

CHANDERĪ UNDER MALWĀ SULTĀNS.

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The disintegration of the Tughluq Empire and its extinction at the hands of Timur in 1398, had led to the independent rule of a number of provincial dynasties including that of Malwa where Dilawar Khan, had founded the strong and virile kingdom of Mandogarh. Two inscriptions of Prince Qadr Khan (Chori) dated 1416 and 1420 have been found in Chanderi and Sivapuri respectively and Muhammad Bihamad Khani, the author of the History of Erachh and Kalpi refers to the usurpation of Paniyargarh, a suburb of Jatara, by Qadr Khan's officer, Qazi Junaid and with a view to recover the thana, a military expedition had to be sent by Sultan Qadir Shah of Kalpi. Qazi Khan Badr Muhammad of Delhi who calls himself Dharwal, author of a lexicon, the "Adatul Fudala", who came to the court of Qadr Khan, the governor of Chanderi from Jaunpur in 1419, pays tribute to the governor for his patronage of poets and scholars there and records the titles of the princely governor as Khan-i-Aazam, Khaqan-i-Muazzam Masnad-i-Aali Qadr Khan ibn Dilawar Khan¹. It is not clear whether Qadr Khan was holding the gubernatorial office since the days of his father or whether Alp Khan, the heir-apparent, was responsible for this appointment on coming to the throne himself as Sultan Hoshang Shah. Thus Bundelkhand in the fifteenth century was being administered from two centres namely Chanderi under the direct rule of the Malwa Sultan and Kalpi, where the Malikzada Turks held sway in the country horizontally extending from Bhandar to Mahoba roughly corresponding to the Jhansi Division (without Lalitpur district) of Uttar Pradesh and the districts of Datia, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur and Panna (without Pawai Tahsil) of Madhya Pradesh. Chanderi Division of the Malwa Sultanate extended vertically from Shivapuri and Deogarh in the north to Damoh (then including Sagar district) upto the source of the river Kyan. In Garhā near modern Jabalpur, had been founded in the beginning of the fifteenth century a new seat of power by the Rāj Goṇḍ, the nucleus of a kingdom destined to develop in the first quarter of the next century as a powerful political centre under Raja Amhanadas alias Sangram Sah who had the audacity to occupy such places of Malwa State as Damoh, Mariado and Hatta, counted important 'garhs' among the fifty two forts of the Goṇḍ ruler whose Chandela daughter-in-law, the Regent Rānī Durgāvati, is known to have inflicted a shameful defeat on Sultan Bayazid alias Baz Bahadur of Malwa.

1. I am indebted for this information to my esteemed friend, Dr. Ziyauddin Desai, Director of Arabic and Persian Epigraphy, extracted for my use from the 'Urdu' Magazine of Pakistan Vol. 43 No. 4 (October, 1967).

The Parihar oriented phase of Chanderi administration under Sultan Mahmud Khilji I (1436-69) reminds us of Tughluq rule hundred years back. An insurrection of nobles associated with the overthrown ruler of the Ghori dynasty, brought Mahmud Shah himself to Chanderi and not only did he put down the serious rebellion but took further steps to ensure peace and order in the region by advancing the headquarters of the Deputy Governor of Baṭihāgarh to Damoh further south into the heart of the Byarma valley, the stronghold of the Parihar Rājapūts driving them out further south to the vicinity of Garha. The Khilji Sultans of Malwa seem to have pursued a firm policy of expansion towards the river Kyan as is indicated by the situation of Ghaisabad (Ghyasabad), presumably named after Sultan Ghayas Khilji of Mando (1469-1500) rather than the earlier Ghayas Tughluq of Delhi. A number of Sanskrit and Persian inscriptions of this Sultan and those of his successors, in which the epithet of 'Rajādhirāja' or 'Mahārājādhirāja' is invariably used testify to the effective rule of the Malwa Sultans there. And the pattern set for later governors of Chanderi by the epithets Khani-Aazam-Khaqan-i-Muazzam used for Prince Qadr Khan is echoed in later inscriptions and Jain Granth—Praśastis which continued to use similar titles in their corrupt form as Maha Khan-Moj Khan in a stereotyped manner. Some of the holders of these titles were strong, brave and experienced governors. No wonder that the Parihars of Kotarā in the trans-Kyan region are found concentrated far away in Unchahra while those of the Byarma valley have receded further south towards Garhā. With Naro (Satna district) as the base of his operations, Vīrasīnhadeva Baghelā (1501-31) undertook two expeditions to the south first against Sangram Sah Goṇḍ of Garhā to punish him for his parricide and the other against the Kalachuri ruler of Ratanpur in Chhattisgarh. In the course of his second expedition Virasīnhadeva defeated the local Parihar chiefs ('Parihararāja') according to the version of Mādhava Kavi, the author of the Vīrabhānūdaya Kāvya, the official history of the Baghela Dynasty of Gahora composed in Sanskrit in the court of Rājā Vīrabhānu, son and successor of Vīrasīnhadeva. While the comparatively uneventful rule of Ghayas Shah had retained the vigour of Mando rule during the years following the expansionist policy of Mahmud I, one of the most ambitious monarchs of his times, who styled himself Alauddin, the second Alexander, matters took a turn to the worse in the time of his grandson, Nasir Shah (1500-11), and with the accession of Mahmud II there was a pathetic and pitiable deterioration in the affairs of Malwa with the rebellion of the nobility and the dominance of the Rājapūts followed by Gujarat intervention and the captivity of Sultan Mahmud in the hands of Rana Sanga of Chittor (1518). Meanwhile two new Rajput States of Raisen and Chanderi had come into existence. No wonder, therefore, that the Parihars of south Damoh above were defeated at ease along with the rulers of Ratanpur and Garhā in the vicinity by a powerful ruler like Virasīnha Baghelā.

