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Development of Education and Languages in the First Half of Eighteenth Century: With Special Reference of Mughal Kings and Nobles

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Abstract: Eighteenth century in Indian history is a very important phase of transition in all spheres of life including education. Generally historians consider this century as an era of decline and rapine but revisionist historians contradict this view and held that phase of decentralization. This paper is an attempt to explore how education system was retained by mughal kings and nobles in eighteenth century.

Key Words: Madarsa , Rekhta, Ulema ,Mushaira ,Diwan , Madad-i- Mash ,Imambara ,Maktab, Malfuzat, Dars-i-Nizami

Mughal kings and nobles played an important role for the development of education. By eighteenth century they had lost the sensitivity of response to new political challenges of the period, but they took actively social challenges and many of them shown keen interest in the development of education by maintaining library, extending free grants to the learned persons, development of languages, established a number of educational institutions and financial support to them. Perhaps acquiring knowledge and disseminate widely was a great passion with the Mughal nobles. Generally majority of them owned an impressive private library which contained a large number of volumes on various subjects. They participated and organized literary and poetical gatherings at their residences for the development of languages.

Noble's literary gifts found expression in poetry and some of the famous poets and literary men, who flourished in this period, belonged to the class of Nobles. It is claimed that the first poet in Northern India, who compiled a *diwan* in *rekhta* was Nawab Sadruddin Muhammad Khan Faiz.¹

Nawab Amir Khan '*Umdat-ul-Umra*' had distinguished himself as one of the greatest patrons of poets and scholars. He was well versed in Arabic Literature and composed verses with equal facility in Persian and Urdu. His own taste and courteous disposition attracted famous contemporary poets like Rasikh, Shakir, Shah Hatim and Mir Zahik , all of whom attended *mushairas* held at his house.² Nawab Asaf Jah I, whose *nom de pulme* was Shakir, has left a *Diwan* or collection of poems in Persian. Anand Ram Mukhlis, was a poet and writer of great repute and author of nearly 14 books some of them are *Gulistan-i-Asrar*, *Bada-i-Waqi*, *Miratul Istilah*, *Safar Namah*, *Chaminastan Diwan* etc.³ Mohammed Maniyab Khan, Shaikh Husain 'Shirazi' and Nawab Asad Yar Khan 'Insan' and Inmullah Khan 'Yaqin' were some of the few amirs who contributed to the growth of the poetry.⁴ The nobles abundantly showered their patronage over poets and men of letters. This liberality gave a fillip to intellectual and literary activities. Asaf Jah patronized several poets of Delhi i.e. Mirza Bedil and Mazhar Jan-i-Jahan. Khan-i-Dauran sanctioned grant of one rupee per month as

¹ *Diwan-i-Faiz*, ed by Dr. Masud Hasan Rizvi, p. 8.

² Zahiruddin Malik, *Reign of Mohammad Shah 1719-48*, p. 368.

³ *Ibid* , p. 368.

⁴ Ghulam Azad, *Khazana-i-Amrah*, p. 28.

stipend to Mir Taqi Mir . Muhammad Khan Bangash was also a great patron of art and literature. During his time and in that of his son, a large number of poets, writers, and scholars arrived at Farrukhabad to seek refuge and patronage.⁵

Raja Chattrasal Bundela, himself a poet had a great respect for the learned, and rewarded them munificently.⁶ He composed his poems in *Brajbhasha* and patronized a number of famous poets i.e. Bhusan, Lal Kavi, Harikesh, Niraj and Brij Bhushan.

Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) informs in his *Malfizat* that in the reign of Muhammed Shah about 22 learned scholars and mystics of note lived in the capital, '*Tarikh-i-Hindi*', provides us a list of famous theologians, teachers, Jurists and mystics, who enriched the religious life of the Delhi city and other places.⁷

Mulla Nizam-ud-Din founded a *Madarsah* at his residence called *Farangi Mahal* in Lucknow, which become a reputed centre of higher learning in Islamic studies and sciences. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb held him in high esteem on account of his devotion to the cause of learning, he bestowed *Madad-i-Mash* grants, in the form of revenue grants and as well as cash allowances for the maintenance of *madarsa* and his family.⁸ He also drew up the syllabus for the theological studies of the *madarsa* known as *Dars-i-Nizami*. The curriculum included subject and books on grammar (*Nahw*), scholasticism (*Kalam*), logic (*Mantiq*), Principles of Islamic law (*Usul-i-fiqh*), Islamic law (*Fiqh*), mathematics (*Riyazi*), tradition of the Prophet (*Hadith*) and exegesis (*Tafsir*).⁹ The madarsa's grants and cash allowances were continued by the governors of Oudh such as Nawab Saadat Khan Burhanul Mulk and Nawab Abul Mansur Safdar Jang. After his death in 1748, his son, Mulla Abdul Ali also becomes popular as a competent teacher. But he left Lucknow and went to Karnatak, where Nawab Muhammad Ali patronized him and provided all necessary hospitality and arrangements for his comfortable stay. The Nawab conferred on him the title of *Bahrul Ulum*, (Ocean of Knowledge) and built a *madarsah* for religious education.

Although the later Mughals were preoccupied with political and personal problems, they took interest in the establishment and maintenance of schools and colleges. Nobles extended their patronage to men of learning and made grants for upkeep of the educational institutions thus most of them owed their existence to the munificence grant of nobles. Some prominent nobles established eminent *madarsas* in Delhi, and they were known by their names like *Madarsah-i-Ghaziuddin Khan*, *Madarsah-i-Sharfud-Daulah* and *Madarsah-i-Roshanud Daulah* etc. Mohammad Shah is credited with having granted big mansion for the *madarsah* of Shah Abdur Rahim(father of Shah Wali-ullah), which soon acquired universal reputation because of the remarkable personality of its founder.¹⁰

Ashob, inform us that Mohammad Amin Khan founded a *madarsah* near *Ajmeri Gate* in Delhi. There were many *madarsahs* which were attached to *Khanqahs* and *Mosque*, like the *Khanqah* of Shah Kalimullah and the *Fatehpuri Mosque* of Delhi. In the Dariba market Sharfud Daulah had built a mosque and a

⁵ Mohammad Waliullah, *Terikh-i-Farrukhabad*, pp. 155-233.

⁶ Bhagwan Das, *Maharaja Chattrasal Bundela*, pp. 114-16

⁷ Rustam Ali, *Tarikh-i-Hindi* pp. 604-12.

⁸ Mohammad Reza Ansari, *Bani Dars-i-Nizami*, pp. 172-80.

⁹ Mohammad Ikram, *Rud-i-Kaswir*, pp. 405-410.

¹⁰ Syed Manzir Husain Gilani, '*Hindustan Mein Musalmano Ka Nizam-i-Talim*' , pp. 1-10.

Madarsah in 1772.¹¹ Scholarship in the Persian and Arabic language flourished under the patronage of many courts. The courts of Nawab Safdar Jang in Oudh and of Alivardi Khan in Bengal were heaven of refuge to eminent scholars of the age.

Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai have mentions the names of many doctors of law and scholars of theology, poets and religious men of great distinction patronized by Alivardi Khan. Some of them are described as men of angelic virtues and integrity.

