

# TELANGANA LAND AND PEOPLE

FROM 1323-1724 CE  
VOLUME 2



A K Goel, RETD IAS  
Rekha Pande, PhD  
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Zareena Parveen, PhD



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FROM 1323 CE TO 1724 CE (VOLUME 2)



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# Foreword

*T*elangana emerged as the twenty ninth state on the map of India in the year 2014 CE. The dream of statehood has been realised after a long and sustained struggle by its people after six decades. Thereafter, due to proactive policy of the state government, an ever-growing number of public functionaries are being recruited through the Public Service Commission. The existing manpower of a couple of lakh employees along with these fresh recruits are meant to serve around 40 million people across the state.

The primary objective of Dr Marri Channa Reddy Human Resource Development Institute of Telangana is to train and sustain a dedicated work force for Government through capacity building and skill development. As you all are aware that Twenty First century greeted State Administration with new issues, implementation dilemmas and doubts resulting from the overarching processes of the globalization of market economies, the fast changing Socio, cultural and political scenario, information technology and finally with ethical and philosophical dilemmas. Accordingly, State Administrative authorities are obligated to balance the conflicting interests between development programmes, individual rights & conveniences, apart from divergent responsibilities.

These new situations or challenges require, consistent with personal integrity and professional expertise, an increased capacity to respond adequately and receptively to the emerging demands with efficiency and expediency. Dr MCR HRD Institute of Telangana endeavours to address all these issues by motivating building up of individual intellectual capacity, and promoting team spirit directed towards target achievement, and thus inculcating public spirited performance through articulated training programmes.

A word about the sojourn of Dr MCR HRD Institute of Telangana would be pertinent here. The institute was setup in the year 1976 CE. Its Mission is to empower public servants towards citizen centric and good governance. Its Vision is to be reckoned as the hub of excellence in all fields of public administration. Driven by this ideology, the institute has evolved into a hub of eco-friendly sylvan ambience equipped with cyber enabled modern facilities, attracting renowned faculty so as to train more than a thousand trainees at one time on residential basis. The On-line training provides an additional multiplier.

After the creation of Telangana, more than ten thousand public servants have passed through the portals of this institute. As mandated, they are

*being equipped with relevant set of knowledge and skills coupled with positive attitudes, so as to serve the entire society. It has also been considered necessary to sharpen the understanding about Telangana – Land and People amongst trainees. In fact, relevant material has evolved during class room sessions conducted by a competent resource team. It has also been shared with successive batches of trainees for last three to four years. Their feedback, without exception has been overwhelmingly positive.*

*Encouraged by such a resounding response, the reading material has already evolved into Volume-I. As the process continued, Volume-II is ready on the academic platform of the institute. The material contained is an honest endeavour to capture factual and scientific narrative from all available and authentic sources, covering the vast canvas of Telangana – Land and People. Almost all trainees of this institute have found this material extremely beneficial. I am quite confident that it would facilitate the Telanganites in particular and their well-wishers in general to revisit the grandiose of their own history and the glory of their culture.*



**Benhur Mahesh Dutt Ekka, IAS**  
**Director General**  
**Dr MCR HRD Institute**

Hyderabad  
January 2023





# Preface

Human civilisation begins with the emergence of the human beings on the planet earth. Indian subcontinent boasts about human presence during Pleistocene period. The present-day Telangana lands were peopled by hunter gatherers during Holocene period. To cover such a vast canvas of such an ancient people is a daunting task. It was however simplified by the historic creation of Telangana as the twenty ninth state of Union of India. A new state needs to orient its ranks of public servants afresh. That need for Telangana orientation has been the *raison d'être* for this volume.

The Telangana State emerged on the map of India as the 29th State on the 2nd June 2014. The State's territorial jurisdiction comprised of ten districts along with Hyderabad as its capital. The ten districts from the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh were Adilabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Warangal, Rangareddy, Nalgonda, Mahaboobnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad.

The first volume had already covered the period from stone age to 1323 CE. The present Volume-II covers the period from 1323 CE to 1724 CE. In all, it consists of nine chapters. Each chapter is a modular unit. It can be read independently or in a sequence, depending upon reader's choice. But once started, we are confident that other chapters, like flower in a garland shall demand their attention too. Telangana, like a freshly strung garland would leave its unique fragranced with each reader.

The first two chapters deal with the evolving polity encapsulating the present day Telangana lands during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries after the collapse of Kakatiya imperium. Emergence of native rulers like Musunuris and Padmanayaks was bound to collide with the simultaneous rise of Bahamanis, the alien rulers. A will to survive by the native rulers due to their internal conflicts were eventually subsumed by the rising tide of Bahamanis. The latter's expansion witnessed climax before their catastrophic collapse by the end of fifteenth century.

Chapter three deals exclusively with the Islamic fiscal jurisprudence which prevailed in Telangana. Its birth in far distant lands had witnessed gradual dynastic evolution under Ummayyads, Abbasids, Gaznavids and Delhi Sultanate. Thereafter, it finally enveloped the Deccan lands. The new fiscal architecture was a complete break from the erstwhile taxation system which had prevailed in Telangana lands for millenaea. It shattered

the agrarian economy and considerably diminished the socio-economic stature of most of the occupational groups in rural society.

Chapter four deals with the various aspects of statecraft which includes polity, general administration, judicial administration, military administration, technology and secret services. Various aspects of economy including agrarian, commercial and trade including slave trade are also covered. The economic regression impacting the lot of people is also covered. Chapter five reflects upon the prevailing socio-cultural scenario in the realm. There was a silent penetration of Sufi philosophers followed by Sufi warriors which impacted the society. Yet another fresh entry was that of Persian language and culture. It was the language of rulers, sufi saints and savants which kept political and ecclesiastical apex united. New languages like Dekkani & Protu urdu also evolved due to symbiosis with local languages.

Chapter sixth deals with Golkonda polity during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After the implosion of Bahamani behemoth, Golconda kingdom emerged as one of its offshoots. It witnessed the usual trajectory of expansion, consolidation, climax, glory followed by decline. It was subjugated by the Mughals from Delhi and after its collapse was annexed and made a part of Mughal imperium by the end of seventeenth century. The tortuous transition continued till the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 CE.

Chapter seven deals with the description of Qutb Shahi state and its economy. The agrarian system with its deleterious impact upon the rural landscape was one dimension. The other aspect relates to trade including slave trade, industries and a vibrant import – export market. Incessant wars and all too frequent famines enfeebled the state. The consequential economic decline is also highlighted. Chapter eight deals with socio-cultural scenario prevailing during those times. Several new institutions like Royal household including royal harem and Karkhanas have been covered. The rising tide of Afaqui influence, followed by its eventual collapse is also highlighted.

Chapter nine, the final chapter highlights the melting of Mughals after Aurangzeb's death and emergence of alternative power centres for controlling these lands. After prolonged conflict, Nizam-ul-Mulk finally arrives, captures power and gives birth to a new kingdom in 1724 CE. Thereafter, Telangana land and people came under the sway of a new set of alien rulers from Islamic lands. That pertains to Asaf Jahi dynasty and the narrative would be covered in subsequent volumes.

**Coordinator**





# Acknowledgements

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Just as it takes a village to bring up a child, the same is true for a book. How many people have helped in this endeavour? Let me remember their names. Innumerable Civil service trainees spread over batches in the Institute come first. Their active participation in terms of class-room learning, subsequent feedback and discussions to finalise the sections and chapters of this book is unforgettable.

A galaxy of senior academics have provided their historic insights. Dr.T.Manohar of Kakatiya University, Prof. Salma Ahmed Farooqui from H.K.Sherwani centre for Deccan studies, Maulana Azad National Urdu University and Prof. Adapa Satyanarayana from Osmania University have scanned selected chapters and enriched them with their encouraging feedback. Most importantly, senior academics from fiscal and economic disciplines, like Prof. E.Revathi and Prof. S.Galab have reinforced the text comprehensively. Professional photographer, Ravinder Reddy and author of Telangana Atlas, Shankar Reddy provided their unique support. The office team consisting of Mr.Tiwari and Mr. Balakishan, has taken pains to convert an assorted raw material into a finished product.

Mr.Balakishan needs special mention as he was at work on 24x7x365 basis – round the clock and round the year. Supriya's signature designing style throughout the book is etched from cover to cover. Someone has to suffer the verbal bombardment to endorse the work. That duty (rather reluctantly) fell to the share of Sushma, my wife. She had no choice but to suffer this one-sided monologue, especially during dinner times. Finally, the leadership of the Dr.MCR HRD Institute, especially the Director General, who let the entire project unfold deserve our lifetime's gratitude.

Coordinator







## Team of Authors

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**A.K.Goel** is a retired IAS Officer of 1974 batch allotted to Andhra Pradesh cadre. After superannuation in 2010 CE, he has been focussing upon the project relating to Telangana – Land and People from Stone Age to the present times. He has acted as the Coordinator for the first volume of the Project, covering the period from stone Age to 1323 CE. Now, he has coordinated the present project, covering the period from 1323 to 1724 CE.

**Rekha Pande** is a former Professor and was heading the History Department and Women's studies at the University of Hyderabad, India. She was the Founder Director of the Women's Studies Centre in Maulana Azad National Urdu University and University of Hyderabad. A guide to 24 doctoral scholars and a prolific writer of 20 books, she is a regular contributor to national and international journals. She has been a visiting professor of several universities abroad. Recently, she has been invited by the National Commission for Women, Govt. of India to be its resource person. All in all, she is an accomplished "GURU", performing multifarious roles with aplomb and dignity.

**Ravulapati Madhavi** is the young Associate Professor of Law & Head of Centre for Public Administration in the Dr. MCR HRD Institute, Govt. of Telangana. She has authored 2 textbooks in Law and published around 45 scholarly papers. She, as an erudite communicator, is a visiting professor of Law for several Universities and Institutions like NPA, HCU, GSI, TSPA and IRDA etc. As a recognised trainer of trainers by the DoPT, Govt. of India, she has conducted several programmes across several Indian organisations. She is a Resource Person for Law subjects for AIS & CCS, Military Engineering Services and Group-I services of Telangana State. A multifarious functionary, she has not only contributed to the subject in successive chapters, but has coordinated the learnings and feedback of various sessions amongst civil service trainees.

**Zareena Parveen** is the Director of Telangana State Archives and Research Institute. She is a multidimensional professional in the field of

history, archives, manuscriptology and Persian language. Gifted with a brilliant academic background, she has evolved in State Archives over three decades from a Research Associate to the apex as its distinguished Director. She has organised the prestigious IHRC conference and also established the manuscript research centre in Hyderabad.

An endless awards winner, she is a natural research supervisor, lecturer and trainer. As coordinator of District Gazetteers and transliteration of Persian manuscripts, she has published countless research papers. Her contribution from original Persian source for this volume is unique. The author's overall record, it would appear is true to her name (Zareena in Persian means, Golden). Her nonstop marathon as Director of State Archives continues, unabated.





# Contents

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|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter 1. THE POST KAKATIYAN RECONFIGURATION (1323 TO 1436 CE)</b>     | <b>1</b>   |
| 1.1 THE DAY AFTER  | 2          |
| 1.2 THE ORIGINS & GROWTH OF PADMANAYAKS                                    | 9          |
| 1.3 THE RISE OF BAHAMANIS - BIRTH OF A NEW KINGDOM                         | 14         |
| 1.4 FLUIDITY   | 28         |
| 1.5 THE CAPITAL RELOCATION   | 36         |
| <b>Chapter 2. THE BIDAR YEARS (1436 TO 1512 CE)</b>                        | <b>44</b>  |
| 2.1 THE MORALIST, THE CRUEL & THE SHORT LIVED                              | 44         |
| 2.2 THE GLORY, CLIMAX AND CATASTROPHE                                      | 54         |
| 2.3 THE DYNASTY COLLAPSES  | 63         |
| <b>Chapter 3. THE ISLAMIC FISCAL JURISPRUDENCE</b>                         | <b>77</b>  |
| 3.1 THE ORIGIN – THE TREATY OF KHAYBAR                                     | 78         |
| 3.2 TAXATION UNDER THE Umayyads  | 86         |
| 3.3 TAXATION UNDER THE Abbassids   | 92         |
| 3.4 FROM GAZNAVIDS TO DELHI SULTANATE                                      | 103        |
| 3.5 TAXATION DURING THE BAHMANIS   | 113        |
| <b>Chapter 4. THE STATECRAFT &amp; ECONOMY DURING BAHMANIS TIMES</b>       | <b>123</b> |
| 4.1 THE STATE APPARATUS  | 124        |
| 4.2 THE ECONOMIC LOT OF THE PEOPLE   | 143        |
| 4.3 AN OVERALL GLIMPSE OF THE BAHMANIS TIMES                               | 152        |
| <b>Chapter 5. SOCIO CULTURAL SCENARIO DURING 14th &amp; 15th CENTURIES</b> | <b>163</b> |
| 5.1 THE SUFI PHILOSOPHY  | 163        |
| 5.2 THE WARRIOR SUFIS AND THEIR IMPACT                                     | 172        |
| 5.3 THE PERSIAN INFLUENCE  | 185        |
| <b>Chapter 6. THE GOLCONDA KINGDOM (1512 – 1707 CE)</b>                    | <b>203</b> |
| 6.1 EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION  | 206        |
| 6.2 CLIMAX AND GLORY   | 218        |
| 6.3 DECLINE AND SUBJUGATION  | 227        |
| 6.4 COLLAPSE AND ANNEXATION  | 236        |
| 6.5 THE TORTUROUS TRANSITION   | 243        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter 7. GOLCONDA STATECRAFT AND ECONOMY</b>                | <b>255</b> |
| 7.1 THE QUTB SHAHI STATE   | 256        |
| 7.2 THE AGRARIAN SYSTEM IN GOLCONDA                              | 264        |
| 7.3 TRADE, INCLUDING SLAVE TRADE                                 | 276        |
| 7.4 INDUSTRIES   | 288        |
| 7.5 INCESSANT WARS AND FAMINES ENFEEBLE GOLCONDA                 | 294        |
| 7.6 THE ECONOMIC TRENDS FROM 1500 – 1700 CE                      | 303        |
| <b>Chapter 8. SOCIO CULTURAL SCENARIO DURING GOLCONDA TIMES</b>  | <b>315</b> |
| 8.1 THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD INCLUDING HAREM                          | 315        |
| 8.2 GOLCONDA – THE LAST PERSIAN BASTION                          | 325        |
| 8.3 AN OVERALL GLIMPSE OF THE QUTB SHAHI TIMES                   | 339        |
| <b>Chapter 9. MUGHALS MELT, ASAF JAHIS EMERGE (1707-1724 CE)</b> | <b>349</b> |
| 9.1 POST AURANGZEB MELT DOWN                                     | 350        |
| 9.2 THE MAN OF DESTINY   | 357        |
| 9.3 LIQUIDATION OF KINGS AND KINGMAKERS                          | 366        |
| 9.4 NIZAM-UL-MULK ARRIVES  | 372        |
| 9.5 BIRTH OF A NEW KINGDOM                                       | 380        |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>  | <b>386</b> |
| <b>INDEX</b>   | <b>390</b> |







# 1. The Post Kakatiyan Reconfiguration (1323 –1436 CE)

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Prior to 1324 CE, the present-day Telangana lands constituted an organic part of the Kakatiya imperium with Orugallu (the present-day, Warangal) as the capital. In 1324 CE, after the subjugation of Kakatiyas by the Delhi sultanate, the new rulers faced a prolonged resistance from the erstwhile feudatories. This chapter deals with the history of Telangana lands during the period from 1324 to 1436 CE. It consists of 3 phases. A brief description of each phase would be appropriate.

The first phase is spread from 1324 to 1336 CE. In the immediate aftermath of the Kakatiya's collapse, Malik Maqbool was appointed as the Governor from Delhi. The new Islamic dispensation was opposed by all feudatories, namely Recharla Padmanayaks, Kondaveedu Reddis and Koppula Chiefs of Pithapuram under the leadership of Musunuri brothers, namely Musunuri Prolaya Nayak followed by Kapaya Nayak. Malik Maqbool was defeated in 1336 CE by the combined league, but no sooner he fled to Delhi, the victorious league developed internal cracks.

The second phase is spread from 1336 CE onwards. The present-day Telangana lands came under the sway of Musunuries in the northern parts of the present-day Telangana around Warangal – Bhongiri axis. The southern parts around Rachakonda-Devarakonda fell under the sway of Padmanayaks. Around the same times, two new power centres emerged in the Deccan lands. In 1336 CE, Vijayanagar emerged with territories lying south of Krishna Tungabhadra doab. The north of doab territories came under the sway of yet other rulers known as Bahmanis. In 1347 CE, they declared autonomy after breaking free from the tutelage of Delhi Sultanate and established their rule, centred at Gulbarga. Taking advantage of conflictual relationships between Musunuris and Padmanayaks, the Bahmanis spread their sway over Telangana lands. By 1368 CE, the Musunuris were extinguished while Padmanayaks became the tributaries of Bahmanis rulers.

The third phase stretches from 1368 till 1436 CE. Both the sibling empires, namely Bahmani and Vijayanagar were expanding. They were engaged in perpetual conflicts. This scenario provided an opportunity to Padmanayaks to choose one over the other. The strategy kept them afloat, before being subsumed by the Bahmani in 1433 CE.

All in all, the Padmanayaka rulers of the present-day Telangana lands had an evolving relationship from autonomy to co-option to conflict to eventual annexation by the rising Bahmani. Thereafter, the latter ruled these lands as a Suba till 1512 CE.

## 1.1 THE DAY AFTER

In 1323 CE, after the Muslim conquest of Tilanga, Pratap Rudradeva was sent to Delhi in captivity. He did not suffer a natural death, but put an end to his own existence. He ‘departed to the world of Gods by his own desire.’<sup>1</sup> It would appear that he either committed suicide or was slain at his own instance by one of his own followers.

After the fall of Kakatiyas, Telingana became a part of the Muslim empire of Tughlaqs. Orugallu was renamed as Sultanpur. Telingana was ruled by a wazir from Daulatabad. The coastal plains submitted to the arms of the conquering hordes within a year. By 10th September, 1324 CE, the big mosque at Rajahmundry was constructed by Salar-ul-Wi, a servant of Ulugh Khan. By that date, the conquest of the entire coastal region of the Andhra country may be considered as complete. Ghiasuddin Tughlaq’s coins have been discovered there for the period from 1322 to 1324 CE.



The political conditions of ‘Tilang country’, subsequent to the fall of Warangal are inscribed in Sanskrit and Telugu in the Vilasa Grant of Prolaya Nayak. It describes the ‘departure of Prataprudra’, followed by spreading of Adharma with eventual overcome of ‘Yavanas’ by Prolaya Nayak. Extracts from the grant throw a flood of light about that period. The inscription begins, ‘with the invocation of the god Vishnu and his Varaha incarnation. This is followed by an account of the creation. It is stated that at first the whole world was submerged under waters; that on perceiving this, the god assuming the form of

Brahma, created all the worlds, in the midst of which was the earth adorned by the Golden Mountain and surrounded by the islands and the seas; that in the centre of the earth and encircled by the salt seas was the Jambudvipa divided into nine khandas or continents, of which that extending from the Himalayas to the Southern Ocean was known as Bharatavarsha comprising many countries, where different languages and customs prevailed; and that one of them named Tilinga, through which flowed many holy rivers, contained several rich towns and cities, beautiful mountains, impenetrable forests, deep tanks, and unassailable fortresses.<sup>2</sup>

About the valour but eventual defeat of Prataparudra, it says:

“Several kings of both the Solar and Lunar families held sway over this country extending from the sea, without swerving from the path of righteousness. During the Kali Age, the kings of the Kakati family ruled over Tilinga from their capital Ekasila, like the Ikshvakus from Ayodhya. When several rulers of the dynasty passed away, Prataparudra, a monarch famous for his prowess ascended the throne and ruled the country with truth and justice so that such famous monarchs of yore as Yayati, Nabhaga and Bhagiratha were completely forgotten. While king Prataparudra was ruling the kingdom in this manner, bitter hostility arose between him and Ahammada Suratrana, the lord of the Turushkas. The Suratrana, who was the Yama (Death) to the kings, stamped out the remnants of the royal families left undestroyed by Jamadaguya (Parasurama). Although Prataparudra vanquished that Suratrana who had an army of 900,000 horses seven times, he had to submit to that Turushka at last, despite his military strength, and unrivalled skill in diplomacy, owing to the decrease of the good fortunes of the people of the earth. While being carried away as a prisoner by the Turushka monarch to his capital Delhi, Prataparudra departed, by the decree of the Providence, to the world of the gods on the banks of the river Somodbhava i.e., Narmada.”<sup>3</sup>

About the crisis, it is quite graphic. “The evil (adharma), which he had up to that time kept under check, flourished under them,



as the conditions were very favourable for its growth. The cruel wretches subjected the rich to torture for the sake of their wealth. Many of their victims died of terror at the very sight of their vicious countenances; the Brahmanas were compelled to abandon their religious practices; the images of the gods were overturned and broken; the agraharas of the learned were confiscated; the cultivators were despoiled of the fruits of their labour, and their families were impoverished and ruined. None dared to lay claim to anything, whether it was a piece of property or one's own wife. To those despicable wretches' wine was the ordinary drink, beef the staple food, and the slaying of the Brahmanas the favourite pastime. The land of Tilinga, left without a protector, suffered destruction from the Yavanas like a forest subjected to devastating wild fire.”<sup>4</sup>

**Land of  
Tilanga, left  
without a  
protector,  
suffered  
destruction  
from the  
Yavanas like  
a forest from  
the wild fire**



It is eventually emancipated by the king Prola, as follows:

’Then was born, as if an amsha of the god Vishnu, who took pity on the sufferings of the people, had descended from heaven, king Prola of the Musunuri family of the fourth caste, who assumed the sovereignty of the earth. He destroyed the power of the Yavanas, who abandoned their forts and fled to unknown places unable to resist his might. The very people who suffered at the hands of the Yavanas sought protection under him, and turned against them and put them to death. Having overcome the Yavanas in this fashion, he restored to Brahmanas their ancient agraharas confiscated by them, and revived the performance of the sacrifices, the smoke issuing from the fire-pits of which spreading over the countryside cleaned of the pollution caused by the movements of those evil-doers. The agriculturists surrendered willingly a sixth of the produce of the soil to the king; and he set his hand to the task of repairing the damages caused by the Parasikas. King Prola established himself at Rekapalli on the Godavari

**Agriculturists  
willingly  
surrendered  
a sixth of the  
produce of the  
soil to the King**



at the foot of the Malyavanta mountain; and having entrusted

the administration to his younger brothers such as Kapaya Nayak, he devoted himself to the performance of charitable and meritorious deeds. He granted many agraharas and large sums of money to deserving scholars.<sup>5</sup>

After subjugation of Tilanga country, other areas like Rajahmundry, Kalinga, Gooty (Ananthapur), Kanti (Gandikota in Cuddapah) and Nellore also passed into the hands of the Delhi Sultanate. The consequent oppression in all these territories is vividly portrayed in contemporary records.

‘Unlike other conquerors of India, the Mussalmans were not satisfied with the acquisition of mere political power. They descended on the Deccan not as mere conquerors in search of new countries but as crusading warriors to spread the true faith in the land of the infidels. To stamp out heathenism, and gather all the people within the fold of Islam, they prohibited, as stated in the inscription, the public exercise of Hindu religion, and subjected its followers to inhuman tyranny. The Hindus could not dress well, live well, and appear to be prosperous. Vexatious taxes were imposed on them; their seats of learning were destroyed; their temples were plundered and demolished; and the images of their gods were defaced and broken and used as building material for erecting prayer houses for the faithful.’<sup>6</sup>

The devastation was witnessed in other parts of the Peninsular India as well. Gangadevi, the queen of Kumara Kampana (1340-76 CE) presents a harrowing picture of devastation caused by the Mohammadans in the Tamil country.

“The temples in the land,’ says she, ‘have fallen into neglect as worship in them has been stopped. Within their walls the frightful howls of jackals have taken the place of the sweet reverberations of the Mridanga. Like the Turushkas who know no limits, the Kaveri has forgotten her ancient boundaries and brings frequent destruction with her floods. The sweet odour of the sacrificial smoke and the chant of the Vedas have deserted the villages (agraharas), which are now filled with the foul smell of the roasted flesh and the fierce noises of the ruffianly Turashkas. The suburban gardens of Madura

present a most painful sight. Many of their beautiful coconut palms have been cut down; and on every side are seen rows of stakes from which swing strings of human skulls strung together. The Tamraparni is flowing red with the blood of the slaughtered cows. The Veda is forgotten and justice has gone into hiding; there is not left any trace of virtue or nobility in the land, and despair is writ large on the faces of the unfortunate Dravidas.”<sup>7</sup>

Let us return to Tilanga country. A crucial role in restoring some order was played by Musunuri brothers, Prolaya Nayak followed by his brother, Kapaya Nayak. As the fall of the kingdom was sudden and unexpected, people were bewildered and a state of anarchy prevailed. All the 77 Nayakas under the empire were shell shocked. Soon, they huddled together under the leadership of Prolaya Nayak, the chieftain of Musunuri. Aliens were cleared from Rajahmundry as lands between Godavari and Krishna were reoccupied. Muslim arms were met through guerrilla attacks, mounted from inaccessible Rekapalli in Bhadrachalam forests.

The inscription states, “After Prataprudra of the Kakatiya dynasty, the lord of Tilinga had gone to heaven by his own will, the whole land was occupied by the Muslims; Prolaya Nayak raised the country that was enveloped in the womb of the Yavanas just like Varaha, the Boar incarnation of Vishnu, who raised the land submerged under water. After Prolaya Nayak left as a guest to heaven at the command of Viswesvara, Kapaya Nayak who was equal in splendours to the sun, ruled his kingdom. He, whose feet were served by the seventy-five Nayakas protected the earth by the grace of Viswesvara. King Kapa is said to have re-granted to Brahmanas, the agraharas taken away by the Turushkas, beside granting them some afresh. After the death of Kapa, all the Nayakas subordinate to him are said to have gone to their towns and protected their respective countries.”

On the occasion of a lunar eclipse, Prolaya Nayak granted the best of the fertile villages in the Konamandala on the banks of Godavari as an Agrahara to Vennaya as a person worthy of a gift (Danaputra). The latter accepted it reluctantly. After receiving Vilasa as an Agrahara, he along with his brother re-granted it to

a number of Brahmans, having divided it into one hundred and eight shares. The territories covered in the Vilasa Grant are located in Amalapuram Taluka in Godavari district.

### **The Reconfiguration**

Beyond inscriptional flourish, let us have a closer look at the reconfiguration of the Kakatiya Imperium after 1323 CE. With the defeat of its last ruler, Prataprudra, their dominions came under the hegemony of Tughlaq emperors of Delhi. The consequent military administration, imposition of new taxes and its collection with an iron hand, confiscation of all previous endowments causing impoverishment of land and its people is covered in the Vilasa copper plate grant of Musunuri Prolaya Nayak.

Musunuri Nayakas were the first to raise the banner of revolt against the new rulers imposed from Delhi. The erstwhile Kakatiya empire was administratively divided into 77 Nayankaras; each under the control of a Nayaka. Most of them fought under Prataparudra against the Delhi armies and lost their lives. Among the few survivors were Induluru Anna Mantri, Kolani Rudradeva, Recharla Singama and Prolaya Vema Reddi of Addanki etc. All of them joined hands under the leadership of Prolaya Nayak, ‘the Kamma chieftain of Musunuru in Nuzvidu area of the present-day Krishna district.’<sup>8</sup> He in turn was supported by his three uncles namely Deva Nayaka, Kama Nayaka and Raja Nayaka, and also his cousin, Kapaya Nayak. His strategy was based on guerrilla attacks launched from inaccessible place called Rekapalli in Bhadrachalam forests. He was able to gain control of the delta region between Godavari and Krishna. In 1332 CE, he died without an issue and was succeeded by his cousin, Kapaya Nayak.

Kapaya Nayak carried forward the movement initiated by Prolaya Nayak. He carried on negotiations with the neighbouring rulers like Ballala-III of Dwarasamudra and the chieftains of the Warangal region. In 1336-37 CE, he recaptured the Warangal fort by defeating the occupying army. “As the Governor, Malik Maqbool fled to Delhi, Kapaya Nayak entered the fort and made Warangal his capital. He was reportedly served by the traditional 75 Nayakas of the erstwhile Kakatiya Imperium.”<sup>9</sup>

The entire Kakatiya territories, technically speaking were liberated from the alien control within 15 years of the fall of Orugallu. However, the unity witnessed hitherto soon cracked up along socio-political cleavages. These cracks developed into a triangular chasm, wherein each arm was controlled by separate forces. Kapaya Nayak, based in Orugallu controlled the first arm. The Padmanayaks of Rachakonda controlled the second arm. And Panta Reddis of Kondaveedu controlled the third arm. At least, that was the triangular configuration in 1337 CE.

By 1347 CE, a new power centre, namely the Bahmanis had established themselves in Gulbarga. The founder of this new dynasty, Zafar Khan was helped by Kapaya Nayak in the beginning. But, once established firmly, the western territories of Telangana stretching from Kaulas up to Bhuvanagiri were annexed by the Bahmanis. The latter also forced the payment of annual tribute upon Kapaya Nayak.

This arrangement continued till 1358 CE, when the founder, Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah passed away. His successor Muhammad Shah took up arms against the Tilangana ruler, Kapaya Nayak. The latter's son Vinayaka Deva was captured and burnt to death.



Exasperated by the cruel death inflicted upon his son, Kapaya Nayak grew desperate and appealed to Firoz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi to support him to crush Bahmani power. He also promised to return the Deccan once again as a part of Delhi Sultanate. The strategic negotiations were intercepted by the secret agents of Mohammad Shah. The latter, by involving the Shia clergy, could avoid the conflict between two Islamic rulers, namely Delhi and Gulbarga. Enraged by the audacity of Tilangana rulers, Muhammad Shah once again attacked the kingdom of Warangal in 1366 CE. Kapaya Nayak was forced to accept a humiliating peace. The Bahmanis extended their territories up till Golconda. It was on this occasion that Kapaya Nayak presented to Muhammad Shah, the Turquoise Throne (Takht-e-Firoza) studded with emeralds.

In 1366 CE, Kapaya Nayak was able to buy peace with Bahmanis but was soon troubled by Recharla Padmanayaks based in Rachakonda.

Kapaya Nayak had been instrumental in capturing Orugallu from Delhi's grip in 1336-37 CE. Now, he himself was threatened by Recherla Chiefs with a threat of ouster from Deccan. In 1367 CE, in a fierce battle in Bhimavaram near Warangal, Kapaya Nayak was killed and thereby ended the Musunuri chieftain's history. We can therefore conclude that one of the arms of the power triangle controlled by the Musunuri chieftains survived from 1336 till 1367 CE. Their rule was challenged by the rising Bahmanis in the beginning but the final knock-out punch was administered by Padmanayaka chieftains of Rachakonda. Unity of purpose in the beginning was being overpowered by centrifugal forces based on socio-political contours.

## 1.2 THE ORIGINS & GROWTH OF PADMANAYAKS

It is a rule that there will be a plethora of learned opinions about the origin of any illustrious family, who had made their mark in history. The origin of the Padmanayaks is no exception. "Some claim their roots extend upto the Nanda dynasty, even prior to the Mauryan times in north India and therefore, regard them as their descendants. Some others believe that they were born from the feet of Lord Vishnu. Yet another school of thought holds them to belong to Durjayakulajulu."<sup>10</sup> The most commonly held belief is that they developed from the common peasant stock and achieved Samantha (Nayaka) status.

"One legend states that an ordinary peasant, Chevvi Reddy, discovered a treasure trove. To take possession of the same, he was forced to make a human sacrifice. Recha, the faithful servant, willingly offered himself with a promise that the master would change his gotra to Recherla. The sacrifice was made, the treasure acquired and Chevvi Reddy renamed himself as Recherla Chevvi Reddy. But that was not the end of the story."<sup>11</sup>

"One evening, when Recherla Chevvi Reddy was returning from his field after dusk, a Vetala (demon) residing in a road side banyan tree appeared to have attacked him. The brave man defended himself with a club, which he was carrying in his hand. The demon was pleased with the manifestation of his courage and after conferring

certain favours, the Vetala vanished. The news of this unique encounter spread and people began to call him 'Betala Nayak'."12 At last, the news reached the Kakatiya ruler, Ganapathi Deva, who invited the brave man to his court at Warangal and bestowed upon him several favours, including the area of Amangallu in Mahaboob Nagar district as his fief. Betala Nayak, the founder of Recherla Padmanayaks, had arrived.

There were several other subordinates working under Ganapathi Deva. Recherla Reddy of Recheruvula and Recherla Reddy of Pillalamarri, apart from Recherla Brahmanayudu of Palnadu were his associates. In fact, Recherla Rudra Reddy was the army chief under Ganapathi Deva. However, Betala Nayak, the founder of Recherla Padmanayaks, was distinctly different. The accidental wealth from the treasure trove followed by encounter and blessings from vetala may be just popular stories. However, Betala Nayaks service to Ganapathi Deva, starting from Amangallu is a fact. His successors were to stand loyal to successive Kakatiya rulers.

After their dominance in Telangana areas, the Imperial Kakatiyas had been facing a triple threat from western, southern and eastern geographies. Ganapathi Deva was no exception. In 1230 CE, Sundara Pandya of the Pandyan Kingdom occupied the area of Telugu Chodas of Nellore. In 1233 CE, the Aniyanka Bhima of Eastern Ganga kingdom occupied the north coastal areas. Around the same times, the Kayastha chief, Gangaya Sahini, supposed to be subordinate to Ganapathi Deva started ruling independently from Pakanadu to Cuddapah. "To meet the triple challenge, Ganapathi Deva invited the help of the prominent and rising Recherla Betala Nayak. Amangallu was assigned to the new lieutenant which yielded not less than one lakh revenue."13 Betala Nayak joined Kakatiya administration as a loyal subordinate. As the star of Betala Nayak rose, the influence of Malyala and Recherla Rudra's slowly declined and finally disappeared in the course of subsequent Kakatiya times. The latter had played an important role during Rudra Deva and Ganapathi Deva's times.

After Ganapathi Deva's death, Rudramba's installation as the ruler had become uncertain. At this juncture, Prasaditya, one of

the three sons of Betala Nayak seems to have played a significant role. Prasaditya, not only installed Rudramba on the Kakatiya throne but also neutralised formidable ring of enemies, who later surrendered to her. “The nobles were not too keen to submit to the authority of a woman, but Prasaditya’s loyalty upheld the cause of the queen. Innumerable titles and rewards like Kakatiya Rajya Sthapanacharya and Raya Pithamanka were aptly conferred upon the new saviour.”<sup>14</sup>

Prasaditya was entrusted with the defence of the kingdom. **In 1279 CE, the Nayankara system was introduced as a measure of administrative reform. Nayankara is an official authority which can be entrusted upon any of the Nayakas. Prasaditya, needless to say, was the very first Nayankara during the reign of Rudramba.**<sup>15</sup> His loyalty to the Kakatiya throne continued even during Prataprudra’s times. The other two brothers of Prasaditya, namely Rudra and Dama continued to hold responsible posts. They also acquired several titles.

“Sabbi Nayaka, the son of Prasaditya and Vennama Nayaka, the son of Dama, succeeded their fathers. The first expedition of Alauddin Khilji in 1303 CE, saw both the sons participating actively in the war. The army of Delhi Sultan could not win but the Kakatiyas lost a large army in this battle.”<sup>16</sup>

“Sabbi Nayaka and Vennama Nayaka were each blessed with a son, namely Nalladacha and Erradacha, respectively. They were said to have distinguished themselves in the Pandyan war at Gollapalli and Kanchi. As a mark of appreciation, Prataprudra conferred on Erradacha the titles of Pandyadala Vibhala (Chastiser of the Pandyan Army) and Pandya Gaja Kesari (lion to the Pandyan elephant).”<sup>17</sup>

Erradacha had 3 sons, namely Singa, Venna and Echa. Of them, only Singama Nayak-II distinguished himself in the affairs of the state. By 1323 CE, Delhi Sultanate had extinguished Kakatiya Kingdom and Prataparudra was taken away as a captive. “During this interregnum, full of political fluidity, Recherla Padmanayaks under the leadership of Singama Nayak-II (1325–1361 CE) emerged as powerful regional powers in Amangallu and Rachakonda regions of Telangana.”<sup>18</sup>



In the immediate aftermath of Kakatiya's collapse, Malik Maqbool

**Malik Maqbool was defeated by the combined league, but no sooner he fled to Delhi, the victorious league developed cracks**



was appointed as Delhi's Governor at Orugallu. The new Islamic dispensation was opposed by everyone, namely Recherla Padmanayaks, Kondavidu Reddy's and Koppula chiefs of Pithapuram under the leadership of Musunuri brothers, namely Musunuri Prolaya Nayak followed by Kapaya Nayak. Malik Maqbool was defeated in 1336, by the combined league, but no sooner he fled to Delhi, the victorious league developed cracks.

After their victory, "Kapaya Nayak conferred chiefship and other offices upon his close relatives".<sup>19</sup> "His cousin Anapota was appointed as the Governor of coastal Andhra country and Kapaya assumed the titles like Andhradeshadhishwara (lord of Andhra country) and Andhrasuratrana (Sultan of the Andhra country)."<sup>20</sup> The sudden power shift, with a caste bias was not to the liking of Singama Nayak or his supporters. He changed his political headquarters from Amangallu to Rachakonda or Rajakonda. A fort was built in the midst of secure mountain ranges and strategically speaking, it was closer to Golconda - Bhuvangiri power axis, leading up to Orugallu. At this juncture, there was a sort of power quadrilateral in and around the present-day Telangana lands. To the west were the newly established Bahmanis; to the east were Kondavidu Reddis; In the Telangana land itself there were two power centres. The northern part centred at Orugallu was with Musunuri Kapaya Nayak while the southern part centred at Rachakonda was with Singama Nayak-II. Kapaya Nayak was engaged in a war with Bahmanis. Singama Nayak-II found it convenient to extend his kingdom as far as Eleshwaram on the banks of Krishna. Some of the forts in the doab region lying between Krishna and Tungabhadra also fell into his hands. His aggressive campaign turned east. "Chintapalli Singma Nayaka, the brother-in-law of Padmanayaka ruler was imprisoned in the Jallipalli fort. The latter launched a vigorous attack on the fort. As the fort could not be held, in desperation, the Musunuri forces got Singma Nayak assassinated treacherously by one Tambala Bammajiyya."<sup>21</sup>

The assassination of the Padmanayaka chieftain created a thirst for counter revenge. His two sons, namely Anapota-I (1361–1383 CE) and Madanayaka (1361–1384 CE) heard the news of the death of their father and proceeded by rapid marches to Jallipalli with 6,000 horses, 700 elephants and 20,000 infantries.

The fort was seized and all the fighters in the fort along with their allies were massacred in cold blood in 1361 CE. The title of Somakula Parasurama (a veritable Parasurama to the lunar race) was aptly assumed. After his return, various modifications were made in Rachakonda fort by constructing defence walls and a tank called Anapota Samudra.

**The fort was seized and the fighters in the fort along with their allies were massacred**



The threat to the Padmanayaks from Kapaya Nayak-I in the north was still alive. In 1368 CE, Anapota-I and Mada-I made headway to the north, attacked Kapaya Nayak, took control of the fort of Warangal and finally defeated and killed Kapaya Nayak at Bhimavaram near Warangal. There was no one to stop Anapota now. The great forts of Tribhuvangiri (Bhongiri), Orugallu, Sanigaram and other minor forts in Telangana were soon conquered. It would appear that by 1369 CE, the kingdom of Rachakonda was extended upto Krishna and Tungabhadra in the south and Sanigaram in the Karimnagar district in the north. After a series of victories over Telangana, Anapota appointed his brother Madanayaka-I at Devarakonda to take care of the south eastern parts of the kingdom. Since then, Devarakonda became the second capital of the Recherla Padmanayaka rule and formed an integral part of the kingdom. Madanayaka-I and his successors continued to rule the territory around Devarakonda without ever challenging the authority of their cousins, who were ruling from Rachakonda.

After consolidating their authority north of Krishna river in the present-day Telangana lands, the hunger for expanding kingdom brought Anapotanayaka-I and Madanayaka into conflict with Kondaveedu rulers. The Krishna river boundary was breached and the territories lying south of the river in the present-day Kurnool and Guntur districts were annexed. “Anapotanayaka-I appeared

to have constructed a flight of steps to the sacred mountain of Sriparvat (Srisailam) and made it accessible to the pilgrims from his kingdom. Madanayaka-I had also made his contributions for the convenience of pilgrims.”<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3 THE RISE OF BAHMANIS - BIRTH OF A NEW KINGDOM

In the closing decade of the thirteenth century, Delhi Sultanate had penetrated the Deccan.

**The Ramayana  
& Mahabharat  
mention it as  
Dakshinapath  
- the route  
leading to  
South**



It is important to clarify as to what constitutes the Deccan. The Deccan literally means the southern and peninsular part of the great land mass of India. The Ramayana and Mahabharat mention it as Dakshinapatha (the route leading to south). In the Markandeya, Vayu and Matsya Puranas, the term Dakshina of Dakshinapatha also denotes the whole peninsula south of the Narmada. Rajashekhara in 11th century, stated that Dakshinapatha or Dakshina desha is the portion of the Indian peninsula lying to the south of Mahishmati (Maheshwara on the southern bank of the Narmada). The Imperial Gazetteer of India defines the Deccan that it ‘includes in its widest sense the whole of peninsular south India, lying south of Vindhya mountains and the Narmada river which separates it from the north.’<sup>23</sup>

The Deccan History Conference defined that, ‘The Deccan shall be deemed to mean the region from the Tapti in the north to the edge of the plateau in the south and from sea to sea.’<sup>24</sup>

The Deccan region is an amalgam of many ecozones, from the arid rocky plateau of the Rayalseema to the bountiful coastal plains flanked by the eastern and western ghats to the vast hinterlands with agricultural plains and forests such as Coorg and Dandakaranya with its varied social formations, agrarian, pastoral, hunting-gathering, artisans and other forms of production to which many great dynasties made their contributions. This region in the medieval period witnessed many transformations in the politico-economic and socio-cultural spheres. Politically, the state gradually transformed into a multi-centered power structure, fragmented and segmented at different levels, owing to the extensive growth of socio-

religious, philanthropic and service tenures, which operated with in the matrix of tax-tribute-plunder. The dharmic kingship of ancient times transcended into ritual kingship, further legitimised by the performance of dana, dakshina, titha, darshana etc. Deforestation and land reclamation during the kakatiyan (1000-1323 CE) and Vijayanagara times (1327-1600 CE) contributed to the growth of brahminical institutions, brahmadeyas and devabhogas on the one hand and the growth of industries and agricultural expansion on the other. This resulted in the consolidation of the peasant and non-peasant groups like the merchants and artisans into guilds; the caste cum professional organisations, but also the temple as an institution that controlled the power structure of state and society.

The contemporary sources however, treated the term Deccan in a somewhat restricted sense. The Deccan, according to them was Bahmani Deccan or the Deccan of the successor states after Bahmanis. The Portuguese chroniclers styled the Empire of Vijayanagara as the 'Kingdom of Narsingh' and called it the neighbour of the 'Kingdom of Daquem'. This definition restricts the Deccan only upto the Krishna river. "Ferishta, the prolific chronicler is more graphic. In the 'Muqaddimah to his history. He personifies the country India as Hind and says 'Dakhan, the son of Hind has three sons and the country of Dakhan was divided among them. Their names are Marath, Kanhar (Kannada) and Tilang (Telangana). At present, these races reside in the Dakhan."<sup>25</sup> Ferishta, like other Persian chroniclers use the term Deccan to indicate the Bahmani Deccan.

**Dakhan, the son of Hind has 3 sons & the country of Dakhan was divided among them**



## The Founder

"The official genealogists connect the family of Hasan with Bahman and Asfaldar of old Iran (hence his sobriquet, 'Bahaman Shah') Hasan was a nephew of Malik Hizhbaruddin Zafar Khan, one of the high ranking official with Alauddin Khalji."<sup>26</sup> However, legends about him are aplenty. Let us see the Ferishta's narrative.

In 1290, Hassan was born in humble circumstances. Employed by a Brahmin of Delhi named Gangu, he was given a piece of land, a pair of oxen and two labourers. He was a hard-working honest man. One day, while at work, his plough got entangled in a chain round the neck of an earthen vessel. It was full of gold coins. He immediately carried them to his master, who commended his honesty. Sultan Ghaziuddin was informed of the discovered treasure. An impressed Sultan bestowed upon Hassan the command of one hundred horses. This sudden elevation from a field labourer to a rank officer may appear absurd now-a-days, but 500 years ago, it was not uncommon. Attracted by the promotion, Gangu who was an astrologer too, cast his horoscope. It foretold that Hassan would one day become a king. While repeating this prophecy, Gangu made one request namely, that Hassan should adopt his name in future and appoint him as his minister, as and when he should someday become king. Hassan promised and from that time onwards, was known as Hassan Gangu.

Good fortune for Hassan was also predicted by a Sufi saint named Nizamuddin Aulia. The latter is still revered in Delhi and his tomb attracts innumerable pilgrims. Emboldened by the twin prophecies and his recent promotion, Hassan Gangu was looking for some opportunity of adventure. The Deccan was then an El Dorado for adventurous and Mohammed Tughlaq had resolved to change his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. Kuttulugh Khan was appointed as its Governor and he was allowed to select his own team of officers. One of them was Hassan Gangu, who followed his new master to Daulatabad. He was assigned the town of Konechee as a Jagir. He remained there for some years and quietly increased his wealth and influence. Ultimately, he became a landholder and military chief of considerable importance.

In the meantime, affairs in Tughlaq's Kingdom had worsened. The southern country broke into open revolt. The Sultan marched to put down the rebellion, but could not go beyond Warangal due to cholera. Returning to Daulatabad on his way home, he permitted those who wished to return to Delhi. Quite a number of them returned, but those who had become acclimatised resolved to stay back. No sooner had the Sultan returned to Delhi, another revolt broke out in Warangal. Kapaya

Nayak raised an army and drove away Governor Malik Maqabul, who fled to Delhi. Warangal was lost to Sultan and could not be recovered because his attention was so fully occupied by other matters.

Daulatabad and Gujarat were still under the control of the Sultan. In 1344, Aziz Khumman was appointed Governor of Gujarat and Malwa with strict instructions to extract maximum tribute. He assembled eighty principal Amirs at his palace and beheaded them all. Sultan, rather than punishing, rewarded the brutal act. In 1345, the nobles revolted, rose and defeated the Deputy Governor Mukbil. The Sultan marched to crush the revolt and after committing great cruelties, achieved some success. Nobles fled with their families and took refuge in Daulatabad. An order was dispatched to Daulatabad to return these fugitives to Delhi under an escort of fifteen hundred horsemen. On the way, these prisoners rose against their guards, killed them and returned to Daulatabad and proclaimed an open rebellion. The treasury was looted and distributed amongst conspirators. Then, they declared the independence of the Deccan. An Afghan chief named Ismael Shah was elected as their first Sultan, who assumed the title of Nusur-ud-din. Prominent amongst these conspirators was Hassan Gangu upon whom the title of Zaffar Khan was bestowed and several districts were given to him as Jagir.

So great was the general discontentment against Delhi that rebels of Daulatabad were assisted by the Hindu rulers of Warangal. The Sultan marched once again to quell the rebellion but could not capture the ring leaders who fled to their own districts. The grip over the Deccan slackened as the Sultan moved back to Delhi to suppress a revolt there. He left behind a deputy named Imad ul Mulk, with orders to march to Gulburga, hunt and kill the fugitives and bring the country to order. Gulburga was part of the country in which Zafar Khan's Jagirs were situated. This was precisely the opportunity he had been waiting for and was fully prepared.

“Zafar Khan collected his troops and moved to confront Imad ul Mulk who remained at Bidar. The Royal army had about thirty thousand men of all arms and Zafar Khan only fifteen thousand. He avoided direct

engagement but kept Imad-ul-Mulk in check until reinforcements could arrive. At length, he received fifteen thousand men from the Raja of Warangal and a body of five thousand horsemen from Daulatabad. Fully reinforced, Zafar Khan did not hesitate to meet his opponent. He marched to Sindan near Bidar where he found Imad-ul-Mulk's large army. After some preliminary skirmishes, Zafar Khan troops, made a mass attack upon the Delhi army and after the day long pitched battle, completely routed it. Sartez, the General wounded by an arrow while trying to escape was caught by a soldier who struck off his head. The whole army laid down its arms. "Camels of Bactria, horses of Tartary, female slaves and Abyssinian male slaves by the thousands, mounds of gold and silver bullion, hundreds of tents and booty without count fell into Zafar Khan's hands."<sup>27</sup>

Everything now lay at the feet of the Deccan army under its commander, Zafar Khan. He was received by Ismael Shah Nasuruddin at Nizampur, about ten miles from Daulatabad with all the pomp befitting the occasion. Ismael soon realised the great popularity and status which Zafar Khan had acquired by his masterly tactics resulting in ultimate victory. About a fortnight later, amirs were called and told by Ismael Shah that the kingdom was kept in trust for Zafar Khan all along. Ismael, in turn proclaimed his own abdication from the throne, taking the title of Shams-ud-din for the rest of his life. This is the most extraordinary even in long history of Muslim rule in India. An inevitable event was avoided by early and wise action by a ruler confronted by a superior would be challenger.

As the throne of Deccan was now vacant, the army as well as the concourse of the people present unanimously selected Zafar Khan as king with the title of Sikandar-i-Thani Ala-ud-din Hasan Bahaman Shah al-wali. Relying on the auspicious occasion, the new king was enthroned by his preceptor, Shaikh Siraj-ud-din Junaidi on Friday, 3rd August 1347 in the mosque of Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah Khalji at Daulatabad.

In his hour of glory, the new Sultan did not forget his old patron. He sent for him and true to the promise, committed to his care his treasury and finances. Gangu, the first Brahmin serving under a Mohammedan prince was certainly not to be the last. During next

two hundred years, Brahmins were appointed to high posts of authority by different Mohammedan kings. As all the people in the Kingdom were Hindus, this was a wise stroke of policy too.

That is how the Bahmani dynasty commenced their rule at Gulbarga. Under the wise and just rule of Sultan Alauddin Hasan Bahaman Shah, it prospered and achieved extraordinary heights. But rare are the examples of such a wonderful change of fortune where success was unstained by cruelty to the predecessor.

The story of Hassan, a humble but honest peasant, ever faithful to his master, rising to become Sultan is perhaps unique.

**Story of Hasan, a humble but honest peasant, ever faithful to his master, rising to become Sultan is perhaps unique**



### **The Founder's Rule (1347-1358 CE)**

Alauddin founded the Bahmani rule under fortuitous circumstances. The Delhi Sultan was pre-occupied, disturbed and faced revolts in various provinces, especially during the last years of Mohammed Tughlaq's rule. In 1351, his nephew and successor Firoz Shah wisely recognized the new Bahmani ruler and devoted his attention to his nearby provinces. As the polity decoupled the Deccan from Delhi as Delhi's interference receded, the infant kingdom in Deccan was bound to grow fast. "However, it is interesting to note that Alauddin was not satisfied with being king of a part of India only but wished to sit in the seat of the Tughlaqs and unite the whole of the Indian sub-continent under his sceptre.

We wanted firstly to cross the Tungabhadra river and conquer the land as far as Rameshwaram and Ma'bar or the Coromandel coast and then to cross the Godavari and subdue Gujarat, Malwa and Gwalior, perhaps finally capturing Delhi itself. But the wise and loyal minister Malik Saifuddin Ghorī opposed this ambitious project saying that the far south was absolutely full of jungles and unfit for a successful expedition. He reminded the king that "Alauddin Khilji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq had both been unsuccessful in the long run to subdue the south" and it was with difficulty that they had been able to bring back even one tenth of the personnel of their armies back alive from these arduous campaigns.



## BAHMANIS DYNASTY (1347 – 1512 CE)

| Sl. No. | Ruler                        | Time line                |
|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.      | Alauddin Hassan Bahaman Shah | 1347 – 1358 CE           |
| 2.      | Mohammad Shah-I              | 1358 – 1375 CE           |
| 3.      | Mujahid Shah                 | 1375 – 1378 CE           |
| 4.      | Da'ud Khan                   | April 1378 – May 1378 CE |
| 5.      | Mohammad Shah-II             | May 1378 – Jan 1397 CE   |
| 6.      | Ghiyas-ud-din                | Jan 1397 – June 1397 CE  |
| 7.      | Shams-ud-din                 | June 1397 – Nov 1397 CE  |
| 8.      | Firoz Shah                   | 1397 – 1422 CE           |
| 9.      | Ahmad Shah                   | 1422 – 1436 CE           |
| 10.     | Alauddin (Ahmad Shah-II)     | 1436 – 1458 CE           |
| 11.     | Humayun Shah                 | 1458 – 1461 CE           |
| 12.     | Nizamuddin (Ahmad Shah-III)  | 1461 – 1463 CE           |
| 13.     | Mohammad Shah                | 1463 – 1482 CE           |
| 14.     | Shihabuddin Mahmood          | 1482 – 1512 CE           |



*Alauddin Hasan Gangu Bahman Shah-1  
of Sultanate of Bahmani Kingdom*

The Malik, therefore, advised the king to pacify the Deccan plateau first and then to proceed to Malwa and Gujarat. The king accordingly ordered his military commanders to proceed to different parts of the Deccan which were still held by those who were opposing his hegemony. He sent Husain Gurshasp to Kotgir and Qandhar, Razi-ud-din Qutbu'l-Mulk to the south-west, Malik Maqbul, now entitled Qir Khan, to Kalyani, and Sikandar Khan towards Telangana, and ordered the army of Miraj to proceed to Gulbarga under `Ain-ud-din Khwaja-i Jahan.”<sup>28</sup>

Within his dominion, the new Sultan subdued the pro-Tughlaq and recalcitrant chiefs stationed at Gulbarga. Then, he won over the Afghan, Mughal and Rajput chiefs stationed at Bidar and Daulatabad. In a short time, his dominion extended from Wainaganga river in the north to Krishna river in the south and from Daulatabad in the west to Bhongir in the east. The Raja of Warangal accepted his hegemony without any blood being shed. He, in turn was regarded as honoured friend and ally of the new state.

**This was a right royal wedding, where the populace were attracted and entertained by circus, extravaganza and lavish festivities**



“After securing boundaries, his first act was to marry his son to the daughter of his prime minister, Malik, Seyfuddin Ghoree, Ferishta tells, “Ten thousand robes of cloth of gold, velvet, and satin were distributed among the nobility and others. One thousand Arab and Persian horses, and two hundred Sabres set with jewels were also divided. The populaces were entertained with various amusements, and engines were erected in the streets of Gulburga, which cast forth showers of confectionery among the crowd.

The rejoicings lasted a whole year, on the last day of which, the nobility and officers presented offerings of jewels, money and the rarest productions of all countries to the Sultan”.<sup>29</sup> This was a right royal wedding, where the populace were attracted and entertained by circus, extravaganza and lavish festivities.

The ex-Sultan Ismael, who abdicated throne in favour of Alauddin, was made Amir-ul-Umra, or the chief of the nobles. Nevertheless, he harboured jealousy and conspired to eliminate him. But, as the plot got revealed, Ismael was found guilty of treachery. The Sultan beheaded him with his own sword. In his place, his son Bahadur Khan was appointed with his property and all royal favours intact. Alauddin may have been a peasant, but he knew how to behave like a King.

Ferishta continues, “From this and other instances of justice tempered with mercy, loyalty to the Sultan became fixed in every breast, and his power daily increased. The Raja of Telangana, who had become disobedient, was treated with generous forbearance on account of his former assistance to the Sultan. He was overcome by the sense of his virtues, submitted to his authority, and agreed to pay the tribute which he here before had remitted to the sovereign of Delhi.”

The last years of the king’s life, just like in the very beginning of his rule, were taken up by expeditions in all the four directions. In the east, Goa was captured after besieging it for five or six months. On the way back, the Sultan subdued Dabul (which now became the chief sea port of the Bahmani State), Kulhar and Kolhapur.

This expedition was probably undertaken in connection with the tribute which was due from the rulers of Vijayanagara, who were forced to part with it to the infant Muslim state.

In the north, the Sultan went as far as Mandu and made the people of the region pay tribute. In the east, he swept over Telangana and seems to have occupied Warangal but suffered reverses at the hands of Kataya Vema, an officer of Anavota of Kondavidu of Dharnikota on the Krishna and was later defeated at Pedakonda by Bhaktiraju. He had to retreat and be content with the annexation of western part of Telangana as far as Bhongiri. The extent of territory under his immediate rule extended from Mandu in the north to Raichur in the south and from Bhongiri in the east to Dabul and Goa in the west. The Rayas on the banks of Krishna and the Raja of Warangal paid him tributes.

An army sent to Carnatic returned with immense booty. Then the old Raja of Gujarat invited him to invade and restore order. Alauddin proceeded with a large army, but returned due to severe illness. Sultan could now see that his days were numbered. But, he gave public audience twice a day and transacted business. All prisoners, except seven sentenced to capital punishment were released. These seven were handed over to his son Mohammed, to be dealt as he thought proper after Sultan's death.

“As medicine did not benefit his health, Sultan discharged his physicians and waited for the final cure of all human ills. In that state, he asked his youngest son as to what book he had perused that day, the Prince replied: “The Boseton of Saadi, and the following passage: I have heard that Jamshid of angelic memory had these verses engraved upon a fountain: Many like me have viewed the fountain, but they are gone and eyes closed for ever. I conquered the world by policy and valour, but could not overcome the grave.”

The King sighed at this recital and called his three sons. Muhammed, Mahmud and Dawud. They were advised to stand united as one family and asked the younger two to obey Muhammed, the heir to the throne. He then gave them money and articles of use and ordered them to go to the Great Mosque in Gulbarga to distribute these things amongst the needy. When the three sons came back

and reported to him that they had done as commanded, he uttered the 'al Hamdulillah' (Praise be to the God) and breathed his last. He died on 11th February 1358 at the age of 67.

Alauddin was asked, "How, without great treasure or armies, he had acquired royalty in so short a space." He replied, "By affability to friends and enemies and by showing liberality to all to the utmost of my power."<sup>30</sup>

Alauddin ruled for just eleven years. Yet his jurisdiction included Dabol, Bijapur, Daulatabad, Bidar, Berar and Telengana. Isami says that Alauddin had three great qualities of a good sovereign. "He always gave relief to the oppressed. He was always kind to the poor and took pains to obey the divine commandments."<sup>31</sup> "Hasan was one of the first Muslim kings who did not collect Jiziya from Hindus."<sup>32</sup>

He deserves a high place amongst the great men of the Indian history. Born in the lowest ranks, he rose, by his own honesty of character, to be the founder of a great Kingdom. At no time, his career was stained by cruelty or injustice. Few characters in Indian history can compare with this, the first King of the Deccan. There are probably few instances in the world where a peasant raises himself to the throne of a monarch and retains throughout his career, not only dignity of character but honesty of purpose and who relinquishes his life with such humble piety and utter simplicity. History would show that Alauddin Hassan Shah Gangu Bahmani was a rare exception to those who followed him.

### **Mohammad Shahi Consolidates (1358-1375 CE)**

Alauddin, as per his wish was succeeded by the eldest son, Mohammed. He consolidated the kingdom most effectively. Hoping to take advantage of a young King on a lately established throne, the kings of Vijayanagara and Telengana stopped sending tributes. Mohammed Shah was rather busy in prolonged festivities due to his accession. He sent his mother to Mecca for pilgrimage with a large train of nobles and chiefs. Negotiations were therefore prolonged with rebellious Rajas. But, as festivities got over and his mother returned, the new Sultan made his intentions quite clear. Time had come to consolidate the new kingdom.

"From its very inception, the Bahmani Kingdom had been facing

opposition from its neighbours. The ruler of Vijayanagar and Telangana demanded the cessation of Doab and Kaulas respectively. In spite of the army support from Vijayanagar, Kapaya Nayak lost Kaulas and was pushed back as far as his capital Warangal and paid one lakh Huns as tribute to Bahmani king. Kapaya's son Vinayak was still restive. He was caught and put to death."<sup>33</sup> "In 1462-63 CE, the news arrived at Gulbarga that the ruler of Telangana had approached Firoz Shah Tughlaq, the Delhi Sultan to attack the Deccan, in return for which he promised to become his vassal. Muhammad Shah invaded Telangana again. As Vijayanagara could not send much help, the Telangana ruler had to cede the town of Golconda with its dependencies. He also presented the famous Turquoise throne to Muhammad Shah, which remained the royal seat for many generations."<sup>34</sup> During this period, the capital city of Gulbarga was beautified and the splendid mosque was built which still stands in the fort. It was modelled after the great mosque of Cordoba in Spain.

**It was modelled after the great mosque of Cordoba in Spain**



"The whole concept of warfare was revolutionized by the discovery of gunpowder. We hear about gunpowder as early in 1325 CE during the siege of Baza in Spain by Ismael b Faraz, king of Granada. It must have been the Rumiya wa Firangiyan (Turks and Franks) serving in the Bahmanis army who introduced this technology in Deccan. It was freely used by Muhammad Shah in the siege of Adoni in 1365 CE."<sup>35</sup>

Mohammed Shah introduced gold coinage. But it was collected by local bankers, melted and thereafter vanished in private vaults. Ferishta attributes it to the instigation of Rajas of Warangal and Vijayanagara who wished their coins as currency. But it is more probable that this was due to unsatiated hunger for gold in India throughout its history, including medieval period. Sultan punished such offenders with death. Banking business was restricted to Muslims related to Delhi bankers only.

The Sultan was jealous about his own dignity and waged wars for what he considered a personal slight. In 1371, a horse dealer arrived in Gulbarga. The Sultan saw the horses and found them of poor

quality and therefore, unfit for a king. The dealer replied that the best horses had been forcibly taken by Nagdeo, the son of Raja of Warangal. Sultan felt insulted, marched, captured Nagdeo and shot him from an engine into a burning pile of wood. This barbarous act enraged people who looted tents and baggage and decimated his army. The Raja, in order to avenge his son's death looked up to Firoz Shah in Delhi. The latter was too much preoccupied with his internal matters and the Warangal Raja was left to his own resources.

The Sultan in Gulbarga was smarting at the disaster of his expedition. He marched with a huge army to Warangal. A second army was sent to besiege Golconda. The Raja of Warangal was threatened with total ruin. The conflict prolonged for two long years. Telengana was finally subdued and severe conditions were imposed. They included cessation of Golconda fort, three hundred elephants, two hundred horses and 33 lakhs of silver rupees. A treaty of perpetual alliance was also sealed between Bahmani Sultan and Warangal Raja fixing Golconda as the boundary. The treaty was faithfully kept for many generations, as there was no more mention of conflict between them. Thus, Golconda came into the power of Mohammedans and henceforth, formed the capital of one of the Gulbarga governors. Later, when Bahmanis declined, a governor declared his independence and Golconda became the capital of a new kingdom.

Another major conflict between the Sultan and Raja of Vijayanagara kept both of them tied to Doab, the land between Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. The initial war was brutal largely due to the indiscriminate killing of lakhs of prisoners of war and civilians including women and children. After the initial terror, the Vijayanagar ambassadors told Mohamed Shah Bahmani that:

“No religion required the innocent to be punished for the crimes of the guilty, more especially helpless women and children: If Krishna Ray had been at fault, the poor and feeble inhabitants had not been accessory to his errors. Mohamed Shah replied that the decrees of Providence had ordered what had been done, and that he had no power to alter them. The ambassadors observed, that as the Bestower of Kingdoms had conferred on him the Government

of the Deccan, it was probably that his successors and the Princes of the Carnatic might long remain neighbours, which made it advisable to avoid cruelty in war; and they proposed, therefore, that a treaty should be made not to slaughter the helpless and unarmed inhabitants in future battles. Mohamed Shah struck with the good sense of this proposal, took an oath, that he would not, hereafter, put to death a single enemy after a victory, and would bind his successors to observe the same line of conduct. From that time to this, it has been the general custom in the Deccan to spare the lives of prisoners in war, and not to shed the blood of an enemy's unarmed subjects.”<sup>36</sup>

The Sultan was again called to Daulatabad, where a rebellion had broken out. He returned victorious, but his days of war were now over. All Hindu Rajas were humbled. His country was quiet and at peace. He treated his soldiers, civilian officers and subjects with kindness and concern. He always sought the company of learned. Men like Sheikh-ul-Mashai, Zainuddin Daulatabadi, Ainuddin Bijapuri, Maulana Nizamuddin Barani and Hakim Zahiruddin Tabrizi crowded his capital. This made Deccan the centre of the learned and envy in all parts of India. The last few months of his life were spent in travelling about his kingdom. In 1375 CE, he died, full of honours, after a reign of seventeen years.

**... This made Deccan the centre of the learned and envy in all parts of India**



“Mohammed Shah seems to have been a passionate and impulsive Prince, easily offended and given to wrath and ready to avenge the slightest offence to his dignity. He must, however, have had considerable military talent and was personally brave. His greatest expeditions were undertaken with a relatively handful of men, and by clever stratagems and surprises, he was able to defeat an enemy immensely superior in members. The treasure he accumulated at Gulburga was said to have been enormous. “Three thousand elephants and half as much as treasure as any other Prince,” was one of the results of his campaigns. But on the other hand, another result was that nearly “five hundred thousand unbelievers fell by the swords of his warriors in defence of the faith of Islam, by which the districts



of Carnatic were so laid waste that they did not recover their natural population for several decades.”<sup>37</sup>

### 1.4 FLUIDITY

The period from 1375 to 1397 CE, saw turmoil, bloodshed and change of Sultan five times. But, even amidst the chaos, two features stood out. The first was that out of these 23 years, 19 years are taken up by the reign of Muhammad-II. He attempted to make the Deccan, a centre of culture and erudition. The second factor was prevalence of complete peace on the frontiers of the kingdom.

Following the death of Mohammed Shah, his only son Mujahid Shah, succeeded him. A tall, strong, handsome and an educated man of

... **This sowed the seeds of jealousy between Dakhani Muslims and immigrant Persians**



considerable intelligence, he chose Arabs, Persians and Turks as his favourite companions. These immigrants were known as Afaquis. They were bitterly resented by the local converts and Abyssinian Habshis (African slaves converted to Islam), who were collectively known as Dakhanis. This sowed the seeds of jealousy between Dakhani Muslims and immigrant Persians. This resulted in recurring intrigues, plots and assassinations leading to dismemberment of the kingdom some one hundred and fifty years later. Eventually, all the Mohammedan states of Deccan were absorbed into Aurangzeb’s unwieldy empire.

“Sultan Mujahid was brave but revengeful. As a fourteen years old child, he stole some gold from his father’s treasury and divided amongst his playfellows. Mubarik, the treasurer reported the theft to Sultan. The prince was reprimanded. After a month, the prince challenged Mubarik to a bout of wrestling, threw him with such violence to the ground that it broke Mubarik’s neck. The unfortunate treasurer died on the spot.”<sup>38</sup>

No sooner than Mujahid ascended the throne, war broke out between Gulburga and Vijayanagara for possession of ill-fated Raichur Doab (land between Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers). Mujahid marched and crossed the two rivers, leaving the veteran Seyfuddin Ghoree as regent in his absence. He killed an enormous tiger on foot by shooting an arrow through its heart.

“Now, the Sultan gave way to a spirit of fanaticism. Outside the city was a sacred Hanuman temple. Several pilgrims and common folks had taken shelter there. They were all put to sword. Mujahid himself struck and mutilated the idol. A dying Brahmin then raised himself with a last effort and exclaimed, “For this act, you will never see your kingdom again and will not return to your capital alive.” Pilgrims rose as one man and defied the army. As battle could not be won, Sultan retreated, and held Daoud Khan, his uncle responsible for the rout. Daoud Khan was severely reprimanded and it stayed in his memory.”<sup>39</sup>

“While retreating, the Sultan laid seize to Adoni with his depleted army. But, as advised by his vazir, he raised the siege and retreated to his capital. After crossing Tungabhadra and taking advantage of peace, he was amusing himself with fishing. But, seized with a sudden pain in eyes, he retired to sleep in his tent alone. That night, Daoud Khan and his fellow conspirator entered the tent with their daggers drawn. The Sultan’s only attendant was an Abyssinian slave, who was rubbing his feet. He at once raised an alarm, but it was too late. Daoud Khan plunged his dagger into the Sultan’s stomach. A fellow conspirator cut down the slave and gave finishing strokes to Sultan.”<sup>40</sup> Who was this another fellow? He was Masoud Khan, the son of Mubarik Khan who was worsted to death during a bout of wrestling by Mujahid, then a prince of fourteen years. Insults and injuries are basically followed by revenge.

Daoud then marched upon Gulburga and ascended the throne amidst great pomp and magnificence. Struck by the curse of dying Brahmin, it appears that Sultan Mujahid Shah never got back to his capital.

This deed of revenge soon brought about its own counter revenge. The rest of the royal family appeared to have acquiesced in the change of affairs. The exception was, the sister of murdered Sultan, Ruh Parwar Ageh. She was head of harem and did not find it difficult to induce a young man, a favourite of the late Sultan, to avenge his patron’s death. While Daoud Shah prostrated himself in public prayer, he was killed with one blow of the sabre. In this way, Daoud Shah, the fourth Sultan of Gulburga died after a short

reign of one month and five days. His son, Mohammed Sunjer, just nine years of age was blinded by that strong minded Princess Ruh Parwar Ageh to prevent any further intrigue during succession. Thus, the sins of father were visited upon his innocent offspring.

Mohammed Shah, the only surviving son of the founder, Alauddin Hassan Gangu was proclaimed as fifth Sultan of Gulburga. He punished the murderers of his nephew, Mujahid. Thereafter, he preserved peace with as much zeal as his predecessors had persevered in war. Peace was made with Vijayanagara. His reign was devoted to cultivation of literature and science. Seyfuddin Ghoree, at ninety years of age was again appointed vazir. During Mohammed Shah his reign of nineteen years, the country was troubled with no wars.

Sultan Mohammed was a very temperate man, both in his habits and dress. He wore nothing but plain white. He held that kings were just trustees of God and to expend more than necessary was to commit a breach of trust. Great attention was paid to education and schools were established in all the principal towns. Children were fed, housed and taught at public expense. Special allowances were given to readers of Koran. Many learned men came to his court from various parts of Asia. On an occasion of a famine, the Sultan employed ten thousand bullock carts to bring corn from Guzerat and Malwa. It was sold to the poor at low rate. A short rebellion organized by the Governor of Daulatabad, Bahauddin was crushed. In 1396, the Sultan died of a putrid fever. And just the day after, the Vazir Seyfuddin Ghoree passed away at a ripe old age of one hundred and seven years. He had accompanied the founder, Alauddin Hassan Gangu from Daulatabad to Gulburga and had himself ruled the country as Vazir and Prime Minister for more than half a century.

**Children  
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at public  
expense**



Mahmood Shah had two sons. The elder one, Ghaziuddin ascended the throne at the age of seventeen. An amicable young prince, he excited jealousy of Lallacheen, a powerful Turkish slave of the late Sultan. The latter desired the post of Meer Naubut, or lord of the watch for son, Hasan Khan. Sultan told him that sons of slaves did not

deserve promotion above the heads of old nobility. Stung by the retort, Lallacheen swore revenge. And the opportunity arrived just too soon. “The teenage Sultan was desirous of obtaining Lallacheen’s daughter. He was invited to a feast, intoxicated, and was drawn aside, as if to lead him to the female’s apartment. He was thrown down, his eyes were gouged and all the 21 attendants were killed, one by one. The blind Sultan was sent to the fort of Saugur. The unfortunate Ghaziuddin ruled for just one month and twenty days.”<sup>41</sup>

Now, his younger brother Shamsuddin, only at an age of 15 years ascended the throne. Intimidated by the fate of his brother, the teenaged Sultan left all powers to Lallacheen. The latter commenced an intrigue with Sultan’s mother. This excited the jealousy of several other members of royal family. Lallacheen was, after all a slave and was wielding absolute power. The Sultan was treated as a mere puppet and his mother did not disguise her intrigues either. The chief noblemen hatched a conspiracy. They collectively prayed for forgiveness. Lallacheen was delighted. For some time, it appeared to be peaceful and quiet. Then one day, Feroz Khan, son of the fourth Sultan Dauod Khan, appeared in durbar with twelve followers, leaving three hundred adherents outside. The porters at the gate obstructed their entry. They were cut down. Adherents blocked the entrance. Feroz Khan with his twelve friends rushed to the hall. Lallacheen fled to an underground chamber but Feroz chased him. Vengeance upon Lallacheen was reserved for the hand of Ghaziuddin. Lallacheen was tied up and placed before the blind ex-Sultan. He called for a sword and killed him with one stroke. Retribution over, he asked to be allowed to go to Mecca. Provided with a liberal allowance from his cousin Feroz Shah, he lived there for several years.

“Now came the turn of the puppet, Sultan Shamsuddin. The boy king of fifteen only was blinded and sent in captivity to Bidar. He had reigned for only five months and seven days.”<sup>42</sup>

That is how two more Sultans of Bahmanis kingdom rose and fell within a span of seven months. The causes were rooted in the power conflict between the slave Lallacheen and the royalty.

### **The Master Linguist (1397–1422 CE)**

Sultan Firoz Shah was already past his middle age when he ascended the throne on 16th November 1397. He was most likely past 45 years then. After he ascended the throne, the Tughlaqs ruling from Delhi were submerged by Taimur's typhoon. In 1398, the Taimur commenced his march from Samarqand, crossed the Indus, subdued rulers in Punjab, overwhelmed Rajput resistance before arriving in Delhi. The city nobles offered their allegiance. Nevertheless, Taimur sacked the capital and indiscriminately massacred both Hindus and Muslims.

In 1401, Firoz Shah sent ambassadors to Taimur, which was gracefully accepted. Thereafter, Taimur reached Meerut and plundered it. Travelling through Haridwar, Nagarkot and Jammu, he returned with artisans, masons and builders as slaves and captives to work on his Samarqand monuments. In 1405, he died. In a short span of just seven years, he inflicted a death blow to Tughlaq dynasty. The ensuing power vacuum was filled with conflicts which further weakened various northern Kingdoms. However, Bahmanis in Deccan were not troubled for another hundred years or so.



*Firoz Shah - 1397-1422*

Facing no threat from the Delhi Sultanate, Sultan Firoz Shah, reigned for 25 years. Compared to the past five Sultans' who ruled altogether for twenty-three years, his was quite a stable regime. He made 24 glorious campaigns and conquered the greater part of Telengana. He forced Vijayanagara King to give his daughter in marriage. The Sultan delighted in the company of women. His harem was well stocked with females of all nations: Arabian, Circassians, Georgians, Turks, Russians, Europeans, Chinese, Afghans, Rajputs, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Telugus and others. He was reputed to be able to talk with each lady in her own language. This was possible not because he was a linguist but the subject matter of conversation was focused and limited and a brief vocabulary sufficed.

**His harem  
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nations**



His multi lingual facility helped him to befriend the neighbouring Hindu aristocracy. He was the first of those who took Hindu concubines not only from the neighbouring state of Vijayanagara and Kherla but also from the plebeian element as well. In the second year of the Sultan's reign, war broke out with King of Vijayanagara, as the latter had captured the Doab, the battle ground between Tungabhadra and Krishna River. Simultaneously, the Raja of Telengana invaded Berar. His army was driven out. The Raja surrendered before the Sultan at his camp at Ellichpore. Pardoned and reinstated, he remained submissive thereafter.

“It was perhaps after the Kherla campaign that Firoz led an expedition into Telengana where a fierce struggle was going on between the Velamas who were supported by the Sultan and the Vemas who had the Raya of Vijayanagara on their side. As a matter of fact, the campaign was undertaken as a reprisal for help which Kataya Vema had been giving to Harihara, and now, accompanied by Annadeva and other Velama chiefs the Sultan marched eastwards.”<sup>43</sup> In the beginning, the king's progress towards Rajahmundry was at first full of success. But he suffered a setback there and had to retrace his steps without fully subduing the local chiefs who, however, continued to pay tribute to the royal treasury.

In 1417, Firoz Shah made an unprovoked attack upon Balkonda fort. After a siege for two years, a pestilence broke out in his army.

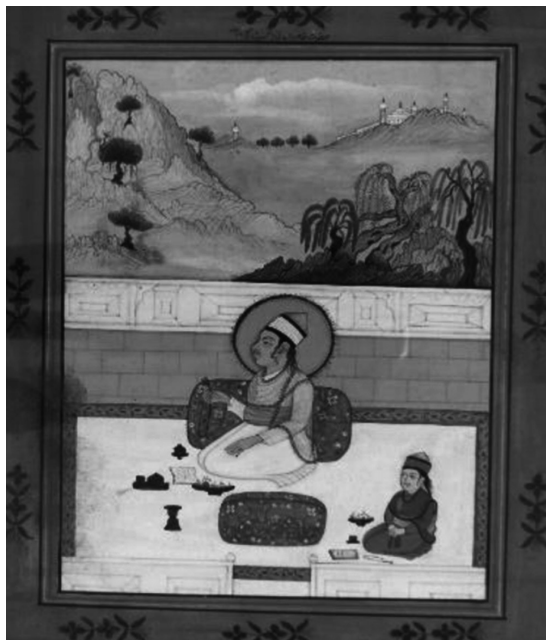
Disregarding advice, he fought on and suffered a severe defeat. His commander was killed. The army retreated and a general slaughter followed. He was chased in his own country which was everywhere laid waste. Mosques and holy shrines were broken down. Only after some time, his brother Ahmad succeeded in restoring the territories.

This reverse weighed heavily upon the Sultan. He fell ill. Ahmad was getting popular amongst nobles, yet Firoz wanted his son to succeed him. During his last days, he had formally declared his son Hasan Khan as heir to the throne. After the nobles had paid homage to the prince, the king sent him to the saint, Gesu Deraz, to pray for his life and prosperity. But the saint retorted that when everything had been done, prayers on his part would be futile.

**... the saint  
said that god  
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Ahmed  
Khan and  
not Hasan  
Khan should  
succeed Firoz**



When pressed, the saint said that God had already willed that Ahmed Khan and not Hasan Khan should succeed Firoz. The



*Saint Gesu Daraz*

sultan was taken aback and he sent word to the saint that as there was much noise in the Khanaqah just behind the palace, he was disturbed by the noise there and asked him to withdraw to some other place.

The saint shifted to a faraway location; so, did his band of loyalists, including Ahmed Shah, the brother of Firoz.

“It was time for royal army to march in search of Ahmed. The latter found a new ally in Khalaf Khan, a horse dealer from Arabia, who goaded Ahmed to proceed to Gulbarga and claim the throne. The horse dealer was a strategist too. He got hold of a few hundred heads of cattle, camouflaged the oxen by tying white cloth on their horns, had them ridden by Ahmed’s soldiers and with the few horses at his command, put them in front of this false cavalry. They threw missiles at the royal elephants, which formed the vanguard of the royal army. The elephant’s stampeded and the battle became the rout of the royal army.” Ahmed entered the capital and immediately betook himself to the old and the dying king.”<sup>44</sup> After being defeated, he summoned Ahmad. On 22nd September, 1422, the gates of the city were opened and Ahmad was taken directly to the dying king. It was a poignant scene. “The two brothers hugged each other and Firoz was all in tears. Burhan-i Ma’athir relates the whole scene thus; Ahmad: ‘Your Majesty, I did all this for no other reason but to save my life’.

Firoz: ‘God be praised that the Kingdom is going to the rightful man. It was my fault that having a brother like you I tried to hand over the kingdom to a less worthy person. My last desire is that you should treat your nephew Hasan Khan with kindness as befits a man like you and regard my progeny with the love similar to that which I bear for you’.

Firoz now untied the sword from his buckle and gave it on Ahmad and holding him by the hand, seated him on the Turquoise Throne’. Firoz died within a week on 28th September, 1422.”<sup>45</sup>

He was a great patron of learning and built an observatory. He made a point of copying sixteen pages of the Koran every fourth day. He paid great attention to the development of trade. Every year, vessels were dispatched from the ports of Goa and Choul. These ships brought back merchandise from different countries. The captains were also instructed to invite and bring persons celebrated for their talents to visit his court. He took much pleasure in the society of Sheikhs, learned and hermits. Around 1412, a celebrated Saint named Gesu Deraz came from Delhi. The Sultan and his brother



both respected him. His tomb, outside the city still stands venerated by the Dakhani and visited annually by thousands of pilgrims.

### **1.5 THE CAPITAL RELOCATION (1422-1436 CE)**

“However saintly the new king was, and howsoever innocent of the death of his brother might have been, Ahmad must have heaved a sigh of relief after hearing his brother’s death.”<sup>46</sup> Within a month of his accession, he had to undergo the real shock due to death of his benefactor, Hazarat Khwaza Syed Muhammad Gesu Deraz. The saint had gathered a good following of those who opposed Firoz and thereby facilitated the enthronement of Ahmad-I. The latter knew that he could not have, single-handily ousted his brother and his nephew so easily. With the sudden departure of his spiritual benefactor, Ahmad-I was not too keen to continue in Gulbarga as his capital headquarters.

Yet another factor for change of the capital was never ending atmosphere of intrigue, faithlessness and disloyalty to the ruler at Gulbarga, whoever it might be. Every one of the occupants of the throne from Mujahid onwards, with the single exception of Muhammad-II had met a violent death. Moreover, Ahmad must have been fully conscious of the steps by which he could become king and thrust aside his nephew. The saint Gesu Deraz’s death so soon after his accession may have weighed heavily upon him and he must have begun thinking hard to extricate himself from the shackles of intrigue. In the capital Gulbarga, there was a party of nobles and one of commoners who both considered Ahmad to be a mere usurper.

The climatic superiority of Bidar over Gulbarga was yet another factor in the capital’s shift. Gulbarga or Kalbarga means ‘stony land’ in Kannada language and this part of Deccan is noted for its scanty rainfall. The sultry atmosphere was no match to salubrious climate of Bidar. The latter, situated on a plateau 2,330 feet above the sea level, was definitely one of the healthiest parts of Deccan tableland.

Lastly, Bahmani arms were keen to have a firm grip over Telangana in the reign of Firoz. The shifting of the capital by Ahmad must have been made for almost the same considerations as those of

Mohammad bin Tughlaq when he made Daulatabad as the second capital of his vast empire. The ever-expanding Bahmani dominions rendered Gulbarga unsuitable from the strategic viewpoint. Bidar was much safer, being at the very edge of the Deccan plateau and besides, more in the centre of the new dominion than the far-flung Gulbarga. The capital was, most probably shifted in June 1424 and Bidar came to be called Mahammadabad.

The change of capital also marked a watershed when Dakhni influence was substantially replaced by that influence of the Iranians and the Trans-oxanians. The latter flocked to the Deccan more than ever making their mark in art, architecture, politics, religion and other aspects of the life of the land. This surely infuriated Dakhnis. Ahmad Shah's accession was signalled by more than ordinary generosity. The holy saint Gesu Deraz was endowed with jagirs, and a splendid college was built for him. In 1424-25, Bahmani and Vijayanagara forces came face to face on the banks of Tungabhadra. Vijayanagar forces resorted to guerrilla warfare. Ahmad crossed the river and played havoc with the populace. He, in turn, was surrounded and his life was saved when almost everything was lost.

“After this hair breadth escape, the king marched on to Vijayanagar itself and sent a messenger to the Raya that one of the conditions of peace would be that the Raya should have all the arrears of tribute loaded on the backs of the elephants from his stables and these should be sent to the Sultan's camp with bands playing in front and with the Crown Prince of Vijayanagar at the head of the procession. This was promptly done, and when the procession arrived at the Sultan's camp it was received in right royal fashion by the Bahmani nobles and conducted to the king's presence. The king forthwith clothed the Crown Prince of Vijayanagar with royal robes and a bejewelled dagger and presented him with Arab and Turkish horses and elephants, greyhounds and three falcons. After these ceremonies, the king marched back towards the Krishna where he said good bye to the Crown Prince.”<sup>47</sup>

In the beginning of the campaign, the Velamas had sided with the Rayas of Vijayanagar against Ahmad Shah. “He wanted now to punish the

Velamas and therefore marched right into Tilangana in 1425 halting at Golconda. Here he rested for a month and twenty days sending Khan-i A'zam 'Abdulla Khan in advance to Warangal, where the fight between his forces and Anapota-II ended in the latter's death on the battlefield. The Sultan now entered Warangal in triumph, and Khan-i Azam was sent to subjugate the whole of Tilangana which he did in a few months' time. The king now returned to his capital having achieved his purpose and left Khan-i Azam as Governor of Tilangana."<sup>48</sup>

After subduing Telengana, Ahmad Shah moved into Gond country. After this, he marched to Elliachpur, stayed there for a year before returning to Gulburga. The Bahmani dominion extended from Berar in the north to a portion of Gondwana and controlled Telengana in the north east. The Kingdom covered Malwa and Gujarat and stretched from Goa to Masulipatnam. Gujarat and Malwa would be contested by the Delhi Sultan. This was the territory for future conflicts.

