

IBN BATUTAH'S VISIT TO SHEIKH JALALUDDIN TABRIZI

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In the middle of the 13th century A,D the Sultan OF Tabriz named Shaikh Jalaludin Tabrizi, a sufi saint travelled all over the world to spread Islam. There is evidence of his coming to Kamrupa and visiting places like Hajo, Garigaon and spent about 20 years by staying here. The Mazar situated in Guwahati Of Assam is said to be built in his name.

It is believed that during an epidemic in 642 Hijri or 1222 AD in Arab, Jalaludin came to India. He came with four of his devotees and spent many years in different region of India and also visited various places like Hajo, Garigaon of Assam.¹ Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, is a historical confirmed Sufi Saint of Medieval Assam, who is a different individual than Shah Jalal of Sylhet.

Born at Tabrez of Persia, he took 'Bayat' from Shaikh Abu said of Tabrez who gave him fundamental teachings of the faith. Later on he went to Bukhara City and studied there for some time and subsequently went to Baghdad where he entered into the hospice of Shaikh Sihabuddin Suhrawardi, the Master of Suhrawardi sect. After few years he came to India spending some time at Delhi he went to Badayun. Incidentally there he met a child whom he blessed and later on that child became Nazamuddin Awlia of Delhi. From the note of Ibn Batuta it is known that he left Baghdad after some time of 1258D. Spending some time at Badayun he came to Lakhnanti where at Pandua he established his hospice, the Khanqua. During later part of his life he came to Kamrup and stayed permanently here. Many historians opine that the person whom Ibn Batuta met was Sah Jalal of Sylhat. They further want to say that Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi was buried somewhere at Devlata of present Bengal or at Mal Div. But the present study and analysis confirms that Ibn Batura came down upto Kamrup where he met Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi proper near present Gauhati. and his grave is situated in Garigaon of Gauhati.²

The dargah(grave) of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriji is situated in Fakirpara of Garigaonin gauhati. It is considered as one of the brightest examples of Hindu-Muslim unity in Assam. His reference can be traced in the travelogue of 13th century traveller Ibn Batutah, writings of -Aftad Auliyaye Hind, Tajkiratul Auliya etc. His life history says that in 1322 AD Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriji came to India from Baghdad. He travelled Multan, Lahor, Rajputana etc. and came to Panduwa or Pandu to preach people. Even Ibn Batutah came to Pandu only to meet this pir.. Both Hindus and Muslims revered him. It is said that due to the influence of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriji, the ritual of satyapeer puja is prevalent

in the Hindu society. After his demise, Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi was cremated here. Ahom king Rajeswar Simha donated 200 bigha of land in the peer's name near the tomb. Everyday hundreds of devotees come to his dargah and- pray_to fulfil their wish. Both the Muslim and intuit& people assemble together in the Majar (tomb) of the great Sufi Saint Tabrezi and pray for the welfare and prosperity of their families and the village. The Muslims of this area celebrate 'Urus Mubarak' in the month of -March (Fagun). It is celebrated in the memory of the great Sufi Saint Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi.³

With the consolidation of British rule in Assam, like many other parts of the state, the socio-cultural pattern of Garigaon underwent certain radical changes. Before the advent of the British in her land of the people of Garigaon were entitled to settle in the revenue free land basically in fakirpara of the Tomb of Jalaluddin Tabrezi endowed by the Ahom king. In November 10, 1852, the British government introduced the revenue system in the Majar (tomb) land except for the residential areas in the village.⁴

Ibn Batuta's own words confirms it. He has written, "*I departed from Sudkawan (Satgaon) for the mountains of Kamaru, which lie thence at a distance of one month journey. The Kamrup mountains are a vast expanse ranging from China to Tibet and the musk producing gazelles are found there. The inhabitants of these mountains resemble the Turks and possess great capacity for strenuous work. They are noted for their devotion to and practice of magic and witchcraft. My object, to these mountains was to meet one of the saints living there, namely, Shaikh Jalaluddin of Tabriz*"⁵

The above words explains that it was Kamrup only with the Tibeto-Mongol looking hill tribes as its inhabitants. The ancient Kamrup was a land of magic and witchcraft, have been quoted by various historical notes including the Ain-i-Akbari.

Ibn Batuta describes the saint, whom he visited in 1346 AD, in the following words.

"The Shaikh was one of the great saints and one of unique personage. He had to his credit miracles (Keramat) well known to the public as well as great deed, and he was a man of hoary age".⁶

Ibn Batuta had written that the saint was a man of super-human quality and was authority about various miraculous deeds. During his stay for three days at the guest house of the Shaikh he had experienced and noticed many miracles of the saint which he recorded in his book. The saint was accepted as Guru or God by both Hindus and Muslims. Ibn Batuta records his personal observations as :-

"The inhabitants of that locality, Musalman as well as Hindus, come to visit the Shaikh and bring him presents and gifts which the Fakir and visitors consume. As for the Saikh he contents himself with a cow with whose milk he breaks his fast of ten consecutive days....".⁷

Ibn Batuta who came to this country more than 100 years before the birth of Sankardeva, could observe personally that in Assam there lived a saint who was followed by followers of both religion and who had an extra ordinary character with super human quality.

