Abstract

“Pir” Cult, one of the branches of Sufi cult also had its sway in the socio-religious profile of the valley. It is still thriving along with other cults preached and practiced in the locality of Astarang and Kakatpur in the district of Puri. Jahania of Astarang Block, Puri is the seat of Pir cult and has been contributing a lot in making social and religious harmony in and out of the locality. This paper, based on field work tries to give a brief account of the Revered Jahania Pir.

Introduction:

India is a land of unity in diversity. It is a land of different religion different culture, different custom and different tradition. Spiritualism has played the role of a great unifying force behind the peaceful co-existence in this sub-continent for hundreds and thousands of years. It acts like a powerful catalyst in accelerating religious and cultural fusion which lends to a most sustainable peaceful and socio-cultural entity of India. Different religious faiths and cults have evolved and ramified in this land. This apart, its broad spiritual bent of mind was welcomed, accepted and internalized different alien religious faiths and cults borne by invaders and crusaders. India acted like both as a salad bowl and a melting pot for different religions and faiths. But all these faiths have undergone a process of metamorphosis losing its narrowness, crudities and parochial attributes and gaining universal brotherhood and human values.

Prachi valley civilization has contributed a lot towards amalgamation, assimilation and proliferation of different religious faiths and cults. “Pir” Cult, one of the branches of Sufi cult also had its sway in the socio-religious profile of the valley. It is still thriving along with other cults preached and practiced in the locality of Astarang and Kakatpur in the district of Puri. Jahania of Astarang Block, Puri is the seat of Pir cult and has been contributing a lot in making social and religious harmony in and out of the locality.

Pir or sufi means a Muslim saint, a devotee of God who completely surrenders before the Almighty who is one, formless and invisible. The term Sufi is derived from the word ‘suf’ as they wear garments of wool (Suf) as their badge of poverty. They are devoted Muslims and believed in inner purity instead of external conduct. The essence of the
teachings of the sufi saint is the union of the human soul with god through love and devotion. The method of their real living was the renunciation of the world and worldly pleasures. They lived a secluded life. They are the best friends of the poor and want to remain far from the rich. That is why Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi said when the sultan Allauddin Khiliji expressed his desire to meet him, Auliya replied - “I have two doors in my home. If the Sultan would enter through one door I would go out though the other”. Another important Sufi named Fariduddin Ganj-I-Shaker used to say, “Every dervish who makes friends with the nobles will end badly”

**Development of Pir Cult:**

Pir or Sufi is the second age of Mahamadeansim. After the departure of Prophet Mohammad the age of Khalifa came to exist in the world. Khalifa means the spiritual head of the Muslim world who was nominated by the Sahabi (Sahabi means who were alive and believed and seen Prophet Mohammad). After the age of Khalifa the age of Pir came into existence in the Muslim world that continues for long. The head of the pirs or first pir of the Muslim world is Shaikh Abdul Qadir Zilani or Bada Pir of Baghdad of Iraq. Initially India was the land of Darut Herb which means the country of non-Muslims. But for the first time Muslim stepped into India and sowed the seeds of Islam in Indian soil in 8th century under the leadership of Mohammad Bin Kasim. Gradually the member of Muslim increased and ruled over India during the medieval period. Medieval India is divided into two periods - one is the sultanate period and the second is the Mughal period.

During the sultanate period the Pir or Sufis came and settled down in different parts of India and their motive was to spread Mahamadianism in India. Due to the exchange of ideas between Muslim and Hindus two religious movements like Sufi and Bhakti movement brought about a tremendous change in the socio-cultural scenario of India. The Sufi saints from Muslim community and the Bhakti from the Hindu community tried to bridge the gap by asserting the oneness of the two religions. That is why Kabir, who is the pioneer of Bhakti movement said - “we are the children of the same God who is Ram-Rahim and Jesus. Hindu and Muslim are two brothers made of the same clay”. The Sufi came from the different orders like Chistia, Sarwardhia, Naksbardia, Qadria etc. The important saints of India are Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti of Ajmer in Rajasthan (1143-1234), Fariduddin Ganj-i-shakar (1176-1265) and Nizam Uddin Auliya of Delhi (1235-1325). Like them a number of Pir came to India from different orders settled in different parts of India. A number of Pirs visited and settled themselves in different parts of Orissa. In the Prachi valley of Puri district a number of pirs settled in different places. They are Jahania Jahangast Pir of Sudikeswar of Astarang, Dadapir of Rasulpur, Katakpur, Pir Hazrat Khaki Sahab of Gop, Baba Bokhari of Kaipadar of Khurda district, Sayed Abdul Rehman Madina Wali , B/O Ishaq Madin of Bisakh Patna of Manikpatana of Puri district etc.

