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SAADI AND SOMNATH TEMPLE

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ABSTRACT

One of the famous temples in India is Somnath temple that has an outstanding position among Hindus; this temple later was narrated in imagination description of many poets especially in Bostan (orchard book) by Persian poet Saadi. The most interesting events that there is in travel of Saadi is his journey and seeking about Somnath temple that has been described in chapter eight of Bostan Saadi. Saadi in this chapter described his journey to India; it may be a fiction of the poet.

Keywords: Somnath, Saadi, Idol, Hindu

INTRODUCTION

Saadi journey the most of his life and the description of his travels is observed throughout the works of Saadi. These descriptions not only have been repeated by poet in various shapes but also they were in company with emotions and situations of the poet's life. Journey has an extensive figurative meaning that contains enduring feature of human such as experiment, resistance and patient. In any state, characteristic of Saadi is expressed with various forms of excitements related to

content. In literature, journey was not important among poets since many of them preferred to spiritual journey (journey to their spirit) instead journey to a place. Some of them such as Hafiz and Nezami traveled very low while Saadi journeyed to different places and described his journeys among his works. Although description of journey is observed in all works of saadi, Bostan and Gulistan are nearest works to personal emotion of passenger. Explanation of Saadi's journey to Somnath is in chapter eight of Bostan and

chapter five of Golestan while there is doubt whether it is real travel or not. This article tries to explain journey of Saadi to India and perversion of idolaters in chapter eight of Bostan. In addition, it attempts to express reasons of being unrealistic journey and viewpoint of Saddi toward the place or places.

A review on Saddi's life and journeys

Abu- Muhammad Muslih al-Din Abdallah Shiraz was born in 1210 in Shiraz. His father died when he was 12 years old. He began his education in Shiraz and during Mongol invasion and campaign of Kharazmian dynasty, he left there to Baghdad. Dolatshah Samarghandi was a biographer who had more than 14 journeys to Mecca (Matini, 1985). It is obvious that Saadi studied in Baghdad at Nizamiyya center of knowledge he journeyed during 1249 that it took 30 years. He wrote Bostan and Gulistan when he returned to Shiraz in 1279. There are some discrepancies about geographical ranges of his travels. Some authors believe that he was journeying from east to India and from west to Africa. Others reject claim about Journey of Saddi to Kashgar and Somnath that has been expressed in chapter 8 of Bostan and Chapter 5 of Gulistan. In following sections the study is discussed about Somnath, place of Somnath and Somnath in Bostan.

Concept of Somnath word

Somnath in Sanskrit is pronounced Somnatha; it a synthesis of Someh –words that means moon and lord (Malalhend). The root of the word is Hindu and its synthesis meaning means moon and idol since in India moon is called “Soma” and idol is called “Nath” (Dehkhoda Dictionary). Abu al Rayhan al-Biruni said about this name:

“It has been quoted that Prjapati's girls married with moon and after atime, moon had a tendency toward one of the girls called Rohini. It led to compliant other girls near their father against moon. Parjapati advised that moon that you should pay attention toward all girls equal, but moon did not observe partjapati's advice and he was caught by Parjapati imprecation. The face of moon became stained and he repented his behavior, however, Parjapat said that I cannot change my imprecation. Moon asked: “how can I clean the stain from my face?” He answered:” you should worship one of the lords that are the Somnath idol”. So the moon worshiped Linga Meha- Deva (one of the lords)”.

Somnath temple

Somnath temple located in Gujarat at north western part of India that in this temple is placed famous idol that is called god Shiva. Indians used water of Ganges River to wash

idle of the temple, while it has 600 mile distance from the River. It was assumed that the source of this River is in the heaven.

Somnath temple was a big idol temple that has 14 golden cupola and 2000 persons from Brahman was occupied in this place. Also, there was a golden chain that had hung in this temple; in a specific time, servants of temple moved this chain and bells began to chime; so, all people came to temple to worship. A big ceremony was celebrated during lunar eclipse that more than hundred Hindu were participating in this ceremony. Always 300 barbers, 300 musical performers and 500 dancers were ready to serve round- the – clock. Gardizi believes that Somnath temple for Hindu is like Mecca for Muslims. Hindus were going on a pilgrimage to the temple from far distances.

This temple had fifty- six columns and in this place, big idol called Somnath was worshiped that was considered as a portrait of Mahadiva and it was said that Mahadiva created this idol. This idol was built from stone, its length was 520 Cm (17.06037 FT) that 312 cm of it was obvious and 208 cm of it was under ground. Others believe the le idol was 5 m. quoted from Gardizi, this idol is placed on a golden chair and his head covered with musk. In addition, sapphire and gem necklaces were

on its head; there were golden trays full of precious stones in front of the idol. The idol and its chair placed on a high and round platform and in each stair of the temple placed various idols in shape of men. Between the idols were small ladders that servants and doorkeepers went up and down by them. Figure of the idols were similar to some Hindu rulers and great ones. Many jewels were vowed for idol; even hundred villages were bestowed to the idol. According the Hindus' beliefs, the idol was provider, receptive, resuscitative and perspicacious. They went on pilgrimage to the idol and were bestowing precious gifts to it, so that much wealth was collecting every year. This idol was washing with water, milk and honey every day.

