EDUCATION IN MEDIEVAL IRAN AND NIZAMIYYAH MADRASAS

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Before the emergence of full time Madrasas, instruction, in the "Islamic Sciences" had orginally been given in mosques without any fees, and this practice continued. At first they may have consisted merely of a room or hall and library. In course of time living quarters for the students were added and funds made available for their support. To this latter form of institution the name Madrasa is given. The first such college seems to have been founded in Nishapur before 960A.D and this was followed within the century by several others. The movement of Madrassa - Founding was vigorously encouraged by Nizamul-Mulk.[1]

There are some sources which suggest that before Nizamiyah, Madrasa, some earlier cases are known'' but this is certain that Nizamul Mulk was the first to provide ''scholarships" for the students. Moreover ,he fixed budgets for these Madrasa. He founded at least nine Nizamiyah colleges, scattered from Mosul to Herat, and they were lavishly endowed. In 1077 A.D Nishapur had enjoyed relative peace under the Saljuqs for nearly forty years, whereas Baghdad had been the scene of strife, which must have made academic work different till after the Saljuq occupation in 1055 A.D It might, therefore, be expected that

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1 Watt,W.M : A study of al -Ghazali , Edin Burgh , 1963, P-22

the level of academic attainment in the region of Nishapur would be among the highest in Islamic world. [2]

Towards the end of 1065 A.D 457A.H Nizamul - Mulk began to build a Madrasa at Baghdad, which was opened in September 1067AD. It started in Dul Hijjah 457 A.H. and completed on 10th of the Diqadah 459 A.H.[3]

This Madrass was known as Nizamiyah. In the same way in each and every city of Iraq, Khuraran especially Asphan, Bulkh, Nishapur, Herat Basrah, Tabristan and Mosual, etc. Madrasas were constructed. Moreover a hospital was built at Nishpur, which also was named Nizamiyah.[4]

But the sources suggest that before Nizamiyah Madrasas, these used to exist Madrasas in several Iranian cities. For example, in Nishapur a Madrasa known as Baihaqiyah was existing there before Nizamiyah. There was a Madrasa known as Saadiyah established by the Governor of Nishapur, Amir Nasr Ibn Subktageen, brother of Sultan Mahood Ghazzanavi. There were two other Madrasas existing prior to Nizamiyah in Nishapur, which were founded by Abu Saeed Ismail Ibn Ali Ibn Masnah Ustarabadi, who was a Sufi preacher, and the other was mainly constructed for Abu Ishaqh Asfaraini. There were schools founded in other cities of Iran as well.[5]

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2 Ibid. P-22

3 *Ibn Khallikan*, as quoted in *Jalaludin Homai, Ghazzali Namah (Persian). Sharh Ahwal, Wa Aasar Wa Aquaid, Wa Afkar-i-Abdi Wa, Mazhabi wa Falsafi wa Irfani*, Tehran, 1383.A.H.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid, pp. 34-35.

But despite these facts, a group of historians like Bhabı, Ibn Khallikan and Subhi insist that Nizamul Mulk was the first to have founded these Madrasas.[6]

But at the same time it is mentioned that though there were Madrasas existing before Nizamıyah in Nishapur, but the credit goes to Nizamul Mulk who provided students with all kinds of facilities.[7]

The Madrasas were virtually founded by the government. The other sources of income were community endownments (Wakf) and donations granted by the rich people.[8]

Nizamul Mulk thus, though not the first person to have established Madrasas in Nisahpur, yet gave a new style and direction to their foundations.

The educational institutions flourished during his period and academics came up. There was no city, where a school and a Madrasa was not found.[9]

In an isolated Island, Jaziratul-al-Ibn-Al-Umar a big Madrasa was found. Allama Qazwini has mentioned in "Aasarul-Al-Baladayn" that the annual budget allocated to these Madrasas was about six lac Ashrafies and one tenth of the government endownments was spent on education. The "Ashrafi" of the Saljuj period was equivalent to about twenty five rupees of our times, which means that about one crore and fifty lac rupees were spend on education

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6 Subki, *Tabaqqat-Al-Shafiyah*. Vol. III, p. 137.

