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### **Historical Importance of Lataif-i-Quddusi**

Lataif-i-Quddusi is an important piece which contains historical information in the form of narratives of Dattu Sherwani. This book was written by Shaikh Ruknuddin, a descendant and the second scion of Abdul Quddus Gangohi, who is generally held to be the first rank of Indian Muslim religious figures. His recorded behaviour shows outstanding nobility of character and wideness of human sympathies of fortituds, although such qualities may be discerned in other Sufi Shaikh. Thus Abdul Quddus's life and personality are worth examining in detail. It would not be out of context to claim that he is a representative figure in whom we find some conflicting tendencies and aspects of Indian Islam and thus represents conflicting tendencies as would be obvious when we will see how he seems to have departed from the sufi practices. There was not dearth of reliable and voluminous information of him in the form of biographical material. Some has disappeared in the ensued battle, fought between Afghani and Mughals to establish supremacy on the

landscape hitherto unknown to them.

Our knowledge of the Lodi, Sur and of the early Mughal period is based almost entirely on either on Mughal works or on the works of Afghan which were written during the reign of Jahangir and Akbar. The fragments of Daulati-Shershahi which contain copies of seventeen farmans of Sher Shah, form the only known contemporary source giving the Afghan point of view. In view of this an eyewitness account of event which has pro-Afghan bias, however fragmentary is a welcome addition to our meager knowledge of the period. A proper study of the Afghan rule in India and of the conflict between the Afghans and of the early Mughal is hampered by the absence of contemporary Afghan sources.

The importance of Lataif-i-Quddusi was brought to light first in 1950 when a short article appeared in the first number of medieval India quarterly, "Lataif-i-Quddusi: a contemporary Afghan source for the study of Afghan-Mughal relationship", by Prof. Syed Noorul Hasan, a faculty in the Department of History, University of Delhi. It was a landmark step as it seems to draw the attention of the historians to the historical contents of this work, as none of the other writers on the political history draw upon it. This seems an unique step as it created an imagination among historians that important sidelights on Indo-Muslim history

are to be found in sufi literature. Although such historical pieces has been written earlier and few eyewitness accounts have reached to us, mostly written many years after the events they chronicle, and the number of these have declined with the sad loss of the Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shah.<sup>1</sup> This piece was the first promising extracts from which were printed in the same number of the medieval India quarterly in which Prof. Hasan's article appeared. The other personal reminiscence of the period, Babur's memoirs and the narratives of Gulbadan etc. are all on the Mughal side. We do not have historical pieces which were written during Suri period and thus we lack information which represent the Afghan's point of view. Prof. Hasan's article was a brief summary of 8 pages but he faulted in not bringing to highlight the important aspect of the text. He did not clearly distinguish between the portion of the text composed by Shaikh Ruknuddin and the portion which represents the reminiscence of an Afghan soldier, Dattu Sherwani. Despite this shortcomings, his essay has developed a new trend among historical academicians, as a horde of historians started searching the important sidelights on Indo-Muslim history.

Thanks to the labour of Prof. Mohd. Habib, K.A. Nizami and Hasan Askari and different others who realized the importance of sidelights, found in Sufi literature.<sup>1</sup> Lataif-i-Quddusi is a collection of anecdotes or Lataifs. It is not a chronicle of events, rather his

narration is discrete. It is a book describing anecdotes regarding the well-known Chishti saint of Sabriya branch, Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi. Abdul Quddus Gangohi is a well-known Sufi of northern India who had lived in the period 1456-1537 A.D.<sup>2</sup> The object of the piece seems to familiarize with an account of the life and the spiritual experience of the saint. The author seems to take extra-cautions to prove the saint's supernatural power. The author of the early portion, that is, from anecdote 1-87, is the son and Sajjada Nasheen of the saint. He has begun the work during his life time and completed it in a few months after the demise of the saint. Despite his attempt to present him his saintliness and the one possessing supra-powers, the piece contains historical information. The anecdotes of Ruknuddin himself, nos. 1-87, bear some interesting incidental historical informations, in particular the anecdote no. 78 and 79 wherein he describes in detail the dispiritedness and foreboding of the Indo-Afghans before Babur's battle of Panipat and his experience as a captive of Babur's forces. Thus we come across historical incidences in which the author himself was in the company of the saint, thus leaving no scope for the reader to cast doubt.

However, the interesting portion of the work is related to those anecdotes which were compiled and added at the behest of one of his sincere disciple, Dattu Sherwani. Dattu was an Afghani military official, who was a disciple of Shaikh Abdul Quddus

Gangohi, when he was away engaged in military activities, he asked Ruknuddin to include those dreams in which his Pir had appeared in dreams and rescued him from some difficulties. Infact, Abdul Quddus was the one who guided him in military intrigues and always informed him about the impending result of the ensued battles. As a sincere disciple, he claimed he had much exterior and interior connections, thus he insicted that these dreams ought to be included in the piece. Thus he wrote down those anecdotes and added in the text.

