

Socio Religio Culture During Qutb Shahs

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Abstract

The Qutb Shahi dynasty has been considered a “Composite “ of Hindu Muslim religio-social culture.

The Qutb Shahi Society were heterogeneous consisting of the people from different lands, religions & sects. They never tried to impose their faith on others. Instead they allowed complete freedom to the people of other religions & sect. Equal opportunities were made available to their subjects in all matters of the State. Even the top positions of the administration were occupied by nobles belonging to different religions & sects.

The Qutb Shahi rulers was particularly liberal in patronizing the Telugu poets. His court represented a true picture of the integrated society in which the Hindu & Muslim poets and Scholars had equal status. This policy was not reserved for the matters of state & administration alone but it was extended to the religious institutions also.

It was an important feature of the Qutb Shahi Kingdom the Sufis of the period belonged to both the sects of Muslims. Their preaching & practices were not different, they all stood for a liberal outlook. The Qutb Shahs patronized them all.

Overlooking the traditions of the period some of the Qutb Shahi ruler had matrimonial alliances with the Sufis.

Qutb Shahs used the religious festivals to promote religious harmony in the society which created an atmosphere of brotherhood.

If is significant, therefore to observe that constant efforts of the Qutub Shahs & their patronage of the Muslims & Hindu institutions all through their rule resulted in the integration of the heterogeneous society of the Qutub Shahi Kingdom. These policies channelized the sentiments of the masses and had a profound influence on the political, social economics & cultural life of the people while promoting multiculturalism where all people could co-exist in peace and harmony.

Keywords: Harmony heterogeneity, institutions, preachings

The emergence of the five states as the result of the decline of the Bahmani Kingdom not only began a new era in the political history but also brought a number of changes in the social and religious life of the people of the Deccan.

The establishment of Qutb Shahi rule in Deccan not only began a new chapter in History but also resulted in bringing about many socio religious reforms.

There was the free exchange of the cultural and religious values between the two main constituents of the society viz, Hindus and Muslims. The result of it was that the society in spite of its diversity got knitted together. The Qutb Shahi Sultans played an important role in the evolution of the state by not only involving in wars for greater period of their rule, but also they envisaged a bread based policy with the main aim of creating social unification, it was through the religious institutions that the Qutb Shahs put into practice their ideals. Therefore the study of this topic Socio- Religio Culture during Qutb Shahs become important to understand the social transformation of the Qutb Shahi period.

There was at that time a continuous flow of people from Turkistan, Khurrassan, Arabia and adjacent lands. (1) The Afaqies as they were called, had a large number of Shias among them. Therefore Shiaism was growing in the Deccan since the fifteenth century. It was after the death of Sultan Muhammad that Qutb-ul- Mulk declared Shiaism as a state religion in Golconda. The declaration of Shiaism at Golconda by Qutb ul Mulk did not have the opposition nor protest from Sunni Ulema or the nobles. They had all accepted it.

Qutb-ul-Mulk, laid the foundation of the religious policy on the principle of tolerance. He was liberal in his outlook and his relations with the *Ulemas* and nobles had never been clouded. Therefore no one was worried of his faith and religious liberties even after the declaration of *Shiaism* as state religion. *Qutb-ul-Mulk* neither allowed religious persecution nor ever awarded jobs and *jagirs* on the basis of sect, the policy laid down by him was carried through by his successor. They even overlooked the traditions of *Shiaism* while paying respect to the *Ulema* and *Sufis*. Their relations with the Sufi saints of *Chishti* and *Qadri silsilas* were very close and cordial. They not only allowed them complete religious freedom but also helped them to propagate their faith. They visited their *Khanqahs* and sought their blessings. (2)

Their policy in the matters of appointment was equally liberal. The appointments were made on the basis of merit. Religion and sect were not considered. Therefore the nobility of the Qutb Shahi empire consisted of nobles belonging to all sects.

Marriage Alliances

The relations of the Qutb Shahs were so close and cordial with the Sunni nobles that they did not even hesitate to establish matrimonial relation with them.