"When I bade adieu to Shakh Jalaluddin, I journeyed to Habang (e-g. Hubung), which

*is one of the most glorious and beautiful cities. It is traversed by a river which spring from the mountains of Kamaru and bears the name of 'Nahr-ul-Azarq.' The way to Bengal and Lakhnauti lies through this river and along the bank of this river to the right as well as to the left there are water wheels, gardens and villages such as along the banks of Nile in Egypt"*⁸

The above words of Ibn Batuta provides that he visited Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi at a Kamrup hill which was near the river Brahmaputra. The various writers and historians claim that Ibn Batuta actually visited Sah Jalal of Syllhat and after that he went to Habiganj near Sylhet and also the river Nahr-ul-Azraq was the Maghna. All there claims and imaginations are negated by the words of Ibn Batuta.

Information available from various sources says that the cult of Satya -pir was initiated by Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi. There is another cult practiced amongst the Hindus is known as 'Satyanarayna'. Both the practices originated in the later part of 13th century AD. Finally it was seen that the central character or the Pole (Qutub) of both the 'Satyapir' and "Satyanarayana" was the same character. Relevant dates confirms that same single character is addressed as 'Satyapir' by and "Satyanarayana" by the Hindus.

*"Jey Satyanarayand, Sei Satyapuri
Dui Kule Loise Seba Koria Zahir"*⁹

e.g. He who is Satyanarayana is the Satyapir, receives prayer on both the coasts taking visible appearance. Ibn Batuta's attempt to meet this saint gives us hint that the saint was a world known and significant individual during that time. Ibn Batuta got down from the ship at Port Satgaon on his way to China only to visit the saint who was at Kamrup. Ibn Batuta was going to China not only as an ordinary traveller but also carried a ship of various presentations and messages from the Emperor of Hindustan, Muhammad Tughlaque to the Emperor of China as he was appointed as his ambassador by the Emperor of India. From the Port of Satgaon Ibn Batuta journeyed up for one month through thick Jungles and hills to reach the saint. This historical incidence itself informs us how significant was that Sufi saint living at Kamrup. Being a man of Morocco, Ibn, Batutah had travelled so many countries and glorious places of the world where he met so many great and famous People, but still he was so much eager to meet that saint. Ibn, Batuta, a world famous traveller and historian, who was received and honoured by the Emperor of Hindustan and China and so many other powerful personals had full knowledge about the greatness of the saint, for which he developed that tremendous desire to meet the saint. The saint himself told Ibn Batuta that he was at Baghdad during its fall in 1258 AD, When the Khalifa of Baghdad Al- Musstasim Billah was beheaded by Halagu, the grandson of Chengiz khan. When Ibn Batuta met the saint in 1346 AD; he saw that the saint was a hoary old man, and he was informed by his disciple that he was of 150 years old.¹⁰

Ibn Batuta had written that the great person was of unique personality and numerous miracles are ascribed to him. Ibn Batuta had noted few such miracles of the saint which he personally experienced. In his own words :

"When I intended to visit the Shaikh four of his disciples met at a distance of two day's journey from his residence and informed that the Shaikh had said to the Fakirs in his

company- 'A traveller from the West has come to you ;go to receive him.' They said that they had accordingly come to receive me under order; of the Shaikh, who knew nothing about me heretofore ; Yet this had been revealed to him. I went along with them to the Shaikh and arrived at his hospice which lay outside the cave".¹¹

Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi taught people that whatever name is given to God he is always one. Hence whichever the method you use, if it is the search of God and worship of the God, than all are same. Whichever the path is taken to reach God all are called Straight Path. If the word 'Truth' is used to name the God, it is seen that it is much easier to convince people, because all of them are familiar to this word since the scriptures they follows have reference of this name Truth. Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi masterminded to promote this name 'Truth' and that's how this Truth got wide popularity. We have evidence of other Sufis of Assam, using this terminology in their sayings and writings. In the Jikirs of Azam Fakir the term 'Satya Pir' is mentioned as :-

*"Koba Lagise Hakkor Murshide, Akolor
Arosot Dhor
Xasa Guru Buli Ji Luke Namane Tololoi
Poriba Xahi,
Uthot Kolom Buli Jivat Kagoz, Date Siyahi Bate,
Xapto Hazaar Awliya Xakale, Eketi Namote Khate
Hokkor Murshid (Haqq Murshid) Means Satya Pir"*¹²

That God is one and all the caste and creeds are worshipping the same One was taught by the saint. The Sufis are extremely devoted to this ideology and many a time they have even sacrificed their life for this noble cause.