About the year 1540 Rājā Dalpat Sāh Goṇḍ is said to have occupied Singorgarh for his residence first reduced by Sangram Sah. What were the relations of

Parihar chiefs with the Gond authorities we do not know. It could be surmised from circumstantial evidence, however, that some Parihars took up service under the Goṅḍs and were so much influenced by them that following the example of the Chandela chief of Rath-Mahoba who gave his daughter, the celebrated Durgāvati in marriage to Dalpat, the Parihārs followed suit, for Lakshman Sen Parihar of Bilahri is said to have married his daughter to some Raj Gond chief whose descendants are known as Khaṭolāhā Goṅḍs (i. e. Gonds of Khatolā in Bijawar Tahsil of Chhatarpur district) still living in village Magardha eight miles north-west of Bilahri. Lakshman Parihar lived in the Garhi of Bilahri and the extensive tank called Lakshman Sagar is attributed to him.

Cultural Aspects of Chanderi

Chanderi epigraphs have yielded only a bare list of kings of the Parihara dynasty ruling for practical purposes independently of the Chandelas or the Paramaras, for the matter of that. Bhelsa was a good trade centre presumably included in the Chanderi kingdom when Alauddin Khilji led a plundering raid against it from Kara in 1292. The fame of Chanderi prosperity seems to have travelled all the way to Delhi when, on the occasion of Alauddin to the throne of his uncle, his boon companion Alaul Mulk, the fat Kotwal of Delhi drew his attention to the conquest of Chanderi along with that of Malwa and Gujarat. And when at last his general, Ainul Mulk Multani, advanced to occupy Chanderi, the Parihar kingdom succumbed to the superior arms of the Imperial Turks. Ikhtiyaruddin Timar Sultani is mentioned as the governor in a Chanderi inscription of 1312 A. D. and for the next two hundred years or more Chanderi was the centre of authority in north-east Malwa first under the Sultans of Delhi and later under the Sultans of Mando or ruled independently by Medini Rai until it was annexed to his newly acquired dominions by the first Mughal Emperor Babar in 1528.

In the absence of Brahmanical Vaishnava records, the only glimpse that we have of the cultural activities in the Chanderidesa pertains to Jain sources. On coming to power of the Tughluqs in Delhi, the imperial authority was reinforced by the appointment of a Governor. A strong man like Malik Zulchi, known as the Commander of the Mongol contingent under Sultan Alauddin Khilji, was selected for the post and Batihadim was fixed as the headquarters of a Deputy Governor in the northern Hatta Tahsil of the modern Damoh district in the person of Jalaluddin Khoja who, among other things, established, what Rai Bahadur Hiralal calls, a 'Gomath' or rest house for cattle at his place of posting. This clearly shows Jain influence in the region which was destined to emerge, after a century, as a strong centre of Jain culture with seats of Bhattarakas at Narwar and Sonagir, besides Chanderi itself following the establishment of a strong and virile kingdom at Mandogarh on the disintegration of the Delhi empire of the Tughluqs. The traditional importance of Chanderi was maintained or perhaps enhanced with the appointment of a prince of the ruling dynasty in the person of Qadr Khan, the