Dattu describes his meeting with his pir, Abdul Quddus in anecdote 90, which took place after Dattu's return from Gujarat (Anec. 98), which must have been early in 1537, and before the Saint's death which took place around oct. 1537. The other anecdotes are related in chronological order, as can be checked by references to historical events, except on few occasions. In his youth, in the disorders of Ibrahim Lodi's reign, he took part in a battle between the Sherwani and Faramuli in the Panipat (Anec. 90). A year before Babur's invasion in 1525, he was at Badaun (Anecdote 89). We do not have information whether he fought at the battle of Panipat in April, 1526, but he describes in anec. 91 the disorderly flight of the Afghan hosts with their possessions, flocks and families. Although few instances of such flight of some prominent members of the Muslim community could be found in his narrations, who had decided to abandon

North-Western India. As is obvious that north-western India was the scene of battleground and the anticipated victory of Babur's forces over Afghan has created a great panic among inhabitants and thus they tried to relocate to safer places as we know from Ruknuddin's anecdotes of how Shaikh Abdul Quddus has transferred his establishment from Shahabad near Karachi to Gangoh near Saharanpur.

Dattu was in the service of his fellow tribesman, Masnad 'Ali 'Isa Khan Sarawani who in course of time, had great influence in Sher Shah's regime. Dattu crossed the Saryu river along with Isa Khan and all the families of the Sarwani went into the province of Bihar. This gave an opportunity to regroup Afghans under the leadership of Mahmood Lodi as Babur was pre-occupied with the forces of Rana of Chittor. Although Afghans in Bihar were pleased that they had leader now but they could not resist the Babur's forces who marched against Afghan, soon they melted away and Mahmood Lodi fled to his brother-in-law, Nusrat Shah of Bengal. Dattu states that the Sarawani and Nauhanis went to Balapath, where Raja Bir Singh Dev, evidently the Baghela ruler of Bhata, ancestor of the Maharaja of Rewah, assigned villages to them and they stayed there for about two decades (Anec. 94). In the anec. 95 he states that he spent two years with the Sarawani households at Balapath from 1528 to 1530 A.D. In the fresh Afghan offensive from Bihar which was led by Mian Bibban and Shaikh Bayazid at Jampur, he might be part of that offensive

as he states in anec. 96 that from Balapath the writer and Malik Roop Chand were with Mian Bibban. He says he set out for the fort of Mandu along with his companions. This must be after Humayun had defeated Bayazid and Bibban at Damoh, probably in 1532. Forced out of that place, Bibban went to the Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat who was a rising force and had harboured design on Agra, the capital of Mughal for help. It seems Dattu and Bibban were part of the Bahadur's army during the second siege of Chittor, which took place in March 1535. In the anec. 96 he describes how they were trapped with the rest of In the the army by Humayun forces at Mandasaur.

anec. 97, he describes the difficulties of escapement from Mandasaur to Burhanpur in Khandesh and also narrates how he joined the forces of Bibban which went southwards and encamped outside the town of Jalagaon in the kingdom of Imadshahi. The Afghans packed up their tents and went away to Bushanpur. Thereafter, Dattu joined Alauddin Lodi, brother of Sikandar Lodi, who was once of the distinguished refugees at It is said that when Sultan Alauddin Lodi reached Bahadur's court. the fort of Janpaneer, he put Dattu in charge of his Pargana of Dholqa in Gujarat, which he quit, as his pir had come to him in dreams and directed him to leave the place (Andc. 100). He passed through Champaner and Mandu and reached to his family in Balapath. This must have taken place between February and March, 1537. Then we do not find any references of historical

incidence in the next three years of his military career. At any time in 1537, he might have visited the Agra fort where his pir was residing and narrated him whole historical incidences.

In the anec. 102, he describes the battle of Shersah and Humayun which was fought in Qinnauj in May, 1540. At Humayun's entry into Bengal in 1538, Sher Khan escaped with his army by Jharkhand (through the bushes of Chhotanagpur). However, before the battle of Qinnauj, Shersah had vanquished the Humayun's forces in Chausa in 1539 which was a surprise attack and thus making it difficult for Dattu to dream about the outcome. Humayun retreated to Lahore and after sometime Masnad 'Ali, Dattu's old and trusted patron, was in charge of the troublesome district of Sambhal and Dattu was sent to administer the Parganas assigned to Isa Khan for salary (Anec. 103). His friend and neighbour in Balapat, Mian Babu was evidently with him (Anec. 106).

.1. Religion and politics in India during the 13th century, Aligarh, 1961, Hasan Askari, "Historical Value of Sufi hagiographical works of the Sultanate", proceedings of 26th Congress of orientalist, Delhi, 1964. M. Habib, "Chishti Mystic Records of the Sultanate Period" in Medieval India Quarterly, Aligar, Vol.I, October, 1950, pp.1-42, K.A. Nizami, Introduction to Khainu Majalis are some of the works.

2 The date 1456 is given by Ijazul Haq Quddusi, op. cit., p.168 on the authority of an Urdu Translation of Mohd. Ghawshis,



Gulzar-i-Akbar.

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3. Haq Quddusi, Academy of Educational Conference, Karachi, 1961.
4. Tarikh-i-Mashaikh-i-Chishti, Karanchi, 1975.