

An Analytical Note on the Visit of Muslim Royalty to Ellora Caves

Abstract:-

In this paper I propose to negate the commonly held misconceptions and prejudices against Muslim attitude to Hindu temples especially the attitude of Alamgir Aurangzeb the most misjudged of the royalty. In this I have not restricted myself only to the attitude, impressions of two Muslim royal figures to Ellora Cave temples, but also highlighted the constructive contribution of these rulers to these caves. I have mobilized my information from secondary sources the bulk of which come from Urdu history chroniclers. The paper includes the accounts of Hasan Ganga Bahanami's visit to Ellora in 1352 A.D. and the visit of Aurangzeb to the caves during his governorship between 1636 to 1644 and his second governorship between 1653 to 1657 A.D. Both these rulers as per the Urdu references genuinely appreciated and glorified the workmanship of these caves and also constructed a road from Daulatabad up to the caves as well as cleaned the caves. This work also includes the translation of an unidentified inscription during the visit of Hasan Gangu along with his Brahmin pundits that finds mention in the work of Abdul Jabbar Khan in Tarikh-i-Mahbub-ul-Watan.

Key Words:-

Introduction:-

The expansive tracts of Ellora – Daultabad and Khuldabad are of momentous significance historically as during the ancient up to the medieval period it witnessed the grown of peaceful co-existence of a multicultural community. The cave temples of Hindu, Buddhists and

Jains were excavated simultaneously and patronized by dynasties loyal to different faiths. The Chalukyas were worshipers of Saptamatrikas-----, but supported the excavation work of Buddhist Caves. As per the rulers people belonging to different faiths were their subjects. And the, political powers respected all re religions and supported them dispassionately. So much so that impressions and influences of architecture, sculptural art, design, motifs exhibited a mixed bag. Designs and motifs on pillars were freely and openly initiated. Surprisingly these influences were even emulated by the Muslim rulers. A wide variety of fabulous animals of Simha, Vyala, Gaja seen at Kailasha are also visible on the various gates and bastions of Daulatabads fortified walls. Lotus has been a popular motif right from ancient to medieval times.

In terms of massive enormity and magnificence both the Hindu and Buddhists Caves competed with each other. This is manifest in the Do Taal and Teen Taal of Buddhists Caves with the grandeur of Kailasha. Though the Jain Caves could not compete these caves in its awe-inspiring grandiosity, but the craftsmanship and intricate and exquisite patterns on pillars are excellent. Here, it would be more sensible to desist from a comparative study but rather focus on the topic of article and emphasize the peaceful co-existence of different religion and the plurasic disposition of the rulers and ruled.

Till the yadavas excavation of Devagiri the religious groups were limited to Hindu, Buddhist and Jains. The Muslim advent in this region came around the 13th century with the first Muslim invasion of Alauddin Khilji, said to be the most boldest and daring invasion in those times. They even witnessed an imprecadanted penetration of Muslim rulers,

arrival of their subjects, gradual settlements and mixing with local people. The indigenous community temporarily viewed the occupants as intruders, but language spoken in these parts was Marathi, Telugu and Kanmarese while the Muslims who came from different countries spoke turkey, pharsi and arabi , Purabi , brijbhasha and awadhi turkey, phrasi. In the market place these people mixed and interacted and this continuous interaction especially during the time of Muhamad Tughloq gave birth to a Deccani Urdu language though in its crude forms as it was in nascent stage of development. Muhamed Tughlaq who transferred his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad around 1327 as per historical references', brought with him his army, officials, courtiers, servants and tradesman who mixed with the local people and unconsciously impacted each other's culture and language.

It was probably during the same time that nearly 1400 Sufi Saints the Chief of whom included Burhanuddin Garib and Hazrat Zainuddin Shirazi who were directed by Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi to proceed towards the Deccan. They all settled at Khuldabad.