Ibrahim Qutb Shah married his first daughter *Kulsum Begum* to *Miran Hussaini Hamavi Baghdadi* of the household of Khaja Banda Nawaz and his second daughter *Khairtunnisa* to *Hussain Shah wali*. (3) The matrimonial relations helped him immensely and the nobles and *Ulemas* started considering Ibrahim

as one of their own men. They were happy at the good will shown by the Sultan and were satisfied that there was no difference between a *Shia* and Sunni as far as the Sultan and his administration was concerned. It was for this reason that a number of Sufi saints came down to Golconda from far off places. (4)

Relations with the Sufi Saints

The honour and respect given to the Sufi Saints can be assessed by the fact that Abul Hasan Qutb shah was the disciple of Shah Raju and accepted him as his most important councilor. (5) The policy of tolerance and spirit of brotherhood adopted by the Qutb Shahs was evident. But they did not achieve this at the cost of their own faith. They freely practiced their faith as they allowed others to do. But while doing so the Qutb Shah's picked up those traditions of the *Shia* faith which were acceptable to all the Muslims irrespective of sects.

Qutb Shahs towards Hindus

The policy of the Qutb Shahs towards the non Muslims of different castes and creeds, who were basically Hindus, needs to be studied with much more care to finally establish their religious outlook. The Hindus formed the majority of the population in Golconda Kingdom. They lived mainly in villages than in cities and Urban centers.

The declaration of *Shiaism* as state religion naturally did not have any effect on the Hindus. Therefore we do not come across any reaction from their side in the contemporary sources.

The relation of the Qutb Shahs with the Hindus were cordial and were based upon confidence in each other. Qutb-ul-Mulk had a lot of confidence in his Hindu officers. A number of instances go to prove this for example during one of his campaign he conquered some of the districts on the Tilang-Vijayanagar frontiers and appointed Ram Raj of Vijayanagar over it as his deputy. (6)

The Hindu chiefs during Qutb-ul-Mulk's period lived in a grand style and were allowed to dress on par with the muslim chiefs. This is confirmed by an interesting Telugu poem *Suka Saptati* written by one *Palavekari*, the lord of *Kadiri* in Cuddapah district. The poem describes the life of the Hindus during the period. The poet says that the Hindu chiefs wore silk *Pajamas*, long caps on their head, pearl strings round their neck and gold embroidered cloak over their shoulders. The *Pajama* as well as the shirt were of pure silks. (7)

The life of the Hindus would not have been prosperous unless there were equal opportunities for both the Muslims and Hindus in the state, that there was complete religious freedom and both Hindus and Muslims could claim the highest office in the state. (8)

It was just patronage given to cultural values which led Qutb Shah to the success. It was also their attitude towards the political rights of their subjects. Venkat Ramayya rightly points out this, writing, that the policy which the Qutb Shah's adopted in their relations with Hindu subjects was based on

two fundamental principles viz. tolerance in religious matters and equal opportunity in the exercise of political rights. (9)

The Muslims, more so, of foreign origin preferred to stay in Urban areas and did not like to work in villages. Therefore the provincial administration of paraganas and villages was mainly in the hands of Hindus. The Brahmins among them had become indispensable to the administration because “while they were employed by the moors for writing and keeping accounts on palm leaves with a pen of iron they were competent astronomers observing the course of seven planets through twelve hours of eclipse and other astronomical predication and not even the moors would undertake a great journey without their advice. (10)

Among the Qutb Shahs it is Sultan Muhammad Quli, who is charged for helping men of his sect by given them important posts of administration. (11) But even during Muhammad Quli’s period we come across a number of Hindu officers both in Civil and Military administration. Some of the important officers were Asva Rao, Jagapat Rao, Sree Rao, and Shahjee. (12)

The remarkable contribution of the Hindu officers in military service during the Qutb Shahs confirm the confidence which the sultan had over his Hindu officer. Among the Qutb Shahi rulers Abul Hasan’s period is specially marked for the appointments of Hindu nobles. He had commanded undoubtedly great confidence over his Hindu nobles and it was his period in which even the highest post of administration *Mir Jumla* was occupied by a Brahmin noble Madanna. (13) Madanna Pandit entitled Surya prakash Rao was the personal Secretary of Syed Muzaffar. Syed Muzaffar was instrumental in bringing abul Hasan on to the therefore, the Sultan had appointed him as his *Mir Jumla*, but Syed Muzaffar lost his position due to his power and pride. Abul Hasan then appointed Madanna to the post. Thus Madanna, who had started his life as a shroff at ten rupees a month rose to be the *Mir Jumla* of a vast kingdom by sheer dint of merit. (14) Once appointed Madanna, perhaps to make his position secure, started awarding his own kith and kin higher posts of the administration.

