

CHAPTER - XIII

SAIYYIDS OF BATWA AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SULTANS OF GUJARAT (1458-1526)

The Bukhāri Saiyyids of Batwa influenced the religious, political and social life of Gujarat, since the beginning of the independent Sultānate to its end and were influential even during the Mughal age. The saints of Batwa probably achieved renown during the time of Shah Alam, the eleventh son of Saiyyid Burhān-ud-dīn. Being the guardian of Prince Fatḥkhān (Mahmūd Shāh I), his prestige, must have been at its height and his influence unchallenged during the last seventeen years of life, which he passed in the reign of Sultan Mahmūd.

We have to depend for an account of their role in the Sultānate mainly on Mirāt-i-Sikandarī and Mirāt-i-Ahmadi (Suppl.) Sikandar's account of their life is hardly objective, for he was the disciple and a follower of one of the descendants of Saiyyid Shāh 'Alam.

Ancestry and early life of Shāh 'Alam and his relations with the Sultāns :-

Saiyyid Shāh 'Alam was the descendant of Saiyyid Jalāl Bukhārī (1308-1384) from Bukhārā, who settled in the Punjab and was buried at Uchh near Shavalpur on the

banks of Sultlej. He is better known as Makhdūm-i-Jahān-iyān. According to Sikandar this saint was highly honoured at the court of Delhi, during the reign of Sultan Firūz Shāh Tughūlaq.¹

We are further informed by the same author that the Bukhārī Saiyyid Makhdūm-i-Jahāniyān is regarded as the patron saint of the Gujarat dynasty. The story runs that Sadhu and Sadharan, the two brothers, were the "Tonk Rajputs" of Thaneshwar, in South Punjab, they secured the favour of Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughūlaq, by giving their sister in marriage to him during the tenure of prince.

Probably because of the influence of the Bukhārī Saiyyids, Sadhu and Sadharan took up Islam as their religion. Sadharan received the title of "Wajīh-ūl-mulk" (the support of the state) at the royal court. When Firūz Tughūlaq ascended the throne, Zafar Khān and Shams Khān, the two sons of Wajīh-ūl-mulk, were promoted to the rank of nobles.²

Saint Burhān-ud-din Qutb-i-Aīlam :-

He was born in 1388 and was the grand son of Saiyyid Jalāl Bukhārī. His father died, when he was ten years

1. MS - Trans (F) p.3.

2. MS - Trans (F) pp.3, 27-28.

old, Shāh Rāju Qattal, his uncle, taught him for two years. In 1400, at the age of twelve he came to Gujarat, with his mother and halted at Fatan. It is said Muzaffar Shāh I, then the Sultan of Gujarat, on the arrival of the Saint, came out to receive him with due honour.

Since then the Bukhāri Saiyyid settled in Gujarat and their influence gradually increased during the reigns of succeeding Sultāns. When Sultān Ahmad Shāh founded the new city of Ahmedabad, he invited Saiyyid Burhān-ud-din to bless the new city.

For some time the Saiyyid resided in Asawal by the river side and then shifted to Batwa, south of Ahmedabad, given to him by the Sultān. He died on December 10, 1453, and left twelve sons and seventeen daughters.³

Saiyyid Shāh A lam :-

Shah A lam was the eleventh son of Saiyyid Burhān-ud-din Qutb-i-A lam and was born on the 9th of Dhilqādāh 817/A.H./January 18, 1415. His mother was Bibi 'Amināh sur-named Sultān Khatun, daughter of Karīm Khān, a noble of Gujarat.

At the age of seventeen, he was initiated into the "Sūfī" order "Maghribīah" and received the "Sūfī" robe

3. MA - (Suppl.) N. Ali & Sedon, pp. 24-27.

from Shaikh Ahmad Khattu. After the death of his father in 1453, he became the most influential of the Saiyyids.