Probably taking advantage of all this, 'certain outlying parts of the kingdom, especially Telengana, rebelled yet again. Rajahmundri had already been lost and Doddaya Alla was ruling there as an independent chief, and now the Velamas declared their independence and drove out A`zam Khan the Governor from the province. Ahmad, who must have been growing old, moved into Telengana in 1433 with a large army conquering the forts as they came in the way. Simha of Warangal had to lay down his arms but was left in possession of his territories in consideration for an annual tribute. Other chiefs who held out were dealt with a stern hand by the Sultan, but in the end most of the captured forts were left in possession of the local potentates. After having accomplished his task, the aged Sultan returned to his capital leaving Ibrahim Sanjar

**Controlling the recalcitrance of Telangana was one of the tangible reasons for shifting the capital to Bidar**

Khan as sarlashkar of Telengana and gave him the fort of Bhongir and a considerable jagir for the support of the army which was left with him."<sup>49</sup> Controlling the recalcitrance of Telangana was one of the tangible reasons for shifting of the capital to Bidar.

"Ahmad was a pious and God-fearing Sultan and is even now regarded a saint by a large majority of the people of the Deccan. There are two episodes which



show the great regard which Ahmad had inclination towards the Shi`ah doctrine. Firstly, he sent thirty thousand silver tankas to be distributed to the needy Syeds of Karbala. It was further related how when a member of the Deccan aristocracy, Sher Mulk by name, insulted one Syed Nasiru`d-din Karbala`i, he had the culprit trampled to death by a mad elephant regardless of his rank in society.”<sup>50</sup>

Ahmed loved the society of learned men. He gave seven lakhs of Dakhani tankas to Sheikh Azuri for writing two verses in his praise. In his reign, Muhammadabad-Bidar became the rendezvous of the learned and the pious from all parts of Iran, Iraq and Arabia, He was himself a man of some erudition, having imbibed knowledge at the feet of Mir Fozlu`l-lahInju, and was also an adept in music and singing. He was very kind and considerate to his subjects as when he opened his purse strings for the purchase and free distribution of coin at the time of a great drought which occurred in the Deccan. We have already related how the king had an inclination towards the Shi`ah doctrine, and he encouraged the influx of learned men, poets, statesmen, soldiers and others from over the seas, which, to a certain extent, led to a greater cleavage between these new-comers and the older colonists.<sup>51</sup>

In the last years of his reign, he appointed his eldest son Alauddin Zafar Khan to be his heir, giving full charge of the kingdom in his own lifetime. He died on 17th April 1436, after a short illness. He is called in history as ‘Ahmed Shah Wali’. ‘An Egyptian grammarian Mahamuda`d-Damamini says that ‘The king was extremely popular and he did not come across a single person who was hostile to him. He ends his encomium by saying that Ahmad Shah was a prince among the learned.’<sup>52</sup>

### **Decline and absorption of Padmanayaks**

Let us pick up the thread from 1369 CE onwards. In that year, Anupota Nayak-I and Madanayak ruling from Rachakonda and Devarakonda had become tributaries to Bahmanis.

During 1383–84, both Mada Nayak-I and Anapota Nayak-I left the stage. They were succeeded by their sons, namely Singama Nayak-II (1383–1394 CE) and Vedagiri (1384-1410 CE) at Rachakonda and Devarkonda respectively. Singama Nayak-II was also known as Sarnagrainga Bhupala. The lands between Godavari and Krishna were

under Singama Nayak-II and Vedagiri. The lands beyond Eastern Ghats in Rajahmundry and Kondaveedu were under Reddy Kings. On the other side, Bahmanis had consolidated their kingdom north of Krishna while Vijayanagara rulers had undertaken consolidation south of Krishna. The Padmanayaka kingdom was therefore surrounded by three forces, namely Bahmanis to the west, Vijayanagara to the south and Kondaveedu rulers to the east. To stabilise as well as to extend

**The relations between the Padmanayaks & Kondaveedu rulers were never cordial, ever since the formation of their kingdoms**



their power, they often shifted their alliances with their neighbouring states and tried to fish in the troubled waters.<sup>53</sup>

The relations between the Padmanayaks and Kondaveedu rulers were never cordial, ever since the formation of their kingdoms. The kingdom of Kondaveedu was situated in the deltaic soil of coast while that of the Padmanayaks was situated in the plateau area.<sup>54</sup>

Frequent conflicts between the two were inherent in the respective polities, driven by the desire to enlarge their kingdoms. On the other hand, the Padmanayaks and Bahmani rulers were on the same page, in the beginning. Bahman Shah-I helped Anapota Nayak-I against Kapaya Nayak. The same relations continued till Singama Nayak-II and Vedagiri-I.<sup>55</sup> To balance the power equation, Vijayanagara rulers found themselves tilting towards Kondaveedu rulers.

Around these times, Harihara-II of Vijayanagara sent an expedition against Singama Nayak. The latter with Bahmanis help, defeated the Vijayanagara army in the Kothakota battle. In this operation, the army chief of Vijayanagara Saluvaraya died. Flush with his victory, the Padmanayak brothers set out to conquer the northern districts of Reddy kingdoms. The manifest division between Pedakomati Vema Reddy and Kotaya Vema Reddy was the added factor. In 1387, Padmanayaks were active there in Simhachalam area. A further thrust brought them into conflict with Gajapatis of Orissa. The absence of Padmanayaks from their core territory inspired Bukkaraya-II of Vijayanagara to attack Pangal and Orugallu.

By now, Feroz Shah had become the Bahmani ruler. He had reversed the policy of supporting Padmanayaks followed by his predecessors all the way from 1347 onwards. In 1397, with the help of Bahmanis

under Feroz Shah, the Vijayanagara rulers occupied the fort of Pangal and Orugallu. Both the Padmanayaka brothers, namely Singama Nayak-II and Vedagiri-I resisted together, but in vain. The reversal of Bahmani policy towards Padmanayaks was taking its toll.

In 1399, there was a simultaneous change of guard at Rachakonda and Devarkonda. Anapota-II (1399-1425CE) succeeded his father Sarvagna Singa-II and Mada Nayaka II succeeded his father Vedagiri-I.<sup>56</sup> As if driven by their ancestral policy, both sought to extend their kingdom. The Reddys of Rajahmundry were not sitting idle, either. The latter had driven out Annadeva Choda from their kingdom. Madanayaka gave him asylum and ensured his installation to his kingdom lying in lower Godavari region. Promptly, Pedakomati Vema Reddi, with the help of Vijayanagara rulers defeated Annadeva choda. Not to give up, the latter directly approached Feroz Shah of Bahmani for help. As a proof of his loyalty, he assisted Feroz Shah in ‘Sagar’ war against Vijayanagara, which went in Bahmanis favour. After this battle, Pedakomati Verma Reddy maintained friendly relations with Feroz Shah. With this powershift of Pedakomati Reddy towards Feroz Shah, the other power equation was bound to undergo appropriate change. The Madanayak and Anapota-II became close to Vijayanagara.

This new power equation was soon put into operation. The Bahmani army, led by Feroz Shah attacked Pangal fort. Singama Nayak and Vijayanagara army marched together and emerged victorious. Pedakomati Vema Reddy was supporting Feroz Shah. In the encounter, his brother Macha Reddy was assassinated in 1419. The deadly retaliation and counter retaliation saw Vema Reddy attacking Devarkonda and killing Vedagiri-I. In response, Kondaveedu was attacked and its ruler Vema Reddy was killed in 1420. To make a statement, his body was hung at the entrance of Devarkonda fort. After this, we do not hear anything about the ‘Reddy Kingdoms’.

By 1425 CE, Singamanayak-III succeeded his father Anapota-II in Rachakonda and Vedagiri-II succeeded his father Madanayaka-II at Devarkonda. A new power equation had developed. The foremost factor

**... his body was hung at the entrance of the Devarkonda fort. After this, we do not hear anything about the ‘Reddy kingdoms’**



had been the change of Bahmanis capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. The recalcitrance of Telengana rulers and their shifting loyalties towards the growing might of Bahmanis was one of the important factors behind the capital shift. It was rather akin to the capital shift, almost a century ago from Delhi to Daulatabad by the then Delhi Sultanate. During Khilji's, the relationship with peninsular kingdoms, namely Deogiri, Orugallu and Dwarsamudra was that of collecting tribute. But, in 1320 CE, with the arrival of Tughlaqs, the policy changed from tribute collection to territorial acquisition. With this new policy, the capital itself was relocated from Delhi to Daulatabad. The consequential impact might have weakened Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, but the fact remains that each one of the three kingdoms in peninsular India, namely Yadavas, Kakatiyas and Hoyasalas soon went off the political map. Similarly, among the strategic factors for a capital shift in 1423 CE was to move from a policy of tribute collection to territorial acquisition of Telangana. The Bahmani rulers

**Kingdom of Padmanayaks was on a decline and it was absorbed by the rising tide of the Bahmanis imperium**



were closer at hand with their capital at Bidar. They occupied the forts of Medak, Warangal and Bhuvangiri during 1433-1436 CE. The kingdom of Padmanayaks was on a decline and it was absorbed by the rising tide of the Bahmanis imperium.

Rachakonda gave in first and Singamanayak-III, probably retired to Bellamkonda in the Guntur district.

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## 2. The Bidar years (1436-1512 CE)

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This chapter deals with the history of Telangana lands from 1436 CE to 1512 CE. Rulers exhibited as diversified characteristics as it could be. They were moralists followed by cruels. They were boy kings ruling just for a couple of years before dying on the night of consumation.

During this period, Bahmanis were ruling the entire present day Telangana lands as an exclusive Taraf, i.e., a province or suba. A short-lived rebellion in 1457 CE supported by Kalinga forces was contained. In 1482 CE, Mahmud Gawan, the competent premier of the Bahmani empire was executed by the fickle minded king. The empire started cracking up and eventually disintegrated in five constituents. By 1512 CE, a new kingdom named Golconda appeared on the map under a new dynasty of Qutb Shahis.

### 2.1 THE MORALIST, THE CRUEL & THE SHORT LIVED (1436–1463 CE)

**A**lauddin, the elder son of Sultan Ahmad Shah succeeded his father and as per his wishes, treated his younger brother Mohammed Khan with royal respect. He bestowed upon him costly presents and gave him the command of war against the King of Vijayanagara for defaulting on tribute. But there is a saying that there is no more room for two Kings in one country than there is for two swords in one scabbard. Mohammed Khan rebelled but was put down by his elder brother. Subsequently, he submitted and was pardoned. After the death of Daoud Shah, the Governor of Telengana, Mohammed Shah was sent as its Governor. Here, he lived undisturbed and spent his life in pleasures. Though Alauddin was not as active as his father, but several expeditions to Konkan, Khandesh, Berar and of course, the natural enemy Vijayanagara kept him busy for several years.

Sultan had a fickle nature and first massacred the Afaquis on allegations by Dakhani. Then, he slaughtered the Dakhani, when Afaquis lodged counter complaints. He gave himself to idleness and pleasures of harem. He only appeared in public once in four to five months. His time was spent 'in drinking ruby-coloured wines, pressing lips of silver bodied damsels, or listening to the melody of sweet voiced musicians. During the last 5 years of his reign, only one or two events of importance took place during the period. Things seemed to be fairly quiet in Telengana until the rebellion of his brother-in-law Jalal Khan, took place. It was rumoured that the king was dead owing to a malignant wound in the shin from which he had been suffering for a couple of years, and possibly taking advantage of the unpopularity of the heir-apparent Prince Humayun, Jalal proclaimed himself the king at Nalgonda where his jagirs were situated, in 1455 CE. On the approach of the king, Jalal shut himself up in the citadel while his son Sikandar Khan hurried to Mahur to seek help from Mahmud Khilji who had taken the place of Hoshang Ghori as king of Malwa, and told him that 'Alau'd-din Ahmad was dead and beseeching him to come and protect life and property which was in grave danger in the Bahmani state. Mahmud was one of the most ambitious and resourceful kings of his time and was always waiting for opportunities like this. He now allied himself with Mubarak Khan, ruler of Khandesh, crossed the frontier in 1456 CE, and marched to Mahur where he joined hands with Sikandar'.<sup>1</sup>

Ahmad-II now proceeded to Mahur from Nalgonda with a huge army of 180,000 men. He placed Maliku't-Tujjar Qasim Beg with the army of Daulatabad opposite the Malwa army and the levies of Berar against Mubarak of Khandesh, while he himself stood at the head of the forces of Bijapur at a distance of about eight miles. 'When it became known to Mahmud that he had been misinformed about Ahmad's death and had to face a strong army with but fifty thousand men under his command, he ordered a retreat leaving a contingent of a thousand soldiers, outwardly to guard the person of Sikandar Khan but really to see that he did not join hands with the Bahmani Sultan'.

In the meantime, 'Alau'd-din (Ahmed-II) had made the newcomer Mahmud Gawan, a mansabdar of 1,000, and ordered him to suppress

**This was really the beginning of the policy of political compromises and toleration initiated by Mahmud Gawan**



Jalal's insurrection at Nalgonda. The new commander immediately marched to Nalgonda and besieged the citadel. Meanwhile Sikandar had escaped from his virtual imprisonment at the hands of the Malwa army. Knowing that his was a lost case, he hastened to Nalgonda and on getting a promise of pardon from Mahmud Gawan, persuaded his father to hand over the citadel to the Bahmani general. All credit was due to the king that in spite of the treasonable conduct of the father and the son, he gave both of them the fullest pardon and even restored the Nalgonda jagir to Jalal Khan. This was really the beginning of the policy of political compromises and toleration initiated by Mahmud Gawan, a policy which was carried on so long as he had any say in the political affairs of the kingdom and which proved him to be its mainstay for more than a quarter of a century.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this serious insurrection in the heart of Telengana some of the local Reddi chiefs, especially Linga-III, went out of their way to "ingratiate the Sultan." They actually defeated a chief, Muddu Dubakka by name, who showed an inclination to go against the Sultan and scaled the walls of Bhuvanagiri fort. When he raised the standard of revolt, Linga forthwith asked Sikandar to quit Sabbinadu in his jagir where he happened to be at that time. At the same time, it should be noticed that apart from Linga, that the fort of Bhongir had to be stormed before it could be handed over to Sanjar Khan as sarlashkar of Telengana.

There seems to have been some show of force on the part of the Gajapati of Orissa as well. It is known from inscriptions that Kapileshwar was ruling round Vijayawada and Kondapalli in 1454 CE and seems to have extended his sway as far as Kanchi. It seems that Sanjar Khan tried to march to the eastern coast but was reprimanded by the Sultan that it was not an easy matter to fight against a chief "who possessed over two thousand elephants while there were not two hundred in the whole of the Bahmani army." It was possible, however, that some kind of conflict ensued between the Gajapati ruler of Orissa and the Bahmanis in which the Bahmani forces were worsted at the hands of a certain Oriyan commander

Rahutanaya who is said to have defeated “two Turuksha princes”. We have no further information about this venture.

The king had taken a strenuous part in the last Telangana campaign and against Malwa. The malignant wound in his shin from which he had been suffering from, grew worse day by day, hastening his death which took place on 3rd April, 1458.<sup>3</sup> It is said that the king used to discuss Hindu philosophy with Pandits and that he was comforted in his illness by Narsimha Saraswathi, the saint of Gangapur.<sup>4</sup> In the beginning of his reign, he was a man of fairly sober character and he tried to eradicate gambling, drinking, debauchery and crime. But, with the passage of time, especially, after the second Vijayanagara campaign, he begun to indulge in wine and women, and gradually withdrew from the state affairs. ‘Essentially, the sultan was a weak willed and pusillanimous character.’<sup>5</sup>

He was a champion of Islam and he was very considerate towards Muslims. “He founded masjids, public schools and charitable institutions, among which was a hospital of perfect elegance and purity of style, which he built in his capital, Bidar, and made two beautiful villages there as a pious endowment, in order that the revenue of these villages should be solely devoted to supply medicines and drinks. To every part of his dominions, he sent censors of morals and just judges and though he drank wine himself, he forbade it to others as also gambling. He put chains on the necks of idle vagabonds and made them street scavengers and labourers, that they might reform and earn their livelihood, or else quit the country. If anyone, of any rank, after warning and much correction was convicted of drinking, lead was to be poured down his throat.

Sultan Alauddin, well educated, was a man of wit and learning and possessed to have considerable eloquence. He sometimes preached in the mosque on Fridays and read the khutba in his own name, styling himself as “The just, merciful, patient and liberal to the servants of God.” On the last occasion when he so appeared, there was a horse dealer present whose account had been left unpaid by the officers of the court. This man was a zealous Mahommedan, and like many others, had been greatly moved by the slaughter of Afaquis by the Dakhani.

On hearing the Sultan read khutba, he rose and said: "Thou art neither the just, the merciful, the patient, not the liberal King, but the cruel and the false, who has massacred the Prophet's descendants; yet darest to assume such vaunting titles in the pulpit of the true believer." The Sultan was struck with remorse, and commanded the merchant to be paid on the spot; saying that those would not escape the wrath of God who had thus injured his reputation. He then retired to his palace, which he never left again till he was brought out to be buried.<sup>6</sup>

### **Humayun - The Cruel**

Ahmad Shah-II (Alauddin) had nominated his eldest son Humayun as heir to the throne. His harsh temper caused so much consternation that some nobles fled from the country while others proclaimed Humayun's brother Hassan Khan as king and seated him on the turquoise throne. The resulting uncertainty brought rabble in the street in front of Humayun's residence in order to plunder it and even to put him to death. The nominated heir, supported by his group which included a holy man and some eighty men by his side fought through the crowd, marched to the throne room of the palace, slapped Hassan on his face, unseated him and himself ascended the throne. The rebels and their partners were put in prison. This happened on 7th May, 1458.

Humayun delivered a speech immediately after his accession mentioning high ideals, he entertained for a Bahmani minister. He said, "Nobles of my kingdom! I am confident that it is impossible to carry on the government of the kingdom efficiently without the appointment of a minister who should be well known the world over and who should excel in wisdom among the Arabs as well as the 'Ajamis'. We are on the threshold of a new epoch in the history of this country and I cannot do better than follow the advice of one who should be clothed with the outward attributes of truth and good faith and who should inwardly be free from vice and vanity. I have therefore made up my mind to appoint Khwaja Najmu'd-din Mahmud Gawan, one of the best known in the state for his sense of justice and equity as well as for his deep thought, to be my Chief Minister."<sup>7</sup>

The king thereupon presented the Khwaja Mahmud Gawan with robes fitting the occasion including a golden cap and a golden belt and made him Malika't' Tujjar, Tarafdar of Bijapur and Wakil-i-Sultanat, giving him full control of military matters.

Humayun appointed Malik Shah as the Tarafdar of Telengana. Sikandar Khan, a cousin and playmate of Humayun did not like this arrangement. He rose in rebellion and attacked the royal camp in the middle of the night, and the next day engaged the royal troops with forces composed of 'Afghans and Dakhnis'. The Sultan tried to conciliate by offering Sikandar any paragana of his choice in the province of Daultabad. The latter haughtily replied that the only difference between Humayun and himself was that Humayun was the paternal and he the maternal grandson of Ahmad Shah Wali, and it would be well if he partitioned the kingdom and at least gave him the province of Telengana entirely.

The battle ensued and raged the whole day without a break. It remained undecided till evening when suddenly, Mahmud Gawan and Khwaja Jahan appeared on the horizon and began their attack from the right and left flanks respectively. The tired royal army was rejuvenated and Humayun was able to send five hundred picked archers and as many lancers with a mad elephant right into the hard-pressed ranks of the enemy. In the thick of the battle, Sikandar fell from his horse and was trampled to death. The route of his army was complete.<sup>8</sup>

Rebels took refuge in the Nallakonda (present day Nalgonda) fort. When besieged, they begged to be spared and offered all their treasures. The king accepted the condition and rebels were put in prison rather than been punished for their treasonable conduct.

'During the campaign, the chiefs of Telengana, especially Linga, and the chief of Velamas had sided with the rebels and therefore, Humayun resolved to reduce them once and for all.' The fortress of Devarkonda was seized by an army of twenty thousand horsemen and forty elephants. Linga sought the help of Kapileshwar, the raja of Orissa. The latter was one of the most ambitious rulers in the history of Orissa. He had got the better of Raya of Vijayanagar and had extended his sway over Rajahmundry and Kondavidu. The tribute offered by Padmanayaka rulers was too tempting.

Before the help could arrive from Kapileshwar, king of Kalinga, there was a council of war in Bahmani camp. The opinion was divided as one camp wanted to draw the defenders out of fortress in the open for hand-to-hand fight. The other camp thought that it would be considered a sign of weakness and they wanted to continue the siege. As stalemate continued in the Bahmani camp, Hamvira, son of Kapileswar leading Orissa forces arrived for Linga's help. The latter sallied out of the fort with his army and Bahmani forces were hemmed in between the the Kalinga army and Linga's forces. The combined forces met the Bahmani forces at Devarkonda in 1458CE. The confederacy won the battle due to the outstanding leadership and successful strategy of Kapileshwara. Kapileshwara now ordered Hamvira to proceed to Warangal, which was captured on 22nd February, 1460. Linga marched to Rachakonda, captured it and made it his capital. Humayun was marching towards Devarkonda himself when the news of defeat along with its causes were conveyed to him. He was furious and the errant amirs had to fly for their life along with the members of their families across the border to Malwa.<sup>9</sup>

While Humayun was away from the capital, Prince Hassan Khan along with thousands of his supporters managed their release from the prison in Bidar. All of them had been implicated in the plot against Humayun's throne and his person in the very beginning of his reign. The king thereupon left Mahmud Gawan, in-charge of affairs in Telengana and left for the capital. Arriving there in March 1460, as king took charge of the situation. Hassan had reached Bir by disguising him as a mendicant. He also proclaimed himself as king, but his kingship was rather short lived. The Royal army arrived in strength and defeated Hassan and his men. They fled towards Vijayanagara and were outwardly welcomed by Vijayanagara rulers. But soon they were imprisoned and sent to Bidar in chains.

In June 1460, Hassan and his party arrived in Bidar. Humayun gave vent to all his cruel propensities in meeting out dire punishment to those who had tried to betray him and end his life". Gribble writes, "The vengeance wreaked by the Sultan was terrible. He ordered stakes to be driven into the ground in the large square

opposite the palace; elephants, and wild beast were then brought in, and large cauldrons of boiling oil were placed in different parts. Upon this the Sultan seated himself in the balcony so as to preside over the execution. The first victim was his unfortunate brother, Hassan Khan, who was thrown before a tiger, that soon tore the wretched prince to pieces. Yusuf Turk and his friends were then beheaded, and their wives and daughters publicly violated. Habibulla had already been killed in Bijapur. All the Prince's followers, even down to the cooks, numbering in all some seven thousand men, women, and children, were then put to death by the most fearful tortures; by sword, axe, boiling oil and water, and every other means cruelty could think of.<sup>10</sup> After this tragic episode, Humayun promoted a number of Dakhani converts.

**... the Sultan seated himself in the balcony so as to preside over the execution of the brutal punishment**



In order to avoid the possibility of another revolt, almost all the other members of the Royal family were put to death, and the Sultan spent the rest of his reign in practicing the most abominable cruelties on the innocent as well as the guilty. He would frequently stop nuptial processions in the street, and seizing the bride and after deflowering her, would send her back to the husband's house. He put his women to death for trivial faults and when any of his nobility was obliged to attend him, so great was their dread that they took leave of their families as if preparing for death.

The Persian historians, especially Ferishta had labelled Humayun as 'Zalim' (cruellest). However, Sherwani had a different perception. He concludes that, "Humayun was a ruler of the ordinary Bahmani type but was at the same time a strict disciplinarian, intent on striking a balance between the old comers and the new comers and the original inhabitants of the land, while trying to keep the kingdom in peace as far as possible. It is remarkable that there is not a single campaign undertaken outside the frontiers of the kingdom right through his reign, which shows that he wanted to consolidate the state rather than be aggressive towards others. But internal turmoil cost him all his praiseworthy projects, and, thanks to intense propaganda carried on against him, even his reputation."<sup>11</sup>



It was impossible that such a state of things could continue for long. After a short reign of three years and six months, this monster of cruelty died, some say by 'natural disease', but others believe that he was killed by a maid servant while asleep on 4th September, 1461.

### **Nizamuddin (Ahmed Shah-III), the short lived**

On Humayun's death, his son Ahmed, just aged eight years, was escorted to the turquoise throne by Shah Mahibul-lah holding his right hand and Syed Shariff holding his left. The late king had foresight to nominate a council of Regency consisting of Khwaza-i-Jahan Turk, Mailk-ul-Tujjar and Mahmud Gawan with the Dowager queen Makhduma-i-Jahan Nargis Begum having a casting vote.<sup>12</sup> Immediately, on the accession of the new king, Mahmud Gawan was appointed Tarafdar of Bijapur and Khwaza-i-Jahan was appointed Tarafdar of Telangana. The sagacious queen successfully presided over the triumvirate. Dakhnis considered the new government to be headed by Khwaza Jahan and Mahmud Gawan, both Afaquis as detrimental to their future prospects. Moreover, some of the officers, especially appointed to the far-off provinces thought that it was a mere boy who was on the throne and so tried to make things uncomfortable for the Regency.

The 'boy on the throne' was also giving fresh ideas to the neighbouring rulers. The ambitious Kapileshwara of Orissa along with his Padmanayaka advanced to Kaulas, plundered all that came in his way and marched forward to within ten miles of the capital itself. The courageous Dowager Queen allowed her youthful son supported by a large army consisting of infantry, cavalry and elephants to fight the enemy. The boy king, who came face to face with Raja was told that the latter wanted tribute from him. The boy king bravely retorted that it was good that the Raja had taken the trouble to come over and meet him, otherwise the king would have had to take the trouble to go himself to the capital of Orissa, Jajnagar, in order to extract the tribute from the Raya. Fight ensued and Raja and his confederates were routed. They were forced to pay an indemnity of five lakhs of silver tankas.<sup>13</sup>

Kapileshwar retreated but his revengeful fury soared. In 1462, he

joined hands with Malwa and Khandesh rulers and came within 32 miles of Bidar. The youthful boy king too was not lacking in response. He mobilized Bahmani forces and went to battlefield with the armies of Bijapur, Daulatabad and Berar. The forces met at Maheskar near the fortified town Quandhar. Bahmani forces were gaining the upper hand while suddenly a stray arrow hit Sikandar Khan's elephant and the animal turned back and stampeded. As it posed danger to the young Sultan, Sikander got alarmed and removed him from his horse and hurried back to Bidar. On seeing the royal mount bare-backed, there was a great turmoil and the Deccan army turned back with victory snatched away from its grasp. Khwaza-i-Jahan complained to the queen of the great indiscretion of Sikander Khan and had him imprisoned. The latter was supported by Turkish guards, who in turn petitioned to her Majesty that Sikander in fact extricated the young king from a very dangerous position to save his life. The queen was touched by this expression of loyalty but responded that she could not do anything at the moment and had to wait for a better opportunity to punish Khwaza-i-Jahan.<sup>14</sup>

In 1462, Mahmud Khalji, the ruler of Malwa arrived at Bidar and having taken to possession of the city, laid siege to its citadel. At this crucial juncture, the sagacious queen and Mahmud Gawan took a bold decision and invited Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat, one of the greatest rulers of western India to help them against the intruder. The help did arrive from Gujarat and the combined forces routed Khalji. He could not retreat as the communication lines were cut off by Mahmud Gawan. The desperate Khalji, set fire to his heavy baggage and sought his way through Gondwana, Ellichpur and Akkalakot. On his way, as many as five to six thousand of his men died of heat and lack of water while the rest was robbed by the Gonds. The Malwa king arrived back to his capital with a decimated army. After the Khalji's ignominious retreat, Ahmad-III wrote a letter of thanks to the king of Gujarat for all his kindness and coming to the aid of Deccan.<sup>15</sup>

In 1463, Mahmud Khalji arrived again in the Deccan with a huge army of nearly 90,000 horsemen. Gujarat help was again sought

**On the night of the consummation, the young king, who had begun life with so much promise, suddenly died...**



and received. Originally, the Sultan of Malwa had some initial advantage but ultimately, he had to relinquish the siege of Bidar which had been gallantly defended by the Queen Mother and the young Sultan. In April 1463, the Khalji retracted his steps back home. The invasion over, young Sultan's marriage was celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing. It however, turned into mourning, for on the night of the consummation, the young King, who had begun life with so much promise, suddenly died. On 30th July, 1463, he was succeeded by his younger brother, Mohammad Khan as Shamsuddin Muhammad Shah.

## **2.2 THE GLORY, CLIMAX AND CATASTROPHE**

Shamsuddin was between nine and ten when he succeeded his brother. Likewise, he too was escorted to the turquoise throne by the nobles and two divines. The wise queen had appointed an eminent teacher of the times and under his guidance, the new boy king became the most accomplished, to start with.

Around those times, Khwaza-i-Jahan began to alienate a powerful section of nobility by his high-handed actions. He managed to send away Mahmud Gawan to frontier provinces. The Queen was able to smell the vacuum and was waiting for an opportunity to do justice to Sikandar, whose imprisonment was advised by Khwaza-i-Jahan. One fine morning in 1466, the latter was surprised to see a detachment of armed troops intercepting him while he was going to pay his respects to the king in the throne room. As he entered, the two maid servants emerged from the zenana quarters, gave the signal and the Khwaza-i-Jahan was dragged and murdered in the boy King's presence. The triumvirate, having lasted for five years fell apart. At this juncture, Mahmud Gawan had no one to equal him in courage, intelligence and diplomacy. He was bound to play a stellar role under the sagacious guidance of queen mother to take the kingdom to glorious heights.

In 1466, Muhammad Shah-III, then in his fourteenth year was married with usual pomp and gaiety. The sagacious Dowager

Queen Makhduma-i-Jahan decided to retire from active politics and the stage was set for the investiture of Mahmud Gawan as the Chief Minister. A ceremonious Darbar was held and the youthful king delivered an address to all those who had gathered there.

He said,

”It should be known that both religious and worldly affairs require the help of advisory councils, and the laws on which the organisation of every state or country is based need great thought and circumspection. Thus, it is necessary that care should be taken to acquire the opinion of the wise in matters pertaining to the affairs of government. For God Almighty him-self ordered the Apostle of Islam (Peace be upon him and his descendants!) that he should take counsel in worldly affairs. The Apostle laid down that counsel was like a fortress against repentance and a refuge from reproach, and the Caliph ‘Ali has said: The best of ministers is counsel and worst of powers is self-will.’ The purport of all this is that it is best to act upon the advice of a wise minister, for his opinion would be like a mirror of truth and honesty. The philosophers of old have said that kings and successful leaders should not interfere with the policy of state without the advice of wise elders.<sup>16</sup>

The address being over, the king with the consent of Dowager Queen made Mahmud Gawan almost omnipotent. He was addressed as ‘Lord of the habitors of the Globe, Secretary of the royal mansion, Deputy of the Realm’ with two thousand Afaqui troops as his bodyguard.

As if driven by destiny, the Sultan on arriving at maturity, resolved upon conquest. In 1467, he sent Nizam-ul-Mulk to Berar as the Governor, who secured border with Malwa. Malwa’s conflict with Deccan had revived the old diplomacy of allying the Deccan with Gujarat. When arms failed to achieve a lasting peace, a treaty was drawn up by which Kherla was handed over to Malwa and Berar allotted to the Deccan. ‘The past quarrels were buried and envoys exchanged ‘...in order that the rules of friendship might serve as foundation of love which should henceforth shine like a glittering and a highly ornamental palace.’<sup>17</sup> This strategic treaty between the

**This strategic treaty between the Deccan and Malwa were the direct outcome of the policy of Mahmud Gawan**



Deccan and Malwa were the direct outcome of the policy of Mahmud Gawan as it lasted till the end of the Bahmani state, for the feud was never resumed.

In 1471, the Raja of Orissa, which included Rajahmundry, Godavari, Ganjam and Vizagapattam districts applied to the Sultan for assistance against usurper of the throne.

The Sultan was too glad to interfere there. In fact, the plot started unfolding after the death of Kapileshwar of Orissa. His throne was usurped by a Brahman Mangala

Rai who expelled Hamvira, the rightful heir. The latter petitioned to Bahmani Sultan to help him in regaining his patrimony. It was the same Hamvira who had forced the Bahmani army to raise its siege of Dewarkonda fort. On receiving the petition from such a formidable rightful warrior, a council of war was held and Malik Hassan Basri volunteered to lead the expedition. He certainly expelled Mangala Rai the usurper and restored the throne to Hamvira. Not content with this, he at the Sultan's instance went and conquered Rajahmundry and the erstwhile seat of Reddis, the great fort of Kondavidu. On his victorious return back to Bidar, he was received by the Sultan with great reverence, granted a robe of honour and at the instance of the Dowager Queen and Mahmud Gawan, made Sarlashkar of Telangana with the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk<sup>18</sup>

With the consolidation of northern and eastern frontiers, it was now the turn of the western coastline to be brought under control. It was achieved in phases, the first campaign taken by the Sultan himself reduced Hubli after a siege. A handsome booty was taken from the local chiefs who were forced to pay tribute to the Bahmani state.

In the beginning of 1469-70, Mohammad Shah expressed a desire that Konkan should be effectively subdued so that peace and plenty, rather than uneasiness and restlessness should be the order of the day. Mahmud Gawan was given the command and he proceeded to Kolhapur and made this city as his headquarters. Rayas of Vijayanagara, when they heard the arrival of Bahmanis closed the ghats which were their natural gateway. Mahmud Gawan found the ground covered with thick jungles. He ordered his men to cut it

down and burn the woods. The enemy resorted to guerrilla warfare giving ‘fifty battles to Mahmud Gawan troops.’<sup>19</sup> As heavy rains set in, Mahmud Gawan retired to his headquarters at Kolhapur.’

When rains subsided, Mahmud Gawan renewed his campaign. He marched to the fort of Raingha. (Is it Raigarh?) Rather than capture it with great carnage, purse strings were opened for the leaders of the opposing forces. They were offered “Frankish cloth, belts, studded with jewels, palanquins, Arab steeds and arms of the most exquisite pattern.”<sup>20</sup> On 19th July, 1470, the fort was surrendered with a slight bloodshed after the payment of the indemnity of twelve lakhs in cash and kind. From Raingha, he moved on to the fort of Machal”, the largest fort in the neighbourhood which was attacked in full force and battlements pigeonholes and bastions of the sky-scraping eminence were all reduced and every one of the surviving defenders was taken as prisoner of war.

In spite of rapid movement of Bahmani army, Jakhauri of Sangameshwar was not to give in without a struggle. Khaja Mahmud Gawan’s progress was checked and he wrote to Bidar for further reinforcements. His protracted absence provided enough oxygen to his opponents who began to undermine him in two ways. Firstly, they withheld the reinforcements from reaching the Konkan and further they began to poison the mind of the king himself. Mahmud Gawan was quite aware of all these conspiracies against him in the capital while he was fighting Jakhauri of Sangameshwar and his associates to ensure that, “The travellers by land and sea should be free from the fear of marauders and pirates.”<sup>21</sup> He pressed on till the gates of Sangameshwar were opened to the Khwaza and his army on 14th December, 1471.

Goa was the next target of Mahmud Gawan. He described it as “the envy of the islands and parts of India and famed for its fine climate, its coconuts and betel nuts and as its springs, canals and plenty of sugarcane and betel leaf”. He continued that, “owing to the abundance of its trees and springs, it is like the mirror of the grove of the Geri and a copy of the cistern of plenty.” The Khwaza sent 120 boats by sea apart from the land forces, which consisted

of the tigers of Arabia and the lions of Persia. When the Bahmani army arrived, there was hardly any attempt to defend the city. It was captured and annexed to the kingdom on 1st February, 1472.

On 10th April, 1472, Khwaza began his return journey. After leaving a strong garrison at Goa, he reached the capital on 19th May, 1472. He had been away on his western campaign for almost three years. He was received by his royal master with great joy who sent ten of his ministers to receive him. Cattle drums were ordered to be beaten for a whole week during which, the king honoured him by being his guest and giving him a suit of his own robes. Not to be outdone, the Dowager Queen addressed him as her brother and did him the unique honour of actually appearing before him unveiled.<sup>22</sup> His already profuse titles were further enlarged by the addition of 'Lord of the Benign Council, great leader and Lord, wielder of the pen and the sword', and the parts and forts of Goa, Londa and Kolhapur were added to his jurisdiction.

After the king departed from his mansion, the Khwaza retired and praised the almighty for all his kindness, wept, put on the robes of dervish and distributed clothes, eatables, jewels etc, to Syeds' of Bidar. On being asked as to why he was so lavishly giving away his

**He dressed simply and always spent his leisure hour in mosques or in the great Madarasa in Bidar**



wealth and why he was crying when he ought to be happy at such great honours being showered upon him. He replied that he was doing it in order to shake off all sense of pride, temptation and other evil passions, which had been endangered. During the rest of his life, he dressed simply and always spent his leisure hour in mosques or in the great Madarasa in Bidar, which he had founded. On Fridays, he would go out disguised to different wards of the capital distributing alms to the needy and the lowly. He never forgot to tell them that alms were on behalf of the king and it was for the Majesty's long life and prosperity that they should all pray.

It was a glorious phase of the Khwaza's honour and greatness. He was supreme in the kingdom. So was the glory of Bahmanis in this part of the country.

## **The climax and catastrophe**

In 1472, Yousuf Adil Khan was appointed as governor of Maharashtra, with its centre at Daulatabad. The new appointee was to show his mettle soon. Maratha Chiefs had occupied some of the north western territories during the war with Malwa. The Sultan ordered Yousuf Adil to proceed against these intruders. He achieved victory and returned to the capital laden with booty, jewels, money and elephants. The king received him in a royal manner and ordered that Khwaza should entertain Yousuf for a whole week on his behalf, after which the king went to stay with the Khwaza himself. The king allowed so many liberties to Yousuf in his own presence that scions of old aristocracy became jealous of him. It led to further rupture between the Afaquis and the Dakhnis.

In 1473, the king led his troops to subdue recalcitrants around Goa country. Belgaum and Bankapur chiefs at the instigation of Vijayanagara rulers were about to raise an insurrection by blockading Goa. On reaching Belgaum, the royal army found that the fort was one of the strongest in the neighbourhood and was built on a rock cut perpendicularly from the bottom to the top and surrounded by a deep ditch full of water. The sustained onslaught of canon fire breached the fort walls. King himself led an assault gaining the ramparts of the fort. The fort was reduced and given to Mahmud Gawan as a Jagir. The overwhelmed Khwaza petitioned to the king to assume the title of 'Lashkari' or 'Warrior' in commemoration of the great success he had personally achieved. It is with this title that the king is remembered in history.

The victorious army on its return was stricken with grief over the death of the Dowager Queen Makhduma-i-Jahan who had accompanied her son in this arduous campaign. The king was naturally very upset but Khwaza was devastated. He lost his patron and helpmate. He wrote to his brother at Mecca stating that the Queen's death was a personal loss to him. He wrote,

“Over and above the excess of weakness naturally due to age, the terrible calamity of the passing away of His Majesty's mother and the increasing burdens of government have told on me and it is



difficult for me to keep the mark of obedience and acceptance on the neck of strength and ability still. I feel a duty and like the payment of a long-standing debt to put the ball of my heart on the field of the homage I owe to his Majesty's person.”<sup>23</sup>

Her death left a gap in the body politic of the land. She was revered by young and old, Hindu and Muslims, for her kindness

**The Queen's departure followed by severe famine was quite an inauspicious combination**



and charitable demeanour. On her way back to her capital, the Sultan broke his journey at Kalaburg near Bijapur. He intended to stay there during the rainy season but was confronted by a severe drought, what came to be known as Bijapur famine in history. The Queen's departure followed by severe famine was quite an inauspicious combination. He therefore hurried back to the capital.

Bijapur famine, lasting for two years from 1473 to 1474 CE, emaciated the people and impacted the treasury of Bahamanis state. In 1475 CE, news came from Eastern regions that rebels have murdered the Governor and invited Hamvira Rai to lead them. Hamvira entered in a confederacy with Purushothama, the ruler of Orissa and also included the chiefs of the country around Jaj Nagar. Bahamani forces, under Mahmud Gawan marched up to Rajahmundry. Hamvira withdrew. Sultan marched in pursuit of Purushothama who laid down his arms and sued for peace, which was granted to him. Peace, however, did not last for long. In the year 1478 CE, Sultan had to lead another expedition in to the very heart of Orissa.

A graphic description by Ferishta needs to be read in full:

“Mahomed Shah now sat down before Condapilly and Bhim Raj, after six months, being much distressed, sued for pardon; which being granted, at the intercession of some of the nobility, he surrendered the fort and town to the royal troops. The King having gone to view the fort, broke down an idolatrous temple, and killed some bramins, who officiated at it, which his own hands, as a point of religion. He then gave orders for a mosque to be erected on the foundation of the temple, and ascending a pulpit, repeated a few prayers, distributed alms,

and commanded the Khootba to be read in his name. Khwaja Mahmood Gawan now represented, that as his Majesty had slain some infidels with his own hands, he might fairly assume the title of Ghazy, an appellation of which he was very proud. Mahmood Shah was the first of his race who had slain a brahmin.”<sup>24</sup>

**Mahmood Shah was the first of his race who had slain a brahmin**



It was not long afterwards, that Eastern provinces rose in revolt, yet again. Army unit in Kondaveedu revolted and put themselves under the protection of Sulva Narsimha, who was the virtual ruler of Vijayanagar and held almost an undivided sway over the eastern coast of Peninsula, south of Krishna. Sultan moved in December 1480 CE, pitched his tent at the base of the citadel of Kondaveedu and ordered its seize. Narasimha fled towards Nellore, the Sultan pursued him. Narasimha surrendered. While at Nellore, the king heard that there was a great store of riches at Kanchi.

Ferishta’s description is quite apt.

“...he was informed by the country people, that at the distance of ten days’ journey was the temple of Kunchy the walls and roof of which were covered with plates of gold, and ornamented with precious stones, but that no Mahomedan monarch had as yet seen it, or even heard of its name. Mahomed Shah, accordingly, selected six thousand of his best cavalries, and leaving the rest of his army at Condapilly, proceeded by forced marches to Kunchy... Swarms of people, like bees, now issued from within, and ranged themselves under the walls to defend it. At length, the rest of the King’s force coming up, the temple was attacked and carried by storm, with great slaughter. An immense booty fell to the share of the victors, who took away nothing but gold, jewels, and silver, which were abundant.”<sup>25</sup>

This happened on 12th March 1481. As this was the southernmost point reached by Bahamanis, special importance was attached to the event and Firmans were issued to all parts of the realm making this known as the greatest achievement of the Ghazi sultan. On his way home, the king halted at Kondapalli, reducing Masulipatnam on the way.

During this campaign, Khwaza had remained at Nellore while Yousuf Adil, had gone southward along with the Sultan. A conspiracy was being hatched at Kondapalli by Dakhni and Habshi commanders, both of whom were promoted by Khwaza but were now in deadly enmity with him. The administrative and military reforms brought in by Mahmud Gawan had already alienated very many new appointees.

A forged letter purporting to have been written from the Khwaza to Purushottam of Orissa inviting him to invade the Deccan was concocted and Mahmud Gawan's seal, which was in the custody of a Habshi was got affixed by bribing him profusely apart from intoxicating him. The gist of the letter was as follows:

“Although I have been brought up on the salt of my royal master, still if you swear over all that you hold sacred according to your own religious belief, that you would agree to partition the Deccan between you and myself, I would promise to help you to the best of my ability. As all authority, financial and civil, rests with me and I have full control over matters of policy as well as those relating to the army, you can well understand that there is nothing which is outside my purview and I can do what I like in order to fulfil our joint purpose.”<sup>26</sup> When the forged letter was produced before the King, he was full of indignation and felt that the reports which had been dinned into his ears so long were corroborated by this letter bearing Gawan's seal. He made up his mind to do away with the Khwaza and summoned him immediately. Some of Gawan's friends got the inkling of Sultan's mind and begged Khwaza at least to avoid going in royal presence that day. The loyal Khwaza insisted on honouring the royal summons saying that his beard had grown grey in the service of his majesty's father, the late Humayun Shah and it was well that it should be coloured red in the reign of his present master. Some of the friends even suggested that he should fly away to Gujarat border where he was sure to be well received. He retorted that he was no criminal and his conscience was perfectly clear that he had done nothing wrong either against the king or against the adopted country and therefore, there was no reason for him to fly away.

Khwaza Gawan in all his humility but dignity intact, appeared before the Sultan. The fake letter was shown and he exclaimed, ‘O God, this is a great forgery. The seal is mine, but not the letter, of which I have no knowledge.’<sup>27</sup> The Sultan, intoxicated with wine ordered Jahir, a Habshi (Abyssinian) to put the minister to death on the spot. Khwaja Gawan addressed the Sultan and said, “The death of an old man like me is of little moment to myself, but to you, it will prove the ruin of an empire, and of your own glory.”<sup>28</sup> The Sultan without attending to his words retired to his harem. The slave drew his sabre and advanced towards Khwaja, who then knelt down, faced the kiblah, said his last prayer and resigned his soul to the divine mercy. At the time of his death, Khwaja Gawan was 78 years old.

**‘Death of an old man like me is of little moment to me but to you, it will prove the ruin of an empire & your own glory’**



## 2.3 THE DYNASTY COLLAPSES

The well-wishers who had advised Gawan to fly away to Gujarat were forthwith executed. More than this, King gave permission to all and sundry, to plunder the late minister’s private property. Thinking that there must be plenty of money in Gawan’s coffers, Sultan summoned his personal treasurer. On his knees, he replied that the Khwaza possessed two distinct treasuries, the ‘treasury of the king’ and the ‘treasury of the poor.’ The former contained royal horses, elephants and the wherewithal for them as well as for the guards, while the treasury of the poor, which was Khwaza’s personal property contained but three hundred lauries. He told the sovereign that Khwaza always deducted the amount needed for upkeep of forces under him from the income of the Jagir and send it to the ‘treasury of the king’ for disbursement, spending what was left to the deserving poor, never a lauries to himself.<sup>29</sup>

Muhammad was greatly touched at this manifest proof of the Khwaza’s integrity and turned to the members of the opposite faction. They now suggested that the bulk of the treasure belonging to the dead man must be at Bidar. On enquiry, it was found that all that Khwaza possessed was kept with him and there was nothing of any value belonging to him at the capital.

The treasurer, loyal to his departed mentor now begged the sultan to make enquires whether Mahmud Gawan was such a traitor and ascertain who had carried the seditious letter to the Purushottam of Orissa. The king asked the Khwaza's accusers to produce the man who had conveyed the letter, which of course, they could not. The Sultan went into the zenana and related the whole story to his elder sister Hamida Sultan. The Sultan had pangs of remorse for what he has done.<sup>30</sup>

In due course of time, Sultan arrived at Bidar. He dreamt that he saw the Khwaza's mother begging the Apostle of Islam to punish him for the murder of his innocent son. The Apostle, in turn ordered Sultan's immediate execution. He woke up in a terrified state and knew that his days were numbered. He drowned his anxieties in excessive drink and immoderate habits. He died exactly one lunar year after the murder of Mahmud Gawan on 27th March, 1482 at a rather young age of twenty-nine years. The date of his death, says Ferishta is comprised in the following verses.<sup>31</sup>



*Mohammed Shah*

The King of Kings, Sultan Mohammed, when suddenly he plunged into the ocean of death, as Deccan became waste by his departure. "The ruin of Deccan was the date of his death." This was perhaps foreshadowed by the departure of the noble mother, the Deccan famine, desecration of Kondapalli temple, killing of innocent

Brahmins and finally putting his most trusted, faithful, innocent and an honest minister old Khwaja Gawan to death.

In 1482, yet another child Shihab-ud-Din Mahmood ascended the throne and his reign dragged on for more than a quarter of a century. However, the state gradually weakened and with centrifugal forces operating in several directions, it eventually split in five successor kingdoms. It would be appropriate to have a look at the important events at the centre in Bidar and the kingdom of Golconda, which emerged out from the collapse of Bahmanis.

Mahmood was crowned when he was twelve years of age with the usual escort leading him to the turquoise throne and the two divines praying for his long life and prosperity. Those nobles who were present saluted the boy king and those who were absent were informed that enthronement ceremony would be re-enacted, as and when they arrived at Bidar.

The end of Mahmud Gawan was brought about during a campaign in Telengana. In a strange coincidence, the seeds of conspiracy which ended the life of his arch enemy Nizam-ul-Mulk were also sown in the same Telengana. In 1486, the Governor of Warangal died. The Rajahmundry ruler marched and took possession of the Warangal and the whole of Telengana. Nizam-ul-Mulk marched against the new ruler and forced him to retire. The former's absence gave ideas to his enemies, who got a royal firman issued that the minister be done to death. Nizam-ul-Mulk rushed back to capital when he got the wind of the conspiracy against his life itself. He sent a word to his friends and relations to arrive with their army while he himself got hold of as much of wealth as possible out of the royal treasury. But the nemesis overtook Nizam-ul-Mulk when his own friend Dilpasand strangled him and cutting off the old man's head and presented it to the king.

The king was greatly pleased at the turn of events and he considered the murder of Nizam-ul-Mulk as an act of deliverance. He began to indulge in wine, women and song and spent so much of money on his luxuries that he had to extract many jewels from the turquoise throne, to fix them on to his wine decanter and cup. He now appeared

to have turned entirely towards the Afaqui group and married his two sisters in the family of an Afaqui noble, Shah Habibullah.

The reaction from Dakhnis, who now allied with the Habashis was conspiratorial and brutal. On 8th November, 1487, they entered the fort, locked it from inside and forced themselves to the king's presence. The king, of course was busy in drinking bouts with his friends and a host of pretty girls. The king's attendants came in the way and they were forthwith done to death. He had to fly and a free fight ensued between the Dakhnis and the rebels. As the news of rebellion spread in the town, the King's partisans jumped in the fray and defeated the rebels in hand-to-hand fight. The city itself was the scene of terrible carnage which lasted till morning i.e., about 6 am. When the king got the situation in his grasp, he ordered that Dakhni's should be killed wherever found and their property sequestered. It was said that the massacre went on for three days and stopped only at the intermission of an Afaqui noble.<sup>32</sup>

The Sultan was mighty pleased, at his own miraculous escape and ordered rejoicing, which went on for forty days. The population too, taken up by the revelry and drinking begun to indulge in excessive pleasure resulting in an almost unprecedented looseness of morals and self-control.<sup>33</sup> As authority slipped out of Sultan's hands, he became a tool in the hands of his minister, a Turkish slave named Qasim Barid. In 1492, Qasim Barid got himself appointed Wakil or Prime Minister of the Kingdom and Sultan conferred on him certain fiefs. Not satisfied with them, he proceeded to subdue other forts on his own accord. When Sultan heard this, he sent Dilawar Khan with a large army against Qasim Barid, Dilawar pursued and almost at the verge of victory was killed by a mad elephant. Barid entered Bidar in triumph and made the King reappoint him as Prime Minister again.

Fired by the boundless ambition, Barid attempted what no one in Bahmani Kingdom ever could dream. He invited the Raya of Vijayanagara to occupy the Doab territory possessing coveted cities of Raichur and Mudgal. The Vijayanagara forces arrived and occupied the two key towns forcing Yousuf Adil to accept

the loss. He turned his revenge upon Qasim Barid and with some strategic alliances, routed him and pushed him back to the capital. In 1493, Yousuf Adil fought a pitched battle with Vijayanagara and reoccupied Raichur and Mudgal. These towns were taken in the name of Bahmani Sultan, as Yousuf Adil sent costly presents including dresses made of cloth of gold and four horses with shoes made of gold and saddles studded with the same metal to the Sultan of Bidar. He retired to Bijapur and had the Khutba read in his own name. He was to found the Adil Shahi dynasty.

Malik Ahmad, the Governor of Daulatabad soon followed him. He founded the dynasty of Nizam Shahi with its capital at Ahmadnagar. In Berar, Imad-ul-Mulk proclaimed his independence and read the khutba in his own name at capital Burhanpur. This laid the foundation of Imad Shahi. And finally, the Qutb-ul-Mulk, the Governor of Golconda and Telengana country became virtually independent in 1491. In his own political interest, he never severed relation with Sultan Mahmood. But in 1510, he too proclaimed himself Sultan and founded the Qutb Shahi dynasty.

Thus, at the close of fifteenth century, we find five Mohammeden kingdoms in Deccan having divided amongst themselves the erstwhile territories of Bahmani. The House of Bahmani had ruled this vast territory as a unified Kingdom for almost one and a half century without break. Their tombs, ten in all, were built together on large oblong platforms. They consist of huge square buildings surrounded by domes similar to those at Golconda. The largest of them is that of Ahmad Shah, who shifted the capital to Bidar in 1432. He built this mausoleum, upon which is inscribed in Persian the following couplet:

*“Should my heart ache, my remedy is this,  
A cup of wine and then I sup of bliss.”*

### **Gawan, the golden premier**

The premiership of Khwaja Mahmud Gawan, as the man of sword, saw the Bahmani state attain a high unequalled in the whole of its history. The frontiers of the kingdom were made secure by the effective occupation of the Konkan territory as far south as Goa.



And the annexation of Godavari-Krishna territories in the east, while expeditions were led to the very heart of Orissa and the Coromandel Coast as far as Kanchi. For the first time, the frontiers of the Bahmani realm extended from sea to sea and the term of the Khwaja's office saw the annihilation of the ambitions of Malwa, Orissa and Vijayanagara for some time to come.<sup>34</sup>

Gawan's administrative reforms were no less dazzling. It weakened the power of the provincial Governors, who had often intrigued against him and frequently rebelled. Eight provinces were carved out of the existing four districts, and certain areas in each of them were placed directly under the central administration, while their revenue was reserved for the state. The Governors were allowed personal control over only one fortress in their territory; the remaining forts in their lands were surrendered to the commanders appointed by the central government. All the military commanders were paid partly in cash and partly by iqta assignments. Iqta holders were directly accountable to the Sultan for revenue receipts and the payment of salaries to their levies. The land was measured, and revenue records were reorganised.



*Khwaja Mahmud Gawan*

The administration of Mahmud Gawan had no parallel in the history of the Bahmani dynasty. He devoted himself completely to the service of the State. No department escaped his attention. He organized the finances, improved the administration of justice, encouraged public education, instituted a survey of village lands to make the State revenue demand just and equitable, and put down corrupt practices. Those guilty of misappropriating peculation were called to account. The army was reformed. Better discipline was enforced and the prospects of the soldiers were improved. In justice, penetration and profundity of reflection, Mahmud Gawan was the most accomplished man of his age.

**In justice,  
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age**



Gawan's legacy, as the man of letters, was no less profound. The versatility and literary aptitude of Mahmud Gawan as well as his love for learning brought the Deccan in close cultural contact with the outside world. The tradition of learning and welcoming the learned from foreign lands had been in existence from Gulbarga days due to the policy of Firoz. His successors, especially Mahmud Gawan intensified these contacts more than ever before. He himself was a scholar of some merit, and by his great treasure of vocabulary, wit and knowledge, he was recognized as one of the most prominent Persian writers of the period. By the power of his pen, he left no stone unturned to make the Deccan known in other countries, and the collection of his letters, the Royazu 'I' Insha, testifies to his sincerity and eagerness in this field.

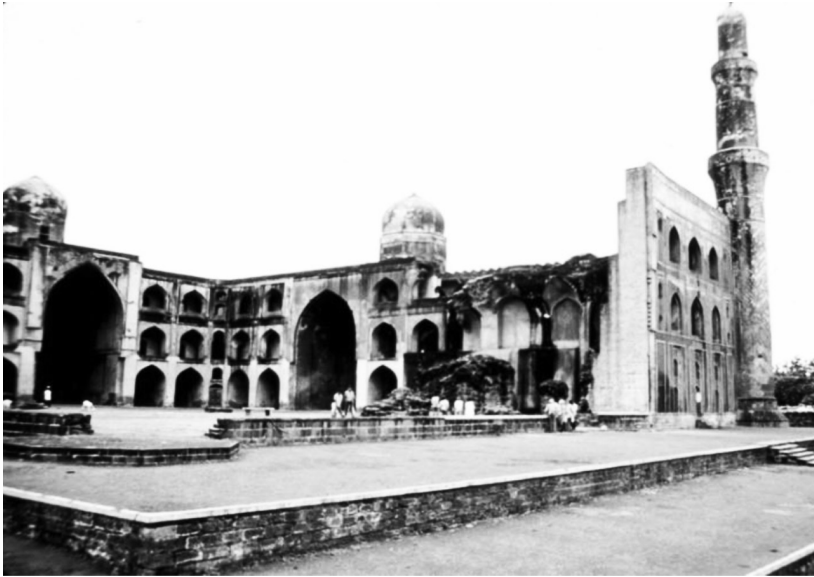
Khwaza was in constant communication with men of letters to keep them informed about the progress of Bahmani arms. There were liberal provisions for the Ulema of Turkey and Iran. Mahmud Gawan was also in constant communication with the renowned in the field of Islamic politics. He was also in communication with Muhammad-II, the conqueror of Constantinople, where homage was paid to the great Sultan as Khalifa of Islam. There was an attempt to build a relationship between the lands of Deccan and Turkey on a firm foundation. What was perhaps even more remarkable was

the arrival of an accredited envoy of Muhammad-II, the conqueror carrying the letter from the Ottoman Sultan to his namesake king in the Deccan. Mahmud Gawan was also in touch with the Sultans of Gilan, Iraq and Egypt as well as the rulers and ministers of Gujarat, Jaunpur and Malwa. In all these communications, Mahmud Gawan as a matter of rule extolled the great might or learning of his adopted country or the dynasty which he deemed as an honour to serve. The learned leaders too reciprocated the gesture and compared his presence in the Deccan land as the 'Envy of Rum itself.'

Apart from building forts, such as that of Parenda, the noble premier is remembered for that noble building, the great college at Bidar. The front of the building, luxuriously adored, with minarets rising to a height of 100 feet rising to three stories in a most imposing position. It has a plan of 205 x 180 feet with excellent arrangements of light and air.

This great seat of learning was surrounded by a huge courtyard with a thousand cubicles where learned men and teachers of renown congregated from all parts of the east, while students were provided not only with intellectual fare, but also with food and clothes free of cost. Such a foundation could not be without an adequate library which was no doubt its central feature, for we read that no one could give a more acceptable present to Mahmud Gawan than a manuscript, and every manuscript which was so presented, forthwith found a place in the library of the Madrasa.<sup>35</sup> In 1472 CE, the great Madarasa was completed. An inscription still adorns its front wall 'to invite everyone to come and partake in the intellectual fare provided therein.'

Mahmud Gawan himself was frequently seen in the corridors of the college in his spare house. He was eager to get the best among the learned of Iran and Iraq to come and lecture at Muhammadabad-Bidar. In fact, he left no stone unturned to get such giants of contemporary learnings as Maulana Nur-ud-Din Jami, the great Persian scholar Jalal-ud-Din Dawani, Shaikh Sadr-ud-Din Abdu'r-Rahman Rawasi and others to come to the Deccan.<sup>36</sup>



*Khwaja Mahmud Gawan Madrasa-front view*



*Madrasa – side view*

As the name and fame of Bahmani went beyond Indian borders, the Russian traveller Athansius Nikitin came in 1469 and stayed for five years till 1474. He said that, it was the chief town of the whole of Muhammadan Hindustan.’ The city was about 15 miles long and as much broad and contained many inhabitants. The trade abounded in horses, cloth, silk, pepper and many other merchandises. A special stress was laid upon the principle that none but the articles

produced in the country should be sold in the bazars of Bidar. The kingdom was a rendezvous for the whole of India. People from all parts of India assembled and traded for ten days and as many as 20,000 horses were brought there. At Dabul, which was a very large town, many horses were brought from Mysore, Arabia, Khurasan, Turkistan and other places and a profitable trade was carried on by sea with Indian and African seaports.

The Russian traveller could also observe poverty. He said, "All this must have increased the wealth of the land and although the country people were poor, the nobles were extremely opulent."

They are wont to be carried on their silver beds (no doubt, meaning palanquins), preceded by twenty charges caparisoned in gold and followed by three hundred men on horseback and five hundred on foot along with ten torch-bearers and ten musicians. "The Sultan lived in the fort palace at Bidar each of the gates of which were guarded by one hundred armed men and there were in addition a hundred scribes who wrote down the names of all those who entered or left the precincts. Nikitin says that the palace was most wonderful to behold for everything there was carved or gilded or otherwise ornamented. Evidently the fort also contained the court of justice. He remarks in particular that great care was taken for the safety of the inhabitants of the capital, for the city was guarded at night by a thousand horsemen fully clad in armour and with lanterns in their hands."<sup>37</sup>

The traveller had the privilege of seeing Sultan himself. He said, "He was a young man of twenty, of a low stature, and was fond of hunting expeditions to which he went accompanied by the Queen and the Queen-mother in full state on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On the Eid day he saw him riding on a golden saddle, in an embroidered dress studded with sapphires and with a large diamond glittering on his pointed headdress probably a Turkish Kulah. The armour he was wearing on this occasion was of gold studded with sapphires and he carried three swords mounted in gold. In front of the cavalcade ran a man playing on a 'teremetz'

followed by numerous attendants on foot. Sometimes the Sultan was carried in a golden palanquin with a silk canopy and a gold pinnacle drawn by four horses in gilt harness. This was preceded by soldiers armed with drawn swords or sabers, shields, spears, lances and large straight bows.”<sup>38</sup>

About the great Wazir, Mahmud Gawan, he mentioned that, 500 persons sat down to dine with him every day, and he carefully remarks, most of them did not belong to the ‘class of the high and the Mighty’; for there were usually only three ministers among them. In this stable stood two thousand horses, half of which were always saddled and kept in readiness night and day. His mansion was guarded every night by hundred armed men and ten torch-bearers.<sup>39</sup>

Prof HK Sherwani had raised an intriguing question i.e, ‘whether Mahmud Gawan did not himself bring about the downfall of the Kingdom?’ the author alludes to the crack in the foundation of the state itself which the minister consciously left over. The clue is found not in what he did but what he failed to accomplish. The policy of Firoz and Ahmad-I was to encourage the influx of overseas men in Deccan. The weak-minded successor, Alauddin Ahmad-II moved in pendulum of the state first towards the newcomers and then towards the oldcomers, with the resulting massacre of whichever party lost the favour of the king. As a result of this vacillation, Humayun initiated a policy of a balance of power between the two groups but his attempt was nipped in the bud. After Humayun, his sagacious mother queen and with her, Mahmud Gawan continued that policy. Though he spent his political career to provide some balance, the apparent equilibrium went for a toss immediately after his death. Lest we forget, Mahmud Gawan was an Afaqui, an outsider who was murdered by a joint conspiracy between the Dakhanis and Habshis.

After his departure in such a cruel manner, there was no one in the Kingdom who wished to bring any kind of balance or equilibrium. To bridge the yawning gap, what was needed was yet another

Mahmud Gawan, who might have stemmed the tide of egoism, intrigue and disorder. But as no such man of faith and integrity was in sight or was forthcoming, the kingdom fell by the first blast of adverse wind like a house of cards.

According to Prof Sherwani, Mohammad's reign was one of the tragedies in the history of the Deccan. It saw the greatest triumph of Khwaja i Jahan Mahmud Gawan, and so long as this minister had control over the affairs of the Kingdom, the Bahmani state

**'The unjust  
execution'  
and that too  
'without fault',  
he became  
a martyr, a  
poignant  
yet historical  
truth indeed!**

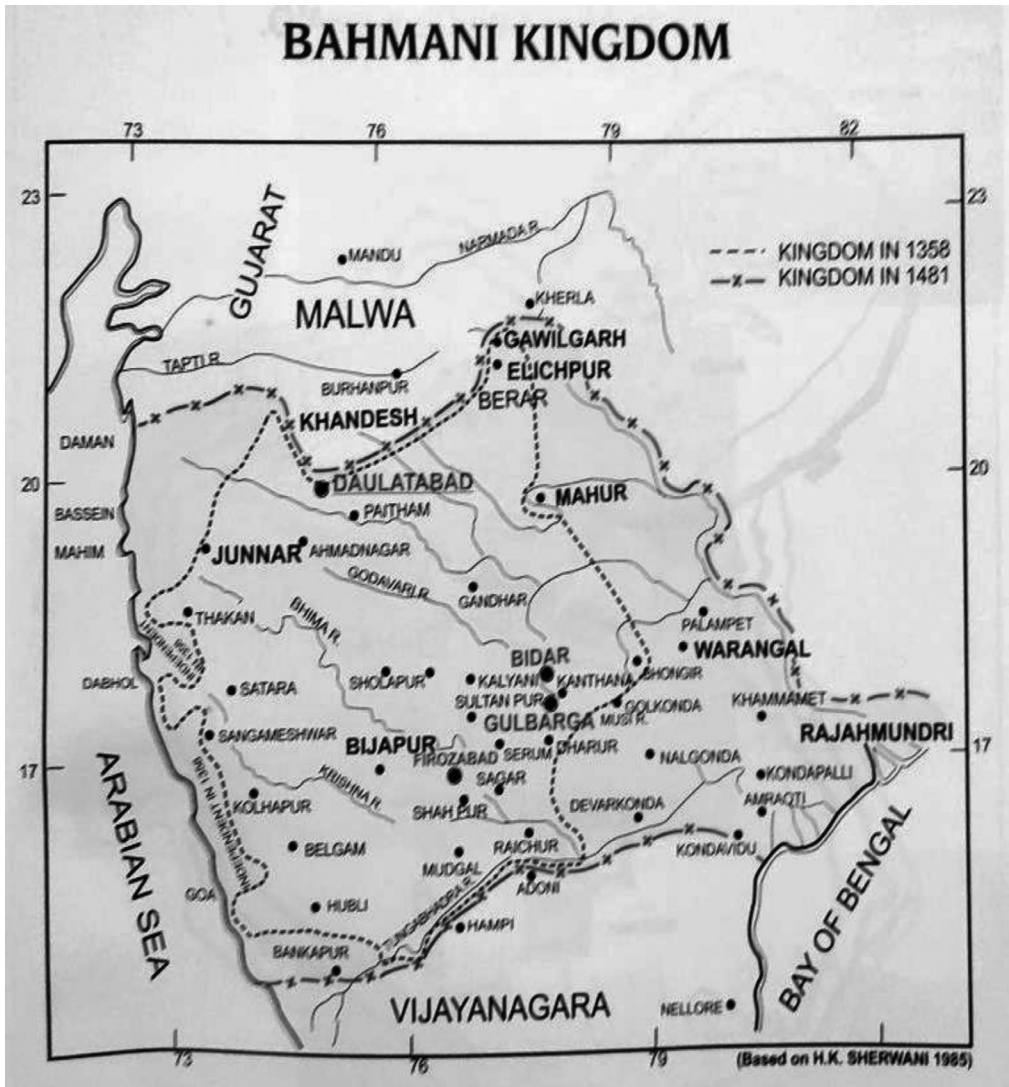


attained heights of prosperity which it had never reached before. But with the death of the Queen, the King's weak temperament was seen in all its gloomy aspects, and the martyrdom of erstwhile preceptor was the result.<sup>40</sup>

The tomb of the faithful minister, Khaja Gawan contains a Persian inscription signifying, 'The unjust execution', and that, 'without fault, he became a martyr', a poignant yet historical truth indeed!

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Map - Bahmani Kingdom in 1358 and 1481 CE



Source - Based on HK Sherwani (1985)



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### 3. The Islamic Fiscal Jurisprudence

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From 1324 CE onwards, after the subjugation of Kakatiyas by the Delhi Sultanate, the present-day Telangana lands came progressively under the political control of the Bahmanis imperium. The present chapter deals with the imposition of the new fiscal architecture upon these lands. The brand-new taxation system based upon Islamic principles was an import from the lands afar. Its evolution over several centuries in those lands needs to be understood before analyzing its impact upon the Telangana lands.

In 629 CE, Hazrat Mohammad, the prophet of Islam had captured a prosperous Jews settlement called Khaybar. The treaty between the victor and the vanquished known as 'The treaty of Khaybar' forms the canonical edifice of Islamic taxation, known as Al-Kharaj. It essentially divides the crop equally in two parts; one for the victors and the other for the vanquished. Yet another concept of Jizyah developed, which was 2.5 percent upon the heads of non-believers. As Islamic dominions expanded, the new crops and animal products were covered under taxation. During Ummayyad's rule (661-750 CE), some additional activities like marriage, houses and currency differentials were taxed. During Abbasid caliphate (750-1258 CE) Kitab-al-Kharaj, a comprehensive document was compiled which streamlined the overall taxation system. The strict implementation of this system coupled with severe punishment for its defiance witnessed copious inflows into the treasury.

As Abbasid power declined, Gaznavids came to rule the north western areas of the Indian subcontinent (the present day, Afghanistan) from 977 CE onwards. By 1206 CE, the Islamic Rule came to occupy Delhi, which marks the beginning of Delhi's sultanate. By 1290 CE, Khiljis came to rule the sultanate. Their taxation system, was based upon the measurements and charges were calculated on the basis of standard yield. The principle of 50% Al-Kharaj remained intact. Additionally, grazing tax was also imposed.

From 1301 to 1347 CE, Delhi sultanate penetrated the Vindyan Mountains and subjugated all the Deccan kingdoms, including Kakatiyas. The system of taxation by the new rulers remained the same. Additionally, fifteen other kinds of taxes covering almost all occupational layers in a village were imposed. There was custom duty also on various articles.

Therefore from 1324 to 1512 CE, the present-day Telangana lands were subjected to Al-Kharaj (50% of the gross produce as state tax) which had evolved over seven centuries with its roots in Arabian lands. In addition, there were other kinds of taxes covering almost all the occupational layers in a village. It would not be an exaggeration to say that taxation system during Islamic rulers transferred almost 50% of rural GDP to the state coffers. There was no tax whatsoever upon the incomes of rulers or any of the state employees.

### 3.1 THE ORIGIN – THE TREATY OF KHAYBAR

Islam means ‘Submission to the will of God’. Muslims believe that God’s message to mankind has been expressed through a series of prophets, culminating in Mohammed, the apostle and prophet of God, that God has spoken through Mohammed and that the Koran (meaning recitation) is the word of God. Mohammed, in their opinion, is the final prophet and no other will come after him.<sup>1</sup>

Mohammed was born in Mecca in about AD 570. The city was the principle commercial centre in the western Arabia and was an important pilgrimage centre because of its shrine, the Ka’aba. Mohammed received his first revelations in about 610 CE and his followers soon grew in numbers. However, the hostility of the merchant aristocracy in Mecca developed into persecution, and Mohammed and his followers withdrew to Medina, some 450 km, due north to Mecca. This migration, Hijra in Arabic, on 6th July, 622 marks the beginning of the Islamic era and the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

The reason behind the Quraysh tribe persecuting the Prophet had an economic dimension too. The Prophet’s promise to his kinsmen to destroy idol worship in the Ka’aba was bound to hurt the lucrative benefit due to pilgrimage. The Quraysh sent

an army, between 900 and 1000 strong. They set out from Mecca with 700 camels and 100 horses and was led by their best nobles. The Muslims, some 300 strong, took position at the well of Badr, blocking the water from the advancing Quraysh. Battle was joined on the 17th day of Ramadan. As he prayed to Allah, the Prophet cried out; 'Oh Allah, if this band of Muslims perish today, then Thou will not be worshipped anymore. Abu Bakr intervened to say that this was enough; the Prophet had prayed to Allah, and Allah would save His believers. Too much entreaty would only annoy Allah, he added. Anxious and tired, the Prophet seemed to faint. Muhammad then slumbered and when he awoke, he was reassured for he had seen Gabriel holding the reign of a horse and leading it. At a critical moment in the battle, a dust storm blew in to the faces of Meccans. Gabriel's horse was galloping in. By mid-day, the battle was over. The Meccans fled. After victory, Muslim soldiers insisted that angels, in white turbans had come to their aid in a battle in which they were out-numbered. The stories of Badr are an integral part of Islamic folk lore. The battle of Badr was fought in 624 CE.<sup>2</sup>

The stories of Badr are an integral part of Islamic folk lore



In Medina, Mohammed organised the Muslims into a community and consolidated his base with the assistance of his Medina hosts. Mohammed returned to Mecca in triumph in 630 CE and cast out the idols from the Ka'aba, transforming it into the focal point of the new religion of Islam. At Mohammed's death in 632 CE, his authority extended over the Hejaz and most of central and Southern Arabia.

### **The Khaybar settlement**

The land of Khaybar, a prosperous township of jews, situated some 250 km, due north-west from Medina, was conquered by the prophet in 729 CE. The prophet had considered the land to constitute spoils and applied to it the Quranic verse on spoils; giving a fifth (Khums) to him and four-fifth for the fighters [*Surat Al Anfal (841)*].

But the process of distribution was halted due to labour being not

available to work on the land, as the Muslims had withdrawn to engage in fighting elsewhere. The Prophet settled the people of Khaybar on their land, provided they spared the Muslims the work; and half of the fruits or half of the crops were for them, whereas the other half was to be distributed according to the Muslim's share. Ibn Shitab al-Zuhri [d. AH 124/747CE] reports: "The Messenger took Khaybar by force [unwatan] after fighting. Thus, it was what Allah had given as booty [afa] to His Messenger. The Messenger divided it into fifth (or five) and distributed it among the Muslims. Some of its people set out to leave after the fighting, so the Prophet called them and said, "If you wish I will hand over this property to you provided that you work on it and its yield be between us and you, I will let you stay as long as Allah lets you stay". So, they did. Therefore, in principle, the general direction was to divide Khaybar, on the consideration of it as ghanimah gained through battle. However, for practical purposes the process of division was halted, and the land given to the Jews for them to farm in exchange for half the produce. This means that the fighters' demand to divide the land conquered by the force transpired from the actual fact, which was the treatment of Khaybar."<sup>3</sup>

The first of Mohammed's successors, the Caliph Abu Bakr (632-634) completed the conquest of Arabia and entered southern Palestine. Abu Bakr died on 23rd August, 634 CE. The next Caliph, Omar Bin Al-Khattab (634-44) advanced to Damascus and followed victory over the Byzantine at the Yarmak river in 636.

### **The Caliphate interpretation**

The Caliphate's view of the conquered lands differed from that of the fighter's and Umar ibn Al Khattab had to deal with this matter before measures for systematisation of taxes could proceed. Fighters demanded that the conquered lands be considered Ghanimah, spoils of war, to be divided among the conquerors, but not other Muslims. They likened their demands to the Prophet's treatment of the land of Khaybar, which had been conquered after a battle in 629 CE.

Habib b.Thabit [d. AH 119/734 CE or AH 122/739 CE] says: "the companions of the Messenger and a group of the Muslims wanted

Umar b.al-Khattab to divide up Syria, just as the Messenger had divided Khaybar. Jarir b. Hazim [d. AH 170/786 CE] reports: “The people in Syria were conquered. Among them was Bilal [b. Rabah]. So, they wrote to Umar that as for the booty [fay] which was obtained, “the fifth [khums] is for you and what is left is for us, there is nothing for anyone else. [This is] just as the Prophet acted at Khaybar]. but Umar said: “No, this is a source of wealth. I will hold it back as common property [fay] to provide for them [the fighters] and the Muslims.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the caliphate did not initially consider unlikely the idea of making the land spoils. However, the opinions and circumstances which emerged after the conquest, in addition to the caliphal inclination towards jihad and desire for the welfare of all the Muslims, brought about a new orientation adopted by the caliphate which demanded that the land be considered as fay and endowed to the general Muslim population. This meant revoking the idea of dividing the land and letting it stay in the hands of its owners, in exchange for the paying of the land tax. Umar “settled the people of the Sawad on their land” and imposed the jizyah on their heads and the kharaj on their land.<sup>5</sup>

**Umar ‘settled the people of the Sawad on their land’ and imposed the jizyah on their heads and kharaj on their land**



The result of this decision was the emergence of a new understanding of the fay, namely that it was the lands conquered by force and because of this new understanding, the lands became fay, endowed for the benefit of all Muslims. The application of the ghanimah was limited to movable property such as gold, silver, weapons and livestock. The narrations report Umar’s statements and his directives to consolidate this decision:

“But I saw that there was nothing left to conquer of the land of Khusrau. Allah has given us their property, land and the peasants [ulu]j] as spoils. So, I have distributed whatever property they acquired as spoils among the deserving, but I have taken out the fifth, and apportioned it properly. I believe that I should keep aside these lands with the peasants and impose on them the kharaj on it [the land], and on the person’s the jizyah which they should

pay. This would be a fay for the Muslims: the fighters and their descendants, and for those [Muslims] who come after them.”<sup>6</sup>

The motives of Umar and his supporters among the senior companions proceeded from the necessity of making available stable resources to the fighters, shoring up the openings into Syria and its garrisons, and guaranteeing the mainland and coastal marches [thughar] spread along the borders of enemy territory [dar al-harb]. The narrations draw attention to this matter through the references to the caliphal viewpoint. Abu Yusuf reports Umar’s statement clarifying the aim of this decision: “Do you see these frontiers? It is necessary they have men to stay close to [defend] them. Have you seen these great cities, like Syria, the Jazirah, Kufah, Basra and Cairo? They must be manned with armies and administrators and their stipend paid. From where would those be given if I were to distribute the land and inhabitants?” In one of his narrations, Abu Yusuf also mentions Umar’s fear that the troops and their sons would be isolated in the Sawad from the other Muslims, with the possibility this would stop the process of the conquests and consequently also halt the sources of funding for the army, and that would have an influence on future regiments. He made that clear by saying: “How [would it be] for those Muslims who will come. They will find that the land with its peasants has been distributed and inherited from the fathers and is owned.” This is in addition to the fear of the troops being preoccupied with agriculture and leaving the fighting: “If you become clustered on the land, you will leave the jihad.”<sup>7</sup>

### **The Battle of Nehawand**

After settling the matter in Damascus, Omar advanced east into Mesopotamia. The battle of Nehawand was fought in 642 CE. During discussions as to how many troops were required for the battle of Nehawand against the Persians, Ali told the caliph Omar, “Oh! Chief of believers! This matter cannot become victory or defeat because of a greater and smaller number. It is Allah’s religion which He made superior, and His troops which He had honoured and supported till they have reached where they have reached. We

have been promised victory by Allah, and Allah fulfils his promise.” The prophecy proved right. In the battle of Nehawand, the mighty Zoroastrian army was defeated by Muslim faithfuls under the command of Umar. The Muslim chronicles describe it as the ‘Victory of victories.’

**We have been promised victory by Allah and Allah fulfils his promise**



By 643 CE, Persia had been over run. After the battle of Nehawand, situation in Sawad settled. The Victorian Caliph Umar ibn Al Khattab assigned to two officials the cadastral survey (misahah) of the Sawad, “So they both surveyed the land of the Sawad and imposed the Kharaj on its inhabitants.”<sup>8</sup>

Wheat and barley were the most widespread crops. Kharaj was imposed upon them. Later on, every jarib (an extent of land) of cultivated land (amir) or even uncultivated land (ghamir) was also taxed. Finally, Kharaj was fixed on the crops such as date palms (nakhs), vineyards, clover, fruit trees and sesame also. The other group of crops including sugarcane, cotton, olives, summer herbs and Indian peas were also covered by duties by the Caliph, Uman ibn Al Khattab.<sup>9</sup>

**Two separate taxes were imposed, Jizyah on non-muslims & Kharaj on land**

The systemisation of Umar ibn Al Khattab proceeded from Islamic concepts of ‘Jizyah’ and ‘Fay’. Two separate taxes were imposed, the ‘Jizyah’ on the non-Muslims and the ‘Kharaj’ on the land.<sup>10</sup>



Umar bin al-Khattab followed a clear approach in his fiscal policy, which necessitated regarding the Kharaj as a fixed duty on the lands of the non-Muslims, as well as taking into account their conditions and treating them with kindness. Al-Shubi [d. AH 106/ 724 CE] narrates that Hudhayfah wrote to Umar to seek his advice on this matter: “I levied the kharaj. Then some men became Muslim before I levied the kharaj on their land and on their heads, and some men became Muslim after I levied the kharaj on their land and on their heads.” Umar wrote to him: “Whatever man embrace Islam before you impose the kharaj on his land and on his head, take the ushr [tithe] from his land and annul [the tax] on his head. Do not take kharaj from a Muslim. Whatever man embraced Islam after you impose the kharaj on his land and on his head, take



the kharaj from his land as we addressed his land during his state of unbelief before he became a Muslim.” This represented the general orientation of the Caliphate. Thus, anyone who converted to Islam had the jizyah on his head removed but continued to pay the kharaj on his land [as a rent for it]. There are no reports that those who converted were exempted from paying the kharaj tax. Rather the narrations confirm that the dahhaqin continued to pay the kharaj tax after becoming Muslim; they included for example the dihqan of Nahr-al-Malik [or according to another narration, a woman from the people of Nahr al Malik, as the same duty was incumbent on men and women] and al-Rufayal, the dihqan of al-AI, on whom 2000 dirhams was imposed when he became Muslim. Similarly, 2000 dirhams was imposed on al-Hurmuzan, the dihqan of al-Ahwaz, when he became a Muslim. This was a gift for the nobility. Other dahhaqin converted to Islam, such as the dahhaqin of al-Fallalij, al-Nahra, Babi, Khatarniyah, Nahr al-Malik and Kutha. The jizyah was removed from their heads, but they continued to pay kharaj on their land. It appears that this measure was not exclusively for the dahhaqin, but also applied to other people. There is a report that two men from the inhabitants of Alis converted to Islam and Umar waived the jizyah from their heads, but took the tax [tasq] from their lands. Umar considered the kharaj land as fay for all Muslims, but he did not issue an order preventing it from being purchased since there was no call for that at this time. Rather, the sources point to the ownership of kharaj land by some of the Companions [Sahabah]: Abu Hanifah stated that “Abdullah b.Masud owned kharaj land. Likewise, kharaj land was owned by Khabab, Hasan and Husayn [the sons of Ali b. Abi Talib], Sharih, Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman, and Ibn Sirin. However, Ali b. Abi Talib [r. AH 35-40/ 655-60 CE] disliked the purchase of kharaj land and used to say there was kharaj on this land owed to the Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

Omar was sagacious in administration and audacious in war. During his ten years of office, the city state became an empire that included Palestine, the Egypt, the greater part of Iran and included Azerbaijan and Armenia. When he lay dying from a knife wound inflicted by a Persian servant, Umar made the elders promise that they would not consider his son, Abdullah as his successor. The choice narrowed

down to six claimants; Ali being one amongst them. Ali, lest we forget was the son-in-law of the Prophet; ever eligible but never considered for the Caliph's post. The Prophet Mohammad himself had chosen Abu Bakr as the first Caliph. The latter, had named Omar as the second Caliph after bypassing Ali. And now, the elders met and chose Uthman, an Umayyad as the third Caliph. Ali lost out, yet again. Uthman was over seventy but remained Caliph for twelve years. His realm was riven with controversy.

As wealth began to pour into Medina from conquered territories, Umar's strict management of the state's treasury gave way to flexibility and accusations of corruption. Beneficiaries called Uthman generous; detractors called it nepotism. His opponents accused him of irreverence when he ordered all copies of the Quran burnt, except the official version that was compiled in his time. Uthman complained that Muslims who had tolerated Umar's whip were now rebelling against his largesse; but he was clearly missing the point. Abstinence was part of the ideal Islamic ethic, as Muslims had seen practiced by the Prophet. Uthman, said his enemies, had wandered from Allah's prescribed way. The third Caliph was brutally assassinated in 656 CE by a group instigated, among others, by companions of the Prophet and his favourite wife, Aisha. Aisha's brother, also called Muhammad, was one of the perpetrators of the murder.<sup>12</sup>

**Abstinence was part of ideal Islamic ethic, as Muslims had seen practiced by the Prophet**



His death sparked an internecine violence. Each faction was claiming the right to protect the faith. The elders begged the reluctant Ali to become the Caliph. Under Ali, however, the civil war became more intense. Umayyad's kin and supporters charged Ali with instigating Uthman's murder. Ali shifted his capital from Medina to Kufa in Iraq. He had to face a Muslim army led by Aisha, the youngest wife of Muhammad. In 657 CE, Ali encountered the forces of Muawiyah, who also offered a compromise to end the civil war; by following arbitration on the basis of Quran. Ali agreed, but Ali was killed by one of his own followers for reportedly betraying the faith by accepting this compromise.