Position of Somnath in Hinduism

Trimurti Hindu contains:

- 1- Brahma: is creation God that is called as lord of lords; Hindus worship this Lord less than other Lords since they believe he has no work in the earth after creation of the world. Status of Brahma was designed with four head and four faces that most of the time it placed on a white duck.
- 2- Shiva: is a God of destruction. He destroys all things that are alive and it

is called greater lord. His sculpture has four hands while he dances. His dance shows his role on creation and destruction.

- 3- Vishnu: is preserver and maintainer of the world that is considered as the source of charities and donations. Ten manifestation of this God for people that is named "Krishna" contain: Fish, turtle, boar, half-man, half- lion, dwarf, Rama, Buddah, the founder of Buddhism law in the world who is the latest manifestation of Vishnu God. His name is "Kalki". He has a sword from fire and he will go with a white horse. He establishes right in the world and destroys false. Hinduism has many sects and they live together in peace, while there is class system or "caste" in the society. It is a social stratification. According the idea of this system the repetition cycle of life and sprite that is called "Samsara" is performed. The regulation of cause and effects that is called "Karma" frequently takes place in this system. The followers of each sect emphasize on each aspect of religion and usually refer to one of Lords. Large populations belong to followers of

Shiva and Vishna. "Linga" is associated with Shiva and it is a symbol in Hinduism. There is the scripture of Linga and its temple in India that one of them is 12 idol-temples in Somnath temple. Hindus believe that sprit after separation from body serves under Somnath idol, and then the same idol again revives the sprit in another shape. Also it was believed that sea worships Somnath and its tide crates because of Somnath. Invasion of Mahmud of Ghazbi to other temples was justified by Hindus on the ground that the Somnath idol was anger from the temple. A group of Shiva worshipers that is called Vat-Linga (it means protector of Linga) hung a small sculpture of Linga on their neck. This sculpture was inside the small cover. There are interesting points about some of the worship ceremonies in some of the Shiva's sects for example: Sakti sects believe that divine force is in the spirit of the women; for this reason, they worshiped the wife or wives of Shiva. In their temple nude women were dancing and performed the acts that were forbidden in Hinduism.

End of Somnath temple:

Mahmud of Ghaznavi was the first Muslim that entered to Indian Subcontinent. He fought against Indian and he returned to Ghazni after any invasion. He in one of his invasion that has been done to obtain enormous wealth and Somnath temple plundered treasures full of gold and precious stones. He destroyed huge idol- temples that later imagination description of it narrated in various works of historians such as Al-kamelibn Athir and Nokhbeh dahr Shamsi. When a vast army of thirty thousand persons of Ghaznavids attacked Somnath temple, Hindus entreated Somnath idol that prevents from Mahmud's attack but the idol was unable to do this act. The great ones escaped from city and they did not return to city until army of Mahmud was in the town. Some people remained in the town to confront the Mahmud but many people were killed.

Mahmud after breaking of the greater Idol, he divided it into 4 sections: he sent 2 parts of it to Mecca and Medina and the others two parts was sent to Ghazni.

Al- Biruni that lived in the same era said about pieces of sculpture. (He believed

that pieces did not send to Mecca and Medina or other place):” after breaking the Somnath idol, the upper section of it with golden necklace was sent to Ghazni. One of them was fixed on the Ghazni square and other was fixed on the general gate of Ghazni since people could cleanse mud and dirtiness of their shoes by it”. He said in the other note that now the head of Somnath idol is in the Ghazni Square while, Gardezi said:”after breaking the Somnath idol, pieces of it was sent to Ghazni city and the general gate of Ghazni but he did not speak about Gazni square and etc (Gardezi,1984).

It seems that Hindus intended to react against Mahmud. So, he was defeated when he returned from Somnath. For this reason, he led an army to Indian in order to revenge from them that it was the last attack of Mahmud to India.

After this era, any trace from the end of Somnath idol in Mecca and medina or Gazni was observed; it is not known that whether this city in conflagration was ruined or it was another end.

Saadi in somnath temple

Saddi in chapter eight of Bostan defined his journey to India and it is not known to what extent it is true. Maybe it is a fiction

story that was created to define Saadi's ideas. In this story, Saadi came to Somnath temple. If the travel of Saadi is true, surely the temple was rebuilt later and he came to new Somnath temple.

The interesting event that Saadi defined from his journey in Bostan is his excursion and curiosity in "Somnath temple" that its description is in eighty verses of chapter 8 of Bostan that it began with following verse:

"At Somnath, I saw an ivory idol,
It was set with jewels such the Manat."

Saadi saw that many caravans from every country brought travels to idol side; and people entreated idol with supplication to grant their needs. He was wondered and he pondered why people were worshipping an intimate object? He said: "I cannot answer to this question" (Bostan, chapter8).

