



THE MADRASSAH OF MAHMUD GAWAN: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT:-

In this research paper I tried to show the important monument of Mahmud Gawan at Bidar. The Madrassah which was an educational centre of Bahmani where they had conducted education in medieval period. Here Madarassah became very famous education center of Bahamani Empire.

KEYWORDS: Madrassah, Architecture, Monuments, Dynasty, Vazir.



I. INTRODUCTION

The Bahmani Sultanate also called the Bahmanid Empire or Bahmani Kingdom which was a Muslim state of the Deccan in South India and one of the great medieval Indian kingdoms. Bahmanid Sultanate was the first independent Islamic Kingdom in South India. The empire was founded by Muhammad bin Tughlaq who had revolted against the Delhi Sultanate. Nazir uddin Ismail Shah who had revolted against the Delhi Sultanate stepped down on that day in favour of Zafar Khan who ascended the throne with the title of Alauddin Bahman Shah. His revolt was successful, and he established an independent state on the Deccan within the Delhi Sultanate's southern provinces. The Bahmani capital was Ahsanabad (Gulbarga) between 1347 and 1425 when it was moved to Muhammadabad (Bidar). The Bahmani contested the control of the Deccan with the Hindu Vijayanagara Empire to the south. The sultanate reached the peak of its power during the vizierate (1466-1481) of Mahmud Gawan. After 1518 the sultanate broke up into five states: Nizamshahi of Ahmednagar, Qutubshahi of Golconda (Hydrabad), Baridshahi of Bidar, Imadshahi of berar, Adilshahi of Bijapur. They are collectively known as the "Deccan Sultanates".

II. BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF MAHMUD GAWAN

The great king, priminister, of Bahmani kingdom was Mahmud Gawan. He was a merchant by vocation, arrived in Bidar kingdom ruled by the Bahamani kings in 1453 A.D. He was well versed in Islamic lore, Persian language and mathematics.



He was known for his profound scholarship in the Middle East before coming to India. Due to his perseverance, honesty, simplicity and learning he earned the goodwill of the Bahmani rulers and held important posts under three successive kings. Mahmud III (1462-82 A.D.) as a young boy studied under his tutorship, and became the grand Vazir or Prime Minister when Mahmud became the king and looked after the administration for nearly thirty years. Gawan was rich due to his international trade but spent his entire earnings on promotion of education. In 1472 A.D. he established a Madrassah in Bidar, then the capital of the Bahmanis. The Madrassah had an imposing three-story building with 100 feet tall minarets in four corners. There were thirty-six rooms for students and six suites for the teaching staff. It also had big lecture halls, a prayer hall and a matchless library of three thousand volumes. Gawan himself had a personal library of more than a thousand books. He used to spend all his leisure time in the library.

III. CONCEPT OF THE MADRASSAH

The word Madrassahs derived from Arabic language 'Madarasa', 'Madrasa'. A Madrassah is simply a traditional Islamic school of higher learning. Till the western forces destroyed (18th Century) the indigenous systems of education like the Gurukuls, the Ghatikas, and the Madrassahs, they were the only formal means of education in the medieval sub-continent. A Maqtab (a.k.a. Makhtab) was a primary school in the Islamic world while a Madrassah was like a high-school or college of today. In the medieval Islamic world, there were many Madrassahs as big as the universities of the twentieth century, complete with libraries, display museums, and visiting scholar programs. Great scholars and teachers devoted their lives in the Madrassahs for the study of Islam, the Farsi language, and most importantly, to spread knowledge among common people. Prophet Mohammad is to have said "a scholar's ink is superior to a martyr's blood", and the thought of the period (10th to 18th centuries) took upon itself to propagate Islam through advancement of arts, sciences, and devotion. Royalty as well as commoners were educated in the Madrassahs.

IV. THE MADRASSAH OF MAHMUD GAWAN AT BIDAR

The Madrassah building had a large courtyard with nearly a thousand cubicles where students and learned men who came from all parts of the country and East could stay. Boarding and lodging were free. There were 118 students on a permanent basis and countless itinerant scholars.



The Madrasah of Mahmud Gawan, Bidar

Mahmud Gawan was familiar with renowned colleges at Samarkhand and Khorasan and his own college or Madrasah was modeled on the West Asian architecture. He tried to get renowned scholars from Persia and other West-Asian countries for teaching and heading the now famous college. But most of them declined the offer due to age and arduous journey. Sheikh Ibrahim Multani became head of the Madrasah and finally chief Kazi of the kingdom who is credited with spread of Islamic learning in the state. Gawan's growing clout in the court was a sour point with Dakhani or local Muslim leaders. They considered him a foreigner and his influence over the royalty brought in lot of contention. There were administrative reforms introduced by Gawan, which brought in much resentment among Dakhani governors. A careful plot was laid down by the courtiers to kill him. They obtained Gawan's seal and affixed it on a blank paper and forged a letter inviting the king of Orissa to attack the Bahamani Kingdom. The letter was duly delivered to the king who was always in a drunken state. Without verifying the facts, the king sent for Gawan, and asked about the punishment to be meted out for treason. "Death" was the prompt reply given by Mahmud Gawan. The Sultan (king) showed him the letter. Although Gawan admitted that the seal was his, he pleaded complete innocence about the contents. But the Sultan was not in his senses and ordered Gawan's beheading on the spot. Gawan warned the king to use discretion in such serious allegations. Those were his last words. Thus came the end of the scholar statesman.

When Gawan's house was raided for alleged accumulated wealth, all that could be found was a mat, cooking vessels, the Holy Koran and 144 letters he wrote. Though the Madrasah suffered heavy loss due to his sudden death, the building continued in good condition for nearly two centuries. After the capture of Bidar by Aurangzeb in the late 17th century, the ranges of buildings were used for powder magazine and as barracks for a body of cavalry. Unfortunately lightning struck the powder magazine and there was a huge explosion, destroying the greater part of the edifice causing immense damage. Most of the rooms and three minarets were destroyed. Only one minaret and few cubicles have survived today.

V. CONCLUSION

The Bahamani Empire was a Muslim Kingdom which was established in South India beginning at Gulbarga and later the capital was transferred to Bidar. The dynasty had given more contributed to the art and architecture. Among the all kings of Bahamani Mahmud Gawan was a great ruler, minister of

Mahmad III. He was also a good administrator, architect and he built a great monument Madrasah in Bidar.

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