Ali's son Hasan took his father's mantle, but Muawiyah put forth his superior claim basing upon longer period of administrative

experience, better understanding of politics and of course, his matured age. Hasan accepted the argument. Muawiyah became the Caliph. Hasan died prematurely and his followers accused Muawiyah of having had him poisoned. That's how, from the 661 CE onwards, the vast Muslim Empire came to be ruled from Damascus under the Umayyad Caliphs.

**They are remembered as the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam'**



Therefore, after the departure of Prophet Mohammed, the period from 632 CE to 661 CE witnessed four caliphs namely Abu Baker, Omar, Uttaman and Ali, ruling as the supreme religious and political leaders of the Muslims. They are remembered as the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.' As conflict overpowered consensus, the future was to witness new power configurations.

### 3.2 TAXATION UNDER THE UMAYYADS

Muawiyah (661-679 CE) was the first Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. The Prophet had been the first to recognize Muawiyah's talent, and had started him on his career; Umar promoted him to the governorship of Syria; his power grew under Uthman and finally his strategy and guile won him total power from Ali and Hasan. He was an outstandingly capable ruler, politically adept, generous and scrupulous in his enforcement of justice, who believed in merit and loyalty rather than family.<sup>13</sup> Muawiyah philosophy was simple. "I apply not my sword where my lash suffices, nor my lash where my tongue is enough. And even if there be one hair binding me to my fellowmen, I do not let it break: when they pull, I loosen, and if they loosen, I pull."<sup>14</sup>

It was said of Muawiyah that he was slow to anger and had absolute self-control. This aspect of his character is amply highlighted by the following event. One day when he was giving audience and all the nobles were in his presence, a young man came in wearing tattered clothes; he greeted Muawiyah, sat down in front of him and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I have come today with an urgent request; if you promise to grant it, I will tell you what it is.' Muawiyah said, 'Anything that is possible I will grant.' The youth said, 'Know that I am a poor man and have no wife; and

your mother has no husband. Give her to me in marriage, so that I may have a wife, she a husband and you gain the reward.' Muawiyah said, 'You are a young man and she is an old woman; so old that she has not a single tooth in her mouth. What do you want her for?' He said, 'Because I have heard that she is plump and I have always liked plump women.'

**'Because I have heard that she is plump and I have always liked plump women'**



Muawiyah said, 'By Allah, my father married her for the very same thing, and it was the only virtue she had. Anyway, I will speak to my mother about this, and if she is willing, I am certainly the best procurer for your purpose.' Muawiyah showed no sign of agitation and remained completely calm.<sup>15</sup>

Muawiyah was a master of administration; he streamlined the chancery, developed infrastructure, built up the postal service, and made the Syrian army into a powerful fighting machine. Under his rule, the empire expanded into North Africa, Khurasan in Eastern Persia, and Afghanistan and Bokhara in Central Asia. But as he turned the theocratic state of Islam into a temporal monarchy, puritan passion was replaced by worldly considerations; wealth, power and luxury became the focus of life; wine, women and song replaced prayer. Times had changed.<sup>16</sup> He ruled for twenty long years ensuring internal peace and external advance across fresh frontiers. By the time he died, Muslims ruled from Sind in India to the Maghreb and Bokhara in the north. He appointed exclusive authority to oversee the 'Kharaj' in Iraq, leaving the matters of war and leading prayers to others.<sup>17</sup>

Muawiyah was succeeded by his son, Yazid. The latter was the antithesis of his father; brutal, greedy, and a Muslim by the accident of birth rather than the virtue of conviction. In three terrible years, he destroyed the stability his father had achieved. Advised by his father to be gentle with Hasan's brother Husayn, Yazid opted for aggression that made the schism between Sunni and Shia unbridgeable. In 680 CE, in the heat of the month of Muharram, his far superior forces surrounded and massacred Husayn, his

**Yazid opted for aggression that made the schism between the Sunni and Shia unbridgeable**



family including small children, and his small band of companions at Karbala, some sixty miles from Baghdad. Yazid's general, Ubaydallah, brought him a macabre gift from Karbala; the severed head of Husayn, and his sycophants laughed while they kicked the head around till one man begged them not to show such disrespect to the grandson of the Prophet.<sup>18</sup>

Yazid (680-684 CE) did not make any noteworthy changes with regard to the 'Kharaj'. His main focus of policy was his preoccupation with the revolts in Kufah. After 'Yazid, his young son, Muawiyah-II was weak and sickly. Therefore, Yazid's cousin, Marwan was chosen as Caliph. In his short reign, Marwan had two notable achievements: being killed by his wife, who smothered him with a pillow, and securing the caliphate for his son, Abd al Malik.<sup>19</sup>

In 684 CE, Abdal Malik became the Caliph. He was a competent ruler. In his 20-year rule (685-705), he consolidated the power of the Umayyads, stamping out rebellion. Together with his right-hand man, al Hajjaj, the hard and wry capable general and governor of Iraq, he controlled the eastern part of the empire. He spread the use of Arabic as the language of administration, government and business. He saw the development of Arabic coinage, which is strengthened the treasury by his efficient tax collection system.<sup>20</sup> In 688CE, he conceived the first great piece of Islamic architecture, in Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock.

### **Tax measures under Abd-Al-Malik**

At the time of Abd-al-Malik b Marwan (684-705 CE), the state faced a series of revolts, financial crisis and spread of epidemics. A series of revolts ignited migration of peasants from villages. The supply of labour declined. Plague overwhelmed Basra, affecting agriculture and production and harming the 'Kharaj'. Abd-al-Malik described those conditions as follows:

"In Iraq, waters have grown turbid, mobs have grown rabid, its sweetness has become vapid, its matter grown complicated, and its fires are blazing and becoming difficult to subdue. Is there anyone who can clear the way for them [the people] with a sharp sword, a broad intellect, an astute mind and fervent pride to put out its fires, repel

its demons, bring justice to those wronged and treat its wounds until they heal, so the land will be serene and the people safe?"<sup>21</sup>

Al Hajaj, one of the most prominent Governors' (694-713 CE) under Abd-Al-Malik had a distinct role in bringing the disturbed state to a definite stability. He completed the digging of several canals. As political conditions settled, he encouraged peasants with loans to continue farming. He also issued an order preventing the slaughter of cows due to their use in sowing and cultivation. To cover the shortage of labour, he brought a group of 'Zutt' people from the Sind with their families and buffaloes and settled them in lower Kashar to do the farming.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from a developmental freak, Al Hajaj was an exceptionally competent, but incomparably cruel individual. This teacher of the Quran developed into the top administrator and politician, effectively acting as the minister of defence. Intelligent and tough, he was a feared and hated tyrant, who throughout his career, remained fiercely loyal to the Umayyads. He is said to have been responsible for 1 lakh deaths. In 694 CE, when he was given charge of Kufa, he made his famous introductory speech to the citizens: 'I see heads which have become ripe for plucking, and I behold blood between the turbans and the beards.' His actions more than lived up to his words.<sup>23</sup>

Never the diplomat, Hajjaj, on taking command, decreased the pay of the Iraqi troops. When tax revenues fell off, imposing financial pressure on the government, Hajjaj's technique for dealing with the problem was as high-handed as ever. He rounded up the Mawalis, late converts to Islam, and forced them to pay the taxes of unbelievers. This certainly raised the revenues, but also raised the level of resentment seen by converts as contrary to Islam's promise of equality to all Muslims.<sup>24</sup>

Hajjaj's nephew, the 17-year-old Muhammad bin Qasim, was an ambitious and capable young man who was given a chance to go and conquer the new territories in India - Sind and Multan. He set out on the perilous and difficult journey through Baluchistan and Mekran, with a small force. In a series of dazzling campaigns, he

**He also issued an order preventing the slaughter of cows due to their use in sowing and cultivation**



**Hajjaj decreased the pay of the Iraqi troops**



established Muslim rule in the north western provinces of India. As Muhammad bin Qasim and Qutayba continued their Eastward conquests, Hajjaj spurred them on with the promise that whoever reached China first, would be the governor of that fabulous empire. But with the change of caliph in Damascus, Muhammad bin Qasim's meteoric career was cut short. Some say he was summoned back to Damascus where he was tortured and killed; others say that he was sewn into the hide of a cow and was dead when he reached Damascus. He was just 20, when he was murdered.<sup>25</sup>

### **Additional Taxes**

During the Umayyad period, some tax collectors (Ummal-Al-Kharaj) added a number of additional taxes, which went beyond the taxpayer's capacity to pay. These additional taxes were imposed on tax payers in 'Kufah' in particular, as its land was considered 'Kharaj' land. Some of them include gifts of Nawruz and Mihrajan, the prices of the papers, the wages of the couriers and the wages of money changers. Some other additions included the Dirham for marriage, the rent of the houses, and the 'Kharaj' on those Ahl-al-Dhimmah, who became Muslim. Yet another tax includes rewards for the messengers, food and lodgings for the tax collectors, and exchanging the dinars which were taken from the surplus between the two prices.<sup>26</sup>

Several rulers exerted themselves to abolish these additional taxes. Their success, at best was temporary. The practice of collecting them stopped for a short period of not more than a year. Then, they appeared a second time with some additional burdens. This was due to their usage spreading such that they became part of customary taxes. These additional burdens were not limited to 'Sawad' but included other areas of the state, such as the region of Nessara, Elusa, Gaza and Filastin. It must be understood that state was charging the 'Kharaj' only, without any other addition, to be just to the tax-payer. But the tax collectors, had developed their own 'customary taxes' which put additional burden upon the population.<sup>27</sup>

### **Setbacks in Spain and Constantinople**

The three caliphs who followed the long rule of Abd-al-Malik were very different from each other – Walid, Suleiman and Umar. Walid's interest

was art, culture and architecture, Suleiman's the harem; and Umar's the religion. The conversation at court changed accordingly – in Walid's time, it was culture and construction; in Suleiman's, it was the beauty of slave girls; but with Umar, it was austerity and Islam.<sup>28</sup> In 715 CE, Suleiman ascended the Damascus throne. In 717 CE, he laid the siege of Constantinople. By now, a brilliant soldier Leo, had captured power there. Greek fire is said to have been a combination of sulphur, naphtha and tar. Even water could not extinguish it; only sand and vinegar would do so. Defenders waited for a favourable wind and then launched missiles of Greek fire against Arab ships, where it spread terror and havoc. They had yet to discover the chemistry of this weapon. By his leadership coupled with superior technology of fire power, Leo outlasted the siege, Suleiman died. The defeated army dragged itself back to Damascus. The ships were scattered by storms or looted by pirates.<sup>29</sup>

In 732 CE, Battle of Tours was fought between Franks under the leadership of Karl Mertel and Muslims under the leadership of Abdul Rahman. The Muslims seemed to have the edge but the Franks had made one decisive breakthrough. They had opened up a line to the camp where the Muslim booty was stored. Abdul Rahman could not control his army as sections of the cavalry and infantry broke order to defend the booty rather than defeat the enemy. As he attempted to restore discipline, he was struck either by an arrow or a lance and killed.

That night, the Muslims gathered what they could of their spoils and retired. Muslims lost because of greed for booty.<sup>30</sup>

From 661 CE onwards, the Umayyads had been ruling from Damascus. Notwithstanding a few setbacks, as the victory juggernaut of Islamic armies accelerated, they controlled territories from Spain across Mediterranean in the west and upto Sind across Indus in the East. Khurasan, their eastern seat of power was spread over the present-day Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran. It was a long way from Damascus, and the authority of the Umayyads decreased as the distance increased. Merv, its capital was a great city of the world then. Moreover, the successive defeats of Umayyad armies at Constantinople and Tours had demoralised the people.

**Abdul Rahman could not control his army as sections of the cavalry and infantry broke order to defend the booty rather than defeat the enemy**





Many Muslims were dissatisfied with the regime and looked to the family of the Prophet to provide leadership.

It was from Khurasan that the Arabs and Persian settlers rose up in revolt against the Umayyads with the new leadership that became the Abbasid dynasty. In the power struggle, Abbas emerged successful. He had a distinguished ancestry going back to the family of Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet himself. Abbas went into the great Mosque and addressed the people, praising them for their support to the family of Prophet; demonizing the fallen Umayyads, offering financial rewards and declaring his mission to root out all opposition, for, "I am the great revenger; my name Saffah, the slaughterer". And slaughter he did, both of his enemies and of his friends.

His primary target was the family of the Umayyads. Extending an olive branch, he offered them an amnesty and invited them to a banquet of reconciliation. Ninety members of the family accepted the invitation. As they settled down to the feast, the attendants suddenly attacked them with clubs. Most were killed in this savage attack; some lived, though mortally wounded. Carpets were thrown

**Slaughter of the Prophet's family at Karabala was avenged by the slaughter of Umayyads**



over the dead and dying, and the feast continued with wine and laughter. The slaughter of the family of The Prophet at Karbala had finally been avenged by the slaughter of the Umayyads.<sup>31</sup>

That is how therefore from 661 to 750 CE, the Umayyads ruled the Muslim world from Damascus as their capital. From now onwards, Abbassids were to rule from their new capital, Baghdad.

### 3.3 TAXATION UNDER THE ABBASSIDS

Abbas, christening himself as Saffah, the slaughterer continued his killing even after assuming power in 750 CE. At Basra, the victims were cut to pieces and their bodies cast in the streets to be eaten by stray dogs. Even those that tried to find sanctuary in Mecca and Medina were not spared. In Syria, the tombs of the caliphs were desecrated and the corpses mutilated. Throughout the empire, amnesty was offered as a ruse; those who fell for it were slaughtered. Even the solemn word of the Caliph was merely a trick to deceive.<sup>32</sup>

In less than five years, Abbas having secured power for his family, died of smallpox. He designated as his heir, his brother Abu Jafar, who ruled as the caliph, Mansur from 754 to 775 CE. Mansur was a complicated, cunning and eccentric man. He was a political genius, deep and dangerous, in the style of a Mafia godfather. It was he who consolidated the empire for the 500-year dynasty that followed him.<sup>33</sup>

The Shias, resentful of having been bypassed in the power struggle that brought Abbasids to power, rebelled. Mansur continued his secret witch hunt of potential Shia trouble makers. It took him around a decade to settle with his enemies. In the last twelve years of his life, he concentrated on building a capital and efficient government machinery. Baghdad became the capital city and within a century of its creation, it became the greatest city in the world, the city of ‘one thousand and one nights.’

**...it became  
the greatest  
city in the  
world, the  
city of ‘1001  
nights’**



Mansur was pious and served no wine at his table. Stern, austere and disciplined, he rose at four in the morning, worked long hours and slept by ten at night. He was an eloquent orator; he liked to be informed and spent hours daily reading and evaluating intelligence reports. Notorious as a miser, in contrast to his stylish and fashionable son, he explained that he had grown up in poverty whereas his son had only known wealth and prosperity.<sup>34</sup> The legacy of this brilliant and dangerous man included the great metropolis of Baghdad, a highly efficient bureaucracy, a powerful army and a treasury sufficient to cover the expenditure of the next ten years. Persian influence had grown; the Arab empire had been converted into an international Islamic empire.<sup>35</sup>

From the beginning of the new dynasty, the culture of Abbassid court lost its Arabic exclusivity and stretched to include Persians and Turks. The capital moved to Baghdad. Construction began in 762 CE and ended four years later at a cost of some five million dirhams. Degeneration was inevitable. If Harun-ul-Rashid (786–804 CE) is remembered for his glorious rule; his grandson Muttawakkil is said to have 4,000 concubines. More impressively, he claimed to have slept with all of them. Slaves and concubines

**Baghdad could boast over 1000 book shops at the end of 9th century, a time when there was none in London or Paris**



appeared in abundance. The wealth was legendary, the spending gross. Harun might buy a ruby for 40,000 dirhams; the Caliph Mustain ordered a rug worth 130 million dirham for his mother. There were substantive achievements as well. Baghdad could boast over thousand book shops at the end of the ninth century, a time when there was none in London or Paris.

From 750 CE onwards, with the arrival of new rulers, a new stage of systematisation of taxation began. It was characterised by its extensive dependence on the legal opinion of the Fuqaha (jurists) and the proposals of the ministers (Wuzara, singular Wazir) and state officials (Kuttab, singular Katib). The first Abbasid caliph, Al Mansur (753–774 CE) came at a time when fluctuations in prices, between high and low had an impact on the ‘Kharaj’.

After noticing the fluctuation in prices, al-Mansur thought seriously about moving from assessing the kharaj according to the misahah system [by land area] to a system which depended essentially on production for its assessment. [This was the muqasamah, or proportional share cropping system, where a percentage of the produce could be paid to the state as tax]. Al-Mawardi says: “The Sawad was still [assessed on] the misahah system and the kharaj until al-Mansur in the ‘Abbasid state changed it for them from the kharaj to the muqasamah system because prices were cheap and there were not enough crops for the kharaj”. So, the Sawad was assessed and al-Mansur made it into the muqasamah [system].”<sup>36</sup>

The decision could not be implemented under Al-Mansur in view of the delay until the end of his caliphate. Al-Mahdi succeeded (774-785 CE) and undertook a study. His Secretary and Wazir, Muawiyah b. Ubbayd-Allah-b-Yasar conducted the study that included several practical suggestions.

For reforming the conditions of the kharaj, taking into consideration the circumstances and living conditions of the peasants. The wazir initially proposed that the caliph should deal with the inhabitants of the Sawad in the manner of the Prophet at Khaybar: “He handed

it [the land] over to its people for half [the produce].” He also suggested introducing the muqasamah system for the people of the Sawad according to the means of irrigation, such that cultivators would pay one-third if the land was irrigated by dawali waterwheel and one-quarter if irrigated by dawalib waterwheels, provided that they were not obliged to pay any other charges after that.

The study included another solution to the kharaj for chaff [tibt, for feed and building material] should be taken proportionally by the muqasamah, or the chaff would be sold for the people if they preferred for it to be purchased at its immediate price. The duties for grapes, trees, vegetables and all other crops would continue to be assessed by the misahah system, taking into account the distance from the markets and the increase or decrease in the level of produce, provided that the share of the treasury was fixed at 50% of the produce after calculating the necessary expenditures”. As for the digging and maintenance of canals, Muawiyah b.Ubayad-Allah suggested to the Caliph than the cost of this should be spent by the treasury. He said: “The expenditure from it is necessary because the river bank has no owner. The expenditure is incumbent on those who might be harmed [by not spending on this] where the harm would revert to the treasury. Thus, the expenditure on it is necessary from it [the treasury].” However, it appears that al-Mahdi did not take up all the suggestions. The treasury’s share increased by 10%, thereby becoming 60 instead of 50%. He also did not take his secretary’s suggestion considering the digging of canals. Rather, he stipulated that the sharecroppers [muzariun] using the Nahr al-Sillah canal, which he had dug, had to pay a share of two-fifths of their produce for 50 years. When the 50th passed, they would no longer have to continue with a condition imposed on them. There was nothing to confirm that the other proposals were applied or put into effect in later periods.<sup>37</sup>

Mansur was succeeded by his son Mahdi, who was succeeded by his son Hadi. After his brief rule for thirteen months, he was succeeded by the legendary Harun-ul-Rashid (782-808 CE). The period of Harun-ul-Rashid witnessed an efficient administration supported by an effective tax collection. It was a time

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of culture, romance, brilliance and above all an extravagant luxury. At the age of 47, Harun fell sick and died. The state had never been more prosperous or secure.<sup>38</sup> His son, Mamun succeeded and presided over the greatest flowering of learning and knowledge in Baghdad. He died at the age of 46, of a fever. Mamun can be considered, comparatively, a reasonable, tolerant and humane leader who rebuilt the glory of the empire and took Abbasid rule to its heights.<sup>39</sup>

### **Taxation under Harun-Al-Rashid**

Harun al-Rashid [r.AH 170-93/783-808 CE] gave particular attention to the kharaj land and levying taxes upon them. He appointed Abu Yusuf, the qadi al qudat [chief judge], to prepare a comprehensive book for him from which he could benefit to systematise taxation and levying, as well as other issues which required examination and action, so as to reform the situation of the people and removing injustice from them. Thus, Abu Yusuf wrote a book on the kharaj and its rulings, the Kitab al Kharaj, a comprehensive financial document. Introducing it, Abu Yusuf had applied ijthihad or independent reasoning, in accordance with the rulings [ahkam] of the divine law, along with some ijthihad demanded by the circumstances and developments of the age. The Kitab al Kharaj included several sections, the most important of which was the evaluation of the system of kharaj prevalent in the Sawad. Abu Yusuf acknowledged its advantage in the early Islamic period, specifically during the caliphate of Umar b. al-Khattab, as there was much cultivated land and it was possible to impose kharaj on it. However, with the increase in the unused cultivated land and uncultivated land, as well as the materials and spending that this required, assessing the kharaj by the misahah system had become a burden for the kharaj payers due to the fluctuation in prices. Therefore, the kharaj assessed through the misahah system was suited to stable prices, but, in a situation where prices fluctuated, it was a different matter. He referred to the sharing of wheat and barley according to the means of irrigation. The rate was two-fifths [if irrigated naturally] by running water and one-fifth to one-half [if irrigated] by waterwheel. He also mentioned the muqasamah of date palms, grapes, clover and plantations at one-third and summer crops at one-quarter, provided that none of it was taken by estimating [the amount of crop on which

the muqasamah was based], and nor should any rate be estimated for the people. Therefore, Abu Yusuf suggested percentages for the muqasamah that differed from those proposed by the Muawiyah b. Ubayad-Allah. It is also noticeable that Abu Yusuf called for applying the muqasamah system to all crops and trees without exception.<sup>40</sup>

The people of the Sawad were apportioned one-half [of the share of the crops] by them after the land survey, which was carried out on them. This was also mentioned by al-Tabari in his account of the events of AH 172/788 CE. He indicates that Harun al-Rashid unburdened the people of the Sawad from the ushr, which was taken for them after the one-half. This meant decreasing the share of the state treasury to half, that is, to 50 percent after it had been 60%. This measure was continued until AH 204/819 CE, when al-Ma'mun ordered the muqasamah rate for the people of Sawad be made two-fifths or forty per cent, and that was after his return to Baghdad and after coming from Khurasan. There were political motivations in this measure, perhaps the most obvious of which was to gain the favour of the people of the Sawad after the end of the crisis over rule between al-Amin and al-Mamun. It was also perhaps an attempt to appease their fear, since they were the ones who had supported al-Amin.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Centralised rule, Consequences & Measures to control people**

The Abbasid state followed a centralized system of rule. It provoked several reactions, which seemed political at first but then became economic. Payment of tax was delayed. That invited fine. The cumulative burden forced the peasants to work in service of big land owners owing plantations. The second option was to take a loan from the merchants in order to avoid selling their produce in a way that would harm them. Merchants gave them loan with interest in order to benefit from the transactions. The exploited peasant facing a ruin because of his inability to cover the debt migrated to the city in search of new work and new loans from new masters.<sup>42</sup>

The state adopted strict measures which affected all the cities of the Jazirah in order to limit migration and to return the migrants to their villages since abandoning the land, whatever the reasons, created a burden for the treasury due to the ensuing decline in cultivation and revenue. However, for the numerous taxpayers whose names were

in the register of the new places to which they had migrated, it meant freedom from paying the kharaj at first and consequently an added burden on the remaining taxpayers. This pushed the inhabitants of the villages to pursue the migrants in order to return them to their villages and force them to pay the value of the Kharaj fixed on them in various ways. But this did not mean that matters progressed in a correct way. The state in its turn pursued the migrants in all the cities of the Jazirah and began by returning them to Mosul. Some of them had succeeded in becoming landowners in the new localities and had also expanded markets and managed their affairs to their own benefit. Musab appointed a special officer, Adam b. Yazid, to pursue those migrants. He began this task by surrounding Amid, Arzan and Mayafarqat. The populations of those villagers expelled those fleeing who had taken refuge with them, or they assisted the state in search of those who were in hiding, either out of fear of a penalty or out of a desire for a cash reward. The official pursued the remaining migrants among those who are blended in with the Syrian Christians and resembled them. He also arrested the heads of the villages in which the people of Mosul had settled and forced them to reveal every stranger among them, thus enabling the capture of the remaining migrants and their return to Mosul. The city of Mardin was the second city after Mosul in which measures relating to migration were applied in view of the migration of a large number of its population, compared with other cities. The officials for migration [amil al-jala] Iklil b. Zadan, adopted harsh measures to track the migrants. He ordered his assistants who had spread across the cities to enquire carefully about every individual, his father or grandfather who had left Mardin in the last 40 or 50 years, and return him to the city without divesting him of his possessions. No village was left abandoned or derelict and ruined until it was repopulated. He was not satisfied with that and headed to the lands whose ownership had been transferred to the Arabs after their original inhabitants [the Christian Syrians] had fled, perhaps due to the heavy tax imposed on them. He returned the lands to its owners and ordered them to cultivate them. This reminds us of the measures of al-Hajjaj in the lands in al-Furat, when he decided to revert them to the kharaj after they had become ushr lands by being given as gifts [to the Muslims from the original owners] and other ways.<sup>43</sup>

“The measures of the governor in the remaining cities did not differ from those in Mosul and Mardin, and were perhaps somewhat harsher. He was not content to send one governor to the city. Instead, he sent a number of officials at one time in order to stop the fleeing, until between seven and ten officials were gathered in one city. The state’s tracking and pursuit of the migrants continued. It seems that the aim of the measures for tracking previous cases of migrants was not completely realized; therefore, another method was followed, namely branding. It appears that this measure was among the harshest measures adopted by Musab in all of the Jazirah. He sent officials to supervise the branding of the inhabitants of the villages [with seal made of lead], specifying the name of their original hometown and the name of the city, fearing that they would leave them to go to other regions. It was not limited to branding the necks of the people, like slaves. Even their hands, chests and backs were also branded. The people were dealt a severe blow and their movement was paralyzed by these measures. The taverns closed up, the markets were deserted of any selling or buying, and emptied of goods as well, just as the roads were emptied of passers-by”.

**It was not limited to branding the necks of the people, like slaves. Even their hands, chests & backs were branded**



The measures for branding went through two stages. The first was to persuade the heads of the regions to take the men from the region to the city for them to be branded. This was followed by the second stage, which was the branding. Each man was branded with the name of his city on his right hand, and the name of his region on the left. Then two brands when applied to his neck: the first engraved with the name of his village; and the second the name of his region. There was a fine of one dirham for every three men. The third stage was recording the name of the man and his appearance, as well as the name of his village and region, in a special register as an additional precaution. This measure alarmed the population as it did not discriminate between migrants and residents. The city officials seized a large group of newcomers and branded them with the names of villages that they admitted having left, whereas in reality they did not belong to those villages, perhaps only having been there once in their lives. For this reason, many refrained from entering the cities out of fear of the evils meeting them there.<sup>44</sup>



The task of the migration officials went beyond searching for migrants to searching for any remaining tax which had been uncollected for a long time and forcing the population to pay double by various methods. A number of poor peasants sought refuge with the leaders of the regions and the judges for protection, but it appears that the influence of the migration officials was great and they forced the peasants to be branded. Similarly, a group of outsiders went to the judges and the leader of the regions, and they imposed on everyone who came to them and who did not wish to return to his village an amount of 30-40 dirhams. Thus, the judges effectively participated in increasing the burden on the taxpayers.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Mahdi began his rule by responding to the complaints and working with the advice of his father: 'It is incumbent upon you to cultivate the land and reduce the kharaj. He issued his order to all the collectors to waive punishment from the kharaj payers. However, they did not adhere to this order and continued to punish the kharaj payers: 'in categories of punishment from beasts of prey, hornets and cats'. Al-Mahdi sought advice from Abu Said al-Mu'addab (Muhammad b. Muslim) about punishing the collectors who retained some of the kharaj, saying: 'O Muhammad, what do you say about the man from the kharaj payers for whom we assign it, but who retains wealth and we are not able to take it until we harm him with some punishment?' He advised him to remove the punishment from them, describing them as follows: 'They are opponents of the Muslims and they must be treated as opponents.' Al-Mahdi was harsh in calling the kharaj collectors to account in order to collect the revenue from them, as was the custom of the 'Abbasids in punishing the tax collectors who demanded the revenue by striking them with whips and placing stones on their shoulders.'<sup>46</sup>

The kharaj of the Sawad increased by a value of 49,420,000 dirhams from the amount that it had been under Harun al-Rashid, and there are references to the reduction of the percentage taken by the state to 40 per cent. This may reveal the omission of this percentage by the tax collectors and there collecting offer kharaj which sometimes surpassed two-fifths [40 per cent]. In addition to that, it is noticeable that the assessments of all of the revenue of Sawad, Syria and Jazirah

are referred to in cash, and do not include any information about the amount of their collection of the resources in kind. This is the revenue relating to the regions in which no change took place in the system of levying. The Sawad, in which the muqasamah system was applied, may be no more than an indication of the values of the grain lands as occurred under al-Rashid.<sup>47</sup>

Abbasid's excesses were constantly challenged by the pious clergy. The Abbasids had the dubious distinction of harassing and even hounding all the four great imams, who laid the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence. Abu Hanifa (700-767CE) died in prison. Malik Ibn Anas (710-795 CE) was flogged. Muhammad as Shafi (772-826 CE) did a prison term. And Ahmed Bin Hanibal (780-795 CE) was flogged as well as jailed. The gates of independent enquiry were closed after them. In 1258 CE, Mongol Halagu Khan came to the gates of Baghdad. He taunted Caliph al Mustasim with verses from Quran, where Allah warns Muslims of the price of pride; humiliation and calamity. Baghdad was destroyed, the Caliph killed. The dynasty was finished and the centre of Muslim power splintered. One of them witnessed the rise of Ghaznavids, who assumed power at the north-west frontier of the land of Al-Hind.

**Abbasids had the dubious distinction of harassing and even hounding all the 4 great Imams, who laid the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence**



**Baghdad was destroyed, the Caliph killed**



**The decline of Abbasids**

Mamun's brother Mustasim, who was with him at the death-bed succeeded as caliph. His reign was a time of stability and prosperity. He was succeeded by his son, Wathiq, who also ruled without any challenge. Stability to both, namely Mustasim and his son Wathiq was provided by a new force consisting of Turkish slave soldiers. These Turks did not come from Turkey, but from Central Asia, the areas of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; the steppes of the twentieth century USSR. They were tough and hardy nomads, used to living in tents and moving on with their herds of animals. They introduced a new style of warfare - war on horseback by expert archers, who, from childhood had lived on horseback, and could take severe hardship and deprivation. Their support made Mutasim a force to be reckoned with.<sup>48</sup>

These Turkish slave soldiers, after the death of Wathiq became instrumental in liquidating successive caliphs which eventually destroyed and brought down the great Abbasid dynasty. Muttawakkil, the 10th caliph was assassinated by the Turkish troops on orders from his own son, Munfasir. Mustain, the 12th caliph was killed together with his wife at the instance of his brother, Mutaaz. The latter died as a captive of those Turk soldiers who demanded 50,000 dinars to release him. The appeal to his rich mother Qahiba did not work. The Queen mother kept her treasure, but lost her son.

Mutaldi, the 14th caliph was chased by his Turks on to a roof where he was caught and killed by crushing his testicles. Al Murtada, the 17th caliph ruled for only a day before being disposed off and killed. Muktedir, the 18th caliph survived as a total puppet with no power. Finally, after two decades of drunkenness, sensuality and extravagance, he was killed by his Turkish troops. As caliphate enfeebled, the Abbasid Empire was truncated with Spain and Egypt declaring their separate caliphates, under new dynasties there.

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The truncated Abbasid caliphate saw Quahir, the brother of Maqtadir as the nineteenth caliph. He along with next two caliphs were being blinded with red hot needles, tortured and imprisoned before being released. At one time, three blind ex-caliphs could be seen wandering helpless, dependent upon whatever hand-outs they could receive.<sup>49</sup>



Blind and helpless, the caliphs were passed from one set of masters to another. Without dignity, they lived as servile puppets for the next two centuries, first under the Shia Buyids, and then under the Sunni Seljuks. Finally, in 1258, a new conqueror, the Mongol, Hulagu, grandson of the great Genghis Khan, hit Baghdad, killing not just the Caliph but slaughtering the entire population and destroying the city and its environs. The rule of the Abbasids in Baghdad had ended.<sup>50</sup>

Even as the power of the caliphs eroded, the myth of the caliphate endured. For the caliphs were not mere kings; they were there, in theory at least, to protect and promote Islam. Descended from

the family of The Prophet himself, they had, in the minds of the Muslims, a legitimacy that superseded kingship or force of arms. Their mandate was Islam, the greatest legacy of Muhammad. So, a strange phenomenon developed; their conquerors dominated the caliphs, controlled them as puppets, blinded and even killed them but accepted their sovereignty and used them to confer legitimacy on their new dynasties.<sup>51</sup>

### **3.4 FROM GAZNAVIDS TO DELHI SULTANATE**

One of the dynasties that came to power as Abbasids declined, was that of Ghaznavids. In 870 CE, they captured power in parts of Afghanistan. In 977 CE, Subuktgin, a Turkish slave ascended his father-in-law Alaptigin's throne in Ghazni and defeated the Shahi king, Jaipal. Then arrived the most notable Sultan, Mahmud of Ghazni, son of Subukitgin. In 1008 CE, he crossed the river Indus and established a base in Punjab. Thereafter, he led seventeen campaigns, almost on an annual basis to plunder Hindu temple wealth in India. In 1,024 CE, he set-off on a winter campaign for Somnath. In 1,026 CE, the renowned Hindu temple of Somnath was destroyed and looted. The massive booty taken back to embellish his capital made Ghazni as one of the great cities of the world, then. After a long pause for more than a century and a half, Muhammad Ghouri became the Governor of Ghazni. His victory over Prithviraj Chauhan at Taraori or Tarain in Karnal district dealt a final body blow to the last Hindu kingdom in north India. Thereafter, Islamic expansion in the Indian subcontinent was rapid.

In 1206 CE, Muhammad Ghori was assassinated on the banks of Indus. Qutb-ud-din Aibek, the Commander in chief of the army was elected Sultan by the Turkish army officers. This marks the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate. At the end of the thirteenth century, Jalal-ud-Din Firoz (1290-1296 CE), a 70-year-old man founded the Khilji dynasty. His nephew and successor Ala-ud-Din Khilji (1296-1316 CE) has made an indelible mark in Indian history.

Ala-ud-din's domestic life was unhappy. A nagging wife and an overbearing mother-in-law, deeply suspicious of his show of affection to her husband, Sultan Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji, gave him

**104** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

no peace of mind. The prince chafed under this domestic tyranny and used to discuss with his trusted officers in Kara the possibility of escaping from this thralldom and carving out for himself a place in some far-off corner of the country.<sup>52</sup> The author of the Arabic history of Gujarat gives the story of an intrigue between Ala-ud-din and a cousin of his (a daughter of another uncle) as one of reasons of the acute relations between the prince and his wife.<sup>53</sup>

This led to quite a domestic crisis and an expedition to the Deccan seemed to Ala-ud-din, the one solution for resolving this tangle and furthering his secret ambition of making a bid for his uncle's throne. The great adventure of Ala-ud-din was carried out with lightning speed. Amir Khusro tells us that Alauddin left Kara on 25th February, 1296 CE and returned to the same place on 1st June, 1296 CE. He was away from Kara for 98 days. Ala-ud-din was at Devgiri for 25 days. He had thus taken just 63 days of journey from Kara to Devgiri and back. It was a sort of Islamic blitzkrieg of those times.

Alauddin ruled for just 20 years. Within such a short span, his trail of military achievements were stupendous. He thwarted the Mongol invasion. Thereafter, he conquered Gujarat, Ranathambor, Chittoor, Malwa, and penetrated Deccan to humble Devgiri and the Kakatiyas of Warangal, Hoyasala King Ballala and Pandyan country Ma'bar. The grip of his iron fist on the statecraft is evident too. His policies had deep impact upon the population in general and peasantry in particular.

The rural areas had always been populated by Hindu peasants while the Muslim population was confined to small towns (qasbas). According to Mohammed Habib, the religion of Islam is fundamentally a city creed. 'The Muslim requires certain social amenities, which are available only in urban areas. These are – the congregational mosque for his five prayers; the common graveyard where his fellow Muslims may bury him neatly and fearlessly and pray for the forgiveness of his sins; a school for the education of his children; a hafiz, preferably blind, who may recite the whole of the Quran in the month of Ramazan; and last, but not the least, social intercourse with an academic flavour in it.' Even now, in Gangetic belt,

which received the full impact of Islamic rule, the population distribution follows this pattern. In Deccan too, which envelops Telangana, where Islamic arms penetrated later, the same pattern is visible.

In the towns, adequate numbers of educated Muslim were available to fill the administrative posts. In the rural areas, the rulers had to rely on Hindu rent collectors. Some of them were defiant and paid nothing to the government and even imprisoned its agents. They had their small private armies and indulged in the game of mutual destruction and looting of caravans of traders. The Sultan sent his army from time to time to realize dues from the rural aristocracy and dealt with them savagely that created a reign of terror.

### **Taxation during Ala-Ud-Din Khilji**

The condition of Hindu peasants was never so wretched as during the oppressive rule of Alauddin. It was the result of his deliberate policy to impoverish them. Talking to a mullah, Alauddin said, 'Be assured that the Hindus will never become submissive and obedient till they are reduced to poverty. I have, therefore, given orders that just sufficient shall be left to them from year to year, of corn, milk, and curds, but they shall not be allowed to accumulate hoards and property.'

The measures taken by Sultan were:

1. The standard of the revenue demand was fixed at one-half of the produce without any allowances or deductions.
2. The Chiefs' perquisites were abolished, so that all the land occupied by them was to be brought under assessment at the full rate.
3. The method of assessment was to be measurement, the charges being calculated on the basis of standard yields.
4. A grazing tax was imposed apart from the assessment on cultivation.<sup>54</sup>

After the conquest of the Deccan, Alauddin Khilji levied one half of the produce as land tax.<sup>55</sup>

Ziauddin Barni, thus details these measures. 'For grinding down the Hindus, and for depriving them of that wealth and property which fosters disaffection and rebellion. The Hindu was to be so reduced as to be left unable to keep a horse to ride on, to carry arms, to wear fine clothes, or to enjoy any of the luxuries of life. Heavier

burdens were not to be placed upon the poor, but the rules as to the payment of the tribute were to apply equally to rich and poor. Collectors, clerks, and other officers employed in revenue matters who took bribes and acted dishonestly were all dismissed. Sharaf Kai, Naib Wazir-i-mamalik, an accomplished scribe and an honest and intelligent man, who had no rival either in capacity or integrity, exerted himself strenuously for some years in enforcing these regulations in all the villages and town. They were so strictly carried out that the chaudharis and khutas and mukaddims were not able to ride on horseback, to find weapons, to get fine clothes, or to indulge in betel and the people were brought to such a state of obedience that one revenue officer would string twenty khutas, mukaddims, or chaudharis together by the neck, and enforce payment by blows. No Hindu could hold up his head, and in their house no sign of gold

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or silver, tankas or jitals, or of any superfluity was to be seen. These things, which nourish insubordination and rebellion, were no longer to be found. Driven by destitution, the wives of the khutas and mukaddims went and served for hire in the houses of the Muslims. Sharaf Kai, Naib Wazir, so rigorously enforced his demands and exactions against the collectors and other revenue officers, and such investigations were made that every single jital against their names was ascertained from the books of the patwaris (village accountants). Blows, confinement in the stock, imprisonment and chains, were all employed to enforce payment. There was no chance of a single tanka being taken dishonestly, or as bribery, from a Hindu or Muslim. The revenue collectors and officers were so coerced and checked that for five hundred or a thousand tankas they were imprisoned and kept in chains for years. Men looked upon revenue officers as something worse than fever. Clerkship was a great crime, and no man would give his daughter to a clerk. Death was deemed preferable to revenue employment. Oft times, fiscal officers fell into prison, and had to endure blows and stripes.'

The net result of these measures was universal poverty and degradation amongst the peasantry. Their standard of living was

reduced to the lowest level. All the surplus which was taken from them was spent on the maintenance of a large standing army. Above all, they had lost their freedom, and were governed by aliens who had no respect for their culture.

Alauddin made his mark in history by controlling prices. Several measures were taken. First of all, Malik Kabul Ulugh Khan was appointed controller of the markets. He used to go round the markets in great state. He had clever deputies, friends of his own, who were appointed by the crown. Intelligent spies also were sent into the markets. Secondly, corn was accumulated in king's granaries. When there was a deficiency of rain, or when for any reason the caravans did not arrive, and the grain became scarce in the markets, then the royal stores were opened and the corn was sold at the tariff price, according to the wants of the people. Another measure was to place all carriers in his kingdom under the controller of markets. Orders were given for arresting the head carriers and for bringing them in chains before the controller of the markets, who was directed to detain them until they agreed upon one common mode of action and gave bail for each other. Nor were they to be released until they brought their wives and children, beasts of burden and cattle, and all their property. Yet another measure for securing the cheapness of grain was against regretting. This was so rigidly enforced that no merchant, farmer, corn-handler, or anyone else, could hold back secretly. If grain was discovered, it was forfeited to the Sultan, and the regrater was fined. The harshest measure was to control the price of produce by cultivators. They could carry their corn into the market and sell it at the regulation price only. Then, reports used to be made daily to the Sultan of the market rate and of the market transactions from different sources including spies. If there was any variance in these reports, the superintendent received punishment. Regulations were issued by fixing low prices for piece goods, garments, sugar, vegetables, fruits, animal oil, and lamp oil.

**He fixed  
price even for  
human beings**



Alauddin's price control was not confined to goods and commodities. He fixed prices even for human beings. Prices of serving girls, slave labourers, young domestic slaves, handsome



lads, concubine and male slaves were fixed in the ascending order. Great pains were taken to secure low prices for all things sold at the stalls in the markets, from caps to shoes, from combs to needles. Although the articles were of the most trifling value, the Sultan took the greatest trouble to fix the prices and settle the profit of the vendors. Another measure for securing cheapness provided severe punishments; blows, and cutting off flesh from the haunches of those who gave short weight.

‘During the reign of Alauddin, either through his agency or the beneficent ruling of providence, there were several remarkable events and matters which had never been witnessed or heard of in any age or time, and probably never will again,’ states Barni. ‘The cheapness of grain, clothes, necessaries of life, the constant succession of victories, the destruction and rolling back of the Mongols, the maintenance of a large army at a small cost, the severe punishment and repression of rebels, the general prevalence of loyalty, the safety of the roads in all directions, the honest dealings of the bazar people. The erection and repair of mosques, minarets, and forts, and hearts of Muslims in general were inclined to rectitude, truth, honesty, justice and temperance.’

Alauddin certainly succeeded in preserving an artificial cheapness in the markets of Delhi, but at the cost of savage oppression. Cheapness of food grains for the city people was achieved at the cost of Hindu peasants.<sup>56</sup>

### **Alauddin as Mao-Tse-Tung of medieval India?**

Muhammed Habib gives the title of rural revolution to the revenue administrative measures of Alauddin. He further equates Alauddin with Mao Tse Tung. The equation is inappropriate and rather misleading. The beneficiaries of these measures were the Sultan, his Turkish officials and army and certainly not the cultivators of land. They had to part with half of their produce to the government instead of one sixth provided by immemorial rule. Cheapness of grains in Delhi was at the cost of savage oppression of rural peasantry. Thus, the standard of living in rural areas, which was already wretched, was lowered further.

**The standard of living in rural areas, which was already wretched, was lowered further**



Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate has calculated that Mao's so called revolutionary policies during mid-twentieth century caused 23 million famine deaths apart from emaciating the general peasantry. The communist rule with complete censor was able to keep the truth in wraps, then. But, with subsequent opening of China followed by information revolution after Mao Tse Tung's death, the world has a better and clearer picture of the so-called rural revolution during Mao's era in China during the 20th century.

However, we would never know the magnitude of rural degradation, peasant's emaciation and famine deaths in distant medieval times during the regime of Alauddin Khilji from 1296 to 1317 CE.

### **Taxation during the Tughlaqs**

In 1325, Ulugh Khan ascended the throne and assumed the title Mohammed Bin Tughlaq, as he is popularly known in history books. He was a strange admixture of extraordinary traits. Some of his schemes indicate that he was megalomaniac, if not fully insane. He dreamt of global victory, like Alexander. He planned to conquer China by sending an expedition across Himalayas. His move to transfer capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in Deccan and back to Delhi is a part of common lore. On his return from Daulatabad, he caused a tooth which he had lost to be interred in a magnificent mausoleum, which is still in existence in Bhir.

Transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, a centrally located place appeared to be strategically sound. But, as Barni states, "It brought ruins upon Delhi, that city which, for 170 or 180 years, had grown in prosperity, and rivalled Baghdad and Cairo. The city, with its sarais, and its suburbs and villages, spread over four or five kos. All were destroyed. So complete was the ruin that not a cat or a dog was left among the buildings of the city, in its palaces or in its suburbs. Troops of the natives, with their families and dependents, wives and children, men servants and maid servants, were forced to relocate. The people, who for many years and for generations had been native and inhabitants of the land, were broken hearted. Many, from the toils of the long journey, perished on the road, and those who arrived at Devgiri could not endure the pain of exile. In

despondency, they pined to death. All around Devgiri, which is an infidel land, there sprung up graveyards of Mussalmans”.

Hard pressed for cash, the emperor issued copper tokens as substitute for silver money. Monetary creativity, overnight transformed goldsmith shops into mint. As currency flooded, markets were jammed. As commodities were hoarded, prices sky rocketed. Eventually, all these copper tankas accumulated as mountain heaps before treasury. As bullion drained out and treasury emptied, the dream project was abandoned.

Tughlaq’s creativity was not yet over. To control China, the intervening mountain ranges have to be subdued. “To affect this object, a large force, under distinguished amirs and generals, was sent to the mountain of Kara jal, with orders to subdue the whole mountain. In obedience to orders, it marched into the mountains and encamped in various places, but the Hindus closed the passes and cut off its retreat. The whole force was thus destroyed at one stroke, and out of all this chosen body of men, only ten horsemen returned to Delhi to spread the news of its discomfiture.’

**A depleted treasury & a demoralised army gave rise to multiple rebellions**



A depleted treasury and a demoralised army gave rise to multiple rebellions. On 3rd August 1347, on his way to Anhilwara, he was informed that Hassan Gangu has defeated his army and established an independent kingdom. The Sultan’s health was deteriorating rapidly; he was unable to stop disintegration of the Sultanate he had dreamt of centralizing. He told Barni that wicked and evil-minded people had become predominant. A mere suspicion of rebellion or conspiracy invited prompt execution. He was determined to pursue his policy until either he himself perished or the people reformed and stopped rebelling. He distributed largess amongst people but they remained estranged and considered him their enemy. The Sultan was even prepared to abdicate, but his sense of prestige called him to crush all rebellion first.

During the last two years of his reign, Sultan was busy pursuing a Gujarati rebel by the name Taqhi. Taqhi fled into Sind and the Sultan, though prostrated by an attack of fever, pursued him to Tasla. On

20th March, 1351, he finally died on the banks of Indus. Badauni said, “The King was freed of his people, and they of their King”.

### **Tughlaq destroyed peasantry**

‘A project of the Sultan which operated to the ruin of the country and the decay of the people,’ states Barni, ‘was the thought that he ought to get ten or five percent more tribute from the lands in the doab. The cesses were collected so rigorously that the riots were impoverished and reduced to beggary. Those who were rich and had property became rebels; the lands were ruined, and cultivation was entirely arrested. When the raiyyats in distant countries heard of the distress and ruin of the raiyyats in the doab, through fear of the same evil befalling them, they threw off their allegiance and betook themselves to the jungles. The decline of cultivation, and the distress of the raiyyats in the doab, and the failure of convoys of corn from Hindustan, produced a fatal famine in Delhi and its environs, and throughout the doab. Grain became dear. There was a deficiency of rain, so the famine became general. It continued for some years, and thousands upon thousands of people perished of want. Communities were reduced to distress, and families were broken up. The glory of the kingdom and the power of the Government of Sultan Mohammed, from this time withered and decayed.’

Sheikh Nuru-i-Hakk gives further details of the ruin of the peasantry of the Gangetic doab. He states, ‘The whole of the doab became unable any longer to bear up against the grievous rack renting and oppressive taxes. The people in despair set fire to their barns and stacks, and, carrying away their cattle, became wanderers in the wide world. Upon this, the Sultan gave orders that every such peasant who may be seized should be put to death, and that the whole country should be ravaged and given up to indiscriminate plunder. He even himself marched out of the city for that purpose, as if he had been doing on a hunting expedition, put to sword all the remaining population, and ordered their heads to be displayed from the battlements of the fort. In this way, he utterly depopulated whole tracts of his kingdom, and inflicted such rigorous punishment that the whole world stood aghast.’<sup>57</sup>

**Sultan gave orders that every peasant who is seized should be put to death**



The Sultan now thought of rehabilitating agriculture. He encouraged the digging of wells and gave loans to the cultivators. He evolved a scheme for state farming and reclamation of waste land. The country was divided into imaginary rectangles. Not a handful of land in all these karohs was to be left uncultivated and every crop was to be changed; thus, wheat was to be grown instead of barley, sugarcane instead of wheat, and grapes and dates instead of sugarcane. This rotation displayed complete ignorance of the principles of agriculture. About a hundred shiqdars, or undertakers, were to be appointed (to these imaginary rectangles). Greedy men, men in distress and reckless adventurers came and undertook within three years to bring under cultivation three hundred thousand bighas of barren land and to provide three thousand horses from the barren land. They gave written deeds to this effect. To this reckless group, which undertook to cultivate barren land, various awards were given, caparisoned horses, cloaks of brocade and cash. Out of a loan of three lakhs of tankas promised to each of them, everyone got fifty thousand tankas in immediate cash. They were to repay it at a future date. In 1351, Sultan died. That certainly saved all the Shikdars and loanees for their dispatch to hell.

In conclusion, by the middle of fourteenth century, the overall picture was that of universal poverty with degraded peasantry. The society was marked by a regressive social outlook, especially towards its women. Citizenry was sullen and angry due to imposition of **Regression of knowledge frontiers was to cost India heavily in times to come** Jiziyah. The state apparatus was conflict ridden and reeking with murderous intrigues at the top. As leaping flames of hatred consumed books, the fresh quest of knowledge was snuffed out. Regression of knowledge frontiers was to cost India heavily in times to come.



The only silver lining, if it can be said, was the benevolent outlook of Chengiz Khan towards India. The Mongol hurricane had humbled the world but spared the land of Buddha, the Enlightened. That perhaps, was the solitary ray of light in the otherwise dark, dismal and depressing scenario.

### 3.5 TAXATION DURING THE BAHMANIS

Just as about Kingship, the Islamic literature is quite clear about all aspects of fiscal administration. The Quranic mandate regarding payment of various dues from various sections of population is well laid down. Let us have a look at each of these dues, its share and purpose for its payment.

Charity in general and the payment of Zakat (alms tax) in particular are obligatory duties for Muslims. As a matter of rule, the property assessable for Zakat should have been in the owner's possession for at least one year. The Zakat money was meant for different categories of poor people and was not considered a source of revenue for the rulers. Firuz Shah Tugalak, however included Zakat on his list of regular state demands and established a separate treasury for it. The 2½ percent Zakat on Muslim trader's imports and exports were levied under both Delhi Sultans and the Mughals. Pious merchants conscientiously paid Zakat. Some of them believed that the blessings obtained from this payment protected them from the loss of their merchandise.

The customs rates under different Sultans varied from 2¼ percent and went upto even 4 to 5 percent. Abul Fazl confirmed that 2¼ percent was the maximum under Akbar. In Jahangir's reign, the customs duties were 3½ percent on all imports and exports of goods and 2 percent on money, gold and silver. The customs duties were increased during Shahjehan's time and ranged from 4 to 5 percent. Aurangzeb was most innovative who fixed even a higher rate for non-Muslims. The differential rates were provided for as per Quranic injunctions and therefore, Aurangzeb was well within the Ruler's 'constitutional rights' to do what he did.

There were transit duties as well. But road and river tolls were a sort of "on and off" affair from one ruler to another. Akbar remitted road toll on two occasions but river toll was imposed. Jahangir remitted both of them. According to travellers like Mundy, Thevenot and Tavernier, transit duties were in force in large areas of the country.

Innumerable articles mainly vegetables, betel leaves, meat and fish

were subject to octroi levies. Cesses were imposed on trades such as cotton carding, soap, rope, oil and brick making. Even gambling houses, centres of amusement and brothels were covered. Sultan Firuz remitted these later cesses, finding them not sanctioned by Sharia.

Presents were another source of income at court. The presentation of gifts to the court and noblemen was an important custom. The more valuable gifts were presented by foreign visitors and officials of all ranks. The emperor received presents on all festive occasions, birthdays and accession anniversaries and even after recovering from an illness. The Mansabdars also made gifts on occasions such as their promotions and reinstatement. The rulers reciprocated by giving robes of honour, precious jewels, belts adorned with diamonds and rare objects to show honour to their noblemen and visitors.

Foreign observers condemned the emperors for enriching their treasury by confiscating the property of their deceased mansabdars. For example, Pelsaert says:

“Immediately on the death of a lord who has enjoyed the King’s jagir, be the great or small, without any exception - even before the breath is out of the body - the King’s officers are ready on the spot, and make an inventory of the entire estate, recording everything down to the value of a single piece, even to the dresses and jewels of the ladies, provided they have not concealed them. The King takes back the whole estate absolutely for himself, except in a case where the deceased has done good service in his lifetime, when the women and children are given enough to live on, but no more.”<sup>58</sup>

**...booty (G’anima) was an important source of state finance**



During early phases of Arab and Turkish conquests, booty (ghanima) was an important source of state finance. According to the Sharia, one fifth is set apart for the state and the remaining four fifths are to be distributed among the soldiers, although the mounted troopers received one or two shares more. With the introduction of regular salary payment to soldiers of all ranks, their share in booty was reduced to one fifth. The fact remains that a share in booty had always been a motivational force for the Islamic armies to sustain their campaign, till the final objective had been achieved.

Jizyah (poll-tax) formed an important source of the state finances. It had been sanctioned by the Quran. Jizyah was levied on Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, who were categorized as protected subjects (zimmis). Those who embraced Islam were exempted from paying Jizyah, but then became liable to pay Zakat. The first invader, Mohammad Bin Qasim, accorded both Hindus and Buddhists zimmi status and imposed Jizyah on them. During Gaznavids and Delhi Sultans, the Jizyah was collected from Hindus regularly.

The principle behind the imposition of Jizyah had never been an issue. The moot question was the legality of giving zimmi status to Hindus. A section of Ulema urged that Hindus should either be converted to Islam or be slaughtered. The Sultan and viziers had to convince the unrealistic 'Ulema' of the impracticability of their demand. Some rulers exempted Brahmans from the payment of Jizyah, but Sultan Firuz Khan reimposed it. The Brahmins protested and resorted to hunger strikes, but the sultan did not relent. Ultimately, some rich Hindus offered to pay Jizyah on their behalf. Sultan relented and reduced the prevalent rate for Brahmans. The collection of Jizyah from the Hindus in towns posed no problem, but in villages, like land revenue collections, it was assessed as a collective tax. It could be done because, almost the entire population in a village belonged to Hindu fold subsisting on land and animals. The village society, its economy and the faith co-terminated into one organic entity and therefore, the imposition of Jizyah on this collective was the only practical way to be realized by city based Islamic rulers.

The imposition of Jizyah varied from ruler to ruler. In 1564, Akbar remitted the collection of Jizyah. Some advisors and experts opposed it, but Akbar held his ground. In the subsequent reins of Jahangir and Shahjahan, no Jizyah was collected. Aurangzeb also did not collect it during early years of his reign, but reimposed it later on non-Muslims.

According to a contemporary historian, the Emperor's principal aim was to spread the law of Islam and to overthrow infidel practices. Khafi Khan, another historian, says that the new law was



designed to reduce the Hindus to poverty. The Satnami rebellions of 1672 had already upset the Delhi Muslims, and the Emperor may have believed that Hindu affluence was the root cause of the local uprisings. For the imposition of jizyah, the population was divided into rich, middle and poor classes. Those who owned property worth ten thousand dirhams or more were classed as rich, those with property valued at two hundred dirhams or more as the middle class, and those with property at less than two hundred dirhams as poor. Since the dirham was not current, the collection was made in silver. According to JN Sarkar's calculations, the rates for the three classes respectively were  $13 \frac{1}{3}$ ,  $6 \frac{2}{3}$  and  $3 \frac{1}{3}$  rupees; i.e, 6 percent of the gross income of the poor,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent on the middle class and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per thousand on the rich. The tax naturally hit the poorest section. Government officials and the priestly classes were exempt. In commercial centres such as Gujarat, Jizyah yielded  $3\frac{1}{2}$  percent per annum of the total gross revenue of the province and was quite sufficient to provide the 'ulema' with a holy source of livelihood.

The outcry and demonstrations by the Hindus of Delhi, particularly the artisans, money-lenders, and cloth merchants, were of no avail. Several Hindu demonstrators were trampled to death under the feet of the elephants and horses, and ultimately, they surrendered. The literary evidence suggests that the Muslim Jizyah collectors were generally harsh and it is plausible to believe Manucci's report that 'many Hindus who were unable to pay, turned Muhammedan.'<sup>59</sup>

### **Land Revenue (Al-Kharaj)**

The principal source of state revenue during Delhi Sultans and Deccan rulers was land revenue (Kharaj). Before the arrival of Islamic rule, the canonic law during the previous rulers, including in Telingana was the standard one-sixth (shastha-bhaga) of the gross produce. It was so during the Harsha's times in north India and so it was in all the southern kingdoms like Hoyasalas, Deogiris and Kakatiyas. With the arrival of Islamic rule, this one-sixth principle was going to be upturned completely. The owners of the land were not dispossessed, but any land, particularly that near the

capital, whose owners had been killed in a battle (and there were so many battles raging all the times) or were not traceable was allotted to Muslims. The Muslim owners paid one tenth (ushr) of their produce in tax on land watered by rains but on land dependent for irrigation with buckets on wheels, only one twentieth of the produce was paid as a levy. These blocks of lands were known as 'Ushri'.

The land left with its known and available Hindu owners was known as Kharaji or Kharaj paying (land revenue paying) land. In the thirteenth century, a collective assessment of revenue (kharaj) was made upon the villages. It amounted to one half of the gross produce from the land watered by rain. The one sixth canonical principles on land produce during Kakatiya times was rather suddenly jacked up to one half within a generation or so with the arrival of Bahmanis. Their principles were in consonance with those prevailing in Delhi Sultanate, be it during Tughlaqs and Khiljis or be it during Abbasids, Umayyads and even going back to The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs.

### **Method of Revenue collection**

For the purpose of revenue (Mukasa), the district was generally divided into those paying the dues directly into the treasury and those paying them to grantees of the state in lieu of their services. The lands included in the former category were called Khalsa or Crown lands, jagirs, Inams or Dumala, according to the nature of the assignment.<sup>60</sup>

The districts under the direct management of the state were placed under in-charge of Mokasadar. He was mainly a civil officer. A part of his Mokasa was allotted to him as remuneration. This officer was liable to be transferred but there are instances when the same post was held up by a 'Mokasadar' for a long period. It was sometimes inherited by his successor, but the decision in this respect always rested with Sultan.

The districts set aside for the expenses of the troops were called jagir and its holder was called 'Jagirdar'. The military chief was placed in the situation of the Governor of a revenue division,

and in addition, he exercised all functions of the 'Mokasadar'. The power to interfere for the protection of subordinate's rights was always retained by the government. The government also decided the claims of Mokasadar to any revenue in excess of the sum assessed in respect of a given area. Jagirs were discontinued or were liable for resumption at the will of the ruler. However, the Jagirdar had a right to waste lands in the districts brought under cultivation by him during his tenure on the resumption of his Jagir by the state.<sup>61</sup>

Extensive Jagirs became unmanageable when the power of the state became weak. This led to further deterioration in the administration. The 'Mokasadars' and 'Jagirdars' in-charge of districts (Sima, Suba or Paragana) were subordinated to the Tarafdars or provincial governors under the Bahmanis. The Tarafdars were vested with the highest civil and military powers; a system which weakened the centre and thus contributed to the dismemberment of the Bahmanis Empire by the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>62</sup>

### **Effect of the Revenue farming system**

There was no limit to the revenue demand of the state, when farming system was followed. When the burden imposed became too heavy and unbearable, the village committees abandoned their lands. Some of them tried to seek alternative means of livelihood while the others joined the banditry. The mode of settlement could not be carried out without interface with the local community. The village headman, who was responsible for the levy from amongst the members of the village community, was sometimes suspended. Thus, the privileges of the community were reduced to insignificance. These evils were further aggravated by farming out revenue collection to the highest bidder. The person (not necessarily working on the land himself) who gave security with a promise to pay the largest amount to the treasury was given the contract for the revenue collection. The contractor, in the like manner farmed-out smaller portions to the highest bidder. These persons, in turn contracted with the headman for a fixed payment from the village, leaving each of them to make what profit he could earn for himself.

If the headman's refused the terms offered to him, the contract was farmed-out to any stranger who was willing to accept the terms. By adopting the farming system, the lot of peasantries worsened.<sup>63</sup> The alienation of government revenue made for charitable or religious purpose or in recognition of personal merits were held under Inams or Dumala grants. Though they were numerous but their area was not large. Religious grants were given in perpetuity and seldom interfered with. The hereditary officers were holding Inams as a part of their remuneration for their service to the village community or government. They were normally held in perpetuity. In all such cases, of alienation, only the state's right to the share of the produce of the land was made over to the Inam-holder. The rights of other land holders remained unaffected.<sup>64</sup>

### **A Firman during Bahmanis**

A Bahmani firman issued by Shihabuddin Mahmud (1478-1482 CE) to the servants of the tomb of Sayyad Muhammad Gesu Deraz mentions regarding taxes to be realised from the three villages located in the vicinity of the town of Ahsanabad (Gulbarga, in Karnataka State). It states as follows:

“Mulla Ashraf jalar Sarsamat, Khan 'Aazarn Azhdaha Khan, the Thanedar and Mulla Sharf Hamd Shahabadi the Deputy (naib) Thandar as well as subsequent state officials (karkun) of Ahsanabad town should know that a few villages (qaryat) in the vicinity (of the town) have been allocated towards the expenses of the tomb of Hazrat Sayyad Muhammad Gesu Deraz on the orders of the royal court in accordance with minister's letter (khurdkhot) from the royal office (rekhat khana-I-muzam), and entered into the records of revenue (dakhil jama) and perquisites or small dues (lawazinat) from the following villages: 1) Bhinoli, 2) Bhairav madi, and 3) Talagtur. Dues to be collected are on account of village assessment (Gaongana), fodder for horses (alufa) Sail-bail, 'tax on oil mills(tel-mukura) fruits(mewa), fees for weighing (kaiyali), measurement of land and revenue (chak bandi), Chavrana, the 'fruit bearing cocoanut trees (bar darkhtan-Naral), Tamarind (khurma-i-hindi) octroi (zakota), leather (Jir), free labour (begar), dues in tribute (farmayish) and

octroi on certain specified items of food grains (zakota ghalla ajnas muta 'aiyin wa Jari) which are current. The said villages have been specifically continued until the year 914 AH (1508 CE). It is going forth in a similar way from the year 915 AH (1509 CE). Do not forbid. Accordingly, do not hinder (muzahim) and (do not) prevent (mu'ariz). Act according to the royal letter of the minister, (khurd khat.) 1514. AD, dated 1st, Shaban, 920 AH 22nd July.”<sup>65</sup>

From the above firman, it may be gleaned that there existed about 15 different types of taxes during the Bahmanis rule in the Deccan. They were well classified. Most of the tax burden fell on the owners and cultivators of the land. All the commodities connected with the agricultural produce, including fruits and trees were taxed. Oil mill (Tel Mukura) driven by bullocks in villages and leather (jir) used for making footwear by the cobblers come under the tax net. Horse fodder (Alufa) was taxed. Fee for weighing (Kaiyali) were recovered. Dues in tribute (farmayish) were probably charged from all inhabitants of the villages.

The author concludes that, it can be safely said that the incidence of taxation might have not been less than 50% of the total assessment of the individual holdings. The category of people, who did not have land for assessment purposes, had to pay, by way of free labour (beggar). This category perhaps consisted of the 'Shudras' component of the village society. That shows that none from the villages escaped payment of dues to the government in the medieval past.



## Customs

Customs was yet another source of revenue to the state. Bahmanis maintained a customs department. The duties imposed upon various articles were as follows:

|                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Horses per head             | - One Dinar |
| Cows and buffaloes per head | - One Tanum |
| Goat per head               | - 5 Jilal   |
| Camel per head              | - ½ Jilal   |
| Elephant per head           | - One Dinar |

The import duty on cloth, silk and cotton was imposed according to price, rate being Rs. 3-8-0 per Rs. 100/-. The same rate was maintained for crockery. For silver, gold and jewellery, the rate was Rs. 7-8-0 per Rs.100/-. No custom duty was imposed on grass, wood and stones but salt tax was retained.



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## 122 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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## 4. The Statecraft & Economy during Bahmanis times

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This chapter deals with various aspects of the statecraft which includes polity, general administration including military administration. It also describes the economic lot of the people.

The erstwhile Kakatiyan's decentralised polity was completely transformed into a centralised power structure. The epic 'Shahnama' written by Firdausi during eleventh century provided the edifice for the new rulers. Later on, during fourteenth century, yet another treatise titled 'Tarikh-i-Firuz shahi' was added by Barani. Both affirmed that the Sultan is God's shadow on earth. He is the apex of all administrative, military and judicial authority in the realm.

As Bahmanis rulers succeeded Khiljis and Tughlaqs, various aspects of their statecraft were faithfully replicated in the Deccan lands. The general administration had the same hierarchy. The territorial divisions had taraf or suba (akin to a province) and paragana (tehsil or taluka). There was no state functionary at the village level. The revenue collection was done by 'revenue farmers' who got this right as highest bidder during auction.

The military administration was centralised. The garrison situated in the capital was adequately resourced in terms of funds, armaments, cavalry, infantry and cannonade. Munniyan (the secret service) was quite active. Most of the posts at the apex of general or military administration were held by the emigrants from Persia. It generated jealousy among Dakhanis elite. The friction among the top ranks due to Afaqui/Dakhanis factor continued to bedevil the kingdom till its implosion.

The economic scenario in the realm was quite skewed in favour of the capital city which was Gulbarga to start with. It was the centre piece of the imperium studded with the court, garrison, harem, shahi mosque and a bustling market. Next came a string of towns like Paithan, Daulatabad, Bidar, Warangal, Bhongiri, Indur and Nirmal which produced specialised items. Last came the innumerable villages where masses lived and looked upto



**the rain gods for their well-being. The skewed pyramid was not quite conducive for a balanced and overall economic growth. The Telangana economy, which had a district edge during Kakatiya times by 1300 CE compared to global averages lost its rural vigour and gradually slipped into relative decline by 1500 CE. The sharper slippage was yet to come.**

#### 4.1 THE STATE APPARATUS

The Bahmani rule was established south of Vindhya during the mid-fourteenth century. By then, the Islamic rule had already seen its flowering under Delhi Sultanate, though intermittently for three centuries. Going beyond, the Umayyads from Damascus followed by Abbasids from Baghdad had also ruled during the previous centuries. Each one of these rulers were guided by the Quaranic injunctions. It would, therefore be appropriate to understand the principle of 'Kingship' as laid down in The Holy Book, Quaran.

According to the Quaran, "God the Most High, Unique and One in Himself enjoys unlimited sovereignty over His creations. Allah's undisputed power 'to give kingdom' and 'to take away kingdoms according to His will, pre-supposes the existence of a state, whose citizens are bound to obey the divine law, revealed through the Prophet Mohammad. With His death, the legislative functions, which He had performed, ended.<sup>1</sup> His successors, 'the rightly guided Caliphs inherited the Prophet's executive and judicial functions. The world view held by these 'rightly guided Caliphs' synthesised the Arab tribal customs with those of the Meccan trading oligarchy, while rejecting Iranian Monarchical tradition. Their successors, the Umayyads, did not enjoy the respect that the first four Caliphs had commanded. The Abbasids, who overthrew the Umayyads condemned their rule as *mulk*(Kingdom) or *irreligious kingship*, in contrast to early Caliphates". The Abbasid Caliphs strove to capitalise on their descent from Al-Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, the prophet's uncle. Abbasids also got the ancient Iranian 'Mirror for Princes' translated in Arabic. The Islamised version of this ancient Iranian text left an indelible impression on the fast-evolving Islamic multiracial society.<sup>2</sup> It unequivocally asserted that the rulers were divinely appointed monarchs who were accountable

to only 'God'. The jurists also maintained that 'God' had made the Caliphs, the trustees of their people and that the happiest 'shepherd' before the God on the 'Judgement Day' was the one whose subjects had been content during his reign.

In 1010 CE, the great Iranian poet Firdausi wrote the epic 'Shahnama'. It was to become the most significant watershed in the history of Islamic political thought. The epic 'Shahnama' eloquently reminded rulers and nobles that monarchs were instrumental in the execution of His will and therefore, their commands were inviolate. The 'God' of the 'Shahnama' was 'omnipotent' and 'omniscient'.

**In 1010 CE, the great Iranian poet Firdausi wrote the epic 'Shahnama'**



In 1122 CE, Abu Bakr Muhammad Bin Al Walid Al Turtushi compiled, a comprehensive Arabic treatise entitled 'Siraj-ul-Muluk'.<sup>3</sup> Drawing from a vast range of source material, the author referred to kings by such titles as 'Muluk' (rulers), Umra (Princes), Salatin (Kings) and Wulat (Lords), implying that they were indomitable powers. He also endorsed the view that a Sultan's right to rule was of divine origin and that he was 'God's shadow on earth', second only in rank to prophets and angels.

By the early 13th century, the Abbasid Caliphate was reduced to a mere shadow. The enterprising Turkic rulers, in order to reinforce their own positions, exhibited the Caliphs sovereignty over the territories they had conquered by including their name in 'Khutba' and on their coins. This not only enhanced their prestige but also legitimised their rule in the eyes of orthodox.<sup>4</sup> In 1225 CE, Iltutmish issued coins showing his close relationship with the Caliph. Four years later, when Iltutmish had annihilated all his rivals, the Caliph sent his emissaries to Delhi. The occasion was celebrated with great festivity, and the Caliph's name was inscribed in Hindi on the coins in order to make the connection between the Sultan and the Caliph widely known. Balban, his successor also considered himself a Vice regent of God and 'His shadow on earth'. In 1317 CE, Ala-ud-Din's son Qutb-ud-Din Mubarak Shah issued coins bearing the titles which the Abbasid Caliphs had adopted. In 1344 CE, the envoy of the Abbasid Caliph in Egypt brought to sultan Mohammad Bin Tughlaq an investiture of authority, which he received with great humility. The reception and gifts given by

the Sultan to the emissary amazed Ibn Batuta, who was present at the time.<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Bin Tughlaq died fighting the rebels in distant Thatta. In 1346 CE, his successor Sultan Firuz received his investiture and the title Sayyidsu-Salatin (Chief of the Sultans) from the Caliph. As usual, a warm welcome along with gifts galore was conducted as a routine, yet a necessary formality.

**It allows Muslim kings in the interest of Islam, to display arrogance & ruthlessness**



In the 14th century, yet another political treatise had been compiled by the author Barani titled 'Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi' and 'Fatima-i-Jalandhari'.<sup>6</sup> It allows, Muslim kings, in the interest of Islam, to display arrogance and ruthlessness. Even some non-Islamic customs such as ceremonial prostration in the style of Iranian Court, amassing of huge amounts of treasure and the collection of large harems, of course in the interest of Islam could be legalised.

Barani reaffirmed his belief that the theory of 'The Sultan is Gods shadow on earth', 'Religion and Kingdom are twin brothers' and 'People follow the faith of their Kings' were true. To Barani, the ideal Muslim ruler could not satisfy his divine commission unless he deprived Hindus of all high governmental positions and forced the Brahmans into bankruptcy and social misery.<sup>7</sup> Those who departed from the orthodox Sunnism, notably the Ismaeli's and Sufi philosophers were to be annihilated, so as to glorify Sunni Islam in India and make it the leading religion. According to Barani, this validated the autocratic form of Delhi Sultanate's rule and gave it a religious basis.

The system of governance and administration bequeathed by the Khalji's and Tughlaqs remained essentially the same under the sultanates of Deccan.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, when one of the high officials of the Tughlaq Empire revolted against his master Mohammed Bin Tughlaq, the political, administrative and judicial institutions that were already available offered a broad base over which the fabric of the kingdom could be erected. In 1347 CE, soon after his coronation, Alauddin Hasan Bahaman Shah effortlessly slipped into this halo of 'Shadow of Allah and His Prophet on earth'.



As the supreme head of the state, he was the

mainspring of honour and dignity. He conferred and abrogated appellation of rank as distinction and right to possession. Except under the first Bahmani sultan, the ministers' nobles and others were required to stand when the sultan was present in the court.<sup>9</sup> All persons when introduced to the king knelt and touched the ground with their forehead.<sup>10</sup> The sultan was an emblem of all authority in the state. As head of the state, he was the chief of all organs of the government, legislative, executive, administrative and judicial. Outside the Shariah, customary and judge made laws, he was the only law giver. As the chief executive, he notified and executed laws with the assistance of officers appointed by him and responsible to him. As the head of judiciary, he administered laws, both directly and with the assistance of the Qazis and other judicial officers.<sup>11</sup>

The precedence of Tughlaq dynasty ruling from Delhi came quite handy to the founder of the new dynasty. He maintained all those administrative institutions which were established in the court of Mohammad Tughlaq. The author of 'Burhan-i-Maasir' gives a list of offices established by Hasan, thus:

- |                      |   |                             |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Sahib-i-Arzs      | - | One who reviews the army    |
| 2. Qur Begi Maisarsh | - | Commander of the left wing  |
| 3. Qur Begi Maimanat | - | Commander of the right wing |
| 4. Dabir             | - | Secretary                   |
| 5. Diwan             | - | Finance Minister            |
| 6. Saiyyad-ul-Hujjab | - | Land Chamberlain            |
| 7. Haijib-ul-Qasbah  | - | Commissioner of the City    |

The sultan was the fountain head of justice and administration, the central pivot on which the entire empire revolved. To help him in performing such arduous duties, he had a council of his own consisting of:

- |                      |   |                            |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Wakil-us-Sultanat | - | Prime Minister             |
| 2. Amir-i-Jumla      | - | Finance Minister           |
| 3. Vazir Asharaf     | - | Member for Foreign Affairs |
| 4. Nazir             | - | Secretary Finance          |
| 5. Kotwal            | - | The Police Commissioner    |
| 6. Vazir-i-Kul       | - | Auditor General            |
| 7. Sadr-Jehon        | - | Member Judiciary           |

Appointment to these ministerial posts were made based on

outstanding merits and their proven army experience. Members of the royal family were not appointed to these posts.

The household administration was yet another system replicated after Delhi Sultan. Isami had stated the pattern as follows:

1. Wakil-e-Dar - The Chief Superintendent of the royal police
2. Barbak - Mentor of ceremonies of the Court
3. Hajib - Receiver and introducer of the Darbar and Transmitter of royal messages
4. Sar-Jaandaar - Commander of the personal bodyguards
5. Sarpadhadar - Special bodyguard of the inner pavilion
6. Qurbak - In-charge of the Royal armoury
7. Shahnai-i-Bargah - Superintendent of the Darbar
8. AkhurBak - Superintendent of Royal horses
9. Shahnah-i-Fil - Superintendent of Royal elephants
10. Shahnah-i-Khwan - Superintendent of Royal kitchen
11. Sarbadar - Superintendent of Royal Water supply
12. Kharitahdar - In-charge of maps
13. Sur-Dawat-dar - In-charge of Royal Stationery
14. Chasnigiri - Taster

Most of the posts mentioned in household administration were given to the members of the royal family or those who were near and dear ones to sultan. Each one of these posts had a deputy i.e naib.

### **The Central Administrative set-up**

The sultan was at the apex of the administrative machinery and conducted administration with the assistance of the Majlis-i-Mushawarat – the advisory council.<sup>12</sup>

The Majlis generally consisted of ministers and high officials. The ministers were charged with the departments like Finance, Army, Accounts, Law & Justice and Police, while the Wakil-i-Saltanat acted as the lieutenant of the kingdom, the Sadrush Shariah was in charge of law and justice, religion and endowments. The Kotwal looked after the city police, law and order and persons. Some of the ministers held the post of Tarafdars (Governor). Two or three of them were generally the most intimate councillors, constituting the inner cabinet. The Sultan convened the majlis at his Diwan khana.

When the majlis met for judicial purposes, the judicial dignitaries like the Sadrush Shariah and muffis were also included.<sup>13</sup>

The ministers were selected by the sultan generally from the ranks of nobles who had shown their mettle in the battlefield and administration. Ministers in-charge of law and justice, religion and endowments were those who were noted for their scholarship. As Sultan's sovereignty was derived to a considerable extent from the implicit and explicit loyalty of elite groups, ministers were also drawn from this group. It was under the personal orders of the Sultan or under those of the Wakil-i-Sultanat, that the officers were transferred, promoted or removed. Jagirs that were granted to officers and others were mostly personal rather than hereditary in character.<sup>14</sup>

### **Wakil-I-Saltanat**

Wakil-i-Saltanat(or Wakil-wa-Peshwa) was primus inter pares among the ministers. The institution first created by the founder of the Bahmani Dynasty and was continued by all the Sultanates of Deccan. Sometimes, the duties of Wakil-i-Saltanat were charged to a commission of three persons, particularly when the Sultan was a minor. The position of the Wakil-i-Saltanat was only next to the Sultan in the realm, in respect of status and powers, but higher than that of Amirul-Umrah, the highest post in the army. The great men like Saif-ud-din Ghori, Fazlullah Inju and Khwaza Mahmud Gawan served the Bahmanis in this post.

The Wakil-i-Saltanat was also known as Malik Naib, as he held the charge of government in the absence of the Sultan from the capital. Under the Bahmanis, he also held the office of the Tarafdar of the province in which the capital was situated.<sup>15</sup>

At the time of appointment, Wakil-i-Saltanat was conferred a special title and robe of honour. A special firmaan was issued for his appointment and dismissal. The authority wielded by Wakil-i-Saltanat depended very largely upon the inter play of his personality with the personality of the Sultan.

Apart from conducting the affairs of the Government through his diwan khana, the king also augmented it by holding Darbar. The former was a meeting of the ministers while the Darbar was a larger

**Darbar,  
undoubtedly  
was a  
dazzling affair**



body in which all the ministers, nobles, officials and Ulemas assembled. Darbar, undoubtedly was a dazzling affair. Its dignity, pomp and show inspired confidence amongst the common people. At the same time, it instilled awe and reverence amongst the potential enemies. The rulers listened to the reports from the heads of department and noted the implementation of state regulations. Ambassadors from foreign countries were also received in public audience, and the tributary chiefs and important dignitaries were accorded a formal welcome there. The princes, ministers, heads of department, and other major officials were assigned fixed places to stand. The master of ceremonies at the sultan's court was known as amir-I hajib or barbak, and his assistants were called hajibs or naib barbak. They stood between the sultan and his subjects. Their duty was to prevent the violation of precedence in standing in the court and to present the petitioners to the sultan. They were members of the military class and acted as commanders of military expeditions when ordered to do so. The leading hajibs played an active role in the war councils. The 'naqibu'l-nuqaba' (chief usher) and his assistants, called naqibs, announced loudly the sultan's orders to the soldiers. They also proclaimed the sultan's presence in the royal cavalcade. The insignia of the 'naqibu'l-nuqaba', consisting of a gold mace and a gold tiara surmounted by peacock feathers, added pomp and luster to the courts. A body of soldiers called silahdar, commanded by the sar-silahdar, also waited on the sultan during the public audiences. The sultan's bodyguards, called jandars, were loyal soldiers and wore very impressive uniforms. Their commander was known as the sar-jandar.<sup>16</sup>

Everyday, except on Fridays, the Darbar was resplendent and ceremonious as befitting to the ruler of a mighty state. Carpets of silk of the highest order were spread and shamianas of cloth of gold erected for the reception of all and sundry. The king arrived at the Darbar hall till the call to the afternoon prayers i.e, about an hour after the solar noon. In the beginning, he was content with the silver throne bequeathed to him by his father, but this was replaced on 23rd March, 1363 by the magnificent Takht-i-Firoza or Turquoise throne sent to him by the Raya of Tilangana. The throne was made of ebony and was 3 yards long by 2 yards broad, and was called Turquoise throne as

it was originally covered with an enamel of Turquoise hue, but each new Sultan after Muhammed-I added fresh jewels and ornaments to it till there was nothing visible except precious stones. The throne was placed in the Aiman-i-Bar-i-Am or Hall of public audience.

The Royal household and its maintenance was yet another elaborate affair. Karkhanas (manfactories) were an important part of the household. These aspects would be discussed at length in context of Golconda kingdom, which enveloped the present-day Telangana lands.

Beyond the management of darbar and the royal household, the principles of administration were also laid down. Saif-ud-Din Ghorī, the father-in-law of Muhammed Shah-I had laid down the principles of monarchical government in the brochure named *Nasa-i-hul-Muluk*. It is addressed to the king himself and gives the qualities requisite for a successful monarch, the need for appointing the best men possible to every post, high or low, the division of officers into men of 'sword and the standard' and men of 'knowledge and pen.' It also narrated the qualities pertaining to high civil officers such as the *Wakil* (Prime Minister), *Wazir* (Minister), *Dabir* (Secretary), Military officers such as *Sarheddar* (warder of the marches), *Qiladar* (Commander of a fortress), *Bakshi* (Paymentor), judicial officers like *Qazi* (judge), *Mufti* (one who interpreted the law), Police Officers such as *kotwal* (Commissioner of Police), *Muhtasib* (Censor of the public morals) and others.

As regards the king himself, Ghori says that he should be lucky enough to come in possession of the kingdom while still young, should be able to discern hidden qualities in men as well as the true bearing of the ways of his enemies, should not take unfortunate occurrences too much to heart, should be good to others, have high moral standards, and at the same time, should be ready to support the poor and the learned, be an adept in diplomacy and have other qualities which might make him respected and exalted. He should do everything which would make the army loyal to him and should try to bring the hypocrites and the half-hearted over to his side, or else, if he is not successful in this, should dismiss them in such a manner that they may not be able to create disturbances in the land. He should



avoid those fond of ease and comfort and others who are prone to be too free with him for their own gain. He advised the king to be ever ready to take counsel of those who are learned and fit to advise him. He further addresses the Royal Majesty and says that he should appoint only such persons to various offices as should be fit for them regarding both their general character and efficiency, for experts of bad character as well as honest men who are ignorant of the duties they have to perform, both bring a kingdom to utter ruin.<sup>17</sup>

Muhammed Shah-I, as advised by his Chief Minister, organised the administration of the kingdom which practically continued right upto the end of the Bahmani period. His father had been constantly on the move leading one campaign or the other and the country was governed more or less under martial law. Muhammad Shah-I, put the administration on a semi-civil basis.

### **Administrative Divisions**

The apex consisting of the Sultan and Wakil-i-Saltanat was assisted by the heads of the administrative divisions known as Taraf. It was divided into taraf or provinces centred at Daulatabad, Berar, Bidar and Gulbarga. The province of Gulbarga, which included Bijapur, was regarded as the most important of all and was usually given to one who commanded the confidence of the king to the greatest degree and was called Malik Naib or (Viceroy).

**It was divided into taraf or provinces centred at Daulatabad, Berar, Bidar and Gulbarga**



The designation was changed to 'Sarlashkar' and later to 'Suba'. The Bahmani Sultans controlled their Tarafdars through several administrative methods. Firstly, it was an administrative and not a hereditary appointment. Therefore, transfers were not infrequent. Then, Sultans made tours to these Tarafs. It enabled them to remain in touch with Taraf and redress grievance, if any. As kingdom expanded, the Tarafs were bifurcated into two provinces and the governor of each province was called 'Sarlashkar'. Fourthly, a number of places in each province were reserved to meet the Sultan's private expenses and district collectors were appointed by the court to manage them. Fifthly, only one fort was left with the Tarafdar while the others were entrusted to officers and troops directly appointed and paid by the

Sultan. This was intended to empower the headquarters to reduce a recalcitrant Tarafdar to subjection.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to this arrangement introduced by the farsighted Mahmud Gawan, the Tarafdar was all in all in his taraf, being the provincial head in all spheres, military, civil and judicial. He made all civil, judicial and military appointments in his division. No wonder that when this arrangement was discontinued after the death of Mahmud Gawan, it was not difficult for the heads of the five large provinces of the kingdom to assume autonomy over their territories.

