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GRT THE LEGACY OF DECCANI SULTANATES TO CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI

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Abstract: *After the dissolution of Bahamani sultanate, five sultanates sprang up at the end of fifteenth century in the Deccan. These sultanate ruled Deccan around 200 years. About the middle of the seventeenth century, Maratha political power under Shivaji revived in the Deccan. Various social, political, geographical causes with the extraordinary military genius of Shivaji were responsible for this phenomenon. But predominantly the Maratha kingdom was established on the land of Adil Shah and Nizam Shah. Therefore an attempt is made here to understand the legacy of these Deccani sultanates to Chhatrapati Shivaji.*

Key words: Bahamani sultanate ,Nizam Shahi Sultanate ,policy of religious tolerance and freedom .

INTRODUCTION:

Surendranath Sen argues that, “Shivaji was not the creator of a new system. He modified and reformed what he had inherited from his Hindu and Muhamedan predecessors. Every administrative system has its roots in the past and the Maratha system was by no means an exception.”¹ Shivaji’s real greatness lay in his character and practical ability. He was ready to accept good and applicable things from the predecessors. “Ferishta tells us how difficult the Bahamani kings found it to tackle the mountain chiefs of Maharashtra. They had again won fresh laurels under the celebrated Malik Ambar, when the Mughal forces of the great Akbar had to beat an ignominious retreat before them. Shivaji therefore found the material for an efficient army readymade”.²

The purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss the legacy of Adil Shahi and Nizam Shahi sultanate to Shivaji and analyze how this legacy helpful to Shivaji in the establishment of Maratha kingdom.

1.Legacy of Nizam Shahi Sultanate

The legacy of Nizam Shahi sultanate is that of Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar was the man who definitely credited for that rich and valuable legacy left to the subsequent Maratha builders of Swarajya, Shahaji and Shivaji, in the form of sound revenue system, effective guerilla warfare to keep at bay even a mighty, formidable and determined power, enlightened policy of religious tolerance and freedom in order to enlist the sympathy and support of followers of other religious creeds and sects and lastly, kept the torch of freedom in the Deccan.

1.1 Land Revenue System

Malik Ambar is respectfully remembered for having surveyed much of the rural western Deccan and for placing the region’s revenue administration on a firm and just basis. “After subjugating the environs of Ahmednagar and

capturing the fort in Jamadi I, 1019/October 1610 he organized his military system, recruited new soldiers, and trained them in the guirilla tactics of fighting. In the interregnum between the recall of Khan-i-khanan to the north & his return to the Deccan again in 1021/1612 he introduced the revenue reform on the basis of Todar Mals’s system with minor changes to suit the local conditions.”³ This was the best system and later on Shivaji also adopts it with some changes. “About 1636 A.D. Dadaji Kondeo, introduced a system of revenue settlement which was admittedly borrowed from that of Malik Ambar. Shivaji also adhered to the revenue system of Malik Ambar”⁴ Land revenue settlements was one of the reason of Shivaji being admired by his subjects

1.2 Effective Guerilla Warfare or ‘Bargigiri’

Malik Amber saved Nizam Shahi from Mughals with the help of guerilla warfare.

It is also revealing that the Mughal term for guerrilla warfare, bargi-giri, referred to units of Marathas-indigenous Marathi-speaking warriors-who were trained by the state and paid directly out of the state’s central treasury. Light and swift, Maratha cavalymen in Malik Ambar’s service wielded deadly effect on the Mughals’ cumbersome armies; on occasion they pursued Mughal troopers clear up to their regional headquarters at Burhanpur.”⁵ Under Malik Ambar the Maratha’s in large number able to learn this technique. Shahaji and Shivahi also used this kind of warfare.

“These two Maratha leaders also learned from Malik Ambar the lesson of how two wage war against a rival powerful state. He was the predecessor of Shivaji in actively and successfully prosecuting the guerilla warfare. Under Malik Ambar, the Marathas, known as Bargirs, received training and attained skill in this mode of warfare, which was

occasionally followed by Shahaji and Shivaji had learnt from Malik Ambar.”⁶

Shivaji utilized bargi-giri for establishment as well as survival of the swaraj.