Saiyyid Shāh 'Ālam and his relations with Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn :-

Shāh 'Ālam became the most prominent of the Saiyyids and it is believed once as a friend of Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn Ahmad Shāh II (1451-1458) and guardian of Sultān Mahmūd Shāh I, this saint enjoyed unchallenged power. In his account of Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn's reign, Sikandar combines the facts of history with the popular traditions of the political influence and the supernatural powers of Shāh 'Ālam. He writes that the Sultan at the very outset of his reign, faced the formidable task of defending his kingdom against the invasion of Mahmūd Khaljī I, the Sultān of Malwa. The Sultān of Malwa marched as far as Kapadwanj and here a battle was fought between the armies of Gujarat and Malwa. During the course of fight the Gujarat army lost one of its wings though the victory lay with Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn Shāh (March/April 1451). In this battle Saiyyid Shāh 'Ālam favoured Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn Shāh with a sword, with which the Sultān fought the battle and atlast won it. ⁴

4. MS - Trans (F) p.26-33.

This tradition is important for it indicates the deep interest of Shāh Ālam and the Bukhari Saiyyids on maintaining the Muzaffar Shāhī dynasty and to establish their influence over the Sultan.

Marriage of Saiyyid Shāh Ālam:-

We learn from Sikandar that shortly after Qutb-ud-dīn came to the throne the relations between the Sultan and the saint Shāh Ālam, once very cordially became strained. This was partly due to the marriage of Saiyyid Shāh Ālam with the daughter of Jam of Thatta, and the events which followed it. Hence a reference to it may be made here.

The Jam of Thatta had two daughters Bibī Mirkī and Bibī Mughalī, of which the latter was said to be more beautiful and it had been proposed to give Bibī Mughalī in marriage to Saiyyid Shāh Ālam. The other was to be married to Sultan Muhammad Shāh. The Sultan, however, managed to secure Bibī Mughalī and Bibī Mirkī was married to Shāh Ālam.

Shāh Ālam did not like this marriage and so he complained to his father who told him that he would marry both the sisters.⁵

5. Bayley - Gujarat p. 156 MS - Trans. (F) pp. 26-33.

Designs against Fath Khān and Saiyyid Shāh 'Ālam :-

Whether it was due to the prophecy or otherwise the fact remains that after the death of Sultān Muḥammad Shāh, Bibī Mughalī with her son Fath Khān (later Maḥmūd Shāh I) sought the shelter of Shāh 'Ālam. After this event Shāh 'Ālam became an object of the Sultān's (Qutb-ud-dīn) ill-concealed animosity. Later when after the death of her sister Bibī Mīrkī, Bibī Mughalī married Shāh 'Ālam, this animosity increased. It seems that the Sultan feared this alliance between Mughalī and Shāh 'Ālam and considered it as a threat to his own self especially as Fath Khān had equal claims to the throne of Gujarat.

Impelled by this fear, he demanded Fath Khān to be surrendered to him. The saint replied that the young man had for fear of his life, sought refuge with the dervāshes, and it would ill become him to give him up to the Sultan.

Foiled in this attempt, he made other attempts to secure Fath Khān, by employing spies and by once sending his wife Rupmanjari to the saint's house. But the saint is said to have protected Fath Khān by his supernatural powers. It is needless to go into the details of these stories. For Sikandar has mentioned them to exalt the Bukhārī Saiyyids and their supernatural powers, and thus

have little historical value.

Dāūd Shāh and Shāh'Ālam :-

Dāūd Shāh, who came on the throne after the death of Sultān Qutb-ud-dīn Ahmad Shāh II, was deposed from the throne by the nobles after a reign of hardly a month. The reason advanced by the Persian chroniclers that Dāūd Shāh was an incapable ruler and had no good qualities. So Malik Sh'bán and his party engineered a revolution against him and with the consent of Shāh'Ālam, they declared Fath Khān as the Sultān of Gujarat.⁶

Viewing the political activities of Shāh'Ālam since the reign of Qutb-ud-dīn Ahmad Shāh II and the saints favour to Fath Khān, it seems likely that Shāh'Ālam might have initiated the conspiracy which unseated Dāūd Shāh, through his followers, Malik Sh'bán and his party.

The fact that Shāh'Ālam could foil the Sultān of the day indicates his power in Gujarat.

