

Some Important Bahmani Monuments in Gulbarga- A Survey

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Gulbarga district is one of the three districts that were transferred from Hyderabad State to Karnataka state at the time of re-organization of the state in 1956. The district is one among the 29 districts of Karnataka State. It is located in the Northern part of the state and lies between North latitude 17 10 and 17 45 and between east longitude 76 10 and 77 45 The District is a biggest district in the state covering 8.49% of the area and 5.9 present of population of the state. It is bounded on the west by Bijapur district of Karnataka and Sholapur district of Maharashtra, on the west by Bijapur district of Andhra Pradesh, on the north by Bidar district of and Osmanabad district of Maharashtra and on the south by Raichur district of Karnataka.¹

GULBARGA was known as 'KALBURGI' in former days, which means stony land in Kannada. Gulbarga district is situated in the northern part of Karnataka State. In the earlier days, Gulbarga was a district of Hyderabad Karnataka area and became a part of Karnataka State after re-organization of states.²

Recorded history of this district dates back to the 6th Century A.D. The Rashtrakutas gained control over the area but the Chalukyas regained their domain within a short period and regained supreme for over two hundred years. The Kalachuri's who succeeded them ruled till the 12th Century AD. Around the close of the 12th century the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Hoysalas of Dwarasamadra destroyed the supremacy of the Chalukyas and Kalachuris. About the same period the Kakatiya kings of Warangle came into prominence and the present Gulbarga and Raichur districts formed part of their domain. The Kakatiya power was subdued in 1321 AD and the entire Deccan including the district of Gulbarga passed under the control of the Muslim Emperors of Delhi.³

The revolt of the Muslim officers appointed from Delhi resulted in founding of the Bahmani kingdom in 1347 AD, by Hassan Gangu who chose Gulbarga to be his capital. When the Bahmani dynasty came to an end, the kingdom broke up into five Sultanates and the present Gulbarga district came partly under Bidar and partly under Bijapur.⁴

With the conquest of the Deccan by Aurangzeb in the 17th century, Gulbarga passed back to the Mughal Empire. In the early part of the 18th century when Mughal Empire was declining Asaf Jha a general of Aurangzeb became independent and formed the Hyderabad State in which a major part of Gulbarga area was also included. In 1948 Hyderabad state became a part of Indian Union and in 1956, excluding two talukas which were annexed to Andhra Pradesh the remaining talukus of Gulbarga district became part of New Mysore State.⁵

This town was the Bahmani capital from 1347 until its transfer to Bidar in 1428 Later the kingdom broke up into a number of smaller kingdoms - Bijapur, Bidar, Berar, Ahmednager and Golconda. The last of these, Golconda, finally fell to Aurangzeb in 1687. Gulbarga's old moated fort is in a much deteriorated state, but it has a number of interesting buildings inside including the Jama Masjid, reputed to have been built by a Moorish architect during the late 14th or early 15th century who imitated the great mosque in Cordoba, Spain. The mosque is unique in India, with a huge dome covering the whole area, four smaller ones at the corners, and 75 smaller still all the way around. The fort itself has 15 towers. Gulbarga also has a number of imposing tombs of Bahmani kings, a shrine to an important Muslim saint and the Sharana Basaveshwara Temple. The Sharana Basaveshwara Temple is a major attraction to both Hindu and Muslim devotees. This

temple is dedicated to an eminent Hindu religious teacher and philosopher, Shri Sharana Basaveshwara. Dasoha ("Giving is earning") and Karma were his basic and simple principles.⁶

The present paper aims at bringing to light the architectural contributions of the Bahmanis which are in ruins and miss the care and attention of archeologists and historians.

The Gulbarga Fort

The Gulbarga Fort located in Gulbarga City was built by 1347 by Al-ud-din Bahmani of the Bahmani Dynasty after he cut off his ties with the Delhi Sultanate; Islamic monuments such as mosques, palaces, tombs, and other structures were also built later within the refurbished fort. The Jami Masjid built later, within the fort, in 1367, is a unique structure built in Persian architectural style, fully enclosed, with elegant domes and arched columns, which is unlike any other mosque in India. It was built to commemorate the establishment of the dynastic rule of the Bahmani kingdom at Gulbarga fort between 1327 and 1424. It remained the capital of the Bahmani Kingdom till 1424 where after the capital was shifted to Bidar Fort, as Bidar had better climatic conditions^{7,8,9}.

