

UTTAR PRADESH DISTRICT GAZETTEERS FAIZABAD

(PAGES 33, 34)

The sunga line of Ayodhya had certainly become extinct with the advent of the Kushanas into whose hands Kosala passed in the 1st century A.D., and who ruled over it for a century or so. Tibetan and Chinese writings contain in the traditions of Kanishka's conflict with the kings of Saketa and Pataliputra and of their being subdued by him. This victory brought to him the famous poet and theologian, Asvaghosha, author of Bhddacharita and Saundarananda who was originally a learned Brahmana of Saketa and had become a convert of Buddhism.

The third class belongs to a later dynasty and the coins are round pieces, struck from dies and usually bearing on the obverse the device of a bull facing an upright standard or spear and on the reverse a bird (presumably a cock) and a palm tree with a river (or snake) and sometimes a framed nandzpada also. The names of rulers supplied by this series are: Sayyamitra, Ayumitra (Aryamitra), Sanghamitra, Vijayamitra, Kumudasena, Ajavarman and Devamitra. The actual sequence of these rulers is not known but there is little doubt that they belong to a single dynasty and were probably feudatories of the Kushanas. It appears that their rule lasted till the rise of the Guptas.

The Gupta-Chandragupta I was the real founder of the kingdom which he extended up to Saketa (Avadh) and Prayaga (Allahabad). If the spurious Gaya copper plate inscription is to be believed, his son and successor, the great conqueror Samudragupta, had a jayaskanadhavara (camp of victory) in Ayodhya. The Vayupurana also mentions that Saketa (or Ayodhya) was included in the domains of Guptas.

According to tradition the credit for the restoration of Ayodhya goes to king Vikramaditya of Ujjai, who is usually identified with Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (379—413 A.D.), the son and successor of Samudragupta. There is reason to believe that in the 5th century AD. Ayodhya rather than Pataliputra was the premier city of the Gupta empire.

PAGES 35-36

Post Gupta Period— With the decline of the Gupta in the 6th century A.D., Ayodhya also began gradually to become desolate. At this time a new dynasty, that of the Maukharis, with its capital at Kanauj, assumed an

important position on the political map of northern India and this kingdom included Avadh. A large hoard of Maukhari coins was discovered in village Bhitaura (parganamangalsi. tahsilFaizabad) and some were found by RivettCamac in Ayodhya itself. Many of these coins were found to be associated with those of Siladitya— Pratapasila whom Sir Richard Burn identifies with HarshaVardhana (606-647) into whose hands the dominions of the Maukharis had passed. if this is correct, it would be a direct proof that Ayodhya was under the rule of Harsha.

During his reign the famous Chinese pilgrim HiuenTasang (630—644 AD.) passed through Avadh. Travelling from Kanauj and crossing the Ganga to the south he reached the O-yu-to country. The capital of this country, which was about a mile to the south of the river, has generally been identified with Ayodhya, although, on account of difficulties of direction and distance, Cunningham proposes a different site for Hiuen Tsang's O—yu-to. According to Hiuen Tsang, this region yielded good crops, was luxuriant in fruits and flowers and had a genial climate. The people had agreeable ways, were fond of good deeds and were devoted to practical learning. Here there were about 100 Buddhist monasteries, more than 3,000 Mahayani and Hinayani monks and only ten deva (non-Buddhist god) temples, the non—Buddhists being but few in number. Then the pilgrim goes on to give an account of the Buddhist scholars, Asanga and Vasubandhu, and of the Buddhist monuments of the place, but is silent about its government.

PAGES 46-47

Under the Jaunpur kings Avadh was administered in a better way than under the later Sultans of Delhi. The local zamindars and rajas also appear to have strengthened their position and the Sharqi rulers (surrounded as they were by petty though independent principalities) had to placate them to maintain peace and order in their kingdom. It was in the reign of Ibrahim Shah Sharqi (1401-1440 A.D.) that Mir Saiyid Muhammad Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, author of Lataif-I-Ashrafi and number of important mystical works, went from Jaunpur to Kichhauchha (now in tahsil Tanda) and died there on 27th Muharam. 808 H. (25th July. 1405 AD.) He is said to have exercised a great deal of influence on the local population.