1.3 Religious Tolerance

Religious tolerance must be the essential virtue of the great rulers. Malik Ambar himself followed this policy very well, and inspired Marathas to follow it. “Malik Ambar seems to have imparted by his example to the Marathas the wisdom of the policy of religious toleration. One can be a zealous devotee of one’s own religion, give encouragement to it and the institutions upholding its cause and yet tolerate the pursuit of another religious by others without injuring their feelings, and interfering with their customs and practices in any way. This policy was scrupulously and sedulously practiced and followed by Malik Ambar, which was taken to heart and acted upon very successfully by shahaji and Shivaji.”⁷

1.4 Torch of Freedom in the Deccan

Malik Ambar with his work and achievement kept the torch of freedom or Swarajya fully lightened in the Deccan and handed it to Shahaji and Shivaji for the task.

“The history of Malik Ambar is one of traditional link between the passage of old type of the Deccani Muslim rulers and the new form of the Deccani Hindu rulers, such as Shahaji and Shivaji. To these two persons, father and son, fortunately he had left a rich political legacy, which stood them in good stead in time to come. The history of these persons, when seen in proper sequential perspective, affords a chain of admiral bond among them. Evidently, what Shahaji endeavored was a reflection of Malik Ambar’s achievement, and what Shivaji did was but a continuity of Shahaji’s mission in his life with an interruption of only a year or so (1636 to 1637 A.D.)”⁸

Shivaji very confidently took the charge of this torch, inspired his subject to fueled it and succeed to the brightened the whole Deccan.

2. LEGACY OF ADIL SHAHI SULTANATE

Adil Shah was the ‘predecessor’⁹ as well as contemporary sultanate to Shivaji and kept very important legacy to Shivaji in the form of trained administrator, Poona as a power base to Shivaji and importance given to public language in the court.

2.1 Trained Administrator

Adil Shahi sultan utilizes all potential among the subject for administration..

“We recognize two basically different categories of administrative staffs in Adil Shahi sultanate. One is the Hindu indigenous hereditary officers, often collectively called deshak and another were the ‘sultan’s bureaucrats’, whom we can call crown bureaucrats.”¹⁰ This stood up the administration very balance. Sultan Ibrahim I also continued this work of encouragement to indigenous people in the administration.

“The customs which prevailed in the reign of Ismael Adil Shah were wholly laid aside; and the public

accounts, formerly kept in Persian, were now written in Hindvy, under the management of bramins, who soon acquired great influence in his government.”¹¹ Thus Adil Shah utilizes Hindu caliber to strengthen the state.

“Basic features of Bijapur’s administrative system had been the direct linkages between the sultan and the desais, unmediated by any jagirdars or bureaucrats. The sultan provided the desai with political legitimacy by identifying him as the court’s representative among the people of his pargana.”¹² Such a desai later on proves helpful to Shivaji.

As Hiroshi Fukazawa clear, “The Muslim rulers of the Deccan, on finding the prototype of the hereditary officers, adopted them, and defined their functions and fixed the means of their remuneration in terms of Muslim concepts so that they could be utilized as indigenous local agents to the Muslim ruling power.”¹³ Though sultan utilized these people as indigenous local agents for their power, but they also received training of administration. Such trained administrator later on plays key role in administration under Shivaji.

2.2 Poona as Power base to Shivaji

The Sultan seems to be careful in administration only for important places.

“The sultan’s direct appointees controlled only the large, strategically important forts. (Many smaller forts and fortified houses were held, as we have seen, by indigenous desh mukh families, mainly Marathas.) The large forts had villages attached to the grant for their maintenance of the fort and its complement of soldiers. This practice was equally true for northern Maharashtra, and had been for the whole period of Ahmednagar’s rule.”¹⁴ This system provides enough command to desh mukhs on such areas where sultan pays little attention over its administration.

