Intellectual traditions in Delhi during Seventeenth century Madrasa of Ghaziuddin Khan, A General in the Army of Aurangzeb

SANA AZIZ

ABSTRACT: The spread of education in medieval India was primarily driven by rulers, who considered it a handmade of religion. However, due to the egalitarian policy of Islam, access to education was open to all during the Mughal regime. Aurangzeb, the first Mughal emperor, championed the cause of free and compulsory education for the masses, leading to high literacy rates. The task of disseminating education among the masses was carried out by nobles, officials, and army generals during Aurangzeb's reign. The madrasa founded by Ghaziu'd-Din Khan, a military general in Aurangzeb's army, is an exemplary institution that exists till present day. After the British conquered Delhi in 1803, this traditional Islamic seminary was chosen as the site to establish a modern-day college by the British, rechristened as the Delhi College. The Delhi College became an agency of contrast between the Indo-Islamic culture of north India and the western concept of education. Khwaja Abid, the 30th descendant in the line of Abu Bakr, received his early education in contemplative and traditional sciences from his father, Khwaja Mir Isma'il. Aurangzeb sent Mir Shahabu'd-Din Khan and his brother Hamed Khan to suppress the hostile Rathores in the 24th year of his reign. Prince Muhammad Akbar was appointed to check their movement, but Prince Akbar refused to accept the offer and instead persuaded his younger brother Mojahed Khan to join him. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, Ghaziu'd-Din Bahadur Firuz Jung was appointed governor of Gujarat. His son Chin-Khalich-Khan-al-Mukhatib-ba-nizamu'l-Asaf-Jah founded the Hyedrabad state in Deccan and completed the construction of the madrasa in North

India. Imadu'l-Mulk Ghaziu'd-Din Bahadur rose to prominence in 1761 and held command over languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.

KEYWORDS: *Madrasa, Ghaziuddin Khan, Medieval India, Aurangazeb, Muslim Education,*

Introduction

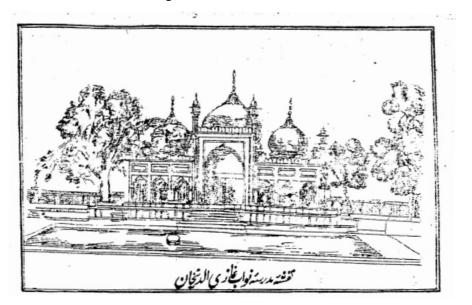
The spread of education in medieval India was mainly dependent on the interest of the rulers. The growth of popular education was hindered for want of a popular medium of instruction. Mughal rulers considered education to be a handmade of religion and hence state's encouragement to education was sporadic. However, due to the egalitarian policy of Islam, access to education was open to all during the Mughal regime.¹ The sayings of the prophet Muhammad and the teachings of the Quran placed great emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge from the cradle to the grave. During Akbar's time, there were no printed books and important handwritten books were read aloud in the court and discussions were held which benefited the aristocracy. Aurangzeb was the first Mughal emperor who championed the cause of free and compulsory education for the masses.² Though he could not enforce it throughout his kingdom, on an experimental basis he enforced it in Gujarat among the Bohra community which seems to have paved the way for the high rate of literacy in this community.

The task of disseminating education among the masses was also carried out by the nobles, officials and army generals during Aurangzeb's reign. The madrasa was founded by Ghaziu'd-Din Khan, a military general in the army of Aurangazeb at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century is one such exemplary institution that exists till present day.³ Until the late eighteenth century the madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan seems to have functioned as a traditional Muslim institution of higher learning. After the British conquered Delhi in 1803, this traditional Islamic seminary was chosen as the site to establish a modern -day college by the British and it was rechristened as the Delhi College. The madrasa was earlier named after Ghaziu'd-Din Feroz Khan, a general in Aurangzeb's army who was entrusted with the task of conquering the southern kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda to bring them under the banner of the Mughal Empire. The city of the Ghaziabad adjoining Delhi was founded in his memory.

This madrasa was transformed into the Delhi College that became the first British enterprise in Delhi aimed at disseminating education after they captured Delhi in 1803 A.D. It was established upon the earlier foundations of *madrasa* of Nawab Ghaziuddin in 1824 near Ajmeri gate, situated at the periphery of Shahjahanabad. Since then it has been one of Delhi's leading places of learning along with being the oldest continuing schools in the city, despite the fact that it became a subject of Delhi's turbulent political events resulting in its closure and then subsequent revivals at different time periods.