**Baba Makhdum Jahania Jahangast:**

He was born at Uchh of Sind in 1329 A.D. He was the son of Sayed Ahamad Kabir, a holy man of Uchh. As morning shows the day from the very childhood he used to get
pleasure by religious discussions with the religious persons. He found pleasure in meeting different religious persons to know about Islamic teachings.

Sayad Bokhari was the spiritual teacher of Jahangast. He liked to maintain and concentrate on life far from any blemishes. So he left his worldly life and led the life of an ascetic. He liked to move from place to place and even wanted to visit the whole world for which he was called Jahania Jahangast. Jahan means the world and Gast means to visit. Sultan Mahammad Bin Tughluque was a great disciple of him. He belonged to Sarwardia order.

He came and settled at Sudikeswar of Astarang in the Puri district of Orissa. With his trusted follower named Mastan Alli Saha he came though Bengal and entered into Orissa and then to Puri via Konark, Ansara, Suhagpur, Kakatpur, Astarang to Sudikeswar which is situated on the seashore where he settled for a long time. At that time there was no village but a person named Bal Chandra Parida, a farmer by occupation who was staying there by clearing a portion of the jungle. One day Baba Jahania Jahangast with his follower Mastan Alli Shah was roaming on seashore where Bal Chandra Parida saw him and was deeply impressed by his spiritual knowledge. Bal Chandra Parida constructed a cottage for them but the Pir liked to stay in a sonar temple inside the sea and his follower stayed in that cottage. But an order of Baba to his follower, Mastan Alli Shah, was that every evening he would visit the darbar of the Pir staying in sonar temple. There was a miracle that when his follower entered into the sea, the sea water used to divide and paved the way for Mastan Alli for the darbar of the Pir where he met him and returned every evening. For his return Mastan was advised by his master neither to see the face of any woman nor to look back till he reaches the shore.

Maratha King Janojee Bhonsla with his wife and soldiers came to Orissa and stayed at Sonagarh kacheri. But his wife was suffering from Leprosy. In spite of huge treatment she was not cured for which the king was very much worried. One day the king was roaming on the sea shore and came in contact with Mastan Alli, the follower of the pir and explained in detail about his diseased wife. Mastan Alli assured him not to be worried and assured him to talk with his Master regarding his wife. Next day when
Mastan Alli went for the pir he explained the details of what the Raja had told him regarding his queen. By his miraculous power the Pir cured the queen.

Mastan Alli shah as usual continued to visit his Master. One evening while going to the pir a child followed him without his knowledge and cried loudly. As he looked back the miraculous division of sea water which paved the way for the Pir’s disciple closed forever. In the same night he saw his master in a dream who told him not to go to the sea to meet him but will get his Kathau (wooden shoes) at the sea shore. Next day Mastan found the wooden shoes of his master on the shore, put them on a sand pile and worshipped there.

Initially there was no shrine but the Martha king, Janojee Bhonsla, constructed a shrine of the Pir on this sea shore and donated vast properties in the name of the pir to take care of his shrine. Everyday the majawar (the care taker of shrine) offers at the shrine a sacred offering of one chhatong ghee, 1/2 kg milk, 1/2 kg sugar, 6 katha rice cooked in clay pot and looks after the pir’s land. Till now the system continues. A festival is held every year on the full moon day of the month of Kartika where a large number of devotees of different cults from far and near assemble to pay homage to Pir Baba, which indicates the cultural harmony of Hindus, Muslims and other sects. The real shrine of Jahania Jahagast is not at Suikeswar of Astarang of Puri but at Uchh in Sindh where the eventful life of the Pir came to an end in 1407 A.D at the age of 77.

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Acknowledgments:
Fakrun Alli Shah S/o Md. Maqbul Hussain (Majawar), Dr. Sayad Sadique Alli Saha S/o Fakrun Alli Saha (Majawar) for their valuable cooperation in my field work.

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