younger brother of the heir-apparent Alp Khan, who succeeded his father Dilawar Khan Ghori to the throne of Mando in 1405 A. D. Qadr Khan patronized the Persian scholar Qazi Khan Badr Muhammad Dharwal who had travelled from Delhi to Jaunpur enroute to Chanderi. The reigning monarch, Hoshang Shah, on the other hand, was quite popular with the Digambar Jain community of Chanderi desa for he is very respectfully mentioned in an inscription of Deogarh dated 1424 A. D. wherein he has been called 'Shah Alam', one of the earlier titles assumed by him before he stuck to that of the better known 'Hoshang Shah'. In the capital of Mando itself a Svetambar Jain family of Oswals figured prominently as scholar—administrators in the court of the Sultans for a period of one hundred years and have left a large number of books written on religious topics in the Sanskrit language. The inscription of Deogarh in question comes from the biggest cultural centre in the region of Chanderi during that period, following the eclipse of Khajuraho as a city of temples on the decline of the Chandela power in the thirteenth century. The inscription pertains to an image in one of the temples and testifies to the policy of religions toleration practised by the Malwa Sultans. A number of inscriptions on Jain images and pattavalis pertaining to two Digambar Sanghas, namely Mulasangha and Kashtha sangha, have been made available by modern scholars, besides grantha prashastis (book colophons) which throw light on the brisk activities of the so-called Bhattarak munis encouraging the chiselling of images, the construction of temples, and the building of chaityalayas and resting places for the munis and travellers during this period in the Malwa dominions of the Sultan including Chanderi desa, another name for Bundelkhand, where minor Jain centres like Udaigiri, Erachh, Ahar and Papaura are known to have flourished.

The Chanderi patta or gaddi, founded by Bhattaraka Devendrakirti of the Mulasangha-Saraswati gachchha-Nandi amnaya, has three names in the pattavali which are relevant to us. Devendrakirti, who hailed from Gujarat, was a disciple of Bhattaraka Padmanandi and was first appointed Chanderi Mandalacharya. He is supposed to have established the Chanderi patta some time before the year 1436, the year of the violent change in the ruling dynasty of Mando from the Ghoris to the Khiljis. He is also mentioned in the Deogarh image inscription referred to above. His disciple, Vidyanandi Parwar, entitled Tribhuvanakirti, is believed to have become Chanderi mandalacharya sometime before 1468 A. D. prior to succeeding his master to the Chanderi patta. Tribhuvanakirti's disciple and successor to the Chanderi patta, namely Yashahakirti, is a well-known figure famous as an author of apabhramsa. He was a contemporary of Shah Ghayas and Shah Naseer, the Khilji monarchs. He often stayed in the Neminath chaityalaya of the town called Jerhat which has not yet been identified. Four of his works have been discovered, so far, that is the 'Harivansha Purana', the 'Dharmapariksha', the 'Parmeshti Prakash Sar' and the 'Yogasara'—all of them dated V. 1352/1409 A. D. which refer in their colophons to 'Mahakhan Mojakhan' who could be no other

than Mallu Khan son of Mallu Khan, the well-known governor of Chanderi during this period. One peculiar feature of the Bhattarakas of the Chanderi patta was that they came from the Parwar caste of the Digambar community, a caste which predominates among the jains in Bundelkhand even today.

The patta of Sonagiri (Datia district) was a branch pitha of Gwalior, the greatest and most flourishing Digamber Jain centre in the capital town of the Tomara rulers. The name is supposed to have been derived from Shramanagiri, ascribed to Shramanasena Muni (V. S. 1335). The Bhattarakas of this centre belonged to the Kashtha sangha, Mathur gachcha-Pushkar gana. The first guru, who has found mention in inscriptions dated 1449, 53 and 73 A. D., was Kamalakiṛti who left a disciple Shubhachandra to succeed him.

Jiṇa Tāraṇ Tāraṇ Swami

The fifteenth century of the Christian era is a century of Hindu-Muslims coming together—an intermingling of the two communities and mutual reapproachment. In spite of wars and conquests and lack of a strong central government, there was prosperity all round; grains and other necessities of life were cheap. Sufis of the Chishtiya Order wielded great influence over the masses-Muslims and non-Muslims. Not only did they approach the people through the medium of the mother tongue and compose love poems in the village dialects but before the close of the century, Kayasthas, Khatris and Kashmiri pundits took to learning Persian, the court language and filling the revenue offices of the Sultans.