At the Daulatabad front the Bahamani dynasty had occupied Daulatabad after Muhammed Bin Tuglaq in 1347. Hasan entitled Zafar Khan, an Afghan or Turki officer of the Delhi Sultanate proclaimed his independence and founded the Bahamani dynasty². He was more popularly known as Hasan Gangu Bahamani. It was during his stay at Daulatabad that Hasan Gangu Bahamani heard about the Ellora Caves and desired to see these caves.

This research paper will focus on the visit of Hasan Gangu Bahamani to Ellora, the repairs of the Road during this period and the translation of inscription at Ellora on the explicit orders of Hasan Gangu.

The paper further will highlight the visit of Alamgir Aurangzeb to the cave temples of Ellora, again the repairs of the road leading to these caves, the cleaning of the caves and genuine appreciation of these caves by the king.

Literature Review:-

The historical references have been taken from Majumdar R.C. Roy Chaudhari Datta. An Advanced History of India London 1984 and the Oxford History of India by Vincent Smith. For the main research findings the original book titled Tarikh-e-Mehboob-ul-Watan by Abdul Jabbar Khan was first published in 1930. The reference of the book is found in Raunaq Ali's book Rauzat-ul-Akhtab. Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Sufi's book Tadkhire-I Salatin Dakan, Gathasaptasati Poona 1956 has been referred to by Dr. R.S. Gupte in his book. The Iconography of the Buddhist Caves of Ellora. Mention of Hasan Gangu's visit has been made in Sen Gupta & "Repairs to the Ellora Caves" Ancient India XVIII (1961) pg. 46-67. In later books the Gulistan-e-Khuldabad written by Abdul Hai in 2001 also finds mention of Hasan Gangu's visit to Ellora Cave. Another urdu book that refers to the incident is Haqiqate – Mohd. Ambari by Agha Mirza Baig written in 1991. The visit of Aurangzeb to Ellora Caves finds mention by Geri Malandhara in his research paper creation of the past for Ajanta and Ellora pgs.12 and he has drawn his reference from Saqi Mustaid Khan, Maasir-i-Alamgiri (1710), trans. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal 1947 pg. 145-146.

Research Methodology:-

Methodology followed by the paper is purely qualitative approach in which only secondary sources were used. Books mostly Urdu as well as a few other books, research articles published and unpublished were used. A limited observational research too was included.

Visit of Hasan Gangu Bahamani to Ellora Caves temples in 1352 A.D.:-

The visit of Hasan Gangu Bahamani in 1352 A.D. to the Ellora Caves first appears in Abdul Jabbar Khan's. *Tarikh-e-Mahbub-ul-Watan*³. Which has later been referred by several Urdu authors as well as Hasan Gangu's visit to Ellora, his construction of a road and repair of caves for his visit. He stayed there with his courtiers, officers and a few family members in tents erected in open space. Hasan Gangu stayed here for a week during which he is said to have visited 12 caves. During this stay he was also accompanied by Brahmin pundits who copied and translated the inscriptions on walls ceilings and pillars. Detailed reference of one inscription was quoted by Raunaq Ali in his book titled *Rauze-tul-Aqutab*⁴.

In this book the movement of Hasan Gangu Bahamani's visit his praise and surprise at the prosperity, grace, intelligence, patience and the height of magnificence reached by the artists has been described lucidly.

While the Sultan was busy each day visiting the caves and appreciating the artistic creations the pundits copies the inscriptions though a number of them were badly destroyed. In Raunaq Ali's work he

has highlighted one particular inscriptions in details which can be translated as follows:-

“I have constituted this structure, a facsimile of a royal durbar, replete with paintings, opulence and affluence of a palatial durbar, so that when posterity witnesses this structure will laud our creation, and perceive this splendor and magnificence and learn the circumstance of our glory and climax as well as decline and will fathom the momentary nature of existence, and will not be allured or beguiled by its bravura and display and will be more concerned with virtuous deeds and a distinctive character which will confer positive results. If in the future a liberal ruler plans to create a structure of such dimensions ask him to employ 20,000 masons who are connoisseurs in stone carving and architectural genius and work ceaselessly for a thousand years, and keep the doors of his treasury open, may than he might a able to create something of such magnitude and leave the memory of his period (Twelve Pranchandrao).