“Shivaji, a son of the kingdom’s Maratha general Shahaji Bhonsale, was beginning to emerge in Sultan Muhammad’s reign as the leader of a movement to establish an independent Maratha power in the Western Ghats. Busily occupied in the Karnataka wars, Shahaji had lost contacts with and effective control over his own jagir, or land holding, in the extreme northwest corner of the kingdom. He had also lost control over his son Shivaji, who was using the Poona jagir as a power base for his own political movement. Finally, in 1646 the young Maratha chieftain seized control of his father’s jagir in Poona. According to ‘Adilshahi usages, as also with Mughal usage, the term jagir designated an area of land whose revenue were assigned to a noble, or jagirdar, who agreed to use such revenues to support military contingents that he would lead in service of the Sultan. Shivaji’s seizure of his father’s jagir therefore did not deprive the government of the land revenue coming from the jagir since such revenues had already been alienated to Shahaji, who was the official jagirdar; and in any event shahaji and his considerable Maratha cavalry were still fighting for the Adilshahi government in the Karnataka. Thus, the nature of the system that permitted Shivaji’s rise to power was such that the court’s loss of control over land-any land-did not matter so long as it could still exact the loyalty and military contingents from the jagirdar who claimed that land as his

jagir.”¹⁵ This legacy of Poona as power base understood well by Shivaji and utilized it for swaraj.

2.3 Importance to the public language

The general nature of Adil Shahi sultanate seems to be secular so they tried to use the language of subjects even at court also. Sultan Ibrahim I try to do it,

“The customs which prevailed in the reign of Ismaeel Adil Shah were wholly laid aside; and the public accounts, formerly kept in Persian, were now written in Hindvy, under the management of bramins, who soon acquired great influence in his government.”¹⁶

During the rule of Ibrahim II “At court, even the language reflects this syncretism. The court was dominated by “Dakkanis,” that is Muslims who had been living in the south for generations. Their language was a mixture of the Arabic and Persian of their origins, the North Indian Urdu of their past, the Sanskrit of the Brahmins, and the Marathi, Telegu, and Kanada of their subjects. This “Dakkani” language became the official language at courts as well as the practical language of the bazaar and the camp. We know, for example, that Ibrahim II spoke better Dakkani and Marathi than he did Persian.”¹⁷ This influences on Shivaji’s major taken to promote marathi language in the administration after coronation.

3. LEGACY OF BOTH THE SULTANATES

Adil Shah and Nizam Shah collectively left the legacy to Shivaji as to support other Deccani states against common enemies, eternal warfare with the Mughal and regional understanding and joint venture.

3.1 To Support other Deccani States against Common Enemy

Deccani states shows unity against the common enemy as they defeated Vijayanagara kingdom in the battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D. Even while fighting with the Mughals also they show such kind of unity.

“Malik Ambar sent many petitions to Adil Shah, who was inclined to please him and sent himself to cherish him because of Ambar’s bravery and the battles he had fought with the Mughals. Every desire that Ambar had was fulfilled, even to the extent of his sending a man and asking for the fort of Qandahar, which had belonged to Nizam Shah in olden times but had fallen into the hands of Adil Shah’s troops, saying, “It is my design to fight the Mughal troops so long as life remains in this body. It may be that through Your Majesty’s daily increasing fortune I shall expel the Mughals from the Deccan. It would not be far from your royal grace to grant me the fort of Qandahar, which your officers have captured again after the olden times.” Adil Shah granted the prayer, and gave him that fort. When Ambar got possession of Qandahar, a new splendour and strength was gained by him, and his power daily increased.”¹⁸ Malik Ambar convince Adilshah to support him and Golkonda also ready for such a support.