7 Ibid.

8 Mujtaba Minuvi Ghazzali-Tawai, In: *Iran Namah* (Persian), New York, P. 558.

9 Rawzatayn Fi-Akhbar -il-Al-Daulataya. Quoted in *Al-Ghazzali* (Urdu Shibli) Noamani-Azamgarh, 1956, p. 14.

annually. This amount was besides the special grant provided by Nizamul Mulk for this purpose.[10]

Moreover, Nizamul Mulk initiated the system of educational budget. He imposed educational tax on the income. In this way the imposition of educational tax is his innovation too.[11]

The basic purpose of Mizamul Mulk apparantly by founding these Madrasas was to promote religious education and strength the ways of Ahli-Al-Sunnah in contradition to Shia, especially the Fatimids.[12]

The Hanbalities seem to have been still furious at the very existence of the Nizamiyah Madrasa and at every one connected with it. Because during this period there were fierce rivalries going on between the Hanbalities and Asharites.[13]

Nizamiyah Madrasa was established in 459 A.H. when Ghazaali was only nine years of age. The student who could complete their education in a competitively excellent manner was provided with a residential quarter and a scholarship to enable him to reach to higher academic positions, which could serve as a prelude to his high worldly professions.[14]

Thus this education would provide the learner with ambitious career as well. Nizamiyah Madrasa made provisions for the physical needs of its students and the model for later institutions of higher learning. The education which was advocated by these madrasa was

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10 Assarul-Al-Babadayn. In *Al-Ghazzali Shibhi Noamani*. op.cit.. 14.

11 Ibrahim Amadi Nadwi. *Musalman Sainsdan Aur Unki Khidmat* (Urdu. Aehasant, Ramput, 1989, p. 207.

12 *Ghazzali Namah*, op.cit p. 51

13 *Mualim Intellectual*. op.cit. p. 51.

14 *Mujtaba Minivi*, op.cit p. 558.

"adequate for the growing demands of the state. It was an education limited to the imparting of knowledge for utilitarian purposes, to secure government employment and to gain position and prestige, comfort and wealth security and ease.[15]

Moreover, sometimes politics doubtless entered into the appointment and demotion of professors, in ways which have not been properly studied. [16] For men in such circumstances their whole careers would depend on worldly calculations of political advantage and disadvantage.[17]

Moreover, sometimes the denominational consideration also determined the appointments of the teachers in Nizamiyah Madrasas. Nizamul Mulk respect for the Sharefi scholars. He selected Shaiefi scholars for the Nizamiyah. It is for the same reason that Nizamiyah Baghdad and for that matter other Nizamiyah Madrasas had a particular colour of Shaiefi school of thought.[18]

On the other hand Sultan Malik Shah was a follower of Hanafi school.[19] He established a Madrasa in Asphan in the locality of Karram, where the Hanafites and Shaiefites were regarded at par with each other.

There was a Madrasa Nizamiyah in Aspaphan which was named after its renowned teacher Sadruddin Khujandi and called "Sadriyyah". According to Muffazzil Ibn Sad Ibn Hussain Mufrukhi Asphani (a 5th centuary Hijrah scholar), it is worth ten thousand dinar endownments (Muqufah) of its own. This Madrasa was

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15 Nabih Amin Firis, (ed.) *The Arab Heritage*, Princeton University, New Jersey, pp. 142-143.

16 *Muslim Intellectual*. op.cit p. 116.

17 Ibid, p. 116

18 *Ghazzali Namah*, op.cit p.133.

19 Ibid, p. 132.

given under the control of a famous Shaeifite dynasty (Khujandi) of Asphan. In opposition to this Saaediyyah dynasty was heading the Hanafis of Asphan. The sur name of "Rukun-ad-din" was prevalent among the Hanafi heads and that of "Sadruddin" among the Shaefis.

Some important scholars of Khujandi dynasty occupied the seats of professorship in Nizamiyah or were custodians of the Auquf (community endownments) Abul Muzaffar Ibn Khujandi was killed in 496 A.H. in Ray. Ibn Aseer narrates about the events of 496 A.H.