Each Taraf also had a Court of Justice.

The royal establishment of a Paragana was known as the Diwan-i-Paragana, whose head was directly appointed by the Sultan. The chief of the Diwan-i-Paragana was known as Hawaldar. He held the office at the pleasure of the Wazir or the Amir who held the Paragana either in Muqasa (the place for collecting the customs or revenue) or in Jagir. If appointed by the Sultan, he was called 'Muqasadar' and was reporting to him.<sup>19</sup>

Along with this royal institution of local administration, there was another one of the indigenous origins popularly known as the Gota, composed chiefly of the Watandars and Mirathdars. During the early period of the Bahmani dynasty, the qazi, who acted as an intermediary between the government officers and the indigenous officers, seems to be responsible for bringing the Diwan and Gota together in a Majlis which was presided over by the qazi. The Pargana Majlis used to confirm private transactions, give testimony and make representation to higher authorities as an administrative body. Parallel to the royal administrative divisions were the Jagirs which were virtually ruled by the landed gentry. By and large, the Jagirs were miniature dominions and were modelled on the pattern of the royal dominion where nobles were of different persuasion from that of the Sultan, they were allowed to read the khuthbah and worship publicly according to their own tenets, subject to a watch over them by the Sultan.<sup>20</sup>

'Iqta' is yet another concept which need to be understood. 'Iqta' means lands, villages or even larger territories, whose rent was received by the recipient of Iqta's for their own maintenance and the

### 134 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

maintenance of troops and administration. The nayakas in Kakatiya times perfected it to suit their convenience and sub-allotted land in every village to pay for the village administration and services. The Rajputs in the north had also followed the same pattern. With the invasion of Islamic arms and establishment of Delhi Sultanate, all such assignments to Hindus were taken back and redistributed among the victors. They were their Turkish followers and included slaves. The new Iqtadaars were expected to maintain law and order and a standing army in their territory. The surplus income, if any was expected to be remitted in the royal treasury. The Iqta right was not hereditary. The Bahmanis of Deccan continued to follow the Delhi Sultanate in the matters of grant of Iqtas. Bulk of them were assigned to their own camp followers. However, in due course of time, a few Hindus were also granted Iqtas. Narayana held Mudkul, Bagalkot, Tardal and Janakhudi, while Khepras held Khembhavi.

#### **Administrative Reforms**

To begin with, the Bahmani's Empire was divided into four provinces during the rule of Alauddin Hasan. One of the provinces was Bidar which included Qandhar, Indur, Kowlas and occupied parts of Tilangana upto Bhongiri. Each province was called 'Atrafs' and was controlled by 'Tarafdar'. The latter were the virtual rulers of the 'Atrafs' and wielded great influence in the districts as well as in the capital. The 'Atraf' had many forts, each under a Thanaidar. All these Thanaidars were fully under the control of Tarafdar.

As the Empire expanded, the territorial boundaries of each Tarafdar expanded too. By 1472 CE, the boundaries of Bahmani Kingdom were touching the Bay of Bengal in the east and Arabian Sea in the west. It was time to reform the system of administration which had been laid down as far back as the reign of Muhammad I, a century ago. The former divisions became unwieldy with vastly extended areas. The result of this incongruity was that the tarafdaar of each province had almost become a small potentate with his territory and resources, sometimes ready to withstand the might of the central government itself. This accretion to the power of provincial governors was unnatural, unwieldy and detrimental to the stability

of the central government itself. Mahmud Gawan, the visionary and efficient minister divided the state into eight smaller provinces. Each province consisted of several sarkars (districts) which in turn were subdivided into Paraganas (Tahsil). Each Paragana had a group of villages under its jurisdiction.

The hitherto four provinces were reorganised into eight sarlashkarship or provinces of moderate sizes. Among other changes, the old Tilangana with the new additions was subdivided into two charges; Rajahmundry included Nalgonda, Masulipatnam and Oriya territory. The Warangal sarlashkarship, due to its sustained belligerence was carved out as a separate province. Apart from roughly halving the old provincial areas, the Khwaza removed certain tracts from the jurisdiction of each one of the new governors, bringing them directly under the control of the king himself called Royal Domain and thus putting a strong check on the power of tarafdaars in their own provinces.

**The Warangal sarlashkarship, due to its sustained belligerence was carved out as a separate province**



The power of tarafdaars over the military affairs of their provinces were hitherto unlimited. He could not only appoint commanders of the garrison in various forts within his territory, but was more or less at liberty to keep as many men on active duty as he liked. He could play around with the huge amount from the mansab he received from the central treasury or the Jagirs he possessed, even to the extent of depleting the military forces, which could not have withstood external dangers.

Mahmud Gawan, made it the rule that a tarafdaar of a province shall have only one fortress under his direct control. The qiladaars or commandants of all the other forts were to be appointed by the central government under its responsibility. Mahmud Gawan, with an eye for details knew that Jagirs given to commanders bore no relationship to their loyalty or even capability. Even the number of troops kept had no relationship with the size of Jagirs. The new plan had a rule that every jagirdar was to be paid at the rate of one lakh of hons (later raised to a lakh and quarter) annually for every

**The king  
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once a year  
necessarily**



500 men kept under arms. If Jagir incurred losses in the collection of rent, the provision was made for the compensation. On the other hand, if a mansabdar failed to maintain the stipulated number of soldiers, he had to refund the proportionate amount to the royal treasury. The provincial governments were kept under strict vigilance. The king toured in these provinces once a year necessarily. The ostensible pretext was hunting but sometimes, surprise visits were also made to the provincial headquarters.

In recruitment, he maintained the balance of power by recruiting an equal number of old comers i.e, Habshis and Dakhanis and new comers i.e Iranian, Circasian and Central Asian immigrants in the royal bodyguard. The same policy was followed while appointing Governors.

### **The Judicial Administration**

**The  
administration  
of justice was  
run according  
to the dictates  
of the Quran**



The Judicial administration was carried out by Qazis and Sadr-i-Jahan. Every province, district and paragona had a Qazi, whose appointment was made out of the category of Ulemas. These Qazi's exercised both, civil and criminal powers. In villages, the judicial authority rested in Amanna and Thanaidar, who after investigations forwarded the case to be finally adjudicated by Qazi. The right of appeal lapsed after one month. The administration of justice was run according to the dictates of the Quran. The Bahmanis did not appoint Brahmin pundits, like the Mughals did later to hear the case of Hindus and dispense justice in accordance of their sacred books.

In certain exceptional cases, the king himself heard cases in Sadr-Adalat and also supervised the deliberations of Sadr-i-jahan, Mohammad Shah-II is reported to have heard a peculiar case of adultery. The Qazi asked the accused woman as to why she had committed adultery. She replied that since every male person had the right to associate with four women, she appropriated to herself a similar right. But when she was told that no such right existed for women, she confessed her guilt and pleaded innocence. The King was amazed at her wit and directed the Qazi to acquit her.

## The Revenue Administration

Mahmud Gawan was one of the ministers in medieval India to order a systematic measurement of land, fixing the boundaries of the villages and towns and making a thorough enquiry into the assessment of the revenue. As the income of the state could be determined on a certain basis, the power of nobles was curbed and thereby the status of the royal government at the centre was raised considerably. Land was classified according to its fertility, irrigational facilities and nearness to the market. The land revenue was fixed based on these considerations. Wet crops, cash crops and gardens yielded more revenue, while the dry crops were assessed low. The land was divided into two categories i.e., arable and non-arable. Tax was regular on arable land while it was nominal on non-arable lands. It would perhaps appear that lands assigned to temple and mosques were exempted from paying rent.

Ahmad had systematised the Mansabdari system giving a mansab of 2000 to each Sarlashkar, 1500 to the Amiru'l-Umara, 1200 to Wakil, and mansabs ranging from 100 to 1000 to other amirs. He also ordered that those receiving the mansabs of 1000 and over should be allowed to use their own ensign, drums and necklace. The reason why the mansab to the Sarlashkars and the Amiru'l-Umara was of greater monetary value than that of the Prime Minister was that the former were military commanders and while they had jagirs in their possession for the army, they had to keep their own position dignified and secure by the amount of the mansab.<sup>21</sup>

The post office was called 'Chapar Khana'. The Bahmanis, on the lines of Khaljis/Khiljis and Tughlaq's maintained an efficient system of postal service primarily meant for royal and governmental purposes. 'Chowkis' were established every 3 miles and letters were carried between the 'Chowkies' by horse riders or sentries. Postal service carried on by horses was called 'Barid-o-Bam.' There was regular communication between the central and provincial governments. In the beginning, there was great challenge to establish postal system. Roads and highways were infested with robbers and dacoits waylaid travellers. Alauddin Hasan Bahaman

Postal service carried on by horses was called 'Barid-o-Bam'



Shah had to launch a campaign against them and that is how the roads became free and safe for travellers and postal services alike.

These two departments, as the name would suggest were responsible for storing precious wealth and organising royal hunt. Toshak Khana or Jama-i-Khana was under jamidar while Shikar Gah was under the control of Mir Shikar. These departments continued to survive even till the Nizam's Government.

### **The Military Administration**

Under the Bahmani rulers, the state departments, four in numbers were deemed as the four pillars of the state. The Diwan-i-Wizarat was connected with finance, the Diwan-i-Risalat with religious matters. The Diwan-i-Arz organised military officers and Dewan-i-Insha dealt with the royal correspondence. Although, Diwan-i-wizarat was senior to the other three, the other ministers had direct access to the Sultan and enjoyed equal respect.

The head of Diwan-i-arz was referred to as the Ariz-i-Mamalik. He directed the recruitment of soldiers and officers, maintained the muster rolls, controlled promotions and demotions and revised salaries. The Ariz also controlled the commissariat. Khalji had introduced the system of branding horses and maintaining a roll describing each trooper, but Firuz Tughlaq discontinued these practices. The army was organised on the decimal system. Al Umari said that a khan commanded ten thousand horsemen or more, a malik commanded a thousand, an amir a hundred did a sipahsalar less than one hundred. Amir Khusraw had also confirmed this decimal system.

A superior military prowess was a necessary pre-condition for Bahmanis to plant the Islamic flag in the Deccan. However, its sustained continuation followed by expansion of territories rendered it all the more necessary to keep reinforcing this military prowess. The sustained conflicts from the Vijayanagara in south, the Malwa's threat from the north and a sustained recalcitrance from Tilangana rulers in the east made it imperative for Bahmanis to establish a large standing army, full of non-Mulkis. They had a central military organisation headed by Amir-ul-Umra, i.e, 'the Commander-in-Chief'. All put together, it was composed of 50,000 cavalry and

25,000 infantry in Hassan times. In later years, in the reign of Mohammed Shah and others, the number increased to one lakh and nine thousand. The military forces were organised in a pyramidal structure. The Commander-in-chief, also called Amir-ul-Umra was the apex and a group of officers called barbardaran were created whose duty it was to mobilise the troops in time of need. There were, besides, 200 men who were called Yakka Jawanan or Silandaran, who were in charge of the personal arms of the king. Besides these, there was a well-equipped force of 4000 bodyguards of the king who were called Khasakhel. Under the Sultan's orders, 50 Silandars and 1000 of the Khasakhel had to attend the royal person every day.<sup>22</sup>

**Army had 50000 calavry and 25000 infantry in Hassan times. Later, in the reign of Mohammed Shah & others, it went up to 1 lakh nine thousand**



The provincial army organisation was headed by the Tarafdar. He was entitled to maintain an army of 10,000 soldiers and render services, whenever asked by the king. The tarafdar was also called 'Saralashkar who had many forts under his command.

The magnificence of the new kingdom could be estimated by the pilgrimage which the Queen mother undertook to Mecca in 1360 CE. With a large retinue of nearly 1000 persons, she started from Dabul. A special Bahmani ship starting on 24th August, 1360 landed at Jeddah on 28th September, 1360. While she was in the Hijaz, she arranged for the marriage of as many as 4000 couples and defrayed all their expenses from her own pocket. This was not all. She got in touch with the Abbasid Caliph of Egypt and took his formal sanction for the use of the Khutbah and Sikkah (i.e the right of being mentioned in Friday sermons and the right of coining money) for her son. The temporal Caliph went beyond and commanded to Firoz not to shed the blood of the Muslims of the south. The possible threat from Delhi was removed and Muhammad was much impressed by what his mother had done to strengthen his hold on the newly acquired territories. The old lady returned after a year and while on her way back from Dabul to Gulbarga, the Sultan went as far as Kolhar to receive her. The Queen lived a few months



after her return and lived all the time in a room built for her by the renowned son.

### **The Secret Service**

Munniyan, or secret service agents of the Deccan were appointed at Delhi to report any fact which might be of interest to the kingdom. In the year 1262-63, they proved their worth by reporting that the Raya of Tilnagana was in touch with Sultan Feroz at Delhi promising him that if he attacked the Deccan, he would be thrice welcomed. He was, in addition promised to be joined by the Raya of Tilangana and the Raya of Vijayanagar as well.

The Sultan lost no time in invading Tilangana in full force and marched right upto the palace itself. Kapaya Nayak was all the while expecting help from Vijayanagar which did not arrive due to succession struggle in that Kingdom. He begged Bahadur Khan to solicit the king, saying

... thus,  
**Golconda**  
became a  
part of the  
Sultanate of  
Deccan



that what he had done in the past against the Sultan was owing to pressure on the part of the Raya of Vijayanagar to take his side, and now he fell on the mercy of Muhammad Shah. He accepted all the conditions imposed upon him and had to give to the Sultan 13 crores of hons, 300 elephants, 200 horses as well as “the town of Golconda with its dependencies.”<sup>23</sup> Thus Golconda, for the first time became a part of the Sultanate of Deccan.

The Sultan received the envoys bearing the indemnity at Bidar with all the respect and honour due to them and loaded them with presents for the Raya. He fixed the interstate frontier between Tilangana and the Sultanate at Golconda “for all times.” It was on this occasion that the envoys surprised their royal host with the present of the Turquoise Throne which they had brought from Warangal packed in a large wooden box, so that no one knew of its contents until it was opened out, assembled and actually presented. The king arrived at Gulbarga just before the autumnal equinox and sat on this throne for the first time when the sun was supposed to pass from the constellation of Taurus to the constellation of Aries on 21st March, 1363. There were great rejoicings lasting forty days, and it is said that “all restraints of law and custom were given up” during that period.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Technology**

The bows were the troopers most prized weapons, followed by the sword. The short spear, the short lance, the mace and the lasso were also used. The finest horses were found in Sultan's stable, and he exercised a monopoly over their purchases. Most of these quality horses were imported from Arabian and Persian territories. Apart from these usual weapons, the Bahmanis used fire arms and maintained an Atish Khana. A completely new technology based on gunpowder had crept into the Deccan. In 1365-66 CE, canons and muskets were used in the siege of Adoni. They were operated by Rumiyah-wa-Firangiyan (Turks and Franks), who were put under Mugarrab Khan. Fire arms were used by the armies both of the Bahmani and later Vijayanagar. This was 80 years before the 'pyrotechnics' at Vijayanagar are mentioned by Abdu Razzaq and 40 years before the Chinese traveller Ma-He described fire arms in Bengal in 1406. The new technology revolutionised the entire concept of warfare. Large fortresses sprang up with extremely thick walls, a strong curtain wall in front of the gates, pigeon holes for fixing muskets, battlements and towers for gun turrets, double walls with the so called 'covered ways', on the walls covering the shot fired from without and various other offensive and defensive structures to suit the new technology. These structures built in Deccan have a remarkable similarity with the fortresses built in Europe. Discovery of a new technology like gunpowder during medieval times was likely to draw similar response by rulers, be it in Deccan or Europe.

In 1366 CE, yet another policy in his domain of international law was enunciated after the sanguinary Vijayanagara campaign. The initial war was brutal largely due to the indiscriminate killing of lakhs of prisoners of war and civilians including women and children. After the initial terror, the Vijayanagara ambassadors told Mohamed Shah Bahmani-I that:

'No religion required the innocent to be punished for the crimes of the guilty, more especially, helpless women and children: If Krishna Raya had been at fault, the poor and feeble inhabitants had not been accessory to his errors. Mohamed Shah replied that the decrees of Providence had ordered what had been done, and that he had no power to alter them. The ambassadors observed, that as the Bestower

of Kingdoms had conferred on him the Government of the Deccan, it was probably that his successors and the Princes of the Carnatic might long remain neighbours, which made it advisable to avoid cruelty in war; and they proposed, therefore, that a treaty should be made not to slaughter the helpless and unarmed inhabitants in future battles. Mohamed Shah struck with the good sense of this proposal, took an oath, that he would not, hereafter, put to death a single enemy after a victory, and would bind his successors to observe the same line of conduct. From that time to this, it has been the general custom in the Deccan to spare the lives of prisoners in war, and not to shed the blood of an enemy's unarmed subjects.

The ship building technology, Bahmanis in Deccan were certainly ahead of Italy in Europe. The Italian traveller, Niccolo Conti, who was in the country about the middle of the fifteenth century, has made some interesting observations. He says that they were much larger than those built in the shipyards of Italy, while each of them bores five sails and as many masts. The lower part of these vessels was built with triple planks in order to withstand the force of the storms to which they were exposed in monsoon days. He says that some of them were built in such a manner; that if a part were shattered by the tempest, the remaining portion would safely accomplish the voyage to port. Coming to the arts of war, Conti says that the army used javelins, swords, arm-pieces, round shields, bows and arrows. Writing especially of the armies of Deccan, he says that they made use of the ballistics and bombarding machines as well as siege-pieces. It sounds most strange that pestilence was unknown and the people were "not exposed to the diseases which carry off the population in our own country."<sup>25</sup>

The travels of Duarte Barbosa who was in India and the east between 1500 and 1517 CE give us some insight into the ranks and equipment of military organisation during Bahmani times. He observed, "The Moorish (Muslim) noblemen in general take with them the tents with which they form encampments on halting ground, when they travel or when they take the field to attack any town. They ride on high-pummelled saddles, and make much use of zojares. They fight tied to their saddles, with long light lances

which have a head a cubit long, square and very strong. They wear short coats padded with cotton, and many of them kilts of mail, while their horses are well caparisoned with steel head-pieces. They carry maces and battle-axes and two swords, two or three Turkish bows hanging from the saddle with very long arrows, so that every man carries arms enough for two. When they go forth, they take their wives with them and they employ pack bullocks on which they carry their baggage when they travel. The gentios of this Daquem (Deccan) kingdom are black and well built, the larger part of them fights on foot, but some on horse-back. The foot soldiers carry swords and daggers, bows and arrows. They are right good archers and their bows are long like those of England. They go bare from waist up but are clad below; they wear small turbans on their heads.”<sup>26</sup>

#### **4.2 THE ECONOMIC LOT OF THE PEOPLE**

The socio-economic pyramid, in general consists of the apex, the middle and the base. The Bahmanis times were no different. There were upper classes comprising of courtiers, high officials, Iqtaidar's and Ulemas. These people received substantial incomes from the state. They were mostly Muslims who had accompanied the rulers during their conquests or had migrated from lands afar. These nobles and Amirs were foreigners. It was natural for them to go to their native places at least once a year. If not, they invited their own relatives and friends from abroad to swell their ranks. “The nobles are extremely opulent and delightful in luxury. They are to be carried on their silver beds, preceded by some 20 chargers caparisoned in gold and followed by 300 men on horseback and 500 on foot and by horsemen, 10 torch bearers and 10 musicians.”

The other social tradition amongst the elite was to offer costly presents to the king and undertake yearly pilgrimages. The value of these presents formed a very important item of the budget of all nobles. The general understanding was that whoever gave much received much more. The apex of the social pyramid during Bahmanis times were not more than 2% of the population. The sultans and their nobles were, if anything most luxurious and extravagant in their mode of life. The Russian merchant, Athanasius Nikitin

wrote: 'The king lives in great pride and pomp. A great number of his servants wear rubies and diamonds and other jewels, on the incepts of their shoes; so you may imagine how many are worn on the fingers of the hand and in the ears. They are all Mohammedans. The ladies go with their face quite covered, according to the custom of Damascus. A look at the heir apparent's marriage would give us an idea about the ambience of those times.'

On 20th June, 1351, the Sultan's son and heir apparent, who later ascended the throne as Mohammed Shah married the daughter of Malik Saif-ud-din Ghori, who later was entitled as Shah Begum. The rejoicings connected with the auspicious occasion lasted for a whole year right upto 8th June, 1352. During the period, the king distributed 1000 pieces of cloth of gold, velvet and silk, 1000 Arab and Iraqui horses and 12 be-jewelled swords to the nobles of his entourage, while grains were distributed to all and sundry, and cooked food was served to the poor and needy of the capital.

When the functions connected with the heir apparent's marriage started, the Queen, Malika-i-Jahan expressed the longing that her sister who was still at Multan might be invited to attend the function. Lest we forget, Multan was the place where Ala-ud-din had spent his early youth and probably got married there. He immediately made arrangements and it is said that it was seven months before the old lady arrived. The Queen of Deccan was surprised and delighted from whom the whole affair appeared to have been kept a secret.

It would be interesting to know what kind of fare must have been provided for the royal guests who dined at the palace during the celebrations. Fortunately, we possess the menu of the dishes served at the royal table on another occasion. When Ala-ud-din arrived at Gulbarga on his way to Sagar to quell the rebellion of Ali Beg Natthu and Muhammad b. Alam, he was received right royally by the wazir Khwaja-i-Jahan, who had prepared a grand banquet in honour of his royal master. It was exactly an eighth part of the day when the trumpeters announced that the banquet was ready. Silk tapestries were spread as table cloths and bread was distributed on them evenly. Then came roasts of various kinds, curry-puffs, cooked

vegetables, raw celery and salad, along with big and small game, and gravied meat curries, while wet and dry sweets and halwas were served at the end of the meal. This banquet was not meant only for the royal gentry and nobility, but all and sundry were invited, the citizens of Gulbarga without exception. The banquet ended with the distribution of betel leaves and the presentation of the nobles and the leaders of the army to the royal guest.<sup>27</sup>

Quite often, the marital alliances were forged with a strategic objective by the rulers. The Prince Aluaddin's marriage was one such example. Both Malwa and Gujarat were potential enemies to Bahmanis. Ahmad Shah, with a view to counter balance both of them sought the alliance of Khandesh through marital ties. He sent Aziz Khan to Khandesh requesting the hand of Sultan's daughter, Agha Zainab for the Crown Prince of Deccan. The girl was sent to Bidar for her marriage which took place at the hour allotted to it by astrologers, when the ceremony was over, the king distributed costly silken robes, jewels, pearls and ornaments to those taking part in the function. The celebrations, we are told were marked by which music, incense and wine. The capital Bidar was then full of the most varied articles of high living and fine arts which have patronized by both the court and the people, while shops and trade establishments were full to the brim with articles of comfort and luxury.

**Both Malwa & Gujrat were potential enemies to Bahmanis. Ahmed Shah, with a view to counter balance both of them sought the alliance of Khandesh through marital ties**



After the elite class, it would be appropriate to look at the economic lot of the other classes. The middle class, if it may be called as such during those distant medieval ages may be said to consist of religious leaders, Brahmins officers below the tarafdars, petty feudal lords and local merchants. Their condition was a great deal inferior to those at the apex. Most of them had enough to eat, drink, sufficient to cloth themselves, a couple of houses, a few servants and a house to live in. It was neither a life soaked in luxury nor a life of starvation and penury. Their life was that of a moderate contentment where basic wants were fulfilled. Their population was between 15% to 20% of the total. The tradition of

**It was neither a life soaked in luxury nor a life of starvation and penury**



trade networks dating back to Kakatiya times got a further philip during Bahmanis. Incessant warfare needed a sustained supply of a whole lot of goods and services. The population, especially located along war routes must have developed a capacity to ensure its supply. The condition of artisans, who were patronised by the sultan and Amirs must have been better than that of peasants. Various cottage industries were vibrant and their products went even abroad. They flourished in towns like Bidar, Gulbarga, Warangal, Raichur, Bhongiri and Nirmal. Each town had a certain specialisation in a particular industry and craft.

Paithan, Daulatabad and Gulbarga produced good silken cloths; the Pagdis of Nanded and Raichur were in demand; Bidar became known for pot manufacturing; Warangal was famous for carpets; The process of forging beams was much in vogue. Perey Brown observed that larger beams were produced by welding together a number of blooms of wrought iron by means of a hammer. The copper mines of Deccan and Chota Nagpur exported copper while Nikitin mentions diamonds of Raichur. Tanning industry was flourishing and leather was exported from Bahmani port Thanā to Arabia and Persian Gulf. Ship building industry was perhaps more advanced than Europe. Conti mentioned that the ships built during Alauddin Bahmani-II were larger than those built in Italian shipyards. Besides ships, Deccan also produced small boats and ferries needed by warring rulers and their armies to cross Tungabhadra to attack Vijayanagar. Factories of iron and steel were established in Nirmal. First rate swords, daggers and knives, etc were manufactured at Bhongiri and Indur. Bijapur needs special mention which developed into a big textile centre. It had a flourishing trade in textiles with Persia, Arabia and East Africa. The state encouraged weavers and offered them tax exemptions.

Most of these industries mentioned above had, in fact, been in position during Hindu rajās. The Bahmanis, however patronised them and also opened a window for exports to Islamic geographies beyond Indian shores. It must have brought a corresponding prosperity in this sector and made the lot of those engaged in these trades, significantly better than their poor cousins subsisting on land. The last comes the bottom of the pyramid. It included almost all the peasants, animal

keepers, petty service providers and labourers. The fate of those people, in fact, the very life depended on rain gods. Nikitin said, "The land is overstocked with people but those in the country are very miserable." Their lot was quite uncertain due to the vagaries of nature. On the top of this, the Bahmanis imposed a substantially higher tax burden upon these 'sons of the soil.' During and upto Kakatiya times; the taxation upon land was 'one-sixth' of the produce. Within a few decades after Kakatiya's downfall, it rose to 300% i.e, one half of their gross produce. In fact, the Khilji's tax burden was 3 times than the Kakatiya rate. It was simply half of the gross produce of peasant, keeping in view the Islamic injunction about the subject. One can only imagine the miserable depth to which the vast masses of peasantry must have descended within a few generations during medieval times. MS Randhawa, the renowned Agricultural historian, wrote, "During this period, culture was mostly urban-based and agriculture was considered an activity not worthy of notice by elite."

**The fate of those people, in fact, the very life depended on rain gods**



**During this period, culture was mostly urban-based and agriculture was considered an activity not worthy of notice by elite**



About 65-70% of the population depended upon land and animal husbandry. The last but not the least were around 10% aboriginal people who lived in hills and jungles. Their economy was rather disconnected from the mainstream. They were subsisting upon hunter gatherer mode of production.

There was no social intercourse between the ruling elite and the teeming multitudes. Vincent Smith observes, 'The process of the Muslim conquest tended to tighten the bonds of caste. The Hindus, unable on the whole to resist them in the field, defended themselves passively by the increased rigidity of caste association.'

Ibn Battuta states, 'Indian idolators never make friends with Muslims, and never give them to eat or to drink out of their vessels, although at the same time they neither act nor speak offensively to them. We were compelled to have some flesh cooked for us by some of them, and they would bring it in their pots and sit at a distance



## 148 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

from us. They would also serve us with rice, which is their principal food, on banana leaves, and then go away.’

While the ruling classes amused themselves with dinner parties and shikar, the poor Hindu peasants found relief in observance of religious festivals and periodical pilgrimages to holy shrines. The most popular festivals were Basant Panchami, Holi, Diwali, Dussehra and Shivaratri. The worship of Shiva figures prominently in the Basant Panchami festival. People put on yellow clothes to harmonise with the yellow blossoms of sarson. Holi, the spring festival, was celebrated by throwing coloured water and red powder. Diwali, the festival of lights, celebrates the return of Rama from exile. Lamps were lighted in homes as well as in temples and public building. Dussehra was celebrated with great enthusiasm for a number of days. The births of Rama, Krishna, Parasurama and Narasimha were also celebrated. Large parties of Hindu pilgrims travelled together for safety and mutual help to holy places on the Ganges. Such journeys provided relaxation from their monotonous existence.

### **Famines, Slave trade and Syphilis (1206-1605 CE)**

The Delhi’s Sultanate seems to have been an oppressive entity.<sup>28</sup> The court in Delhi, and its ruling elite mostly included many immigrant fighters, who came in search of wealth and power. They were small in number, felt insecure and therefore maintaining a standing army was necessary for survival as well as expansion. Therefore, taking into account frequent warfare, suppression and general socio-political instability, there are reasons to think that 13th, 14th and 16th centuries may have been less conducive for population growth. The conditions in the 15th century were possibly a little more favourable.

The 13th and 14th centuries were particularly, very hard for most of the people controlled by the Delhi Sultanate.’ In the 13th century, the ‘Slave Dynasty’ controlling a disciplined body of Turkic speaking warriors terrorised and plundered the peasants. 13th century witnessed three intense famines. Around 1291 CE, there was a severe famine in the north. The famine seems to have returned at the beginning of the next century.

At the beginning of the 14th century, Alauddin repulsed Mongol attack, conquered large swathes of territories, imposed heavy taxes to

be realised through physical coercion and imposed price controls. All this led to a situation of chaos. “Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, following Alauddin Khilji was also a harsh ruler. His forced relocation of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad followed by retracting his steps back to Delhi and imposing heavy taxes are well known events. In 1343-45 CE, there was a major famine, linked to a series of droughts. There was also a peasant revolt, an uprising that was crushed.”<sup>29</sup> In addition, it is claimed that there was an outbreak of plague in his army in 1345 CE. The following regime during Firoz Tughlaq seems to be less severe. The 14th century ended with the invasion of Timur’s Mongol forces in 1398 CE. Delhi was sacked, its population liquidated and it was accompanied by a long lasting and severe famine, and another out-break of plague.<sup>30</sup> Some irrigation works were taken-up by Firoz Tughlaq and certain new technologies also were developed like spinning wheel, the geared Persian wheel to lift water, ox driven sugar mills and paper manufacture. On balance it appears that socio-political conditions between 1250 and 1398 CE were not particularly encouraging for population growth.<sup>31</sup>

The impact of ‘The Black Death’ during mid-14th century on the Indian sub-continent has been researched by many. The catastrophic epidemic, which is thought to have been some form of plague devastated the middle-east and Europe during 1347-52 CE, and then flared up from time to time over the next few centuries. This epidemic also hit central Asia, and quite possibly China. Based on historical evidence from multiple sources, it can be safely said that ‘the subcontinent did not experience a demographic collapse from the Black Death, such as the loss of between a quarter and a third of the population, as is thought to have happened in Europe.’<sup>32</sup>

...the subcontinent didn't experience a demographic collapse from the Black Death, such as the loss of between a quarter & a third of the population, as is thought to have happened in Europe



### **Migration and Slave trade**

Migration into and out of the sub-continent are other factors impacting the overall population. During the Delhi Sultanate, there was an approved policy to promote immigration from abroad, because such were the opportunities offered by India and such was the turmoil elsewhere in Asia that the flood of adventurers rarely dried-up.<sup>33</sup>

Yet another factor was the practice of slavery. The practice of slavery

**The practice of slavery is integral to the Islamic tradition**



is integral to the Islamic tradition. The legions of slaves had been traded like bulk commodities in markets of Damascus, Baghdad, Gazni, Delhi, Agra and any other capital of Islamic rulers as a matter of routine. Various raiders captured men, women and children as slaves who came by way of Afghanistan. The entire wealth of defeated armies, including slaves, was yet another source. It is said that in 1018 CE, Mahmud of Ghazni returned to Afghanistan with 53,000 slaves. Similarly, in 1398 CE, many of the Delhi inhabitants, who escaped massacre by Timur's army were enslaved, carried away and traded in the slave markets of Central Asia.<sup>34</sup>

In Delhi too, there was a thriving slave market during Sultanate period. Many of those captured spent the rest of their lives in agrarian slavery like domestic servant, concubine and labourers. Slaves also formed a significant fraction of the Sultanates urban population.<sup>35</sup> The supply of slaves was so great that they were exported to Middle East, where there was considerable demand.<sup>36</sup>

**One feature of the import of Middle Eastern slaves was a particular demand for castrated young men to serve as keeper of harem**



There was also a human traffic in the opposite direction, i.e., from Middle East and Central Asia to the sub-continent. One feature of the import of Middle Eastern slaves was a particular demand for castrated young men to serve as keeper of harem. African slaves were also trafficked via ports like Zanzibar; their descendants forming the today's Siddi community. Slavery however diminished during Mughal period. Foreign visitors still commented on its existence, but there is no mention of large and thriving slave markets such as had existed under the Delhi and other sultanates.

The scale and brutality of the slaving must have raised death rates in areas where slaves were kept. Indeed, slave raiding followed by trading must have caused chaos and could have been a factor behind depopulation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>37</sup>

During the 15th century, there were no major warfares on a pan Indian basis and the sub-continent witnessed the multiplicity of

regional kingdoms. The dwindling of the repressive nature of Delhi Sultanate during 15th century may have had some positive effects on population.

In 1498 CE, Vasco da Gama arrived on the Kerala coast in search of spices and Christians. His sailors came with canons to establish Portuguese foot-hold. They also introduced Syphilis, the horrific disease which appeared in Europe in 1494 CE. It attracted a great deal of attention in Europe, and a few years later in India - where it was clearly seen as a new disease.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently, the Portuguese captured Goa, where they were maintaining ecclesiastical records of baptism, burials and marriages from as early as the sixteenth century.<sup>39</sup> In 1543 CE, they were the first Europeans to describe cholera epidemic which struck Goa. It was said that the deaths from the disease were so numerous that the disposal of bodies was a formidable task.<sup>40</sup>

**They also introduced Syphilis, the horrific disease which appeared in Europe in 1494 CE**



### Inland Trade

The arrival of Islamic armies opened new land routes connecting Delhi with Daulatabad, Telingana and Malabar. Postal stations were built along these highways and travellers were also allowed to stay there. In the 15th century, the network of local roads connecting the provincial capital with district headquarters increased considerably. Trees were planted on both the sides of these roads. Caravan sarais with wells and surrounded by trees were established at four-mile interval. The marching troops needed a place of worship and therefore, a string of mosques also showed up along these roads. There were separate food areas for Hindus and Muslims. Goods were also moving along these networks and reaching as far as Lahore, Multan, Kabul and Kandhar with onward transmission to Persian and Central Asian cities. A regular payment of pension to the unruly Afghan chiefs ensured that the Khyber route was reasonably safe.

**A regular payment of pension to the unruly Afghan chiefs ensured that the Khyber route was reasonably safe**



### 4.3 AN OVERALL GLIMPSE OF THE BAHMANIS TIMES

The Bahmanis timeline stretched during medieval period. Their kingdom stretched from coast to coast at its peak. It comprised the lands broadly lying between Vindhya and Tungabhadra. The polity was completely decoupled from that of Northern India. During 175 years of its existence from 1347 till 1522 CE, the Bahmani Kingdom witnessed the reign of 18 Kings, 5 of whom were murdered, 3 deposed, 2 blinded, while 2 died of intemperance. Its founder, Alauddin Hassan Gangu was decisively the most noble, able and perhaps, destined. He was a rare exception to those who followed him.

His successor, Mohammed Shah, through clever strategies expanded the Kingdom. Telingana was subdued and subsequently incorporated along with Golconda. After him, a quick turnover of the Sultans, punctuated by murders gave way to Feroz Shah. His reign witnessed stability and twenty-four glorious campaigns, but victory eluded him during last years as Warangal Raja switched loyalties towards Vijayanagar. The successor Ahmad Shah, wrecked vengeance upon Warangal Raja. As consolidation continued unabated, the Kingdom stretched from Goa to Masulipatnam. After a brief interlude of Humayun the cruel, Mohammed Shah, the boy king took charge under noble queen mother and able advisor, Khwaja Gawan.

The Bahmanis Kingdom had peaked by now. In 1483 CE, Khwaja Gawan, the innocent adviser was executed. Fate took its revenge.

**Chanakya  
prayed for  
destruction  
of his  
tormentors.  
He lived to  
see his wish  
fulfilled.  
Gawan had  
also prayed  
before  
execution. As  
he could not  
live, the divine  
fulfilled his  
wish later**



All the 5 successors were mere puppets. Within four decades, the Kingdom imploded and the Bahmanis ceased to exist. It was a bit like the Nandas dynasty in Pataliputra during the fourth century BCE. At its peak, the wise and loyal adviser Chanakya was insulted in court and excommunicated. He swore revenge, joined hands with Chandragupta, organised rebellion and ensured Nandas' liquidation. Chanakya had prayed for destruction of his tormentors. He lived to see his wish fulfilled. Khwaja Gawan had also prayed before execution. As he could not live, the divine fulfilled his wish later.

## Telangana Lands – a war zone (1324-1512 CE)

What was the overall political landscape of the present-day Telangana lands as they stand carved out as the 29th state of the Indian union from 2nd June, 2014 onwards? It must be stated categorically that there was no separate Telangana polity known by that nomenclature way back in 1324 CE. Kakatiyas had been ruling a broad imperium which apart from other areas also included the present-day Telangana lands with Orugallu (the present-day Warangal) as its capital. From 1324 CE onwards, after the subjugation of Kakatiyas, these lands came progressively under the political control of Bahmanis imperium. The process of power shift was bloody and conflictual, to say the least. It continued unabated till 1512 CE when Bahmanis imperium imploded and made way for Qutb Shahi rulers controlling the present-day Telangana lands. It would not be an exaggeration to state that Telangana lands resembled a perpetual war zone from 1324 till 1512 CE. An elaboration would be appropriate.

**It would not be an exaggeration to state that Telangana lands resembled a perpetual war zone in 1324-1512 CE**



In 1324 CE, Malik Maqbool was appointed as the Governor from Delhi which was ruled by Mohammed Bin Tughlaq. The new dispensation was opposed by all feudatories. In 1336 CE, Malik Maqbool fled and the northern part of Telangana lands came under the sway of Musunuri Nayakas. The southern part of Telangana around Devarakonda and Rachakonda came under the sway of Padmanayaks. By 1347 CE, a new emerging Bahmanis power chipped away western rim of Telangana from Kaulas to Bhongiri. By 1368 CE, rising tide of Bahmani extinguished Musunuris while Padmanayaks became their tributaries.

The apparent political equilibrium was disturbed due to perpetual conflicts between Bahmani and Vijayanagar rulers while Padmanayaka rulers were fishing in troubled waters for some political gain. Their uncertain loyalty towards Bahmani rulers forced the latter to shift their capital from Gulbarga to Bidar in 1423 CE. After repeated onslaughts, Bahmanis reigned supreme and subdued Padmanayaks by 1436 CE. Khan-i-Azam was appointed as Governor of Telangana.

154 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

From 1436 CE onwards, Bahmanis were ruling Telangana as an exclusive Taraf (a province or a suba). The summering discontentment came to a boil in 1458 CE when the Padmanayaka chief Linga invited Kalinga chief Hamvira to subdue Bahmani army. The uprising was quelled and within less than a decade, Bahmanis asserted their supremacy with a decisive victory over Telangana lands. This continued till 1512 CE.

The repeated war-fares by conflictual political forces witnessed in the present-day Telangana lands spread over two centuries or so during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had its adverse consequences. The entire state machinery be it governance, military or secret service was mostly focussed upon warfare. Almost the entire fiscal resources of the state were getting dissipated in financing such costly projects. As

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we have seen that taxation system transferred almost 50% of rural GDP to the state coffers, one does not hear about any major irrigation work taken up anywhere in the Bahmani kingdom. The repeated famines had impeded the war campaigns on several occasions. This rural drain of resources did help to erect palaces and mosques in the capital and an educational complex in Bidar. So far as the present-day Telangana lands **are** concerned, it did not see any tank, temple, market or any such project helping rural populace. Orugallu, the

erstwhile capital of Kakatiyas became jaded due to repeated onslaughts and faded from its glorious heights. Gulbarga and Bidar were the new capital cities teaming with courts, palaces, mosque, bazars, khanagahs (the sufi congregation centres) apart from harem and garrison.

Such a vast Kingdom in Deccan had certain unique characteristics. It would be just and appropriate to have a brief glimpse of them.

Eternal conflict with its sibling and southern neighbour, Vijaynagar was the single most dominant thread running through the Bahmanis. They kept on colliding and counter colliding to control Doab between Krishna and Tungabhadra. Sometimes, the beauty of an ordinary peasant girl attracted one Raja. That provoked the Sultan to counter attack, repulse him, marry the beauty to his son

and demand Raja's daughter in marriage as compensation. Wars following wars knew no bounds between these two sworn enemies. It weakened and consumed both, one after the other.

Internal jealousies and mutual hatred between Afaquis and Dakhanis nobles were another important feature. The hate virus sprouted during later Bahmanis Sultans and survived even beyond. The rivalry had its origin in the evolution of Mohammedan aristocracy in Deccan. 14th century heralded the entry of Islamic arms in Deccan geography. Muslim rulers were new. But, over time, they became domiciled and got acclimatised. Manners, food, way of life and even complexion underwent change. Intermarriages and conversion swelled their stock.

Afaquis known as Pardesis or the new comers were not the native of Deccan. They came from abroad and joined Bahmanis army. Their kin and folks followed. They came for trade and found it to their advantage to remain connected with politics of the country. Being the land of opportunities, soldiers, traders and adventurers poured in from Persia, Turkey, central Asia, Arabia and Afghanistan. Here, valour was recognised and statesmanship rewarded. From the beginning, the Pardesis wielded considerable influence in power politics. Bahman Shah, the founder of the dynasty came from Delhi and persuaded many others to join his standard. His successors continued the same policy. This policy of preference and exclusion created the hate virus in Deccan polity.

To begin with, Pardesis were few. But, as numbers grew, they became conscious of their separate identity. That retarded the process of assimilation. It resulted in evolution of two distinct classes known as Dakhanis and Pardesis. The latter were, generally speaking, more energetic, enterprising and preferred employment. The former found themselves surpassed both in the battle field and in the council chamber. As the empire expanded, hatred grew. Moreover, as majority of Pardesis were Shias and most of the Dakhanis were Sunnis, the religious wedge kept the jealousy flames alive.

During 1430 – 1431 CE, the Bahmani army was defeated on three consecutive occasions. A Pardesi minister blamed the Dakhanis cowardice for the debacle. But the later convinced the king of the



incompetence of the Pardesi adviser. The Dakhanis were promoted and raised to the power. They suppressed Pardesis and later, massacred them by treachery. When the ruler came to know the truth, he punished and downgraded the Dakhanis. The Pardesis regained power. The Dakhanis felt humiliated, joined hands, hatched a conspiracy, and forged a letter with a seal of Gawan, purporting to invite the Raja of Orissa to invade the Bahmani Kingdom. In 1483 CE, Khwaja Gawan, the loyal minister was executed. That eventually caused the dissolution of the Bahmani Kingdom. Hate virus, however survived and kept tormenting future Sultans.

Urge to expand the newly born Kingdom based on Islamic polity, the first of its kind in Deccan, compulsion to fight with the neighbouring Vijayanagara Kings and wrecked by interval dissensions, the Bahmanis, in retrospect appear to have missed out on a few historical opportunities. Neglect of irrigation, if not by design, kept peasantry at the mercy of rain Gods. Firoz Shah Tughlaq in the north had drawn canals. Nearer home, the Kakatiyas had left splendid tanks in good shape. Their territory, after absorption formed a part of Bahmani Kingdom. Even, their sworn enemies in Vijayanagara were constructing tanks apace. Then, how come, the Bahmani, eighteen Sultans in all, just forgot irrigation? No big tank was constructed. No canal was laid. It took its toll. Lands were ravaged by droughts repeatedly. Corn was imported from Gujarat and distributed amongst needy poor by several Sultans. Such devastations were unknown to either Kakatiyas or Vijayanagara Kings.

Vincent Smith points out, "Their rule was harsh and showed little regard for the welfare of Hindu peasants, who were seldom allowed to retain the fruits of their labour, more than would suffice to keep body and soul together."

The attention deficit in the countryside was more than compensated by total attention to beautify capital cities like Gulburga and Bidar. Palaces, forts, mosques, bazaars, madrasas and other public utilities were meticulously planned and executed brilliantly. Designs were imported from Cordoba, Spain. The architecture was similar to that followed by contemporary Sultans in Delhi, Agra and Jaunpur. Rulers living in urban ambience, it appears were out of touch with the vast country side. Therefore, as the capital city dazzled, the countryside decayed.

Another aspect of the crucial miss related to science and technology. Printing press had been invented. It was doing wonders in Europe. But, no one had any idea about it either in the Delhi Sultanate or in the Deccan Kingdoms. In 1453, the Ottomans had already captured Constantinople. This news would have surely reached the clergy and nobility in India. But, somehow, invention about printing press did not reach and books could not be multiplied too fast. Madararas were in vogue but calligraphy was prevalent. That confined knowledge to a very thin crust of population. A very major part of society was illiterate and was to remain so far, a long time to come.

Then, Crown's neglect of innovations is another crucial gap. China had a head start in naval technology but suffered due to sudden change in policy. Then in Europe, especially Spain and Portugal, Crowns provided solid support for research and innovation. This sustained support gave them head start. Vasco da Gama arrived with ships, fitted with artillery on board to Calicut. Soon, Goa was captured. Bahmanese Sultans were using the same Goa port to trade luxury goods, horses, slave boys and virgin girls. But, somehow, the curiosity of naval technology never excited them. Their world view was confined to lands only. Sea was looked upon as a highway of trade. Perhaps, it never occurred to them that sea lanes would become the strategic routes for future warfare.

And, finally, the elite were not driven by any new and creative ideas. An assorted lot came from near and far. It included saints and sufis, poets and philosophers, faquirs and yogis, traders and entrepreneurs besides the ordinary. The Sultan's court and harem kept them engaged most of the times. Scientific discoveries and technological breakthrough therefore, got stuck in the past. The last decade of 15th century saw the European ships, fitted with artillery knocking at western peninsular coasts. Alas, Bahmanis ruling in proximity was imploding around the same times. The contrast could not have been starker. But the scenario was not much different in north India. There, too, polity had lost its vigour. Wells of creativity and innovations were

**The Sultan's court and harem kept them engaged most of the times. Scientific discoveries and technological breakthrough therefore, got stuck in the past**



desiccated. The evolving vacuum was going to be filled up by new formations in Deccan and in northern India, soon.

Before we take leave of the Bahmanis, let us remember its founder, Alauddin Hassan Shah Gangu Bahmani. He was the noblest and most benevolent of all, and is revered by its people. Another noble soul was Khaja Gawan, the minister. His last words to Sultan were, "The death of an old man like me is of little moment to myself. But, to you, it will prove the ruin of an empire, and your own glory."

Khwaja Gawan was executed. The Empire was ruined and lost its glory. Obviously, the divine fulfilled his last wish.

**Prophecy of noble souls, it would appear had brought the birth as well as the demise of Bahmanis kingdom**

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It is important to clarify as to what is Telingana. During the times of Ala ud din Khilji, Mohammed Bin Tughlaq and the Sultans of Bahmanis dynasty, the Telugu speaking territory was called Telingana.



Medieval historians pronounced it as Telingana

instead of Telangana. The word Telingana was used in a broader sense for the whole of Telugu nadu, Telugu desa and Telugu speaking region, for which the centre of administration was Warangal. It included the coastal Andhra region also whereas Rayalseema was under the control of Raayas of Vijaynagar. The areas of Kondaveedu and Rajamundry were once integral parts

**This division indicated that Rajamundry was an integral part of Telingana during the medieval period**

of Telingana. Mahmud Gawan, the able Prime Minister of Bahmanis Sultan, divided Telingana taraf into two saraksharaships, namely Warangal and Rajahmundry. This division indicated that Rajamundry was an integral part of Telingana during the medieval period.



Bahmanis were ruling from Bidar. After their implosion, Qutb ul Mulk declared his independence and started ruling from Golconda since 1518 CE. Coming under the sway of Qutb Shahis, Telingana hereinafter came to be known as the Golconda kingdom.

### Economic Trends (1300 –1500 CE)

During the first half of the 14th century, Khilji and Tughlaq dynasty were ruling almost the entire Indian subcontinent. Thereafter, the polity splintered. Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa and Kashmir were important kingdoms in northern India while Bahmanis and Vijayanagar kingdoms came to rule the peninsular India. A brief description of each one of these kingdoms would be appropriate.

In 1338 CE, Fakhr-ud-din, the Governor of Bengal revolted against Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and declared his independence. All successive rulers were Muslims or Hindu converts to Islam. Capital city was Gaur, also called Lakhnauti. Borders were pushed to Orissa and later on Tiruhata was added. So far as agriculture is concerned, nothing of significance was achieved in Bengal during those Sultan's rule.

In 1391 CE, Zafar Khan became Governor of Gujarat and till 1511 CE, it was ruled by Muslim rulers. Ahmadabad was made the capital where wood carvings and textiles flourished. No irrigation works were taken up and therefore the peasant's lot was left to the whims of God. Bahadur Shah was the last ruler whose reign ended in 1537 CE.

In 1401 CE, Malwa became independent under Dilawar Khan Ghori after Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Dhar was the capital and all the rulers till 1561 CE were Muslims. Shifting of capital to the cool climes of Mandu and collection of 15,000 women in ruler's harem came to an abrupt end with Akbar's onslaught. Regarding agriculture, the Sultans did not take any special interest. None of the Islamic historians have mentioned the conditions of peasants or any irrigation work.

**Shifting of capital to the cool climes of Mandu and collection of 15,000 women in ruler's harem came to an abrupt end with Akbar's onslaught**

Kashmir during those days referred to the valley lying north of the river Jhelum. From 1318 to 1529 CE, Kota Rani, Sikander and Zain-ul-Abidin were important rulers. Kota Rani, the last Hindu ruler died a tragic death. Sikander broke idols and destroyed various temples. Zain-ul-din followed and became the noblest of rulers. Demolished temples were rebuilt; Jiziyah was abolished and killing of cows was



**160** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

penalised. Scholars came, poetry flourished, so did various crafts. But the most important task of this noble ruler was to reduce the land assessment from half to one-fourth of the gross produce in some places and to one-seventh in other places. Law was enforced in a fair yet firm manner; canals were dug; gardens were laid and roads were constructed which could be used even in rainy season. Towards the end of Zain-ul-din's reign, a severe famine gripped Kashmir, with its attendant misery. The ruler cancelled all the debts apart from taking various steps to restore normalcy. Several rulers came and went after this noble ruler. Yousuf Shah Chak was the last ruler who made way for Akbar's army in 1586 CE, who occupied Kashmir and thus ended the Sultanate.

Coming to peninsular India, Bahmanis and Vijayanagar kingdoms were the prominent ones. Bahmanis were a comprehensive Islamic polity while Vijayanagar was a solid Hindu kingdom. The Hindu kingdom had Shata-Bhaga (one-sixth of the gross produce) as the prevalent land tax. The country side, dotted with massive tanks irrigating large tracts was peaceful and prosperous. Women were moving and interacting freely after adorning themselves with flowers. The capital city, Vijayanagar was a dazzling metropol flaunting palaces, temples, gardens, markets and paved roads.

It is thus quite clear that almost 88% of the Indian subcontinental geography was controlled by kingdoms under Islamic rulers during the 14th and 15th centuries. Only the territories lying south of Krishna river, covering around 12% of the subcontinental area was ruled by Hindu rulers. Therefore, the dominant taxation measures and the consequent economic trajectory was substantially driven by Islamic rule. Bahmani rulers, being comprehensive Islamic rulers were a representative subset of the overall Indian sub continental political and economic scenario.

Population of Telangana in the Indian subcontinental context is estimated as follows:

**Population in lakhs**

| Year    | India | Telangana |
|---------|-------|-----------|
| 1300 CE | 960   | 27.84     |
| 1500 CE | 1100  | 31.90     |

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita income figures for India and the world, as estimated by Angus Maddison are as follows:

**Per capita income in dollars**

| Year    | India | World |
|---------|-------|-------|
| 0       | 450   | 444   |
| 1000 CE | 450   | 435   |
| 1300 CE | 510   | 513   |
| 1500 CE | 550   | 565   |

The per capita income figures for India had a distinct edge over global average all the way upto 1,300 CE. However, it entered a period of relative decline from 1,300 CE onwards and by 1,500 CE, the Indian GDP Per capita had fallen distinctly behind the global averages. The Bahmani dominions, which included the present-day Telangana lands had been politically and economically interconnected, not only within the Indian subcontinent but also with Persian lands across the oceans. The obvious conclusion is that the present-day Telangana lands had entered a period of economic regression from the lapse of the Kakatiya Imperium.

The worst was yet to come.

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## 5. Socio-cultural Scenario during 14th & 15th centuries

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This chapter reflects upon evolving shades of socio-cultural scenario after collapse of Kakatiyan imperium. The convergence of Sufi wave from Northern India as well as deep Southern territories of Mabar in Deccan lands was the most insidious yet profound phenomena. Sufism has twin weapons; philosophers and warriors.

The original mission of Sufis was to 'Propage and spread Islam'. They arrived in Deccan lands even before the Khalji's army. Settling in the outskirts of towns, as soothe sayers, they became important centres of societal attraction, especially among poor masses. In due course of time, with the arrival of Khalji, Tughlaq and Bahmani armies, they were sought after by the prospective contenders for power. After the establishment of Islamic polity, they joined and moved up in the political hierarchy through matrimonial alliance and influenced various rulers.

Kakatiyan polity may have fallen, but the corresponding court culture migrated to the territory of Padmanayak rulers. As the new victors, Bahamanis expanded, the space occupied by Padmanayaks shrank and by 1436 CE, they were subsumed.

Implant of Persian language with its long-term implications was yet another dimension. Victors came with a new flag and new language, which was Persian. Saints and savants preceeded them; merchants and king makers followed them. All of them were close to seat of power and spoke the same language. Their comraderie kept the flag of rulers aloft while Sanskrit and Telugu, the local language were relegated to the background.

The hybrid culture, in due course of time showed up as Proto Urdu and Deccani language also.

### 5.1 THE SUFI PHILOSOPHY

Sufism has two dimensions: The first relates to philosophical aspects and the second and more important dimension relates to its practical manifestations. Both these aspects of Sufism, combined



as an organised force have played a stellar role in pushing and consolidating the Islamic frontiers in various geographies, especially the Indian subcontinent. Let us take the philosophical aspect first.

Sufism is said to have been originated near a place called Basra located in Iraq. The Muslims located in this region started off this religion as a path to reach the divine. The divine form who is worshipped in Sufism is Prophet Mohammed (Let peace be upon Him) and all schools of Sufism consider the Prophet as the manifestation of God. This is one reason why Sufi is considered to have branched from Islam. However, ancient Islamic scriptures have no mention of Sufism in them. Some scholars hold the view that Sufism is the evolution of Islam in a more spiritual and mystic direction. Sufism in its earlier stages was recited and meditated from the Quran. The word Sufism derived from the word Arabic Sufa (Purity), for the Sufi is one who is purified of all worldly passions. Others connect it to Saff (rank) since the Sufi is in first rank in virtue of his communion with the supreme Being (Allah). Others say it is from the word Suf-a garment of course, undyed wool which was the dress of the Sufi saints.

In the Quran there are both ascetic and mystical elements. The claim of Sufi's that they inherited their doctrine from the prophet cannot be dismissed. Sufi doctrine were a result of Islamic monotheistic ideas, Christian asceticism and mysticism. The Sufi's claim that Mohammad had two types of revelation:

1. One embodied in the Quran meant for everybody and binding on all known as Ilm-I-Safina (book of knowledge) custodian of which were the Ulema.
2. The other was Ilm-I-Sina, knowledge in his heart, reserved for the closest to him which he transmitted personally to Sufis. They thus claimed to be companions of Prophet-Shahaban.

The growth of the Sufi movement can be divided into two phases:

1. Earliest time to 9th century – It was merely a tendency and had no system. The Sufis were ascetics, recluses with headquarters at Basra and Kufa. They were seekers of piety & other worldliness than of divine knowledge. The earliest form of Sufism had two features, renunciation of worldly pleasures and intense fear of judgement of Allah.

2. The second period began after 9th century & developed into pantheistic mysticism (a doctrine that identifies God with Universe). In this period, several groups came to existence which differed from each other with details of organisation & philosophical notions.

### Philosophy of Sufism

Sufism, as mentioned in the literature, is basically a religion based on the truth of life. It is a mystic tradition that consists of a varied range of ideas and practices that emphasise on the attainment of divine love and compassion of the heart. In the 14th century, a Sufi saint wrote a book known as the “Principles of Sufism” that defines the essence of Sufism as “a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God”. Universal Sufism has been defined by great Sufi masters as a way to travel to the presence of the Divine force and fill oneself with inner beauty and compassion. The Sufi doctrines spoke of the mystical union of man’s soul with God. The world was a mere reflection of the supreme being and one required the aid of a spiritual guide to reach God. They emphasized on faith rather than action for the salvation of man. To the Sufis, there are seven stages (mogamat) in the journey of the soul to the supreme being. Pir is a guide who has already taken this journey and is familiar with the process & the end result. Fazl or grace of God is also required in this for the complete annihilation of self, meaning Fana.

**‘Sufism is a science which has an objective of the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God’**



- 1. Ubudiyat:** It is the first stage when man starts realizing he is a pure man and prepares for the Journey.
- 2. Ishq:** Divine influence leads him to Ishq of God and everything is forgotten except this poverty is essential in this stage and no room for earthly desire.
- 3. Zuhd:** Renunciation of worldly pleasures once you are in Ishq.
- 4. Maarifat:** Knowledge also called Inosis, in which the traveler contemplates the attributes and works of God. Slowly the logical reasoning based on intellect is abandoned and the traveler seeks relief only in the mercy of God.

**5. Wajd:** Ecstasy in which mental excitement is produced only through contemplation of one reality God. He repeats the name of God often.

**6. Haqiqat:** Reality when you reach this stage your heart is illumined by the true nature of God and you see his power, strength, reliability and surrender to him.

**7. Wasl:** Union. When the traveler finds himself face to face with God leading to fana, i.e. merger.

## **Sufi Practices**

- **Dhikr**

Dhikr is basically about remembering God for all Sufis. According to Islam, one who engages in Dhikr has awareness of God. It basically includes chanting of God's name and reciting sections of the Quran. It has similarities with the Jewish Merkavah practice of meditation used to attain a higher level of consciousness. This can be done through singing, dance, meditative music, swirling, etc. that finally leads to a trance.

- **Hadhra**

The Hadhra basically consists of various forms of Dhikr, songs and dances that are used to appeal God and Angels. The word Hadhra is Arabic and it means "Presence".

- **Qawwali**

In Sufism, Qawwali is the devotional form of music, which is common in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran, etc. The Qawwali is known for its worldly appeal and transcends all bounds and limitations of countries and different regions. Some of the modern-day masters of Qawwali are Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Sabri Brothers.

- **Sama**

Sama is an Arabic word which means listening. In Sufis, the holy ritual of whirling dance is known as Sama. It is basically an act of devotion that takes a person to a higher level of consciousness. The right kind of music invokes the right kind of emotion which is elated when one does the whirl dance. This helps in the process of contemplating the divine force.

- **Khalwa**

Khalwa basically refers to a kind of retreat that a person can experience under the guidance of a Sufi teacher. There is a belief in Sufism that all

prophets must have retreated into seclusion at some point of time in order to derive inspiration and divine power. Thus, the Sufis practice retreat in order to concentrate on the divinity of the Almighty.

The seminal study regarding, "Sufi Orders in Islam" by JS Trimingham has identified 3 distinct stages through which Sufism in its organisational aspect has evolved; the Khanaqah stage, the Tariqa stage and the Taifa stage.

The first namely Khanaqah stage of Sufism was the golden age of Islamic mysticism when original mystical literature was produced and the simplicity of the Sufi's social organisation was apparent. Shocked by the extravagant wealth and power of the Abbasid Caliphate and struck by the apparent contradiction between the imperial worldliness of an opulent caliph of Islam and stern commandants of the Prophet Mohammad, the first Sufis were true ascetics, in both lower Iraq and Khurasan. Sufis like Hasan-al-Basri, Ibrahim b. Adham, Shaiq of Balkh and Abd Allah b al-Mubarak during the eight centuries led a quietest life in ascetic ways by withdrawing from the mundane society of Abbasid Caliphate. The same trend was continued during, the 9th century by Muhasibi, Dhul Nun, Bayazid Bistami, Abul Qasim al Junaid and Mansur al Nazzaz. They emphasised more on love of God and spiritual affinity rather than on the fear of God. These masters soon developed a circle of pupils who assembled regularly at a quiet place, situated at some distance from the main habitation. This humble joint soon became a rest house or convent where wandering Sufis could lead a devotional life under the tutelage of some master. Over time, this came to be known as Khanaqah. From the 9th century through the 12th century, such Khanaqahs could be found all over the Islamic world, especially on the Islamic frontier. They played a silent but important role in integrating Non-Muslims into the Islamic community of the ever-expanding Islamic polity.<sup>1</sup>

**They emphasised more on love for God and spiritual affinity rather than on the fear of God**



From about the 13th century, the evolution of Sufi movement witnessed the formation of mystical schools that begun to coalesce around a particular master. The mystical techniques were systemised

to bring the Sufis in direct communion with God. A structured set of spiritual exercises developed which had to be learnt and mastered by the pupils. Transmission of these methods from one Sufi to another became explicit, resulting in the formation of the spiritual lineages or *Silsilah* (meaning Chain). Each *Silsilah* could be traced back to its founder. Thus, the *Quadri Silsilah* is traced to its founder. *Abd-al-Qadir Jilani* (d 1166 CE), the *Rifa's Silsilah* to *Ahmad al-Rifai* (d 1182 CE) and *Yasari Silsilah* to *Ahmad Al Yasri* (d 1166 CE) and so on. This stage of Sufi evolution is known as *Tariqa* phase. *Tariqa* literally means methodology.

In the *Tariqa* phase, the Sufis now belonged to a particular *Silsilah* rather than the undifferentiated lot in the freer *Khanaqah* phase. In the latter, both teacher and pupil were essentially equal in their capacities to attain their spiritual goals. However, in the new *tariqa* phase, the distinction between the *Pir* (or *Murshid*), who was the director, and the *Murid*, or disciple became quite discernible. Thus, the *Murid* was obliged to completely surrender himself to the *Pir* along with the whole complex of exercises, terminology and disciplines that his *Pir* taught. All *Murids* were, in theory equal in the eyes of the *Pir*. However, as it always happens, some became more equal than others and that was the time for the development of the concept of *Khalifa* (or successor). This person in due course of time became closer to the *Pir* than other *Murids*. Quite often, he was deputed to initiate other *Murids* into the order of the *Pir*. This *Tariqa* phase was the beginning of the process whereby the creative freedom of the mystic was channelised into an institution.<sup>2</sup>

The Sufism from the 15th century onwards evolved into a cult-association called a *Taifa* phase. Now, a Sufi's direct communion with God was replaced by the veneration and even worship of a *Pir* who now occupied the position of a spiritual intermediary between the disciple and the God. *Pirs* thus became *Walis* (*Wali* literally means 'Friend of God'). The erstwhile school of spiritual discipline got transformed into saint cult, centred on the spiritual power, or *Barakat*, of a single individual. The headships of most *Taifas* became hereditary as blood replaced merit as the chief criterion of succession.

The successive generations by virtue of their blood descent could now claim special spiritual status. These familial descendants of a Pir came to be called Pirzadas (literally, born of a Pir).

Over years, this intangible capacity (Barakat) of a saint to attract devotees was transmitted not only to a saint's descendants, but also to his tomb. These tombs are called 'Dargahs'. These Dargahs attracted quite a number of common folks, especially during Urs, the annual celebration day to commemorate Sufi's death date. In fact, the saint had never died; he just married God on that day. As Urs became popular, the descendants, or the Pirzadas made elaborate arrangements for the convenience of

**In fact, the saint had never died, he just married God**



ordinary folks. And the multitudes, in general were not coming to have any communion with the God but to achieve relief from their day-to-day worldly anxieties or attaining worldly possessions. In due course, the Dargah joint became formidable as the organisers introduced astrology, magic, talismans and charms as means of preserving the flow of Barkat from the saint, who had always occupied the central position in the cult, to a devotee.

As Thrimigham summed it up, "if the Sufis in the Khanaqah phase surrendered to the God and in the Tariqa phase to a method of discipline, in the Taifa stage, they surrendered to a person, the barkat possessing saints of whose cult, they were members. Finally, as the saints passed away, their descendants became Pirzadas who would organize annual Urs around the Dargah, attended by common folks with a reasonable expectation to receive Barkat in the form of alleviation of their worldly miseries.

### **Development of Sufism in India**

It is very difficult to disassociate Sufism within India, with Sufism outside India. The same saints often got associated with many branches. One of beliefs of Sufis is that saints never die and one can communicate with his living spirit and discuss their ideology. A man who is able to establish contacts with a large number of saints dead or alive is most informed. So, when a saint initiated into one order, he made it a point to go and establish contacts with spirits of others going to their Dargah.

It is difficult to pin down a particular date for the arrival of Sufism in India. It is generally believed to have entered with Islam when 1st Muslim saint Talim Ansari buried at Mailapur. After 12th century, they gradually expanded their activities. There were 4 important orders- Chisti, Qadri, Naqshbani and Shuttari or shuharwardiya.

### 1. Chisti Order:

Chisti order was introduced in India by Khwaja Muinuddin chisti and Bakhtiar kaki who came to India a little before the invasion of Mohd. Ghori. The Chishtiyyah originated in Afghanistan but it took root in India. This was the most successful and popular of all the orders because it knew better how to adapt itself to the usages and customs of the country in which it had come to settle down. Muinuddin chisti was born in Persia and is said to be a direct descendent of Prophet Muhammad. He settled in Ajmer in India from where he preached the principles of Sufism to all. Centuries later, with the support of Mughal rulers, his shrine became a place of pilgrimage. Akbar would visit the shrine every year. He had a massive following. Every year, his death anniversary is celebrated in Ajmer at his tomb when thousands of believers gather to pay respect to this great Sufi saint. After his death his numerous disciples continued his mission.

**Chisti order was introduced by Khwaja Muinuddin & Bakhtiyar kaki who came to India a little before the invasion of Mohd. Ghori**



Another famous Sufi saint of the Chisti order in India was Hazrat Khwaja Nizam-ud-din Auliya, who was popularly known as Hazrat Nizam-ud-Din. His real name was Mohammad and at the age of 20, he became the student of Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakkar. He was revered saint who is supposed to have been the master of Amir Khusro. His shrine located in Delhi is a popular attraction for Sufi followers. Auliya possessed a liberal outlook and inspired men with love of God.

Baba Bulleh Shah was yet another Sufi saint of India whose real name was Abdullah Shah. He preached his teachings and principles in Punjab. During the time he was at his peak, there was much unrest between Muslims and Sikhs. He preached nothing but the truth and his words of wisdom pacified those affected by the constant tiffs between Muslims and Sikhs. Through his poems, he criticized the

orthodox religious systems that were prevalent during his time. His poems were written in Punjabi and Sindhi as these were languages that common people could read and understand. Other important saints of this order were Khwaja Fariduddin, Ganja Shakar (Baba Farid), Qutub Sahib. During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq, who spread the Delhi Sultanate southward, the Chistiyyah order spread its roots all across India, eventually becoming the most popular order within India.

This order has been called the most systematied, popular, and prominent order in India. The Chisti Sufi saints believed in spiritual importance of music and they patronised professional singers of talent, irrespective of their religion or caste. They followed the practice of chilla-a spiritual exercise strictly observed for 40 days when God is remembered in every breadth, spending the time in a mosque or a close room accepting minimum food.

## **2. Suharawardi Order:**

The Suharawardiyyah order was started by Shahab al-Din Suharawardi of Baghdad and brought to India by Shaikh Baha-uddin Zakariya Suharawardi of Multan. The Suharawardiyyah tariqa achieved popularity in Bengal. He was succeeded by his son Shaikh Sadruddin, who was very friendly to Balban's son Muhammad Shaikh Ahmad Masud, who in fits of ecstasy neglected the Islamic practices. This order divided into 2 groups. 1) Bashara- who were in favour of observing the laws of Shariat strictly, and 2) Beshara- who did not observe Shariat saying it is only a means not an end.

## **3. Qadiri Order:**

The Qadiri order was founded by Abdul-Qadir Gilani, whose tomb is in Baghdad. It is popular among the Muslims of South India. This reached India a little late by 15th century by Shah Niamatullah and Makhdam Mohammad Jilani. Others of this order were Shaikh Daud Kirmani, Abdul Maali Qadiri, Dara Shukoh was a great patron of this order.

## **4. Naqsbandi Order:**

The origin of this order can be traced back to Khwaja Ya'qub Yusuf al-Hamadani (b. 1140), who lived in Central Asia. It was later organised



by Baha'uddin Naqshband (1318-1389) of Turkestan. Baha'uddin is widely referred to as the founder of the Naqshbandi tariqa. Khwaja Muhammad al-Baqi Billah Berang, whose tomb is in Delhi, introduced the Naqshbandi order to India. The conquest of India by Babur in 1526 gave considerable impetus to the Naqshbandiyyah order. Its disciples remained loyal to the throne because of their common Turkic origin. With the royal patronage of most of the Mughal rulers, the Naqshbandi order brought about the revival of Islam. The essence of this order was insistence on strict adherence to the shari'ah and nurturance of love for the Prophet. It was patronized by the Mughal rulers, as its founder was their ancestral pīr (spiritual guide). Baqi Billah's chief disciple was Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi who demolished the doctrine of 'unity of being' and in its place put faith philosophy of modified monism. Khwaja Mia Dard also attempted a synthesis between elements of love and legalism. He regarded himself both a slave and lover of God. The Naqshbandis earned their living by designing patterns printed on cloth.

## **5.2 THE WARRIOR SUFIS AND THEIR IMPACT**

Sufism, as an organised force has played a stellar role in pushing the Islamic frontiers in various countries. The present-day Telangana lands which formed a suba (province) during Bahmanis rule was swept by this wave during the closing years of thirteenth century. A closer look at this profound and insidious phenomenon would be appropriate.

### **Sufis as Warriors**

The biographical account of the first warrior Sufi of Bijapur, Shaikh Sufi Sarmast reads as follows:

“He came to the Deccan from Arabia in the seventh century AH [13th century AD] at a time when the Deccan was a land of unbelievers with no sign of Islam or correct faith anywhere. His companions — mendicants (faqir), disciples (murid), and soldiers (ghazi) — numbered over 700. He settled in Sagar in Sholapur [District]. There, a zealous and anti-Muslim raja named Kumaram wished to expel him. [Sufi Sarmast] and his companions having also prepared for a struggle, a bitter fight ensued. Heroes on both sides were slain. Finally, the raja was slain by the hand of his daughter.

Countless Hindus were killed, and at this time Lakhi Khan Afghan and Ni'mat Khan came from Delhi to assist him. Hindus were defeated and the Muslims were victorious. The rest of the Hindus, having accepted tributary status, made peace. Since by nature he was fundamentally not combative, Sufi Sarmast spread the religion of Muhammad and befriended the hearts of Hindus. Having seen his fine virtues and uncommon justice, many Hindus of that time became Muslims. Finally, he died in the year AH 680 [AD 1281].”<sup>3</sup>

The account of yet another warrior Sufi of Bijapur, Pir Mabari Khandayat reads and reinforces the above account as follows:

“It is known that he was born and raised in Ma’bar, on the coast of the salty sea. During the period of ‘Ala al-Din Khalaji, the Shah of Delhi, he accompanied the camp of the army of Islam in the year AH 710 [AD 1310-1311] when buried treasures of gold and silver came to the hands of the Muslims and the victory of Islam was affected.”<sup>4</sup>

Keeping aside the hyperbole of these biographical accounts, the fact remains that around the turn of the thirteenth century, the warrior Sufis from the northern India as well as from deep southern territories of Ma’bar were converging in Deccan. And what were they doing in these lands at that distant point in time? Let us see.

**... the warrior Sufis from the northern India as well as from deep southern territories of Ma’bar were converging in Deccan**

“It is said that in the time that arrogant infidels, surly (bad tempered and unfriendly) Hindus and powerful and vain rajas ruled [Bijapur] by force, he came here and waged jihad against the rajas and rebels. And with his iron bar he broke the heads and necks of many rajas and drove them to the dust of defeat. Many idolators, who by the will of God had guidance and blessings, repented from their unbelief and error, and by the hand of Pir Ma’bari came to Islam. Nonetheless, by the hands of wretched idolators and erring unbelievers, he and a group of his sons and friends drank the cup of martyrdom.”<sup>5</sup>



The Pir Mabari Khandayat literally means a fierce wagger of Jihad wielding an iron bar.<sup>6</sup> The same event is mentioned in The Bombay Gazetteer, 1889. It mentions that “Around 1305 CE, he, Pir Maabari

Khandayat, came to the Deccan as a “Missionary” and converted to Islam, a large number of Jains whose descendants are among the cultivating classes of Bijapur district.<sup>7</sup>

What the Sufi Sarmast and Pir Mabari Khandayat shared in common their affiliation with Muslim armies in the Deccan. They were followed by others from their tribe who arrived in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. They are remembered for their combative prowess and martyrdom.

Shaikh Ali Pahlavan, a companion of Sufi Sarmast, migrated to a town near Kurnool where he and his followers became engaged in a struggle with Hindus, again described as a jihad, and were killed. Shaikh Shahid (d 1272-73), who was a disciple, khalifa of Sufi Sarmast, is said to have migrated with four companions to Talikota, a town 50 miles southeast of Bijapur. There, he and his companions engaged a number of Hindus in combat and, after killing “countless numbers” of them, were themselves slain. Their burial place in Talikota is named ganj-i shuhada or “treasure of martyrs.” Still another early Sufi, Pir Jumna (d 1304), is said to have come to Bijapur city, “in the time of flourishing unbelief” ie, immediately before the governorship of Karim al-Din, and waged jihad which “cleansed the area of idol-worship.” Another source adds that despite the Sufi’s many virtues, in the year 1304 Hindus persecuted and killed both him and his 40-50 followers.<sup>8</sup>

Let us have a look at the titles given to these Sufis after their death. Shahid means a martyr, Sufi Sarmast title was ‘Asad al Aulia’ or ‘Lion of the Saints’. ‘Husam al Din’s title was ‘Tigh Barahna’ which means ‘naked sword’.

**The territory passed from Dar-ul-Harb to Dar-ul-Islam**



The timing of the arrival if these warrior Sufis commenced from 1296 CE, the time of the very first invasion from Delhi Sultanates and by 1347 CE, the Deccan, especially the Bijapur plateau saw the plantation of Bahmani’s Kingdom. The territory passed from Dar-ul-Harb to Dar-ul-Islam.<sup>9</sup>

The warrior Sufis in India was not an isolated phenomenon. It should be seen in the broader context of Islamic history as it had evolved

by the 14th century. Sir Hamilton Gibbs has made some significant observations regarding the relationship between a Ghazi or a holy warrior and the Sufi in the 14th century. The Arabic word 'Ribat', which originally meant the forts or fortified lines (literally pickets) staffed by fighting Ghazis along the Muslim frontier, came to mean for the Sufis the hospices, where devotees congregated to lead their religious life. This is equivalent to Khanaqah in Persian. This correlation between Gazi fighters and Sufi devotees had a certain parallel in the early years of Islamic history. The fighting life of the Ghazi had merged with the rise of the ascetic and mystical movement in Islam. Early Muslim asceticism was dominated by the fear of hell. Since, death on Jihad was the only sure passport to paradise, it came about that in the early days, ascetics had generally taken a prominent part in the frontier warfare.

**This correlation between Gazi fighters and Sufi devotees had a certain parallel in the early years of Islamic history**



In fact, by the 13th and 14th centuries, certain group of Sufis living along the worldwide Muslim frontier had not yet withdrawn from active participation of the frontier warfare. For example, in Anatolia some Sufis, called Ghazi baba's, conferred a measure of religious legitimacy on the acts of fighting Ghazis living with them on the frontier. The Ghazi and the Ghazi Baba are also seen in the exploits of Ghazi led Turkoman tribes and a certain Sari Saltuk, during the 13th century whose heroic deeds are expounded. In Saltuknama, he is portrayed as exhorting the Turkomans of Anatolia to take up war against the Christians. His exhortations generally led to war and resulted in victory.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the early Ghazis of Anatolia and the states they founded linked themselves to the only Islamic organisation available in the marches which possessed any dynamic element – the wandering Turkish Darawish, the Havas from Central Asia who accompanied, followed and fortified the warriors.<sup>11</sup>

Another example of Sufis participating actively in frontier warfare comes from North Western Iran in the 15th century. "The Murids of the order became the Guzat-i-Sufia [Sufi Ghazis] and under the leadership of Gunaid and Haidar, we see them fighting in large numbers against the Georgians of Trapezund or against

the Georgians of the Caucasus. It is no more that the heart of the Muslim world which attracts them; it is no more the Dar-ul-Islam but the Dar-ul-Harb. Overnight, they have become Ghazis fighting the unbelievers along the Muslim frontiers of the north.<sup>12</sup>

...that influential poets like Shah Ismael used both the terms 'Ghazi' & 'Sufi', when referring to his Murids



It is quite significant that influential poets like Shah Ismael used both the terms 'Ghazi' and 'Sufi', when referring to his Murids. The relationship of Murid to his Pir had evolved to such an extent that Murid shall go to a battle and martyr himself, if demanded by his Pir. We are talking about the Persian Safawi Dynasty that ruled Iran from 1501 to 1722 CE, almost overlapping with the Qutb Shahis in Deccan lands and Mughals in the Indian sub-continent.

We can therefore conclude that warrior Sufis in the Deccan played their military role in the late 13th and the early 14th century. It was common with both the Anatolian Ghazi Baba's and the Safawi Murids. Each one of these movements were being enacted in a remote frontier region, far removed from the established centres of Islamic polity and culture. The warrior Sufis did not represent the synthesis of Islamic and Indic traditions, but only a transplant of the former into the world of the later.<sup>13</sup> The activities of warrior Sufis were far removed from the commonly understood meaning of a Sufi who as a self-possessed mystique, within the framework of Islam attempted to achieve direct communion with God.

### **Sufi wave from Delhi Sultanate to Deccan**

In 1296 CE, Ala-ud-din Khilji, the then governor of Kara, raided Deogiri. The political significance of those military operations was obviously great, because of their long-term implications. Therefore, in the closing years of the 13th century, the Deccan became a subject matter of intense discussions in Northern India. Apart from military generals leading a large army, the mystics like Amir Hasan Sijzi, a distinguished disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia also arrived in the Deccan. We also find that the Deccan being mentioned in the assemblies of the Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia at Delhi.

Legend has it that in 1300 CE, at the instance of Khwaja Nizamuddin

Aulia of Delhi, a band of 700 Sufis arrived from Delhi and established themselves in various places in Deccan and further south. The leader of this band of missionaries was Muntazab-ud-din Zarzari Zar Baksh. He settled on the outskirts of Daulatabad in a village called Khuldabad and married Sona Bai, the daughter of a petty local official of the Yadavas. In August 1309, after his death, his brother Burhanuddin Gharib Shah arrived with his band of followers. 'The mission of these Sufis was to propagate and spread Islam.'<sup>14</sup> In the Deccan and deep south. Burhanuddin died at Daulatabad in 1338 CE and by this time, the Muslim rule was being firmly established in the Deccan. In due course of time, these missionaries acquired a following of non-Muslims also, some of whom were converted to Islam. Their soft power undoubtedly contributed towards stabilising the alien Muslim rule in the Deccan.<sup>15</sup>

**...he settled outside Daulatabad in a village called Khuldabad and married Sona bai, the daughter of a petty local official of the Yadavas**



During those tumultuous times, two significant incidents need some elucidation. The first incident relates to when, Malik Kafur was leading the Khalji forces into Warangal and the Sultan (Ala-ud-din Khilji) did not hear for a long time about the fate of his army. A messenger was sent to the Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia's camp to seek his spiritual help and request him to pray for the safety of his army.<sup>16</sup> The second incident relates when, A visitor called at the Khanaqah of the Sheikh and stayed at the gate, hoping to be called in. Just before him, Ulugh Khan (The Future Mohammad Bin Tughlaq) had left the hospice. The Sheikh told an attendant that one king has left and another is waiting at the door. The visitor was ushered in and the saint received him with affection and prophesied a bright future for him in the Deccan. He pressed a piece of bread on one of his fingers and offered it to him saying that it was the Chatr (canopy) of his Sultanate. The visitor, the future founder of Bahaman Kingdom, took it as a happy omen and left the Khanaqah in good cheer and elated.<sup>17</sup> The saint's prophecy did not go in vain. The first act of the founder of the Bahmani Kingdom after the assumption of royal power was to send five maunds of gold and ten maunds of silver to the disciple of Nizamuddin Aulia, namely Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib for

distribution amongst the needy and the poor in order to bless the soul of Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia.<sup>18</sup>

In 1322 CE, when Ulugh Khan, the future Mohammad Bin Tughlaq marched to Deogiri, Amir Khusro, a renowned poet also accompanied him. The city caught his attention and he wrote in praise of the city. It is no flattery to call it paradise, but I do not call it that, lest it be confounded with the paradise of Shaddad. The city was surely destined to become a paradise under Islamic rule, for that is why it has been so carefully decorated. It was on hearing the fame of this city that Cairo dipped her garments in the Nile and Baghdad split herself in two.<sup>19</sup>

Mohammad Bin Tughlaq's decision to make Devagiri as his capital was surely a political and administrative exigency. However, Khusro's description of the charms of Deogiri could not possibly have left the ruler's mind untouched or unaffected. The capital shift from Delhi to Deogiri (called Daulatabad) forced Ulemas and Mashaikh to migrate as well. The Khanaqah life in Delhi was paralysed but Daulatabad received a windfall of these pious souls. Notables amongst them were Burhanuddin Gharib, Fakhruddin Zarradi, Amir Hasan Sijzi, Syed Yousuf (father of Gesu Deraz), Khwaja Hussain, Khwaza Omar and several others. All of them were brought-up in the traditions of Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia and had imbibed from him the Chishti mystic principles.

Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib was one of the senior-most disciples of Nizamuddin Aulia, known as Sahib-i-Walayath. He was past 70 years when he arrived in Deccan. He disdained the possession of private property. One day, the Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq sent him a gift of 3000 tankas. The Sheikh knew that refusing the gift would invite troubles. He added twenty tankas available in his own Khanaqah to the royal gift and distributed the entire amount in charity.<sup>20</sup>

### **Sufis in Bahmanis kingdom**

From the late 13th century onwards, most of the Sufis who migrated to Deccan, especially in Bahmanis territories belonged to the Chisti, the Qadri or the Shattari order. Each of these orders or Silsilahs had already undergone considerable development in various parts of the Indian sub-continent and beyond before its penetration in

the Deccan. The Chisti order, was the earliest to flourish during the 13th century in Delhi. Those early adherents avoided the court and courtly affairs. "My room has two doors; if the Sultan comes through one door, I will leave by the other." This sentiment was followed strictly which forebode its followers to accept land grants (Inams) from the court. A corollary of this detachment implied a simple ascetic life shared by all the inmates of Khanaqahs. They slept, prayed, studied and shared food when available in a communitarian mode. Tasks were also distributed among inmates; collecting wood for fuel, cooking food, writing-out documents such as amulets (Tawiz) or attending the Pir. The overall discipline and a kind of spiritual atmosphere attracted all kinds of public; scholars, politicians, soldiers and even Hindu yogis, who would come to receive blessings or guidance from the Pir, or simply to share with him their worldly concerns and their possible mitigations.