From 1452 to 1480, Bahlul (the founder of the Lodi dynasty of the Afghans) had to wage incessant war against the Sharqi Sultans before he could put end to their power.

Avadh again became a part of the Sultanate of Delhi and was given by Bahlul to an Afghan noble named Kala Pahar Farmuli. Sultan Husain Sharqi, an ambitious man (who had retired to Bihar), took every opportunity to retrieve the ground he had lost. Avadh and Jaunpur remained in a disturbed condition till about 1495, when Sikandar Lodi was able to consolidate his empire as far as Bihar. But peace was short-lived, for many Afghan nobles were alienated from his successor, Ibrahim Lodi. In the early years of the latter's reign a civil war broke out between the Sultan and his brother, Jalal Khan, whose followers defeated Sai Khan, son of Mubarak Khan Lodi of Avadh. But Jalal Khan's power could not last very long and Avadh again came under the sway of Ibrahim Lodi

The Mughals- on the eve of Babur's invasion, Bayazid Farmuli held Avadh. After Ibrahim Lodi's death in the battle of Panipat (1526), he, with a number of other Afghan chiefs, joined Babur and a portion of Avadh, carrying a large amount of revenue, was assigned to him by Babur. But he soon rebelled against his new master who himself hastened towards the east in February, 1528, ordering Chin Timur Sultan to proceed in advance to crush the rebels. The latter reached Avadh as a result of which Bayazid and his family escaped to Ghazipur. Babur himself reached Avadh (Ayodhya) and stayed there for a few days and was greatly impressed with the "gardens, running water, well designed buildings, trees, particularly mango trees, and various birds of coloured plumage." He appointed Baqi Tashqandi the governor of Avadh, who subdued the rebellious local chiefs. During his regime Baqi built a mosque in Ayodhya in 1528. The inscription inside the mosque gives the date of the construction of the building in the last line and is as follows:

Ba farmuda-I-Shah Babur ki adlash

Bina ist ta kakh-I-garun mulaqi

Bina kard in muhbit-I-qudiyan

Amir-i-saadat-nishan Mir Baqi

Buvad khair baqi-chu sal-i-benaish

Ayan Shud ke guftam-Buvad Khair baqi

[By the command of the Emperor Babur whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heavens, The goodhearted Mir Baqi, built this alighting-place of angels; Buvad khair baqi! (may this goodness last for ever!) The year of building it was made clear likewise when I said, Buvad Khair baqi (=935).]

Ayodhya is pre-eminently a town of temples but not all the places of worship are connected with the Hindu religion. There are some Jain shrines and several Muslim mosques and tombs. It is said that at the time of the Muslim conquest there were three important Hindu shrines here and little else, the Janmasthan temple, the Swargadwar and the Treta—ke-Thakur. The Janmasthan was in Ramkot and marked the birthplace of Rama. It seems that in 1528 AD. Babur Visited Ayodhya and under his orders this ancient temple was destroyed and on the site was built what came to be known as Babur's mosque. The material of the old temple was largely employed in building the mosque and a few of the original columns are still in good preservation; they are of close grained black stone (kasauti) bearing various Hindu bas-reliefs (see Plate 1), the outer beam of the main structure being of sandal wood. The height of the columns is seven to eight feet, the shape of the base, the middle section and the capital is square, the rest being round or octagonal. There are two inscriptions in Persian, one on the outside and the other on the pulpit bearing the date 935 Hijri. Subsequently Aurangzeb also desecrated the shrines of Ayodhya which led to prolonged bitterness between the Hindus and Muslims. The latter occupied the Janmasthan by force and also made an assault on Hanuman Garhi. Attacks and counter-attacks continued, culminating in the bloodshed of 1855 under the leadership of Maulvi Amir Ali. As a result, in 1858 an outer enclosure was put up on front of the mosque and the Hindus, who were forbidden access to the inner yard, had to perform their puja on a platform outside. Since 1949 the position has changed and the Hindus have succeeded in installing the images of Rama and Sita in the mosque owing to which the spot has become the object of much litigation. Now the inner yard is protected by an armed guard and only a few Hindu pujaris (priests) are allowed access to the inner sanctum.