“A Dutch merchant, Peter Gilles Van Ravestejn, informs us that Malik Ambar had at that time the supreme command over the three combined armies of Ahmednagar, Golkonda and Bijapur, which were then fighting with the

great Mogul. He had at that time presented himself a protector of the independence of the Deccan States.”¹⁹ Shahaji also ask Adil Shah to support him, “Shahaji told the Adil Shah that he would function as a buffer state between the Bijapuris and the Mughals, and thereby protect the former.”²⁰ Adil Shah gave support to Shahaji. “We must see the support given to Shahaji by Bijapur as the result of a factional dispute which pitted those who favored propping up the failing Ahmednagar state at all costs against the Mughals.”²¹ So this legacy continued at the time of Shivaji and both of them help each other in a critical struggle against Mughal.

3.2 Eternal Warfare with the Mughals for the Survival

Adil Shahi as well as Nizam Shahi both faced Mughal attack as it was imperial policy of annexing the whole South India. Nizam Shahi try to survive with Great Spirit under the leadership of Malik Ambar and Shahaji Bonsale for 35 years even after the loss of Ahmednagar, but finally it came to an end by the Mughals. Adil Shah managed to survive by signing ‘Deed of Submission,’²² in 1636. But it was a just a breathing time. The completion of annexation was only a question of time. So it was the eternal warfare with the Mughals for the survival of the Deccani States. Shivaji understood it and prepare for the warfare and some time attack on them.

“The past history of Mughal expansion into the Deccan since the days of Akbar, was warning to Shivaji, every Deccani power was bound to wage eternal warfare with the Mughals if it wished to survive. Hence Shivaji lost no chance of robbing Mughal territory in the Deccan.”²³

3.2 Regional Understanding and Joint Ventures

Being the Deccani states they show regional understanding and ready for joint ventures. “A Dutch merchant, Peter Gilles Van Ravestejn, informs us that Malik Ambar had at that time the supreme command over the three combined armies of Ahmednagar, Golkonda and Bijapur. He had at that time presented himself a protector of the independence of the Deccan States, and was an excellent general and organizer.”²⁴

To maintain the regional balance in Deccan Malik Ambar and Shahaji Bhonsle shows the regional understanding, make collective efforts against the Mughal.

“Under Malik Ambar, the units of Maratha cavalry in Ahmednagar’s service grew from 10,000 in 1609 to 50,000 in 1624. The different quarters of Khirki, the town near Daulatabad name after prominent Maratha chiefs– i.e., Malpura, Khelpura, Paraspura, Vithapura. In fact Ahmednagar sultanate under Ambar’s direction had effectively become a joint Habshi-Maratha enterprise.”²⁵

Thus Chhatrapati Shivaji obtained enormous legacy from these sultanates. That proves helpful to him in the establishment of Maratha power.

CONCLUSION

Adilshahi dynasty utilized the representative social strata of the Maratha’s to the large extent and depended heavily upon them for carrying on almost all the aspects of

daily local administration of the sultanate. A result of this situation was that, about the middle of the seventeenth century, a great number of Maratha's acquired the techniques of daily administration amidst the Adilshahi rule. Hence the great rise, the rapid expansion, and the quick consolidation of Shivaji power resulting in the establishment of a solid Maratha kingdom was made institutionally possible only by the positive support and active participation of a large number of those Maratha's who had trained themselves in the administrative routines under the Adilshahi rule. The administrative foundation for the rise of the Maratha's may therefore be said to have been prepared in the Adilshahi sultanate. In case of Nizam Shahi, the legacy of it to the Maratha's was the Malik Ambar. His claim to fame lies in his genius as the initiator of a new system of military tactics called 'Bargier', for this purpose, for the first time in the history he trained and made use of light Maratha cavalry and thus laid the foundation of future greatness of the Maratha nation. Malik Ambar inculcated the loyalty of the Maharashtra peasant's by his land reforms and established direct connection between the cultivator and the government. Malik Ambar's control over the watander's was remarkable.

Shivaji understand the legacy of these sultanate very well, shows great respect to it and with an excellent adaptation skill adopt it and made the necessary modification according to the situation, and gave good kingdom to the people.

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