This Chisti policy of maintaining an aloofness from the court developed into an open and mutual hostility that resulted from conflicting notions in the court and the Khanaqahs about the Sufi's proper role in society. Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq had visited the assemblies of Nizam ul Din Aulia as a young man. But after ascending the Delhi throne, the same Sultan came to believe that Sufis, instead of devoting themselves to a cult of personal worship of God, should be active in the propagation of Islam among the non-Muslims.<sup>21</sup>

The Sultan went even further. He demanded Sufis to discard their patched frock (Khirqa) and replace it with silken gown and broad waistband of the government officers. Tensions between the court and the Sufis culminated in 1327 CE when Mohammad Bin Tughlaq ordered all Sufis in their Khanaqahs to shift from Delhi to the new capital in the Deccan, Daulatbad. So complete was the destruction of Khanaqahs life in Delhi that with the exception of tombs of Shaikh Qutb-ul-Din-Bakhtiyar Kaki and Shiekh Nizamuddin Aulia, no tomb or hospice in Delhi had even a candle lamp.<sup>22</sup>

Delhi's loss was bound to become Deccan's gain. Several of the disciples of Nizamuddin Aulia migrated to the new capital at Daulatabad. In 1347 CE, just 20 years after the migration southwards, the rebel Dakhanis revolted

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against Delhi's rule and founded the Bahmani Kingdom at Gulbarga. In this new political situation, several Chistis gravitated to Gulbarga and while doing so, they unlike their spiritual forefathers in Northern India developed a rather close relationship with the court. In this process, the Bahmani rulers took the initiative in forging close relations with Muslim divines. The founder, Ala-ud-din Hasan Shah needed any support he could muster for consolidating his initial tenuous hold over the Deccan plateau. Accordingly, he and his successors actively solicited the support and co-operation of any Sufi, who because of his popularity amongst a large number of non-elite groups, was thought to be capable of carrying the roots of Bahmani power deeper in public confidence."

Shaikh Siraj-al-Din Junaidi was perhaps the first Sufi to become quite close to Bahmani's court. Born in Peshawar, he had accompanied Muhammad Bin Tughlaq to the Deccan and settled in Bijapur. On 3rd August, 1347 CE, he crowned the new king, Ala-ud-din Bahman Shah. In return, the new king promptly granted the village of Korchi as Inam to Siraj-ud-Din. In addition, the new Sultan distributed five maunds of gold and more than ten maunds of silver, in the name of Nizam-ul Din Aulia, the great Chisthi of Delhi. Lest we forget, it was the same sheikh who had given Ala-ud Din a loaf of bread with a prophecy that

**The payback by Sultan was apt & timely which opened the strategic highway linking successive rulers with the contemporary Sufis**

it represented the Chatr (canopy) of the kingdom, he would find in the Deccan. The Sufi was no more but his prophecy had come true. The payback by the Sultan was quite apt and timely which opened the strategic highway linking successive rulers with the contemporary Sufis. Alauddin's successor, Muhammad Shah Bahmani was able to obtain a declaration of allegiance from virtually all the Sufis of his kingdom.<sup>23</sup>



The Chisti association with the Bahmani court was intensified by another prominent Sufi of those times, namely Saiyad Mohammad Hussaini Banda nawaz Gesu Deraz. His evolution also indicates the degree to which the ideals of fourteenth century Delhi were compromised in the fifteenth century Gulbarga. Born in Delhi in 1321 CE, Gesu Deraz moved to Daulatabad along with his father when Mohammad Bin Tughlaq ordered all the Sufis

in Delhi to move over to Daulatabad. After the death of his father in Daulatabad, Gesu Deraz, a young lad of sixteen years returned to Delhi. Shortly afterwards, he became attracted to the one Chisti Sufi who had defied the orders of the Sultan by staying-put in Delhi, Nasir ul Din Chiragh in Delhi. Once again, in 1398 CE, when Taimur Lang (Timur the Lame) invaded India, Gesu Deraz abandoned Delhi for the Deccan. He also veered radically away from the ideals of his Pir with respect to the traditional Chisti policy of avoiding the court. When Gesu Deraz arrived in Gulbarga, the reigning monarch, Sultan Firuz Bahmani sought him out and granted him several villages as Inams, which the Sufi accepted. Gesu Deraz's popularity, especially with the urban population of Gulbarga grew. It was time for Firuz to decide about his successor and he expected the Sufi saint to automatically support the claim of his son. But the saint threw his support in favour of Firuz's younger brother, Ahmad. Angered, Sultan Firuz ordered, Gesu Deraz to move his Khanaqah away from the proximity of the court. The younger brother Ahmad, on the other hand regularly attended the saint's musical sessions and lavished great sums of money on his Khanaqah. In 1422 CE, after Firuz's death, as Ahmad ascended the throne, he went even further by transferring the court's traditional support of the family of Siraj-al-Din and even towns and more villages were granted to Gesu Deraz in the Gulbarga region.

As Gesu Deraz political sympathy merged with the court, his doctrinal position became more orthodox. In fact, he squarely aligned himself with the Ulema by declaring the supremacy of Islamic Law (Shariat) over all Sufi sages. All liberal Sufis were denounced as enemies of Islam.<sup>24</sup>

**As Gesu Deraz political sympathy merged with the Court, his doctrinal position became more orthodox**



In 1422 CE, Gesu Deraz died. The grateful Sultan Ahmad built a great shrine (Dargah) over his grave. The strategic considerations prompted the Sultan to shift his capital to Bidar. In Trimmingham's scheme, the Tariqua phase passed over to Taifa phase. As the tomb became a renowned focal point, the descendants of Gesu Deraz became too occupied administering the affairs of Dargah, apart from maintaining

the vast estates bestowed upon their illustrious ancestors. All these developments taken together, effectively killed any living tradition of Chisti Sufism in Gulbarga.<sup>25</sup> Just look at the contrast. The Chisti tradition in Delhi had ceased functioning by being too unyielding before a hostile court. The same movement ceased to function in Gulbarga by taking too pliant a stand before a generous court.

### **The Sufi Influence**

The Sufi divines received unreserved reverence from the Bahmani sultans.<sup>26</sup> This may be traced to the Sufis prognostications about Hasan's founding a kingdom in the Deccan. It is said that the Bahmani's future destiny was foretold by the celebrated Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia and one or two other Sufis.<sup>27</sup> The coronation ceremony of the Bahmani sultans was marked by the practice of installation of sultan by the Sufis in the presence of learned divines, nobles and state officers.<sup>28</sup>

Almost all Bahmanis Sultans sought the help of Sufi saints in the consolidation of their power. They offered endowments in the form of villages, stipends and buildings etc to the saints and they, in turn gave moral support to them and whipped up public opinion in their favour.<sup>29</sup>

In moments of crisis connected with accessions, campaigns and factious conflicts between contending parties to the throne, the support or opposition of these saints went a long-way in determining the eventual course of political events. The founder Ala-ud-din Hasan Bahamin Shah, apart from respecting saints like Gharib, also used to invite them to his camp during campaigns and load them with presents. His successor, sultan Muhammad-I always counted on the prayers of these holy men and distributed a large amount of money amongst them. It is

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well known that the crucial support of Gesu Deraz put Ahmed Shah Wali on the throne. Alauddin Ahmed-II, similarly went through the ceremony of enthronement with holy saints holding his hands on the either side. Similarly, in the conflict between Humayun Shah and his brother Hasan Khan, the support of the saint proved decisive. Thus, we find that the saints and Masheikhs have been deeply involved in the politics of succession amongst Bahmani rulers.



After Chisti Silsilah, we see yet another Silsilah called Qadiri order, entrenching in Deccan during the fifteenth century. The Qadiri order was pan-Islamic spread throughout the Muslim world from India to Morocco, with its point of origin and centre of gravity being Baghdad. Its founder Ad al Qadir Jilani had taught and died in 1166 CE. It bore a distinctly Arabic character and Qadiri Sufis looked more to the Arab world for their spiritual nourishment. Qadiri Sufis followed doctrinal positions, which were hardly distinguishable from those of the regular Islamic clergy or the 'Ulema'.

The first Qadiri Sufis to journey from the Arab Middle East to India appeared in the Bahmani capital, Bidar from about the mid-fifteenth century. The shifting of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar witnessed a new political ambience where foreigners, especially Persians were the flavour amongst the new power elite. Gulbarga faded from the political history and became a city of tombs. The city itself came to be identified with Dakhanis Muslims. The new rulers encouraged the immigration of foreign Sufis from the Middle East, a policy very much in line with its desire to seek foreign administrators from the Arabian and Iranian areas around the Persian Gulf.

The bargaining that took place between the court and foreign Sufis could almost be seen as a special branch of diplomacy. Ferishta relates that Sultan Ahmad Bahmani (1422-1436), the monarch responsible for shifting the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar, sent two holy men from his court to the Iranian city of Kerman for the purpose of soliciting a renowned Sufi by the name of Shaikh Ni'mat Allah (d. 1430-31) to return with them to Bidar. The shaikh declined, but sent in his place his favorite disciple. Sultan Ahmad, pleased with this gesture but still not satisfied, sent two more holy men to Kerman to solicit the shaikh's sons to come to Bidar. Shaikh Ni'mat Allah again declined, pleading that he had but one son. He did agree, however, to send his grandson to Bidar. Although both missions from Bidar fell short of their aim, the extent to which the Bahmani court valued foreign Sufis can be seen in the lavish treatment accorded to Shaikh Ni'mat Allah's grandson. He was carried from the Konkan seacoast to Bidar on the monarch's personal palanquin, escorted by two venerable religious men. And

in the vicinity of the capital the monarch personally went out to welcome the newcomer, and directed that on that spot be built a mosque and village, which he named after the man's grandfather still in Kerman, Shaikh Ni'mat Allah.<sup>30</sup>

One of the first Qadiri Sufis to arrive at Bidar from Baghdad was Shah Jain al Din Ganj Nishin whom the reigning Sultan personally welcomed to the city. Around the same time, yet another Qadiri Sufi from Baghdad Shah Ismail Qadiri arrived in Bidar, where he and his three sons furthered the teachings of their order. Shiekh Muhammad Multani was yet another Qadiri Sufi. The Quadiri Khanaqahs were also established in Khandesh and Ahmednagar. The fortunes of those Qadiri Sufis followed the fortunes of the Sultanates in whose capital they lived. By the end of the 15th century, as Bidar fell, other places like Bijapur became the new power centres. Qadiri Sufis too shifted to Bijapur. Shaikh Alaul Haq Quadiri and Shah Abul Hasan Quadiri worked in Bijapur. Syed Shah Jamal, an important Quadri saint came from Baghdad and settled in Warangal in 1590 CE.

The third Sufi order was the Shattari Silsilah. Rooted in Iran, this Silsilah was brought to India in the mid-fifteenth century by Abd Allah Shattar. He settled in Mandu and his technique of dissemination was unique. He moved from place to place with an army of disciples clad in military uniform. At each place of halting, an announcement was made with the beat of drums asking people to come to him if they desired to be shown the way to God. The military outfit may have created its own suspicion in the minds of many rulers, but the energetic mystique was able to extend his hold far and wide, especially in the Deccan.

The Shattari spiritual ideology includes the halo of intoxicated Persian mystics like Shaikh Bayazid Bistami. Transported upon

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by ejaculating**

the wings of mystical fervor" wrote Arberry, Bayazid found God within his own soul and scandalised the orthodox by ejaculating, 'Glory to me! How great is my majesty.'<sup>31</sup>

Shattari Sufis absorbed even non-Islamic ideas. Saiyid Muhammad Ghaus, one of their eminent Sufis meditated for 13 long years under austere conditions



near Banaras. He wrote one book combining Islamic mystic thoughts with astrological theories and another on the methods of self-discipline and breath control as practiced by the Yogis.<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Ghaus established various centres of Shattari teachings in Gujarat, importantly at Ahmedabad and Broach.

The association of these saints with the rulers, however proved detrimental to the larger interests of the Sufi silsilahs. The earlier tradition of keeping away from politics and eschewing the company of rulers had given a great moral strength and spiritual vitality to the mystic movement in India. But, when the saints of the Deccan began to work for public welfare under the patronage of the Bahmani rulers, their freedom of action was curtailed. The Khanaqahs became an extension of the court, subsisting on state finances. As jagirs became big and unwieldy to administer, it became increasingly difficult to keep succession of the spiritual gaddi open for men of talent. The principle of heredity which had so long been looked down upon by the early saints, inevitably came in to determine the organization of Khanaqahs. Starting with the able saints, the leadership of the mystic orders in course of time passed into the hands of those with smaller stature and inferior mettle. Syed Muhammad Gesu Deraz once expressed a deep concern at this degeneration of mystic families. "Surprising indeed is the position of the sons of the Masheikhs. With what ease, they became Sheikhs after the death of their fathers. They know not that their fathers attained that position after spending years of their lives in jungles, without food and without dress. It was after undergoing so many hardships, that they attained their status".<sup>33</sup>

It was probably due to the hereditary succession that, though the Deccan produced a number of outstanding individual saints; it could not produce a line of able saints as had appeared in North India, in the early phase of the history of the Chisti movement.<sup>34</sup>

### 5.3 THE PERSIAN INFLUENCE

In 570 CE, Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was born in Arabia at Mecca. He died in 632 CE. The new religion was a revolutionary social creed and within a few centuries, it was spread far and wide by the Arabs. Among other kingdoms, they conquered Persia and with the

gradual establishment of Islamic culture there, Indian sub-continent became its next target. The virile creed of Islam had revolutionized Persia and its people in their social, political and cultural outlooks. As men of genius and talents were fostered in this new Islamic tradition, these men, in due course of time were attracted towards India, which held out a promising career and a glorious future for them. The Arab supremacy in political affairs in Baghdad had already peaked during the reign of caliph (786-809 CE) Harun-ur-Rashid. The rising power of Persians witnessed pro-Persians learnings of caliph (813-833 CE) Al-Mamun, which emancipated Persia from the Arab rule. The leading officials at Al-Mamun's court were mostly Persians.<sup>35</sup> Under their guidance, Hindu doctors of learnings, medicine, mathematics and astronomy were invited from India. Their erudition saw many of them efficiently superintending their observatories and research institutes of medicine. The contribution of the Hindu sub-continental intellectual elite provided a renewed impetus to various disciplines, including practical sciences.

**Persian nationality had played a prominent & conspicuous role in subjugation of India and establishment of the Muslim rule in the country**



The Persian nationality riding the Islamic wave had played a prominent and conspicuous role in the subjugation of India and establishment of the Muslim rule in the country. Though it is a fact, that Mahmud of Ghazni, Shihab-ud-din Ghouri, and his generals, the founders of Khalji, Tughlaq and Mughal empires, as also the Bahmanis, Adilshah and Qutb-Shahi dynasties were either of Turk or Mongol origin, yet prior to their arrival in India, the pervading influence of Persian cultural base had more or less absorbed these foreigners in its fold. Many of them had adopted the Persian language, customs, conventions and mannerisms of life. Their court ceremonies and administration of justice were also modelled on the ancient Persian style. Thus, these adventurers, though racially Turks and Mongols transformed themselves and became culturally Persians.<sup>36</sup>

As the Muslim rule broadened and deepened in the Indian sub-continent, the successors in all these dynasties did not even know how to speak the language of their ancestors. Even the immigrants coming to India from the North or to the Deccan from the western

coast, who belonged to Turkish or Afghan stock used Persian as their lingua-franca. As a common medium of expression of this country, Persian became the state language of India with the foundation of the first Muslim Sultanate by the Ghori's general, Qutbud-Din-Aibak from 1206 CE onwards.

The role of Persian aristocracy had been a major factor in the revolt of Deccan. In 1320, after demise of the Khalji dynasty, the Tughlaqs came to establish their sway and extinguished the rule of Kakatiyas, Yadavas and Hoyasalas. Mohammed Bin Tughlaq, with a view to control these lands decided to shift his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. The scheme was the beginning of a series of major blunders. The scheme of migration of the entire elite along with its paraphernalia by and large failed. They were forced to migrate. Everyone could not make it. Those who could make it found social and climatic difficulties all around the new capital. As the scheme of migration failed, Muhammad Tughlaq developed a callous indifference towards the affairs in the Deccan. As other sovereign innovations engaged his attention, he let lose his grip over the South. The natural consequences of which was that many provinces rose in open revolt and proclaimed their independence from the sovereignty of Delhi. The Deccan was also one of them. In the pick of the nobility and aristocracy which had been compelled to migrate to the South and had later continued to stay, there was an active secret agent who conceived a coup-de-etat, and seizure of political power, from the Governor of the Tughlaqs. He was Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Transitional Turmoil**

The transitional phase between the fall of Kakatiyas in 1324 CE and the establishment of Bahmanis in 1347 CE was one of unrest and disturbances. It was during this period that the rigours of an alien rule were felt by the people. The poet Namadeva said, "the earth was tyrannised by daityas. The instances of idol breaking and temple destruction are rampant during this period."<sup>38</sup> Hindus in general and Brahmins in particular were appalled by the cow killing practices of the ruling class and their other iconoclastic indulgences.<sup>39</sup>

There were occasional exceptions too. In 1326 CE, during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and possibly under instructions from him,



the temple of Madhukeshwara at Kalyani which suffered damages during the rebellion was restored by reinstalling shivalinga and resuming worship. Beyond these solitary instances, during the days of Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, disorder prevailed and social security was threatened. The Leela charitra records that robbers, highway men and other undesirable elements interrupted the even tenor of the life of the people.<sup>40</sup> Those robbers used to plunder caravans. Orders were issued to the Tarafdaars to exterminate the criminals by routing them out and inflict on them harsh punishment. The undesirable traces of that condemned class were removed within 6 or 7 months.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Founder of the deccan empire**

In 1347 CE, as the founder of the first Islamic State in the South, Al-ud-Din was also a pioneer in introducing Islamic institutions of government, of law and jurisprudence and of public education in the Deccan. For its sustenance and stability, this lone Islamic State south of Vindhya had perforce to depend on the ability, initiative and efficiency of talented Muslims of Persia, Iraq and Arabia in order to rule a Hindu population. The state as an emblem of political power is a standard bearer of the culture of the ruling Muslim elite. The latter were foreigners and mostly Muslims of Iranian stock. They naturally inherited the glorious traditions of the legendary kings of Persia with their rich heritage. It was no wonder therefore, that the court presented an opportunity to enterprising Persians of distinction in every sphere of government, justice, army apart from art and culture to achieve success in their careers in the Deccan India,<sup>42</sup> during those centuries was a land of many promises to all these men of Persia. Their intrinsic worth, coupled with the privilege of being foreigners or Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) at once admitted them to the appropriate state service, with assured rise in their future.

In 1397 CE, Sultan Firuz Shah ascended the Bahmani throne. He stands out as the most outstanding of all the Bahmani rulers. His buoyant enthusiasm to enjoy life in its fullness, his fiery martial spirit, his calculating diplomacy, and his fully stocked harem with a global flavour was one aspect of his personality. However, his inviolable faith in the sanctity of religious duty, his love of intellectual learnings

and his craze for music are rather unknown facets about his multi-dimensional personality. He evinced deep interest in the study of religion. He wrote out copies of the Holy Quran in his excellent hand writing in the Naqsh style and earned his livelihood from their sale, or gave them as gifts. He is credited with the institution of research boards for a comparative study of the scriptures. A keen student of mysticism and theoretical philosophy, and a champion of reason, he was moving on a reformist line. Unfortunately, in his later life, his reformism deteriorated into voluptuary care and licentiousness with a predictable unsavoury end.

His area of knowledge spanned science, theology, Quranic commentaries and philosophy. He regarded the spread of culture and light as a mission more sacred and noble than kingship itself. In the chronicles, Ferishta's opinion, he probably surpassed Muhammad Tughlaq in his intellectual accomplishments. He was deeply interested in the study of mathematical science, especially astronomy. He had constructed an observatory at Daulatabad in 1407 CE and also invited astronomers like Mahmud-e-Gazaruni and Hasan-e-Gilani to conduct research in astronomy.

His reign witnessed an overwhelming influence of Persians in all fields of political and cultural activity. The administration was entrusted to Mir Fazul-lih-Inju-Shiraji, a scholar of great reputation and an educationist. Soon, his marital ties with the royal family brought about a rapid rise in the fortunes of Injus. Indo-Persian relations were reinforced further and Firoz Shah sent an embassy to Timur's court in Central Asia. Bahmani ships plied between Goa, Dabhol, Jepol and the ports of Persian Gulf to fetch scholars, poets, litterateurs and of course, handsome lads and concubines to the Bahmani capital. Gulbarga appeared as if it was a capital of Persian prince, complete with the hierarchy of grandees and nobles, and the army of the paragons of erudition, poetry and philosophy almost entirely drawn from centres of Persia and Central Asia.<sup>43</sup> The only Indian scholar at Firoz Shah's court was Mulla Daud-e-Bidri,

**Bahmani ships plied between various ports of India & Persian gulf to fetch scholars, poets, litterateurs, and also handsome lads and concubines to the Bahmani capital**



holding the office of the court chronicler. He is the author of *Tuhfatus Salatin*, an oft quoted source of Ferishta's *Gulshan-e-Ibrahimi*.

Towards the end of his reign, Firoz Shah became a jaded and feeble voluptuary. Hoshiyar and Bedar, two favourite slaves of the ruler seized political power. This led to a sudden decline in the royal prestige and the nobility was weaned away from its support from Firoz Shah by his brother Ahmed Shah, Khan e Khanum. The latter suddenly withdrew to the sanctuary of Gesu Deraz before his dramatic escape from Gulbarga. Firoz Shah got suspicious of his brother's designs and a contingent of royal army was dispatched to arrest him. Ahmed Shah, the grand rebel, inflicted a defeat on the royal forces and marched in triumph to the gates of Bahmani's capital. Firoz Shah, left alone, with his authority evaporated, abdicated the throne in favouring his brother Ahmad Shah. Firoz put the royal crown on his brother's head with his own hands and tied his scimitar to his belt. After blessing him, the Sultan Firoz Shah died a fortnight (poisoned?!) later, in 1422.

### **Saints and savants deepen persian influence**

In the famous saint of the Deccan, Khwaja Banda Nawaz, Sadr-ud-din Abul Fath Sayyid Muhammad e Husayni, popularly known as Gesu Deraz came to the Deccan at a ripe old age of 83 years during the reign of Firoz Shah Bahmani and settled at Gulbarga. At a very early age of just 4 years, was at Daulatabad where he received his early education. He was greatly fond of attending the Sufi dance and music. He went to Delhi with his mother and his natural aptitude towards spiritualism soon attracted him towards the famous divine and mystic, Khwaza, Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud-Chiragh-e-Delhi. In 1299 CE, Delhi was threatened by the Mongol invasion. The divine left Delhi went to Gujarat en-route Bahadurpura, Gwalior, Bhandar and Khambayat. After sometime, he resumed his journey again via Baroda, Daulatabad and Khuldabad before arriving at Gulbarga. In the meanwhile, the master died and the new star succeeded to the holy seat. His mission continued to diffuse mystic learnings and its cardinal doctrines for a period of forty years. His name and fame were bound to spread far and wide.

The reigning king of Bahmani, Firoz Shah beseeched the Divine to bless his capital by making it his permanent residence. The Divine agreed,

stayed there and remained alive for another ten years. In the year 1422 CE, when he died at a ripe old age of 105 years, Firoz Shah had died and Ahmad Shah was on the Bahmani throne. The very first act of the new Sultan was to honour the saint due to whose blessings, he attributed his success. A magnificent mausoleum with rich endowments was built and Khwaja Mohammed was buried in it. The shrine is a sacred seat of pilgrimage in the Deccan, even today.

**A magnificent mausoleum with rich endowments was built and Khwaja Mohammed was buried in it**

The Khwaza was highly respected by the ruling dynasty of the Bahmanis. Therefore, his family's influence was bound to play a political, apart from religious role in the statecraft. Descendants of Khwaja were married to the royal families and became councillors of the sovereigns. As torch bearers of religion, they formed a link between the religious minded Muslims, who had implicit faith in them and the sovereigns, whose trust and confidence they enjoyed. Khwaza, was a great missionary of Islam. His treatises and pamphlets on religion and Sufism numbered more than thirty. The important ones are Kitab-e-Khatima, Jamame-ul-Kalim, Anis-u-Shishaq, Anis-ul-Shishaq, Asmar-ul-Asrar. The chronogram of the Khwaza's death is Makhdume-Din-wa-Duniya. His shrine at Gulbarga is a sacred seat of pilgrimage in the Deccan.<sup>44</sup>



The second half of the 14th century, heralded the dawn of Persian language and literature in the Deccan. The brand new cultural super-structure was carried astride the Islamic polity, which was to rule this land for next 5-6 centuries.

### **Persian merchants as kingmakers**

In 1422 CE, the rise of Ahmed Shah to power was, among other factors also due to the stratagems of Khalaf-e-Hasan-e-Basri. He was a Persian merchant, whose devotion during the crucial phase proved to be a valuable asset for Ahmad Shah to acquire sovereign authority. He was granted the title of Malik-ur-Tujjar (The Prince of Merchant). The blue-blooded Persian was instrumental in reviving the Persian influence which was temporarily undermined by Hoshiyar and Bedar, the two slaves.

For the new sovereign Ahmed Shah, religiosity was an absorbing sentiment throughout his life and it permeated through every sphere of his activity. The hierarchy of saints and religious divines forged their way to power, and wielded great authority in political matters, so long denied to them. The foundation of mosques, religious trusts and charitable institutions, a vital link between the masses and the pioneers of the Islamic cultural concepts, was undertaken on an extensive scale during his reign.

**... a large number of about 3000 archers from Iraq, Khusran, Transoxonia, Syria and even Arabia found their way in Bahmani army**



The supremacy of the influence of Persians in political and religio-cultural affairs during this phase had a certain definite logic. Khalaf-e-Hasan-e-Basri, the most trustworthy and loyal merchant, was made Wakil-us-Saltnat. He was in charge of a number of military expeditions. As his prestige soared, a large number of about 3000 archers from Iraq, Khusran, Transoxonia, Syria and even Arabia found their way in Bahmani army. The dominant section amongst these immigrants, were of course, Persians and Turks. The ranks nobles in Ahmad Shah's court were already crowded with Persians or Persianized Turks.

In this connection, Ala-ud-din Ahmad-II deserves special mention. He established a hospital at Bidar and endowed it with some villages to fetch enough revenue for providing food to all the patients. Both, Hindu and Muslim physicians were appointed to look after this hospital.<sup>45</sup> He came very close to his Hindu subjects and was comforted during his last days by the sage of Gangapur. The Gurucharitra tells us that, "The sultan, without caste was a large-hearted ruler. He evinced devout attitude towards the Brahmins and temples in the land he did not molest. But we are also told that the same sympathetic attitude of the Sultan disturbed the orthodoxy. Shaikhs and Ulemas at the royal court detested his fraternising with non-Muslims while the Brahmins were distressed that their brethren should discuss sacred Vedas and other Hindu religious texts with a person who, though a king, was of 'No caste'.<sup>46</sup>

Ahmad Shah died in 1434 CE. Religious minded Tabatabai, apart from compliments and tribute to the sovereign, refers to him as Afzal-us-Salatin-e-Bahaman. The Bahmani's capital was shifted from Gulbarga

to Bidar (Ahsanabad to Muhammedabad). The royal palace bears the excellent calligraphical signature on its entrance. The couplet reads: “How grand is this strong palace; that in its excellent sublimity, even the lofty sky is but a threshold on the base of this edifice. Nay, it (the threshold) cannot even be called the sky; for it is (obviously) against its dignity. (Don’t you know); that it the palace of the sultan of the world, Ahmad, descendant of Bahaman Shah.<sup>47</sup>

### **Greatest tragedy after Karbala**

Commencing from 1434, the reign of Ahmad Shah-II marked the climax of Afaqui influence in the Bahmani’s polity, leading to a series of catastrophes, which undermined the foundation of the kingdom. The coronation ceremony of the new ruler witnessed the salience of Afaqui influence. The few Dakhni office bearers were murdered through court intrigue. They were replaced by foreigners again. The situation turned for the worse when Khalaf-e-Hasan-e-Basri marched against the Khandesh army with an army exclusively consisting of Afaqui soldiers. The victorious return of this ‘pure Afaqui army’ witnessed a warm reception, with a royal mandate recognizing their superiority by granting them seats on the right side of the throne in the court. The embittered hearts of ‘Dakhni’ faction took its bloody revenge. Twelve hundred Sayyids and thousands of Afaquis were beguiled into a fatal trap in Chakan and ruthlessly butchered by the Dakhnis. In the opinion of Tabatabai, this was the greatest tragedy to befall on earth after Karbala, which consumed the descendants of ‘The Holy Prophet’.

The cathartic response from the ruler caused temporary suppression of the Dakhni’s faction. He started extempore oration in Persia from the pulpit. He enforced total prohibition, banned gambling and created a number of charitable endowments. The appalling tragedy of Chakan, however sapped his vitality and shattered his strength. He died in 1457 CE.

After Ahmad Shah-II, the power pendulum swing to the other extreme during Humayun Shah’s reign. He reigned only for three and a half years, but soon became an inveterate enemy of the Afaqui’s, because of their constant intrigues to overthrow him and place his younger brother, Hasan Khan on the throne. A brutal punishment awaited Afaquis. About 7000 of them were put in prison, including the Sayyids, scholars, saints,

**The wrath of  
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butchered**



fakirs and commons; almost all of them being Afaquis. The wrath of Sultan saw all of them indiscriminately butchered. To add salt to injury, Humayun promoted native converts to Islam to high positions. Humayun was most probably killed at the hands of a maid servant while asleep in 1460 CE. A contemporary poet thus expressed his sense of relief on his death.

O tyrant! Be afraid of the sigh of pious (keepers of the vigil) hearts and take fright of the evil instigating wretched carnal soul. Behold fearful eye-lashes of the oppressed people and dread the bright bloody dagger.<sup>48</sup>

### **Rise and fall of Mahmud-e-Gawan**

In 1452 CE, towards the end of Ahmed Shah-II's regime, Mahmud-e-Gawan, a merchant from Gilan arrived in Bidar. Within a short time, he entered the ranks of nobility and rose to political power quickly. In 1457 CE, the new sovereign of Bahmani's, Humayun Shah appointed Mahmud-e-Gawan as his Prime Minister. For the next three decades or so, the Bahmani's polity was substantially directed by this new star on the political horizon. After his tragic death, the Bahaman behemoth imploded within half a century. The contribution of this star actor in bridging the yawning gap between the Afaqui and Dakhni faction is profound.

Due to the initiative of Mahmud-e-Gawan, many Afaqui prisoners were released. Then, a fair distribution of important posts between the two factions restored some equilibrium. The policy of coordination and compromise was able to achieve some temporary solidarity among various classes constituting Bahmani's ruling class. During the reign of Mahmud Shah-III, Gawan remained the supreme authority. He was instrumental in affecting a treaty of peace with Malwa, which allowed the Bahmani's to expand to the west by subduing the Raja of Sanghmeshwar and Goa. Soon, thereafter, Rajamundri and Kondaveedu were also subdued. It was indeed the climax of the Bahmani's power, which now spread from sea to sea and bordered Vijayanagar likewise.

In 1482, the treacherous murder of Mahmud-e-Gawan, the saviour of Bahmani kingdom and the loyal builder of the great empire,

struck a fatal blow to the Bahmani rule. The balance of power, so carefully built and ably maintained by the Khwaza throughout his career between the Afaquis and the Dakhnis factions was rudely shaken. The Dakhni faction gained an upper hand in administrative affairs. The arch conspirator against Khwaza's life was Nizam-ul-Mulk-e-Bahri, a Dakhni convert to Islam and the father of the founder of the Nizam Shahi kingdom of Ahmednagar. The Afaqui group found itself out of power structure in Ahmednagar as well as from the central government at Bidar.

Nizam-ul-Mulk-e-Bahri made himself the master of the situation. The leader of Afaqui faction, Yousuf Adil Turk and Fatul-lah Iwadul Mulk refused to return to the capital. The former made his way to Bijapur with his faction. The capital Bidar had become a hotbed of intrigue and the only weapon to gain power was murder. Mohammed Shah-III plotted against his own prime minister Nizam-ul-Mulk-e-Bahri and got him murdered. The outrageous incident provoked the Dakhni's who marched to the royal palace to avenge the murder of their leader. The march soon became insurrection, arson, plunder and butchery and played havoc in the city as the Dakhni's took their revenge upon Turks, Mughals and foreigners residing in the capital. Muhammad Shah escaped death by a hair breadth due to one of his loyal Turks, Sultan Quli. The Sultan ordered an indiscriminate and wholesale massacre of Dakhnis and Habshis of the city lasting for 3 days. This had never happened in the entire history of Deccan where the ruler ordered wholesale massacre of his own subjects residing in the capital. Dakhnis

**The Sultan ordered an indiscriminate and wholesale massacre of Dakhnis and Habshis of the city lasting for 3 days**



could not take it anymore. In 1488 CE, the first Dakhni Muslim state was formed by Nizam-ul-Mulk-e-Bahri's son, Malik Ahmed at Ahmednagar. The implosion of Bahmanis had begun. By 1487 CE, Bijapur and Berar severed their connections with the central rule from Bidar. The capital itself was in the throes of convulsion when in 1490 CE, Qasim Barid usurped Bidar and became the ruler. The original Bahmani ruler languished and when he died in 1518 CE, his position was no better than a mansabdar, while his one time



loyal servants were the rulers of the independent states. The last four Bahmani princes nominally ruled under the tutelage of Barids and the dynasty came to a formal end in 1527 CE. What a quick undoing of the glorious achievements of the masterminds like Firoz Shah and Ahmad Wali by their unworthy successors. Prof. Sherwani's lament is quite apt. "Thus, fell ignominiously within 50 years of Khwaja-e-Jahan, Mahmud-e-Gawan's death, this magnificent edifice, which had been built up by the early Bahmanis and had been made secure through Khwaza Mahmud's prowess, ability, fact and great impartiality."<sup>49</sup>

### **Persian Language**

Victors arrive with two things; a new flag and a new language. The subjugation of kingdoms by the Tughlaq armies planted the Islamic flag in the Deccan soil. Simultaneously, their language i.e, Persian also arrived as the court language. The Bahmani Kingdom saw its flowering in coming centuries. Isami, the historian and panegyrist of Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahaman Shah wrote his *Futuhu-i-Salatin* at Gulbarga, while it was Ainuddin Bijapuri who penned his *Mulhikat* or supplements of Minhajus Siraj's *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri*. Quite a few Persian savants of note, such as Mufti Ahmad Haravi, Nasiruddin Tirbizi, Mir Muhammad Badakhshi and more renowned Saifuddin Ghori, Mir Fazlu-i-Lah Inzu and many others made the Deccan their home. The Persian literature was enriched by royal patronages as well as several rulers themselves being the 'man of pen' as well.

Muhammad Shah-II received his early education at the hands of Mir Fazl-i-Lah Inzu and he himself was a poet of some repute. He was at home in Arabic and Persian and he established Madarsas in some important centres of the kingdom. Keen to make his capital Gulbarga a meeting place of Persian scholars, he invited Hafiz, the renowned poet of Shiraz to the Deccan. As ill luck would have it, the journey had to be abandoned due to disturbances on high seas. Tajuddin Feroz, apart from his other worldly hobbies, was a man of intellectual attainments and linguist of a high calibre. He is said to have composed Persian poetry under the names of Uruzi and Firuzi. Apart from influx of scholars from Persia and adjacent lands, Mohammad Garzuni and Hasan Gilani were astronomers of some repute.

The baton of Persian learning was taken up by Shihabuddin Ahmad-I who not only shifted the capital to Bidar but embellished it with Persian hue. Tiles, arches, pavilion and the throne room with the Persian emblem, the lion and the rising sun make it look like a Persian extension. Sheikh Adhari, the author of Bahmana Nama was appointed after the fashion of the legendry Firdausi who had authored Shah Nama. The climax of Persian influence was undoubtedly reached during the times of Mahmud-e-Gawan. He had arrived in Deccan in 1455 CE from Iran and lived till 1481 CE. The collection of his letters named Rayazul Insha and his book on Persian diction, Mahazir-ul-Insha reverberates with the excellence which he had attained in Persian prose and poetry. He was in correspondence among others with Muhammad-II, the conqueror of Constantinople. His letters are found not only in Indian libraries but also in the libraries of Isatanbul, and British museum. The Persian imprint upon the Bahmani Deccan reached its climax about the middle of 15th century.

**Sheikh Adhari, the author of Bahmana Nama was appointed after the fashion of the legendry Firdausi who had authored Shah Nama**



The status of Telugu literature during the Bahamanids rule also needs a passing reference. The rise of Bahamanids coincided with the almost simultaneous rise of Vijayanagar and the evening of the Kakatiya's rule. It was in the very nature of Bahamani's polity that while they controlled a substantial portion of Tilangana territory, either as ruler but mostly as captors, the Telugu language needed the ambience of neighbouring rulers like Kondaveedu and Vijayanagara to leaf and flower. We have no evidence to show that the Bahamani kings patronized Telugu men of letters. A scant flowering of Telugu literature in Padmanayak territories is visible. Bammera Potharaju, a saintly poet and contemporary of Srinatha has authored Andhra Maha Bhagavatha. He belonged to the village of Bammera near Warangal and lived during the reign of Padmanayakas. He does not seem to have any patronage of rulers. He exclaims, "Instead of dedicating the Bhagavatha to wicked kings for the sake of lucre, lands and other honours, and as a result invoke the wrath of the lord Yama, this Bammera Potharaju dedicates the Bhagavatha to Lord Sri Hari."

The poet, therefore chose the hard path of poverty, deprivation but independence rather than the easier path of flattery of king and consequent wealth. Potana introduced the message of Advaita into the Bhagavata. In devotional situations, Potharaju forgets himself and surrenders himself to his poetic imaginations. The anecdotes of Dhruva, the royal child; or Prahlada, son of Rakshasha king; of the elephant which appealed in distress to the lord; or the Gopikas who chose to attain salvation through love; the Kuchela, the Drohna in rags and numerous other stories make Pothana's fame immortal.

### **Political power and female beauty**

#### **– Made for each other**

The inextricable magnetic attraction between political power and female beauty is perhaps as old as the creation itself. In Devaloka, poets have described celestial beauties like Rambha and Urvashi illuminating Lord Indra's court. During Chalukyan and subsequently Kakatiyan times, stories abound regarding the pomp and vigour of rulers and their court dancers. The last Kakatiyan ruler, Prataparudra, himself a poet deputed artists to write and play the story of Machaladevi, the ruler's Bhogini. After the fall of Kakatiyas, the corresponding court culture migrated to the territory of new rulers. It is in this context that Padmanayaka rulers and their court culture survived during the close of fourteenth century in Rachakonda.

Sarvagnya Singha Bhupal, the Padmanayaka kind of Rachakonda was ruling during the closing decade of the fourteenth century. Hitherto, Bhogini's were called as Saamanya (ordinary) woman, who were not eligible to be called as heroines. The new ruler ordained that Bhoginis should be accepted as heroines in plays. He went further and composed a story in the form of a play Ratnapanchalika. It was about a Bhogini Kovalayaavali who loved and married Krishna. Subsequently, this thesis was endorsed by the poet Bammara Pothana during mid fifteenth century. His poetry Bhogini Dandakam describes Bhogini, a daughter of an old prostitute, who loved the ruler Singhana Bhupala. The poet also tells us as to how such maidens were to perform dances in the court halls on the occasion of Vasanthotsavam. Bhogini used to see through her house window (jaali) the pomp and virility of her hero. The sister of Bhogini, it

appears met Singana Bhupala while he was in Nrutyaagara (dance hall). Out of her love and gratitude on Singhana Bhupala, Bhogini employed a skilled sculpture to chisel the figure of the king. Poets have described the king as a women impressive handsome guy riding a horse. What was happening then is an imagination of poets, but what survives today is a four pillared mandapam which is called “Bhogini dani mancham” (Bhogini’s cot).

At the close of fifteenth century, Bahamani rulers from the time of Firoz shah changed their policy. As they expanded their domain, the space occupied by Padmanayaks shrank and by 1433 CE, it was extinguished. However, the kings, their kingdoms, the dancing halls, the window and the Bhogini’s cot continues to illuminate those times with receding memories.



*‘Historian discovers 14th century Bhogini Mandapa’ -The New Indian Express*

### **Evolution of new languages**

The army along with their camp followers brought in its wake the Zaban-e-Dilli or the language of Delhi.<sup>50</sup> It was this embryonic form of the language which was adopted by Amir Khusarau (1253-1325 CE). It continued to be a spoken language till the advent

of Hazrat Khwaza Banda Nawaz who arrived at Gulbarga at the advanced age of 80 and died there in 1422. The saint had drawn not only from Persian but also Sanskrit and other spoken languages. The last work composed in Dakhni was Ashraf's Nausarhar. But its calibre is not quite high. The language was to reach its high-water mark under the Adil Shahis and Qutb Shahis. Thereafter, it became an all-India language with the conquest of practically the whole Indian subcontinent by the Mughals during the 17th century.

### **Proto Urdu**

The word 'Urdu' is akin to the Turkish word 'Ordu' meaning the army and is probably derived from the Latin "Ordo, Ordinis" meaning a row or live, from which the English words like order, ordinary and ordinance have been derived.<sup>51</sup> We see a very hazy backdrop of its emergence under the Bahmanis and may call it 'Proto Urdu'. The spoken language had developed during the invasions of Khalji and Tughlaq and especially with the capture of Devagiri, renamed as Daulatabad, the second capital of Mohammad Bin Tughlaq in 1327 CE. But it took another century for the new idiom to take a literary form during Firoz Shah Bahmani times. The Sufi saint Hazrat Khwaja Daula Nawaz Gesu Deraz arrived at the Bahmani capital Gulbarga at the hoary age of 80 and died in 1422 CE. With his resilience, wealth of knowledge and hard mental exercise began to attract disciples

**Gesu Deraz,  
the saint may  
rightly be  
regarded as  
the creator of  
proto-Urdu**



from all sections of society. His language was free from complicated literary forms so as to reach the masses and classes alike. This was the language in which the elite as well as commons made them understood with each other. Gesu Deraz, the saint may rightly be regarded as the creator of proto-Urdu, which in due course of time travelled north during Moghul times and leafed and flowered in its imperial capital Delhi. It continued to prosper in Lucknow, even after the eclipse of Moghul power in Delhi.

### **Educational Administration**

Most of Bahmani rulers were patrons of art and literature. Whenever they won a war, invariably mosques along with madrasas were constructed. These institutions were residential in nature where students were fed, clothed and taught in Arabic and Persian. These schools, mostly

located in provincial headquarters received regular annual grants. In the non-residential schools, its students were given monthly stipends and scholarships. The teachers were paid handsomely. Muslim wards acquired their educational skills in these Madarsas. The curriculum consisted of Arabic grammar, Arabic literature of the period before and after the advent of Islam, rhetoric, logic, Quran, Hadith, Sufism and other branches of Arabic learnings. The centres of learnings were at Gulbarga, Bidar, Qandhar, Elichpur, Daulatabad, Chaul and Dabhole. The great college founded by Gawan at Bidar in 1471-72 CE was the highest form of Muslim education in the Deccan. Calligraphy had an honoured place in the educational as well as governmental system. Zahiruddin mentions about Talim Khana where physical education was imparted. The students were trained in archery, swordsmanship, riding, 'Binut', and 'Kushti'.

In regard to the education of Hindus, the rulers neither interfered nor actively patronised by giving them grants or stipends. Education for them was treated, for all practical purposes as a local matter, left to the discretion of the local society. Nasik and Paithan were the two seats of Brahamical learnings throughout the Bahmani's period. Gangapur is another place mentioned in Gurucharitra. The learned Brahamins accepted pupils who stayed with their gurus and received instructions from them. In return, these pupils were expected to perform such chores for the preceptor and his household as they were called upon to do.

The curriculum followed was of traditional type and was generally restricted to Brahmins. A pupil generally started with Amarakosha, Rupavati and Samaschakra, followed by Panchatantra and Hitopadesha. Epics and dramas of Kalidasa and other Sanskrit authors followed. Those scholars aspiring for higher learnings went on to study logic, grammar and prosody. The learning of Vedas and related branches was the apex of learning. **Banaras continued to flower throughout the period as the greatest seat of Sanskrit learning.**



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## 202 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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## 6. The Golconda Kingdom (1512-1707 CE)

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This chapter deals with the political history of Telangana lands during the period from 1512 to 1707 CE. The present-day Telangana lands formed an organic part of the Golconda kingdom which was ruled by Qutb Shahi dynasty from 1512 to 1687 CE. The entire period witnessed three political watersheds. From 1512 to 1636 CE, Qutb Shahis were its sovereign rulers; from 1636 to 1687 CE, they became Baazgujar (tributaries) to Mughals. In 1687 CE, after annexation of Golconda by Mughals, the kingdom was ruled directly from Delhi till the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 CE. A brief description of each one of these phases would be appropriate.

In 1512 CE, a Persian migrant with Turkish ancestry laid the foundation of Qutb Shahi dynasty. A skilled hunter, courageous soldier and a great military strategist, he became sovereign after implosion of the Bahmanis Empire. Qutb Shahis had inherited the Vijayanagara rulers as their neighbours and principal adversaries. In 1565 CE, the erstwhile Islamic Sultanates constituting Bahmanis empire, which included Golconda formed a confederacy and destroyed the mightily Vijayanagara empire.

The ensuing period of relative peace and tranquillity lubricated by copious war booty provided enough oxygen to the rulers for venturing into something new. In 1591 CE, the foundation of a new capital city was laid during such stable times. The brand- new dream city known as Hyderabad needed vast resources and total attention from rulers. As it rose amidst din and bustle, everyone from foreign visitors to commoners were mesmerized. By 1597 CE, Mughal arms had in fact reached up to upper Godavari, but did not penetrate the Qutb Shahi domain. That created a mirage of security.

Many European traders and visitors had already arrived and visited the peninsular coastline through the entire 16th century. In 1611 CE, the English obtained from Qutb Shahi rulers a trading toehold at Masulipatnam. Over time, it became a foothold, followed by the firm hold soon thereafter. Presence of alien traders dotting the coastline neither alarmed nor threatened anyone, including rulers. In fact, many rulers encouraged this trade arrangement as



it brought increased revenues. This did not impact the polity during the ensuing decades, but it brought havoc in times to come.

What in fact, alarmed and threatened the rulers in Deccan was an ever-growing Mughal shadow from the north. In 1636 CE, Mughals had forced Inquiadnama (An Instrument of Surrender) upon Golconda kingdom. In fact, right from the end of the 16th century, Mughal's imperial vision was colliding directly with an independent Golconda kingdom. Akbar had arrived till Godavari river in 1600 CE; Jahangir followed but could not penetrate further; Shah Jahan in 1636 CE forced Golconda to become a tributary. The Mughal's grip tightened with the arrival of Aurangzeb. In 1658 CE, he enhanced the tribute amount considerably. Golconda rulers were no match for Aurangzeb's might. The Qutb Shahi rulers withdrew in their palace comforts, while administration was left to Akkanna, a Brahmin. In 1677 CE, Akkanna entered in a treaty with Shivaji, the arch rival of Aurangzeb. In 1680 CE, Shivaji died.

In 1682 CE, it was time for Aurangzeb to move his vast army. In 1687 CE, he laid siege to the Golconda fort and subjugated all resistance. The political changeover from 1687 CE onwards was seismic. The Golconda monarch was replaced with a Mughal governor. Carnatic territories were separated and placed under another governor. The wealth of Golconda was systematically drained to Burhanpur, Agra and Delhi. The political elite of Golconda, either changed their loyalties or were liquidated.

The third phase from 1687 till 1707 CE was even more regressive. The Mughal appointees to Golconda as Governors were changed at least six times. Each change accelerated the worsening uncertainty all around. Maratha raiders, indigenous sardars, desh mukhs and renegade Mughal officers, flourished as bandits. They attacked villages and towns. Traffic on roads became unsafe. Severe drought, famine, price rise and pestilence added to the mounting social misery. This phase came to an end in 1707 CE, with the departure of Aurangzeb.

Therefore, disruptive forces were loosened with cyclonic affect after 1687 CE. The ensuing insecurity and uncertainty fractured the existing political and economic ambience of the present-day Telangana lands. The worst was yet to come during the 18th century.

# Golconda Kingdom

(1512 – 1707 CE)

| Sl. No. | Ruler                         | Time line      |
|---------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.      | Qutb ul Mulk (Quli Qutb Shah) | 1512 – 1543 CE |
| 2.      | Jamsheed                      | 1543 – 1550 CE |
| 3.      | Ibrahim                       | 1550 – 1580 CE |
| 4.      | Mohammed Quli                 | 1580 – 1612 CE |
| 5.      | Mohammed Qutb Shah            | 1612 – 1626 CE |
| 6.      | Abdullah                      | 1626 – 1672 CE |
| 7.      | Abul Hassan                   | 1672 – 1687 CE |
| 8.      | Ruhullah Khan                 | 1687 – 1688 CE |
| 9.      | Jah Sipar Khan                | 1688 – 1700 CE |
| 10.     | Mohammed Kaum Baksh           | 1700 – 1709 CE |

## 6.1 EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION

By the end of the 15th century, the behemoth of Bahmanis Empire started disintegrating. It was replaced with five new Sultanates. They were Berar, ruled by Imad Shahi dynasty; Ahmednagar, ruled by the Nizam Shahi dynasty; Bijapur, ruled by Adil Shahi dynasty; Bidar, ruled by Barid Shahi dynasty and the most important of all, Golconda, ruled by Qutb Shahi dynasty.

This Kingdom of Golconda was destined to play by far the most important and lasting role in the Deccan polity. During Bahmanis rule, Golconda was the capital of the Tarafdaar (Governor) of Telangana province. Their rule extended up to the eastern coast and included ports at Masulipatnam and Kakinada. The erstwhile Hindu kings had disappeared but a number of Hindu chiefs survived. As they were a source of conflict, the Telangana province was quite strategic and its Governor was an office of high dignity.



*Sultan Quli Qutb-ul-Mulk -  
the First Sultan of Qutb Shahi dynasty Reign 1512-43*

### Founder's Ancestry

Sultan Quli Qutb Shah, the founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty belonged to the Turkish race.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of Sultan Quli Owais Peer Quli, son of Alvand, son of Sikander, son of Qura Yousuf,

son of Quara Muhammed, son of Yafes, son of Naah Prophet.<sup>2</sup> Even at a tender age of 12 years, he invited the envy of the Sultan Yakub, who had recently come to power in Persia. Therefore, the youngster was sent along with his uncle to India. Both arrived in India and headed for Bahmanis jurisdiction because his father had trade relations with the latter. Moreover, many Turkman servants were employed by the Bahmanis in army and civil administration. In Iran, the youngster had met a great Sufi Nuruddin Nimatullah in the city of Yzd.<sup>3</sup> The saint told, ‘Quli, God has given you a part of India.’ After touching his head and shoulders and giving him several coins, the Saint continued, “This is the first victory to go to India.” Quli arrived in Muhammadabad/ Bidar and met Sultan Mahmud Shah Bahmani. Quli’s uncle introduced him as a young prince of Qara Quyantulu Dynasty. Presentation of gifts made Bahmani Sultan quite happy and the young prince evolved as a trustworthy and powerful commander in Bahmani’s court.

Winning the Sultan’s admiration by his hunting skills, he was bestowed the title of Khamas Khan Quli and granted him the jagir of Kurrangal. In 1490, an attempt was made to assassinate the Sultan. Quli was amongst his defenders and the revolt was quelled. Meanwhile, Tarafdar of Bijapur, Yousuf Adil Khan asserted his independence and founded Adil Shahi dynasty. He advanced into Kovilkonda and occupied it. In 1496, Bahmanis Sultan appointed Quli Qutb to Golconda as the commander of royal forces and conferred on him the title of Qutb-ul-Mulk.<sup>4</sup> He went ahead, confronted Adil Shah, negotiated a treaty and forced him to evacuate Kovilkonda. Now, it was the turn of Vijayanagara forces to occupy the Doab and Kovilkonda. Quli Qutb just remained silent. He kept himself aloof and did not assist the Bahmani Sultan this time. Till 1612 CE, he did not declare his independence and was known as ‘Bade Malick’ – the big chief – the title that is inscribed on his grave.

**...thereupon, he moved towards coastal plains and came to an understanding with Gajpathi King of Orissa, fixing Godavari as the boundary between the two Kingdoms**



**The plot was hatched by his son, Jamshid Quli who succeeded him**



## **The Founder's Reign**

After the collapse of Bahmani dynasty, Quli Qutb Shah became independent from 1518 CE onwards.<sup>5</sup> After the independence, the Shia religion in his territory was dominant due to the influence of Shah Ismael, the Safavid ruler of Iran. In 1524 CE, Sultan Quli ordered that the names and the title of Imams of Shia to be minted on coins and their names recited in Khutba during Friday prayers. In addition, he ordered to include the name of Hazrat Ali in Azan.<sup>6</sup> He patronised the Persians and appointed them in the government, both civil and military. Thus, Persians and foreign emigrants entered in all walks of life in the Qutb Shahi kingdom. Most of the Qutb Shahi ministers and scores of officials, both in civil and military, were Persian immigrants and termed as Afaquis. Qutb Shahi rulers maintained constant contacts with Persia and its rulers. Their relations were in the nature of political, diplomatic, cultural and commercial.<sup>7</sup>

Qutb-ul-Mulk was contemporary of Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1529 CE) and Achyut Raya (1529-1542 CE). Apart from being a brave soldier, he was an astute and pragmatic ruler. Being no match to Krishna Deva Raya, he maintained correct relations with him. Under Krishna Deva Raya, the Vijayanagara kingdom was rapidly extended along the coast until it reached as far north upto the river Godavari. Qutb Shah found himself cut off from the seashore. He did not seem to have held any lands south of Krishna river. But, after Krishna Deva Raya's departure, as the Vijayanagara Empire weakened, he risked capturing Rachakonda and Devarkonda, hitherto under the control of Vijayanagar Empire. Achyut Raya advanced. The two armies met at Panagal. The battle dragged on, but Achyut Raya withdrew to his capital due to intrigues of Rama Raya, the ambitious son-in-law of Krishna Deva Raya. The fort was captured easily and the Sultan returned with a considerable amount of plunder.

From Panagal, the Sultan proceeded to Ghanpuram. Two months later, the fort was seized after heavy losses. Time was now ripe to capture Kovilkonda, as Vijayanagar Empire was embroiled in internal dissensions. Its successful capture put Golconda kingdom

as the immediate neighbour of both Vijayanagar and Bijapur kingdoms. Achyut Raya, having failed to stem the Golconda advance, instigated Adil Shah of Bijapur to attack Golconda. The latter moved his forces to Kalyani, a strong fort on the border of Golconda and laid siege to Kovilkonda. The qiladar (commandant) of Kovilkonda was Jaffer Beg, a relation of Qutb Shah. He asked for reinforcement from the capital. Meanwhile, Qutb Shah sent an envoy advising Adil Shah to withdraw his forces. He paid no heed and intensified his attack. Qutb Shah was not very sure of his success and was preparing to withdraw to Ghanapuram, in case the need arose.

During an engagement that followed, he received a sword cut in his face which disfigured him for life. Part of his nose and cheek were cut off. The battle for Kovilkonda prolonged for about a year. Suddenly, Adil Shah's Commander was taken ill. He died of fatigue. His minister and general in chief, Assud Khan raised the siege and returned after negotiating peace with Qutb Shah. In 1534, the battle ended with a clear victory to Golconda forces.

Shitab Khan (Sitapati Raju) had occupied Warangal and after the death of Krishna Deva Raya, he occupied Kondapalli, and Bellamkonda. But Qutb Shah reoccupied both these forts. Thereupon, he moved towards coastal plains and came to an understanding with Gajpathi King of Orissa, fixing Godavari as the boundary between the two Kingdoms. Towards the end of his reign, Qutb Shah faced many revolts from local chiefs. Hari Chand, the chief of Nalgonda revolted. Qutb Shah proceeded in person, quelled the revolt, killed Hari Chand and annexed his territory. Then, Bidar and Bijapur conspired and occupied Medak and Kaulas. But these places were returned to Golconda rulers after the intervention of Shia clergy which was common to all the Deccan Sultanates.

On August 3, 1543, Quli Qutb Shah was assassinated whilst saying his prayers in the mosque at Golconda. The plot was hatched by his son, Jamshid Quli who succeeded him. Thus, the founder of Qutb Shahi dynasty ruled Golconda including Telangana province for 60 years, 16 of which he had been a governor and 44 years as an independent Sultan. He died at a ripe old age of 90 years.

Qutb Shah was a skilled hunter, courageous soldier, and a great military strategist. He chose the right timings for his campaigns and never took an impulsive decision to attack. In defence, perseverance was his forte. He was able to defeat his powerful enemies by attacking them at the fag-end of the battle with his extra forces kept in reserve for this explicit purpose. He renovated and strengthened Golconda fort, so much so that even after 170 years, it resisted Aurangzeb's army. It could not be won by frontal assault but was won only by treachery.

### **Jamsheed - the Kam-naseeb (unfortunate)**

Quli Qutb Shah had three sons, Jamsheed, Daulat and Ibrahim. As we have seen, Jamsheed was instrumental in the killing of his father while at prayer. He imprisoned his brother, Daulat Quli, in Bhuvangiri fort. Ibrahim, in the meanwhile took shelter in the court of Rama Raya of Vijayanagar. In 1543 CE, clearing all the hurdles, Jamsheed ascended the throne. He reigned for only seven years. He was frequently engaged in various quarrels between Bijapur, Bidar and Ahmednagar. Driven by political cunning, he would contrive to be on the winning side so as to draw some advantage out of each quarrel.

In the meantime, Qutb Shahi forces captured Gulburga. Bijapur forces under Assud Khan marched against Jamsheed, recovered Gulburga and then chased him all the way to Golconda. With defeated army, a wounded Jamsheed was compelled to take shelter within the fort. The victorious Assud Khan returned to Bijapur, where he was received with great distinction.

The military reverses against neighbouring Bijapur cast a long shadow upon the short existence of the new state. Bereft of friends and well-wishers, Jamsheed tried to enlist the support of Hindus by involving them in administration. But nothing worked. On 22nd January, 1550, haunted by evil murder of his father, hated by his brothers and beaten by Bijapur forces, Jamsheed Quli died of cancer, unsung and un-repentant. He is remembered as Jamsheed – the 'Kam Naseeb' (unfortunate), till this day.

### **Ibrahim returns and consolidates**

There was no direct successor to the Golconda throne at Jamsheed's death except his infant son, Sultan. He was proclaimed king but

reigned only for six months. His minister Saif Khan was very unpopular amongst nobles. Ibrahim's supporters did not like to see an infant on the throne. They sent urgent summons to Vijayanagara asking Ibrahim to return and pledged their full support. Rama Raya, Ibrahim's benefactor provided him with a force to escort him to Golconda. In July 1550, Ibrahim reached Kovilkonda. People and officials rallied around him. Saif Khan rushed to Kovilkonda, conveyed his homage and respect to Ibrahim, stayed there for three days and then returned to Golconda.

**Rama raya,  
Ibrahim's  
benefactor  
provided him  
with a force to  
escort him to  
Golconda**



Ibrahim arrived at Golconda, ascended the throne and immediately got down to serious business. Law and order in the kingdom had considerably deteriorated during previous years due to political uncertainty. He created a new system i.e, spy organisation (Khufiya nawsi) to collect secret information about the important state functionaries. Moreover, a judicial system was created with heavy and exemplary penalties like pulling nails etc. After such stringent rules in vogue, in the Telangana area that was known for robberies, no one could dare even to talk about theft.<sup>8</sup> With restoration of peace, travel became safe and secure on highways. It gave a fillip to trade and commerce.

### **Shift in policy with Vijayanagara**

To begin with, relations with Rama Raya were quite friendly. After all, Ibrahim was sheltered there from the murderous wrath of his brother, Jamsheed. During stay at Vijayanagar, he endeared himself to the Queen, was treated extremely well and was seated by the ruler's side. He even married a Hindu princess, Bhagirathi.

He was invited by Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar to join an alliance against Bijapur. But Rama Raya wrote a letter to Ibrahim Shah and dissuaded him from so doing. Following is text of the letter, "Be it known to your Majesty that it is now many years since the two courts of Bijapur and Ahmednagar have been in a constant state of warfare, and that the balance of power between them was so equal, that, although every year each of these sovereigns had been in the habit of making a campaign on the others frontiers, yet



no advantage accrued to either. It now appears that your Majesty (whose ancestors never interfered in those disputes) has marched an army to turn the scale in favour of Hussein Nizam Shah, without having any cause of enmity against Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur, who has accordingly sought our alliance. As a friendship has long subsisted between our court and your Majesty, we have thought fit to lay these arguments before you to induce your Majesty to relinquish the offensive alliance which your Majesty has formed, and by returning peaceably to your capital, show a friendly disposition towards both parties, who will afterwards conclude a peace and put an end to this protracted war”.

Whether it was the letter or the feeling of gratitude to Rama Raya, the Golconda Sultan remained neutral.

But, soon after, Ibrahim unearthed a conspiracy to replace him by his brother Daulat Quli. Several conspirators were eliminated but their leader Jagadev Rao fled and was sheltered, of all the people, by Rama Raya. This was certainly not a friendly act. Relations with Vijayanagara were reviewed. Subsequent developments in Bijapur were to decisively shift Golconda's policy away from Vijayanagara.

Jagdeva, the conspirator induced quiladars of Kovilkonda, Panagal and Ghanpuram to surrender the forts. As Vijayanagara army invaded Telangana, several other forts were also captured. Ibrahim sued for peace and agreed to cede these three forts in return for others. Rama Raya returned other forts occupied by his troops and

**A collective sense of humiliation amongst Deccan Sultans against the common enemy, Vijayanagara resulted in quick strategic moves**



feudatories but occupied the three important ones. This treaty of 1563 marks the zenith of Vijayanagara power under Rama Raya.

Ibrahim was feeling humiliated after this loss. Other Sultans in Ahmednagar and Bijapur were feeling no less miserable due to the rising power of Vijayanagara. A collective sense of humiliation amongst Deccan Sultans against the common enemy, Vijayanagara resulted in quick strategic moves. Ibrahim married the daughter of Ahmednagar Sultan, who was already humiliated at the hands of Deva Raya. The

Ahmednagar Sultan's another daughter, Chand Bibi was married to Prince Ali of Bijapur while Ali's sister was married to Nizam Shah's eldest son, Sultan Murtaza. This triple marriage was carried out with great pomp.

But behind the facade of royal marriages and merriment, brisk preparations were afoot for launching jehad (the holy war) against the Hindu kingdom. Gribble's description is quite graphic. "The holy league being thus formed, was also joined by Bereed Shah of Bidar. The Sultan of Berar does not seem to have been invited, and took no part in it. In the year 1564 CE, the four princes met in the plains of Bijapur and then marched to Tellicotta, on the Bijapur bank of the Kistna. Though the preparations for this undertaking must have lasted some time, Rama raja seems to have at first treated it with contempt. But when convinced of the fact of the alliance, he dispatched his younger brother, Timma Raya, with a large army, said to have consisted of 1 lakh foot, 20000 horses, and 500 elephants, to guard the passages of the Kistna. His second brother, Venkatadri was sent with another large army as reserve, and he himself followed with the whole of the rest of his forces. The allied armies by a series of clever feints managed to draw the Hindus away from the only practicable ford, after which, returning by a forced march they succeeded in crossing the river without opposition, and then drew up their forces in order of battle. Hussain Nizam Shah, as was due to his age, took the lead, and commanded the centre; Ali Adil Shah commanded the right, and Qutb Shah with Bereed Shah the left wing. The artillery was fastened together by chains, and drawn up in front of the line, flanked on each side by the war elephants."<sup>9</sup>

Ferishta continues, "About twelve O' clock in the day, Rama Raya mounted a litter in spite of the remonstrance of his officers, who wished him to be on horseback, as much safer; but he said there was no occasion for taking precautions against children who would certainly fly at the first charge. Both armies being in motion, soon came to battle, and the infidels begun the attack by vast flights of rockets and rapid discharges of artillery which did not discourage

the allies. A general action took place, and many were slain on both sides. Rama Raya, finding a different behaviour in the enemy from what he had expected, descended from his litter and seating himself upon a rich throne set with jewels, under a canopy of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold and adorned with fringes of pearls, ordered his treasurer to place heaps of money all round him, that he might confer rewards on such of his followers, as deserved his attention. There were also rich ornaments of gold and jewels for the same purpose. The infidels, inspired by the generosity of their prince, charged the right and left of the allies with such vigour, that they were thrown into disorder; and Ali Adil Shah and Qutb Shah began to despair of victory, and prepare for retreat. Hussain Nizam Shah

**Nizam Shah ordered instantly his head to be struck off and placed upon a long spear point, so that his death might be proclaimed to the enemy**



remained firm in the centre, and pushed so vigorously, that it began to be confused; upon which the Raja again mounted his litter, which was soon after let fall by the bearers upon the approach of a furious elephant belonging to Nizam Shah, and before he had time to recover himself and mount a horse, a body of the allies took him prisoner, and conducted him to Chela Roomi, who commanded the artillery. He carried him to Nizam Shah who ordered instantly his head to be struck off and placed upon the point of a long spear, so that his death might be proclaimed to the enemy. The

Hindus according to custom, when they saw their chief destroyed, fled in the utmost confusion and disorder from the field of battle, and were pursued by the allies with such successful slaughter that the river which ran near the field of battle was dyed red with their blood. It is computed by the best authorities that one hundred thousand infidels were slain in the fight, or during the pursuit.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Ruin of Vijayanagara**

After a decisive victory in the battlefield, the fury fell upon the capital city, Vijayanagara. Sewell describes its fate: “Then a panic seized the city. The truth became at last apparent. This was not a defeat merely; it was a cataclysm. All hope was gone. The myriad dwellers in the city were left defenceless. No retreat, no flight was

possible except to a few for the pack-oxen and carts had almost all followed the forces to the war, and they had not returned. Nothing could be done but to bury all treasures, to arm the younger men, and to wait. Next day the place became a prey to the robber tribes and jungle people of the neighbourhood. Hordes of Brinjaris, Lambadis, Kurubas, and the like, pounced down on the hapless city and looted the stores and shops, carrying off great quantities of riches. There were six concerted attacks by these people during the day.

The third day saw the beginning of the end. The victorious Musalmaans had halted on the field of battle for rest and refreshment, but now they had reached the capital, and from that time onward for a space of five months Vijayanagara knew no rest. The enemy had come to destroy, and they carried out their object relentlessly. They slaughtered the people without mercy, broke down the temples and palaces, and wreaked such savage vengeance on the abode of the kings that, with the exception of a few great stone-built temples and walls, nothing now remains but a heap of ruins to mark the spot where once the stately buildings stood. They demolished the statues, and even succeeded in breaking the limbs of the huge Narasimha monolith. Nothing seemed to escape them. They broke up the pavilions standing on the huge platform from which the kings used to watch the festivals, and overthrew all the carved work. They lit huge fires in the magnificently decorated buildings forming the temple of Vitthalaswami near the river, and smashed its exquisite stone sculptures. With fire and sword, with crowbars and axes, they carried on day after day their work of destruction. Never perhaps in the history of the world has such havoc been wrought, and wrought so suddenly, on such splendid city; teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in the full plenitude of prosperity one day, and on the next seized, pillaged, and reduced to ruins, amid scenes of savage massacre and horrors begging description.

**With fire and sword, with crowbars and axes, they carried on day after day their work of destruction**



Vijayanagara became a haunt of tigers and other wild beasts. It remains the scene of desolation and ruin, till this day.

### **Hatred unites, greed divides**

In this battle, Ahmednagar and Bijapur had played the main role while Bidar and Golconda's role was secondary. Laden with massive booty, it was time for the Sultans to head home. Common Muslim hostility against Vijayanagara had destroyed the later. But the massive booty obtained after victory divided them, yet again. Their old feuds erupted with renewed vigour. Relations between Golconda and Ahmednagar deteriorated. Nizam Shah marched into Golconda kingdom and ravaged Kovilkonda and Ghanpuram. Ibrahim send a large force under the command of Salabat Khan. He drove the Ahmednagar forces away from Telengana region across Bidar border.

Having strengthened his position in Telangana, Ibrahim set his sights beyond. North-coastal areas were occupied and Golconda army advanced up to south Orissa along the east coast. In 1578 CE, Ibrahim invaded the depleted and truncated Vijayanagara Empire. Ahobhilar, Udayagiri, Kondavidu and Vinukonda forts, all situated south of Krishna were captured by his commander, Haider Khan. Warangal was also annexed. However, on the west, Ibrahim was engaged in a number of quarrels with Adil Shah of Bijapur. The Bijapur-Golconda boundary continued along the Krishna river.

From the battle of Talikotta upto the end of his reign, Ibrahim Qutb Shah was engaged in very few wars. As conflicts minimised, he and his successors devoted their time to improve the country. Firstly, the fort of Golconda was strengthened. Many fine palaces were erected there. The fort city was getting congested and hygiene suffered. Habitations were growing on the other bank of free-flowing river, Musi.

In 1578 CE, a bridge was laid across the river Musi. The idea of establishing a city outside the fort took roots. A township called Ibrahimpatnam was set up along with a tank, some twenty kilo meters away. The town did not grow appreciably. Several irrigation tanks in the vicinity like Hussain sagar and Budvel were constructed. Ferishta says that, during his prosperous

reign; Telengana, like Egypt, became the mart of the whole world. Merchants from Turkistan, Arabia, and Persia resorted to it; and they met with such encouragement that they found in it inducements to return frequently. The greatest luxuries from foreign parts daily abounded at this King's hospitable board.

Ibrahim continued the tradition of friendly relations with Safavid dynasty. He wrote a letter to Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576 CE). It details the title for Tahmasp, including Hawwab-i-Khalifat Allahi, professing his sincere devotion to Shah and reviving the old ties. This letter also reveals that he was the first to raise the standard of Madhkabi-Imamiya and to recite the Khutba Ikhwa Ashariya in Golconda. Therefore, on the principle that the first ones are the nearest ones (in relationship), it would be only appropriate for the Shah to favour and (publicly) exalt the writer over all his equals.<sup>11</sup>

In 1576 CE, the Golconda Wazir, Mustafa Khan Ardastani wrote a letter to Shah Tahmasp. It stated that the Kings of Deccan States are fully determined to defend their countries and would not allow the Mughal ruler to occupy even an inch of their land. It is necessary that his Majesty of Iran should unhesitatingly come forward to help us in this vital matter. Further, as the inhabitants of these regions had a peaceful life under the protection of his majesty's ancestors, our request is that his Majesty should not leave us undefended. It becomes even more pertinent in the light of the treatment meted out to his Majesty's envoy at the Mughal court. The Mughal ruler sat on the Jharoka, called him to wait on him, but dismissed him without taking the trouble of reading the letter brought by him. Whereas an insignificant envoy from Rum (Constantinople) received reception and honour more than was due to him.<sup>12</sup>

**Kings of Deccan states are fully determined to defend their countries and would not allow the muslim ruler to occupy even an inch of their land**



After a glorious trail of victories followed by a decadal reign of peace, Ibrahim Qutb Shah died in the 31st year of his rule in May 1580. Out of his 30 children, only 6 sons and 13 daughters survived him. Also survived an idea of establishing a city outside

the Golconda fort. Time was ripe and the idea was to flower as the dream capital in decades ahead.

## 6.2 CLIMAX AND GLORY

Born after the famous battle of Talikota, Mohammed Quli ascended the throne at a tender age of just 14 years, in 1580 CE. The Times were tranquil and peaceful. The young Sultan was soft and gentle by nature.



*Quli Qutb Shah, the lover*

Absence of warfare and political threat provided him enough time for art and poetry. In 1578 CE, Musi river had already been bridged during his father's reign. Golconda, the capital, came in direct contact with villages on the other bank.

Sultan Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah, thought that the Golconda was not sufficient place for the king and decided to build a new

city. One day, he went out of Golconda for hunting and he found a beautiful land with many trees and mountains. Therefore, he decided and ordered to build a new city.<sup>13</sup> The city of Hyderabad during Quli Qutb Shah times was surrounded by four villages; in the north Bhongiri, in the south Haragora; in the east Ibrahimpatnam and in the west Patancheruvu. The village in the closest proximity across the river Musi was Chichlam. Amongst ordinary mortals, there lived a village belle, Bhagmati. Her horoscope predicted that she would be a person of great renown and her progeny would dominate affairs of the state for a long time.

As it driven by destiny, Mohammed Quli met Bhagmati, fell in love with her, married and installed her as Queen of Golconda. The communion between the two gave birth to the new capital around the very spot where they had met first. In 1591, as foundation was laid, the Sultan named it Bhagnagar. In due course of time, as Bhagmati was renamed Hyder Mahal, the city too evolved into Hyderabad. Around these creative times, in 1594 CE Bhagmati gave birth to a baby girl. Sultan named the daughter Hayat Bakshi, the giver of life. Her horoscope predicted long life and glory. Surprisingly, it tallied with the prediction made about a quarter of a century ago about Bhagmati. The horoscope also said that the little girl would have no brother or sister. With focused attention and affection from a rapturous Sultan, the girl grew into a beauty with brains.



*Charminar – Hyderabad*



**220** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

The brand-new capital city grew fast. Palaces, mosques, hospitals, bazaars and most important of all, a battery of gardens within and around the city started sprouting simultaneously. That attracted architects, planners, traders, entrepreneurs, fortune tellers and sooth sayers from near and far. The din and bustle of the rising city mesmerised rulers and commoners alike. The nomenclature of the capital city is no less interesting. The Sultan gave this name of Hyderabad (Haiderabad), the city of Haidar, the title of the fourth caliph, Hazrat Ali. He was the son-in-law of Hazrat Mohammed himself, married to his daughter, Fathima. Several buildings were built in the name of Shia Imams like Jahannuma. The birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammed was to be organised as a big ceremony.<sup>14</sup>

**...the hospital proper and the college were 2 main departments and medicines, lodging and diet were provided free to all the patients**



An important building of public utility, the famous Darul Shifa needs a special mention. Darul Shifa was a hospital as well as a residential college of Unani medicines. The hakims who were highly experienced, learned and specialists in various diseases were employed by the state to attend to the patients and also lecture before medical students. They were two departments, namely the hospital proper and the college. Medicines, lodging and diet were provided free to all the patients. Those young men who wished to join the college were given scholarships by the government and were assured employment after completion of their medical course.<sup>15</sup>

Several other works of public utility like public baths, state guest house (Sarai) and schools were also built. Apart from such Sarais, Mosques were also used as inns for travellers. Hamman (baths) were also attached to these mosques such as the Jama Masjid and public buildings such as General Hospital. Barbers, paid by the state were ready for a haircut and clean towels were provided to those who came to have a bath.

Dad Mahal, the seat of justice also needs special mention. “The Sultan himself delivered justice there. The palace was constructed in such a way that one side of it over looked the main thoroughfare, so that it might be easy for those who wanted to lay a complaint

before the royal person to have recourse to justice. In order, perhaps, to avoid frivolous complaints, it was ordered that all complaints should go to the Sultan through the secretaries and chamberlains.”<sup>16</sup> Sultan Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah also decreed that every morning after sunrise, the amirs, nobles, nayakwaris and others should come and salute him.<sup>17</sup>

### **Embassy from Persia**

The fame of Golconda spread far and wide. The King of Persia, Shah Abbas sent his envoy, Aqhilu Sultan to Golconda. An ambassador along with one hundred persons arrived from Shah Abbas, the first king of Safawid dynasty of Persia to the court of Qutb Shah in the reign of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah. He accepted the embassy and after six years sent an ambassador Sultan Talash to Safawid Persia.<sup>18</sup> However, the close relations between two Shia powers of Golconda and Persia became an eyesore to the Delhi Mughals, who professed the Sunni faith.

**... the close relations between two Shia powers of Golconda and Persia became an eyesore to the Delhi Mughals, who professed the Sunni faith**



The Mughals were ruling Delhi and Akbar was the emperor there. Most of the Hindu kingdoms north of Vindhya were subdued. It was time to look towards Deccan. Ahmednagar was in direct line of assault. Mughal Imperial forces numbering only fifteen thousand arrived to subdue Ahmednagar. Rulers of Bijapur and Golconda allied with the latter. The allied army consisted of no less than sixty thousand cavalries, besides infantry. The overall campaign by Dakhani forces lacked cohesion and focus. Troops, though brave were undisciplined as a body. They outnumbered their opponents, achieved initial successes yet failed to press on for want of coordination and discipline. It also shows the wisdom of Akbar’s rule and the support he received from Rajputs who formed the flower of his army. Allied army was defeated. It dispersed quickly. As imperial troops advanced, Ahmednagar was torn by civil war. Garrison was divided in itself. The conflict consumed Chand Bibi, one of the noblest and devoted characters in Deccan history. Subsequently, Ahmednagar fort itself was captured. Loot, pillage and slaughter followed and the

young king Bahadur was captured and sent to Akbar at Burhanpur. He was later sent to the fort of Gwalior where he remained in an honourable confinement – till death. In 1599, the Mughals had now taken a firm hold in the upper Godavari basin at Ahmednagar. It was to change the history of Deccan in the coming decades.

Mohammed Quli came into conflict with Venkata-II, the Vijayanagara ruler of Aravidu dynasty with Penukonda as his capital. In the beginning, the Golconda Sultan occupied Kurnool, Gooty and Gandikota and even advanced to Penukonda. However, the Vijayanagara forces succeeded in driving them away by a clever stratagem. Mohammed Quli was forced to accept Krishna river as the boundary between the two kingdoms.

### **East india company gets a foothold on Eastern coast**

Masulipatnam, situated on the eastern coast of Golconda kingdom was an internationally famous port. The Portugese had already brought their ships with canons to the western coast around a century ago. Now, it was time for English East India Company to send a ship named 'Globe' at Masulipatnam. The Sultan permitted them to open a factory there. Their ostensible purpose was to use it as a trading outpost, to start with. In subsequent centuries, these trading posts were to become entry points for a new power which gradually spread to overwhelm the entire country.

In 1612 CE, Mohammed Quli died at a rather young age of 46 years after a brief illness. His last journey is best described by Luther:

“The cortege was taken to the fort first. From there, it was brought out through the Banjara gate in a procession. Mohammed Quli had in his own lifetime, built his own resting place in the family necropolis. It is a magnificent building and outshines all others in its size and splendor. His body was given a bath in the royal mortuary. Then the prayers were read and the coffin was lowered into the crypt of his mausoleum. Mohammed Quli, the Prince and poet, lover and builder, the founder and father of the city, was returned to earth. In the long memory of the city, the imprint of his deep and abiding humanity,

**Mohammed  
Quli, the  
Prince and  
poet, lover  
and builder,  
the founder  
and father of  
the City, was  
returned to  
Earth**



his love of poetry and beauty, his swashbuckling manner, his vision, is clear and indelible.<sup>19</sup>

### **Mohammed Qutb Shah**

Mohammed Quli had no male issue. He, therefore, married his only daughter, Hayat Bakshi to his nephew and arranged for the smooth accession in his lifetime. The new Sultan, Mohammed Qutb Shah was a sober young man with a religious propensity. He shared with his uncle a love of poetry and composed poems under the pen name Zil-ul-lah. The cultured and intelligent Queen Hayat Bakshi enjoyed his creativity. In due course of time, she gave birth to the first child, Abdullah.

The prince was born under an inauspicious star. It bodes ill for the Sultan. Astrologers advised the father to avoid seeing the prince's face for twelve years. Royal couple cried and consoled each other. The Sultan was advised to construct a mosque so that the curse on the prince might be lifted. Qutb Shah himself laid its foundation but could not complete it in his life time.

Beyond the capital city, the tidings were not good either. By 1599 CE, the Mughal Emperor Akbar had already penetrated Deccan and subdued Ahmednagar. Bijapur and Golconda were still holding out and remained so till Akbar's death in 1605 CE. But Deccan had already appeared on the Mughal agenda for expansion and they never let it go out of sight. Emperor Jahangir appointed his son Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jahan) as the commander of Mughal forces in Deccan. Later, he rebelled against his father and was pursued by Prince Pervez on the orders of Jahangir. Mohammed Qutb Shah assisted Prince Khurram to safely escape to Bengal through his kingdom.

Shah Abbas-I wrote a letter to Jahangir, the Moghul Emperor of Hindustan seeking his forgiveness to Qutb Shah. He recommends the case of Deccan rulers for favourable consideration and this letter dated 1613 CE refers to the traditional ties of attachment and devotion binding the Deccan's rulers to the Safawid and requested Jahangir to forgive the Deccan rulers, especially Muhammad Qutb Shah who is in a special relationship with him.<sup>20</sup>

In 1616 CE, Sultan Mohammed Qutb Shah received an interesting letter from Shah Abbas, the tone of authority with which the Shah rebukes the Qutb Shah over the detention of Persian envoys and ask him to forbear this practice (ba'd az in bar khilaf-I guzashta 'amal namuda').<sup>21</sup> However, the letter from the same Shah Abbas I to Mir Muhammad Momin, the Prime Minister of Golconda was quite reassuring. Since the sultans of Golconda, out of their love for the Holy Prophet's progeny, have been for a long-time devotee of the khandan-i-khilafat (i.e the Safavid dynasty), he (the Shah) too looks upon them (the Qutb - Shahis) as his close ally. The presence of the Mir among them is a most fortunate coincidence. As on the death of the late Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah has ascended the throne, it became incumbent upon him (the Shah) to send a trusted servant to condole with the new Sultan. Hussain Beg Qaichaji is therefore being sent. Ask the Mir to promote the loyalty of the Qutb Shahis to the Safavid family, and to secure an early dismissal of the Persian envoy. The envoy should not be detained in Golconda as had been done earlier. The Mir should frequently send his "aridas" to communicate his needs and his cogitations, and ever remain hopeful of unlimited imperial favour.<sup>22</sup>

Abdullah Qutb Shah had an aunt in Iran. A letter from him reads,

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>"Let the respected aunt be assured of royal favour and know that the allegiance of the Qutb-Shahis towards the Shah of Iran is manifest and unquestionable"</b></p> | <p>"Let the respected aunt be assured of royal favour and know that the allegiance of the Qutb-Shahis towards the Shah of Iran is manifest and unquestionable. For me, there is no refuge except the Shah's court. Shah Jahan Badshah-I Hind, the instigation of the traitor (namak haram) Mir Muhammad Sa'id has broken all pledges with the writer and is bent on destroying him, and as in the previous year, is sending Prince Aurangzeb, this time accompanied by Muhammad Sa'id, to subjugate the Deccan. As there is no hope of getting help from any quarter, I (Abdullah Qutb Shah), if my situation becomes desperate, will seek asylum at the Shah (Abbas-II)'s court."<sup>23</sup></p> |
|---|---|



By this time, Shah Abbas-II had assumed power in Persia. Continuing the traditional ties, Qutb Shah wrote another letter." The long-standing

loyalty of the Qutb Shahi family to the Safavids is well-known. The writer has been anxious to send his submissions and presents to the Shah (Abbas II). But it was beyond his power to do so openly. Hence, he sent the late Shaikh Muhammad Khatun, who enjoyed the trust of the writer and the Shah, with cloth and goods made in this country, worth 10,000 huns. The Shaikh, who was to proceed on pilgrimage (Hajj) first, was directed to present the articles with him to the Shah in a manner that no one should come to know of the matter, and to use the occasion to convey to the Shah the writer's devotion to him and to apprise him of the plight of this country. The writer requests (istid'a) his aunt to secure the aforementioned goods which are held separately in custody by the agents (wukala) of the late Shaikh, and to present the goods to the Shah (bandagan-I a la hadrat-I-hkhaqni) inform him of the situation of this country, convey to him the firm allegiance of the writer and explain to him the reason for the writer's failure to communicate to the Shah directly."<sup>24</sup>

The tone of response from Shah Abbas-II to Qutb Shah of Golconda is rather authoritative. Why the addressee did not ask for help when he was in trouble from the enemies, so that with joint effort could be put to end to the mischief of the enemies. The lost opportunity can, however, be made up for. Now that the empire of Hindustan is in disarray and its imperial sceptre is changing hands, the addressee (Qutb Shah) should launch a forceful attack on these perfidious anti-Shiites. This time there will be no delay or slackness in sending help from this side. As an earnest of the Shah's resolve in this matter, an Imperial letter (nama-i-humayun) has been already issued to the Wali of Bijapur commanding him to actively cooperate, in the manner of his ancestors and in accordance with old documents, with the addressee (Qutb Shah), so that enemy domination over both of them can be entirely overthrown. Fulan (so-and-so) is being sent to ascertain the addressee's welfare, and should be allowed to leave early. The letter under reply gives a harrowing account of the effects of Mughal invasion also contained an implied complaint against Shah Abbas II for not helping Golconda in its hour of need. The present letter also contains a mention letter sent to Bijapur evidently about the same time.<sup>25</sup>

Yet another letter from Shah Abbas-II to Qutb Shah Wali-i-Dakhan Expresses pleasure at receiving the letter of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah. Learnt of the perfidy (bad-ahdi) and the vile deeds of the Wali of Hindustan (that is the Mughal Emperor) if only the Qutb Shah had informed the Shah at the time the perfidious enemy launched his attack, the Persian army would have crushed the aggression of these Shia haters. The Last opportunity will, however, be soon made up for. Now that the Timurid empire has been shaken to its foundations, the Qutb Shah like his ancestors, should cooperate with the Adil Shah, so that with their combined power, they can break the aggressive power of the enemy. The Adil Shah too has been sent a similar advice. Asks the Qutb Shah to mention unhesitatingly all his requirements. The old servant, Mirza Muhammad Muqim, *kitabdari-i-khassa-I sharifa*, is being sent to Golconda to find out all the facts of the Qutb Shah's situation. He may be given an early hearing so that he can report back on the requirement need of the Qutb Shah.<sup>26</sup> This is one of the several letters addressed by Shah Abbas-II to the rulers of Golconda and Bijapur, inciting them to act jointly against the Mughal Empire during the period.