British interest of disseminating knowledge in Delhi can be seen in terms of their primary objective of attaining political legitimacy along with their cultural mission to "civilize the natives", and introduce modern day western education. In this context, the Delhi College became an agency of contrast between the Indo-Islamic culture of north India and western concept of education. The institutional history of what was first the madrasa of Ghaziuddin and later, the Delhi College would provide the framework for the cause and nature of this contrast.

Fig. 1 : Madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan (Source: Bashiruddin Ahmad, *Waqeat-e- Daru'l Hukumat-i Dehli*)



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A Short Biography of Nawab Ghaziuddin Khan

Khwaja Abid the 30th descendant in the line of Abu Bakr, entitled Al-Siddiq, the first caliph of Islam belonged to a small locality in the vicinity of Samarqand called Aliabad. He received his early education in contemplative and traditional sciences from his father, Khwaja Mir Isma'il, and other learned men at Samarqand. After the death of his father he went to Bukhara. There the office of *Qazi* (Judge) was entrusted to him, and later he was appointed *Shaikh-ul-Islam*, the highest position in the Muslim world.⁴

He first came to Hindustan in 1065A.H./1650 A.D. (in the 29th year of accession of Shahjahan) while going to the Hijaz to perform the holy pilgrimage at Mecca. Shahjahan received him with great esteem, awarded him a robe of honour with six thousand rupees, and offered him a high position at the court, which he promised to accept after his return from Mecca.

After performing the holy pilgrimage at Mecca, Khwaja Abid came to Hindustan in 1657 A.D. and joined the services of Aurangzeb, who, at that time, was in Deccan. When he declared himself the king of Hindustan in 1668A.D. and marched from Aurangabad to Agra, Khwaja Abid was with him in this journey. After helping Aurangzeb to remove all his rivals, he invited his eldest son Mir Shahab Uddin from Bukhara in 1674 A.D. (12th year of the reign of Aurangzeb). He also like his father had come from Samarqand to Bukhara after receiving preliminary education at home. At the time when his father's invitation arrived, Mir Shahab Uddin was in the service of Subhan Quli, the ruler of that region. He came to Hindustan after gaining his permission. Once in Hindustan he presented an enameled shield to the emperor and was honoured with a rank of three hundred and seventy horsemen.

He was hardly twenty years old when he married Safiya Khanam, the daughter of Sa'adu'llah Khan, the prime minister of Shahjahan. Unfortunately, the events of early ten years of his life are still obscure. He rose to high military positions commencing in 1679 A.D., the 23rd year of the reign of Aurangzeb. In that year, one night when he was on duty at the royal post guard, the emperor called on him and questioned regarding the whereabouts of Hasan Ali Khan. He further enquired about the royal army that had accompanied Hasan Ali Khan to suppress the hostile Rana of Udaipur and had lost his way in the northern hills of that region. To search for that noble and the royal Army, he showed great efficiency and he went to the country of the rebellious Raja which was quite near to him. Within two days he located the royal army and returned to the court with the petitions note of Hasan Ali Khan. Upon his successful return, the emperor was so pleased that he gave Mir Shahabu'd-Din the title of Khan, an increase of two hundred in his rank and awarded him with an elephant, a quiver and a bow. His title was now Mir Shahabu'd-Din khan.

In the 24th year of his reign, Aurangzeb sent Mir Shahabu'd-Din Khan along with his brother Hamed Khan to suppress the hostile Rathores. Here also he proved himself a successful commander. He chased the enemy in the hilly region of their territory and returned victorious after defeating the Rathores. Finding him again a courageous and efficient man, Aurangzeb awarded him a robe of honour, a cow and an elephant.

After sometime Durga Das Rathore instigated Prince Muhammad Akbar against his father and marched towards ajmer. To check their movement, Aurangzeb appointed Mir Shahabu'd-Din Khan and sent him towards Sarohi. The rebellious Prince through bribes and precious gifts tried to tempt Mir Shahabu'd-Din who was loyal to his master, and did not accept any of these. Fortunately, his younger brother Mojahed Khan was in Prince Akbar's camp. Mir Shabu'd-Din wrote him secret letters and advised Him to join him. Mojahed Khan played a trick and suggested to Prince Akbar that he would go and persuade his brother, Mir Shahabu'd-Din. Prince Akbar appreciated his idea and immediately permitted him to go. From there, Mojahed Khan collected whatever he could and joined his brother. Following in the steps of Mojahed Khan, many nobles of royal camp who were with Prince Akbar, joined Mir Shahabu'd-Din. In the light of this situation the Rajputs also denied to give him any support. Prince Akbar disappointed escaped from his camp and took refuge with Sambhaji in the Deccan. This plan enabled Mir Shahabu'd-Din Khan to crush the rebellion without any blood-shed. This time Aurangzeb awarded him a robe of honour and appointed him a Darogah.

