and gallantry of the crew."⁶

His wealth and liberality :-

The Persian chroniclers give many stories about his great wealth. He had a thousand water carriers on his establishment and when on march kept with him a huge reservoir of leather which supplied his army, his horses and elephants with water. His retainers, down to humblest were clothed in velvet and broad cloth and gold brocade, and his table was supplied with the richest and rarest dainties of food from every country.

It is said that when in ^{the} reign of Muzaffar Shāh II, the king summoned Malik Ayāz from Sorath to help him in the war with Rana Sanga, the Malik used to invite all the nobles in the royal camp to dine at his table. This assumption of superiority caused jealousy in the nobles.⁷

6. MS - Trans (F) pp. 84-85.

7. Malik Ayāz's political career has been discussed in detail in the sections on "The Portuguese Relations and the Rajput Relations of Muzaffar Shāh II".

His death :-

After waging unsuccessful war against Rana Sanga, Malik Ayāz returned to his jagir Div, in Saurashtra. He died at the town of Una, in the extreme south of Saurashtra, in A.H. 928/1522, and he was buried near the tomb of Samas-ud-din.

Muhāfiz Khān :-

Muhāfiz Khān was originally known as Jamāl-ud-dīn Muhammad. He is mentioned as "Faujdar" and "kotwal" at the capital and was on more than one occasion "Amīr" in charge of Ahmedabad during the Sultān's absence. He was raised to the office of "wazīr" and "Nāib-ul-mulk" in succession to Khudāwand Khān in 1480 and we find him highly praised for his qualities. Muhāfiz Khān was the grandfather of Husām Khān, the author of "Tārīkh-i-Bahādur Shāhī", which has been extensively used by Sikandar and Hājī-ud-Dabīr for their works on the history of Gujarat.

Dāvar-ul-mulk :-

Dāvar-ul-Mulk was better known as a saint than a noble during the reign of Sultān Mahmūd Begada. Sikandar has depicted him, with the support of number of stories, as a soldier of quality and a man of piety. These stories

can hardly be considered reliable by modern cultural standards.

He was a religious man and therefore after the conquest of Saurashtra the Sultān appointed him the "Faujdar" of Ambarana in Saurashtra (now in Nawanagar) and entrusted him with the work of conversion and submission of Rajput "Garasias" of the neighbouring district. He was assassinated by a Rajput of "a depraved heart" on the Z'īl-qādā, 13,879 A.H./March 21, 1475.⁸ He was buried in Ambaran, and since then he has been venerated as a saint under the name of Shah Daal. His shrine of Ambaran has become a centre of pilgrimage and "visited by thousands of people from every quarter, chiefly from the Deccan and Malwa."⁹

Malik 'Alīm Khudāwand Khān :-

Malik 'Alīm was the brother-in-law of Sultān and probably ranked next to the Sultan during the great part of the reign.

He was, however, the author of a conspiracy to dethrone the Sultan in 1480, Sultān Mahmūd, at this time, was out of the capital and Imād-ūl-mulk was in charge of the government in Ahmedabad. By this faithful noble's timely action the plan of the conspirator was averted.

8. MA - (Suppl.) N. Ali & Sedon, p. 47.

9. MA - (Supply) Ali & Sedon, p. 48.

The Sultān punished the conspirators but pardoned the Malik, saying, "If I put Malik 'Alīm to death or exile him from the country, where in Gujarat can I find a man like him." ¹⁰

He was a man of eloquence and he was conversant with many languages. He was expert in archery and at the game of Chaugan (Polo). He is accredited for introducing the seeds of Kharbuzah (melon) and the saplings of the fig and of the solid bamboo from Vijaynagar and Deccan in Gujarat. He was buried in Alimpur (now Dana Limda) adjoining his mosque. ¹¹

Malik Sārang Qiwām-ūl-mulk :-

He and his brother Mullo, were originally Rajputs and taken as captives by Sultān Maḥmūd Shāh, who converted them to Islam.

He won the favour of Sultān Maḥmūd Shāh and obtained the titles of Mukhalīs-ūl-mulk and Qiwām-ūl-mulk from him. It is said that Malik Sārang was bold in his expression and the Sultan permitted him to express any truth, even if it was bitter. ¹² His services to the Sultān in

10. MS - Trans (F) p. 87 MA - (Suppl.) N. Ali & Sedon p. 14 Beyley - Gujarat pp. 286-287.

11. MS - Trans (F) pp. 86-87.

12. MS - Trans (F) pp. 86-87

at the time of the conspiracy of Khudāwand Khān in 1480 and in the final storming of the fort of Pavagadh in 1484, brought him into prominence.