1. Maulavi Nissar, a native of Shahpura.
2. Mir Mohammad Alim resident of Azimabad a desciple of great poet Mirza Moi-musawi Khan.
3. Shah Mohammad Amin a man well versed in the science of the Quran.
4. Shah Khizr, a native of Basrah and religious men of great distinction.
5. Syed Mir Mohammad Sajid.
6. Syed Alim-ul-Allah, the grandfather of Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai.¹²

As far as concerned science, it was not ignored Mohammad al Midu Bed Ali at Patna, whose erudition touched the whole circle of science and who was thoroughly versed in the mazes and depths of astrology.¹³ The Maulavi of Rangpur mentioned by Buchanan as teaching the higher parts of Persian literature.¹⁴

The school for Persian in existence was mostly of elementary instruction and was called *Maktabs* or *Madarsa*. They were supported by the various endowments made by Mughal princes and nobles. The *Madarsa* at Patna was founded by the Nawab of Bengal.¹⁵ There were a large number of students engaged in the studies.¹⁶ Hardly, there was a single *mosque* or *Imambara*, in which professors of Arabic and Persian were not maintained. *Maktabs* sprang up where *Musalman* predominated in number.¹⁷

It was during this period that a number of meritorious and knowledgeable scholars came to India from Iran and settled particularly in Bihar and Azimabad.¹⁸ The important among them were:

1. Mohammad Al Bedoo Bed Ali, who changed his name into that of Mohammad Hazin, he was learned and the illustrious, the foremost of the renowned doctors the veil drawers of the difficult and hidden passage. His writings and composition were well known both in India and in Iran. In that age he had no one his equal to him all over Iran and Arabia. It is claimed that the Emperor Mohammad Shah fully apprised of his merit and used to send him messages by Amir Khan to accept the office of *Wazir* but he declined the proposal.¹⁹

Alivardi Khan and his two son-in-laws, wrote him repeatedly in the most respectful term, supplicating the happiness of seeing him in their dominions.

2. Shah Mohammad Hassan, was a master of Arabic language, jurisprudence and commentaries on *Quran*. By birth he was an Afghan, but he migrated with his parents and family to the Karbala and Najaf, from Najaf he came

¹¹ Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asar-us-Sanadid*, p. 309.

¹² Ghulam Hussain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*. (trans.) Haji Mustafa Khan, Vol. I, p. 175.

¹³ Ibid, Vol. II, p. 176

¹⁴ M. Martin: *Dispatches, minutes and the correspondence of Wellesely*, vol. III, pp. 132-33

¹⁵ J. Malcom, *Memoir of Central India*, I, pp. 133.

¹⁶ Ghulam Hussain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*, Vol. I, p. 175

¹⁷ Education commission Report of the Bengal Province committee, III, p. 183-84

¹⁸ Ghulam Hussain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*, Vol. II, pp. 175-85

¹⁹ Ibid vol. II, p. 176

to Shahjahanabad. Here he attached himself to Abul Mansoor Khan, who appointed him tutor of Shuja-ud-Daulah. Later he was retired to Azimabad, where he passed away.

3. Syed Mohammad Ali, his father was a native of Iran but he was born in Hyderabad. His father took him to Iran for education. He attached himself to Mohammad Sadiq Shistani, who was at the utmost height knowledge in the subject of science. In the science of theoretical and practical, especially physical he is reputed to have no one his equal. There was not a Mosque or *immabara* in which professors of Arabic and Persian were not maintained.²⁰

During the reign of Mohammad Shah the Mughal government began to disintegrate rapidly in politics and administration, thus the initiative passed into the hands of provincial chiefs and influential nobles.

In North India, Rohilla chief were great patron of learning and took interest in building construction and maintaining schools and colleges in their territories. The founder of the dynasty Ali Mohammad Khan had received good education and extended his patronage to the *Ulama*.²¹ His generosity drew scholars from distant places, i.e. Jalaluddin Khan Muhaddis of Kabul came to Aonla and Sayyid Ali Shah from Tirmiz.⁶¹

Hafiz Rahamat Khan was so keenly devoted to the cause of education that he took a personal interest in selection of books for the various courses of study and anxiously watched the progress of the students studying in institutions supported and maintained by him. In the whole of Rohilkhand, we find a network of *mosques* which had schools attached to them. Besides making provision for the supply of books to the students the government also awarded stipend (*Wazifa*) to them usually rupees one hundred per student. On completion of their courses, the turban (*dastar*), a symbol of graduation was wrapped or put on the head of the successful candidate by the Hafiz Rahmat himself.⁶² Besides a big college at Shahjahanpur, he built a magnificent *madarsah* at Pilibhit at a cost of three and a half lakhs of rupees. Here too the students received books, stipend and other assistance.⁶³