Among the most outstanding provincial kingdoms were those of Jaunpur, Mando and Ahmadabad. Sant Kabir the most radical social reformer hailed from Varanasi in the Sharqi dominions and his verses embodying new ideas were steeped in the Jain-Nathpanthi traditions. He called upon the Brahman-dominated neo-Vaishnavism to fall in line with his principles of cultural synthesis and liberalism in faith and practice leading to mutual tolerance and fraternization of castes and creeds. He not only condemned casteism but made idol worship the target of his attack.

Simultaneously with Kabir among Hindu Vaishnavas of Madhyadesa, flourished Lonkasah among the Shvetambar Jains of western India who organized a similar movement of radical reform with his centre at Ahmadabad during the first half of the fifteenth century. Like Kabir in Northern India, Lonka-Sah raised the banner of revolt against the Jain priesthood and called upon them to prove the justification of idol worship on the basis of Jain agama literature. Of his two main disciples, one hailed from Mandogarh, the capital of the Sultans of Malwa through whom the preachings of Lonkasah must have filtered down to the Jain masses in Malwa.

Lonkasah's thoughts were, however, echoed from an unexpected quarter by a none too learned Digambar Jain of Chanderi—'Damovadesa' in Bundelkhand namely Jina

Taran Taran who is said to have been born in 1448 A.D. at Puhpavati (Pushpavati) another name for Bilahri in Katni Tahsil of Jabalpur district to his Parwar parents. His father Garha Sah retired to Semalkheri near Sironj in the district of Vidisha where Taran was brought up in the house of his maternal uncle. This was the Age of Bhattarakas among Digambar Jains and from the biographical dates of Taran Taran available to us, he was a contemporary of Bhattarak Yashahakirti of the Mulasangha. Taran Taran, however, led a life of isolation from the so-called Bhattarakas who had fallen from the ideals of the ancient munis and had forsaken the rigours of their discipline. Their services to Jain Culture were none too negligible for they promoted the cause of idol making, temple building and manuscripts copying but their life of growing comfort and ease and accumulation of riches had made them indistinguishable from priests for all practical purposes. For instead of moving about constantly, they mostly resided in Chaityalayas and Upasras practising tantra and mantra besides ayurveda and jyotisha. Even the learned among them like Yashahakirti held narrow and reactionary ideas of caste and sex inferiority of sudras and women. Such ideas and practices must have been an anathema to a radical thinker like Taran Taran who, far from conforming to them, took to a life of nude asceticism and practised austerities in forest resorts like Semalkheri and Sukha (Damoh district), besides village Rakh, now called Mallhargarh in Guna district where he passed the best years of his fruitful life attended to by his disciples of all castes and creeds including Muslims among whom two names are prominent—those of Luqman and Ruia Raman who is supposed to have been a cotton ginner or pin-jara by profession.

Taran Taran was a junior contemporary of Lonkasah of Gujarat and presumably took inspiration from him. Taran Taran has left a dozen books of verse in which he has propounded the philosophy of 'anekant' and 'syadvad' emphasizing the importance of atma as paramatma in the making. There was no place for idol worship in his scheme of religious practice but he refrained from launching a direct attack on the idolatory practiced commonly by the Jain shravakas or householders. The language of his books is a strange mixture of Samskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Deshi. A collection of these compositions is available in print.

Taran Taran breathed his last at the age of sixty seven and his samadhi called Nasiyaji is the chief centre of Taranpanthi community from where radiates the ideology of this greatest saint of the Digambar Parwars. Unfortunately there was no scholar among his disciples who could take up the work of organization of the panth which even today finds itself indebted to persons outside its fold for the work of editing and publishing of and commenting on Taran bani. As far as the Saint Taran Taran himself is concerned, he deserves to be bracketted with Lonkasah and Kabir, his Shvetambar and Vaishnava counterparts.

It may not be supposed from the above account of a nonworshipper of idols that idol worship in Chanderi-Damoh had declined among the Jains. On the

other hand the Bhattarakas had succeeded immensely in their mission of persuading the Jain house-holders to make idols and establish them for worship under the auspices of their gurus so much so indeed that a donor—philanthropist like Jivaraj Papriwal is supposed to have got chiselled single-handed a lakh of Jain images and caused them to be deported to various temples throughout Northern India and there is not a Jain temple but has an image made by Jivaraj Papriwal. These images bearing the inscription of Jivaraj Papriwal of Vikram Samvat 1548-1491 A. D. are found through out Greater Malwa even today.

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