The changing tone of correspondence between Golconda and Safavid rulers clearly establish the declining authority of Qutb Shah. Let's get back to the twelve-year period of the familial curse which was coming to a close. Sultan was going to see his dear Prince after such a long wait. But in the thick of preparations for the royal re-union, the retinue of Sultan crossed the suite of the Prince in palace corridor. Their sights intercepted before the appointed day. The accidental oversight got submerged in the great excitement. Within a few months, Sultan developed fever, and with ever rising temperatures, went into delirium. Luther best describes the last moments:

“When the Sultan regained consciousness, he told his mother that there were 3,500 *hons* in a special locker which should be taken out and distributed in charity. She should also make arrangements for the enthronement of Abdullah. Then he asked for the *Sura Fajar* of the holy Quran to be read out to him. The Qazi read it aloud and coming to Ayats 27 and 28, droned: ‘Since you had faith in the will of God, return towards the Benefactor. You will be pleased to go to Him and He will be pleased to receive you. Then as he came to Ayat 29, ‘Join my favourites,

and enter my heaven, ‘Sultan Mohammed Qutub Shah, the sixth ruler of the Qutub Shahi dynasty, mumbled, ‘Allah ho Akbar – Allah is great’ and closed his eyes. He was then 33. It was the year 1626.<sup>27</sup>

### 6.3 DECLINE AND SUBJUGATION

In 1626 CE, Abdullah, son of Mohammed, a young boy of twelve years, ascended the Golconda throne. His mother, Hayat Bakshi had personally supervised his education and training all along. Therefore, when he became Sultan, she became the real ruler, power behind the throne. Her sane advice won great renown. But actual administration was in the hands of factious council of officers. They were jealous of each other, too ambitions and too treacherous for any ruler, even during normal times.

Therefore,  
when he  
became Sultan,  
she became  
the ruler,  
power behind  
the throne



And times were quite abnormal, to say the least. Rains failed successively for three years. In 1632, famine struck. Starvation stalked everywhere. Coffins for Muslims were provided and arrangements made for last rites of one lakh men, women and children. Countryside was laid barren. Prices shot up, almost five times. For survivors, it was an unforgettable nightmare.



*Abdullah Qutb Shah*



In 1634, the teenaged Sultan, issued a firman on a gold plate granting trade privileges to East India Company. It was yet another concession extracted by the fast-growing English trading body. They had opened their factory in Masulipatnam just 23 years ago. By now, Deccan had appeared on the Mughal horizon ever since their arms took a foothold in upper Godavari basin in 1599. Irrespective of the emperors in Delhi, the imperial ambitious collided directly with independent Deccan Sultanate. Moreover, there was huge wealth in Golconda to excite their cupidity. The Deccan rulers were Shias and read khutba in the name of Persian monarch. Mughals were Sunnis. They did not like what they saw in the Deccan.

**This treaty of May 1635, brought Qutb Shahis under the titular suzerainty of Mughal Emperors**



Shah Jahan was now the Mughal emperor. He sent a large army towards Hyderabad under the command of Baqe Khan, the Mughal governor of Orissa. In May 1635, the overawed Abdullah surrendered, signed Inquiyad Nama (document of surrender) and accepted the suzerainty of the Mughals. He agreed to pay an annual tribute of six lakh rupees and also arrears amounting to 36 lakh rupees. Further, he agreed that Shah Jahan's name should be cited in the khutba and on the coins of Golconda. This treaty of May, 1635 CE brought Qutb Shahis under the titular suzerainty of Mughal Emperors.

Thus, just within a decade, Abdullah's rule witnessed a devastating famine, deepening of East India Company's foot prints on its eastern sea board and Mughal threats to his sovereignty. It was not a lucky turn of events. In 1636, Aurangzeb, the young Mughal prince arrived as Governor of the Deccan. Thereafter, things were set to change slowly yet surely, forever.

At the young age of seventeen, Aurangzeb was more devoted to religion than to pomps and vanities of the world. He even thought of retiring from the world as an ascetic and indeed, lived in a cell for about a year. Matters remained relatively quiet during the first viceroyalty of Aurangzeb in Deccan. However, the very presence of a Mughal representative at Golconda was sufficient cause for interference in its internal affairs. In 1644 CE, Aurangzeb left the

Deccan as he was called to lead military operation in Balkh– which was on the north-western border of the Mughal Empire, on the present-day Afghanistan–Pakistan border. It kept him away from Deccan for a decade.

Up in north, Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh mounted unsuccessful invasions to recover Kandahar. But the Persian artillery was superior to Mughal guns. The latter’s army was trained to fight in plains and not in hilly regions of Kandahar. After prolonged war in the mountains and heavy losses, Shah Jahan became realistic and stopped dreaming of ruling his ancestral lands, now inhabited by hostile tribes, who were expert in siege tactics.

### **Mir Jumla appears on the scene**

In the 17th century, Hyderabad was a centre of mercantile enterprise. Merchants, dealers and fixers flocked here from all parts of the world. Golconda was global mart for diamonds.<sup>28</sup> Amongst those adventurers was the son of an oil merchant of Ishfahan - a planned city in the present-day Iran - who arrived here in the year 1630 CE. Working as a servant of a jewel merchant, he grabbed his master’s wealth. A man of extraordinary talents, he soon rose to a position of great wealth and influence. He is known in history by the name Mir Jumla. The traveller Tavernier who visited Golconda said, “Mir Jumla was a person of great wit and no less understanding in military than in state affairs. I had occasion to speak to him several times, and I have no less admired his justice than his dispatch to all people that had to do with him; while he gave out several despatches at one time, as if he had but one business on hand.”<sup>29</sup>

With his dazzling achievements, he won attention of Sultan Abdullah and became his Vazir (Chief Minister) within a few years. He utilised the position to amass more wealth. He conquered Cuddapah, Gandikota and Carnatic, possessed twenty diamond mines and maintained a force equipped with artillery and 5,000 cavalries. He refused to hand them over to Sultan. This enormous power of an outsider invited jealousy of the Dakhani nobles.

**He utilised position to amass more wealth**



Mir Jumla’s son, Mohammed Amin was a young man of dissipated

habits. He misbehaved with the Sultan by entering his harem, fully drunk. He was arrested and confined to the fort of Kovilkonda. Mir Jumla's property was also confiscated. As Shah Jahan had appointed Mir Jumla and Mohammed Amin as Mughal mansabdars, Qutb Shah was ordered to release them. And if the Sultan disobeyed him, the Emperor ordered Aurangzeb to seize Golconda.

Mir Jumla, sensing the opportunity, resolved to throw himself into the arms of imperialists. In 1652 CE, Aurangzeb came as the Governor of Deccan for the second time and remained in that post till 1657 CE. Events were moving fast. Golconda had defaulted regarding the payment of annual tribute to Mughals. Aurangzeb was smarting due to military reverses in Kandahar. And, here was Mir Jumla, the disgruntled vazir of the Golconda Sultan, looking out for an opportunity.

Mir Jumla invited Aurangzeb to invade Golconda. The letter, according to Bernier, reads as follows:

“You need but take four or five thousand horses of the best of your army, and to march with expedition to Golconda, spreading the rumour by the way that it is an ambassador from Shah Jahan who goes in haste to speak about confidential matters to the king at Bhagnagar. The Dabir, who is the first to be addressed, to make anything known to the king, is allied to me, and is my creature and altogether mine. Take care of nothing but to march with expedition, and I will so order it that without making it known you shall come to the gates of Bhagnagar, and when the king shall come out to receive the letters according to custom, you may easily seize on him and afterwards on all his family, and do with him what shall seem good to you; in regard that his house of Bhagnagar, where he commonly resides, is unwallled and unfortified.”<sup>30</sup>

On receipt of this letter, Aurangzeb at once marched as proposed. Mir Jumla kept his word with everything was falling in place as predicted. “The king being advised of the arrival of this pretended ambassador, came forth into a garden according to custom, received him with honour and having unfortunately put himself into the hands of the enemy, ten or twelve slaves were

ready to fall upon and seize him, as had been projected, but that certain Omrah touched with tenderness, could not forbear to cry out, though he was of the party, and a creature of the Amir: Doth not your Majesty see that this is Aurangzeb? Away, or you are taken. Whereat the King being frightened, slips away, and gets hastily on horseback, riding with all his might to the fortress of Golconda.”<sup>31</sup>

On 22nd January, 1656, Abdullah Qutb Shah fled from Hyderabad to Golconda in order to save himself from total destruction. Invaders entered the city and got down to business. Qutb Shah’s entreaties and his abject surrender to the imperial command were of no avail. On 6th February, 1656, Golconda itself was besieged by Aurangzeb but could not be stormed. Aurangzeb was determined to annihilate Qutb Shahi state but Shah Jahan was not prepared to take extreme measure. Dara Shikoh, was bribed by the Golconda envoy, secured peace for them on the payment of an indemnity. Aurangzeb, considering the imperial softening fatuous, kept Shah Jahan’s letter a secret.

At this crucial juncture, Golconda nobles beseeched Hayat Bakshi Begum, the Queen Mother to intercede with Aurangzeb on behalf of the Sultanate. On 8th March, 1656, she went and met Aurangzeb under unusual circumstances. The bargain between the haughty Mughal viceroy and the humble Deccan Queen Mother was destined to be one sided.

**On March 8, 1656, she went and met Aurangzeb under unusual circumstances**



Humiliating terms were accepted by Abdullah Qutb Shah. His eldest daughter was married to Prince Mohammed, the son of Aurangzeb. Huge indemnity was paid. As capitulation was complete, Aurangzeb forwarded the decree issued by Shah Jahan earlier pardoning the ‘sins’ of Abdullah along with a robe of honour. Advisers were happy and Sultan relapsed into his unabashed indulgences, as if nothing had happened.

On 20th March, 1656, Mir Jumla reached Aurangzeb’s camp at Golconda and showered him with valuable presents. He was called to Delhi, where he presented to the Emperor the splendid diamond,

## **232** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

believed to be Koh-ei-noor, which is now the preserve of British crown jewels. Mir Jumla continued to be Aurangzeb's confidential adviser and no doubt, much of the latter's success was due to his advice. He was rewarded by the viceroyalty of Bengal.

### **The Deccan Imbroglia**

In 1652 CE, Shah Jahan had appointed Aurangzeb to the governorship of the Deccan province for the second time. Aurangzeb, an able administrator and experienced commander was well versed in the Deccan politics, since 1630s from his first stint. Twenty years of Mughal suzerainty over the sultanates had brought only disturbance, laced with occasional defiance. Additionally, the large Shiite communities and Hinduised ceremonial were just not acceptable to an orthodox Sunni as devout as Aurangzeb. Annexation rather than over lordship was the only solution.<sup>32</sup> Mir Jumla, a Persian adventurer in the service of Golconda sultanate came in handy to the Aurangzeb. Both entered a mutually beneficial conspiracy, wherein Mir Jumla's strategic help to Mughal forces would be reciprocated with the promise of a top rank in Mughal military hierarchy and a guarantee of his territorial possessions.

In 1656 CE, both joined hands and attacked Golconda. Hyderabad was captured and the sultan took shelter in Golconda fort. He appealed to Dara shikoh, Aurangzeb's eldest brother and also deadly rival to abort the campaign. Aurangzeb did do but, only after extracting a heavy indemnity plus forcing a matrimonial alliance with sultan's daughter to his own son.

In 1657 CE, Shah Jahan was suddenly taken ill with acute constipation. His limbs swelled, his palate dried and fever developed.<sup>33</sup> Rumours of his death or incapacity spread and the potential successors jumped into action. Shuja, the Bengal prince quickly coroneted himself and Murad, the Gujarat prince followed suit. Dara Shikoh, the eldest prince remained ensconced with the Emperor Shah Jahan in Agra fort.

In February 1658 CE, Aurangzeb, after making adequate preparations made his first move. Mir Jumla's troops including a strong detachment

of artillery under European directions plus cash indemnities collected from Golconda and Bijapur were at Aurangzeb's command 'as he moved north into Malwa with a force of thirty thousand' (Keay John, p 338). There he met up with Murad and near Ujjain, defeated Emperor's army which was moving south to intercept him. Heavy Rajput casualties in Shah Jahan's army, but comparatively few amongst its Muslim component suggest that Aurangzeb's cause has already commanded sympathy across the filial divide. The victors continued to march north before they encountered Dara, within eight miles of Agra fort. In the ensuing fierce encounter, despite more Rajput heroics, Aurangzeb's Deccan army stood its ground while the gunners did the rest. Dara's men, quickly wilted in the furnace temperatures of the late May. As he chose premature flight, Aurangzeb occupied Agra. The ailing Emperor Shah Jahan was besieged and confined in the marble terraces of Agra Fort. There, the emperor would remain, a semi-senile spectre of his former glory, till his death eight years later.

**Dara's men,  
quickly wilted  
in the furnace  
temperatures  
of the late  
May**



Aurangzeb's victory would remain incomplete till the elimination of all the rivals. Murad, an ally this far was invited to Aurangzeb's camp, taken prisoner and beheaded. Later, Shuja, re-emerging from Bengal was defeated and sent fleeing back to the east. Dara continued to elude capture as he flitted from Punjab to Sind to Gujarat. Eventually, he was captured, enchained and carried through the streets of Delhi, before being cut to pieces. Some say that his body was then again paraded through the streets. So once alive and once dead, he was exposed to the eyes of all men and many wept over his fate.<sup>34</sup>

Aurangzeb was to crown himself as emperor twice. Once he was crowned in a perfunctory ceremony in 1658 CE while chasing Dara and then at a grand assembly in the Delhi's Diwan-i-am in 1659 CE. His title was Alamgir (The Universe capturer). He soon resumed his campaigns to live up to the title. After tackling Assam affairs, where his brother Shuja had fled, he brought north-western tribes to order. In 1666 CE, it was announced that he had secured the submission of Tibet. All these territories were large in size but

rather insignificant in revenue. Aurangzeb was on a look out for meaningful conquests and where else it was but in the rich and troubled peninsula. The Deccan beckoned the emperor and the opportunity did not take long to come by.

In 1681 CE, Prince Akbar, one of Aurangzeb's son proclaimed himself an emperor and marched against Aurangzeb. Soon, the young prince discovered himself to be just no match to his veteran father. Akbar fled south without giving battle.

**Conquest in the Deccan was essential to mop resources to restore and sustain the imperial system which he had established**



Narrowly escaping capture, he reached the Deccan. There he was welcomed by an even more implacable Mughal foe. Prince Akbar became a protégé of the Marathas. Aurangzeb soon followed him. Victory over Deccan lands could be the crowning glory of Aurangzeb's reign. New lands affording new source of revenue in the form of jagirs were badly needed to meet the sky high expectations of ever growing legions of mansabdars. Conquest in the Deccan was

essential to mop up resources to restore and sustain the imperial system which he had established.

In 1681-82 CE, the Emperor moved south along with the entire imperial court plus, in this case, much of the army. It also meant that Shah Jahanaabad (the present day Delhi) was partly vacated.<sup>35</sup> For the purpose of travel, all moved into a tented city which was reconstituted with the same topography of bazars, cantonments, administrative offices and imperial apartments at every halt. Once in the Deccan, they remained in camp. There they stayed, thus they lived, and thence the empire was ruled for the duration of the campaign. The entire scenario was a replication of semi-nomadic tradition of their Timurid, Mongol ancestors.

While resuming his long affair with the Deccan sultanates, the Emperor was heading 'the entire imperial court, the imperial administration and something like 1,80,000 troops'.<sup>36</sup> None realized that this campaign would prove to be endless. Many of those who went south would never see Delhi again, including the Emperor; and this was despite his having another twenty six years to live.

An active commander into his late eighties and for the most part a successful one, Aurangzeb would push Mughal rule to its greatest limits. Indeed the empire which he finally claimed exceeded that of any previous Indian ruler. But, the price would far outweigh the prize. The emperors dogged longevity, no doubt the reward of frugal habits and pious living, would prove to be a substantial contributor to his empire's undoing.

Let us return to Akbar, the recalcitrant and rebellious prince of Aurangzeb who had fled to Deccan and was sheltered in the waiting arms of Marathas. After Shivaji's death in 1680 CE, his son Sambhaji lacked the steel of his illustrious father. With Mughal armies already swarming through northern Maratha lands, he ignored Akbar's plea for an all India offensive. In despair, Akbar took a ship to Persia but was disappointed yet again as the Shah there did not share the prince's ambitions. Akbar, the prince was heard no more.

Meanwhile, 'Aurangzeb's armies were enjoying uninterrupted success through no decisive victories. The Mughal strategy towards Marathas was not subtle, just thorough.'<sup>37</sup> Maratha lands were ravaged and desh mukhs were over awed and then enlisted in the imperial service as mansabdars. But the forts were rarely worth the immense effort of capturing them and the main enemy detachments proved too wily to be induced into battle. Already, it was becoming clear that outright conquest of the Maratha kingdom would demand a greater commitment of imperial resources than Aurangzeb had realized.<sup>38</sup>

Badly in need of more tangible success and resources, the emperor turned on Bijapur. In 1684 CE, an army of eighty thousand invaded the sultanate. The siege lasted for one year, after which the overwhelmed kingdom surrendered. It became a Mughal province and its chiefs' nobles were co-opted into the Mughal hierarchy. The Sultan became a state prisoner in the imperial encampment.

The Mughal appetite for success and resources was ignited further by their victory in Bijapur. The nearby kingdom of Golconda was the obvious next target.



## 6.4 COLLAPSE AND ANNEXATION

Abdullah, the ruler of Golconda had three daughters and no son. The eldest was married to Aurangzeb's son, Prince Mohammed, who was imprisoned at Aurangabad. The other daughter was married to one Nizamuddin. The youngest was married to Abul Hassan. In the contest for the throne of Golconda, Abul Hassan came out successful and became the ruler on 21st April, 1672.

**“He was an indolent, pleasure loving and benevolent ruler. Surrounded by concubines, he was popularly known as Tana Shah**

Abul Hassan was an indolent, pleasure loving and benevolent ruler. Surrounded by concubines, Premamati being the favourite mistress, he was popularly known as Tana Shah. Initially, he appointed Saiyyad Muzzafar as his Vazir or Chief Minister. The latter tried to dominate the Sultan and therefore was replaced by Madanna, a Telugu brahmin from Hanumkonda. The latter had originally served as secretary and personal assistant to Saiyyad Muzzafar.



Within a short time, Madanna posted his relations and confidants in key positions. Akanna, his brother became Army chief, his nephew Venkanna became a General with the title Rustam Rao, another nephew Linganna, became the Governor of Carnatic and yet another nephew Gopanna was made Tahsildar of Bhadrachalam.

Then Madanna, as a strategy, forged close relations with the powerful Maratha Kingdom. On 7th March, 1677, Shivaji, the redoubtable Maratha chief arrived as a state guest. A treaty was signed to help Golconda in case of attack by Mughals. Part of Carnatic territory was also handed over. Then, Golconda agreed to pay one lakh hun every year to Maratha King in lieu of giving up their demand for Chouth in Golconda areas bordering Maratha Kingdom and lastly, Abul Hasan gave monetary help to Shivaji in his expedition to Thanjavur and Southern Carnatic. En route, Shivaji prayed at Srisailam, on the banks of Krishna.

This clear diplomacy succeeded in establishing close relations between the wealthiest Muslim Kingdom of Golconda and the powerful Marathas. In 1680, Shivaji died and his son Sambaji

continued the alliance. These developments alarmed Aurangzeb. He knew Deccan affairs too well due to his past association as its Governor. In 1682, after getting respite from north, he moved his army to Aurangabad. His son, Akbar rebelled and took shelter in the Maratha court. The Emperor realized that in order to control Maratha's effectively, both Bijapur and Golconda have to be annexed. In April, 1685, he attacked Bijapur. In 1686, it was annexed after considerable losses to the Mughal armies.

During the siege of Bijapur, Abul Hassan sent a message to Bijapur that he would send an army of forty thousand from the east to help him against Mughals while Marathas would attack them from the west. This message fell into Mughal hands. Aurangzeb was incensed. A large imperial army under the command of Prince Alam was dispatched to Golconda. It confronted a numerically larger army of Sultan under Mohammed Ibrahim's command. But the Golconda general defected with his entire force. With opposition demoralized, the imperial forces won an easy victory. As the Sultan's troops fled in confusion, they were chased by Imperial troops.

**But the Golconda general defected with the entire force**



### **Plunder of Hyderabad**

On hearing the treachery and defection, Abul Hassan at once left the city and took refuge with his servants and family in the fort of Golconda. His ministers however advised him to retreat to far away Warangal, in Telangana country where he would be safe. He could have collected a fresh army with which to raise the siege of capital. But Sultan panicked and his flight was so hurried that nobles of the city came to know about it only next day. A general panic gripped and the civic order totally collapsed. Palaces of Hindu ministers were pillaged first. The palace of Sultan and those of the nobility came next. Anarchy pervaded everywhere. Khafi Khan writes, "The women of soldiers and of inhabitants of the city were subjected to dishonour, and great disorder and destruction prevailed. Many thousand gentlemen, being unable to take horse, and carry of their property, in the greatest distress took the hands of their children and wives, many of whom could not even seize a veil or sheet to cover them, and fled to the fortress."

Before day break, the imperial forces arrived and subdued the rioters. Then, they plundered on their own account.

A frightful scene of plunder and destruction followed, for in every part and road and market there were lakhs and lakhs of money, stuffs, carpets, horses and elephants belonging to Abul Hassan and his nobles. Words cannot express how many women and children of Musalmaans and Hindus were made prisoners, or how many women of high and low degree were dishonoured. Carpets of great value, which were too heavy to carry, were cut to pieces with swords and daggers, and every bit was struggled for.

City was exhausted after plundering. Now letters were sent by Abul Hassan offering submission. Hindu ministers, Akkanna and Madanna, were dismissed and a plot was hatched with some ladies of the harem. Both were killed while going from durbar to their own houses on the streets of Golconda fort in March 1686 and their severed heads were sent to imperial camp. Jamshid, the murderer, was a steward in the Royal Court. Aurangzeb approved of what all has happened but expressed displeasure at uncontrolled riots. As forces were needed to quell Bijapur, most of the troops were recalled leaving only a small force to watch the situation in Golconda from a safe distance. Sadat Khan kept Abul Hassan engaged regarding indemnity and tribute.

After the fall of Bijapur, Aurangzeb arrived in Gulburga on his march towards Hyderabad. Abul Hassan became thoroughly alarmed. He sent his family jewels to Sadat Khan. But Emperor's march continued unabated. Abu Hassan gave up all hopes of escape by mere payment. He sent for Sadat Khan to return the jewels, but was told that they had already been sent to the Emperor. The Sultan then dispatched a humble letter to Aurangzeb. The prompt and stern reply reads, "the evil deeds of this wicked man pass beyond the bounds of writing, but by mentioning one out of a hundred, and a little out of much some conception of them may be formed. First, placing the reins of authority and government in the hands of vile tyrannical infidels; oppressing and afflicting the Saiyyads, shaiks, and other holy men; openly giving himself up

to excessive debauchery and depravity; indulging in drunkenness and wickedness day and night making no distinction between infidelity and Islam, tyranny and justice, depravity and devotion; waging obstinate war in defence of infidels; want of obedience to the divine commands and prohibition, especially to that command which forbids assistance to an enemy's country, the disregarding of which had cost a censure upon the holy book in the sight both of God and man. Letters full of friendly advice and warning upon these points had been repeatedly written and had been sent by the hands of discreet men. No attention had been paid to them; moreover, it had lately become known that a lakh of pagodas had been sent to the wicked Sambha. That in this insolence and intoxication and worthlessness, no regard had been paid to the infamy of his deeds, and no hope shown to deliverance in this world or the next."<sup>39</sup>

### **Traitors triumph, Golconda falls**

After receiving this reply, Abul Hassan saw no hope of mercy from Aurangzeb. Now, was the time to set his shoulder to the wheel. A fifteen thousand strong cavalry was stationed in the rear of the Mughal army. Help was called from Sambhaji which was duly sent. It helped in disrupting supplies and harassing convoys. The Sultan had ample stores of provisions, ammunition and a powerful battery of artillery. His men were imbued with patriotism and hated Mughals. But, majority amongst principal officers deserted the Sultan. The entire nobility, with just two exceptions crossed over to Imperial camp. Ibrahim, the former Golconda Commander in chief was given a high rank amongst the Mughal besiegers. The two exceptions were Abdur Razzak Lari and Abdullah Khan Pani.

**But, majority amongst principal officers deserted the Sultan**



The former performed miracles of heroism and ranks amongst the bravest and most faithful of soldiers. The latter, was a serial traitor. He had shifted his allegiance from Mughals to Bijapur Sultans in the past before serving the Qutb Shahiis. The seige commenced on 10th February 1687 and lasted beyond eight long months, each day witnessing one encounter or the other.

The Sultan's troops helped by Maratha reinforcements had swelled to between forty and fifty thousand horsemen. The Garrison was proving to be impregnable and tough. Prince Shah Alam intended to consider Sultan's overtures for peace but Aurangzeb was not to be thwarted by his own son. He was arrested and sent away in confinement.

Trenches were pushed forward. Almost daily the Garrison made sallies, some of which were successful, but the defenders were never able to break the line, and the toils gradually closed in on the fortress.<sup>40</sup> Fire was hot on both sides and smoke removed the distinction between day and night. Large mounds were erected with Emperor's tent pitched at a strategic point.

In about a month's time, trenches reached to the edge of the moat. Attempts were made to fill it up by throwing in cotton bags filled with earth. Fifty thousand bags were ordered from cotton producing tracks of Berar and the Emperor himself sewed the seams of the first bag thrown in. A surprise attack was attempted one night. Ladders were fixed and a few men climbed the ramparts. But the garrison was alerted by the barking of a dog. The defenders succeeded in throwing down the ladders and the scaling party was beaten back. The alert dog was given a golden collar and a gold-plated chain and was tied near the Sultan himself - probably, the luckiest dog in the known history.<sup>41</sup>

Pestilence had already broken and now the rains set in. Heavy losses were mounting for Imperial forces, both those killed and taken prisoners. One of them, Sarbhara Khan was captured by the Golconda force and then sent back to Emperor by the Sultan with peace proposals. Aurangzeb remained adamant, in spite of straits to which his army was reduced. He replied, "If Abul Hassan does not repudiate my authority, he must come to me with clasped hands or he must be brought bound before me. I will then reflect what consideration I can show to him."

Now, three mines were being laid and they were ready to be exploded. But Abdur Razzak, by counter mining, neutralized them. Only one mine exploded, partially. That inflicted more damage to besiegers than the besieged. An assault under the eyes

of Emperor himself was repulsed. Imperial forces could not make a breakthrough. Aurangzeb was now hungry for success. Golconda fort was proving to be impregnable.

Having failed to win through assault, Aurangzeb tried another strategy, bribery. Abdur Razzak refused all overtures. In spite of allurements, he tore the Emperor's letter to pieces in presence of his men. A message was sent that he would fight, till death. Abdullah Khan Panni, however, yielded to Emperor's offer. After a seige for eight months and ten days, he betrayed his Sultan and treacherously kept open the windows of a gate on 28th September, 1687. After midnight at about 3 AM, the Mughal forces entered the window and threw open the gate, now known as Fateh Darwa or gateway to victory.

**Having failed to win through assault, Aurangzeb tried another strategy, bribery**



With gates wide open, Prince Mohammed Azam's army flooded in. As victory joys were raised, Abdur Razzak heard this. He sprung on a horse, without a saddle with sword in one hand and shield in the other. Accompanied by ten to twelve followers, he rushed to the gate through which Imperial forces were gushing in. His followers were dispersed, but he alone threw himself upon the advancing avalanche. He fought with inconceivable fury and desperation, shouting that he would fight to death for Abul Hassan. Every step he advanced; thousands of swords were aimed at him. His body from the crown of his head to the nails of his feet was covered with wounds. His face received twelve wounds and the skin of his forehead hung over his eyes and nose. One eye was severely wounded and cuts upon his body seemed as numerous as stars. His horse was covered with wounds too and he reeled under his weight. Reins were given to the beast and it carried him to a garden, called Nagina, near the citadel under a coconut tree, where he threw himself off with help of a tree. He was recognized next day and carried upon a bedstead to a house. His men, on hearing this came and dressed his wounds.<sup>42</sup>

### **Abdur Razzak, The Sword of Deccan**

The brave and faithful general, Abdur Razzak lay wounded and his story deserves due coverage. Khafi Khan, the generous enemy paid tribute to his prowess. Abdur Razzak, senseless, but with a spark of

life remaining, was carried to the house of Ruhu Illah Khan. As soon as the eyes of Saf Shikan Khan fell upon him, he cried out 'This is that vile Lari! Cut off his head, and hang it over the gate!' Ruhu Illah replied that to cut off the head of a dying man without orders, when there was no hope of his surviving was far from being humane. A little bird made the matter known to Aurangzeb, who had heard of Abdur Razzak's daring and courage and loyalty, and he graciously ordered those two surgeons, one a European, the other a Hindu, should be sent to attend the wounded. The Emperor also sent for Ruhu Illah Khan and told him that if Abul Hassan had possessed only one more servant devoted like Abdur Razzak, it would have taken as much longer time to subdue the fortress. The surgeons reported that they had counted nearly seventy wounds, besides the many wounds upon wounds which could not be counted. Although one eye was not injured it was probable that he would lose the sight of both. They were directed carefully to attend to his cure. At the end of sixteen days, the doctors reported that he had opened one eye and spoken a few faltering words, expressing a hope of recovery. Aurangzeb sent a message to him for giving him his offers, and desiring him to send his eldest son, Abdul Qadir, with his other sons, that they might receive suitable mansabs and honours. When this gracious message reached that devoted and peerless, he gasped out a few words of reverence and gratitude, but he said that there was little hope of recovery. If, however, it pleased the Almighty to spare him and give him a second life, it was not likely that he would be fit for service but should he be ever capable of service, he felt that no one who had eaten the salt of Abul Hassan, and had thriven on his bounty could enter the service of King Aurangzeb. On hearing these words, a cloud was seen to pass over the face of his Majesty, but he kindly said: "When he is quite well let me know."<sup>43</sup>

Eventually Abdur Razzak recovered and again refused to appear before the Emperor who became angry and sent to arrest him. He could evade arrest but was kept in concealment. After a year, Abdur Razzak thought better of the Emperor's offer as he could do no good to his fallen master. So, he entered the Imperial service with a mansab of three thousand horses.

In the meantime, Abul Hassan met his fate in a royal manner. Noises and groans convinced him that all was over. He then went to his harem, comforted his women, asked their pardon and took their leave. He then went to the throne room, placed himself upon the throne (masnud) and ordered food to be served to him where he was. At last, Ruhu IIah Khan, the commander of Aurangzeb's forces entered. Sultan greeted him with courtesy, conversed with him at his ease and never for a moment, forgot his dignity. He then called for his horse, himself placed on his neck a splendid row of pearls and went with his captor to the Imperial camp. He was first taken to Prince Mohammed Azam to whom he presented the pearl necklace. The Prince accepted them, placed his hands on the Sultan's back and endeavoured to console him. He was then taken to the Emperor and duly introduced. Emperor of Hindustan, Aurangzeb received him courteously, and after a few days, sent him to Daulatabad Fort. He remained there as a state prisoner until the time of his death some years later. He was given allowance along with the company of his wives.

This is how the rule of last Sultan of Qutb Shahi, rulers of Deccan came to a close. Whatever may have been the faults of Abul Hassan's life, he met his misfortune in a manner worthy of a king.

Three centuries and a quarter have lapsed since the fateful day when Abdur Razzak, the faithful and loyal General of the last Golconda King rode the bare horse and plunged himself into the ocean of enemy arms. He faced sure annihilation, yet confronted with his heroics, death dare not touch him that day. He was truly a loyal son to his motherland. Just like Maharana Pratap, the brave Rajput of Chittoor sacrificed for the motherland, so did Abdur Razzak of Deccan. The loyal and true sons of motherland really never die. They are preserved in the pages of history, forever. Shamshir-e-Deccan (The sword of Deccan) is how Abdur Razzak is remembered by the posterity, till this day.

**He was  
truly a loyal  
son to his  
motherland**



## 6.5 THE TORTUROUS TRANSITION

The transition from a regional kingdom to an imperial province brought in its wake several changes of more than temporary



importance in Golconda polity. The Qutb Shahi rulers were controllers of vast wealth which the tax tribute system of Golconda had funneled into the capital. Replacement of the monarch by a Mughal Governor could never fill this loss. No matter how noble or well meaning, a governor was necessarily far less than a king in all aspects of public life.<sup>44</sup> A Mughal governor was, moreover, part of a harsher and less personal imperial system, being directed from Agra, Delhi or Aurangabad.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that popular opinion in the conquered kingdom continued to exhibit a sentimental attachment to the former dynasty and a corresponding dislike due to the emotional distance of the new regime. As late as 1698, twelve years after the conquest, rumours circulated that, the ex-king Abul Hasan had escaped from the Mughal captivity in Daulatabad fort and that he would make an attempt to regain his throne with Maratha help. Similarly, in 1700, in Masulipatnam, rumours about a possible restoration were greeted with great enthusiasm, by the local populace, who retained both affection for Abul Hasan and pity for his condition.<sup>45</sup>

Aurangzeb further lessened the powers and grandeur of the new Hyderabad Governor by splitting off the Carnatic territories, south of Krishna from Hyderabad province. After 1687, tax collections, bribes, tributes, coining and diamonds from the southern districts moved away from Hyderabad to Carnatic.<sup>46</sup> Integration of Hyderabad into the imperial system also had serious economic consequences. The wealth of Golconda, including the diamonds began to be systematically drained, as Mughal administrators started sending the surpluses directly to the central treasury at Aurangabad. This was bound to set-off a process of economic drain in the fortunes of Hyderabad, hitherto the foremost commercial and capital centre, south of Vindhya. Madras and Bombay were still evolving up from infancy of fishermen's hamlets into English and Portuguese trading hubs.

Another immediate and radical change occurred in the composition of the political elite. The local Telugu, Persian, Afghans and Deccan Muslims who formed the Golconda nobility prior to annexation

was replaced by the new ruling elite composed of Mansabdars drawn originally from north India. The varied, personal, cultural, political and economic ties between Golconda and Safavid Persia gradually diminished. The alliance between the Qutb Shahis and Marathas, entered during Abul Hasan's reign at the instance of Akkanna and Madanna too got snapped.

### **Transitional Governors**

Ruhullah Khan was the Governor of Hyderabad when Aurangzeb left with his army. Early in 1688, a Maratha army plundered the countryside near Hyderabad, without any challenge from Ruhullah Khan. The latter was promptly replaced by Jan Sipar Khan whose son Rustam Dil Khan acted as his father's deputy. The arrangement was that while Jan Sipar Khan stayed in the capital, his son campaigned with a mobile force against recalcitrant zamindars, bandits and Maratha raiders.<sup>47</sup> In 1691, Jan Sipar Khan collected a force of 5,000 horsemen to defend Hyderabad against a Maratha army of twice that number. Several other recalcitrant zamindars were also subdued. In October 1691, Venkat Rao Deshmukh of Kaulas controlling a paragana in Elgandal district was captured and subdued. In 1692, the formidable Anand Eshwar Rao, zamindar of Paloncha was tackled. The other local chiefs too either acquiesced or were brought around by diplomacy coupled with force, if necessary.

In April 1692, the Dutch received reports from their Masulipatnam factories that Maratha bands joined by local raiders were plundering daily. This extortion of funds from the inhabitants and robbing of merchants on the roads led to general distraction of trade. Suddenly after 1692, Maratha pressure on Hyderabad eased. It was due to emergence of Jinji, the great triple fortress as the new focal point of Maratha-Mughal war. In 1695, only one brush with the Marathas occurred. The Maratha forces had raided Bijapur and captured its faujdar. The Emperor ordered to march in pursuit of Maratha forces. The mission failed and the prudent Rustam Dil Khan avoided further engagement before returning to Hyderabad.<sup>48</sup>

In 1700, twelve years after becoming Governor of Hyderabad, Jan Sipar Khan died in office.<sup>49</sup> Aurangzeb selected his own youngest

son, Prince Mohammed Kaum Baksh, as his replacement. The prince was released after several years of imprisonment. Rustam Dil Khan was named as his naib (deputy). By now, Jinje the formidable Maratha stronghold had already capitulated in 1698. The Maratha forces, feeling humiliated after losing their strong anchor moved northwards. Soon, their presence was felt in and around the city of Hyderabad. In summer of 1702, a Maratha horde, estimated at 50,000 horses and foot attacked the city. Rustam Dil Khan, who was in the city, did not make any attempt to defend the city. He along with other officials and nobles of the city either remained

**Meeting no resistance, the Marathas occupied the entire city and looted the defenceless populace for 3 full days**



guarded by canons within their residences or fled to the shelter of Golconda fort. Meeting no resistance, the Marathas occupied the entire city and looted the defenceless populace for three full days.<sup>50</sup> The leaders demanded enormous ransom but finally, Rustam Dil Khan handed over 7,00,000 rupees and the raiders left.<sup>51</sup> Seizure of the provincial capital in this daring manner with no resistance offered by the governor was the most damaging blow to the Mughal prestige,

since the fall of Golconda, some fifteen years before. The inability to deal with Maratha raids encouraged banditry on an extraordinary scale in Hyderabad. Even Mughal faujdars turned bandits, Riza Khan being one amongst them. Unpaid soldiers and the like were the new recruits to these bandit leaders, who offered them hope, protection and employment on a sustainable basis.

By May 1703, Rustam Dil Khan was replaced by Saiyyad Muzaffar Khan as the new deputy governor. In 1704, the Maratha raids were resumed. Their repeated hammerings went unopposed so much so that Saiyyad Muzaffar Khan took shelter in Golconda fort.<sup>52</sup> The raiders were enacting a familiar routine of forcible entry into the city without opposition, followed by plunder at will and finally exiting after extorting a large cash payment. It hardly mattered as to who the Governor was at Hyderabad. Sayyid Muzaffar Khan was scrupulously following the footsteps of Rustam Dil Khan. Mughals were demoralized; Marathas overconfident.

In 1704-1705, rapid collapse of imperial authority brought yet

another reshuffle. Daud Khan Panni, the new deputy Governor was ordered to immediately go to Hyderabad and drive out the ‘worthless infidels’ implying Marathas. Daud Khan was not too eager to take on the task. He temporized and tried to get his orders changed. As a result, the administration in Hyderabad drifted further for nearly a year. The aging emperor turned once again to Rustam Dil Khan. He, with enhanced rank was brought back as deputy Governor at Hyderabad.<sup>53</sup>

Around these times, Aurangzeb’s death was expected and feared at any time. Mughal administration had divided into two asynchronous factions in Hyderabad. The absentee Governor Prince Mohammed Khaum Baksh, continued his efforts to built a power base in Deccan anticipating the power struggle. Rustam Dil Khan, didn’t openly challenge or clash with his nominal superior. Nevertheless, all his energies were directed towards self preservation. He continued to avoid any kind of direct clash with Marathas, who sacked the capital once again in 1706. He continued to built-up his personal treasury. His emerging alliance and compromises with the most aggressive and disruptive Riza Khan were damaging to imperial interests.

Morale, efficiency and standards of imperial administration in Hyderabad dropped precipitously. The Emperor was unwilling to spare any of his armies for duty in Hyderabad. He merely shuffled personal at the highest provincial posts without any noticeable effect. Soon, these appointees concluded that they could not count on any meaningful assistance from the centre.<sup>54</sup> They refused to even confront Marathas, much less fighting them. Instead, they came to an accommodation with them. The squeeze on revenues due to lessened agricultural production, drying up of trade and commerce and difficulties in collection disturbed the jagir system. The privileged position of urban Muslim notables, members of the ulema and others were the hardest hit. For example, “a Muslim noble woman, who was Abul Hasan Qutb Shahis widowed sister had held a subsistence grant near Hyderabad. The village in Rajkonda paragana, Bhongir district which she held had a revenue totalling 1,042 rupees yearly. By 1702, she petitioned to have her grant changed to another village as her original village was no longer cultivated or populated.

Since the granter was completely dependent upon this support, for her livelihood, she was in great distress.”<sup>55</sup>

**In conclusion, it is obvious that disruptive forces were loosened in Hyderabad with an almost cyclonic effect after 1687. Maratha and Bedar raiders, indigenous Telugu Sardars and Deshmukhs, renegade Mughal officers, and all sorts of bandits freely attacked the villages and district town, traffic on the roads and even the capital itself. Severe drought, famine and pestilence added to the general misery. These disturbances created a climate of insecurity and uncertainty that fractured the existing social and political order of the present day Telangana lands. The worst was yet to come with the onset of the eighteenth century.**

### **Deccan consumes Aurangzeb**

First invaded and occupied in 1685 CE, the Golconda Sultanate fell in 1687 CE, after a long siege lasting almost a year. It too was incorporated into the Mughal Imperium. Aurangzeb’s argument was that both the Sultanate deserved their fate, for having on occasion abetted the infidel Marathas. In Hyderabad, the revenge was rather sweet. Vast wealth was appropriated, temples were desecrated, the Brahmin ministers beheaded and Hindus of all castes penalized by the Jizya.<sup>56</sup>

**He was duly  
tortured and  
then painfully  
dismembered,  
joint by joint,  
limb by limb**



In 1688 CE, the Aurangzeb’s mission in south soared to its glorious climax when Shivaji’s successor Shambaji, together with his brahmin chief minister was captured in an ambush. Brought to the imperial encampment, Shambaji managed to heap insult on both the emperor and the Prophet. He was duly tortured and then painfully dismembered, joint by joint; limb by limb. It was symbolic of Aurangzeb’s treatment while dealing with peninsular kingdoms.<sup>57</sup>

Rajaram, Sambaji’s brother filled the power vacuum but was himself besieged in the fort at Raigarh. He escaped, headed south and took shelter in Jinji. The formidable fort remained under siege of Mughal armies for excruciatingly eight long years from 1689 CE to 1697 CE. At times, the Marathas armies from elsewhere pressed

the Mughals so hard by cutting off their supply lines so successfully that the besieges became the besieged. After the marathon duel, the fort finally fell and Rajaram and most of his men were allowed to make their safe escape.

It was the turn of Satara now. In 1700 CE, it was seized by Mughals and forced to surrender. As Rajaram died, his widow Tarabai assumed political control in the name of her son, Sambaji II. The Satara engagement had cost thousands of lives - two thousand Mughal troops died in a single misdirected mining attempt.<sup>58</sup> Tarabai offered a deal, but Aurangzeb being Aurangzeb, haughtily rejected the overture.

Meanwhile, Tarabai as regent was insinuating into the Mughal provinces of the Deccan to run what amounted to a parallel administration. This was a new tactic based on a Maratha claim to a 25% share (Chauth) of all revenues collected in the Deccan plus an additional 10% for the hereditary Maratha Sardeshmukhi or sovereign's share. Payment supposedly guaranteed protection, especially from the Mughal revenue collections which amounted to 50% of the gross produce. It also justified a shadow hierarchy of Maratha governors and deputies operating from their own fortified bases within Mughal territory and levying additional tolls on the vital trade routes of the region. The burden was not out rightly rejected because of the resentment stirred up by the Aurangzeb's religious policies, the strain imposed upon military and his financial resources due to incessant Maratha campaign. The growing discontent among Mughal mansabdars whose Deccan jagirs either failed to materialize or failed to yield their expected revenue, were all taking a toll of Mughal authority.

In 1705 CE, Aurangzeb fell seriously ill. Installed in a palanquin, he was carefully carried back to Ahmednagar. Now, as age advanced, the Emperor could foresee this own departure. Shortly before his death, he wrote a letter to Azim Shah and another to Kaum Baksh. Both of them are so intense and introspective that they must be read in full. The letter to Shah Azim Shah, "Health to thee! My heart is near thee! Old age has arrived: weakness subdues

me, and strength has forsaken all my members. I came a stranger into this world, and a stranger I depart. I know nothing of myself, what I am, and for what I am destined. The instant which passed in power has left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire. My valuable time has been passed vainly. I had a patron in my own dwelling (conscience) but his glorious light was unseen by my dimmed sight. Life is not lasting; there is no vestige of departed breath, and all hopes from futurity are lost. The fever has left me, but nothing remains of me but skin and bone. My son Kaum Baksh, though gone towards Bijapur, is still near; thou my son art yet nearer. The worthy of esteem Shah Alum (Bahadur Shah) is far distant and my grandson (Azim Ushan) by the orders of God is arrived near Hindoostan. The camp followers, helpless and alarmed, are like myself full of affliction, restless as quick silver. Separated from their lord, they know not if they have a master or not.

I brought nothing into this world, and except the infirmities of man,

**"I brought  
nothing in  
this world,  
and except  
the infirmities  
of man, carry  
nothing out..."**



carry nothing out. I have a dread for my salvation and with what torments I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounties of God, yet regarding my actions fear will not quit me; but when I am gone, reflection will not remain. Come then what may I have launched my vessel to the waves. Though Providence will protect the camp, yet regarding appearances, the endeavours of my sons are indispensably incumbent. Give my last prayers to my grandson (Bedar Bukht, son of Azim Shah) whom I cannot see but the desire affects me. The Begum (his favourite daughter) appears afflicted but God is the only judge of hearts. The foolish thoughts of women produce nothing but disappointment.

Farewell! farewell! farewell!"<sup>59</sup>

The letter to the Prince Kaum Baksh, "My Son, nearest to my heart. Though in the height of my power, and by God's permission, I gave you advice and took with you the greatest pains, yet, as it was not the divine will, you did not attend with the ears of compliance. Now I depart a stranger, and lament my own insignificance, what does it profit

me? I carry with me the fruits my sins and imperfections. Surprising Providence! I came here alone, and alone I depart. The leader of the caravan has deserted me. The fever which troubled me for twelve days has left me. Wherever I look I see nothing but Divinity. My fears for the camp and followers are great, but alas! I know not myself. My back is bent with weakness and my feet have lost the power of motion. The breath which rose is gone, and left not even hope behind it. I have committed numerous crimes and know not with what punishment I may be seized. Though the Protector of mankind will guard the camp yet care is incumbent also on the faithful, and my sons. When I was alive no care was taken and now the consequence may be guessed. The guardianship of a people is the trust by God committed to my sons. Azim Shah is near. Be cautious that none of the faithful are slain or their miseries will fall upon my head. I resign you, your mother and son to God, as I myself am going. The agonies of death come upon me fast. Bahadur Shah is still where he was, and his son has arrived near Hindustan. Bedar Bukht is in Guzerat. Hyut al Nissa (his daughter the Begum), who has beheld no afflictions of time till now, is full of sorrows. Regard the Begum as without concern. Odeypooree, your mother, was a partner in my illness and wishes to accompany me in death; but everything has its appointed time.

The domestics and courtiers, however deceitful, yet must not be ill treated. It is necessary to gain your views by gentleness and art. Extend your feet no lower than your skirt. The complaints of the unpaid troops are as before. Dara Shakoh, though of much judgment and good understanding, settled large pensions on his people, but paid them ill, and they were ever discontented. I am going. Whatever good or evil I have done, it was for you. Take it not amiss, nor remember what offences I have done to yourself, that account may not be demanded of me hereafter. No one has seen the departure of his own soul: but I see that mine is departing.”<sup>60</sup>

The misery ended on 21st February 1707. With a heavy load of guilt on his conscience, Aurangzeb died. His funeral expenses were supposedly met from the sale of the Qurans he had copied and the prayer caps he had stitched.<sup>61</sup> He was buried at Khuldabad, near Aurangabad in the least pretensions of all the Mughal tombs.

**With a heavy load of guilt on his conscience, Aurangzeb died**





### Revenue during Aurangzeb's reign

Several authors' have calculated the revenue resources of Mughal Empire during the Aurangzeb's reign. They are tabulated as follows:

| Sl. No | YEAR                        | AUTHOR            | REVENUE (in Crores) |
|--------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1.     | 1651                        | Irfan Habib       | 22.25               |
| 2.     | 1654                        | Dr. Edward Thomas | 26.74               |
| 3.     | 1667                        | Irfan Habib       | 26.24               |
| 4.     | Some year between 1656-1667 | Bernier's return  | 22.59               |
| 5.     | Some year between 1667-1691 | Official returns  | 35.64               |
| 6.     | 1687                        | Irfan Habib       | 33.05               |
| 7.     | 1988                        | Irfan Habib       | 34.51               |
| 8.     | 1692                        | Irfan Habib       | 30.18               |
| 9.     | 1697                        | Dr. Edward Thomas | 38.62               |
| 10.    | 1707                        | Dr. Edward Thomas | 30.17               |
| 11.    | 1709                        | Irfan Habib       | 33.35               |

(Source: *Habib Irfan, 2004, pp 454-455 & Sundaram Lanka, 2007, p60*)

An exorbitant increase by 73.57% of Mughal revenues during Aurangzeb's reign was achieved by expanding the dominion in all the directions, especially the Deccan. Almost half of his imperial career was subsumed in Deccan lands. **His successes included the annexation of Golconda kingdom which enveloped the present-day Telangana lands. During the first year of imperial rule, Golconda had suffered invasion, defeat, siege, disorder, famine, plague and depopulation. Trade remained frozen, roads were uniformly dangerous and the only flourishing economic activity was the slave trade.**

**In effect, the annexation of Golconda initiated the process of accelerated fiscal drain, resulting in adverse economic consequences.**

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**254** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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## 7. Golconda Statecraft & Economy

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This chapter describes the Qutb Shahi state, its governing structures, fiscal administration and various aspects of the economy. This state emerged after the implosion of Bahmanis kingdom during the early sixteenth century. The new state bore a distinct stamp of Persio-Islamic culture, statecraft and diplomacy. The rulers being Afaquis (outsiders, mostly of Persian origin), the ministerial ranks were held by the emigrants from Persia. Their influence continued unabated during the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth centuries. With the deepening of Mughal shadows from mid seventeenth century onwards, the Afaquis lost their salience, which reached a rock bottom in 1687 CE, with the annexation of Golconda by Mughals. Persian remained the official language throughout the period, be it Qutb Shahis or Mughals.

The administrative pyramid was headed by Peshawa who was assisted by twelve ministers to look after day to day administration. Kotwal, the commissioner of police was at the apex of law and order machinery while Qazi was dealing with civil cases. Personal law was applicable to Hindus and Muslims, as per their traditions. The provincial administration was under 'Hawaldar' who was responsible for collecting taxes. His office was publicly auctioned or 'farmed'. The tradition of presenting costly gifts by these Hawaldars to their superiors in the court was quite prevalent.

The chief port officer was called 'Shah Bandar'. His duty included to manage the growing port towns and also guarantee the safety of various merchants, including European companies who had established their trading posts. The fulcrum of military was heavy cavalry which was under king's control and was paid from the central treasury. It was manned by Persian and Turkish troopers and cannons were manned by Europeans. The

delay in payment of salaries to armed troops was a constant challenge. The taxation policy on the present-day Telangana lands during the entire period was the continuation of the fiscal architecture during Bahmanis time. All the lands in the realm belonged to the sovereign as per the Islamic law. Zamindar was in fact the 'holder of the land' and not the 'owner of the land'. The right to hold was of course granted by the sovereign alone. The land revenue tax collection followed the canonical principle of Al Kharaj. Half of the gross produce was the state's share; and the remaining half belonged to raaya. The tax collection was 'farmed' to the highest bidder, which was subsequently leased and subleased to the lowest strata, till the peasant paid the tax to the final sub farmer. Apart from Al kharaj, there were fifteen other 'duties' covering almost all the aspects of rural economy. Tax realisation was quite strict and oppressive, without any respite, especially during famine years which frequented the kingdom quite often.

In contrast to the rural landscape, the industrial and trade scenario was quite vibrant. Various industries like diamonds, iron, steel, saltpetre and ship building were active. The trade was also vibrant with a huge basket of diversified items like agri products and cotton textiles being exported. Simultaneously, several items like horses & bullion were imported. The overall economy being mostly agrarian was in decline, but the strange contradiction was that the pomp and the grandeur of sultan and his court was being propped up through the wealth pouring in treasury from various quarters. This exuberant ambience with opulence and gay abandon, gradually lost its vigour in the closing decades of the kingdom, till the curtain fell in 1687 CE.

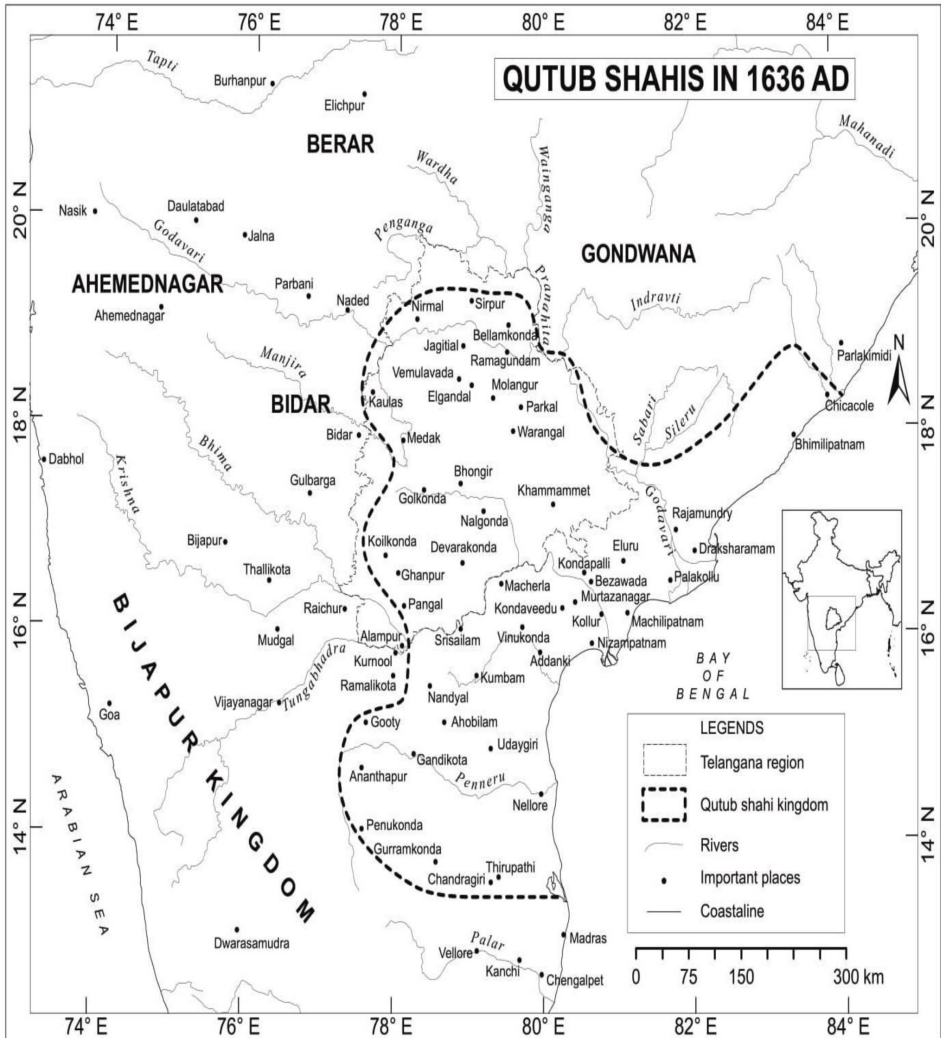
## 7.1 THE QUTB SHAHI STATE

The Qutb Shahi rule was established in Golconda after the implosion of the Bahmanis during early sixteenth century. Even prior to that, the Bahmanis rule was established south of Vindhya during the mid-fourteenth century. By then, the Islamic rule had already seen its flowering under Delhi Sultanate. Going beyond, the Umayyads from Damascus followed by Abbasids from Baghdad had also ruled during the previous centuries. Each one of these rulers were guided by the Quranic injunctions. It would,

therefore be appropriate to understand the principle of ‘Kingship’ as laid down in the The Holy Book, Quaran.

Based on the formidable theses regarding the Kingship, which had already evolved during several centuries, its follow-up by the Qutb Shahis was quite appropriate. Quran, the fountain head of Islamic law had enjoined that the Khalif was both the temporal and spiritual head of the State. The Sassanids in Persia crystallised

**Map : Qutb Shahi in 1636 CE**



Source: Shiva Shankar Nimmala, 2018, p17

**The Sassanids in Persia crystallised this concept and arranged the court as a temple where people had to approach the head of the state in all humanity and servility** this concept and arranged the Court in the form of a temple where people had to approach the head of the state in all humanity and servility. The Khalifas, on their part preferred to be called the Viceroys of God, “Niyabut-i-Khudawandi”. In due course, it was interpreted as “Sultan-zilla-Allah fil Arz’ or ‘The Shadow of Allah on earth’. Drawing inspiration from these established Islamic ideals of Monarchy, the Delhi sultans styled themselves as the shadow of God on earth and their heart as ‘Manzar-i-Rabbani’.



The system of governance and administration bequeathed by the Khalji’s and Tughlaqs remained essentially the same under the sultanates of Deccan.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, when one of the high officials of the Tughlaq Empire revolted against his master Mohammed Bin Tughlaq, the political, administrative and judicial institutions that were already available offered a broad base over which the fabric of the kingdom could be erected. In 1347, soon after his coronation, Alauddin Hasan Bahaman Shah and in 1612 CE, the founder of Qutb Shahi effortlessly slipped into this halo of ‘Shadow of Allah and His Prophet on earth’.

With this background, let us focus upon the Golconda Sultanate. About the Sultanate of Golconda, Richards said, Golconda created in the early years of the sixteenth century, was a conquest state ruled by a Turco-Persian Dynasty and dominated by a Muslim political and economic elite. The kingdom of the Qutb Shahis represented successful expansion of the frontiers of Islamic conquest into the eastern half of the peninsular India, the Deccan. The subject peoples, the indigenous inhabitants of the region, were almost entirely Telugu speaking Hindus.<sup>2</sup>

The prosperity of the Kakatiya rule was substantially due to a harmonious link between society and state, the village tank and the royal reservoir, the village temple and the Shaivite mathas, the village headman and Nayak. This was the peasant society in service to the crown. These characteristics suggests a strong capacity for resistance. As a result, invasions and conquest of the eastern

Deccan by the Muslims, who appeared early in the fourteenth century, were to be difficult, time consuming and expensive.

During the lengthy thirty-year reign (1550-1580) Sultan Ibrahim, unlike his father, played down the Persian and Islamic character of the monarchy. Although he remained a Muslim, Ibrahim succeeded in presenting himself as an indigenous king. He stressed his sympathy for Telugu culture and life in a number of public expressions. From a long seven years refuge in Vijayanagara, he had acquired facility in the Telugu as well as a Hindu wife. Throughout his reign, Ibrahim enforced a policy of official bilingualism, in both Persian and Telugu. He enjoyed and actively patronized Telugu poets and writers. He also kept aside tax free lands and villages for supporting temples. Jiziya, or the capitation fee on non-Muslims was not enforced. All these conciliatory policies were maintained without exception by his successors, until the end of the dynasty in 1,687 AD.<sup>3</sup>

In 1551, the very next year after his accession to the throne, he set his engineers to clear and renovate a large run down Kakatiya irrigation work at Pangal. In so doing, he touched the most deep-rooted sentiment of the Telugu society and its culture. In the bilingual inscription commemorating the work, Ibrahim retained one part of the incomes from those lands irrigated by the complex for the royal treasury, another portion for these cultivators and the remainder for the support of Muslim holymen and Brahmins.<sup>4</sup>

In 1565, Ibrahim joined with the four other Muslim sultans of the Deccan to mount a joint onslaught against Vijaynagar. At the battle of Talikota, the Islamic confederacy destroyed the Hindu kingdom. After this event, the Telugu Nayaks of Golconda were denied support or any possible refuge from outside the boundaries of Golconda. For next seventy years or so, the Golconda polity retained its inner equilibrium without any outside threat.<sup>5</sup>

The power of the king commanded the loyalties of the Muslim nobility, who served the state as its highest-ranking administrators. Members of this body attended court in person, while keeping their personally recruited and paid bodies of heavy cavalry in reserve as part of the central army at the capital.<sup>6</sup> They could be sent to act



as administrators of the various provinces in the kingdom. There, they were responsible for all military, revenue and police functions in a given area. Payment for their services was obtained through a military fief (Musqasa) which supposedly yielded a fixed sum in tax collections. Nobles holding Musqasas were free to sublease their holdings to tax farmers or private entrepreneurs for whatever price the market could bear. There was little regulation upon those nobles as long as they obeyed the orders of the king, ensured a steady flow of tax without arousing heated protests from the population under their jurisdiction. All nobles, be it district chiefs or military commanders were subject to promotion, demotion and transfer by the king or his Chief Minister. The nobles of Golconda were not semi-independent tributary chieftains.

### **The Central Administration**

As the Qutb Shahi kingdom progressed, the picture of administration during Abdullah's reign became clearer than the one during the time of Ibrahim Qutb Shah. The strange contradiction was that while the kingdom's standing was declining internationally, the position of sultan was being propped up through the wealth pouring into the treasury from various quarters. The reception of the sultan by the Persian ambassador in his mansion at Mir Jumla tank, his tour of some of the eastern provinces in 1630 CE followed by a more comprehensive and exclusive tour of the entire coast from Bezawada to Masulipatnam in 1632 CE reflects the opulence of the state along with the restive population of the region. Like his grandfather, Muhammad Quli Abdullah lived a gay life. Therefore, by 1634 CE, practically the whole administration was entrusted to the Peshawa, Muhammad Ibn Khatun.

Another institution, Majlis-i-Diwan Dari or Privy Council also flowered during his times. The Majlists or councillors were appointed from among those who made a mark in public service or belonged to the nobility or title holders of the kingdom. The king ordinarily presided over the Majlis, and the Majlists had precedence over the king's entourage and the royal bodyguards.<sup>7</sup>

The head of the administration was the Peshwa. Mohammad

Ibn Khatun, was the most renowned of all the Peshwas. He was appointed in 1629 CE, dismissed on suspicion of indiscretion in 1632 CE and reinstated in 1634 CE. Next to the Peshwa came the Jamal-at-ul-Mulk, or as he was generally called Mir Jumla. Mansur Khan was the first to hold this office but Mohammad Said, the brilliant soldier and administrator was the most renowned one who switched sides from Abdullah, by defecting to the Mughals and thereby tilting the power balance in favour of Aurangzeb.

The Peshwa, at the apex of administration was helped by twelve ministers in day-to-day administration. These ministers were held in high public esteem and titled as Dhi Shaukat which implies 'His Eminence'. The senior most amongst them was called Amin-ul-Mulk and the Jagirs of these ministers were situated at a distance from the capital. The Dabir or Secretary was next in order of precedence. There were two secretaries; the Dabir-ul-Muwalik or Chief Secretary and 'Dabir-i-Faramin, Hindawi, in charge of Hindawi firmans. The office of the Dabir was called Diwan-i-Insha. One of his main duties was to make note on the petitions and draft the firman and obtain the royal 'Chaap' or seal. Probably, he performed some financial work as well and we find the English factors calling him 'Lord Chief Justice'. The office of Majmualdar or Accountant General was at times joined on to that of the Hindawi dabir.

Coming to the capital, Kotwal or Commissioner of Police was the most important office. Apart from maintaining law and order in the vastly heterogeneous population of the growing city, he was also the master of the mint and 'supreme judge' of the city in certain matters. The Qazi dealt the civil cases accruing between Muslims. The personal law was applied in case of Hindus and Muslims regarding marriage, divorce and succession, etc. Sarkhel, meaning group leader was the chief revenue officer at the capital having a large provincial jurisdiction as well. As the Director of the revenue department, he had some authority over European trade on the east coast and he could tilt the balance in favour of Dutch or English factors according to the policy of the administration.<sup>8</sup>

**Kotwal or  
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## **Provincial Administration**

A carefree character of Abdullah Qutb Shah, coupled with increasing stronghold of Mughal Emperor diluted king's authority in his far-flung dominions. The prestige declined to such an extent that some of the royal firmans were simply ignored by provincial officials and robes of honours conferred by the king were sometimes returned.<sup>9</sup>

'Simt' was the unit of local government and 'Sarsimt' was the officer in-charge. Hawaldar was another officer whose duty was to collect local taxes. This office of 'Hawaldar' was publicly auctioned or 'farmed'. Although the auction was generally supervised by 'Sarsimt', but, in practice, he could do what he liked. The Hawaldar, though theoretically subordinate to the 'Sarsimt', was held in high esteem by the Dutch and English factors who used to call them 'Governors' in their records. Most of them were opulent Brahmins or Komatis. They lived in lordly style and decided petty cases in addition to the collection of revenue.<sup>10</sup> These governors gave lavish presents to their superiors at the court. The annual sum had to be paid in three instalments, and default was met with flogging.<sup>11</sup>

The chief of port officer was called Shah Bandar. He appeared to have exercised great authority at the port towns especially during early days of the reign, when these ports were getting populated. He was also the guarantor of the safety of the property of merchants. There are references that Shah Bandar and Hawildar of Masulipatnam prohibiting the Dutch for offering violence to the English.<sup>12</sup>

Qutb Shahi Kingdom had diplomatic relations with kingdoms and Empires beyond its borders. Embassies from Sultanates of Bijapur and Ahmednagar were stationed at the capital. As the foreign contacts evolved during the seventeenth century, two distinct categories of envoys may be perceived, namely the Hajib-i-Muquimi or the permanent ambassador and the Hajib-i-Maslihahi or envoy with a specific mission. The Dutch and English representatives at the capital were called agents or 'representatives'. They did not enjoy diplomatic immunity.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond all this, we find an envoy from Prince Aurangzeb, the Viceroy of Deccan. They were accorded the same honours as the imperial ambassadors. After the Deed of Submission signed by Abdullah in

1636 CE, this relationship became anything but equal. In 1667 CE, when Bernier was in Golconda, he found the Mughal ambassador issuing commands, granting passports and speaking and acting with the uncontrolled authority of the sovereign.<sup>14</sup>

### **Military Organizations**

The fulcrum of the state power lay in the heavy cavalry directly under the command of the king and paid from the central treasury. These Persian and Turkish troopers, riding large and armoured imported horses had long established a decisive tactical superiority over the lighter armed and local mounted warriors of the Deccan. The king of Golconda could muster at least 30,000 and perhaps as many as 80,000 horsemen for his standing army. An additional number of foreign cavalries served in the employ of the various members of the nobility. A large artillery park supplied a supporting arm for the heavy cavalry. Cannons were manned by European gunners on direct payment. This overwhelming military power at the 'direct disposal of the king ensured that serious rebellion or defiance of his authority was not likely to succeed.<sup>15</sup>

**The king of Golconda could muster at least 30000 and even perhaps 80000 horsemen for his standing army**



The delay in the payment of the salaries of garrison was a perpetual problem in the Qutb Shahi period. In fact, the problem was faced quite often all over Deccan Sultanates. Sohrab, the Qiladar mourns the delay for the six month's salaries. He had recruited more men for the garrison than the fixed quota and yet could not protect the country from the onslaught of Marathas. He remonstrated for such a state of affairs. In another instance, Barkhurdar Khan, yet another Qiladar regretted that only a part of pay bills of the salaries of the Mutasaddis, which were submitted for sanction were honoured and the balance of amount of salaries was received very late. He had also reported lack of ammunition and iron cannon balls. The Diwan-i-Buyniat or the Director of supply department recommended stone balls instead of the iron ones and Correspondence continued with no decision whether iron or stone

**Diwan-i-Buyniat or the Director of supply department recommended stone balls instead of the iron ones and Correspondence continued with no decision whether iron or stone**



continued without any balls materialising, iron or stone. The author of 'Hadiqatus' Salatin records that, as many as forty or fifty thousand military and civil officers followed the sultan to and fro from the east coast towns in 1639 CE. The army was based partly on feudal levies and partly on paid mercenaries. Tavernier informs us that, "most of the soldier's chief weapon was a broad sword and musket. Horsemen carried bows and arrows, a buckler, an axe, a helmet and a jacket of mail."<sup>16</sup> When there was a danger of foreign invasion, the border forts were issued quilted cloaks, coats of mail, helmets and armlets.<sup>17</sup>

Strict discipline was maintained and those who were found negligent in their duties were executed. The chiefs' forts of the kingdom were furnished with parks of artillery, which was mostly manned by Europeans and Turks, as well as catapults for throwing stone missiles. Kondapalli and Gandikota were import forts of the kingdom.

## **7.2 THE AGRARIAN SYSTEM IN GOLCONDA**

Under Islamic polity, all cultivated land has been legally classified, for the purposes of the assessment of land revenue. "The main classifications were; i) Ushri, ii) Kharaji and iii) Sulhi."<sup>18</sup> The Sulhi appellation is used in a technical sense for certain areas regarding which the Muslims, during their earlier conquests reached some kind of agreement with the vanquished. Such lands were outside the Indian subcontinent and therefore, we need not bother about its details.

The Ushri lands included,

- i) The lands of Jazirat-ul-Arab
- ii) All lands whose owners accepted Islam of their own accord and were left in possession of their estates
- iii) All lands conquered by force and distributed among Muslim soldiers
- iv) Habitations of Muslims converted into gardens, provided they are irrigated by tithe water
- v) Waste lands developed by Muslims with the Imam's permission, provided they are according to Abu-Yousuf, in an Ushri district and according to Mohammed-Ibn-Hasan, if they have been irrigated with the tithe water.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the Kharaji estate bought by a Muslim. Abu Hanifa thinks it remains Kharaji; whereas Malik thinks it becomes 'Ushri'. If a dhimmi buys 'Ushri' land, it becomes 'Kharaji'.

This classification also needs the definition of Ushri water. Rivers, lakes, springs and wells sunk in the first three categories of 'Ushri' lands; also any water which has not come under the jurisdiction of authority are Ushri. Kharaji water is that situated in Kharaji lands; also, that of wells, canals or reservoirs constructed by non-Muslim kings or at the expense of the public exchequer, and that of rivers controlled by human agency. The rate charged on Ushri lands is uniform, for produce irrigated by rain or flood water and for wild fruit, the growing of which does not require exceptional labour. It is one-tenth; where the crops have to be irrigated with buckets on wheels, thus requiring extra hard work, the rate is one tenth of the produce.<sup>19</sup> Muhammed Bin Qasim, who captured Sind in 712 CE, recognized the lands of all those who accepted Islam as 'Ushri'. Similarly, Qutb ud din Aibak in 1206 CE, commanded that all the lands possessed by Muslims should be treated as Ushri and required to pay only one tenth or one-twentieth of the produce as revenue. Later, during mid fourteenth century, Firoz Shah Tughlaq also mentioned about 'Ushri' lands.

### **The Kharaji Lands**

"The word 'Kharaji' in its Aramic form, precedes the birth of the Prophet. Kharaj was also used by Persians."<sup>20</sup> All lands conquered by force and not divided amongst the Muslim soldiers but left to non-Muslim owners or given to non-Muslims settlers from elsewhere are 'Kharaji' lands.<sup>21</sup> Besides, if a dhimmi buys 'Ushri' lands, it becomes 'Kharaji'. If the owners of kharaji lands turns Muslim, his land remains Kharaji. Land developed by Muslims with Kharaji water is also Kharaji. All the water carried in channels dug or controlled by the state is Kharaji; so is water contained in reservoirs built with public money. The general principle of taxation upon Kharaji lands had always been to take half the gross produce on land to the state and leave the other half to the raaya (cultivator).

According to the jurists, a Muslim state is enjoined to impose religious

tax upon its subjects. The religious taxes bear a clearcut distinction between the believers and the unbelievers. The believers are enjoined to pay 'Zakat', which is an act of piety. The zakat is payable on gold and silver, herds and merchandise, provided such belongings reach or exceed a certain limit, called 'Nisab'. The zakat, when assessed on value or weight is one fortieth (2.5%) of the property. The property of which zakat is assessed should have been in possession of the owner for at least one year. Zakat on imports was a fortieth (2.5%) of the value of the merchandise; on horses, it was 5%. These charges were doubled in the case of non-Muslim traders.

**The mirror image of Zakat was Jiziyah or poll tax**



The mirror image of 'zakat' was jiziyah or poll tax. It was levied from non-believers. Mohammed bin Qasim on his conquest of Sind recognised Hindus as zimmi and mutahids i.e, protected people, and he imposed Jiziyah upon them in accordance with rates universally recognized in the Islamic world. The Sultans of Delhi assessed this tax and Firuz Shah, after consulting the 'Ulema' levied the tax upon Hindu monks and priests as well. "The measure caused unrest in the capital but the sultan remained firm and ultimately, the rich Hindus of Delhi undertook to pay for those Brahmins. On subsequent occasions, the Sultan reduced the tax on the richer Brahmins, but did not abolish it altogether."<sup>22</sup>

### **Minerals and Treasure Troves**

"According to Hanafi school of jurisprudence, whose tenets had mostly found favour in India, the state was entitled to one fifth of all minerals, provided they were all solid and capable of being melted and bearing an imprint. The same principle applied to treasure trove, of which one fifth had to be paid to the state and the rest belonged to the finder; irrespective of his being a believer or a non-believer (zimmi)."<sup>23</sup> If the land did not belong to the finder, then the land owner was entitled to four fifths of the treasure and the rest went to the state. The state also claimed share in unstamped bullion or of money minted before the conquest of the area by the Muslims. The understanding was that the treasure would have formed a part of Ghanimah (spoils of war) if it had not been hidden.

The property of Muslim intestate and without heirs belonged entirely to the state. The property of 'zimmi' dying in similar circumstances was handed over to his community.

### The Presents

An important source of income consisted of the presents which were made by his subjects to the sultan. Any man, who came to pay his respects to the monarch, even after a short absence, presented a gift in accordance with his rank. "The faqih presents a Quran, or a book or something of that kind; a faquir a prayer carpet, a rosary, a miswak or some other object of a similar nature; the amir gives horses, camels or arms."<sup>24</sup> Some of the gifts made by grandees and great officials were magnificent; for example, vases of gold and silver encrusted with precious stones. Ibn Battutah tells us about the prime minister, offering Muhammed Bin Tughlaq gold and silver wares together with a porcelain vase filled with rubies, another with emerald and a third with magnificent pearls. When noble arrived, it was announced and presented to the sultan, the presents were then carried before the monarch and then displayed and the emperor graciously expressed his approval; sometimes, he honoured the donor by shaking hands with him or even embracing him. The custom of presenting gifts to the rulers dates back to Osman, the third rightly guided caliph who accepted gift from one of his governors. In India, right from the beginning, Qutb ud din Aibak was receiving gifts from muquddams and distinguished men.

**Important source of income consisted of the presents, made by his subjects to the Sultan**



### Budget

The budget consists an account of receipts and expenditure. The likely receipt of money from various sources was known; so were the main channels of expenditure. The main heads of expenditure were the royal household, the administration, the army, the pious and charitable organizations, social service, public works, some works for improvement of water bodies and the rewards, gifts and presents bestowed by the sultan. The money received from 'zakat' and 'ushr' was expended on charitable purposes. "Successful military campaigns paid for themselves through the concept



of ‘Ghanimah’<sup>25</sup> Other state expenditures centered around the household including harem, court and the garrison were mostly met out of ‘Al-kharaz’ – the ubiquitous land tax collected from ‘zimmis’ under coercion.

### **The Mode of payment**

Ibn Battutah’s description of how payments were made is quite illuminating. When a sultan ordered that a man be paid a sum of money, a document was made out, which was called a ‘Khatt-i-Khurd’. This was countersigned by the Hajib and three other nobles, in case Qutlugh Khan, the Kharijahdar and the dawatdar. The document was registered in the diwan-i-wizarat; then it was examined and sealed by diwan-i-nazar and the diwan-i-shraf. A parwanah (an official document akin to a government order, now a days) was then made out ordering the treasurer to pay the money. The order was registered; for the treasurer reported every day the payment orders which he had received. When the sultan confirmed these orders, the actual payment was made. Sometimes, this did not take place for six months. If the sultan wanted to make immediate payment, he gave special instructions. The treasury deducted ten percent from the face value of the order. This custom seems to have been derived from the Abbasids, where magnets made payments by drawing cheques on their bankers, who deducted ten percent as their commission. Elaborate registers were maintained for keeping records.

After defining the broad contours of Islamic taxation, as they had evolved over centuries, let us look at its specific details as obtaining during the Golconda Sultanate.

From the earliest years of Muslim rule in Golconda, there existed a perfect assessment (Jama-i-Kamil) which specified a normative land tax figure for each village, sub-district and district in the kingdom. The origin of this Jama-i-Kamil or perfect assessment, whether arrived at by political negotiations, royal fiat or systematic land surveys is obscure. The Muslim conquerors did impose their own pattern of territorial sub-divisions over the existing Hindu units. In the fifteenth century, the basic territorial unit prevalent in Telengana districts was the Sima, a group of villages clubbed together as Bhumi

or districts, for the purpose of revenue administration. The Qutb Shahi reorganization imposed a new and larger spatial division called *paragana* which incorporated several *simas* within their boundaries.<sup>26</sup> With this change, the *sima* figures were added up to arrive at *paragana* figures. As the medieval Hindu kingdoms had used measuring poles of a fixed length to conduct cadastral survey, the effort and expense of a fresh survey was eliminated.

The state demand at the time of the formulation of the perfect assessment (*Jama-i-Kamil*) seems to have been computed on the equivalent of one-half share of production.<sup>27</sup> Though, the demand was quite high compared to just one-sixth in previous reigns, the Qutb Shahi's tried to mitigate it to a certain extent. Internal revenue collection arrangement in the village was kept intact; land grant to temples was not touched and finally the apparent willingness of the state to forego revision of the demand left the tiller to expand the cultivation and productivity.

By the later part of the seventeenth century, with the addition of Carnatic territories, the *Jama-i-Kamil* for Golconda totalled Rs.2.87 crores. The official figure from the *Inayat Jung* collection is Rs. 2,91,88,125 or say 2.92 crores. Siddique's figure of Rs.2,47,50,000 or say 2.48 crores in late eighteenth century is much lower. It represented perhaps the *hasil* or collection figure, rather than *Kamil* or assessment figure.

**The official figure from the Inayat Jung collection is Rs 2,91,88,125 or say 2.92 crores**

The equation between the state and society in Qutb Shahi reign underwent a definite change. "The Muslim warriors and administrators of sixteenth century Golconda super imposed their own political and administrative practices, derived from the Bahmanis institutions of the western Deccan, over those of a conquered society. Large scale settlements and colonization by Muslims did not occur. Instead, the conquerors formed a political elite in a complex society of pre-existing institutions. Although, the relative numerical weakness of the Golconda elite forced upon it initial compromises and accommodations, the growth of state power in the seventeenth century ensured an equally steady growth in state pressure on the conquered society."<sup>28</sup>



A number of similarities exist between the concentrated power of the Qutb Shahis, rulers of Golconda, and that of the Timurids, rulers of the Mughal Empire. In each state, an effective central administration and strong central army was sustained by steady, increasing revenues. Military power depended on access to troops of heavy cavalry, largely Muslims of recent foreign origin. Continued expansion also helped to strengthen a common tendency toward the centralization of power.<sup>29</sup>

### **Land Rights**

The land rights in the kingdom of Golconda, amongst various holders had a certain hierarchy. It would be appropriate to have a look at various types of land holders such as Meinwar, Deshmukh and Deshpandya.

The term 'Meinwar'<sup>30</sup> is defined as an accountant, but he also held Zamindari rights in certain areas. Hereditary succession to Meinwari appears to have been a general practice. In 1686 CE, Abul Hassan issued a firman conferring the hereditary claims of Meinwari on Narain Rao and Nirmal Rao after the death of their father Hari Gopal Rao. Meinwar was supposed to maintain law and order in the area. In 1680-81, the Meinwar of paragana Amirabad was ordered to maintain law and order in his paragana. A cash salary was paid to Meinwar. In 1672, Abul Hassan issued a firman ordering payment of 400 huns annually to Gopal Chand Reddy, who was a recently appointed Meinwar.

Deshmukh <sup>31</sup> was another local official. The earliest reference to a Deshmukh is found in *Ain-i-Akbari*, where the term is defined as equal to Chaudhuri of North India. Subsequently, reports in British India defined him as a district collector, exercising administrative and fiscal control over his area. Sometimes the office of a Deshmukh was combined with that of a zamindar. Sometimes, a quiladar could also become a deshmukh. Rusumi-Deshmukhi is the fiscal right of a Deshmukh upon the land within his jurisdiction. The rusum varied from place to place, from 1% to 5% of the total revenue collected.

The Deshpandya was another revenue official who was regarded

as an equivalent to qanungo by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*. British official records defined him as an accountant who sometimes held land rights. In 1617, his *rusum* amounted to 2½% of the total revenue realised. That apart, he used to claim various other petty cesses, namely *Haqdari*, *Rahdari*, *Kalali*, *Mahtarifa* and *Mamul-i-Deshara*.

*Zamindar*, a frequently used term in seventeenth century in the Mughal documents of north India, literally means 'holder of land'. In the Qutb Shahi kingdom, the first instance of *zamindar* has been traced in a document of 1626. It appears that the *zamindar* in Golconda, as elsewhere could sell their rights. In times of need, the Qutb Shahi rulers provided military help to *zamindar*. In 1661, the Qutb Shah sent 10 *sawars* and 150 musketeers to *Surbhimula Nair*, the *zamindar* of *Jatprole*. The rulers often bestowed robe of honour on the *Zamindars* and it was as customary on the part of *zamindars* to pay homage to Qutb Shah by presenting gifts. In 1662, the *zamindar* of *Udgir Fort* presented a pair of bangles set with gems and a ring of ruby to the Qutb Shah.

### **Mechanism of Revenue Collection**

For some strange reasons, the Persian chronicles of Qutb Shahi Kingdom are largely silent on the mechanism of revenue collection. Therefore, we have to depend upon European records and traveller's accounts. The travellers considered the king of Golconda as the proprietor of land and his subjects as tenants. It implies that the total rental collected from the peasantry may be regarded as equivalent to land tax collected in the ruler's name. According to the theory that the King was the owner of all the land in his Kingdom, agricultural land was "farmed" or auctioned to the highest bidder, and there was a whole ladder of sub infeudations right up to the actual tiller. It should be remembered that the right to collect revenue was not hereditary, and that the only right which a "farmer" had over his sub-tenant was that of collection of rent from him. Land revenue paid both in cash as well as in kind, formed one of the major sources of the revenue of the State.<sup>32</sup>

Sources indicate that tax farming was prevalent in Golconda. The

**Sources indicate that tax farming was prevalent in Golconda**



leases were auctioned once a year in the month of July. The king used to farm out the land to some big officials. They in turn, farmed it out to others as sub-lease. The process of leasing and sub-leasing continued down the line till ultimately, the peasant paid his tax to the final sub-farmer. The farmers of revenue were expected to pay three quarterly instalments each in a year. The lease holder, who had to pay annually to the government, was free to extract as much possible from his territory. The revenue farmer is often described as 'Governor' by the European travellers. The government was quite strict about the realization of rent from the lease holders or the farmers. Those who failed to make full payment by the end of the year were awarded severe punishment. "They were often flogged to such an extent that they can never recover their health during their whole life."<sup>33</sup> The harsh attitude of the state towards these revenue farmers naturally resulted in their dealing equally harshly or even more with the peasantry, in order to maximize realisations. Methwald spoke of "other oppressions whatsoever they can possibly extract from the poorer inhabitants using what violence within their government they shall think fit."<sup>34</sup> Generally, the lease holders were the local people of the region. There was an official, called superior by a Dutch traveller, who was attached to a farmer to keep a check on his activities. He was supposed to inform the king about the activities of the farmer. The 'superiors' were usually Muslims.<sup>35</sup>

During the reign of Abdullah Qutb Shah (1626-1672 CE), there was an impulse for increased taxation, which the English factors thought, came from the obligation of the ruler to pay tribute to the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan. In 1667 CE, it was noted that "The weavers etc, must keep up the price of their cloth or else they cannot pay their rent and taxes. The increase in real taxation thus added to wage costs. Thus, it was reported in 1667 CE that a tax farmer had really to pay 40% more."<sup>36</sup> The kingdom of Golconda adopted the system of administrative features evolved by the Mughals. The two Mughal revenue terms i.e, Jama-i-Dami and Hasil are present. The figures in Dams represent the former while those in rupees, represent the hasil.