Satya Narayana Panchdi quotes:

*"Satyapir Rup Dhor Asilek Probhu Hari
Taahar Mohima Nubujila."
"Pir Rup Dhari Bule Koranor Lekha
Samaste Satyrupe Prabhu Abotirna."
"Joi Joi Satyapir Sanaton Dastagir
Deva Deva Jogotor Naam."*¹³

Such is the cult of Satyapir, who is identified as the same character Satyanarayana. Though both the terminology is based on the references in the Scriptures of Hindu & Muslim, it was one Sufi saint on whose Patronage it was re-established in the territory of ancient Kamrup, within which present Eastern and Northern Bengal were included. The .Saint whose name is attached in establishing and promoting this most popular culture to unite the people of two different opposing religious groups is known to be Shiakh Jalaluddin Tabrizi. The saint, who hails from the Tabriz city of Iran, had visited and established many centers in different places of India, including the one at Pandua near present Maldah which is known as 'Bais Hazari Mokam'. But the final settlement of the Saint was at Kamrup where he was successful in establishing his ideology, after the term Satyapir-Satyanarayana. That this saint organized his establishment and originated the cult of Satyapir-Satyanarayana at Kamrup is confirmed by the historical dates of which Ibn Batuta's note is the strongest of all evidences.

S.K Bhuyan in his Book 'Annals of Delhi badshate' writes that Ibn Batutah travelled from Sadkawan(Chatgaon) for the Mountains of Kamru,with the object of meeting a saint named Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi. Kamru was the name of Kamrup,by which it was known to the Islamic world ,being adopted by Al beruni as well. Ibn Batutah was in assam in about 1350 A.D. The Traveller Ibn Batuta Records In His Turbat Nuzzar That He Stayed At Tabrizi's Hermitage For Three Days. Some Amount Of Confusion Has Arisen Between this Saint visited By Ibn Batutah And Shah Jalal Who Died In 1189 A.D,and Whose Dargah Or Mausoleum at Sylhet is Still visited by Pilgrims.¹⁴

The information of Ibn Batuta is very clear that it was the Kamrup where he met the Sufi saint. Ibn Batuta had written further in his Rehla about his journey, *When I bade adieu to Shaikh Jalaluddin, I Journeyed to Habang (eg Habang), which is one of the most glorious and beautiful cities. It is traversed by a river which springs from the mountains of Kamaru and bears the name of Nahr-ul-Azaraq.The way to Bengal and Lakhnauti lies through this river and along the bank of this river to right as well as to the left there are water wheels, gardens and villages such as those along the bank of Nile in Egypt.*

*After fifteen days of our voyage in the river as we have related we arrived in the city of Sunakaun (Sonargaon)."*¹⁵

The above note clearly mentions about Habung, which was a famous country in Medieval upper Assam. In the records of Ibn Khurdadbih and Al-Idrisi it is given that Kamrup was a country situated 15 days journey from the coastal areas of ancient Bay of Bengal.

Nahr-ul-Azaraq means Blue river. This is the point where comes a logical answer. Why Ibn Batuta called it Blue River. Some writers comments that it was 'Meghna, river', as Meghna-comes from Megha e.g cloud which is dark or Blackish.

As per the different information the river Brahmaputra is known by various names of which the most widely known name is Luit or Lauhitya. In Ahom writing the river is termed as Jilan. In Tabaqat-i- Nasiri the river crossed by Bakhtiar Khalji was Begmati.

In Khasi language Indigo is called 'U Lir'. It pronounces as Lai or Lasai, U is not pronnced. 'Ti' stands for river. Hence Ti Li / Ti Lai / Liai is the actual word of Ji.Lau of Ahom terminology. If Lir or Lai is written first and Ti after it than it will be Liau + Ti from where Luit or Lauhitya word was formed. From this angle Ibn Batuta's naming of the river as Blue River was correct.¹⁶

In Khasi language Black is called as-'b-iong'/ ba-dum/ba- ma ba-ma or 'ba-iong', the word Ti is combined it becomes ba-ma-ti/ ba-iong -ti which might be the origin of 'Begmati' of Tabaqat-i-Nasiri. In that case it will be Black river. Many times black is termed as blue.

Analyzing through Tibetan language it is seen that 'Ba' stands for 'Buddha' or 'Muni' or Lord, 'Ma'-is Blue and Ti-is river. So 'Tabaqat-i-Nasiri's 'Begmati' word signifis Big or Great Blue River. Bakhtiyar – khaljis' guide was Ali Mech . So he must have mingled with tribes of Tibeto-Burman stock. Hence the name of Blue River could be found as Begmati / Bagmati. Batutah came up from Satgaon. The tribes encountered by Ibn Batuta was likely to be Khasi- Garo of Mon khemer or Austric stock.. Ibn Batuta might have got the information from Khasi Garo sources. With all the above points it can be said that

Ibn Batutah in reality came to Karnrup_and the saint is confirmed to be Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, on whose patronage Saty-Narayan cult was established with its followers mostly from both the present Bengal and Assam eg- Ancient Kamrup. Satyapir assimilated as Haq-Murshid amongst the Sufis.¹⁷

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