Mahmūd Shāh I and Shāh'Ālam :-

Shāh'Ālam lived for the first seventeen years of Sultān Mahmūd Shāh's reign. It is believed that during these seventeen years, the saint had great influence over

6. MS - Trans. (F) pp. 3, 21-33 - ~~FF~~ - Trans (Briggs) ~~FF~~.

the Sultan and dominated the political and religious life of Gujarat. It is possible to infer from the stray instances available that Shāh Alam used his influence to spread Islam in Gujarat. The Junagadh wars of Sultān Mahmūd Shāh was partly the result of the influence of the saint.

The two letters of Saiyyid Rāju of Mangrol, who was assigned the duty of the spread of Islam in Saurashtra, have been brought to light by Prof. Nadvi. These letters, as the author has identified, were addressed to Saiyyid Shāh Alam and in them he lodged a complain against Ra Mandalika of Junagadh, to whom Saiyyid Rāju considered an obstacle in his task.⁷ Therefore, it is clear that, some of the wars waged by Sultan Mahmud Shah against Rajput, especially against Junagadh, were possibly due to the influence of Shah Alam.⁸

His Death :-

Shāh Alam died on Jumda II 20, A.H./October 21, 1475, and left behind him five sons and four daughters. One of the sons was Shāh Bhikan, whose mother was Bibī Mīrkī, appears to have died in boyhood.⁹ The saint still

7. Quoted from Jote R.B. Cultural history of Gujarat - E. II (Guj.) (Islam Yug) - P. 491.

8. Cf. "The conquest of Junagadh".

9. MA - (Suppl) Ed. N. Ali & Sedon, pp. 35-37.

commands, along with his father (Saiyyid) Burhān ud-dīn) and Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, the pious reverence of the Muslims of Gujarat and his name is permanently linked with the village of Shāh'Ālam, situated to the south of Ahmedabad, and its monuments, Shāh'Ālam received the sufistic robe from Shaikh Ahmed Khattu and since then his descendants came to be known as "Shāhiān Saiyyids" to distinguish them from those of his brothers who were called Qutbiān Saiyyids. ¹⁰

Shāh Shaikhjiū and Sultān Muzaffar Shāh II :-

It seems that after the death of Saiyyid Shāh'Ālam, relations of the Sultāns of Gujarat with the saints of Batwa were not cordial. They were strained during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah.

Saiyyid Jalāl ud-dīn Shāh Shaikhjiū was the fourth son of Saiyyid Mahmūd and nephew of Saiyyid Shāh'Ālam. He was born at Asawal in the year 853 A.H./1484. Shāh Shaikhjiū received sufistic knowledge from his uncle Shāh'Ālam. He was an heir to his grand father's jagir in Batwa.

Sultān Muzaffar, as reported by the Persian chronicler, respected the learned men but he did not like saints and dervishes. On the occasion of Muzaffar Shāh's

¹⁰. Ibid.

accession, Shāh Shaikhjiū though unwilling, was forced by his disciples, to go to Champaner to congratulate the new Sultan. The Saiyyid was welcomed by the courtiers and the Sultān was informed of his arrival. The Sultān, who was in the adjoining room, passed a remark that the saint was unfavourable to his father. He wanted to see what he had brought for him. Shāh Shaikhjiū, by chance over heard that remark, and without congratulating the Sultān, he left Champaner for Batwa. The Sultān also did not care for the saint and while passing from Batwa he recited the "Fatīda" on his horse back and went to Ahmedabad. ¹⁴

The relations between the two continued to be strained, inspite of the effort of the nobles to bring them together. Finally as Sikandar reports it was the patron saint Qutb-i-⁶-Ālam, who appeared in a dream to both and brought about an understanding. It seems that this ~~is~~ ^{is given to} a story ~~to~~ ^{to} save the face of one of them who sought the initiative in patching up the quarrel.

We may quote here another instance connected with the succession dispute between Sikandar Khān and Bahādur Khān the two sons of Sultān Muzaffar Shāh. In this connection the Sultān sought the blessings of Shāh Shaikhjiū

in favour of Sikandar Khān, but the saint through mistake blessed Bahadur Khan as the Sultān's successor, what ever may be the reason for this mistake of the saint but the fact remains that the saint by this time had gained a powerful influence in the politics of Gujarat and so the Sultān sought his favour for Sikandar Khān.

Shāh Shaikhjiū died in A.H. 931/1524 at the age of nearly seventy six years.

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