The jama figures for four sarkars (districts) were as follows:

| Sl. No | Sarkar    | Jama        |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| 1      | Medak     | 6,88,35,000 |
| 2      | Pangal    | 9,69,20,000 |
| 3      | Malankoor | 59,50,000   |
| 4      | Elcondal  | 4,52,15,000 |

*Source: Document of Samsthan, 1691*

In those four sarkars, the jama figures mentioned for paraganas total up and become equal to that of sarkar. But, if we analyze Zama and hasil figures separately, there was discrepancy. In many places, hasil exceeds Zama, especially in places having areas of production of important commercial commodities. For example, the neighbourhood of Rajahmundry was a centre of textile production. There was also availability of timber which was floated down the Godavari. Bhongiri manufactured chintz. Warangal was famous for woollen carpets and muslin. Devarakonda, Mustafanagar, Murtazanagar and Pangal had gold mines. Iron and steel manufacturers were located in Elagondal and Murtazanagar. In the neighbourhood of Medak, extensive cultivation was carried out with the help of tanks.

The higher amount of hasil compared to Zama, however could not be explained in Khammamet, Sikakul, Kallas and Melankoor which were not known for any important kind of manufacture.

All these figures mentioned till now relate to Qutb Shahi times as provided by Inayat Jung documents. There is no contemporary record for checking its accuracy. We, however have the records of Dastur-ul-Amal-i-Shahan Shahi compiled near the close of Aurangzeb's reign in 1707 CE. Inayat Jung's documents give both, Zaama and Hasil figures. It seems that Mughals did not consider Zaama figures of the Inayat Jung's documents as actual figures and had taken only hasil figures into consideration after their annexation of Golconda.

Overall, the hasil of the 16 sarkars in Inayat Jung's documents totalled up to Rs. 83,36,153.22. It was considerably higher than that of Dastur-ul-Amal-i-Shahan Shahi which totalled upto Rs. 69,18,795.73. It would, therefore, seem that when the Mughal

administration was extended to Golconda, it inherited two sets of taxation figures from the Qutb Shahi administration, Jama and Hasil. Both were estimates but not actuals of revenue collection. The former was already obsolete, and henceforth, the hasil figures alone were used. These were altered and, on the balance, substantially scaled down. The initial reference point, however was furnished by the records of Qutb Shahi times.

| <b>Name of the Sarkar</b> | <b>Total Amount of Hasil in IJC</b> | <b>Total amount of Hasil in DAS</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Muhammadnagar             | 7,72,608.74                         | 1,49,521.42                         |
| Bhongir                   | 4,99,164.82                         | 4,25,671.08                         |
| Nizamattan                | 2,46,000.00                         | 2,46,000.00                         |
| Masulipatan               | 3,80,369.03                         | 4,14,565.54                         |
| Deverkonda                | 10,39,051.15                        | 7,01,752.31                         |
| Rajahamundry              | 1,50,382.50                         | 1,35,405.00                         |
| Malankoor                 | 1,74,231.07                         | 1,74,164.05                         |
| Ellore                    | 3,93,012.13                         | 2,86,033.00                         |
| Murtuzanagar              | 7,91,037.07                         | 10,61,698.13                        |
| Khammam                   | 2,27,959.08                         | 1,09,088.09                         |
| Warangal                  | 11,97,091.22                        | 3,42,818.08                         |
| Kollas                    | 4,24,516.02                         | 2,32,213.42                         |
| Pangal                    | 2,30,333.00                         | 3,24,894.08                         |
| Elcondal                  | 4,72,561.44                         | 6,47,879.84                         |
| Medak                     | 7, 05, 542.64                       | 9,68,929.16                         |
| Mustufanagar              | 6, 32, 293.31                       | 6,98,162.53                         |

*Source: EFI, 1665-67, p330; Thomas Bowery, p105; Streyntsham Master, p115*

The mechanisms for taxation and revenue collection in the expanding economy of Golconda bore certain common characteristics. Firstly, the revenue collection was relatively decentralized and efficient; to start with. The state investment in building and operating an expensive administrative structure was kept to a minimum level. The king imposed full personal responsibility for revenue collection on a single official or private individual (i.e the tax farmer) who was to make predetermined payments on a regular basis. Secondly, all collections were rigorous.

Tax farmers who failed to make their required payments quickly met harsh punishment. Thirdly, the system, often as a result of competitive bidding for tax concessions or monopolies tended towards maximum, often rapacious demands.

During sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Qutb Shahis of Golconda and Adil Shahis of Bijapur showed up on the map of Deccan simultaneously. It would be appropriate to know about the agrarian conditions in the neighbouring Bijapur during those times. Practically, all the Muslims derived their livelihood from the state. They were usually town dwellers, while agriculture, the main occupation of the people, was almost entirely in the hands of Hindus.<sup>37</sup>

The agrarian system was undoubtedly oppressive to the cultivator, the wages of labouring classes were very low and their standard of life, in general was much lower than that of the peasant and labourer of today.<sup>38</sup> During sixteenth century, Linchoten observed that the condition of the cultivating classes was deplorable.<sup>39</sup>

**The agrarian system was undoubtedly oppressive to all cultivators**



The severe famine of 1630-31 told heavily on the economy and spread desolation everywhere. Even as the kingdom was trying to recover from the bleak calamity, the Mughals once again turned their attention towards Bijapur to be followed a little later by the forays of Shivaji. Thus, for most of the two hundred years that he was under Adil Shahi rule, the peasant lived in perpetual fear of marauding armies of a hostile Sultanate or the Mughals or the Marathas or sometimes even of rival nobles belonging to the kingdom itself. Moreover, recurring wars had affected both agriculture and trade and the economic resources of the kingdom towards the close of the Adil Shahi regime had been considerably depleted. However careful the Adil Shahi Sultans were for the welfare of the peasants, they never attempted to reform the agrarian system. The rapacious revenue farmer and constant fear of war stifled the enterprise of the peasant.<sup>40</sup>



### 7.3 TRADE INCLUDING SLAVE TRADE

The Golconda Kingdom during the seventeenth century witnessed dramatic turns in its fortunes. In 1636 CE, it was made a tributary of the Mughal Empire. In 1642 CE, the neighbouring Vijayanagar kingdom erupted into a civil war and in less than decade, it

**The Qutb shahis of Golconda were the main beneficiaries of Vijayanagar disintegration**



was reduced to a glorious chapter in the pages of history. The Qutb shahis of Golconda were the main beneficiaries of Vijayanagar disintegration. The heartland including northern and eastern territories were annexed by Golconda rulers. However, the gains did not last for long. In 1656 CE, the Golconda kingdom's tribute was increased and eventually, it was annexed by the Mughal imperium in 1687 CE.

Now, the Mughals confronted the Marathas. Gingee was the stronghold of Marathas. Mughals laid siege but took almost eight years to reduce it. By 1698 CE, the Mughals emerged victorious, but just at that point, the disintegration of Mughal Empire at the epicentre began. With the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 CE, the collapse accelerated and the sub-continental mainland was destabilized along fluid boundaries of the emerging new autonomous kingdoms. The Coromandel Coast, especially the port towns became the safe sanctuaries for the trading activities. This coastal ribbon abutting the Bay of Bengal was going to become the new frontier for establishing supremacy by various contending European companies. The beginning of the eighteenth century shifted the focus from land warfare to sea warfare. Correspondingly, the power also shifted from Qutb shahi and Mughal rulers to the new European kids on the block. As we would see, it also shifted the bulk of trade activities away from Narsapur, Masulipatnam, Palakollu, Motupalem and Nizamapatnam, to either Bengal or Madras ports.

#### **European Companies**

The beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed establishment of trading posts by several European countries like Dutch, Portuguese, English and French on the Coromandel coast. Driven solely by the profit motive, each one of them invested copiously to obtain firmans from the rulers of Golconda. Once in business,

they were equally keen to protect, and if possible enhance their trading activities to maximize the profits. Internal conflicts between those companies were inherent in the scheme of their motives. Eventually, due to collapse of the Golconda kingdom in 1687, these companies either wound-up their business or shifted to greener pastures beyond the erstwhile territories of Golconda kingdom by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The story of each one of those companies and their activities during the period would be quite appropriate.

“In 1605 CE, The Dutch were first to establish their factory in Masulipatnam, after obtaining the royal firman from the Qutb Shahi rulers. During next three years, they extended their factories at Pulicat and Nizampatnam. The royal firman at Masulipatnam had a price, to bribe the local havildar at Shah Bandar by lending him 3000 pagodas without interest.”<sup>41</sup>

“In 1626 CE, the English East India Company also pitched its trading tent firmly at Masulipatnam. Dutch were prohibited by the Qutb Shahis to trade in Masulipatnam. Some ships of Dutch on arrival at this port were sent-off to Pulicat and a regular siege of Masulipatnam began. Some important citizens of the town were able to persuade the Dutch agent Yeststrantz to return. He obliged owing to the importance of cloth supply from Masulipatnam.”<sup>42</sup>

“Dutch and Portuguese, from the very beginning during the first decade in seventeenth century were not on good terms. The Portuguese raided the Dutch factory at Pulicat in 1612 CE. The Dutch factor Wanner completed the fort at Pulicat to safeguard it from Portuguese threats.”<sup>43</sup> In 1622 CE, the Dutch also captured two Portuguese ships at Pulicat. With the decline of Portuguese power, the Pulicat was left entirely under the Dutch control.

**Dutch and Portuguese, from the very beginning during the first decade in 17th century were not on good terms**

But, the vacuum of a competitor was not going to remain for long. Dutch now had English as their rivals.

In the beginning, in 1617 CE, they mutually agreed to share their trade and combine their forces. In 1621 CE, there was yet another



agreement, wherein English were allowed to trade at Pulicat using Dutch facilities on payment of rent. The English factors would also inform the Dutch what particular variety of cloth they desired to buy. Lastly, the servants of both the companies were prohibited from the private trade in cloth.

The agreement was bound to fail, sooner than later. In 1622, the Dutch factor wrote to his directors, it is impossible to deal with the English. They would do as much damage to the Dutch interests as possible. Profiting for one's own company while damaging the rivals' interests was not an unknown practice amongst various European countries vying for influence and profit on the same strip of Coromandel Coast. Palakollu was yet another place where Dutch established their factory. During the second half of the seventeenth century, they established their factory at Narsapur from where they procured iron. In 1676 CE, the Dutch had nine places and factories upon this coast in the king of Golconda's dominion. The relationship between the Dutch and local custom officials used to blow hot and cold, depending upon the payment or otherwise of tribute to the official machinery.

The English East Indian Company had their factories in Masulipatnam, Nizampatnam and Narsapur. From the very beginning, the English factors were conducting their trade on private basis. Their own colleagues resented it and sent complaints to the company. The methods applied by the company officials were rough and ready. In 1615 CE, to realize debt from a Qutb Shahi Governor, they planned to seize his son when he was in the custom house and carry him till all debts were aboard. In 1633, in order to control over the trade of a particular area, the Masulipatnam junks were seized to secure their objectives. They later established a factory at Modapallam, near Narsapur, to procure cloth supplies. The English continued to work with Indian merchants who acted as middlemen. From 1676 CE onwards, the merchants of Masulipatnam agreed to work for them on 8% commission or thereabouts. Merchants of Modapollam were made to fall in line and they reduced their usual prices by 8% on

finer cloth. After 1680's the business started drying up. Hamilton visited the English factories in 1690's both at Masulipatnam and Nizampatnam. These were then in decay. The main commerce had apparently shifted to Madras.

Compared to the Dutch and English, the French were somehow late comers on the Coromandel Coast. After the French Company was formed in 1664 CE by Colbert, they were keen to open their factory sooner. In 1669 CE, a French representative, Mons Mercars went to Golconda and obtained a firman on the same terms as had already been granted to the English and the Dutch. In 1671, they obtained the permission to establish a trading post at Masulipatnam. French was mainly interested in cloth, especially chintz, gingili oil, saffron and long peppers. To conduct their business, French was taking loan at Masulipatnam at 2% interest per month in 1671 CE. The local merchants in general welcomed the French business practices. Sensing a threat, "The Dutch had completely won over the chief minister (Madanna) and ensured the opposition to any negotiations attempted by French at the court." From 1680, onwards, the Dutch lost their grip. In 1686 CE, Masters found Dutch factory in Nizampatnam in bad condition. Hamilton confirmed it in 1692. During sixteen nineties, only a few Dutch factors remained in Masulipatnam, while they retained Pulicat, till the beginning of the eighteenth century.

French was keen to obtain another firman to trade free throughout the kingdom. Governor of Masulipatnam promised to help but demanded 1000 pagodas for procuring this firman. French protested and decided to shift their focus to Son Thome (Madras). The local authorities requested the French to return but it was refused. Relations deteriorated and in 1673 CE, De La Hay, a French Commandar led an expedition against Masulipatnam to destroy the shipping of the port and bring pressure upon Qutb Shahi rulers to conclude peace with French. But the plan did not fructify. Son Thome was another point of dispute between the French and the local authorities. Business in cloth and rice induced the French to establish there. "In 1671 CE, an embassy was sent with presents worth Rs.150000 to the court of Golconda to secure cessation of Son Thome. Failing peaceable means, the French seized it in 1672 CE.

This was resented by the Dutch.”<sup>44</sup> French were keen but could not meet the demands of Golconda officials. During the crucial period, the Dutch reached an agreement with Golconda authorities to recover Son Thome. On 22nd August, 1672, the Dutch sailed twelve vessels and eight katches to Son Thome. After a long blockade and siege, the French surrendered on 5th September, 1674.

After the French left Son Thome, they were not too keen to re-establish themselves at Masulipatnam. They nevertheless resorted to piracy and constantly harassed Masulipatnam trade. By 1681 CE, the situation worsened to an extent that the governor was compelled to write to the court at Golconda to terminate the hostilities with the French. For otherwise, it would bring total ruin to the commerce at Masulipatnam, as none of the merchants dared to send ships out to the seas any longer.

In 1686 CE, The Qutb Shahis granted a firman to the French, according to which, “The privilege of opening trade in any part of the kingdom, was granted to them. But the French again declined this offer as the Kingdom was in a bad state and it appeared highly unlikely that the present rule would continue for long.”

### **Items of Export**

Apart from a diversified basket of agricultural products, cotton goods and diamonds, the Golconda also exported indigo, iron, steel, saltpetre and gunpowder. Several agricultural products such as rice, wheat, sugar and tobacco etc., were exported. Indalwai, on the north western borders was the centre of manufacture of swords, daggers and lances, which were made from iron minted at Kalaghat hills. On a minor scale, slave trade including women slaves was also in existence during the seventeenth century.

Let us focus on the export of agricultural products. Rice, sugar, wheat, cloves, pepper, tobacco and cotton yarn were exported. Rice, being widely cultivated was often exported to Java, Batavia and Malacca. Due to scarcity there, export took place in 1618, 1624 and 1625. “In 1630’s, the Dutch started making distilled liquor (Arrak) from rice and therefore, the demand for rice increased.”<sup>45</sup> “Cotton yarn made in Golconda was in demand in Amsterdam, southeast

Asia and Persia.”<sup>46</sup> Tobacco export was introduced in 1630’s from the region of Nagapatnam. It was exported to Arakan, Mokha, Pegu and Tanasirm. Due to its modest quality, it ceased to be a significant item of export in subsequent years. The other minor items of export included sugar and wheat. Sugar was exported to Persia.

Indigo had widespread use as a dye. It was produced in Nagulvancha, Sandrappla, Gave, Ecouz, Golubundy and Bhimlipatnam. Nagulvancha was considered to produce the best indigo within the region. Besides, Masulipatnam, indigo was also exported from Nizampatnam and Pulicat. Dutch were the sole dealers in indigo and they exported it in 1614-1615 and 1616. The indigo export varied due to political conditions in Golconda and market competition elsewhere. But by 1636, the Masulipatnam trade had recovered due to increased supply.

Chayroot, the red dye was produced in areas around Pulicat, Nizampatnam and Masulipatnam. The earliest reference to the export of chayroot occurs in 1583-91. The demand continued till the second decade of the seventeenth century. In 1656, the English made considerable investment in exporting it. Dutch, on the other hand preferred to dye cloth and export the textiles rather than export chayroot itself. It remained an export item till 1679 by English at Masulipatnam.

### **Cotton and textiles**

The factory record of the seventeenth century is replete with a bewildering variety of names for the different types of cloth manufactured at the time. These varieties may be classified as piece goods and readymade clothing. The piece goods were plain cotton cloth which included calico, a stout cloth and muslin, a thin transparent cloth of fine varieties. Both could be dyed red or blue. Coloured yarns were obtained either by dying, wood block printing or brush painting. The printed variety was known as chintz and painted cloth as pintadoes. Striped cloth was also in vogue.

**The factory record of 17th century is replete with the mind boggling varieties of cloth produced at that time**



Among the various centres of cloth production, Masulipatnam occupied the prime place with an international mart and a big port.

It produced plain and coloured calicoes, chintz and cloth of quilts. The Dutch used to exchange cloth with spices from Arakan, Pegu, Siam, Malacca, Batavia, Bantam, Java, Jambi and Amboina. The Golconda cloth was also exported to Persia, Holland, England and France by the respective companies. The Dutch records give as an interesting information about the varieties. They were long cloth, fine and coarse salampuri (a white cloth with red border). Its usual dimensions were 4 x 1 yard. Belmila or betille is a Dakhanis term for muslin. Its length varied from 15 to 25 yards and the breadth was usually 1 yard. They were sometimes dyed red and were sometimes striped or flowered with embroidery. As neck-clothes, it was much in demand in Europe. Muri was one of the categories of staple cotton-cloth, usually of superior quality and much in demand in Europe as a substitute for linen cloth. It was also used for chintz making. Its usual dimensions were about 9 yards by 1 yard 8 inches. Gingham was woven with double threaded warps and wefts, thus having a distinctive texture. They were sent to the Malay Archipelago and after 1640 CE, to Europe. The dimensions were approximately 20 x 1 yard. Tapi or skirt was a general term for coloured piece-goods used as skirts by both men and women in many parts of South East Asia. A well-known variety known as tapi-sarassa or sarassa Malaya, was patterned with birds and foliage. Parcalla was a closely woven cotton cloth. It was a sort of fine white cambric. Its dimensions were 8 x 1 yard. Taffechela was a cheap striped cloth of mixed silk and cotton, patterned in the loom, much in demand by the slave traders. Dungaree was a strong coarse calico of very low grade and was often used for packing other goods. Drongan was a cheap dyed cotton cloth, usually black and red, either striped or checkered. Rumals were large sized handkerchiefs made up of fine threads.<sup>47</sup>

There were other towns as well, involved in this production for export. Narsapur had an English factory where weavers and painters were settled. They manufactured long cloth apart from coarse and painted cloth. In Palakollu, there was a Dutch factory. They established indigo factories, iron works and weaving industries. A large number of weavers and painters were settled

here under Dutch protecting as being easier living under them than under the yoke of Moors.<sup>48</sup> The Dutch also had a factory at Bhimlipatnam, with four European employees to purchase most of the cloth for their factory at Batavia. Viravasaram was a great centre for cloth production, accommodating a large community of weavers. At Madapollam, the English had a factory which was famous for producing fine white piece goods. Sikakul was famous for a special kind of muslin with woven flowers.

South of Masulipatnam also, there were several production centres. Nizampatnam, Vetapalem, Montopoli, Bapatla, Karedu and Nagulwancha were producing all kinds of calico and several other textile products. Nizampatnam had importance only next to Masulipatnam. Both, Dutch and English had their factories there. It produced both woven and painted items such as long cloth, muris, salempores and lungi, etc. The specialty of this place was for high class chintz, both printed and painted with patterns. In Karedu, there was production of salempores, dimities, gingham and diapers. At Hyderabad also, there was a Dutch factory who were manufacturing a large variety of calicoes and chintz. All these items were exported to foreign countries.

Between the European companies and the class of weavers, washers and painters, a set of middlemen were employed. These middlemen or merchants belonged to the 'Komati' community, called by the English factory records as 'Committees'. A group of five or six men were carrying out the whole trade between the weavers and a company. Their profit margin was 20% to 25%, the balance going to the European companies.<sup>49</sup>

On their own, the weavers and painters did not get suitable returns for their labour. They had to pay the levy imposed upon them by the king and bear the oppression and harassment of local officials and tax collectors. It was because of these reasons that the weavers and painters preferred to move to the European settlement where they could enjoy peace and regular employment and hope for some improvement in the terms of the contract as there was a keen competition between the Dutch and the English to monopolize their services. At times, the Dutch provided the weavers with the



special material necessary for their work, like gold yarn required for the manufacture of goulongs, and thus fostered a new type of development within the putting out system, providing scope for qualitative improvement beyond the reach of manufactures, without support from merchant capitalists.<sup>50</sup>

From 1665, Golconda cloth began to be quite in demand in England. The chintz of Masulipatnam was especially popular among the English aristocracy. In 1682 CE, a large order was placed for export. Masulipatnam factors were asked to supply 45,000 percelloes of finest variety, made into chintz 8 yard long, full yard broad. But order could not be executed due to political instability in the region. As a result, Madras came to be used more and more by the English to meet the new demand, and there was a migration of painters from Masulipatnam to Madras.

### **Slaves including women slaves**

The Dutch realized that a far greater margin of profit lies in slave trade than in any other items of export. In spite of the fact that coromandel textiles were in great demand, the interest of the company would be served better by the procurement of the slaves, who were likely to afford a much higher profit. In fact, the Dutch as colonizers needed slave labour to settle certain areas under their domination in South-East Asia.

Masulipatnam, Pulicat and Tagnapatam were the slave procurement centres. Kidnapping from highways was a known method but

**During the time of famine and starvation, the export of slaves naturally increased, as parents sold their children to save themselves from starvation**

sometimes, the Dutch claimed that, “we took from their owners for notorious crimes to make them free from severe punishment. As a result, at Pulicat, many of the people of the town had withdrawn themselves with their wives and children into remote places to avoid a supposed danger.”<sup>51</sup> During the time of famine and starvation, the export of slaves naturally increased, as parents sold their children to save themselves from starvation.

The available data about slave export from Coromandel Coast may be tabulated as follows:



| Year | Place   | Destination | No. of Export | References          |
|------|---------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1619 | Pulicut | Jakarta     | 19            | DFI, p 121          |
| 1619 | Pulicut | Bantam      | 19            | DFI, p 121          |
| 1621 | Pulicut | Arakan      | 124           | Ray Chaudhuri Tapan |

*Source: Singh Seema, Overseas Trade of Golconda during the 17th Century, AMU Publications, pp 20-21*

The sudden spike in slave trade in 1622, 1646 and 1649 from Coromandel was due to severe famine in Deccan lands. The prices of slave also varied. It ranged from Rs.10 to 11 on lower side and to Rs.48 to 49 on the higher side. Slaves in the age group of 16-20 years were in great demand. Since they were most suitable for hard labour. Women slaves were also exported. After 1668, the English factors were not able to meet demand of slaves for Bantam and reported that we can make no supply from this place.

### Items of Imports

The imports were equally diversified. It included spices, such as mace, cloves, nutmeg, pepper, metal other than iron like tin, copper and alum. Several luxurious items like sandalwood, eaglewood, coral, tortoise shells, camphor, porcelain and silk were brought for sale on the coast and the balance was adjusted in gold and silver.<sup>52</sup> Imports came from Europe and Central Asia as well. Lead from England, broad cloth from France, horses from Uzbekistan, Arabia, Persia and Ethiopia, dried fruits from Bokhara and Persia, cowries and ambergris from the Maldives, Porcelain from China, and pearls from Tuticoran and Bahrain, cloves and cinnamon from Ceylon were the principal imports. Ships laden with articles like quicksilver, vermilion, gold and silver ingots and iron cannons as well as articles meant for presents came principally from the west. Saltpetre was the chief item of import for the manufacture of gunpowder.<sup>53</sup>

### Spices

During the seventeenth century, the Dutch and the English imported considerable quantities of cloves, pepper, mace and nutmeg into Golconda.

Cloves were imported for consumption within Golconda as well as re-exported to northern India through Burhanpur and Agra. In 1626 CE, Agra consumed 300 maunds of cloves at 11 pagodas per maund. The English factors also re-exported cloves to Persia for better profits. Dutch imported cloves in 1617, 1618 and 1619 at Masulipatnam and the demand continued during the next three years as well. There was a decline in demand during thirties due to wars and famine. Yet again, there is import in 1640 and 1650. The relative fluctuation in prices was due to competition between Dutch and English, apart from natural calamities.

“Pepper was the next in importance and was in considerable demand.”<sup>54</sup> It was mainly procured from Achin, Queda, Amboina and Maccasar. The Dutch faced much competition from Indians in pepper trade. There was pepper import in 1677, 1683 and 1684, 1685 and 1686 in Coromandel, but not beyond. It was due to the annexation of Qutb shahi kingdom by Aurangzeb in 1687. In 1621, the king of Achin allowed pepper to be sold at comparatively cheaper rates for the Masulipatnam merchants. That was due to the long standing trade relationship which Masulipatnam traders enjoyed with those areas.

Mace and Nutmeg were also in demand and were imported from Batavia, Bantum and Amsterdam.<sup>55</sup> Starting from 1618 CE and well into twenties, there was annual import of nutmegs and mace. Prices were normal in sixteen twenties, but went down in 1644 CE. In 1650 CE, there was a general decline in the supply of spices, as the prices fell due to a bumper crop at Amboina.

Horses were a standard and uniform item of import in all the sub-continental kingdoms, including Golconda. The agile and strong animal was the mainstay of any warfare and was in demand all the times due to frequent war fares. An anonymous Dutch factor, informs us in 1614 CE that, “All the horses of Golconda country are of small size, but they are better for travelling than large horses, because large horses may not be ridden but they are imported. Horses from Arabia and Persia are very highly esteemed and were mainly brought by sea”. The ruler of Golconda himself was an important buyer of horses. Shah of Persia being on friendly terms with the Qutb shah used to send horses as presents to the latter. Tavernier tells us that in one

voyage on his vessel, there were fifty five horses, sent by the king of Persia as a present to the king of Golconda. Horses were also gifted by foreign traders to win favours. In 1659, the Masulipatnam factor was asked for presentation to Qutb shah ruler in order to obtain a confirmation of company's privileges. There was also some import of horses overland from Afghanistan. In 1661, Darwesh Muhammed, an Afghan horse dealer came to Golconda with his horses.

The other items of import included copper, porcelain, coral, tortoise shells and elephants. Japan was supplying to Dutch as copper was needed in artillery. "The copper trade was not uniform. In 1620's, copper was sold in coromandel; in 1650's, the rulers restricted its sale for minting coins; in 1668, the ruler of Japan banned export of copper, but relaxed it in 1669. By this time, the king of Golconda also relaxed his orders. 1684 appears to be the last year when copper from Japan procured by Dutch factors was sold to a Golconda merchant for coinage."<sup>56</sup> Porcelain from China was purchased by Persian merchants at Masulipatnam and exported to Golconda by both, Dutch and English factors. Lead was also in considerable demand and was traded by both the companies at Masulipatnam. Vermillion was imported from China. In 1630's, the English imported 1500 lbs of vermilion each year. Chinese silk was also imported for aristocracy. Imported corals also had a niche market, just like tortoise shells.

Elephants were other items of import which came from Siam and Arakan. They were given as presents to the ruler. A reported sale in 1662 CE indicates that price varied from 1250 pagodas to 913 pagodas. A female elephant at that time was sold at 890 pagodas.

Gold and silver were other major items of imports. Both were required by the sovereigns and commoners alike. South-East Asia was a major source of gold as the frequent references to Bantan, Batavia, Sumatra, Malacca, Patam, Java, Pegu and Siam in Dutch and English records clearly show. That apart, gold also came from Japan, Formosa and Holland. In 1617 CE, Dutch imported gold at Masulipatnam. It was repeated in 1622 CE at Masulipatnam and in 1626 at Pulicat. The wide spread famine in 1630's affected the gold supply. In the 1660's, the conditions improved but the supply from Formosa dwindled due to the deterioration in the quality of alloy.

“During 1660’s, the demand picked up, because the Qutb shah had to pay tribute to the Mughal emperor in gold instead of silver and Japan also permitted the unlimited export of the metal.”<sup>57</sup>

Silver constituted the bulk of imports to the Coromandel Coast during the seventeenth century. Amsterdam, Bantam, Batavia, Sumatra, Macha, Siam, Patani, Pegu, Batavia and Japan were the main places of import, where from silver was brought to Golconda. The silver market was subjected to sharp fluctuations and was inexorably linked to the gold market. In 1617, value of silver declined in relation to the gold and Dutch stopped importing silver. In 1619, some imports were made. Later on, in 1620’s the prices fell to such an extent that traders refused to accept it. During 1630’s, the English imported silver because silver-gold ratio in India was better than in Europe. During the 1640’s, the situation improved when silver yielded some profit. During 1650’s, the demand of Mughals was in silver and hence silver minting started yet again. But, then the Mughals demanded tribute in gold and demand for silver fell yet again. During subsequent decades, the same seesaw battle continued between gold and silver demand as well as prices. 1678 is the last year when we hear about silver import, and not thereafter.

## 7.4 INDUSTRIES

A broad spectrum of industries including ship building, diamonds, iron, steel and saltpetre among others were flourishing in Golconda kingdom.

From an organizational and technological point of view, ship building was quite an advanced industry. This was possible due to proximity of iron ore, forests of teak wood and red sanders and other materials needed for ship building. According to Seherer of English East India Company, ships manufactured at Golconda Kingdom were so strong that they could sail from the Coromandel Coast to far distant places like Achin, Priaman, Queda, Perak, Ceylon and Maldives.

Indian Ships along with Dutch, Portuguese and English ships used to sail to and fro from different ports of Golconda during the seventeenth century. Indians not only owned ships; they built large vessels on their own. Mir Jumla, a minister at Golconda sent his goods on their ships.

He hired English sailors for navigating his junks. Persian ships were absent from trading on the Coromandel Coast.

The major site of ship building was at Narsapur situated some sixty six miles away from the famous port at Masulipatnam. It had advantage of a river which was 'very large, wide and convenient. Yet another advantage was its access to timber. The teak growing in the forests along the course of Godavari was floated down the river. Methwald, thought that timber used for building ships at Narsapur to be of high quality. The other material used for ship building was iron for 'bolts and anchors.' They were also available at reasonable rates. The iron was brought in the form of ore, wherein ship building was done at Madapallam Palakollu, where English and Dutch supervised the process. Coir of coconut fiber was available in abundance, which was used, 'for cordage for the ships.' The availability of workmen at low wages was yet another positive factor.

**The major site of ship building was at Narsapur situated some 66 miles away from the famous port at Masulipatnam**



In 1669, the English factors at Bengal preferred to build their small vessels at Narsapur, instead of Hugli due to easier rates for materials and workmen. The European merchants admired the skilled work done at Narsapur. Though ships were better trimmed and far superior to those which came out of England. The Portuguese, Dutch and English used to build and repair their ships at Narsapur. The English tried to improve their ships by bringing 'very ingenious master builders to built ships for their own employees. Dutch factors, for the convenience of their superiors sent some skilled master craftsmen from Batavia to Narsapur. "The labour employed for construction of each ship was quite numerous."<sup>58</sup> In 1614 CE, there were 25 carpenters and caulkers for workmen besides 24 lashkars and 60 coolies, which daily did about the ship. In 1638, an Indian Mir Mohammed Saiyyid was building a ship of about 600 tons at Narsapur. There was also considerable repair work carried out at Narsapur, including protection against leakages, deck fitting and trimming. Spikes, bolts and anchors were skilfully made by Indian smiths. "A detailed account of the techniques of drawing ships on to the shore for repairs is available".

In 1666, some ship repair work was done at Masulipatnam. Thereafter, no accounts are available about the ship industry, either for construction or repair works either at Narsapur or Masulipatnam.

## **Diamonds**

During 16th & 17th centuries, Diamond mining and polishing put Golconda on the map of the world markets for large diamonds. "Dutch and English invested a considerable amount in diamond export from time to time. The English investments are recorded in 1622, 1623 and 1624. The Dutch investments are recorded in 1629, 1635, 1639, 1640, 1642 and in 1652."<sup>59</sup> The stones found in the mining areas along Krishna river valley were polished, cut and sold either at the mines or in the diamond quarter of Hyderabad. By the 1670's, at least twenty-three mines in Golconda were in active production operation. In most, ill paid workers, employed by individual entrepreneurs washed and sifted the dirt extracted from alluvial surface pits in search of possible stones. As many as several hundred thousand contractors, labourers, money lenders, merchants and officials might be engaged at Golconda mines at any given time.<sup>60</sup> Royal control and regulation of this vast enterprise afforded a large and increasing income to the royal treasury as well as possession of the choicest and largest stones found.

**The glitter  
of diamonds  
brought  
prosperity, it  
also attracted  
Mughal envy**



It spurred the long distance trade, especially with Persia and the Arabian markets. Two hundred miles to the east, Masulipatnam, possessing an excellent anchorage, came to rival the great Mughal port of Surat in Gujarat in the size and value of its international trade. The glitter of diamonds brought prosperity; it also attracted Mughal envy.

## **Iron and steel**

The kingdom was also producing iron and steel which was in great demand along with armaments used mostly by the army like swords, guns, daggers, spears, pans and blades, etc were manufactured. Besides the military weapons, several domestic tools like knives, sickles, ploughs and spades were also produced. Nearly 20 men were employed at one furnace, In some iron foundries, profits and wages were expressed in

kind i.e. in iron bars, which were sold in the market by the workers themselves. In other cases, the labour received payment in cash.

Indalvai near Nirmal was famous for iron mine. Iron was also procured from Bhimlipatnam, Nagulwancha, Ramaypatnam and Narsapur before being exported from Masulipatnam and Nizampatnam in the form of pig-iron, iron bands, iron bars and cannon balls. In 1629 CE, about 96,000 pounds of iron and 20,000 pieces of steel were sent to Jakarta from Masulipatnam. Local merchants used to send large amounts of steel every year to Achin.

Coromandel iron was thick and heavy and therefore “Dutch tried to teach Indian iron smiths a quicker method of manufacturing nails and cannon balls.”<sup>61</sup> In 1672, a Swedish expert from Batavia was even sent to teach the skill to Indian blacksmiths. The local authorities disallowed this innovation due to a fear that it might deprive many blacksmiths their livelihood. The biggest centre of demand was Batavia and Persia also provided another market for Coromandel iron. In 1623, Dutch exported iron to Batavia. In 1634, Persia emerged as yet another market for steel. In 1660’s, the export increased due to shortage of supplies from Europe. “By 1672, the coromandel iron was yielding 80% to 100% gross profit to Dutch in South East Asian markets.”<sup>62</sup> Streynsham master records in 1679 CE that in their factory at Narsapur had ‘as many forges as 300 smiths may work in them.’<sup>63</sup> Afterwards, we do not hear any export of iron or steel from Golconda.

### **Saltpetre**

Saltpetre was in much demand and was produced in many areas of coromandel especially at Nizampatnam, Pulicat, Madras and Ramaypatnam.

The European demand for this crucial raw material was ignited due to ‘The Thirty Years War’ (1616-1648) in that continent. It was the prime material to make gunpowder. It was also exported to meet the demand of the Amboise gun powder mills of the Dutch. The Dutch and English companies were also exporting it to South East Asian countries, Persia, Holland and Amsterdam. Sometimes, its demand was diverted to local warfare among various Naiks. In 1623 CE, “It had not been possible to send saltpetre because of the wars among the



Naiks. The available evidence shows the export of saltpetre during 1620's and 1630's by the Dutch". "After 1638, we do not find any evidence about the export of saltpetre from the Golconda region, presumably because the focus of buyers had shifted to Bengal."<sup>64</sup>

## **Customs**

An important source of revenue was the duties levied on export on commodities, which naturally affected the chief overseas carriers of goods, the Dutch and the English. Of these two, the Dutch were the more favoured at Hyderabad, partly because of their hostility towards the Portuguese who were disliked owing to their rapaciousness as well as to their proselytizing tendencies. In 1606, Paulas Van Saldth secured a Firman from Qutb Shah, according to which the Dutch had to pay 4% on both imports and exports throughout the kingdom. In addition, the Dutch were exempted from the tax on cloth. In 1611, a conflict arose when the local authorities demanded 5% on both imports and exports. The Dutch traders threatened Mir Sadaruddin, the local official that they would leave the port in protest. The officials relented and agreed for 4% duty as before. In 1615-16, the Dutch adopted a new method for payment of customs. Wenmer Van Berchen made an agreement with the king of Golconda to pay a lumpsum of 3000 pagodas yearly for both imports and exports.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the governor expected valuable presents from the Dutch. The changeover to a lumpsum was resented by the local authorities as it removed their tax collectors altogether. The tug-of-war between Dutch and local Havildar continued for several years.

The custom duty paid at different ports of Golconda varied with the influence exercised by the various parties concerned. There are references to different trading companies and native traders paying different amounts of customs at Masulipatnam, according to the wishes of 'havildaar' or other port officials. About the Indian merchants, we are informed that native merchants bringing goods into Masulipatnam were obliged to pay full of 7%. Indians had to pay a duty of 5.3% on different goods. Again, when the merchant carried goods from the port, he had to pay a duty according to ex-land. Indians also paid duty on cloth, the Chap-dalali (Royal Stamp), as it was popularly known, in addition to custom, which amounted

to around 11% to 12% advaloram. Later, in about 1613, the Dutch representative at Hyderabad was able to compound all import and export duties by the payment of a lump sum of 3,000 pagodas.<sup>66</sup>

A little later, in 1616, English was able to secure a Firman according to which they had to pay 4% on imports and exports. The agreement continued till 1630. English factors became aware of the advantage of yearly payment like Dutch and they recommended to their superiors at Surat to learn by the Dutch a better and more profitable way by way of treaties with this king to agree for the annual custom of our trade.<sup>67</sup> At last the English received a Firman from Qutb Shah on 26th February 1634, according to which they were required to pay a fixed sum of 8,000 pagodas per annum in lieu of all customs. This grant was confirmed in 1639 by another Firman. In Madras the English factors were allowed half the amount raised by the customs at the port of Madras, while so far as “the village of Madras” was concerned they were allowed to deal with their goods duty free. As the English factors were bent on their complete economic autonomy, Neknam Khan was able to affect a virtual boycott of the English trade, as a consequence of which the Madras trade dwindled almost to nothing.

On 27th November 1636, the Dutch obtained a royal firman which was brought to Masulipatnam in great pomp and ceremony. The firman was addressed by Abdullah Qutb Shah to the captain of the Dutch at Masulipatnam and directed that in case the Dutch had any complaint to make, it should be brought before the Shah Bandar or Sarsanat for disposal. In case they experience any kind of violence, they should submit a petition to the king in person. Another royal firman was received by Van Dannen, Viceroy of the Dutch, at the request of his ambassador, Jan Van Twist “In which the king hoped that the Dutch would drive the Portuguese from India and capture Goa, after which they would receive half of the tribute and also a place where they wish to establish themselves.”

The Dutch, in the midst of pomp and ceremony were careful to give ‘a decent present to the governor to satisfy his immense avarice’. This was a kind of peshkash or Nazarana which took the form of cash as well as kind. A term for some of the articles presented, as coined by the Europeans, especially English merchants was ‘toys’. It included an assorted lot as large

sized mirrors, cut-glasses, drinking vessels and tumblers, brass cannon, pedigree dogs and mastiffs. Presents were also showered upon the kings and his entourage for obtaining any favour. Thus, the English company made a present of 6,000 pagodas for obtaining a golden firman, while the presents from the Dutch Company for obtaining their wide privileges came to the same amount, besides elephants, horses and copper candelabra. Such presents were given to the territorial lords as well. In one instance, a Nayak demanded and received costly velvet, damash and taffeta as well as cannon for the purpose of admitting the English into the port of Armagaon. Besides presents, the method of presentation was equally important. A letter of 6th February 1661 stated that the presents meant for the king must be made by the principal agent of the Company. Other sources of income were tobacco and salt on which octroi was levied. Lastly, there was what may be called abkari tax on the tari or fermented juice of the date-palm which abounds in the Tilang-Andhra region.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, as the seventeenth century progressed, new sources of export driven revenue became more and more significant. Under the stimulus of British, Dutch and French trading companies' capital investment, export from Golconda of textiles, indigo, food stuffs, saltpetre and iron increased steadily in volume and value. European payments for these goods came primarily through imports of gold and silver. These precious metals found their way in ever increasing amounts to the mints and treasuries of the Qutb Shahis. The value to the regime's ready access to a steadily increasing stock of precious metals cannot be over emphasized. During the last decades of the century, the trade dwindled and industries declined. By 1700 CE, it almost ceased to exist.

## **7.5 INCESSANT WARS & FAMINES ENFEEBLE GOLCONDA**

Golconda and Ahmadnagar were neighbouring kingdoms in the Deccan during the Mughal emperor Akbar's reign. The Mughal army had subjugated Ahmadnagar by the end of sixteenth century. The new power configuration posited Golconda in the immediate neighbourhood of the Mughal imperium.

The period from 1600 CE to 1701 CE witnessed a famine galore rather too frequently across the Indian subcontinent. The natural tragedy had its fair share across Golconda lands as well. Both the rulers, namely Mughals in Delhi and Qutb Shahis in Golconda were facing the stress simultaneously. The imperial urge of the Mughals to expand their dominion in the Deccan was resisted by the Golconda rulers for as long as they could. The periodic warfare dissipated resources on both the sides. A look at both these factors impinging upon Mughals and Golconda rulers would be appropriate.

**The period 1600-1701 CE witnessed a famine galore rather too frequently across the Indian subcontinent**



### **The Post Akbar Economic decline**

The reforms undertaken by Akbar would indeed go a long way towards integrating most of the subcontinent into a strong centralized political structure. But it was an integration from above which ignored the plight of the producer and sought increased productivity through increased exploitation. The Mughal state was an insatiable leviathan, writes Tapan Ray Chaudhuri in the Cambridge Economic History of India, 'its impact on the economy was defined above all, by its unlimited appetite for resources.'<sup>69</sup>

Towards the end of the Akbar's reign, mansabdars and their followers consumed 82% of the total annual budget of the empire for their pay and allowances.<sup>70</sup> The emperor, in addition, personally commanded a further seven thousand crack sowars plus eighty thousand infantry and gunners who consumed another 9% of the budget. In addition, according to Abul-Fazal, the locally based zamindars could muster a colossal 4.5 million retainers, mostly infantrymen. This multitude didn't feature in the imperial budget and were paid poorly, if at all by their zamindars. Aggregating all those troops along with the likely horde of non-combatant dependents – suppliers, servants, family members – it has been suggested that the figure for those who relied on the military for a living could have been high as seventy-six million. It was a humongous size, almost, a quarter of the entire population. The Mughal empire whether bearing the character of a 'patrimonial bureaucracy' as per the administrative hierarchy, or of 'a centralized autocracy' as per the ranking system, was essentially a coercive military machine.<sup>71</sup>

Much of the coercive potential was deployed to expand the empire, especially the obdurate Deccan sultanates. But excluding those units on active service or in attendance at the royal court, many sowar contingents were stationed in different parts of the empire to maintain order and enforce the collection of revenue. In effect, many regular troops, as well as all those zamindari retainers, were being used to extract the agricultural surplus which financed their salary and perquisites. It was, as Roy chaudhuri puts it a vicious circle of coercion, helping to maintain a machinery of coercion.<sup>72</sup>

Akbar's long reign (1556 CE – 1605 CE) as it drew to a close was overshadowed by rivalry and rebellion. In 1600 CE, prince Salim, the future Jahangir attempted to seize Agra during Akbar's absence in the

**The dissipation  
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Deccan. In 1602 CE, he actually proclaimed himself as the emperor. Abul Fazl, a senior commander as well as Akbar's memorialist was sent to deal with the prince.

The elderly commander was coolly murdered on the prince's orders. Later, Salim, the prince reconciled with Akbar, but a section of the nobility preferred prince Khusrau, his (Salim's) eldest son. When Salim was duly

installed as the emperor Jahangir, Khusrau fled north, laid siege to Lahore and had to be subdued in battle. Captured, he was eventually blinded on his father's instructions. The dissipation of the imperial resources caused due to internal power struggle had commenced.

The death of Jahangir in 1627 CE was yet again eclipsed by the deadly manoeuvres during succession wars. Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) was on collision course against his father, Jahangir for four long years and they reconciled just eighteen months before emperor's death. It was followed by more bloodletting as Shah Jahan made good his claim to the throne by ordering the death of his only remaining brother, plus sundry cousins.

The long-drawn Mughal dalliance with Kandahar, the commercially and strategically important capital of southern Afghanistan needs some elucidation. This was the ancestral homeland of Mughals and therefore demanded the attention of each of its sovereign. Humayun, had ceded it to Persia but Akbar had won it back. In 1622 CE, the Persia's great Shah Abbas advanced in the city. Jahangir

commanded Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) to rush his troops to its defence. The latter's suspicion of his being sidelined for the succession led him to defy the imperial dictate. The Kandahar fell to the Shah Abbas. Later Shah Jahan ascended the Mughal throne as emperor. He too launched several expeditions to reclaim the city. All proved dismal with increasingly embarrassing failures. Shah Jahan later made two forays into northern Afghanistan. Neither of their targets, Balkh and Badakshan was secured and the dream of reinstating a Timurid in Samarkhand receded still further.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Golconda enfeebled**

On 23rd May, 1636, the Inqiyad-nama (Instrument of submission) acceded to by Abdulla Qutb Shah bound the Golconda kingdom into a Mughal sphere of influence. The terms exacted by Shah Jahan were harsh. A tribute (*bajguzari*), valued at 2,00,000 gold huns or 8,00,000 silver rupees were to be sent to Agra. Golconda foreign policy would be directed by the Mughal Emperor; Sultan of Golconda would hereafter strike Mughal gold mohars and silver rupees, according to dyes supplied from the imperial mints. Furthermore, Abdullah agreed to have the names of the four 'rightly guided' caliphs read in the Friday prayers according to the Sunni practice and to eliminate the names of the twelve Shia Imams. At the same time, the Khutba would mention the Mughal Emperor as the lawful ruler of the Golconda state instead of the Safawid monarchs, who until the date had been treated as the symbolic suzerain of Golconda. Should any lapse of these conditions occur, the Mughal Emperor would be fully justified in annexing the kingdom.<sup>74</sup>

From the Mughal point of view, Abdullah Qutb Shah, addressed as a disciple of Shah Jahan was hereafter on the same legal footing as a zamindar; for he had lost all the attributes of a medieval Islamic sovereignty. From then onwards, a resident or Mughal ambassador (*hajib*) whose function was to enforce the emperor's orders took-up residence in Hyderabad. Over the next half a century, the Mughal (*hajib*) was a prominent figure in Golconda's politics.

In 1656 CE, Abdullah Qutb Shah declared open war on his over powerful minister, Mir Jumla, the conqueror of the southern Carnatic. The latter fled to Aurangzeb and accepted an appointment as a high

ranking mansabdar.<sup>75</sup> In the emerging power struggle, for the Mughal throne at Delhi, Abdullah Qutb Shah had his ally in Prince Dara Shikoh, who was more than pleased to assist him in thwarting the ambitions of Aurangzeb, an emerging and determined contender to the throne. The latter used the imprisonment of Mir Jumla's son by Abdullah Qutb Shah as a pretext to invade Golconda. A large force of Mughal cavalry under the command of Aurangzeb's son, Prince Muhammad Sultan, moved quickly into the kingdom with instructions to seize Abdullah at his capital and kill him outright, even before Shah Jehan could interfere. Abdullah saved his life by fleeing with his household and court to Golconda fort lock, stock and barrel. Invaders poured in and occupied the capital unhindered. The delightful Mughal soldiery thoroughly looted the abandoned palaces and residences of Hyderabad, one of the wealthiest cities in India.<sup>76</sup>

With the arrival of Aurangzeb, Mughal army began to seize Golconda fort, while intense diplomatic activities continued on all sides. The Golconda envoy at the Mughal court persuaded Dara Shikoh and Shah Jahan that Aurangzeb had misrepresented the facts. Once convinced, Shah Jahan issued a pre-emptory order to Aurangzeb for withdrawal. Aurangzeb did so only after exacting a price; marriage of Abdullah's daughter to Prince Mohammed Sultan and two million rupees indemnity. The tributary relationship remained intact and continued, even after Aurangzeb becoming emperor in 1658. He had to wait for full thirty years before changed political conditions caused the Mughal suzerain to annex Golconda in 1687.

### **Tightening of Revenue system**

After 1674, under the watch of Akkanna and Madanna, the tightening of revenue system made it even more oppressive than before. In 1681, the French governor of Pondicherry, Francois Martin travelled north to Hyderabad. As soon as he crossed the Gundlakamma river, he began to notice ruined villages and towns. At Mangalgiri, a large town on the banks of Krishna, the large population of weavers and painters of clothes had disappeared because of the bad governance of the Brahmins. Nandigon, also on the banks of Krishna, was still bustling and prosperous only because

of the productivity of the diamond mines nearby, since many diamond merchants who come to trade lived in the town. Closer to Hyderabad, at Antegair (between Nandigama and Nalgonda), Martin found the largely Muslim inhabitants in extreme misery. So poor was the populace that his servants could not buy even such a minor luxury as betel in the shops.<sup>77</sup>

### After the conquest of Golconda

In September 1687, the Golconda capitulated. A few days after the surrender, Aurangzeb, the victor moved his camp from the seize lines into the city of Hyderabad. From the Imperial audience tent pitched beside the Charminar, the precise centre of the city came a series of Firmans, which during the next four months, directed the establishment of a new administration in the defeated kingdom.<sup>78</sup> Firmans were sent to all incumbent administrators and military officers throughout the kingdom. These documents confirmed the recipients in their positions, assured their safety and ordered that they formally acknowledge the emperor's authority. Simultaneously, troops of Mughal horsemen arrived at various strategic points to emphasize the reality of imperial power. Everywhere, there was a pause, a lull and a silent compliance with Aurangzeb's dictates. The populace waited to assess the impact of this great political event.

The ex-monarch, Abul Hasan was made captive and his family was kept under watch in Aurangzeb's camp. All his wealth and possessions became spoils of war. While Mughal nobles and army officers acquired the lower ranking women in the defeated king's harem, court officials and accountants busied themselves with his treasuries in the fort.<sup>79</sup> Coined money alone totalled nearly seven million gold huns and twenty million silver rupees, totalling 4.8 crore rupees. Besides, there were large quantities of precious stones, jeweled objects, gold and silver plates and miscellaneous other valuables. Mughal officials spent several weeks inventorying, packing and shipping this treasure by camel trails towards north

**From the imperial tent pitched beside Charminar, the precise centre of the city came a series of Firmans, which during the next 4 months, directed the establishment of a new administration in the defeated kingdom**





in the imperial vaults in Agra and Delhi. Even depleted, as it must have been, by a year of warfare and seize when normal revenues were cut-off, the size and variety of Abul Hasan's treasure testified to the truth behind his reputation for immense wealth.

Formal distribution of the rewards followed shortly after the fall of the fort. The blood princes and thirty one Amirs, who had commanded the besieging army were given robes of honours, jewelled tokens and lavish promotions. Amongst the audience, was a person entitled Mahabat Khan, formerly known as Mir Muhammed Ibrahim who until January 1686 had been the Commander-in-chief of Golconda army. His dissertation then had caused Golconda's defeat and facilitated the assassination of his former associates, Akkanna and Madanna. On this occasion, Mahabat Khan received a robe of honour and promotion from 1000/1000 to the rank of 7000/7000.<sup>80</sup> In the same audience, Aurangzeb named Mahabat Khan as the first Mughal governor of the conquered kingdom. Widely reported, these appointments signalled to other Golconda officers, still holding out without surrendering, that honourable accommodation with the Mughals under a Sunni Emperor was possible. The new governor replaced the fort commanders with his trust worthy loyalists. Similarly, he appointed trust worthy and experienced Amils and Havaldars to collect the arrears of taxes accumulated during the past year of warfare, as well as the revenue assessed for the present year. The other arrangements like tax free grants and inams continued undisturbed. Within two months in December 1687, Aurangzeb transferred Mahabat Khan from Hyderabad to the Governorship of Lahore in Punjab. Ruhullah Khan, the Chief Bakhshi of the empire, who enjoyed the emperor's confidence, became temporary governor of the new province.<sup>81</sup> The predominant Muslim bureaucracy and nobility, from passive formal acceptance of the new authority soon became its active partners. Most of the middle and lower level bureaucrats in the capital like office managers, accountants, clerks, all without any great political power seized the opportunity to trade their local knowledge for

positions in the new Kingdom. Members of the Muslim Ulema, whose subsistence depended upon the royal patronage, also accepted the new regime.<sup>82</sup>

The experience of the Hindu officials of Golconda, mostly Brahmins was however completely different from that of their Muslim colleagues. After assassination of Akkanna and Madanna, a mob attacked all Brahmin officials and killed most of those who worked in the central administration. Survivors of the massacre, who managed to retain their offices soon lost them, when the Mughals took over.<sup>83</sup>

**After assassination of Akkanna & Madanna, a mob attacked all Brahmin officials and killed most of those who worked in the central administration**



On 25th January 1688, the great assemblage of the imperial camp and the grand army moved slowly out of the conqueror city and marched west towards Bijapur.<sup>84</sup> Simultaneously, a 40,000 strong army under prince Azam moved in the direction of Maharashtra to attack Sambhaji, the Maratha king. The leading Mughal general, Feroze Jung led a body of 25,000 horsemen towards Adoni, principality on the western border of Hyderabad Carnatic where Siddi Masud, the former Vazir of Bijapur had taken refuge. After crossing Golconda's western border, Aurangzeb sent Abul Hasan under guard to the Daulatabad fort, outside Aurangabad in the western Deccan.<sup>85</sup>

Apart from the war ravages, it would be appropriate to have a look at the general condition of land and people in Golconda territories. Francois Martin, the French head merchant at Pondicherry recorded in March 1688, "In places, where there had been thirty or forty thousand souls, there is not one to be found. The countryside is strewn with bones; the houses and streets filled with bodies, the few people remaining half dead, the others like skeleton."<sup>86</sup>

Under conditions like these, all economic activity stopped. Trade remained frozen, for roads were uniformly dangerous. At the capital, the greatest market in the province, no business was transacted at all. Everybody was hiding their diamonds and money. Diamond production had ceased and the area around the mines deserted.

**During the first year of imperial rule, Golconda had suffered invasion, defeat, seize, disorder, famine, plague and depopulation**



The only flourishing economic activity was the slave trade. The Dutch and other European companies bought and shipped large number of people trying to save themselves from starvation.

During the first year of imperial rule, Golconda had suffered invasion, defeat, seize, disorder, famine, plague and depopulation. It was far removed from the general impression of Golconda as a rich, fertile and productive kingdom.<sup>87</sup>

### **Wars and Famine galore (1605 –1700 CE)**

The seventeenth century saw its fair share of fighting. But, the sub-continental people experienced several exceptionally serious droughts and famine. The period between 1610 CE and 1690 CE saw relatively low world temperatures. One outcome of this cooler period appears to have been a rise in both the frequency and severity of the El-Nino southern oscillation (ENSO), a climate phenomenon which can have a very disruptive effects on the sub-continental rainfall.<sup>88</sup> The repeated monsoon failures were bound to impact harvest, men and cattle. In this backdrop, the ever present taxation system based on Al-Kharaj, where half of the gross produce of all peasants was mopped-up by force, using coerces if needed was the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. Crops dried up, animals shrivelled and the population got desiccated.

For the century as a whole, there were said to be several food scarcities and famines in : 1613-1615, 1630-1632, 1636-1637, 1640, 1642, 1644, 1646, 1647, 1648, 1650, 1651, 1658-1660, 1662-1663, 1670, 1682, 1685, 1691, 1694-1695 and 1696-1697.<sup>89</sup> The list is incomplete as it relates to only those areas under Mughal control. In addition, Geoffrey Parker notes that the monsoon failures of 1613-1615, 1630-1632, 1658-1661 and 1685-1687 appears to have been especially disastrous.<sup>90</sup>

The most awful catastrophe seems to have been that of 1630-32, when the chronicle of the Shah Jahan's official historian states, as follows:

“Throughout the Deccan and Gujarat, a perfect drought prevailed. Consequently, those regions suffered severely from the dearth of grain and the want of the common necessities of life. The cravings

of famine compelled parents to devour their off-springs, and high and low were clamouring for their bread and dying from sheer exhaustion...“The mortality was so dreadful that in all cities, towns and villages of those kingdoms, the streets and market places were so thronged by the immense number of corpses that a traveller could scarcely make his way through them.”<sup>91</sup>

As the famines took their toll, it was followed by rains which brought epidemics. The out-break of mosquito borne diseases, such as dengue fever and malaria devastated the remaining population. Parker, a European observer remarked of the situation in 1632 CE that not a family evaded fevers and pestilential diseases.<sup>92</sup> There is little doubt that huge number of people perished. The overall sub-continental population probably did increase to a limited degree over the course of 17th century.<sup>93</sup>

## 7.6 THE ECONOMIC TRENDS FROM 1500 TO 1700 CE

The 16th and 17th centuries witnessed the Mughal rule covering almost the entire Indian subcontinent. The corresponding period also witnessed Qutb Shahi rule in Golconda till their subjugation by Aurangzeb in 1687. Political fortunes of the Golconda kingdom notwithstanding, what we know for sure is that its economy was fully integrated with the Indian sub continental economy. The movement of goods, services and people was quite free across the borders. Economically speaking, it can be reasonably stated that the Golconda economy was a subset of the superset called Indian economy.

Beyond political rulers, what is more striking is the similarity of the overall policy framework of the two dominions. The statecraft, governance, fiscal policies, trade and industries and agrarian scenario in Golconda kingdom was almost a replica of Mughals ruling from Delhi. Therefore, it can be reasonably deduced that Golconda economy was a representative subset of the sub-continental economy.

**Golconda economy was a representative subset of the sub-continental economy**



It must be stated that while various economic trends at sub continental level are available from several sources, a similar exercise has not been attempted for Golconda economy. It would be appropriate

**304** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

to have a look at these trends for the Indian subcontinent before looking at its applicability to the Golconda economy. The Mughal system of governance resembled an abnormal pyramid. Angus Maddison has given the structure as follows:

| Percentage of Labour Force | The Economic Sector  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>18</b>                  | <b>NON-VILLAGE ECONOMY</b>   |
| <b>1</b>                   | Mughal Emperor and Court<br>Mansabdars<br>Jagirdars<br>Native princes<br>Appointed zamindars<br>Hereditary zamindars   |
| <b>17</b>                  | Merchants and bankers<br>Traditional professions<br>Petty traders & entrepreneurs<br>Soldiers & petty bureaucracy<br>Urban artisans & Construction workers<br>Servants<br>Sweepers<br>Scavengers |
| <b>72</b>                  | <b>VILLAGE ECONOMY</b>   |
|                            | Dominant castes<br>Cultivators and rural artisans<br>Landless labourers<br>Servants<br>Sweepers<br>Scavengers  |
| <b>10</b>                  | <b>TRIBAL ECONOMY</b>  |

*Source: Angus Maddison, 2006, p112*

At the apex was the Emperor and his court consisting of ministers, Omrahs and Mansabdars. The offices of trust and dignity were held by foreigners; Persians, Arabs and Turks. The Mansabdars had to maintain a fixed quota of horses. They derived their income from Jagirs or land revenue assignments or in cash from the treasury. Notwithstanding their pomp and show, Bernier states that most of them were in embarrassed circumstances and always deep in debt. A large establishment consisting of wives, harem, servants, elephants, camels and horses, besides the

tradition of paying costly presents to the Emperor (Nazarana) at certain annual festivals were the contributing factors.

The entire splendour of the court, the glitter of the harem and the might of cavalry and infantry in garrison needed an enormous expenditure. Land Revenue (Kharaj) was the chief source of receipts which increased sharply to almost three times from Akbar to Aurangzeb. Dr. Edward Thomas work about Revenue Resources etc., of the Mughal Empire had given the following table:

| Period  | Reign            | Rupees       |
|---|------------------|--------------|
| A.D. 1594                                       | Akbar            | 14,19,09,576 |
| A.D. 1648                                       | Shah Jehan       | 22,00,00,000 |
| A.D. 1654                                       | Shah Jehan       | 26 74,39,702 |
| Some year between 1656-1667                     | Bernier's return | 22,59,35,500 |
| Date uncertain but held to be between 1667-1691 | Official returns | 35,64,14,398 |
| A.D. 1697                                       | Aurangzeb        | 38,62,46,802 |
| A.D. 1707                                       | Aurangzeb        | 30,17,96,859 |

From this, it is evident that the peak revenues of Aurangzeb amounted to nearly three times while compared to those of Akbar. It was, by and large proportional to the number of subas under Mughal control.

The mode of realizing this 'Kharaj' would be instructive to understand the peasants' lot. Niccolao Manucci's description is apt. At the beginning of their year, which is in June, the officials come from the court to the villages and compel the peasants to take up the land at a certain rate. This bargain made, they must give notice at harvest-time to the king's officers, for without their permission, the peasants may not harvest the grain. As soon as notice is received the officials proceed to the spot, and before allowing the crop to be cut, they ask the cultivators whether they are willing to give a half or a third more than they have contracted for at the beginning of the year. Should the cultivators agree to this, writings are drawn up and security taken; but after having made the bargain, they usually find that what they gather in does not suffice to meet the king's rent. "It thus happens; more often than not they find themselves ruined by this revenue payment."<sup>94</sup>

It is for this reason that many of them, when the royal officials try to increase the demand, reply that they can pay no more than they agreed to before signing the papers. "But this way, too, they find themselves equally ruined, for the officials then remain present during the harvest, and inspect the cutting of all the crops, the cultivator also being present."<sup>95</sup>

When all is ready, they first place on one side the cultivator's share; next they compel him, then and there, to buy the king's share. When in the country-side, one measure is selling for six sols, they force the peasants to give them nine. In this way, whatever be the method employed, the poor cultivator finds himself ruined. "Nothing is left to him to maintain his family, seeing that they are obliged to enter every year into new engagements in order to get a subsistence for their family and obtain fresh supplies."<sup>96</sup>

Omrahs, though chosen by the Emperor, did not enjoy and security of their property. In spite of devoting themselves entirely to gathering their treasures, Pelsaert observed, immediately on the death of a lord who has enjoyed the king's Jagir, be he great or small, without any exception - even before the breath is out of his body - the king's officers are ready on the spot, and make an inventory of the entire estate, recording everything down to the value of a single paisa, even to the dresses and jewels of the ladies, provided they have not concealed them. "The king takes back the whole estate absolutely for himself, except in a case where the deceased has done good service in his lifetime, when the women and children are given enough to live on, but no more."<sup>97</sup>

With this kind of rack renting taxation extracted by an oppressive machinery, the peasant's lot defies description. The observations of European travellers can give us some idea. "Peter Mundy tells us that, the peasants near Agra were treated 'as Turks treat Christians', taking from them all they can get by their labour, leaving them nothing but their bad, mud-walled, ill-thatched houses and a few cattle to till the ground, besides other miseries."<sup>98</sup>

Pelsaert, who was in Agra during the rule of Jahangir observed, the land would give a plentiful, or even an extraordinary, yield if the peasants were not so cruelly and pitilessly oppressed; for villages which, owing to some small shortage of produce, are unable to pay the

full amount of the revenue-farm, are made prize, so to speak, by their masters or governors, and wives and children sold on the pretext of a charge of rebellion. Some peasants abscond to escape their tyranny, and take refuge with rajas who are in rebellion, and consequently the fields lie empty and unsown, and grow into wildernesses. "Such oppression is exceedingly prevalent in this country."<sup>99</sup>

Bernier, commenting about the agriculture and peasantry in the northern parts of the country states, Of the vast tracts of country constituting the empire of Hindustan, many are little more than sand, or barren mountains, badly cultivated, and thinly peopled; and even a considerable portion of the good land remains untilled from want of labourers, many of whom perish in consequence of the bad treatment they experience from the Governors. These poor people, when incapable of discharging the demands of their rapacious lords, are not only often deprived of the means of subsistence, but are bereft of their children, who are carried away as slaves. Thus, it happens that many of the peasantry, driven to despair by so execrable a tyranny, abandon the country and seek a more tolerable mode of existence, either in the towns or camps, as bearers of burdens, carriers of water, or servants to horsemen. "Sometimes, they fly to the territories of a Raja, because there they find less oppression, and are allowed a greater degree of comfort."<sup>100</sup>

**Sometimes they fly to the territories of a Raja, because there they find less oppression and are allowed a greater degree of comfort**



Jeane-Baptist Tavernier visited India six times between the years 1638 and 1688 CE. Corroborating the account given by Bernier, he states, The peasants have for their sole garment a scrap of cloth to cover those parts which natural modesty requires should be concealed; and that they are reduced to great poverty, because if the Governors become aware that they possess any property they seize it straightaway by right or by force. "You may see in India whole provinces like deserts from whence the peasants have fled on account of the oppression of the Governors."<sup>101</sup>

The flight of peasants from the land intensified during the reign of Aurangzeb. With the decrease in the number of peasants, the



income of the assignees, the Jagirdars, was reduced. The Jagirdars, to make good their loss, put increased pressure on the working peasants. Moreover, the practice developed of selling governments of provinces for immense sums in hard cash. Hence, it naturally became the principal object of the individual thus appointed Governor, to obtain repayment of the purchase-money, which he had borrowed at a ruinous rate of interest. This in turn resulted in more repression on the cultivators.

Due to uncertainty created among Jagirdars owing to the constant and unpredictable transfers of jagirs, the agents of the Jagirdars had given up the practice of helping the peasantry of making firm arrangements, states Bhimsen. Moreover, the amils of the Jagirdars were not sure of their own tenures of employment and so they were tyrannical and unrelenting in the collection of revenue. When the jagirdar, instead of appointing his own agents to collect

**Mughal  
system of  
Government  
and the  
Mughal  
society was  
predatory**

the revenue, farmed out the Jagir, the evil was worse still. The land was being laid waste, says Sadiq Khan, writing of Shah jahan's reign, through bribery and revenue-farming, as a result of which the peasantry was being robbed and plundered.



To sum up, the Mughal system of Government and the Mughal society was predatory. There were lots of little fleas with lesser fleas on their backs to bite them. The English ambassador at the court of Jahangir's, Sir Thomas Roe, aptly observed, 'The people of India live as fishes do in the sea - the great ones eat up the little. For first, the farmer robs the peasant, the gentleman robs the farmer, the greater robs the lesser, and the King robs all.' By the term farmer, he means the jagirdars and his gentlemen were omrahs and mansabdars. The upper classes, the omrahs, mansabdars and Jagirdars spent their incomes on objects of luxury and display. "They did not invest money on improvement of land or on welfare of the peasantry and as a result, the misery of the peasantry deepened, and their burden became insufferable in the reign of Aurangzeb and his successors."<sup>102</sup>

## The economy from 1600 CE onwards

The golden age of India's past has been a matter of strong conviction as well as controversy. The travelogues of Europeans to India in the 16th and 17th centuries often described great wealth and opulence as reflecting their contacts with the ruling classes. The apex class certainly enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle, with consumption of high quality food, clothing and ornaments, as well as imported luxury goods. The middle class consisting of merchants and rich peasants too enjoyed a reasonably comfortable lifestyle. However, most travel accounts of Mughal India and the Deccan also noted that the majority of Indians, especially in the countryside lived in poverty. The labouring classes were seen as living in mud huts with thatched roofs, eating coarse grains, wearing rudimentary clothing and the use of foot wear was relatively unknown. The tropical climate may explain these consumption patterns, but most writers were in little doubt that the population at the bottom of the pyramid lived in poverty.

There is substantial literature, starting from 1595 AD, which charts Indian living standards over time. The reign of Akbar is usually seen as the peak of economic wellbeing and is well documented in *Ain-e-Akbari*, which meticulously reported wages and prices in the region of Agra. Broad berry and Gupta have estimated the Indian GDP from the output side for the period 1600 – 1871, and combined the figures with the population data. The findings are consistent with a relatively prosperous India at the height of the Mughal Empire during Akbar's reign by 1600 AD. However, much of this prosperity had disappeared by the eighteenth century. The post Akbar period saw a secular decline of per capita income from a level of 782 international dollars in 1600 AD to 661 dollars in 1750 AD, slightly before the Battle of Plassey. This shrinkage of around 15.5% during this phase is not insignificant. In the coming century, with the advent of British East India Company, the decline continued unabated from 661 dollars in 1750 to 526 dollars in 1871 AD. This further shrinkage of 20.5% reduction in per capita income of India brought the Indian economy to its knees by mid

**310** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

nineteenth century. These findings are more in tune with the recent revisionist work on Europe, which suggests that Maddison (2003) has substantially underestimated living standards in the pre-modern world (Broad berry 2009).

**INDIA'S GDP PER CAPITA**  
**Indian Population and GDP per capita, 1600-1801**  
**(1990 International Dollars)**

| Year | Millions | Indian GDP per capita |
|------|----------|-----------------------|
| 1600 | 142      | 782                   |
| 1650 | 142      | 736                   |
| 1700 | 164      | 719                   |
| 1751 | 190      | 661                   |
| 1801 | 207      | 639                   |

*Source: Derived from Maddison (2003)*

**The process of de-urbanization can also be dated back to 1600 CE.** The declining per capita income and de-urbanization were going hand in hand, commencing from post Akbar times.

**URBAN POPULATION IN INDIA**

| Year | Population (millions) | Urban share(%) | Urban population (millions) |
|------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1600 | 142                   | 15             | 21.3                        |
| 1650 | 142                   | 15             | 21.3                        |
| 1700 | 164                   | 14             | 23.0                        |
| 1751 | 190                   | 13             | 24.7                        |
| 1801 | 207                   | 13             | 26.9                        |

*Source: Population: Urban share: 1600, 1801: Habib (1982: 166-171); 1871: Visaria and Visaria (1983: 519); other years: interpolation*

Most writers seem to accept the idea of a downward real wage trend during the 17th & 18th centuries before recovering during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This pattern was suggested by Mukherjee(1967) and confirmed by Broad berry and Gupta(2005).

**REAL WAGES OF INDIAN UNSKILLED LABOURER 1600 – 1801**

| Year | 1871=100 |
|------|----------|
| 1600 | 207.9    |
| 1650 | 179.8    |
| 1700 | 171.9    |
| 1751 | 140.7    |
| 1801 | 120.8    |

Source: Broadberry and Gupta (2006:14); Mukherjee(1967:58)

It would appear that decline of per capita income, de-urbanisation and decline of real wages for unskilled and skilled workers commenced simultaneously from 1600 AD onwards. The unfolding triple tragedy held disturbing portends for the future.

The Indian sub-continent including the Golconda territories, especially to most of the foreign visitors still appeared to be a land dotted with opulence and riches, as viewed from the ruler's court. The overall riches of its people had however shrunk from a high of 24.4% in its global share in 1500 to 20.9% in 1750.<sup>103</sup> The graph of Indian prosperity was on a slow yet certain decline. The nadir had not been reached yet, at least by 1750. The 'Battle of Plassey' was still some years away.

**Decline of per capita income, deurbanisation and decline of real wages for unskilled & skilled workers commenced at the same time from 1600 AD onwards.**

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### 312 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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## List of Rulers from 1700–1724 CE

| Sl. No. | Ruler | Time line |
|---------|-------|-----------|
|---------|-------|-----------|

### Governors appointed by Mughals (1700–23 CE)

- |    |   |                 |
|----|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Mohammed Kaum Baksh                             | 1700 – 1709 CE  |
| 2. | Yousuf Khan                                     | 1709 – 1711 CE  |
| 3. | Rustum Dil Khan                                 | 1711 – 1712 CE  |
| 4. | Ibrahim Khan                                    | 1712 – 1713 CE  |
| 5. | Mubariz Khan                                    | 1713 – 1723 CE  |
| 6. | Nizam-ul-Mulk<br>(Founder of Asaf Jahi Dynasty) | 1724 CE onwards |



## 8. Socio-cultural Scenerio during Golconda times

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This chapter attempts to capture the prevailing Socio-cultural landscape during Golconda times. As we have already seen, this state emerged with a distinct stamp of Persio Islamic culture. Most of the ministerial, diplomatic and ecclesiastical ranks were held by the emigrants from Persia. They all spoke Persian language and therefore the Persian cultural stream was dominant at the apex. However, a sprinkling of Telugu literature laced with a social reform agenda was influencing the society at large.

The royal house hold was an important institution. It was like a massive beehive with an elaborate system consisting of a big staff of officers, ushers and heralds. There were sultan bodyguards, his personal attendants, the palance guards and staff required to serve the royal inmates apart from sundry workers. The royal harem was yet another important institution which was organically linked to the royal household.

Karkhanas were yet another department which supplied all the requirements of the household.

Apart from Qutb Shahis, the Adil Shahis were also enveloped under the influence of Safavids from Persia. To use a contemporary political metaphor, they resembled a 'Persian Common Wealth'. Mustafa Khan-e-urdistani and Mir Mohammed-e-Astrabadi were the advisors-in-chief from Persian lands who shaped Golconda rulers and its polity. Towards the end of seventeenth century, curtain came down for these Afaqui immigrants after annexation by Aurangzeb.

### 8.1 THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD INCLUDING HAREM

The royal household, like a massive beehive was an elaborate system consisting of a big staff of officers, ushers and heralds. There were the sultan bodyguards, his personal attendants, the palace guards, the staff required to serve the inmates of the royal palace which included harem and a host of other workers. Besides, a few state departments



were treated as a part of the palace organization. An understanding of this intricate yet vital organization would be appropriate.

“The chief dignity of the household was wakil-i-dar. He controlled the entire household and supervised the payments of salaries and allowances to the sovereign’s personal staff. The royal kitchen, the sharab khanah, stables and even the royal children were under his care. All royal orders relating to household were communicated through him; It was he who reported all affairs requiring royal sanction. He had a separate secretariat where every order was first registered and then received the impression of the seal. As the courtiers and nadims, the princes, the queens and the harem formed a part of the household, the wakil-i-dar exercised great influence and were, in many respects, considered to be the sultan’s deputy.”<sup>1</sup>

Amir Hazib, also styled as barbek was the next in rank. He was the master of ceremonies at the court. His duty was to marshal the nobles and the officials as per their ranks and dignity. His assistants, stood between the sovereign and his subjects and nobody could enter the royal presence without being introduced by them. They conveyed the messages from their royal masters to supplicants and officials. All petitions were presented to the sovereign through his Amir hajib or his subordinates. The post commanded great prestige and was reserved for princes of royal blood or the sultan’s most trusted nobles. The monarch had practically always a few hajibs in attendance, and one or two of these waited on him when he was alone or even closeted with his nobles in consultation. Hajibs were also trained in soldiery and were often entrusted with the command of the military expeditions. When the sultan in person took to the field, the hajibs acted as his aids de camp. The leading hajibs were often invited by the monarch to attend councils of war and their advice carried weight. “It is not, therefore surprising that some amir hajibs seized the regency under the weak monarchs”<sup>2</sup>

Naquibs or ushers were next in importance during ceremonial functions. They were used to proclaim orders to the soldiers and the populace. They ran in front of the royal cavalcade, announcing in loud voice the presence of the sultan.

The sultan had a number of picked soldiers called jaandars who acted as his bodyguards. Only brave young men of impressive physique were chosen for this purpose. Their training, equipment and uniform was always top class. They had to be present on all the occasions when the sultan appeared in public. These men with drawn sword added magnificence to the procession and also impressed the general populace. “The female quarters were guarded by eunuchs. They were imported from the neighbouring countries. Eunuchs also acted as messengers between the inmates of the harem and the outside world. Minor household posts were given to them and they served sultan as attendants in his private chamber. Occasionally, a very capable and lucky eunuch impressed the monarch with his wit, intelligence or some unique trait and even rose to the position of power.”<sup>3</sup>

**Eunuchs acted as messengers between the inmates of the harem and the outside world**



There were a host of minor officials attending to as many duties. The library was under a kitabdar; the chashnigar supervised the kitchen, tasted the food and carried the meat for the sultan. The sharabdar was responsible for drink which was served by the saqi-i-khas. The chief farrash looked after the furniture and tents; the tashtadar was the ewer bearer, who helped the sultan in his ablutions. And the mashaladars was responsible for the lights. The royal writing case was kept by the dawatdar; the intimate personal attendant was the aghachi; and the registrar of the palace was dar i sara. The khazinahdar was the keeper of the privy purse. The sar chatradar was the chief of the umbrella bearers; the ami-i-tazuk looked after the royal insignia; the qurbag was responsible for the sultan's arms. The monarchs' personal arms and armour was in charge of khasahdar. The royal physician was styled as malik-ul-hukamen.

Beyond those functionaries, was the royal family, the core of the monarch's heart throb. It obviously enjoyed a great prestige. The senior queen was styled malika i jahan and the queen mother bore the title makhdumah i jahan. “Some of them raised their son to the throne but could not ensure their continuance. Some patronised art, learnings and charity,

while others meddled in politics and wire pulling. The princes were given a good general and literary education. It was soon followed by real responsibilities like commands in the army or with governorship. Other royal relations were also treated as per their proven tastes. Those who were considered dangerous were imprisoned, mutilated or executed.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Royal Harem**

The royal harem which was organically linked to the royal household was yet another important institution. “The social life of a harem was very different from that of an ordinary woman. For all their royal titles, those women were the private property of the monarch, just like gold, silver and jewels in the treasury and the horses and elephants in the stables. The harem was, in fact a metaphor for the monarch’s lifestyle”<sup>5</sup> The court historian Abul Fazl has recorded a rather exaggerated number, five thousand in Akbar’s harem at Fatehpur Sikri. Firuz Shah, the Bahmani ruler was reputed to have his harem stocked with women from various countries across the world. Ibrahim, the Qutb Shahi ruler was reported to have a stock of eighteen thousand courtesans. In short, it has to be bigger to look better; reflecting the glory as well as the sexual prowess of the royal monarch.

During the Islamic rule, be it Delhi Sultanate, Mughals or the regional kingdoms like Bahmanis, Qutb shahis or Asaf Jahis, those thousands of women; queens, princesses and concubines lived out their entire life in those mahals, as those impregnable fortresses were called. Despite being educated and accomplished, only a few women are known to us by their names and just a handful of them have left a mark in history. A vast majority of those womenfolk consisted of ordinary working women. The rank and file of maids, cooks, tailors, musicians, dancers, astrologers and even female security guards were overseen by women officers, the mahaldars, who headed different departments. At the apex was the ‘Padshah Begum’, a senior female royal.

Besides being a mini empire, the mahal provided a warm family space, where several generations, from doughty old matriarchs to the youngest princes and better still princelings co-existed.

Mahboob Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam was brought up mostly in the confines of those protected sanctuaries. Quite often, the young heir apparent, due to sudden death of their father was kept in the safety of these harems. The senior grandmothers protected them from the dangers of war and the perennial battles for the throne among power hungry kinsmen. Quite a few of these prince lings developed a special attraction to harem's life.

As the royal succession in Islamic polity was rather uncertain, the death or even ill health of a ruler was a signal for an impending bloody struggle for the throne; not just among the sons but amongst all kinsmen. Therefore, some princesses were not married off, so as to prevent their husbands and sons from adding to the list of contenders. Thus Jahanara, the eldest and favourite child of Shahjahan, who was only seventeen when her mother Mumtaj Mahal died, remained a spinster. Wealthy in her own right, she was a business woman; a ship owner and a philanthropist. These women wielded enormous power when the empire was at its zenith. The overall decline of the mahal as an institution was in tandem with that of the empire or a kingdom.

So, what it was to live in a royal harem in those bygone days? Was it merely a physical enclosure like a gilded cage or was it a precautions social organism pulsating with human emotions? Reading contemporary accounts, we do get a sort of balanced picture. In many of the writings the Harem, is portrayed only as a secluded, and sexualized domain and it regulated the sensual pleasures of the king and noblemen. This was an unchanging world and while the polity, administrative systems and production processes all underwent changes, the harem continued to stand like and icon of the medieval world and here the real women become very marginal. This is a view which is repeated in many works on medieval India. To Prof. Lal, the haram conjures up a vision of sequestered place ensconcing beautiful forms in mysterious magnificence. The younger girls were not exposed to the celebrations in the Mahal(palace) in which sex orgies dominated or the master bargained for beauty and love on the occasion of Nauroz and Khushrooz. Naturally every

**Reading contemporary accounts, we do get a sort of balanced picture**



lady of consequence tried to win the masters undivided love and openly competed to gain ascendancy in the harem. There were often tensions here, though not so deep in effect. These may be classed under the generic term jealousy. The harem was not meant for the old and the ailing. It was meant to be a bright place, an abode of the young and beautiful, an arbor of pleasure and a retreat of joy.<sup>6</sup> Even the New Cambridge History of India reproduces the same image for it states that ideally the harem provided a respite, a retreat for the nobleman and his close male relative- a retreat of grace, beauty and order designed to refresh the males of the household.<sup>7</sup> Even Jahangir is described as a man who excessively indulged in wine and woman. He is said to have nearly 300 young and beautiful women attached to his bed, an incomprehensible figure in the modern age and this shows his over indulgence in sex and his over engagement with the harem.<sup>8</sup> A departure can be seen the work of Tirmizi who lists out the edicts issued by the various queens from the Mughal harem.<sup>9</sup> We thus have a clear dichotomy as painstakingly illustrated by Ruby Lal who compares the depiction of the harem in the Humayunnama and contrasts the same with the writers like KS Lal and even JF Richards to bring out great differences.<sup>10</sup>

However, a careful reading of the sources gives us another picture of the harem which is by and large ignored. A reading of Gulbadan Begums memoirs gives us an indication of the various relations in the haram, the creation and maintenance of hierarchal relationships and the harem as a site of building alliances and reinforcing kinship solidarities. After the battle of Panipat, when Babur's close friend Khavajeh Kilan expressed his desire to go back to Kabul, Babur gave him permission and asked him to carry valuable presents to his relations and other people in Kabul. Gulbabdan Begum reconstructs Babar's conversations with Khvajeh Kilan and states that Babur stated that he will write a list and he should distribute the gifts according to these. "You will order a tent with a screen to be set up in the garden of audience Hall for each Begum and here the Begums are to make a prostration of thanks for the complete victory which has been brought about. Each Begum is to be given a dancing girl brought from the court of Ibrahim Lodi, whom Babur had defeated, along with a plate full of Jewels, rubies, pearls, cornelian, diamonds,

emeralds, turquoise, topaz, two trays full of Asharfis. He further states let the present jewels, asharfis and Shahrukhis be divided among my sisters and children and the harems and kinsmen and to the begums and aghast and nurses and foster brethren and ladies and to all who pray.<sup>11</sup> In fact a closer reading of Gulbadan Begum's Humayunama shows us the hierarchies with in the harem, the haram consisted of the old and the young. There were sisters, kinsmen and their wives, head of the household, nurses and children who were all part of the Haram. Thids would have been true of the deccan too.