"He was killed in Ray, when he was delivering a sermon by an Alawid, when he was descending from the pupit. The Alawid also was killed on the spot. Al-Khujandi was burried in the city of Khujandah, which is a big city on the bank of Saihoon from Eastern Iran, in Almata.[20] It is said that Nizamul Mulk used to listen Abu Bakr Mohammad Ibn Thabit Khujandi in Marro and was impressed by his oratory. He called him to Asphan and was appointed as a professor there, where Nizamul Mulk used to visit him.[21]

Ibn Jawzi says in his famous book in relation to the events of 496 A.H.

"Abul Muzaffar Al Khujandi, a Shafie jurist, a professor in Asphan is related to Al-Muhlab Ibn Abi Safrah was killed by an Alawid in Ray during a clash between Shias and Sunnis. The assassinee was killed later on."[22]

Abul Qasim Masud Ibn Khujandi was a leader of Shafietes in Asphan during the rule of Burkiyaruq (486-498) A.H. who was an ardent opponent of the Batiniyyah, and

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20 *Insab-as-Samaani Wa Muajamul al-Baldan.*

21 *Ibn Aseer Fi-Waqaih Sanatah*, 496 A.H.

22 Ibn Jawazi; *Al-Mumtazim*, Vol. 9,Narration of events in the year 496.

responsible for the persecution of Batimiyyah, and whosoever, found to be identified as a Batiniyyah, was burnt alive. Therefore, he was called "the master of hell". (Malik-I-Duzakh)".[23]

Abdul Latif Ibn Muhammad Ibn Thabit Khubandi was also among the Shafietes of Asphan who was very influential. He too was killed by Ismailis in 523 A.H.

Sadruddin Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abdul Latif Ibn Muhammad Ibn. Thabit Khujandi was an Asphai - Shaifite a courtier, appointed, as a Professor in Baghdad. On his death on 22nd Shawal 522, great tension gripped Asphan.[24]

In the Nizamiyah M<adrassas, there was a well organised system of Libraries, the Library was called Khazana, and the Librarian "Khazin darul Kitab". The selection of the librarian was made from the section of the Ulama and scholars. The status of a professor was above all people and were selected directly by the court of the rulers. Every professor used to have a repetiteur (Mueed) to assist him. Moreover, there used to be a "Waiz" (Maitre de cufereunce) who delivered lectures on selected occasions.[25]

The scholarly polemical discussions were a ladder to success and a means to prove ones academic excellence. It was because of this reason that big polemical assemblies were organized in the course of nobles and rich people. Thus scholarly polemics was the order of the day. A person who excelled in polemical discussions won the day. In the big cities polemical gatherings were arranged and people thronged to such gatherings. It was perhaps for the same reason that polemics itself became a science and hundreds

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23 *Ghazzali Namah*, op. at p. 135.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid, p. 132.

of books were written on this subject.[26] These debates, discussions and symposia were recorded in forms of books, treatises and monographs. Tabaqqat-al-Shafiah, of Subki and other books are replete with the details of such subjects.

However, the most famous persons who earned name in these discussions were scholars like, Abul Maali al-Juwaini and Sheikh Abu Ishaqh Shirazi.[27]

In Jamiah Mansur Baghdad such discussions took place between Qazi Abul Taib and Abul Hassan Tallaqani. Another discussions are recorded between Abu Ishaqh and Abul Maali Juwaini in Nishapur, between Abu Ishaqh Asfraini and Qazi Abul Jabbar Mutazili and in Nishapur between Qazi Abdul Taib and Abdul Hassan Hanafi. [28]

Apart from former lectures, the professors used to arrange lectures and lessons at their respective residences for the wider dissemination of knowledge to the learner.

In these schools the medium of instruction generally was Arabic but sometimes explanations and meanings were made in Persian language for the convenience of beginners as well.[29]

Muyeed used to repeat the delivered lessons and explain the difficult portions also.[30]

The zeal for acquisition of knowledge was such that the students were travelling to far and wide if they came to

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26 *Shibli Noamani*, op.cit pp. 14-15.
27 *Al-Tabaqqat-us-Shafiayah al-Kubra*. Vol. 3, p. 182.
28 Ibid, pp. 100-109, 114, 182, 189.
29 *Mujtaba Minuvi*, op.cit p. 558.
30 Ibid, p. 559.

know about the presence of a good scholar in their native places or any Madrasa other than their own.[31]

Discussions took place in these residential Madrasas. The students exchanged their views. Books were exchanged among the scholars and were presented a gifts on the special occasions.

