

GAZETTEER OF THE PROVINCE OF OUDH

VOL. I.-A TO G

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The monastic orders.- There are seven *akharas*, or cloisters of the monastic orders, or Biiragis disciples of Vishnu, in Ajodhya each of which is presided over by a *mahant* or abbot; these are-

1. *Nirbani* or Silent sect, who have their dwelling in Hanoman Garhi.
2. The *Nirmohi*, or Void-of-affection sect, who have establishments at Ram Ghat and Guptar Ghat.
3. *Digambari*, or Naked sect of ascetics.
4. The *Khaki*, or Ash-besmeared devotees.
5. The *Mahanirbani*, or literally Dumb branch.
6. The *Santokhi*, or Patient family.
7. The *Niralambhi*, or Provision less sect.

The expenses of these different establishments, of which the first is by far the most important, are met from the revenues of land which have been assigned to them, from the offerings of pilgrims and visitors, and from the alms collected by the disciples in their wanderings all over India.

The Nirbani sect. - I believe the mahant of the *Nirbani Akhara* or Hanoman Garhi has six hundred disciples, of whom as many as three or four hundred are generally in attendance, and to whom rations are served out at noon daily. The present incumbent has divided his followers into four *thaks* or parties, to whom the names of four disciples, as marginally noted, have been given.

Four thaks-

1. Kishan Dasi 2. Tulsi Dasi 3. Mani Rami
4. Jankisaran Dasi

There are in this sect-first, lay brothers, second anchorites; the former do not abandon the world, the latter first make a round of the sacred places, Dwarka, Jagannath, Gya, and are then admitted to *full* brotherhood: celibacy is enforced- *all* castes are admitted, but Brahmans and Chhatris have two exceptional privileges, they are admitted over the age of sixteen and they are exempted from servile offices.

Nirmohi sect.- It is said that one Gobind Das came from J aipur some two hundred years ago, and having acquired a few . bighas of revenue-free land,

he built a shrine and settled himself at Ram Ghat. Mahant Tulsi Das is the sixth in succession. There are now two branches of this order, one at Ram ghat, and the other occupying the temples at Guptar Ghat. They have rent-free holdings in Basti, Mankapur, and Khurdabad.

The Digambari sect. - Sri Balram Das came to Ajodhya two hundred years ago, Whence it is not known, and having built a temple settled here. Mahant Hira Das is the seventh incumbent. The establishment of resident disciples is very small, being limited to fifteen; they have several revenue-free holdings in the district.

The Khaki sect. - When Ram Chandar became an exile from Ajodhya, his brother Lachman is said, in his grief, to have smeared his body with ashes and to have accompanied him. Hence he was called *khaki*, and his admiring followers bear that name to this date. In the days of Shuja-ud-daula, one mahant, Daya Ram, is said to have come from Chitarkot, and having obtained four bighas of land, he thereon established the *akhara*, and this order of *Bairagis* now includes 180 persons, of whom 50 are resident and 130 itinerant. This establishment has some small assignments of 12;:-1 in this, and in the Gonda district Ram Das, the present mahant, is seventh in succession from the local founder of the order.

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The Mahanirbani sect. - Mahant Parsotam Das came to Ajodhya from Kota Bundi in the days of Shuja-ud-daula, and built temple at Ajodhya. Dayal Das, the present incumbent, is the sixth in succession. he has twenty-five disciples, the great majority of whom are itinerant mendicants. The word Mahanirbani implies the worshipping of God without asking for favours, either in this world or the next.

The Santokhi sect.- Mahant Rati Ram arrived at Ajodhya from Jaipur in the days of Mansur Ali Khan, and building a temple founded this order. Two or three generations after him the temple was abandoned by his followers, and one Nidhi Singh, an influential distiller in the days of the ex-king, took the site and built thereon another temple. After this, Khushal Das of this order returned to Ajodhya and lived and died under an Asok tree, and there the temple, which is now used by the fraternity, was built by Ramkishan Das, the present head of the community.