Jumma Masjid inside the Fort

The palace and other structures inside the fort wall are now in ruins. But the Jumma Masjid, a noteworthy monument of Gulbarga is in well preserved condition. Built and completed in 1367 by Rafi an architect hailing from Iran, this distinctive Mosque has 250 arches and five large domes of which the central dome is 63 feet in diameter. Its interior surface is decorated with flowers and creepers.¹⁰

Tomb of Hasangangu Bahamani

The tomb of the founder of Bahamani dynasty Ala-ud-din Hasan Gangu (1358), Muhammad Bahaman Shah-I (1375) and Muhammad Bahaman Shah-II (1397) can be seen on the left side of the road leading to Aland. The domes are attractive imitations of the tombs of pathans in North India. These tombs are simpler in nature compared to the well planned and decorated sepulchers of the later period.¹¹

Tomb of Khwaja Banda Nawaz

Sayyad Hazrat Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz was a sufi saint. He came to Gulbarga for propagation of Islam. A Persian scholar to begin with, he learnt Urdu. He wrote many works in both languages and lived in Gulbarga from 1407 to 1422. The Saint was much revered and respected by all alike. The annual Urus in his memory takes place on the 15th of Zakid month which attracts devotees from all over the country Lot of Hindu devotees also attend the Urus. The Dargah located amidst number of large and small tombs in a compound, is known for its religious as well as architectural features. The construction of Dargah begun two years after his death and was completed seven years later. The simple walls of the Dargah are decorated with sentences from the Quran painted in gold. The paintings on the walls and dome are in Turkistani and Iranian style.¹²

The saint's corporal remains are preserved in Dargah. Besides this, is located the Dargah of saint's son. The library in the premises is having rare books on history, philosophy and religion.¹³

The Sath Gumbaz Complex (Haft Gumbaz)

The Gumbazs located on the way to Khwaja Banda Nawaz Dargah consists of the tombs of Bahamani rulers and their military commanders. Of these the tombs of Mujahid and Tajuddin Firuz are monumental and distinctitive. This group of seven tombs are exceptional as they represent a structural arrangement not found elsewhere. This consisted in building the tomb in a double form of two mortuary chambers, one containing the cenotaph of the king and the other those of his family. The tomb of Daud Shah is a double tomb i.e., two square domed tombs joined together by a narrow corridor built into the thickness of the walls.¹⁴

Chor Gumbaz

It is built on the top of the lonely hill and visible from distance. It has attractive Gumbaz and it is locally believed that it is entrance to a secret passage. Like the Gol gumbaz of Bijapur this monument also echoes, but the immense proportion of Gol Gumbaz is not noticed in this monument. This tomb was supposedly built by a merchant for the Chisti saint Gesu Daraz, who declined to use it because the merchant was a money lender. Hence it was abandoned and taken over by robbers as meeting place. The tomb is large, nearly 30mts high with hemispherical dome and corner towers which have an arch in each side. Col. Meadows Taylor claims to have lived in it for some time and immortalized it in one of his literary work.¹⁵

Shah Bazar Mosque

Constructed during the reign of Mahammad Shah-I, the Shah Bazar Mosque is quiet attractive with beautiful columns, arches and domes. Infront of this mosque there is an arched entrance and on either side is tall minor. Inside there is an open courtyard and at the rear is the prayer hail. The Mosque has fifteen arched openings which lead to a sanctuary six bays deep enclosed by a wall. Each of the bays is surmounted by a small dome similar to the Tughalaq domes of Delhi.¹⁶

Monuments at Holakunda

The five tombs at Holakunda (28km north of Gulbarga) belonging to significant personalities of the Bahamani Empire with beautiful Gumbazs, resemble the Haft Gumbazs of Gulbarga.

Monuments at Firozabad.

Firoz Shah Bahamani (1397-1422) built a capital on the Bank of Bhima river on lines similar to Akabar's Fathepur Sikri. He built beautiful Palace, Fort, Mosque and gateways and called it Firozabad (34km South of Gulbarga).

The ruins at Firozabad speak volumes about the beginning of Indo-Islamic style of construction. Though the Bahamanis capital was supposed to be shifted to Firozabad for strategic reasons but it could not become the capital and instead the capital was shifted to Bidar by Ahmed Shah I after 1424. Flooding in Bhima was also said to have influenced the decision.¹⁷

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