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Centres of Educational Learning in Mughal India 1526-1707AD. A Historical Approach

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Abstract

The advent of the mughals in Indian soil started a new era in the field of culture and education. Most of the mughal emperors made great contribution to learning and famous for patronizing different fields of education. Education during the mughal period in India received great impetus from the sovereign. They were patrons of learning and learned men and their enlightened patronage drew many of them to their courts. Almost in all parts of the country mosques were constructed. Higher education was imparted in madrasa which were usually established in towns which were the capital seat of mughal ruler. This paper discuss the role played by mughal ruler in promoting education and knowledge through establishing of madrasa, patronizing scholars and theologian and giving grants to institutions. Education was a private concern but inspite of this the mughal emperors were great patrons of learning and literature.

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Introduction

Education during the mughal rule in India, received a great impetus from the sovereigns. They were patrons of learning and learned men and their enlightened patronage drew many of them to their courts. The aims of the educational policy of most of the mughal sovereigns were motivated by the noble principles that as far as possible knowledge from the arts and sciences should not disappear from this world. For the attainment of this end, they liberally patronized learned scholars and men of talent irrespective of race, caste or creed and they were established numerous educational institutions with rich endowments and other grants.

As soon as the mughal arrived in India, they established settlements, which eventually developed into big towns. With the passage of time these towns became the important Centers of educational learning and culture.

Higher education was imparted in madrasa which were usually established in towns, towns which were the capital seat of mughal ruler or the headquarter of some subhadhar usually grew into famous educational Centers. ^[1]

Each seat of higher educational learning specialized in one particular branch. For instance the Delhi schools of shah waliullah, specialized in the traditions (Hadis) and exegis

(tafsir), the farangi mahal school of Lucknow specialized in the grammar. This might have been the reason for the constant migration of schools from one city to another in search of suitable teacher. Sometimes colleges were also established in villages such as sohali and bilgarm close to Lucknow, gopanaw and kharabd in Oudh were at one time famous seat of learning. ^[2]

Chief Seats of Higher Learning

Agra: Agra was founded by Sikandar Lodi during his reign who himself resided there. During the reign of Akbar as it became the centre of government of the empire of Delhi and one of the chief cities of Hindustan. ^[3]

During the mughal period Agra was a famous seat of higher learning for the people. Many colleges of Islamic learning were established by the mughal emperor's themselves and also by their nobles and the learned scholars. A large number of advanced scholars flocked to there to take lesson from renowned scholar's sajjid shah Mir of samara, his hospice assumed the appearance of big college. The famous teacher mirza muflis, the uzbek taught for four years in the Jami masjid of khawaja muin -ud- din farakhbadi at agra. ^[4]

Akbar founded a madrasa known as madrasa Akbarabadi in Agra. Chalpi beg a savant of Shiraz was invited to teach here and appointed its principal.

During Akbar reign Agra became an important Center of Islamic education and culture as well as arts and crafts. Numerous scholars, philosophers, poets and artistes came to Agra from different parts of the country. The period of Akbar reign can definitely be called the golden age of progress of Agra. [5]

Jahangir has written in his memoirs that the inhabitants of Agra involved themselves in the acquirement of crafts and in attainment of knowledge. Various professors of every religion and creed used to come to this city for the acquisition of knowledge. There were numerous educational institutions in this city either founded by mughal sovereigns and their nobles. [6]

Jahangir was so much interested in the promotion of education and learning that as soon as he ascended the throne he repaired even those makhtabs and madrasas where birds and beats had made their dwelling for more than three decades.

Jahangir stipulated that if any wealthy man died leaving an heir, his property was to be confiscated by the state and its proceeds utilized for the upkeep and maintenance of madrasa. [7]

Shahjahan established a government school at Agra and the teachers were directly appointed by the emperor. Jahanara build a madrasa known as madrasa jami masjid and created a trust for its maintenance.

Agra enjoyed a prominent position as a center of education through that the mughal period. The mughal emperors, nobles and learned scholars such as mir kalan harawi and sheikh zain ud din khafi established many other of Islamic learning.

Fatehpur Sikri: Was another important Center of learning. During the reign of Akbar numerous schools and khanqah were set up in this city. He built colleges at Fatehpur Sikri. Abdul kadir, sheikh faizi and Nizamuddin were some scholars who taught at Fatehpur Sikri.

Akbar had built a madrasa known as madras Akbar on the top the hillock at the instance of shaik salim-bin-bahauddin chisti. The emperor also appointed several theologian as teachers of this institution at handsome remuneration. Some of colleges built by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri were residential while there non-residential.