The Niralambhi sect.- Sri Birmal Das is said to have come from Kota, in the time of Shuja-ud-daula, and to have built a temple in

Ajodhya, but it was afterwards abandoned. Subsequently Narsingh Das of this order erected a new building near Darshan Singh's temple. The present head of the fraternity is Ram Sewak, and they are dependent solely on the offerings of pilgrims.

The Janamasthan and other temples.- it is locally affirmed that at the Muhammadan conquest there were three important Hindu shrines, with but few devotees attached, at Ajodhya, which was then little other than a wilderness. These were the "Janamasthan," the "Swargaddawar mandir" also known as "Ram Darbar," "Treta-keThakur."

On the first of these the Emperor Babar built the mosque, which still bears his name, A.D. 1528. On the second, Aurangzeb did the same A.D. 1658 to 1707; and on the third, that sovereign or his predecessors built a mosque, according to the well-known Muhammadan principle of enforcing their religion on all those whom they conquered.

The Janamasthan marks the place where Ram Chandar was born. The Swargaddwar is the gate through which he passed into paradise, possibly the spot where his body was burned. The Tretake- Thakur was famous as the place where Rama performed a great sacrifice, and which he commemorated by setting up there images of himself and Sita.

Babar's mosque.- According to Leyden's *Memoirs of Babar*; that Emperor encamped at the junction of the Serwa and Gogra rivers two or three *kos* east from Ajodhya, on the 28th March 1528, and there he halted seven or eight days, settling the surrounding country. A well-known hunting ground is spoken of in that work, seven or eight *kos* above Oudh, on the banks of the Sarju. It is remarkable that in all the copies of Babar's life now known, the pages that relate to this doings at Ajodhya are wanting. In two places in the Babari Mosque, the year in which it was built, 935 H., corresponding with 1528 A.D., is carved in stone, along with inscriptions dedicated to the glory that Emperor.

If Ajodhya was then little other than a wilderness, it must at least have possessed a fine temple in the Janamasthan for many of its columns are still in existence and in good preservation, having been used by the Musalmans in the construction of the Babri Mosque. These are of strong, close-grained, dark-coloured or black stone, called by the natives *kasauti* (literally touch-stone slate,) and carved with different devices. To my thinking these more strongly resemble Buddhist pillars than those I have seen at Benares and elsewhere. They are from seven to eight feet long,

square at the base, centre and capital, and round or octagonal intermediately.

Hindu and Musalman.- The Janamasthan is within a few hundred paces of the Hanoman Garhi. In 1855, when a great rupture took place between the Hindus and Muhammadans, the former occupied the Hanoman Garhi in force, while the Musalmans took possession of the Janamasthan. The Muhammadans on that occasion actually charged up the steps of the Hanoman Garhi, but were driven back with considerable loss. The Hindus then followed up this success, and at the third attempt took the Janamasthan, at the gate of which seventy-five Muhammadans are buried in the "martyrs' grave" (Ganj-I-Shahidan). Eleven Hindus were killed. Several of the King's regiments were looking on all the time, but their orders were not to interfere. It is said that up to that time the Hindus and Muhammadans alike used to worship in the mosquetemple. Since British rule a railing has been *put* up to prevent disputes, within which, in the mosque, the Muhammadans pray; while outside the fence the Hindus have raised a platform on which they make their offerings. A second attempt was made shortly afterwards by Molvi Amir Ali of Amethi; the object was to seize the alleged site of an old mosque on the Hanoman Garhi.

The two other old mosques to which allusion has been made (known by the common people by the name of *Naurang Shah*, by whom they mean Aurangzeb, are now mere picturesque ruins. Nothing has been done by the Hindus to restore the old *mandir* of Ram Darbar. The Treta-ke-Thakur was reproduced near the old ruin by the Raja of Kalu, whose estate is said to be in the Panjab, more than two centuries ago; and it was improved upon afterwards by Aholya Bai, Marathin, who also built the adjoining ghat, A.D. 1784. She was the widow of Jaswant Rae, Holkar of Indor, from which family Rs.231 are still annually received at this shrine.