The spread of these Nizamiyah Madrasas were responsible for producing some stalewarts in various fields of academics and literature. Famous scholars were the scholarship holders from these Madrasas. Anwari Abewaridi and Zaheer Faryabi, two famous poets were students of Nizamiyah Nishpur, Rashiduddin Wat-watt a poet and famous calligrapher was the product of Nizamiyah Bulkh. Moreover, he was the court poet of Khwarazam Shah. Famous poet Saadi Shirazi (d. 691 or 694 A.H) was the fellowship holder of Nizamiyah.[32]

Moreover, hospitals and convents (Khanah) were established in Asphan, Nishapur, Bulk, Harrat, Basrah and Bagdad. These spirits and convents were also called Nizamiyah.[33]

Toos being the birth place of Nizamul Mulk, naturally received much attention in the construction of Madrasa. These Madrasas, in our terminology, were day and night schools. The students styled in the hospitals and remained under the constant guidance and training of their teachers and professors. In the academic gatherings, scholars, jurists and ulama used to participate and take part in the lectures and the discussions. The books prescribed

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31 Ibid.

32 *Ghazzali Namah*, op.cit. 132.

33 Ibid, p. 132

were supplied to the students from the Masdrasas. The lectures and lessons were pinned down by the students.[34]

In these schools special attention was paid towards grammatical constructions, the quaranic teachings, Hadith, literature, Fiqh course and its principles, Arabic language and literature, were integral part of the syllabus those days. The medium of instructions in teaching and discussions was in most cases Arabic. Generally the students were provided with a scholarship by the owner or sponsor of the Madrasas.[35]

In this way from 4th century Hijrah onwards the constructions of Madrasas started in the Muslim world. Some Madrasas constructed before Mahmood of Ghazzanavi's death are still insect. These were the full time schools and the students used to reside in these Madrasas and receive monthly scholarships from the owner of the Madrasa or the Waqf Community endowments". These Madrasas were established in all the big cities of the Muslim worls. Mirst and more most being Baghdad. When Nizamiyah Baghdad was completed in 459 A.H. Ghazzali was only nine years of age that time. However, Nizamiyah schools were the best among all such educational institutions.[36]

The general impression as one can gather from the proceeding discussions is that Nizamul Mulk was if not the first person to have founded Madrasass, yet gave new direction to the establishment of educational institutions.

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34 *Mujataba Minuvi*, op.cit p. 558.

35 Ibid.

36 Hussain Qadri Imam Ghazzali Ka Falsafah Mazhab Wa Ikhlaq, Delhi 1977, p. 61.

However, some people give this credit to Sultan Mahmood Ghazznavi .[37]

It is said that in 410 A.H., he got constructed a mosque in Ghazzni known as Uroos-i-Falk. A grand madrasa was attached to this mosque in accordance with the instructions of the Sutlan. Moreover a library full of rare, books, was arranged for this madrasa. In order to meet the financial requirements of the mosque and the madrasa, the Sutan donated various villages to it.

After Mashmood Ghazzanvi, many nobles and vazires followed his example and thus in a very short span of time inumerable madrasas came up in Ghazzni and its adjacent areas. Inns, convents (Khanqahs) and mosques were also constructed in every nook and corner of the country. [38]

Sultan Masuood , (the son of Sultan Mahmood) also constructed many schools during his regin. During this period a madrasas was founded for Ibn Ishqh Asfaraini (in. 414 A.H.).[39]

In Nishapur Saadiyah and Baihaqivah were two big Universities, Sadiyah was established by Amir Nasr, the brother of Mahmood Ghazzanvi. [40]

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37 Ibn Kaseer, Al-bidayah Wal-Nihayah, Vol. II, *Matabah al-Sadat*, Egypt, 1351, p. 342.

38 *Tarikh-I-Farishta*, Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1281 A.H.,Vol. I.

39 Ibid. See also S. Hussain Qadri, op.cit pp. 61-62

40 Imam Jalaludin Sayati *Masnal-Al-Mahadaratah*. Vol. I, p. 165, Idaratul-Al-Watan, Egypt, 1299.