Shortly thereafter, news came that Sambhaji, the successor of Shivaji, had plundered and burned Burhanpur. This was the first time that Aurangzeb thought seriously about the Marathas for two reasons. Firstly, Sambhaji had given protection to Prince Akbar. Secondly, he wanted to check the activities of the Muslim rulers of Bijapur and Golconda because they had started their alliance with the Marathas.

To punish the Marathas, Aurangzeb went to Aurangabad via Burhanpur. He divided his army in three units. The command of one of these units was given to Mir Shahabu'd-Din. He successfully won the campaigns of Junair and Kokan. He had hardly reached Nizampur, near Raigadh, that they suddenly came across Sambhaji and faced bravely his sudden attack and defeated him in the field. When Aurangzeb received this news, he was so pleased that he honoured Mir Shabu'd-Din with the title of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan Bahadur in 1683 A.D. he also fought bravely in the campaign against the Muslim rulers of Golconda and captured the dictator Abu Hasan as a prisoner of war. The following year he was unable to capture the fort of Rahiri; however, after plundering the fertile land of the surrounding area, he set it on fire. He arrested many experienced chiefs of Marathas army and came to the court of the emperor with rich booty. This time he was given the title of Firuz Jung. Since then he has been known as Ghaziu'd-Din bahadur Firuz Jung.

Ghaziu'd-Din Bahadur Firuz Jung spent most of the years of his rest of life in southern region of India, where he led the campaigns against the Marathas and the Muslim states of that region. In 1689 A.D. when he was busy in a war campaign at Bijapur, plague broke out and he lost his eye sight. But in spite of his blindness, he continued military activities as the advisor of the emperor. Aurangzeb was highly convinced by the achievements of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan that prompted him to write in his autobiography that:

*"Victory over Bijapur is achieved by the bravery of my dear son (Ghaziu'd-Din Khan)"*⁵

After the death of Aurangzeb, (1707 A.D.) when his son Muhammad Mu'azzam Shah, entitled Bahadur Shah came to the throne, Ghaziu'd-Din Bahadur Firoz Jung was appointed as his governor of Gujarat. There he 138 | 2022 | JOURNAL OF INDIAN HISTORY died at the age of sixty two on 27th of the month of Shawwal in 1709 A.D. and his body was carried from Ahamedabad to where he was buried near the grave of Wajih'ud-Din, in a tomb that he had built during his life. Moreover, near the tomb is situated the madrasa, which is my main concern of study.

His son Chin-Khalich-Khan-al-Mukhatib-ba-nizamu'l-Asaf-Jah was prominent in the political scenario of the Deccan, where he founded the Hyedrabad state and died there only in 1748. On the other hand, in North India, his eldest son took active part in the political activities of Delhi and got the title of Amir-ul-Umara Ghaziu'd Firuz Jung Sani. It is he to whom we refer as Ghaziu'd-Din II and who completed the construction of the madrasa whose foundations were laid down by his grandfather Ghazi'ud-Din I. He died in 1752 A.D., while he was on his way to Hyedrabad to claim his possession in the property, after the death of his brother Nasir Jung. His dead body was also brought to Delhi and was buried near the grave of his grandfather in the same madrasa. He left behind him one son entitled Imadu'l-Mulk Ghaziu'd-Din Bahadur, who again rose to prominence while fighting in 1761, in the campaign against Ahmad Shah Abdali. He was a close companion of *Maulana Fakhru'd-Din* to whom he even dedicated a masnavi. Maulana Fakhru'd-Din was a well-learned man and held command over languages such as Arabic, Persian and Turkish. His influence can be seen in the teachings given in the madrasa and the curriculum of the madrasa about which I have discussed in the later part of this chapter.

Another outstanding feature of the building is the presence of the graves of the founder and his descendants as well as his associates. As discussed above, the founder of this madrasa, Ghaziu'd-Din chose the site of his burial place at this madrasa because of its proximity to the grave of Shah Wajihu'd-Din, who was a prominent personality in his time. Till date nobody has pointed out the location of Wajihu'd-Din's grave. At present in the surrounding area of madarsa-i-Ghaziu'd-Din, some graves are visible at three places; near the central mihrab of the mosque are graves of Nawab Amin Khan and his son Nawab Qamaru'd-Din Khan, who was the Prime Minister of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. In

the North West corner, about one hundred and fifty yards to the west of the mosque, are two other graves in *sardaba*, the basement, which in local language is called *sardawa*. One of these graves is that of Hafiz Sa'adu'llah Naqshbandi and the other of his son, whose name has not been mentioned anywhere. An old inscription, carved on pink sandstone, indicates that Hafiz Sa'adu'llah died in 1740 A.D., that is thirty years after the death of Ghaziu'd-Din.