The same reference is also given in Agha Mirza Baig's book Haqiqate – Malik – Ambar⁶. In both the references it has been mentioned that Hasan Gangu Bahamani visited 12 Caves. But it is not clear which particular caves. The word 'Barga' has been used for the royal darbar, which probably points to Kailasha which is complete with courtyards, pillars porticoes, huge halls, corridors, temple, dhujastambha, elephants and huge figures of Gods, Goddesses, apsaras, vyalas etc.

The visit of Hasan Gangu in the Urdu work of Jabbar Khan⁷ is also mentioned by Dr. Ramesh Shankar Gupte in his book titled, Iconography of the Buddhist Caves of Ellora⁸. In this he refers only to the approach roads to Ellora being repaired for the visit of Sultan Hasan Gangu

Bahamani who camped near the caves for a week to enjoy the magnificent architecture and sculpture of the caves. Repairs of the caves by Hasan Gangu is also mentioned in Sen Gupta's article 'Repairs to the Ellora Caves'.

The second significant royal visit to these caves was by Alamgiri Aurangzeb probably during his long Governorship in the Deccan between 1636 A.D. to 1644. The original source of information about this visit is described in *Mausir-i-Alamgiri* by Saqi Mustaid Khan (1710) trans. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta 1947¹⁰. The same incident is also referred to in the book. *Waqua-e-Alamgiri*¹¹ which was a news bulletin of those days in which daily news especially pertaining to the royalty was circulated. The original source has been quoted by Geri Malandra in his research paper. 'The Creation of a Past for Ajanta and Ellora'¹².

The stereotypical Criticism of Aurangzeb has been contradicted here as it appears that Aurangzeb's attitude towards Ellora contradicts the cliché¹³. He visited the caves of Ellora and was so impressed by what appeared to be the work of God (ginn) Aurangzeb describes this place as 'in all season, and particularly in the monsoons, when this hill and the plain below resembles a garden in the luxuriance of its vegetables and the abundance a hundred yards in water tumbled down from the hill. It is a marvelous place for strolling, charming to the eye. Unless one sees it, no written description can correctly picture it. How then my pen adorn the page of my narrative?'¹⁴.

According to another author Waheeda Naseem¹⁵ Aurangzeb get the caves cleaned, the road repaired to the caves and also came often with his nobles, officers and family members. These members These extracts which have been described by his chronicle is an account that is of an

impartial observer who is neither hostile nor a passive observer as it has been discussed from his personal observation.

From the above details, references and accounts which have come from contemporary historians and scholars cannot be denied or every disputed. Later even the Nizam of Hyderabad contributed constructively and is credited with a big share of conservation activities by inviting Italian restores, cleaning the caves and also constructing road from Aurangabad to Ellora. Nizam Hyderabad had even started the Archeological Survey and conserve several old moments of all faiths and religions.

This paper however is restricted to the accounts of only two Muslim ruler especially Alamgir Aurangzeb who has been a controversial figure and much criticized for his attitude towards Hindu temples, therefore the account offers a different face of Aurangzeb and his uncontrolled appreciation of the Ellora Cave temples.

References:-

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4. Ibid - Ali Raunaq pg. 115.
5. Ibid – Ali Raunaq pg.

6. Baig Mirza Agha - Haqiqate – Malik – Ambar, Aurangabad 1991. Pg. 69, 70.
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13. Ibid - pg. 12.
14. Ibid - pg. 21.

Waheeda Naseem; Aurangabad – Malik – Ambar – Se – Alamgiri Ta