During the reign of Sultān Muzaffar Shāh II, the nobles of Hindu origin formed a party under his leadership. During this reign he also became turbulent.

He became the governor of Ahmedabad in 1520 and administered it strongly. After the death of Malik Ayāz, Div became a trouble spot and therefore Sultan Bahadur Shah appointed him in charge of Div, in 1528.

The date of his death is unknown and probably he died an old man soon after 1528. He founded the locality of Sarangpur in Ahmedabad, probably during his governorship of the capital in the time of Sultan Muzaffar Shah II.

Malik Sh' bān :-

He was one of the principal nobles at the Gujarat court since the reign of Sultān Mahmūd and was recipient of the titles of Imād-ul-mulk and Malik-ul-Sharq (Lord of the East).

Malik Tuhfāh-i-Sultānī, his father, was in the service of Sultān Ahmad Shāh and he received the title of Rāj-ul-mulk in 1415. On the request of the king of Sirohi,

he was sent against Rana Kumbha of Chitor, during the reign of Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn where he was defeated with heavy losses.

In the beginning of the reign of Sultān Mahmūd, the Malik was appointed in the office of "wazīr". He was a successful administrator and the people were happy under him. As Sikandar states "Neither in east or in west was a "wazīr" like him".¹³

It seems that after 1461 he went into retirement. He laid a large garden attached with his name "Bagh-i-Sh'bán" in Rakhyal and a "Raudah" inside it. The royal "Firman" in the marble slab inside the "Raudah" exhibit the text with slight variations. It records the grant of six "ploughs" of land in prosperity to Malik Sh'bán and his descendants by Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn Ahmad Shāh.¹⁴

Malik Gopi :-

Malik Gopi, a noble, deserves special mention for his career indicates, that Hindus were not debarred from rising to some of the highest posts in the Sultanate. It is, however, from the Portuguese and some of the travellers accounts, rather than from Persian chroniclers,

13. MS - Trans (F) pp. 86-87.

14. Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica (1921-22) pt. 45.

that we are able to gather the details about the career and family of this remarkable man.

It is believed that he was a native of Surat, and the historical traditions in the local histories of this city in Urdu and Gujarati indicate that Surat was not a place of importance until the fourteenth century. The prosperity of that city dates from the time of Malik Gopi at the end of that century. His name is given as Gopinath or Gopinaik.

He began as a rich trader and his success in business attracted many merchants to Surat, from nearby places, especially from Rander. He founded one of the suburbs in the town called Gopipura after him and enlarged a pond later known as Gopi Talav, ¹⁵ making it the chief beauty spot of the city. Sultān Muẓaffar Shāh II, pleased

15. P. Della Valle, the Italian traveller took note of this in 1623, "Travels of in India", Ed. E. Grey Hak Soc. I, pp. 34-35.

Thevenot - Travels into Indies, Trans, Lovell (London) 1687p. 25 (1666) The embassy of Sir Thomas Roe. Ed. W. Foster (Hak.Soc.) I, p. 112 (1615) J.A. De Mandelso (1638) Voyages and Travels into the East Indies - Trans J. Davies (London) 1662, p. 24,

at his successes in making Surat flourishing town, entitled him as "Malik" and his wife as "Rani". Malik Gopi's wife founded a ward known as "Rani Chakla" and built a reservoir known as the "Rani Talav". ¹⁶

In the court of Ahmedabad, he befriended Malik Sārang. Sikandar tells us that he and Malik Sārang conducted everything in a high handed manner and that the entire government of the country was in their hands. It seems that either in the last years of Mahmūd Begada's reign or in the beginning of Sultān Muzaffar Shāh's reign, he was appointed in the office of "wazīr" and remained so, for the first two or three years of the latter's reign. At his intercession, the life of Rao Bhim, was spared by the Sultan.

The Portuguese historians inform us that Malik Gopi befriended them and advanced their case against Malik Ayāz. The Portuguese embassy despatched by Albuquerque to the court of Sultān Muzaffar, landed first to Surat, with the hope of gaining some instructions from Malik Gopi. Dastur Khān, the Governor of the town, informed them that Malik Gopi was "out of king's favour". Duarte

15.(Contd.) Commissariat M.S. Mandelso's travels in
W. India (Oxford 1931) p. II.

16. Bom. Gaz. II, Surat and Broach pp. 70-71.

Barbosa, a traveller who visited Gujarat in 1515, described him as a "great friend of the Portuguese".¹⁷ Hence it is clear that Malik Gopi must have been in power for two or three years in the beginning of Sultān Muẓaffar's reign, for the historians do not refer to him such position during the reign of Sultān Mahmūd Begada.