Najib-ud-Daulah was another prominent Rohilla chief, who patronized learning and education. Besides the numerous *madarsahs* founded and aided from his *jagir* and near Najiababad he is also stated to have built the *madarsah* of Daranagar near Amroha. Most of the teachers employed here were graduates of *Firangi Mahal*. Shah Abdul Aziz says that Najib had, employed 900 scholars for his schools.⁶⁴

Badaun, another Center of education in Rohilkhand. An old college known as the *Madarsah-i-Qadimiya* was in the charge of Mufti Murid Mohammad.⁶⁵ The *Madarsah-i-Aliyah*, of Rampur known all over north India, and Sambhal and Amroha was also, famous for learning.

Under the Nawab of Bengal, Murshidabad became an important cultural centre. Due to the space it is difficult to give a detailed account of the contribution they had made to the growth of learning but in short it can be mentioned here that Jafar Khan's *madarsah* bears the marks of its past greatness

²⁰ Education commission Report of the Bengal Province Committee ,pp. 183-84

²¹ Namul Ghani, *Akhbar-us-Sanadid*, I, P. 95

⁶¹ Azhar Ali, *Safar Nama-i-Anand Ram Mukhlis*, pp. 85-86.

⁶² Sadat yar khan, *Gul-i-Rahmat* f. 93.

⁶³ Ibid. f. 94.

⁶⁴ Ibid. f. 33

⁶⁵ Yaqub Hussain Qadiri; *Akmal-ul-Tawarikh*, vol. I, p. 26

even today. At Birbhum a *madarsah* was established by local Zamindars named Abdullah. He is stated to have dedicated half of his property for the expenses of this *madarsah* and stipends to the students who studies there.⁶⁶

The *Madarsah-i-Bihar* was founded by Munshi Sadr-ud-din where Maulana Abdul Ali of Lucknow was appointed its principal with a salary of Rs. 400 per month. Under him the *madarsah* of Bihar attained great reputation.

Perhaps to acquire knowledge and help to diffuse it was a great passion with the Mughal noble, and a source of spiritual satisfaction for him. They possessed means to purchase books and leisure to read them. They owned impressive personal libraries in which contained large number of books on various subjects. Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah attracted scholars and men of genius from different places of the country. Lucknow had numerous libraries i.e Royal library at *Rumi Darwaza*, Library of Moti Garden and Library in Farrukh Baksh Mahal.⁶⁷ Nawab Ibrahim Khan Bahadur Hizbur Jung was counted among the influential nobles of Delhi. He also had a big library in which books were entered after purchase. These libraries were intact up to the time of Mohammad Shah but later on due to political chaos they were neglected.⁶⁸

Rohilla Pathan Hafiz Rahmat Khan was a patron of Sayyids Scholars and distinguished people. During his rule he carried out many public works like the construction of mosques and *Madarsas*. He had a great library also. In 1188 A.H (1774-75) Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula plundered the Royal library. The library was a part of loot and it was placed as Top Khan Library in Lucknow.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION:

Thus during the first half of eighteenth century educational institution was in good position that is confirmed during the rule East India Company in the beginning of nineteenth century, by various educational reports i.e Adams.

⁶⁶ Abdul Hasnat 'Nadwi'; *Hindustan Ki Qadim Islami Darsgahen*, pp. 57-76.

⁶⁷ S.A. Zafar Nadwi, *Libraries in Muslim India*, *Islamic Culture* (1946), Vol. XX, p. 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, (1946) Vol. XXI, pp. 339-40.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, (1945), XX, p. 9.