On a popular front, this grave of Shah Sa'adu'llah Naqshbandi is famous for its healing water. It is believed that this grave, which is immersed in water for the last seventy-one years, has some supernatural powers which help people to get rid of their ailments.⁶ On every Thursday, the followers go to this grave and collect the water to heal the ailments. In the south west corner, are two marble tombstones, of which, one is plain and on the other one, verses from the Quran had been inscribed. Very likely one of these graves is of Shah Wajihu'd-Din because the carving of the marble slab and the style of calligraphy of the Quranic verse are of Shah Wajihu'd-Din's time.⁷



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Contribution of Madrasa Ghaziuddin in the Education State of Delhi

Madrasa is the traditional education system of Muslims all over the world and literally it means a place where *Dars* (lesson) is given to students. *Madrasa* is a phenomenon of late ninth and early tenth centuries.⁸ Religious education has always been a compulsory component of Muslim education, but the rational sciences had often found a focal attention in the curriculum of Muslim education.⁹ If we go by the presupposed theological connotations attached to the institution of a 'madrasa', it seems ironical here that the British, the self-proclaimed "epitome of modern education" chose the site of a madrasa for the establishment of a college. From this we can conclude that the initial representatives of the British in Delhi did not intend to replace the traditional mode of education by the new emerging western concepts. However, later developments of the history of this college reveal that this institution became site of contrast between these two corresponding cultures and their understanding of 'Education'.

The glorious past of this *madrasa* has attracted scholastic interest from various fields be it education, architecture or literature. There had been scholarly works regarding the founder and foundation of the madrasa, and also about the architecture of the madrasa. Some sources also mention that Madrasa-i-Ghaziuddin was formally founded in 1792 by Nawab Ghaziudin II, the son of Nizamu'l-mulk-Asaf Jah I, founder of Hyedrabad state in the Deccan.¹⁰ Margarit Pernau, however, finds that the early history of this institution is quite vague and full of contradictory information because Nawab Ghaziu'd-Din II died in 1751/52.11 Thus, the year of its foundation i.e. 1792 is open to questioning. He built this madrasa laid by his grandfather Ghaziu'd-Din I, who in his lifetime chose the site for his grave due to its proximity to the burial place of his spiritual guide Shah Wajihu'd-Din and built the mosque which still forms the centre of what is today the Anglo- Arabic School.¹² As he died in 1710, this gives us a fairly precise idea of the time period in which the madrasa was planned and finished.

To understand the nature and existence of this *madrasa*, let us trace the history of the men who envisaged the existence of such a *madrasa* in Delhi to enlighten the ignorant. Though, enlightenment here might not fit into the mould of the knowledge and education created by the British educationists. In Delhi of eighteenth century, education had religious connotations attached to it and knowledge was all about finding the path towards the Almighty. For this we need to first examine the state of Delhi in terms of its educational value in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The eighteenth century in India, along with the political decline, has wrongly been assumed as the period of overall collapse and disintegration of the Indian society. The historians have overlooked the fact of the emergence of Muslim reform movements of great magnitude. It was during this period that two important madrasas came up to play a significant role in the life of the Indian Muslims. One was Madrasa-i-Alia Nizamiah and another Madrasa-i-Rahimiah. Mullah Nizamu'd-Din Sahalvi, son of Qutbu'd-Din Shahid, founded the first madrasa at Firangi Mahal, Lucknow. Mullah Nizamu'd-Din was the first Indian Muslim scholar who made generous changes in the syllabi of Indian madrasas. The syllabi prepared by him came to be known as Dars-e-Nizami and it was taught for two centuries in Indian madrasas without any major change and without any discrimination against any sect.¹³ He stressed the need for providing education of rational sciences to the Muslims to inculcate in them the habit of thinking and research. He introduced Philosophy and Logic in his curriculum.