He appointed his brother Akkana Minister incharge of the army and later Qutb Shahi resident at Bijapur from which he was advance to become the Governor of Karnatak.

Madanna appointed his nephew Podili Linganna as *Tarafdar* of Poonamalee. Another nephew Yanganna was awarded the title of Rustum Rao and given command in the army. A third nephew Gopanna, who is known in history as Ramdas was made the revenue officer of Bhadrachalam. (15)

Thus there was complete domination of the Brahmin family of Madanna over the administration rightly observes that as long as Madanna remained *Mir Jumla* there was clear tendency towards some kind of favour to the high Hindu official and gentry. (16)

Awards of Jagirs and titles to the Hindus

The Hindus loyally served the state and the state rewarded them along with their Muslim counterparts. The Qutb Shahs true to their policy did not differentiate among their nobles while awarding titles and Jagirs. There are a number of firmans belonging to different periods confirming this.

These firmans from the period of Abdullah were issued in two languages Persian and Telugu, the Persian was the court language whereas Telugu was the language of the people. The Persian text of the firman was translated word to word in Telugu and was attached to the Persian text, (17) so that the Hindus living in parganas and villages could understand them with great ease. These firmans which are large in number establish that the Hindu were awarded large *Jagirs* along with the Muslim nobles..

It was just not the nobles who enjoyed lavish patronage of the Sultan but even the petty officials working as *Deshmukh, Majmuadar*, Nargud in parganas were the recipients of lavish awards of the Sultan.

It was the sense of equality which was created by the Qutb Shahs among the Hindus which brought them near to the throne and created loyalty among them. Their religious freedom was never curbed and there was no interference in their personal laws. The cases cropped up were referred to the local Brahmins by the Government officials. (18)

The attitude of the Qutb Shahi Muslim nobles was helpful. They not only allowed the construction of temples in their *Jagirs* but also granted *Agraharas*.

Ibrahim Qutb Shah made some pious donation which made the people happy and favorable to Qutb Shahi regime. (19) Similarly an epigraph of 1586-87 A.D. from Hasayapeta village in Nellore District records the grant of a village as *Agrahara* to several Brahmins by a Muhammadan officer Lal Khan. (20)

The practice of granting villages to the temples did continue till the last Sultan of the Qutb Shahi dynasty Abul Hasan. The Hindus were allowed to visit their temples without any fear or hindrance. There was no pilgrim tax at any time during the Qutb Shahi period for visiting any temple. Even the Hindus belonging to other parts of India were allowed to visit the temple situated within the Qutb Shahi Kingdom.

The religious policy of Qutb Shahs was to use the religious institutions of all religions and sects to foster the spirit of brotherhood and tolerance. They did not differentiate among the Muslim and non-Muslim institutions in this regard as they patronized both the Hindu and the Muslim institutions alike.

The Muslim institutions during the Qutb Shahi period were the *mosques, Ashur Khanas and Dargahs* of the Sufi Saints. In addition to these the religious festivals such as *Muhrram, Idd, Milad-un-Nabi, Ghadeer Vasant and Mirag* were celebrated on a large scale, therefore these celebrations also become a part of the institutions. The policy adopted by Qutb Shah's in patronizing these institutions was to create better understanding and participation of the people. The Muslim religious institutions under the Qutb Shahs generally contributed to religious tolerance, while doing so the covenants of Islam were neither changed nor experimented with.

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For more details see Chapter No. 4. On Dargahs of the Sufi Saints.

Abul Hasan Qutb Shah lived in the Khanqah of Shah Raju for Fourteen Years.

H.K.; P.158

Meer Momin and Allama Ibn-e-Khatoon were Shias while Shah Muhammad was a sunni. H. K., P. 506.

Refer Chapter of Dargahs of the Sufi Saints for more details.

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