Death of Malik Gopi :-

Malik Gopi is said to have been executed by the orders of Sultān Muẓaffar Shāh between 1514-1515.¹⁸ It is likely that he was put to death some time early in 1515, for Barbosa at the time of his visit to Surat states "Hitherto a heathen named Milocoxim (Malik Gopi) held sway and governed here, who the king of Cambay ordered to be slain on account of the evil reports he received about him." ¹⁹

It is clear that when the Portuguese landed in Surat in 1514, they were instructed to see Malik Gopi by Albu-

17. Barbosa had no chance of seeing Malik Gopi, for at this time he had been executed at the Sultān's orders.
cf. M.L. Dames - Book of Duarte Barbosa (Hak.Soc.)
pp.149-150.

18. MS - Trans (F) p. 94-95.

19. M.L. Dames - Book of Darte Barbosa (I) pp. 149-150.

querque, Duarte Barbosa an officer in the service of the Portuguese in India, did not see him during his visit of Gujarat in 1515. Malik Gopi therefore must have died after the arrival of the Portuguese embassy in Gujarat in 1514 and before the visit of Duarte Barbosa in 1515. No account of Malik Gopi is available after the Portuguese embassy either in the Commentaries or in the history of De Barros.

According to Sikandar, Malik Gopi was a man fond of pleasures, of dancing girls and entertainments. He had a large seraglio and held dancing parties at his residence frequently. One day Ahmad Khān, a near relation of the Sultān, disguised himself as a torch-bearer and entered Malik Gopi's house to see a beautiful dancing girl. Malik Gopi's servants recognised him and beat him so severely that he died the next day. The Sultān was enraged at this incident and ordered Gopi's house to be plundered and Gopi was brought before the Sultan. Gopi pleaded for his life, but the Sultan ordered, him to be put to death, declaring that "many Muslims had suffered through his actions".²⁰ Pietro Della Valle in his "Travels" and John Ogilby in his "Asia" have mentioned that Malik Gopi's daughter at Surat was reduced to a position of great poverty and misery.²¹

20. MS - Trans (F) p.96, Ross - An Arabic history of Gujarat, I, pp. 116-117.

21. Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India, Ed. by Gray

The fate, Malik Gopi had to meet, was probably due to the jealousy of other nobles and the narrow religious outlook of the Sultan. The power and prestige enjoyed by Malik Gopi, besides his ostentatious, seems to have been aroused the jealousy of Muslim nobles in the Gujarat capital.

Persian chronicler indicates that he and Malik Sārang shared the administration of the capital. The remarks with which Sikandar reports that the Sultān too have made, when Gopi's execution, were "many Muslims had suffered through his actions". Therefore, it seems that the immediate events alone were not the only causes for Malik Gopi's execution.

Khush Qadam the Imād-ul-Mulk :-

Sultān Mahmūd Begada's prominent nobles, viz. Malik Ayāz, Malik Gopi and Malik Sārang also played an important part in Sultān Muẓaffar Shāh's reign. Another noble Khush Qadam came into prominence during the latter reign.

According to Sikandar, he joined the service of

Sultān Muẓaffar Shāh, as a purchased slave of Bibi Rani. Hājī-ud-Dabīr in his "Arabic history" says that Bibi Rani was the foster mother of Khush Qadam and that the latter won the favour of the Sultān because of this and of his good looks.²²

Khush Qadam distinguished himself at the time of Muẓaffar Shāh's accession and during the seige of Mandu in 1520, he gained the title of Mukhalīs Khān. He was also known as Malik-ūs-Sharq, in addition to his title Inād-ūl-Mulk.²³ During the seige of Mandu he was entrusted with a section of army of "Sari" gate of Mandu fort. He had a force of 2,000 men, composed of 5,00 Abyssinians, 500 Arabs and 1,000 archers, probably Bhils.²⁴ He scaled the walls of the fort and led way into it. He may have initiated the massacre of the Rajputs, that followed. This success brought him into prominence.

This, however, proved a short lived for immediately after the death of Muẓaffar Shāh, he was executed by the orders of Bahādur Shāh.²⁵

22. MS - Trans (F) 131-133, Ross - An Arabic history of Gujarat - I, p.134.

23. Nadvi - Muẓaffar Shāhī (Guj.Text 1942) pp.11,20,22

24. Ibid pp. 26-27 and Fn.

25. Ross - An Arabic history of Gujarat I, p.134.