Another important movement in the field of Muslim education, which arose during the same period, was initiated by Shah Abdur Rahim who founded the Madrasa-i-Rahimiah or Delhi Madrasa, later fully developed by his son Shah Waliu'llah who traced his spiritual descent back to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1563-1624), as did most of the Naqshbandis. Shah Waliu'llah distinguished himself by his balanced approach between *Taqlid* and *Maqulat*, adopted a rational approach within the religious discipline which tend to free the Muslim community from religious rigidity and conservatism. As an economist analyst, he was the precursor of Marx, as a political thinker, he betrayed the qualities of Aristotle; as religious leader, he was in conformity with Abdul Wahab of Nejd, his contemporary on several principles and issues, as psychologist and educationist, he was second to none. He was first educationist to frame rules, regulations and methods of teaching.¹⁴ The emphasis on the promotion of vernacular languages as a means of learning, first of Persian, in the next generation of Urdu, found its expression in the translations of the sacred texts by Shah Wali Ullah and his sons. Thus, decades before the foundation of the Delhi College, translation was already being used as a way to induce changes- it transformed the language and the way canonic texts were regarded.¹⁵ The *Madrasa* Rahimiah now attracted many students and thus in recognition of his outstanding scholarship, Shah Wali Ullah was awarded 51 bigha of land near Delhi in 1754 by Alamgir II (reidned 1754-1759) for the construction of his own madrasa.¹⁶ Shah Wali Ullah in many ways still acted within the parameters of a Sufi order.

However, in the beginning of nineteenth century, his sons, foremost among them Shah Abdu'l Aziz and Shah Abdu'l Qadir, extended their teaching network over the whole of north India and drew increasingly large numbers of students to their school. In order to disperse their message through *fatwas* and pamphlets, they soon started making use of the print media.¹⁷ Shah Abdu'l Aziz witnessed the imperceptible extinction of the Mughal Empire and at the same time the consolidation of British rule in India. In this first phase their relation to the British does not seem to be marked by antagonism. The British error in placing the responsibility for a riot in 1807 on Shah Abdu'l Aziz's brother Shah Rafi'u'd-Din and exiling him from the city was quickly rectified, once they realized the outstanding position the family occupied in Delhi, and they did their utmost to placate them.¹⁸ Apparently this appeasement was successful because Shah Abdu'l Aziz avoided an open pronouncement against the British at this time. Equally he gave very cautious answers on the permissibility for Muslims of learning the English language and taking up service with the colonial masters, deeming these issues as religiously neutral, as long as they did not lead to a loss of the faith or to actions harmful to fellow Muslims.19

There were other madrasas, as in the mosque of Akbarabadi where Maulawi Abdu'l Qadir, another son of Shah Wali Ullah taught; madrasa

of Shah Muhammad Ishaq; madrasa of Maulawi Muhammad Yaqub; madrasa of Nawab Ahmad Saeed Khan and Nawab Iradat Khan. Similarly, Chishtiya Sufis of the period- Shah Kalimu'd-Din, Shah Fakhru'd-Din laid stress on adherence to the Shari'a which is indispensible for a saint while he lives mystical life of renunciation and self-surrender. Their monasteries (*Khanqahs*) also served as great seats to educate and train students keen to attain spiritual illumination leading to gnosis.²⁰ But at the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of these educational institutions were dominated by the Naqshbandi ideology established around the rather exoteric- simultaneously sufic- teachings of Shah Abdu'l Aziz. The studies of Quran and *hadis* formed the main part of the curriculum and deliberate attempt was made to harmonise theological and mystic aspects of faith along with the study of rational and non-religious sciences. Thus, the educational expansion and development that occurred in Delhi was largely the work of the madrasas from whose corridors emanated rays of knowledge to dark corners in near and distant places, dispelling illiteracy.

It was in this backdrop that the madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din was established and it also continued to serve the motto of fulfillment of education like its contemporary counterparts were doing in Delhi. Although clear information regarding the kind of teaching taking place in this madrasa is quite obscure, but the kind of educational system that was being followed in Delhi in the time period under our consideration, as discussed above, make it probable that the teachings at the madrasa were influenced by the curriculum of the Dars-e-Nizami along with other non-religious courses. It served the scholastic need of the city in all its respect. Contemporary sources indicate that students from many of the smaller towns in north India went to study general courses, or skills like calligraphy and medicine from the well-known savants of the city.²¹ The madrasa attached to the mausoleum of Ghaziu'd-Din overtook all other educational institutions, and was chosen as the local beneficiary for a share in the small sum of money the East India Company set aside for encouraging education, in 1824 resulting in the establishment of the Delhi College.

From the above discussion we can conclude that Delhi was still the greatest intellectual, educational and religious center in north India as it

had always been since the thirteenth century. Throughout seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries schools and colleges continued to grow and develop under the guidance of competent and dedicated teachers. *Madrasas* and colleges, set up on non-commercial basis in the pre-colonial period, carried on their academic activities independently of government or any external agencies that only provided financial assistance without exercising influence in framing the curriculum of studies or their management.

Dr. Sana Aziz is an Assistant Professor in the Centre of Advanced Study (CAS), Department of History at Aligarh Muslim University.

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