Abul fazal also established a madrasa at Fatehpur Sikri which was known as madrasa Abul Fazl. [10]

Delhi: Delhi was the capital of Mughal Empire for a long time and such it was an older education centre for the mughal. Delhi's significance lies in the fact that not only the mughal sovereigns but also enlightened nobles and other interested persons built in Delhi a number of madrasa and several other institutions which enhanced the fame and glory of the city as a centre of learning during the mughal period. Mulla chisti of Hussain baghdadi of akbar reign and Muhammad chisti of kannauj of Shahjahan's reign were famous schools of centre. [11]

Among the many important madrasas of Delhi were humayun's madrasa built in the honour of zain - ud - khafi. This madrasa was founded for the purpose of conducting education in geography and astronomy.

The tomb of humayun also served as important educational institution. Madrasa of mahan begum which perhaps founded in 1561 as appears from the name of its building khair ul manzil.

It was residential madrasa and students lived in the rooms of both storeys and classes were held in the hall. Abdul Kadir Badauni had received education in this madrasa. [12]

Jahangir founded the madrasa sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith. It was institution of higher learning along with a supporting trust for Sheikh Abdul Haq bin well known Scholar of traditions belonging to Delhi. The credit of introduction growth and popularization of the science of tradition in India goes to this madrasa. [13]

Shahjahan founded a madrasa known by the name of Darul baqa between 1649. His reign also witnessed the construction of an imperial college in the vicinity of Jami masjid.

One of the queens of Shahjahan fatehpuri begum who built the beautiful fatehpuri masjid constructed a madrasa known as madrasa fatehpuri begum near it 1649. [14]

Madrasa - i- rahamiya known after the name of Abdul Rahim was built during aurangzeb's reign. Madrasa Mir Jumla was founded by Mir Jumla one of the best known grandness of Aurangzeb.

It is to be remembered in this connection that almost all the learned man of this period maintained a band of grandness. [15]

During the later mughal period most of the new madrasa owned their existence not only to royal patronage but to private effort. [16]

Lahore: Lahore was a centre of education and the reputation of its scholars attracted students from places far and near. About Lahore it was said that the poets from various countries would congregate every Friday in masjid Wazir khan and recite the their poetry. [17]

Sialkot: The fame of Sialkot in the province of Punjab, dating from the time of Akbar rested on the fact that paper was easily procurable here.

The eminent Scholar Mullah Abdul hakim Sialkot established a madrasa at Sialkot. Shahjahan gifted a number of villages for meeting the recurring expenses of the madrasa. [18]

Thatta: Theta in the Subha of Sindh was an adobe of many Scholars and processor of various art sciences. Alexder Hamilton visited India during the reign of Aurangzeb and refers to this city as a famous center of learning, the city of Thatta says Hamilton is famous for learning theology, philosophy and politics and they have above 900. Colleges for training. [19]

Jaunpur: Jaunpur was a home for the homeless who were in searching of knowledge. Jaunpur was compared to Shiraz in Persia and called the Shiraz of India. The city of Jaunpur had developed into a splendid and magnificent seat of culture and learning catering to the needs of northern India. This city was in reality a repeated seat of learning and treasure house of education and scholarship from early times. [20]

Sher shah the famous afgan ruler had also received his education in one its numerous college. [21]

We got in detailed account of this university city of Jaunpur from tazkirt-ul-ulama written by Maulana Khairuddin Mohammed Jaunpuri. This city maintained its reputation as a center of learning till days of Mohammad shah. Jaunpur specialized in teaching of history, philosophy, politics and military training. [22]

N.N.Law has lamented the downfall of such town in the following words: like Jaunpur many a great Muslim university has now ceased to exist, leaving behind only a memory of its glory. [23]

Gujarat: According to the writer mukundram a large of makhtabs were established in Gujarat. Sadiq khan was a renowned cultured man of 16th century and he founded a madrasa at Ahmedabad. Gujarat fame as a seat of learning came too enhanced with the accession of Aurangzeb who took special interest in this suba. [25]

Patna: Patna during the period under review had the privilege of being an important seat of learning. In this city persons of diverse traders and professors and especially Scholars and saints found their shelter and contributed liberally towards the promotion of education and learning among the masses. The author of subh -i- sadiq has depicted a very vivid pictures of the educational activities of this city. According to him the city of Patna was a very famous on account of its people of sweet and virtuous disposition. [26]

Conclusion

The above discussion on the educational Centers of higher learning shows that these Centers were found all over the Mughal Empire and imparted education on different branches of learning at higher level.

Thus we see that numerous educational institutions were established by the mughal ruler and their nobles which provided free boarding and lodging to the teacher and students.

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