Outside the outer wall of this contested shrine there is an old and broken image of the Varah (boar). There are a number of mounds in the vicinity bearing traces of different layers of brick work. A good view of the Saryu and the country beyond may be 'seen from the old platform or one of these mounds.

Other mosques built by Aurangzeb are now in ruins. That near Swargadwar replaced an ancient temple. Near the Maniparvat there are two graves (venerated as those of the patriarchs Seth and Job) which are

mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* as being six and seven yards in length respectively. A grave about 9 yards long and reputed to be that of Noah, is situated near the police—station. Another shrine held sacred by the Muslims is that of Shah Juran Ghorī who is said to have come with Shahabud-din and destroyed the Jain temple of Adinath in the Murao Tola near Swargadear, giving his name to the mound on which his tomb stands. The shrine of naurahni Khurd Makka takes its name from one of the earliest Muslim immigrants and a renowned saint, Mir Ahmad (who is said to have derived his cognomen from the place Naurahni from where he came). The tomb on Kabir-tila (one of the chief bastions of Ramkot) is still revered as that of Khwaja Hathi, a follower of Babur.

There are some other old shrines such as those of Makhdum Shaikh Bhikha (a devotee who lived about 250 years ago), of Shah Saman Fariad-ras and of Shah Chup. The only remaining institutions of Muslim origin are the Hayat Bakhsh and the Farhat Bakhsh, for mer royal gardens which later passed into Hindu hands.

Among the numerous temples of Ayodhya is the Treta-ke-T hakur which marks the place where Rama performed an ashvamedh yajna and set up images of Sita and himself. About three centuries ago, the Raja of Kulu built a new temple, presumably on the same site. It was improved in 1784 by Ahalya Bai, the famous Holkar queen, who also built the adjoining ghat. The ancient images (of black stone) were said to have been thrown into the river by Aurangzeb and to have been recovered and placed in the new temple know as Kaleram-ka-mandir.

The chief place of worship in Ayodhya is the site of the ancient citadel of Ramkot which stood on elevated ground in the western part of the city. The old ramparts have long since disappeared but the mound remains and on it stand a number of temples. The Hanuman Garhi, a massive structure in the shape of a four-sided fort with circular bastions at each corner, houses a temple Hanuman and is the most popular shrine in Ayodhya.

The Mahant (pontiff) of Hanuman Garhi claims to have in his possession a record indicating that the present structure was constructed on the site of some land granted by a Nawab of Avadh to sadhu who cured him of a severe illness.

Among other places of interest is the Kanak-bhavan. Legend has it that Kaikeyi built it for Sita, and that it was originally the place of Rams. Subsequently it appears to have fallen into decay and to have been restored

time and again by various kings, including Vikramaditya,. The present temple was built by Rani KrishnabhanuKunwari of Orchha in 1891. There are some modern paintings and a small library here as well as a copy of Sanskrit inscription which seems to imply that on Tuesday, the 2nd of the dark fortnight of Pausa in Yudhisshthirsamvai 2431, King Vikramaditya, the son of GandharvaSen, restored this temple and installed in it the images of Rama and Sita.

Other sacred places are the SitaRasoi (sita's kitchen), the Barasthan, the Ratna-singhasan (marking the place where Rama was enthroned after his return from exile), the Rang-mahal, Anand-bhawan, Kaushalya-bhavan and the temple of Ksheereshwarnath containing the image of Siva said to have been installed by Kaushalaya.

From Hanuman Gari the main road lads north to the river passing the Bhur and the Shish-mahal temples on the left and on the right those of Krishan, Uma dutt and Tulsidas. To Tulsidas is dedicated a temple, Tulsi-chaura, which is said to be the place where he started writing his great epic, Ramacharitmanasa.