At first, Saadi expressed his wonder with his friend (one of the servant) but his friend instead a true answer, became angry:

"The Magi was angered at my words,
He become my foe,
And alerted the idolaters
Of What I had said,
Such a drowning man,

I was destitute of aid."

When he saw the situation, came to chief of Magi and defined about pretty face and stature of the idol:

"I am pleased with the figure of the idol,
Its appearance was strange in my sight.

But I recently arrive in this place,
And a stranger can seldom recognition
between evil and good.

You are an aware person,

So, tell me what reality is there in the
form of the idol, for I am foremost among
worshippers?"

The face of chief glowed with happiness
because of his words and said to him: if
you want to find reality, stay in temple
tonight that you can see how this idol can
raise his hands to God.

Saadi stayed in the temple, while he
observed the action of worshipers,
especially the servant of temple. In the
morning, a multitude of people came
again into the temple. Suddenly the idol
raise his hand to sky.

"When the crowd had left,

The Magi looked smilingly to me "

When he saw his level of ignorance, he
contrived a new plan:

"I shed hypocritical tears
I am sorry for what I said".

When the servants saw this action of Saadi, they ran toward him and led him by the arms reverently toward the ivory idol:

“I kissed the hand the little idol”

When he attracted their trust toward himself, he stayed in the temple and began to investigate about the idol. He realized that a servant of the temple servants was back of the curtain which was behind the idol and he had the end of a rope in his hand. When the rope was pulled, the hands of the idol raised toward sky. When Brahman of temple found that Saadi realized this trick, he was ashamed.

“Brahman was ashamed of me”

Saadi described the end of the story as following:

I came to India after that resurgence

Then I left to Yemen,

I passed all the hard

But today my mouth becomes sweet”.

It is no doubt that Saadi is master of locution especially in his odes but in this story some terms and words such as pagan, Brahman, fire worshipper, archbishop and clergy is used instead of each other. In view of Saadi, Zoroastrian Magi prays without ablution. With this definition, it seems that there was no journey and he intended to create a story

with his imagination and at the end he reached to his desire conclusions. For this reason, the words and different concepts has been used instead of each other.

Another case that is doubtful in Saadi’s journey to India is description of Saadi about ivory ideal. Hindus never create idol from ivory since they believe elephant is a holy animal and creation of ideal from ivory is prohibited in their religious (Mahdi Razavi, 2007).

At Somnath, I saw an ivory idol,

It was fixed with jewels such the Manat.”

Also, there are serious problem to believe his journey. In this event, Saadi played the main role to kill the Indian Brahman and it seems that he did not know where Somnath was since he arrived to India after escape from Somnath.

“I came to India after that resurgence

Then, I left to Yemen,

I passed all the hard

But today my mouth becomes sweet”

Historians such as Eghbal ashtiani who consider Bostan and Gulistan as an ethical set are at a loss to understand some story Saadi has the main role in ethical events. They confuse whether the events are considered as a real story or they are classified as fiction story. Edward Brown

considers the above events of Bostan and Gulistan as a real event and his ethical deficiency that is concluded from the events has been explained as follows:” Saadi is characterized as ethical poets in view of many people. Although from one view it is true, it should be considered that his moralities are different with common ethical theories in west”.

Unfortunately, some people who accept possibility of saadi’s storytelling have simplistic perception for example they accept that Saadi could not go to Somnath since if he went to Somnath; he must know where India was. In this regard, they believe Sadi mixed reality and imagination with each other. Based on their view, he used eloquence in his story; in addition, his careful attention to literary device prevents to recognize reality from imagination (Eghbal Ashtiani, 1937).

Since application of rhythm and creation of a story with importance of witticism and eloquence in this works is conformed to the description of common authorities, it does not mean that Saadi imitated Balkhi (The famous essayist in Persian language (Matini, 1985).

Saadi used more humorous expression to point the fictional nature of his story in

first chapter of Gulistan. Since the travelers had the main role of the story and he would be punished for his lies, he said to Malak: “if you listen to empty word from your slave, you do not offended since worldly- wise is lying too much”.

The Malak’s command who pardoned the strange passenger because of his true confession is a humorous warning of Saadi to readers in order to know that he sometimes used from witticism during the story. In addition, there is a warning in Bostan and Gulistan that nothing should be considered as apparent meaning.

CONCLUSION

Somnath temple and its great idol had the main important situation among Hindus especially Shiva worshipers. This situation is comparable with situation of Mecca and Media. Lack of resistance of Hindus against Mahmud was arising from their belief against great idol. Saadi in Bostan with narration of a story expressed his idea about this place. It seems that priests of Somnath temple established this place to misuse belief of people. It was cleared with 2 servants inside the idol and a servant behind the scene in order to raise the hand of the idol. However what

express the imagination of the story is application of Magi, Jewish priest, Zoroastrian magi and other priests in different religions. As the literature of Somnath defined, it is a place for worship of Hindus Brahma in the same era and existence of Magi, Jewish priest seems unlikely. Maybe, Saadi had a special purpose for using the terms that is beyond the article. Another case is lack of awareness of Saadi from Somnath situation and he sometimes pointed to being unreal story with witticism in Bostan and Gulistan.

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