During medieval period, many senior women with wisdom, authority and status would help in arranging a matrimonial alliance and playing an important role in carrying forward the royal name. These women had performed their role in their youth and given sons to carry out the legacy. Now they did this through getting the younger women involved in the family of the kings. There is a very interesting incident narrated by Gul Badan Begum. Once after the war between Humayun and Kamran got over and Humayun returned to Bikaner and Kamran proceeded to Kabul, Humayun's stepmother Dildar Begum organised an entertainment, in which all the ladis of the court were present. Among these was present Hamida Banu Begum the daughter of Mirza Hindal. When Humayun made enquiries and expressed a desire to marry Hamida Banu Begum, Mirza Hindal was very upset and is said to have stated to Humayun that he thought Humayun had come to attend the entertainment to do honour to him and not to look out for a bride. This displeased Humayun and he left the banquet. Dildar Begum now tried to patch up the situation and she is said to have scolded Mirza Hindal for speaking improperly to His Majesty whom he should consider as the representative of his late father. She gave a nuptial banquet the next day and delivered the young lady to his Majesty and gave them her blessings and from here they both proceeded to Bhakkar.<sup>12</sup> The same incident is also elaboratred by Gulbadan Begum and she shows how initially Dildar Begum refused to marry Humayun. On Humayuns insistence Dildar Begum was invited to Dildar Begum's quarter. To this Hamida Banu replied that if she was invited to pay her respects to the king she had already done so the previous day and there was no need for her to come again. On

this Dildar Begum seems to have advised her that she has to marry some day and it would be better to marry a King who is there. To this Hamida Banu's response was that yes, she would marry some day but it would be some one whose collar her hand can touch and not one whose skirt it does not reach.<sup>13</sup> What is important in Gulbadan's rendering is not the facticity (or literal veracity) of this exchange between Dildar Begum and Hamideh Banu Begum, but the fact that she was willing to put such a conversation into her text. This says something about her understanding of the cultural practices of the time. One may thus see Gulbadan's account of Hamideh Banu Begum's reluctance as a statement about continuous debate, and tension, in matters of appropriate behavior in the lives of people at the court. In one of the communications that Hamideh Banu Begum is supposed to have sent to the emperor, she says: "To see kings once is lawful [jayiz ast]; a second time it is forbidden [na-mahram asr]. I shall not come." Humayun responds to the concern implicit in Hamideh Banu Begum's refusal to visit him a second time: "If she is not a consort [na-mahram-and], we will make her a consort [mahram misazim]." Their marriage follows.<sup>14</sup> Though in the end Humayun and Hamida Banu are married but this incident clearly shows that there were hierarchies in getting married and attention was paid to genealogy and dynasty. The son continued to be very important and a women had a special status if she was able to give birth to a son. Maham Begum was very keen to see a son born to Humayun. In the harem, when two women Bega Begum and Maywa Jan were in the family way, Maham Begum got two sets of weapons ready and stated that she would give to one who bears sons. Bega begum gave birth to a daughter and it was discovered that Maywa Jan was a fraud because she did not have any issue till the eleventh month.<sup>15</sup> Beveridge describes Maham Begum as a clever woman who both as a wife and widow made herself felt in her home.<sup>16</sup> She was a woman of authority and as an elder person her advise would have carried a lot of weight and she must have been very concerned about Babur and Humayun producing sons.

Hence we get enough information on the domestic lives of noble women. We see the tensions, the little little joys and the other dimensions of a family as never seen before in any chronicle noted

by the male writers of this period. This comes as a breadth of fresh air in an environment where majority of the sources talk about party politics and other factions. Women especially from the elite sections were a part and parcel of an imperial design and played a very crucial role in the making of this monarchy.

Apart from Harem, the slaves were also an integral part of the royal household and played an important part in household as well as country's administration. "Their origin dates back to Abbasids, who employed a large number of Turkish slaves, who in due course captured power due to their own organizational strength."<sup>17</sup> Any slave has to start from scratch, show his merit and struggle for promotion. No office in the state was considered too high for them. Slaves were needed by any monarch to chastise high handed nobles; but at times these slaves developed enough gravitas so as to play the power game autonomously. There was no department of the household or administration where they were not in evidence; the capital and the provinces were full of them. This army of slaves were administered by a department with its own officers, accounts office and treasury.

### **Karkhanas**

"Karkhanas (literally meaning a workshop) were yet another department which supplied all the requirements of the royal household. They supplied food and fodder for the stables, the kennels and the like. It provided lamps and oil; cloths, uniforms, furniture, tents etc."<sup>18</sup> Objects for royal use were also manufactured there. For example, in Muhammad bin Tughluq's reign, four thousand silk weavers manufactured material for the robes of honour which the sultans lavishly distributed, while five hundred craftsmen were engaged in gold embroidery.<sup>19</sup>

In general, Sultans divided these karkhanas into several sections. Their supreme controller was a leading noble; his subordinates, who supervised each karkhana separately, were also noblemen. The karkhanas under the Mughals were also known as buyutat. Besides storing and manufacturing articles for the emperor's household and the court's needs, the mint, public treasury, department for construction of monuments, roads, and repairs, and artillery were also



included in the buyutat. Karkhanas were maintained even in districts, far from the capital in order to manufacture articles for which local craftsmen, especially weavers, were readily available. The growing luxury of the emperor's court and the need to send gifts to foreign courts engendered a competitive spirit in these karkhanas. Continued efforts were made to step up production and raise the standards of manufacture. Under Akbar, the diwan-i-buyutat controlled the finances and working of the buyutat. From Jahangir's reign, the mir-i-saman was made slightly senior to the diwan-i-buyutat, although both were jointly responsible for the efficient working of the system. The mir-i-saman controlled the organization of the imperial tours and the establishment which accompanied the emperor.

Each karkhana was supervised by a darogha (superintendent), while its cash and materials were in the charge of a tahwildar (cash keeper), and its accounts were regularly audited by the mustawfi (auditor). The mushrif-i kul-o juz was the accountant for all sections of the buyutat.<sup>20</sup> "Royal stable was yet another department which took care of supply of horses. Horses were procured from Arab, Persia or even Russia. No gift was considered more acceptable than a horse. These stables also had elephants, camels, mules, bullocks and buffaloes, which were needed for transport, especially, during any warfare"<sup>21</sup> The royal sport of hunting also ensured hunting animals like leopards, dogs and hawks kept in various karkhanas. Animals were trained and bred in captivity or picked up at young age from jungles. A sultan's hunting expedition was accompanied by hundreds of courtiers and thousands of cavalries and infantry and archers. Then, there were thousands of drum beaters who drove the quarry in the ring. Most of the game was distributed to the soldiers and the servants taking part in the hunt. Amir i shikar was the head of this department.

"Amir i Majlis was responsible for organizing sultan's private parties. These parties apart from sultan's friends witnessed a gathering of brilliant conversationalists, poets, historians, musicians and literati in the domain. The flow of wine, rhythm of music and swaying of graceful dancers normally accompanied such majlis. The quick witted with a ready tongue could brighten these gatherings."<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, the role of royal household was not merely confined to the physical perimeter of the sultan's residence. It radiated far and wide to cover almost the entire realm. The royal bodyguards and chosen household troops not only kept the nobles under discipline, but also fought the battles of the empire, whenever the need arose; the hajibs commanded armies and acted as a general staff; the karkhanas manufactured the goods required by the royal household, army and other departments of the state; the royal stable bred horses and other animals required for hunting, war and transport. Most importantly, the palace including the harem also harboured the multiple progenies of any monarch and each one of them growing with a fixed dream so as to capture the throne, some day. The royal household reflected the heartthrob of the realm today; it also carried the seeds of future rulers or wreckers of the kingdom, tomorrow.

## **8.2 GOLCONDA – THE LAST PERSIAN BASTION**

During the early sixteenth century, after the implosion of the Bahmani Empire, two kingdoms bearing the stamp of Persian-Islamic culture arose in southern India. The Adil shahi kingdom of Bijapur and Qutb shahi kingdom of Golconda, both lasted for a period of about two centuries and came to an abrupt end by the southern march of the Mughals, in the closing decades of the 17th century.

The Qutb shahi dynasty ruling from Golconda, being of Afaqui (outsiders, mainly of Persian origin) continued the tradition of its predecessor Bahmanis in diplomacy, statecraft, religion and culture. Khwaza-Mahmud-e-Gawan had been the master trainer under whose guidance the founders of Qutbshahi (and also of Adil shahi) kingdoms learnt the art of statecraft, apart from cultivating a love of literature and fine arts.

Qutb shahis of Golconda present a striking parallel to the contemporary reigning dynasty of Adil shahs of Bijapur. The founders of both these dynasties originated from Persia and belonged to an aristocratic class. Personally, they inherited the tradition of their Persian ancestors and on acquisition of the political power, endeavoured to follow these traditions in the Deccan. The rulers of both the dynasties were staunch partisans of the Shia-Muslim creed. Their religious convictions clearly

**Persian soul was pervading in all dynasties, namely, Safavids, Adil Shahis and Qutb shahis, a sort of 'Persian Commonwealth' in today's terms**



linked them with the Shia heartland, Persia under the Safawids. They being Afaqui themselves, naturally cherished a deep fascination for their compatriots. The ministerial ranks at Golconda and Bijapur were held by emigrants from Persia. During the regimes of these dynasties, Bijapur and Golconda had therefore become active centres of Persian literature, art, poetry and of course, statecraft. The Persian soul, it would appear was pervading in all these dynasties namely, Safavids, Adil shahis and Qutb shahis. To use a contemporary political metaphor, they resembled a 'Persian Commonwealth'.

### **The Founder**

The founder of the Qutb shahi dynasty, Sultan Qutb shah Hamadani was a Persian emigrant to the Deccan. As a trusted attendant in the retinue of Sultan Mahmud Shah Bahmani, he was instrumental in saving the life of his sovereign from the murderous designs of Dakhnis and Habshis conspirators. In 1495 CE, he was appointed as the tarafdar of Telingana. His loyalty to his sovereign remained steadfast and he did not break his allegiance to the Bahamanai state, till the death of his master in 1518 CE.

His regime of twenty-six years was studded with military campaigns. He was a Muslim crusader in his expeditions against Telengana feudatory chiefs and Vijayanagar rulers. His military genius combined with his zealous Shia faith acted as a powerful impetus for the extension of his new domain. He annexed a number of Telengana forts like Rachakonda, Devarkonda, Pangal, Ghanpura, Elgandal, Malangsur, Kondapalli, Indrakonda, Ergir and Bellamkonda.<sup>23</sup> Sultan Quli Qutb Shah was a devout monarch. In his reminiscences, the Sultan refers to his spiritual preceptor, Shah Nur-ud-Din, who had predicted his glorious future. He further added that if the prediction came true, he would sponsor the cause of Shiaism in remote lands. Immediately after proclaiming independence, he introduced Shiaism as the state religion in his kingdom. He regarded Shah Ismail-e-Safawid as his Murashid zada (Suzerain) and inserted his name in the Khutba. Sultan Quli, the founder of Qutb shahi dynasty was indeed a Mujahid of Islam – a zealous propagator of Shia creed.

In 1543, the founder was assassinated by Mir Mahmood-e-Hamdani, while he was offering prayers, very probably at the instigation of his third son, Jamshid. The valliant son, usurped the throne by blinding his elder brother Qutb-ud-Din, the heir designate. Yet another brother Ibrahim managed to escape and was sheltered in the secure arms of Vijaynagar rulers. Jamshid's short regime of seven years was entirely devoted to military campaigns. He contributed to the solidarity of the Qutb shahi state by interminant warfare against Adilshahis and Baridshahis, interspersed with his shrewd diplomatic manoeuvres. He primarily depended on the might of his army rather than on the ostentatious display of royal pomp and pageantry. When the title 'Shah' and the regal emblems of 'Chatr' and 'Aftabgir' were offered, he dismissed this offer with an impromptu reply in verse. It implied, "I do not need a royal canopy, nor do I care an honorific title at this old age. Because, the kings of the Deccan, one and all, have held the canopy of kingship in their name only by their valour and magnanimity and by strength of their arms and power of their intellect. They carried the ball of victory from the control of treacherous sky, out of the plain of valour with the help of the wall-stick of battle. Then alone I will accept a title and a crown when I will reveal to the king striking strength of my valiant hand. Then alone, will I accept the regal insignia (chatr), when through the grace the Prophet, I seize it from the enemy."<sup>24</sup>

### **Mustafa Khan e Urdistani, a Persian Chanakya**



*Mustafa khan E Urdistani*

In 1550, Jamshid was succeeded by his minor son, Subhan Quli. The Afaqui faction at the court was evidently dissatisfied. A secret message was sent to Ibrahim Quli, who was in exile in Vijaynagar to seize the throne. Mustafa Khan, the ring leader raised a loan of two lakhs of rupees from the Hindu money lenders and Salabat Khan organized a large army to render assistance to Ibrahim. Jagdeo Rao, who was a Hindu grandee of the court, sided with the Afaquis and handed over the fort of Golconda to Ibrahim in 1550.<sup>25</sup>

As Ibrahim ascended the throne, Afaqui influence was again re-established and reinforced at Golconda. Mustafa Khan-e-Urdistani, the ring leader of the Afaqui group was married to Ibrahim's sister and was appointed to the office of the Mir Jumalat. He featured in all important events of Ibrahim's regime. He set his vision upon forging an Islamic confederacy among warring kingdoms after the Bahmanis implosion. As the Qutb shahi ambassador at the Ahmednagar, he brought about a diplomatic coup through his personal influence on Hasan-Beg-e-Shiraji, the Afaqui charge-de-affairs of the Nizam Shahi state.<sup>26</sup> He annexed several forts in Telengana and pushed the Qutb shahi boundaries further south till the borders of the Vijaynagar kingdom.

Adil shahi kingdom at Bijapur, bordering Vijaynagar was already at loggerheads with the latter. Mustafa Khan, at this crucial juncture worked a miracle through Afaqui diplomats in Bijapur and Ahmednagar. A military coalition of all these Muslim sultanates against Hindu Vijaynagar was formed. It was further reinforced by simultaneous marital alliances forged between these ruling families. Ibrahim married the daughter of Ahmednagar Sultan, whose another daughter, Chand Bibi was married to Prince Ali of Bijapur. Simultaneously, Ali's sister was married to Nizam Shah's eldest son, Sultan Murtaza. Behind the facade of marriage and merriment, brisk preparations were afoot for launching Jihad (the holy war) against the Hindu kingdom. In 1565, the Vijaynagar Empire were struck with a fatal blow to their very existence in the Battle of Talikota. Ibrahim, the Qutb shah ruler distinguished himself by striking a death blow to the Vijaynagar sovereign's person, who had sheltered Ibrahim for seven long years while in exile. So much for return to hospitality!

Mustafa Khan's diplomatic horizon was not confined to Deccan. He

corresponded and sent precious gifts to Shah Tahmasp of Persia, Shah Sulayman of Turkey and Moghul Emperor, Akbar. He also maintained a mercantile fleet of about 180 ships which plied between Persian and Indian shores. During this period, Telengana, like Egypt, had become the market of the East, where merchants from Turkey, Arabia and Persia transacted business, mostly in diamonds on a large scale. Ibrahim encouraged the foreign merchants by paying liberal prices for the rare and valuable commodity supplied by them.<sup>27</sup>

The plunder of Vijayanagar was available in plenty to undertake several projects. Ibrahim was the first great builder king of Golconda. He laid the foundation of several mosques, madrasas and charitable institutions. He built the Hussain Sagar Lake and Ibrahim Pattan tank. The famous cause way over Musi, Riyaz Mahal and Bagh-e-Ibrahim shahi and many other magnificent buildings were constructed during his regime.

**The  
plunder of  
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several  
projects**



Sultan Ibrahim continued the religious policy of his father and maintained a close alliance with Shah Tahmasp-e-Safawi. Ambassadors were frequently exchanged between Iran and Golconda. In 1580, Ibrahim Qutb Shah breathed his last.

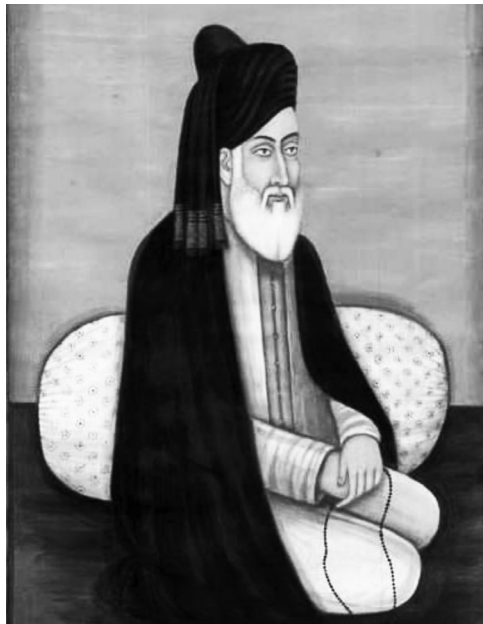
In 1580, Ibrahim's third son, Muhammed Quli ascended the throne at a tender age of fifteen. The veteran Afaqui diplomat, Mir Shah Mir was conducting the seize of Naldurg. He hastened to Golconda, secured his position in the new official hierarchy and persuaded the young prince to accompany him to the battle front. He also prevailed upon the young master to accept his daughter in marriage.<sup>28</sup> Mir's status got enhanced when he was invested with supreme administrative authority. A couple of other Afaquis got important posts and imposing titles. The rival faction of the Dakhnis, unable to bear the supremacy of the Afaquis, fabricated a letter of treason allegedly written by Mir Shah Mir and sent to Adil shah, instigating him to invade the Qutb shah kingdom. The document was forged but the young Sultan was provoked. He promptly dismissed Mir Shah Mir, put him under arrest and banished him from the state. The weapon of forged documents by Dakhnis to get even with rising influence of Afaquis is well known in Deccan's history.

### 330 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

Mahmud Gawan, the great premier during Bahmani rule, was one of its victims. The same thing was repeating in Qutb shahi's regime. The drastic action, as in the past, split the Muslim elite leadership. The dissensions, in the army lowered the morale of the fighting forces, which mostly comprised of recruits from Persia.

Mir Shah Mir's pre-emptory dismissal after a brief interval was partially compensated by appointing another Afaqui, Mir Momin-e-Astarabadi to the office of the wizarat. As Muhammad Quli preferred a voluptuary life and romantic abandon, the new Afaqui savant, Mir Momin, became the virtually dictator of the Qutb shahi state. The latter was a Persian and the active diffusion of Shia doctrine at his instance, transformed the Qutb Shahi State into a center of Persian culture.<sup>29</sup>

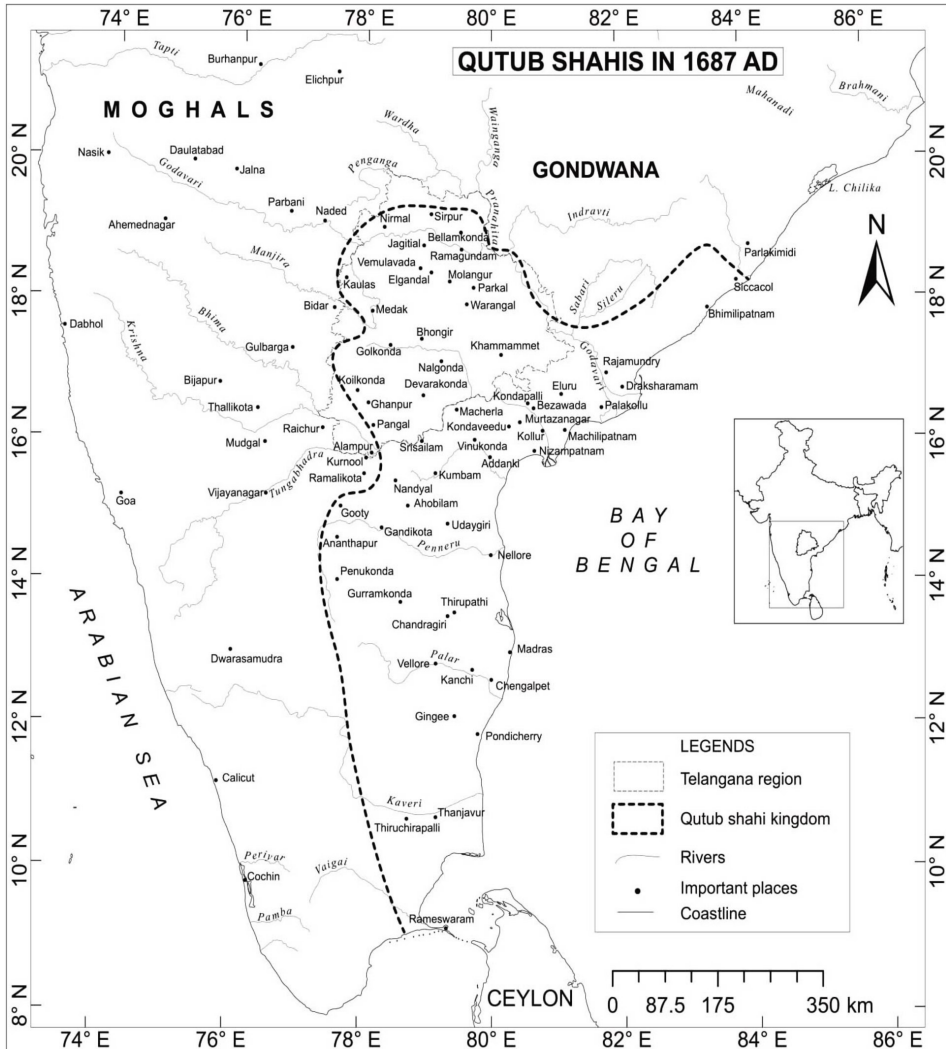
#### **Mir Muhammad Momen-e-Astarabadi**



*Mir Mohd Momin e Astrabadi*

Born during the mid sixteenth century, Mir Muhammad Momin heralded from an illustrious family of sayyids of Astarabad. The town was famously known as a rich mine of lustrous gems of intrinsic merit and the family had a long tradition of erudition and learning. The Safawi rulers of Persia held the family in high reverence. Mir Muhammad Momin's educational career was

Map : Qutb Shahi in 1687 CE



Source: Shiv Shankar Nimmala, 2018, p17

shaped by renowned doctors of current sciences as well as Shias dogma. He gained proficiency in astronomy, physiognomy, geomancy and other occult sciences. His erudition, piety, modesty of temperament and affable disposition won him country wide celebrity. The Persian emperor, Shah Tahmasp appointed him as the guardian tutor to the prince Haydar. The death of Shah Tahmasp in 1576 CE was followed by murder of Prince Haydar,



who endeavoured to seize the throne. Frightened by the fratricidal wars, Mir Muhammad Momin migrated to the secure environs of the Golconda kingdom. The arrival of Mir Muhammad Momin occurred just a few months after the demise of Ibrahim Qutb Shah. "The next Qutb Shahi ruler Muhammad Quli, impressed by Mir Momin's versatility and experience appointed him to the office of Peshwai in 1585 CE."<sup>30</sup> This position was held by the Mir Momin for four decades without a break till his death. The Afaqui savant controlled the Qutb Shahi statecraft spanning two rulers, namely Muhammad Quli and Qutb Shah and left an indelible impression upon its administration, glory, prosperity and enlightenment.

**Propagation of Shia faith was a lifelong mission of this learned divine** "Propagation of Shia faith was a lifelong mission of this learned divine."<sup>31</sup> Shortly after assuming charge, he introduced Shia ceremonials like public mourning during Muharram, the installations of 'Alams' and the elaborate public display. This impressed the credulous common folk of the kingdom, as well as its monarch.



"Persianization of the Qutb Shahi bureaucracy was his next great achievement."<sup>32</sup> A number of aliens like Muhammad Amin-e-Sharistani, Shaykh Muhammad Ibu-e-Khatun, Mir Zaynuddin Mazaudarani, Qazi Muhammad Samnani, Niamatullah Shirazi, Mirza Sharif-e-Shirazi, Muzaffar Dabir, Maulana Hussain-e-Shirazi and a host of others were entrusted with responsible offices in the state. In their wake came many Afaqui poets, historians and the like. These luminaries were appointed as guardians and tutors to the princes. The ever-tightening Afaqui grip moulded the life and outlook of the heir apparent to the throne from their very formative years. The frivolous and bohemian Muhammad Quli was gradually transformed into a devout and pious shia. His successor, Muhammad Qutb Shah was in matters of literary taste, culture and refinement, out and out an Afaqui. The same policy was followed in making arrangements for the education and shaping of Abdullah Qutb Shah as well.

As Mir Momin's held the torch of Persian enlightenment and culture aloft in Golconda lands, Shah Abbas, the ruler of Persian treated him as his trusted representative in the Deccan. Firmans

were generally sent independently by the Shah through trusted disciples. In reply to one such Safawi firman, Mir Momin has made a frank statement of the alien point of view, relating to the position of the Muslim Sultanates in the Deccan vis-a-vis Persia. The Shia zealots, temporarily residing in India acknowledged Shah Abbas as their emperor. They also regarded the sultanates in Deccan (Golconda and Bijapur) as overseas colonies or subservient states of Iran. Muhammad Quli and Ibrahim-II have repeatedly stressed their allegiance to the suzerainty of Shah Abbas in their firmans.<sup>33</sup>

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Mir Momin was an educationalist and in the midst of his onerous official duties, he imparted instructions to candidates regularly every day. His favourite pupils and protégés included eminent doctors of shia learning and distinguished poets. They described their teacher in highly laudatory phrases. Ferishta, the ubiquitous chronicler of medieval history was a compatriot of Mir Momin at Golconda and hailed from the same town, Astrabad. He regarded the presence of Mir Momin at Golconda as a divine blessing on Muhammad Quli. In his letter to Shah Abbas, Mir Momin describes himself as a patriot and a Shia zealot and earnestly prays for the progress and prosperity of the Safawi Shahs who were the protectors of the Shia creed.<sup>34</sup>

Mir Momin also authored three small brochures. One deals with weights, measures and distances. A detailed definition of Mil (mile), farsakh (league) and barid (4 farsakhs) is attempted. The second pamphlet tried to prove the prophecy regarding the reappearance of Imam-e-Mahdi with the help of the traditions. The third pamphlet relates to prosody which is regarded as the best of its kind in Persian.

Mir Momin was a poet too. He possessed uniform excellence in the panegyric as well lyric form. His panegyric are mostly direct and realistic. His lyrics emphasize the poignancy and ardour of symbolic love. Though he wore the ministerial mantle on his shoulders, he considered himself as a genuine mystique yearning for the unknown 'grief' or 'majesty of suffering' in his inner life. Frustration and failure are noble and glorious to him.

“Momin’s ghazals are couched in frank and emphatic language. Murtaza-e-Mumalic-e-Islam was the favourite title by which he was generally referred to by his contemporary as well as later historians.”<sup>35</sup> He passed last days of his life in a comparative isolation and detachment and died in 1624 CE.

In Muhammad Quli’s regime, several local rebellions broke out. The army suffered several reverses in its attempt to suppress them. Indolence and lethargy at the top started seeping in the rank and file of the fighting forces. Since most of the rebellions were localised in the south, they hardly disturbed the tranquillity and peace of the state. Muhammad Quli was a lover of peace, cultural life and constructive pursuits rather than keen on military expeditions and territorial aggrandizement. Religion, learning and fine arts, flourished. He is also renowned as one of the greatest builder kings. He laid the foundation of the Qutb shahi capital, Hyderabad and built the famous Charminar. That apart, Dad Mahal for dispensation of justice, Sajan Mahal for scholars and literatures and exquisite Khuldabad Mahal were also constructed. A langar khana was instituted in the name of Imams. The Prophets birthday along with the Shia’s tradition of setting up ‘Alam’s’ in the month of Muharram and convening the assemblies of ‘mourning’s’ in the Holy month were also celebrated.

The Qutb shahi court had become a brilliant galaxy of renowned illuminate of learning and poetry. The ruler’s patronage of learning was a fascination for many poets and litterateurs of Persia who came to Hyderabad in large numbers. The list of leading literary luminaries mentions eleven poets, eight scholars and two historians.<sup>36</sup>

This pleasure-seeking prince, a precursor of Jehangir by a few decades, was essentially a prince of the harem, preferring to remain in the charming company of choicest beauties of his seraglio. At the same time, he cherished a deep religious devotion. His zeal for the Shia creed, his devotion to the Prophet, his self-imposed austerity in the month of Muharram and his scrupulous observance of religious ceremonies were in marked contrast to his life of gay abandon. It would appear that the gratification of carnal desires in Mohammad Quli’s body and the inner craving of the soul seeking

spiritual satisfaction were fused in his organic personality. In 1611, Muhammad Quli died at a rather young age of forty-nine years.

Mohammad Quli was succeeded by his nephew, Muhammad who was only nineteen at the time of his coronation. It was a diplomatic triumph of the Afaqui group led by Mir Muhammad Momin. In 1609, Mir Mohammad Momin had ensured Muhammad's marriage with Princess Hayat Bakshi Begum, the only issue of Muhammad Quli Qutb shah. Muhammad had earlier practically become the heir presumptive to the throne. Mir Momin's prompt move of proclaiming Muhammad's sovereignty immediately after Quli's death checkmated the designs of Dakhni partisans. The 'aliens' (Afaqui) supremacy continued, as the adjacent kingdoms of Bijapur and Ahmednagar recognized the new ruler. It was not difficult, as all the three ambassadors in Golconda, Bijapur and Ahmednagar were Afaquis.<sup>37</sup>

Muhammad's regime witnessed a high watermark of the Afaqui influence in the Qutb shahi state. Mir Muhammad Momin continued to have a dominant influence due to his holding the office of 'Peshwa' almost throughout Muhammad's reign. Many of his favourite protégés and fellow Persians were appointed to various responsible offices through his recommendation. It was the most peaceful period of the Qutb Shahi dynasty.

Muhammad Qutb Shah, in complete contrast to his uncle, was a rigid puritan, scrupulously abstaining from all kinds of sensual pleasures. Even during his youth, religious devotion and scrupulous observance of the injunction of his Muslim faith were the most dominant sentiments of his life. He was puritanic and sober. His personality was a typical product of the austere cultural environment created by the Shia Ulema's and mujahids who subordinated life to religion and theology. He was also a staunch Shia zealot, like his uncle.<sup>38</sup> He was a voracious reader and finished reading one version of Quran every month. He also evinced interest in works of history, biography, theology and poetry. He convened the meetings of the doctors of learning and theology frequently and took active parts in these seminars. In 1625, at the young age of thirty-four, Muhammad Qutb shah died. His reign lasted only for fourteen years.

In 1625, when Abdullah Qutb shah ascended the throne, the nearby state of Bijapur was a fast transforming itself into a centre of Dakhni supremacy and no prominent Afaqui diplomat was holding the reins of power there. Therefore, Hyderabad was the last stronghold of the Afaquis. As the prominent Persians like Ibn-e-Khatin and Muhammad Raza-e-Astarabadi were incharge of administration, most of the Persian newcomers to India during that period were naturally drawn towards Hyderabad.<sup>39</sup>

Ibn-e-Khatin had intimate contacts with the Safawid's as he had stayed in their court as the ambassador for the Qutb shahis. It paved the way for deepening of diplomatic relations between Persia and Golconda. Frequent exchange of ambassadors between these two Shia states, in spite of separation by a long sea journey was a normal feature of Qutb shahi state during the wizarat regime of Ibn-e-Khatim. Descriptions of the grand receptions accorded to Safawid ambassadors and presents lavished on them are well recorded by the contemporary chroniclers.

Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah revived the festival connected with the Prophet's birthday and the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in Muharram, which had been practically discontinued during his predecessor's time. The drinking of wine as well as meat eating, cutting of hair, purchase of betel leaves was prohibited. The Langar processing was the climax of the Muharram celebrations. The Sultan, also included his birthday in the celebratory calendar of Golconda Kingdom. His birthday, was celebrated with great abandon when dancers from Hyderabad and Tilang, beautiful women from Carnatic and Ahmedabad all joined to make the occasion memorable. Flowers and scents, betel leaves and condiments were distributed and gaiety reached its climax.<sup>40</sup> These celebrations continued upto 1918 CE.

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in Muharram**



The Afaqui group continued to hold most of the key positions of the state. Though, Habshi's (former African slaves) had become equally powerful and were beginning to share political power with

Persians, they were culturally not compatible with the Persians. Consequently, Persians continued to dominate in literature, learnings and religion. The important Afaquis in a commanding position in the bureaucracy were Ibn-e-Khatun, Mir Muhammad Taqi-e-Tafrashi, Shariful-Mulk, Mir Fasihiuddin, Qasim Bege-e-Urdistani, Hasan Beg-e-Shirazi, K.Afzal-e-Turk and Muhammad Quli Beg. The list is just indicative and not exhaustive.<sup>41</sup>

It would give us an idea as to how tightly, most of the nodes of administrative pyramid were held by the 'alien group' consisting of Afaquis. They put up a stubborn resistance to the Mughal activities in the Deccan. This anti-Mughal and Pro-Safawid tilt soon assumed sectarian overtones. In 1636, the arrival of Aurangzeb as the Mughal subedar in Golconda court was the beginning of a shadow, which darkened of extinguished the Qutb shahi kingdom in next five decades.

### **Curtain falls for Afaquis**

Abdullah Qutb shah died in 1672. From 1611 onwards, the Afaqui influence on Qutb shahi polity had only been strengthened. The Afaqui clique, as usual got into the act of putting their protégé on the throne. Fatima Khanam, the eldest daughter of Abdullah Qutb shah was married to Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad, a Sayyid (descendent of the prophet) from Persia. She endeavoured to seize the throne for her stepson, Sayyid Ali. But, this time the Dakhni's group had done their home work well. The first act of Dakhni protagonists was to imprison all the three, namely Mirza Nizamuddin, Fatima Khanam and Sayyid Ali who were adversaries of Abul Hasan, a Dakhni partisan himself. The latter ascended the throne with more than active support of a large number of Dakhni supporters who had seen their fortunes dwindle for too long. With the new sovereign on the Qutb shahi throne, the Afaqui influence began to wane. With the exit of Muzaffar Khan from the office of the Wizarat, the Hindu Madanna Pandit rose to political power and became the Wazir of Qutb shahi state.

Madanna, a Brahmin from the Hanumkonda was an enemy of the aliens and openly espoused the cause of Dakhnis.<sup>42</sup> On assuming office, he dismissed foreigners

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and appointed Dakhni Mulki-Muslims along with Brahmins (mostly his close relations) in their place. In foreign policy, Madanna kept pursuing a policy of co-operation with the neighbouring sultanates. The rising Maratha star, Shivaji was also befriended in a new strategic alliance. This was not all. When Aurangzeb laid siege to Bijapur, Abul Hasan Tana Shah dispatched a contingent of 40,000 horses to assist Bijapur. Aurangzeb was greatly incensed at this unexpected move of Abul Hasan and resolved to inflict a severe punishment on the recalcitrant Qutb shahi ruler. Aurangzeb dispatched forces under Khan-e-Jahan along with the Prince Azam to subdue the new enemy. The long standing rivalry between the Afaqui and Dakhni factions took its toll and Qutb shahi forces retreated towards the capital in ugly haste.

Distrust of the Afaquis had grown so much that even the Sultan had begun to suspect their loyalty. This lack of trust drove many Afaquis into the inviting arms of the Mughals, where they were honoured with titles and Jagirs.<sup>43</sup> As Khalil-ul-Lah, the army commander defected, the army of Qutb shahi got demoralized. Sultan Abul Hasan was so greatly frightened that he immediately withdrew to the fort of Golconda. It was time for the capital citizens to take fright. Chaos and confusion reigned supreme in the capital as citizens rushed into the fort for safety of their life.

The city was overrun the next day by the Mughal army. A large and invaluable booty fell in the hands of the invaders. Abul Hasan solicited peace. Prince Azam strongly recommended this. But Aurangzeb summarily rejected the peace offer. The siege began around Golconda fort. The desertions continued unabated but the fort could not be captured. The Qutb shahi garrison fought bravely for eight long months against heavy odds. At this crucial stage, Abdullah Khan-e-Panni's treachery by allowing a secret entrance to the Mughals under the cover of darkness hastened the doom. The garrison eventually capitulated on 20th September, 1686. Abul Hasan was captured and imprisoned in the fort of Daulatabad, where he breathed his last in 1699.

Abul Hasan was a highly cultured king. He was a disciple of Shah Raju, a renowned Sufi divine of Hyderabad. His deep interest in literary and artistic activities acted as an incentive to scholars and poets.

The downfall of the Qutb shahi dynasty towards the end of the seventeenth century brought the curtain down for the influx of the cultured Afaquis to Hyderabad.<sup>44</sup> Under the iron grip of Mughals from now onwards, the statecraft as well as literary canvas of the subsequent period bore a purely Sunni character.

### **8.3 AN OVERALL GLIMPSE OF THE QUTB SHAHI TIMES**

Qutb Shahi reign, like the Bahmanis lasted almost as long. But, unlike the Bahmanis, sword was used far less often to decide succession. From 1521 till 1687 CE, the Qutb Shahi Kingdom witnessed eight rulers, out of which only two were deposed by force. In contrast, the preceding Bahmanis witnessed eighteen rulers, twelve of them being deposed by force. Relatively speaking, Qutb Shahi times were far more stable and peaceful. Stretching over a major part of the 16th and 17th century, it witnessed three distinct phases. In 1512, commenced the first phase and stretched up to 1580. It witnessed birth, expansion and consolidation of the Kingdom. The second phase, evolving thereafter witnessed its maturity and glory. The third and final phase, commencing from around 1626 witnessed its decline, decay and destruction by 1687. As each phase evolved over a period, the dates mentioned are just indicative and at best, approximate.

The first phase was consumed by constant warfare and internecine conflicts with the southern neighbour, Vijayanagara Kings. The antagonism inherited from the past, based on religious animosities, survived the implosion of Bahmanis Kingdom. In 1565, it finally peaked. After the decisive battle of Talikota, as Vijayanagara Kingdom lay in ruins, Qutb Shahis could breathe peace for next half a century.

Dawn of peace laid the foundation of the second phase. As borders became secure, Golconda kings turned their attention to build their Kingdom. The concept of a brand new capital got embedded in their psyche. As time passed, it started flowering. The other Bahmani cities like Gulbarga, Bidar and Ahmednagar were lost to neighbouring Kingdoms. Warangal, the Kakatiya capital had peaked and was on wane for fifteenth century. As Golconda, the present capital, was getting congested, the sprawl on the other side of nearby flowing river, Musi provided the right location. It also intercepted the Golconda-Masulipatnam trading highway. Founded in 1591, the capital was destined to grow into a unique city. In coming



centuries, it outgrew all the erstwhile capital cities of Deccan rulers, be it Warangal, Bijapur, Gulburga, Bidar or Ahmednagar. Vijayanagara, the splendid city had ceased to exist by then.

Timing of the birth of Qutb Shahi dream capital Bhagnagar and its evolution into Hyderabad was to prove propitious too. Centred in the Deccan, it provided the sole magnet for best and the brightest of those times. The fame of Qutb Shahis and the glory of Hyderabad had spread far. Architects and artisans, traders and soldiers, qazis and fakirs, fortune makers and fortune tellers, poets and chroniclers, learned and wise, fiddlers and charlatans, pimps and prostitutes - everyone, who could make it, came here. Hyderabad was a sort of El-Dorado of those days.

As the dazzle of Qutb Shahi peaked, the third phase began. Its glory was too good to last forever. The decline had set before it became apparent by 1626. The Mughal shadow enveloped Golconda and their treaties were humiliating. Then came Aurangzeb, who stayed in Deccan for rather too long, first as its Governor and then as the Emperor of Hindustan. The Mughals' might directed by the determined Aurangzeb debilitated and finally destroyed the Qutb Shahi Kingdom in 1687.

Role of the noble Queen Mother, Ma Saheba has been highlighted by historians. But, for her sagacious presence, Qutb Shahis could have been extinguished much earlier. In 1656, she played a crucial role while Aurangzeb was poised to devour the Kingdom. Her motherly persona confronted arrogant Aurangzeb and a treaty was signed. It was no doubt a humiliation, but the Kingdom was saved. For the next three decades or so, Mughal arms did not trouble them. In 1667, she died.

Subsequently, Abul Hasan appointed Akkanna and Madanna, the Hindu brothers as his Prime minister and Army chief. They in turn appointed their kith and kin to crucial posts. The Qutb Shahi polity developed a distinct Hindu flavour too soon. Aurangzeb was not amused. To add salt to injury, a strategic alliance was forged with Shivaji, the sworn Mughal enemy. In 1677, Shivaji arrived in Golconda as state guest, went south, prayed at Srisailam, went deeper, subdued Kingdoms, collected ransom and returned back.



Madanna



Akkanna

However, he conveniently forgot to fulfil his obligation to pay a part of the ransom. Qutb Shahis felt cheated, but were too weak to protest. Strategic alliances make sense between equal partners. Qutb Shahis were anything but equal to Shivaji.

In 1680, Shivaji died. His son, Sambaji continued to attract the wrath of Mughals. Aurangzeb was already vexed about the recalcitrant Deccan Kingdoms. He invaded Bijapur, whom Qutb Shahis assured full support. The secret letter written by Akkanna fell into Aurangzeb's hands. He was incensed. The dye was cast. The Mughal fury did not take long to reach the ramparts of Golconda. The city was sacked. The fort was overwhelmed. Heads of Akkanna and Madanna, the symbols of Hindu flavour were severed and sent to imperial camp. Elephantine pressure crushed them to smithereens under Aurangzeb's watchful eyes. He was just proving the imperial logic to Qutb Shahis for their Maratha tilt.

Sagacious and elderly persona of Ma Saheba, like the mother saviour delayed the extinction of Qutb Shahis. True. But, after her departure, the Maratha alliance engineered by Akkanna and Madanna, the Hindu chiefs certainly hastened its collapse. Treaty with Shivaji was

**Treaty with Shivaji was unthinkable if Ma Saheba was alive**



unthinkable if Ma Saheba were alive. The departure of the noble mother Queen perhaps, sealed the fate of Qutb Shahi times. It was a repeat of what had happened some two centuries ago. In 1472, the benevolent hand of Queen mother was removed and thereafter, Bahmanis dynasty exploded within a couple of decades.

Qutb Shahi reign was certainly a welcome break from the past. The rulers were great builders and patrons of learning. They were tolerant Shias. Hindus were appointed in higher positions. They were popular rulers and patronised Persian culture together with the regional culture of Deccan symbolised by Telugu language. Ibrahim Qutb Shah learned and loved speaking Telugu at Vijaganayar. As Sultan, he patronised and encouraged learning of Telugu, besides Dakhani Urdu and Persian language. The Telugu poets eulogised him with the title Malikibharam. Poets from all over the Deccan converged at his court.

Later, Qutb Shahi kings issued bi-lingual grants, both in Persian and Telugu. Addanki Gangadhara Kavi adorned Ibrahim's court and wrote Tapati Samvarana – Upakhyanamu and dedicated it to 'Malki Bharama'. (meaning Malik Ibrahim, the ruler). The story is taken from Mahabharata. Ponniganti Telanganarya wrote the poem, 'Yayati Charitra' and dedicated it to Amin Khan, in-charge of Potlacheruvu (Patancheru region). One of the wives of Amin Khan, Badi Bibi was an ideal woman, in and outside the home. Amin Khan used to arrange marriages of poor unmarried Brahmins. His zest, it appears alarmed the God Hanuman, a sworn bachelor. Therefore, the God ran away to the forests.

Kandukuri Rudrakaul is another poet who received patronage of Ibrahim. He authored 'Nirankuso Pakhyanamu', 'Sugriva Vijayamu' and 'Janardhana Ashtakamu'. The story of Sugriva Vijayamu is taken from Ramayana and deals with the relations of Sri Rama with the kingdom of vanaras and the brother Bali and Sugriva. Singaracharya, a Vaishnavait by faith wrote 'Dasharatha Raja Nandana Charitra', the story of Sri Rama. The policy of tolerance of Ibrahim continued to be followed by his successors. Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah also encouraged Telugu poetry but did not receive any dedication of any Telugu poem, like his father. Saranga Tammaya, the Karnam of the city of Golconda wrote 'Vaijyanthi Vilasamu' which deals with the

life of Vaishnavaita saint Vipranarayana. Raja Malla Reddi wrote 'Shat Chakravarthi Charitra'. He wrote another poem 'Siva Dharmothara' where he shows great solicitude for the comforts of cows. Yet another poet Raja Surabhi Madhava Rayulu of Jataprolu wrote 'Chandrika Parinayamu', a scholarly poem.

During the last days of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty, Abdul Hasan Tana Shah has brought Akkana and Madanna, the Hanumakonda Brahmins at the apex of his administration. Their nephew, Gopanna, as the tahsildaar of Bhadrachalam, wrote 'Dasarathi Satakamu'. His(mis) appropriation of the government revenue to improve Rama's temple at Bhadrachalam, his subsequent arrest, imprisonment and miraculous rescue due to Lord Rama's intervention is a part of history. However, he came to be known as Ramadasu (servant of Rama) for his devotional songs written during his imprisonment. The devotional songs are known as Ramadasu Kirtanamulu.

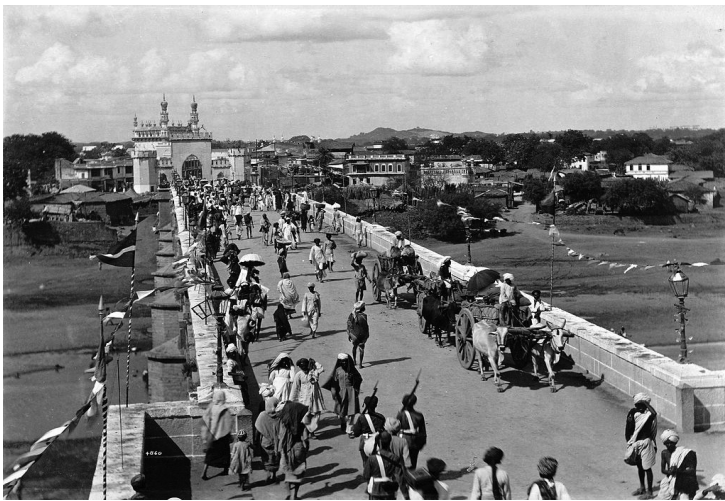
Some of the Qutb Shahi rulers encouraged music and culture. Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah was lover of music. The famous Telugu Vaggeyakara, Khetreya visited his court and won esteem and presents by composing some padyalu in his honour. In 1687 CE, the Golconda fell. The Telugu region and in fact the whole of the peninsula was plunged into confusion. The Mughals could not establish their authority firmly. All cultural effervescence got frozen. Poets could only send up piteous wails to the Gods. Aloca chieftain, Dhamsa sacked the Bhadrachalam temple and the priests carried away the idol in the shrine to the place of safety. A poet Bhalla Peraya wrote the Bhadrachalam Sataka in which he refers to these incidents. The Simhadri Narasimha Sataka of Kurmanatha is written in the same strain. A Mughal contingent attacked the Simhachalam temple. The poet appeals to the god in a significant language. "If you are not able to protect yourself, how can you protect your devotees." The literary scene shifted to the southern courts of Tanjore, Madurai, Mysore, Pudukottai and lesser principalities. The literary lamp continued to illuminate, but with diminished lustre. Qutb Shahi rulers were great builders too. Building spree commenced with the founder himself. He constructed Jami Masjid just outside the Bala Hissar Darwaza of Golconda fort. Fort of Golconda was strengthened. In 1572 CE, the Hussainsagar tank was completed. In 1578 CE, Puranapul

**344** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

or 'old bridge' at Musi River was built. Darul Shifa or General Hospital containing a college of unani medicine, the Bad Shahi Ashur Khana and Jama Masjid were also built. But the historic mosque which had taken the longest time to complete was yet to come. In 1614 CE, its foundation was laid near Charminar. It is said, that the Sultan announced, that anyone who had not missed even a single prayer everyday in his life might lay the foundation stone of the mosque. But no one among the nobles and people present there, came forward. The Sultan himself, who had not missed the Tahajjud or pre-morn prayer even once since he



*Hussain Sagar tank*



*Purana pul - Gate and entrance bridge to Hyderabad*

attained his majority, came forward and laid the foundation stone of the mosque, which was not completed during his reign. The construction work was continued by his successors. Finally, it was completed by Aurangzeb in 1693 CE. It is the famous Mecca Masjid.

As Mughals were contemporary to Qutb Shahis, there are certain policy parallels between the two. There was fashion of erecting lofty arches at the entrance of buildings. In 1575 CE, Akbar built Buland Darwaaza at Fatehpur Sikri in order to commemorate his conquest of the Deccan. In 1594 CE, Char Kamman or 'four arches' were made in each direction of the Charminar. The sovereign focus on the capital city was another common trait, be it Akbar's Agra, Shah Jahan's Shahjanabad, or Mohammed Quli's Bhagnagar. They loved their dream capital and decorated them with palaces, forts, paved roads, lakes, fountains and a set of lush gardens. 'Jannata' in Arabic means heaven, as well as garden. It appears that the then rulers wanted their capital cities to be just that – Jannata. Fatehpur Sikri near Agra and Ibrahimpatnam near Golconda were planned but were abandoned due to water scarcity. How can Jannata survive without its elixir, water?

**As the capital followed the whims of rulers, the vast countryside followed the whims of Gods, especially rain Gods**

As the capital city followed the whims of rulers, the vast countryside followed the whims of Gods, especially rain Gods. During normal monsoon, crops were copious and the surplus fed towns and cities. But, once rains failed, the limited produce was held back for self-consumption. As tax men arrived with force, peasantry took to its heels. The decade of 1630s witnessed perennial famines across the sub-continent. In fact, the Redfort and Taj Mahal were the kind of employment guarantee works taken up by the then sovereigns.



A general neglect of countryside is yet another common theme. Its relationship to the capital was like a feeder without any reciprocity. Firoz Shah Tughlaq had drawn Yamuna canal, but the Mughals did not follow it up. Vijayanagar rulers, with Portuguese technical help had constructed magnificent tanks, but the Qutb Shahis did not replicate it. Without sovereign attention, they decayed and dried up in course of

time. A general neglect of countryside, especially in Deccan lands was to prove rather costly. Golconda, visited by perennial famines enfeebled Abdullah who fell prey that easily to Mughal dictates. Repeated anger of rain Gods was perhaps a divine alarm for future forebodings.

A complete neglect of naval technology was yet another similarity. In 1597, pirates were harassing Haj pilgrims and demanding their fee. The problem was brought to Akbar's notice. He ignored it. The threat kept growing. In 1601, the famously known East India company was formed in England. In 1602, Dutch formed a similar company. French took quite some time and formed their company in 1664. In due course of time, these companies established their trading outpost along coast in hitherto unknown fishing hamlets. English came to Hoogly and Chennapatnam. French came to Chandranagore and Pondicherry, and Dutch put their foot prints on Bhemunipatnam and Narsapur. Over time, these ordinary fishing hamlets were to grow into commercial hubs and finally political hubs to overwhelm the entire sub-continent. Rulers at Delhi and Golconda were far removed from oceans. They were masters of swift cavalry and booming artillery, on land. Somehow, the oceanic world of naval technology and trade was ignored.

But, superiority at sea of European arms was not peculiar to this sub-continent. It was global in nature. In 1453 CE, Ottomans had captured Constantinople. But in 1571 CE, Don John of Austria defeated Turks at Lepanto. Ottomans slipped at sea but yet were dominant on land. However, the decisive victory of Sobieski over Kara Mustafa in 1683 at the gates of Vienna proved to be the tipping point. It signalled the slow yet terminal decline of Ottoman empire. The same decade, coincidentally witnessed the demolition of Qutb Shahi dynasty in 1687CE.

And lastly, there was no institutional structure to govern such a wide geography. The entire Kingdom was deriving its strength from just one man, the Emperor or Sultan. Akbar is said to be great, so the Mughal empire remained strong. Ibrahim and Mohammed Quli were strong. So, Golconda became strong too. Half a century later, Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan fell ill. That triggered a ferocious civil war amongst his sons. The victorious Aurangzeb was a devout but intolerant ruler. His policies antagonized peasantry across the sub-continent. Sikhs in Punjab,

Jats in UP., Marathas in Deccan and Satnamis near Delhi revolted simultaneously. Then, as Aurangzeb aged, his repeated hammering of Deccan dissipated his vast army. Eventually, the mighty Mughals became their poor shadow just in about half a century. During the transition was to emerge yet another dynasty to rule Deccan, including Telingana.

Before we take leave of Qutb Shahis, let us remember the eternal lovers namely Mohammed Quli and Bhagmati. Their evolution as King and Queen terminated with their mortal departure. But their love story called Bhagnagar or Hyderabad continues to evolve ever since. Sultan's prayer to God was quite eloquent.

*“Mera shehar logan soon mamoor kar*

*Rakhya joon toon darya mein min ya Sami!*

(Fill up my city with people my God,  
just as you have filled the river with fish)

More than four centuries and a quarter have lapsed since that prophetic prayer. And, **the city of Hyderabad, like an eternal love story continues to thrive since then – till this day.**



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**348** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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## 9. Mughals melt, Asaf Jahis emerge (1707 –1724 CE)

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This chapter deals with the period from 1707 till 1724 CE. After departure of the last tinanic Mughal, Aurangzeb, his empire witnessed the emergence of several provinces with new power centres across the Indian sub-continent. Asaf Jahi dynasty in the Deccan territories was one such power centre. Chin Qilich Khan played the stellar role, as the founder, followed by being the ruler of the domain. A brief summary would be appropriate.

In 1671 CE, Qamar-ud-Din was born in Delhi at the height of Aurangzeb's reign. His chronogram read 'Nek bakht', which meant 'a person having good fate'. After seeing the child for the first time, Aurangzeb had predicted about his future greatness. Blessed by the emperor, the young lad evolved under his direct watch. Honours multiplied and finally he was titled 'Chin Qilich Khan' (the boy sword's man) by Aurangzeb, before his death in 1707 CE.

From 1707 till 1724 CE, Chin Qilich Khan evolved from a master strategist to the founder of a new dynasty. He always ensured to be around the ever-declining centre of Mughal power, while being careful not to get sucked into the vortex. In 1707 CE, he moved to Delhi and became a Fakir, (Fakir is a mendicant who subsists on alms being offered by the sundry), but remained in touch with potential pretenders to the Mughal throne. With quick changeover of emperors, the master strategist maintained his calculated silence, without offending the key players. In 1713 CE, Farrukhsiyar designated him as Nizam ul Mulk and appointed him as Subedar of Deccan. Within a month, Mubariz Khan was also appointed as the new governor. The tug of war for Deccan Sultanate was inherent in the scheme of these twin appointments.

In 1715 CE, Nizam-ul-Mulk was recalled to Delhi due to the court intrigue of Mughals. He complied without murmur. Farrukhsiyar was killed in 1719 CE, but Nizam ul-Mulk maintained his calculated neutrality. In 1720 CE, he was sent to Malwa. As Mughal power was depleting at Delhi, Nizam-ul-Mulk struck and asserted his military superiority over their weak governors in Deccan. Once again, he was

called to Delhi and offered vizerate in Mughal's court. A true disciple of the Aurangzeb's school of ideology, he was not in tune with the loose administration and lax political ambience at Delhi. Nizam ul Mulk always looked upon Deccan as the land of his dreams and in 1724 CE, he finally achieved it by the right of his sword after subduing Mubariz Khan in the battle at Shakar Kheda. Qamar-ud- Din, the 'Nek Bakht' was indeed a 'Man of Destiny'. As a true disciple of Aurangzeb, he founded and ruled over the Asaf Jahi Dynasty in Deccan lands.

From 1724 onwards, Asaf Jahi dynasty ruled over these lands for more than two centuries.

## 9.1 POST AURANGZEB MELT-DOWN

After 1707 CE, with the departure of Aurangzeb, the Mughal imperium, substantially covering the Indian sub-continental geography, underwent a tectonic collapse within half a century. At its peak, the empire had stretched from Kashmir in the north to Jinji in the south and from Hindukush in the northwest to Chittagaon in the east. The empire had obviously developed internal fault lines on multiple axes. However, the punch delivered by Nadir Shah in 1739 CE, followed by the knockout administered by Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1761 CE witnessed its substantial collapse. By then, the empire was just in the name, while local powers had asserted their independence in several provinces like Bengal, Awadh, Hyderabad and Carnatic. Alongside these provinces, Marathas, Sikhs, Jats, Rohillas and Rajputs had also carved out their autonomous territories. It would be appropriate to have a look at the evolving political map of Indian sub-continent during those decades.

In 1716, Bengal province was the first to become free after Murshid Ali Khan became its Governor. He stabilised the administration and made Bengal a revenue surplus area. In 1727 CE, after his death, his son-in-law Shuja-ud-din ruled Bengal till 1739 CE. Ali Vardi Khan replaced him, promoted trade and industry and in 1751 CE, facing Maratha depredations handed over Orissa by way of agreeing to pay Chauth (one fourth of the revenue). In 1756 CE, he was succeeded by Siraj-ud-daula who, as is well known was defeated by Robert Clive in the (in) famous battle of Plassey in 1757 CE. The curtain for Islamic rulers came down in 1764 CE,

when the deposed Nawab of Bengal, Mir Qasim was humbled at Buxar by the British company forces.

In 1722 CE, an Iranian adventurer titled Saadat Khan laid the foundation of Nawab dynasty in Awadh. In 1739 CE, after his death, his nephew and Son-in-law Abdul Mansoor Khan titled Safdar Jung became the second Nawab. After his death in 1753 CE, he was followed by Shuja-ud-daula. He joined the Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1761 CE in the famous third battle of Panipat. The idea was to weaken Marathas. Humbling of Marathas was achieved and it provided a temporary reprieve to Shuja. In 1764 CE, the curtain came down for Nawabs when Shuja joined Mir Qasim, the deposed Nawab of Bengal and the combined Awadh forces were defeated by the rising tide of the British company at Buxar.

In 1724 CE, the autonomous kingdom of Hyderabad was inaugurated by a powerful noble at the imperial court, Chin Qulich Khan, who eventually took the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah. He was controlling six subas in the Deccan, namely Aurangabad, Khandesh, Berar, Bidar, Bijapur and Hyderabad. In 1748 CE, Nizam-ul-mulk died. Nawab of Carnatic broke free from the control of Viceroy of Deccan. After Nizam-ul-Mulk's departure, the affairs of Carnatic deteriorated as it became a battleground for its Nawabship between contending parties who were supported by rival French and English trading companies.

**In 1724, the autonomous kingdom of Hyderabad was inaugurated by a powerful noble at the imperial court, Chin Qulich Khan, who eventually took the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah**



The story of Marathas is rather unique. Shivaji had defied Mughal's authority even when Aurangzeb was alive. He died in 1680 CE and Aurangzeb commenced a long drawn-out campaign to subdue Deccan kingdoms. He died in 1707 CE. But the Marathas power not only survived but became fairly widespread. In 1719 CE, Marathas were able to extract a sannad (imperial order) recognising their right to chauth and Sardeshmukhi (one fourth and one tenth respectively of the government revenue) in six Mughal provinces of Deccan, chauth of Malwa and Gujerat and independent status in Maharashtra. In 1720 CE arrived Bajirao, a young Maratha star.

### 352 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

He rose like a meteor and by the time he got eclipsed in 1740 CE, the kingdom of Marathas had expanded into an empire. However, the curtain came down in 1761 CE, when Ahmad shah Abdali, an Afghan invader humbled the Maratha forces in the third battle of Panipat. Maratha power began to decline and was eventually extinguished by 1818 CE by the British company.

The rising fury of Sikh peasantry after Aurangzeb's departure needs some coverage. After Guru Govind Singh's assassination in 1708 CE, Banda Bahadur rallied together the poor peasants and carried out a vigorous though unequal struggle against the Mughal army. He perished in 1715 CE, but the spark of defiance survived. In 1739 CE, came Nadir Shah followed by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761 CE. The invasions dislocated the Punjab polity. As Abdali withdrew, the Sikhs began to fill the power vacuum. By 1800 CE, they brought Punjab and Jammu under their control. The indomitable Ranjit Singh arrived in 1809 CE and was recognised as the sole sovereign ruler of Punjab by the British company. His authority was recognised in territories between the river Sutlej and the mountain ranges of Ladakh, Karakoram and Sulaiman, with his capital at Lahore. In 1839 CE, he died and within a decade or so, the independent Sikh rule disappeared and was taken over by the British company.

The Jat revolt against Aurangzeb, like the Sikh uprising also had its roots in peasantry. The agriculturists living around Delhi, Mathura and Agra revolted against the oppressive taxation. Rulers suppressed the revolt but the area remained disturbed. In due course of time, the Jat state of Bharatpur was set up and during 1756-1763 CE. The Jat power reached its glory under Surajmal. He successfully withstood the seize by Abdali's army and supported the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat. After his death in 1763 CE, the Jat state declined and split up amongst petty zamindars.

After 1739 CE, following Nadir Shah's invasion, Ali Mohammed Khan carved out a separate territory called Rohilkand at the foot hills of Himalayas between Ganga river in the south and Kumaon hills in the north. They clashed constantly with Awadh, Delhi and Jats. Their appetite for bearing arms and to engage in a battle brought

them as far as Hyderabad state, where successive Nizams needed their services quite often.

The Rajputs during Akbar's reign were considered the right arm of Mughal's empire. However, the ruthless campaigns of Aurangzeb in Rajasthan, his religious intolerance and imposition of Jizyah aroused anger amongst many Rajputs. In the aftermath of Aurangzeb's death, they formed an anti-mughal league. As the Mughal power enfeebled, the Rajput rajas stopped paying tributes.

The southernmost state of Travancore had always maintained its independence from the Mughal rule. In 1729 CE, its king Martanda Varma started expanding its dominions. In 1766 CE, it withstood the shock of a Mysorean invasion. However, towards the closing years of the eighteenth century, the region lost its former glory and succumbed to the company's pressure, accepting a British resident in 1800 CE.

### **The Noble Robber**

The Aurangzeb's death was bound to ignite the power struggle amongst his progeny. All eyes of potential kings and kingmakers were directed towards Delhi. The shift of focus away from Golconda, created a power vacuum and Papa Rayudu sprouted in such an ambience. A look at the events unfolding in both the theatres, i.e, Delhi and Golconda at that juncture would be appropriate. We would take Golconda first.

In 1687, Golconda had fallen to Mughal forces. The new trophy was force-merged with the rest of the Empire. Many changes were introduced. Revenue collection became cash based and not in kind. Monetary system was changed from gold to silver, conforming to North Indian usage. Brahmin officials, occupying high posts in Golconda governance for several decades were dismissed outright. And, given their pro Turco-Iranian racial bias, the Mughals appointed more Westerners than Dakhanis as fort commanders and military governors. The Qutb Shahi practice of respecting the local Telugu Nayaks was completely reversed.

These politico-administrative dislocations were compounded by a prolonged economic disruption due to frequent movement of troops, widespread crop failure, famine, cholera epidemics, falling agricultural production and finally, depopulation. An

**Papa Rayudu,  
a local bandit  
sprouted  
in such an  
ambience**



unsettled populace looked towards highways for their livelihoods. Trade took a beating and eventually dried up. Papa Rayudu, a local bandit sprouted in such an ambience.

His early upbringing was in Tarikonda village situated in proximity to Warangal-Golconda highway which connected erstwhile Capitals of Kakatiyas and Qutb Shahis. Defiance of authority was a part of his DNA. Born in a toddy tapper community, he discarded the family profession. He reasoned that toddy tappers were ideally suited for positions of leadership, and even power, since their work required them to coordinate skills of a number of different castes and communities. Driven by such ideas, he assaulted and robbed his sister, a wealthy widow. The wealth enabled him to gather followers, built a hill fort, equipped it with a canon and began highway robbery. On receiving complaints from several respectable members of society, Rustam Dil Khan, the Golconda Governor attacked Shapur, with an imposing cavalry. The fort was seized but after 2 months, Papa Rayudu was able to carry the day, not by force of arms, but by large sacks of money. It had been a familiar practice because Aurangzeb himself had bribed the generals to capture Golconda fort just 2 decades ago. In 1707, Aurangzeb expired. As his progeny got busy in struggle for the Delhi throne, the resulting power vacuum provided the right opportunity Papa Rayudu had been waiting for. Ashura, for centuries has been observed by Shias with intense mourning. It fell on 1st April, 1708. On the evening of 31st March, Papa Rayudu comprising 200 to 300 infantry and 400 to 500 cavalry seized Warangal fort. Plunder continued for several days. Cash, textiles and carpets were of course looted.<sup>3</sup> But, the principal prize was the thousands of upper caste women. They were abducted and kept in Shahpur fort. It included the wife and daughter of the City's Chief Judge, Warangal. This episode transformed Papa Rayudu's fortunes. He purchased 700 double barrel muskets and other weaponry from Dutch and English merchants, who still called at Masulipatnam. Comporting himself in the style of a Raja, he was carried about in a palanquin with an elite horse mounted guard accompanying him. His lack of pedigree was thus compensated

by trappings of royal status and life style of a great land holder. His appetite grew and the opportunity did not take long to come by.

The 1st June, 1708 CE happened to be Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Papa Rayudu attacked Bhongiri fort but the attempt did not fully succeed. However, he succeeded in carrying some hostages. Abductors were promised silver coin for females and gold coins to those who took elite women. But, power struggle at Golconda prevented any action. Kaum Buksh, a claimant to the Mughal throne was busy at Gulbarga, praying at the shrine of Gesu Deraz for his victory in the impending showdown with his brother, Bahadurshah. The latter arrived in January 1709, confronted and defeated Kaum Buksh at the outskirts of Golconda and became the Emperor of Hindustan. After a lapse of 22 long years, Mughal durbar was held at Golconda. Papa Rayudu attended the durbar, paid cash and gifts and was rewarded with a robe of honour by the Emperor. His hunger for recognition was partially satiated, but it infuriated the elite who had suffered personally due to abduction of their women.

**Abductors  
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women**



In particular, the abduction of the wife and eight years old daughter of the qazi of Warangal hurt the nobility deep. The father-in-law of the afflicted qazi led a deputation of prominent members of the Ulema to complain in person to Bahadur Shah. The cry was not for protection, but for vengeance. While Bahadur Shah temporised, the bereaved qazi retired to his home, divided his possessions among his servants, and after forty days, died of grief and shame. Bowing to the occasion, the emperor then ordered Yousuf Khan to assemble a large force and liquidate the man, who just a short time ago had been honoured as a tributary chief at a royal audience.<sup>1</sup>

Tidings in his village Shahpur were not propitious too. The imprisoned captives there staged an uprising under the leadership of Papa Rayudu's brother-in-law. The fellow prisoners cut their shackles by using files smuggled by Papa Rayudu's wife. They overpowered the guards and seized control of the fort, while Papa Rayudu was away and being honoured by the Emperor. On reaching Shahpur, he was greeted with cannon balls fired from



his own artillery by his own hostages. In the meantime, Mughal forces arrived. Papa Rayudu took shelter in the basement of the fort where the hostages were kept. Months passed but nothing happened. Then Papa Rayudu's men were bribed with double the salary. They defected. Running out of options, he came out in disguise and travelled alone, incognito.

Finally, he appeared in the village of Husnabad, the village he had founded. Maintaining the disguise, he asked the proprietor for a glass of very best toddy. But the shop owner could identify his customer from his sharp demeanour and asked him to remain seated while pretending to

**Papa Rayudu was finally hacked to pieces....**



fetch fresh toddy. He surely returned, not with toddy but with an expeditionary force. Papa Rayudu was questioned regarding whereabouts of his collected wealth. He was finally hacked to pieces, his head being sent to Mughal Court at Golconda, while his body was hung from the gates of Hyderabad, both as a trophy and a cautionary warning.

Papa Rayudu sprouted, grew, peaked and was finally absorbed in the power vacuum prevailing in eastern parts of Golconda. He left no progeny, nor any inheritance. All his earnings were dissipated in the surrounding society. No wonder, he is remembered as a 'noble robber' and enjoys 'Robbin Hood' like status in the collective memory of Telangana society. The popular folklore recalls him as Sardaar Paparayudu.



*Sardaar Paparayudu*

## 9.2 THE MAN OF DESTINY

On 11th August, 1671, Mir Qamar-ud-Din was born to Ghazi-ud-Din Khan and his first wife Safiya Khanum at the imperial capital Delhi.<sup>2</sup> The Mughal Empire at that time was at its height with the Emperor Aurangzeb at its helm. Qamar-ud-Din's birth chronogram read 'Nek Bakht', which in Persian means a person having good fate.<sup>3</sup> He was surely destined because his family had the right political DNA. His grandfather Khwaza Abid had met Aurangzeb in 1657-58 at the crucial time during war of succession for Mughal's throne after Shah Jahan's death. Aurangzeb's eventual success ensured progressive promotions for Abid Khan. In 1680, he was given the crucial task of pursuing Prince Mohammed Akbar, a recalcitrant son of Aurangzeb. The success of Abid Khan was rewarded with the title of 'Qilich Khan', a robe of honour and a horse with golden trappings. In 1685-86 CE, he was appointed as the Subedar of Zafarabad (Bidar). In January 1687 CE, during the siege of Golconda, he was fatally struck by a shot. After the ultimate sacrifice of a trusted lieutenant, his eldest son Ghazi-ud-din was bound to receive favours from the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb.

**Qamar-ud-Din's birth chronogram read 'Nek Bakht', which in Persian means a person having good fate**



Even prior to his father's death, Ghazi-ud-din had served Aurangzeb at the risk of his life, when he brought a crucial message from the hills of Udaipur while pursuing Rana, the sworn enemy. He was granted the title 'Khan' for accomplishing that dangerous mission promptly. In most of the campaigns of Aurangzeb in Deccan, he took an active part for nearly a quarter of a century. In 1707 CE, at the time of Emperor's death, Ghazi-ud-din was at Ellichpur as Subedar of Bidar. He remained neutral in the war of succession amongst Aurangzeb's progeny. Bahadur Shah, who came out victorious considered him to be dangerous and therefore shifted him to Ahmedabad in Gujarat, where he died in December 1710 CE. Qamar-ud-Din, the latter's son by his first wife Safia Khanam now stepped into the shoe of his father and grandfather. The child's chronogram which read, 'Nek Bakht' had been in the making for several decades, throughout the Aurangzeb's reign.

On seeing the child for the first time, the Emperor had predicted about his future greatness. At the age of just six years, he received a mansab of 450 horses. After one year, it was increased to 900 horses. Enhancement of mansab and rank followed quickly, in successive years. The title of 'Khan' in 1684-85 CE, the title of 'Chin Qilich Khan' (which means 'boy Swordsman') in 1690-91 CE along with a cow elephant were presented to him. The child swordsman did not take long to show his mettle. In 1693 CE, sent by his father to chastise Marathas, he successfully relieved the fort of Panhala. Marathas were successfully dispersed who then retreated to Satara.

In 1698 CE, Chin Qilich Khan was sent on an expedition against the Nagoris near Bijapur. The success in his first military undertaking was followed by yet another success of restoring order in Nagar Kotha near Bijapur. The Emperor was so much impressed that Chin Qilich Khan while returning, found himself being escorted from the gates of the fort to the Aurangzeb's court with enhanced rank and honours. In 1700, he laid siege to the fort of Satara and ensured the neutralization of Maratha supply lines. In 1702, his success was rewarded by his appointment as the Subedar of Bijapur. Several additional responsibilities were to follow in years to come.<sup>4</sup>

In 1705 CE, Chin Qilich Khan joined Aurangzeb in the expedition against WakinKhera. The siege was protracted but finally Marathas yielded. Chin Qilich Khan, of course was honoured, enhanced in rank and more importantly, acquired so much influence that Aurangzeb consulted him on all important matters of administration and strategic

**Aurangzeb sent him a valuable ring on which his full title 'Chin Qilich Khan Bahadur' was engraved**



moves. In 1706, Aurangzeb, the ageing Emperor asked him to select a health resort for spending the monsoon season. Chin Qilich Khan selected Devapur in Suba Bijapur and remained with the Emperor most of the times. Here, Aurangzeb fell ill and left for Bahadurgarh.<sup>5</sup> In 1706, the faujdaari of Raichur and Talikota were also put under Chin Qilich Khan's charge. Aurangzeb sent him a valuable ring on which his full title 'Chin Qilich Khan Bahadur' was engraved. This was to be the last gift to this man of destiny, from the Emperor of Hindustan.

On 3rd March, 1707, Aurangzeb died. His death was bound to ignite the war of succession amongst his progeny. The fact that he died in Aurangabad, far away from the capital headquarters at Delhi made it quite complicated. Prince Azam rushed, laid the body of Aurangzeb to rest, seized the treasury and proclaimed himself the Emperor. Feroz Jung and his son did not evince any interest in the ensuing civil war. Azam tried to conciliate with the 'Chin Qilich group', enhanced his mansab and made him the Subedar of Burhanpur. Chin Qilich Khan accompanied him for some distance upto Pandhar near Burhanpur but soon returned to Aurangabad on the pretext that his presence was badly required in his province.

In the distant Delhi, after the death of his brother in confrontation, Muazzam ascended the Mughal throne under the title Shah Alam Bahadur Shah. He called Chin Qilich Khan to the court, confirmed all the previous titles and mansabs and put him in additional charge as Subedar of Audh and faujdaar of Lucknow. He took charge on 9th December, 1707, but did not stay for long. He resigned from his job, withdrew from public affairs, practically turned into a fakir and started distributing cash and treasures amongst the poor and sundry.<sup>6</sup> Tragedy struck again when his father Feroz Jung died in 1710 CE. His property was confiscated. In 1711, Chin Qilich Khan, sent his resignation which was accepted and Rs.4000 per annum were granted for his support. During the period of seclusion, Chin Qilich Khan was not merely distributing gratis to poor; but was also having intimate contacts with Prince Azimush Khan, son of Bahadur Shah. The frequent visitor promised that if he ever became an Emperor, he would make Chin Qilich Khan as his minister.<sup>7</sup>

In 1712 CE, Bahadur Shah died at Lahore. All the four sons jumped into the vortex of succession war. Chin Qilich Khan was called by all the four sons to Lahore. A great confusion prevailed at Delhi at the news of the struggle for succession. As the succession negotiations got delayed, the body of Bahadur Shah awaited burial. During this crisis period, a body of 3000 faithful soldiers, mostly Turanians pleaded with Chin Qilich Khan, who was in exile to lead them. He stirred out of his recluse and began to march from Delhi at the head of 3000 troopers to espouse the cause of Azimush Shah. However,

hardly he had started that news reached him about the death of Azimush Shah, Jahan Shah and Rafiush Shah and the accession of Jahandar Shah. The quickly planned march was abandoned and Chin Qilich Khan returned to his private life.<sup>8</sup>

In 1712 CE, Jahandar Shah ascended the throne of Hindustan as Mughal Emperor. Zulfiquar Khan, the intriguer behind Jahandar Shah's victory viewed the espousal of Azinush Shah's cause by Chin Qilich Khan as an act of hostility. He, as the kingmaker could have crushed the latter but desisted from doing so. On the contrary, keeping in view his factional strength of Turanian faithfuls, he was reinstated with the title of 'Ghazi-ud-Din Khan Bahadur Feroz Jung.' Towards the end of Jahandar Shah's short reign, Chin Qilich Khan was appointed to the defence of Agra. It was time for Saiyyad brothers with Farrukhsiyar in the lead to lay a claim to the Mughal throne. While the battle for supremacy was being fought in Mathura, Chin Qilich Khan stayed neutral. His calculated neutrality was to prove helpful for Farrukhsiyar, who eventually won the Mughal throne of Delhi in 1713 CE. The moment Farrukhsiyar became the Emperor, Chin Qilich Khan was rewarded with the title of 'Nizam-ul-Mulk'. He was appointed as the Subedar of the six provinces of Deccan and faujdaar of Karnataka. The Emperor bestowed on him the robe of honour, a head ornament, an Arab steed with gold embroidered trappings, a sword and a dagger. The gifts were personally brought to his residence. This ushered in a new era in Nizam-ul-Mulk's career.<sup>9</sup> At just the age of forty-three years, he rose to the position of prominence, which he never lost till his last breath, some thirty-five years later. Aurangzeb's prophecy about the 'child swordsman' had come true. But the future, full of challenges, still lay ahead for the 'Man of Destiny'.

**Aurangzeb's  
prophecy  
about the 'child  
swordsman'  
had come true**



### **The War of Succession**

After Aurangzeb's death, the unsettled succession of the Mughal throne dominated the political scene in Hyderabad province. A look at the various contending forces would be appropriate. Each one of three surviving sons of the Emperor, namely Shah Alam, Azam Shah and Kam Bakhsh were keen to capture the Mughal

throne. Aurangzeb's death in Deccan, far away from Delhi, made it all the more intense. Azam Shah, the governor of Gujerat, arrived at Ahmednagar, took possession of the imperial camp, formally ascended the throne and at once, commenced a leisurely march for Agra.<sup>10</sup> Kam Bakhsh, the youngest son of Aurangzeb stayed back in Deccan, leaving his two elder brothers to fight it out. He got busy with collecting an army with which he resolved to confront the victor.

The route chosen by Azam Shah was straight and shorter as the crow flies but terrain was hilly and difficult. En route, his arms weakened, but vanity took possession of his mind. While on march, he never dreamt of finding a rival to dispute his throne. From this dream of security, there was a rude awakening. A message from Shah Alam, his eldest brother and Governor of Kabul offered to divide the Kingdom with him. The offer was haughtily refused. On 23rd May, 1707, armies met at Jajau, about twenty miles from Agra. Azim Shah fell and Shah Alam, ascended the throne, by assuming the title of 'Bahadur Shah'.<sup>11</sup>

The only danger remaining to the Emperor was in Deccan. There, Kam Bakhsh, the youngest of the three sons was enroute to take his new post of Bijapur. He moved towards Hyderabad and in January 1708 CE, crowned himself as the king of Golconda. He had the khutba read in his name. Coins were struck and he had assumed all signs of royalty. A favourite son of Aurangzeb, he was however, rash and impulsive. He faced covert resistance from local Mughal officials. In view of extreme financial problems, there was lack of enthusiasm amongst his followers. Imposition of harsh new taxes and forced loans upon the citizens of the capital merely added to the decline of the prince's position. With a view to help him, the Emperor had attached a powerful noble Ghaziuddin, a Turanian noble whose power and influence in Deccan was very great. Son of this noble was Chin Qilich Khan, the future founder of a new dynasty.

However, Kam Bakhsh made no attempts to improve and conciliate. He estranged and disgusted the trusted noble by his arbitrary and domineering conduct. He imprisoned Rustum Dil Khan and killed him. Feroz, who had for some time been blind, withdrew from Deccan and went to Gujarat. Chin Qilich Khan stayed back but kept himself aloof from headstrong young Prince who was evidently bent upon consummating his own destruction.

Several other noblemen deserted Kam Bakhsh but he declared that he would fight out for the throne till the bitter end.

Bahadur Shah made necessary arrangements for settlement of his new empire. Then, he marched to subdue his rebellious brother with a big army. Before entering Deccan, he made last attempt at conciliation. His letter to brother Kam Bakhsh reads, "Our ever-honoured father resigned to you Bijapur; but we give you in addition, Hyderabad. These two extensive countries, long famous for great kings, producing revenue more than half of Hindustan, we leave to you, without interference or reluctance, and shall esteem you dearer than our own children. Think not then of contention or consent to shed the blood of the faithful or disturb the repose of our government. If you give the ear of acceptance to this advice, we will further confer upon you the Nizamat of Deccan if agreeable to you; and after visiting the sacred tomb of our father, we will return to Hindustan."<sup>12</sup>

Kam Bakhsh paid no attention to this sincere overture but continued to prepare for confrontation. Bahadur Shah arrived within twenty-five miles of Hyderabad. His forces were augmented due to desertions from Kam Bakhsh unpaid troops. His imperial army confronted a demoralized army of infatuated Kam Bakhsh consisting of only ten thousand of worst Deccan horses and a small force of artillery. With this insignificant army, he gave up the protection of city walls, marched forth to meet the imperial army, fought and fell wounded. The subsequent death of Kam Bakhsh in 1709 CE settled the issue of succession.

During those two years from 1707 to 1709 CE, between the death of Aurangzeb and Kam Bakhsh, the internal power struggle between the latter and Rustam Dil Khan needs some elucidation. In 1705 CE, Rustom Dil Khan was recalled to take up his job as Naib to Golconda governor, Kam Bakhsh. The former had set about entrenching his position which would discourage any attempt of his removal by the emperor. He intended to pass the governorship onto one of his sons in the same fashion that he had acquired it after the death of his father, Jan Sipar Khan.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the governor's sons had already participated in the administration, much as their father had.

As soon as the long-anticipated news of Aurangzeb's death reached Hyderabad, Rustam Dil Khan intensified his efforts to built-up his military and financial base. He had accumulated by diverse means a personal treasury of 33,00,000 gold muhars as well as large measures of precious stones. In April 1708 CE, Prince Kam Bakhsh paused at Gulbarga before his final march to Hyderabad. Rustam Dil Khan made an attempt to usurp control of Golconda fort to better his bargaining position with the Prince. The fort commander, stoutly resisted the move and retained full authority over the stronghold and its garrison. In desperation, Rustam Dil Khan reached out to the bandit leader Riza Khan and received his help for future confrontation with Kam Bakhsh.

On learning of Kam Bakhsh's march towards Hyderabad, Rustam Dil Khan first sent a deferential message. He offered peshkash and the hand of his daughter to Kam Bakhsh's son. In return, he asked for his confirmation as governor of Hyderabad.<sup>14</sup> On receipt of a favourable reply from the prince, Rustam Dil Khan rode out from Hyderabad to make formal personal submission. Kam Bakhsh soon arrived and crowned himself as king of Golconda. Rustam Dil Khan, with a greatly increased rank, continued to administer the province's governor.

Emboldened by the new confidence, Rustam Dil Khan transported his family and treasure from the fortress of Welikonda (modern veligonda), 35 miles due east from Hyderabad back to the governor's residence in the capital.<sup>15</sup> But, tensions rose rapidly when the financially hard-pressed Kam Bakhsh tried to confiscate Rustam Dil Khan's treasury. The governor opposed it, both with his own forces and with troops sent by bandit leaders.

The Prince, learning that the royal treasury at Masulipatnam contained 32,00,000 Rupees sent a party of 500 horsemen to seize the money. Forewarned by secret orders from Rustam Dil Khan, the Diwan of Masulipatnam defied Kam Bakhsh and kept Prince's troops at bay. At the end of the year, a larger force took possession of Masulipatnam and its treasury for Kam Bakhsh. After several months of conflict, Kam Bakhsh arrested Rustam Dil Khan on a charge of treason and executed him in September 1708.

**Kam Bakhsh, arrested Rustam Dil Khan on a charge of treason and executed him in September, 1708**





Immediately afterwards, officials seized the dead man's treasure and imprisoned his family.<sup>16</sup>

Removal of Rustam Dil Khan, however, did not by any means eliminate all centers of resistance to Prince Kam Bakhsh. Bahadur Shah had commenced his march, with his army towards Hyderabad and was coming closer to the capital every day. Firmans were reaching officials regularly from Bahadur Shah.<sup>17</sup> The commander of Golconda fort felt emboldened to hold on until the Emperor arrived. Diwan of Masulipatnam too, resisted Kam Bakhsh more vigorously due to the fresh oxygen flowing from the brisk march of Emperor. As a result, Kam Bakhsh could never command the administrative machinery of the province, nor could he effectively mobilize the resources of Hyderabad in his fight for survival. In his capricious cruelties and frenetic measures to realize funds, Kam Bakhsh arbitrarily re-taxed at the original rate, all goods for sale in the shops. He also imposed Jijya. In protest, the shopkeepers, mostly Hindus closed their shops in a combined strike.<sup>18</sup>

Kam Bakhsh could not have won against the imperial might endowed with a more formidable manpower, cavalry, resources and motivation. After the predicable defeat and death of Kam Bakhsh, Bahadur Shah, the victorious Emperor appointed Yousuf Khan, to the governorship of the province. He was able to re-establish Mughal authority by his modest military successes against the likes of Papa Rao and plundering Maratha troopers. However, he failed to meet the crucial fiscal test of mobilizing enough revenues for his own sustenance or for the use of central government. Even the capture of

**By the end of 1710, sufficient funds were not available to pay the salaries of the administration**



Tarikonda fort and the fortunes of Papa Rao were rather modest. By the end of 1710 CE, sufficient funds were not available to pay the salaries of the administration. In desperation, the governor paid his soldiers with bills of exchange (hundi) drawn on subordinate Mughal officials in the district. But they could not fully honour the bills, and the salaries of the governor's troops remained in arrears until his death in July 1711 CE.

Yousuf Khan's death witnessed a bizarre scene. The unpaid soldiers for several months were angry and they held-up their

dead master's funeral for two hours, until his widow persuaded them to allow the funeral proceedings to continue. Later, when the royal accountants came to confiscate Yousuf Khan's property (the usual and normal procedure for settling outstanding accounts with the royal treasury), the desperate soldiers again broke into the proceedings. They forced the officials to distribute the goods in partial satisfaction of their salary demands.

Bahadur Shah named Rustam Khan as Yousuf Khan's replacement. But the new appointee died enroute to Hyderabad. Eventually in January 1712 CE, Ibrahim Khan Panni was appointed as the new governor. The vacuum for full seven months saw complete fragmentation of administration. There was little remaining to be salvaged by Ibrahim Khan when he assumed office. Maratha raids continued unabated and even reached the walls of the capital city itself and none of the inhabitants dared leave the city's protection. Suddenly, in August 1712 CE, Maratha incursions subsided or even stopped altogether. In Delhi the death of Bahadur Shah has brought Jahandar Shah at the Mughal throne. The new emperor recognized the infant son of Raja Ram of the Kolhapur branch of Shivaji's line. Such recognition included a title, Mansabdari rank in the Mughal service and the position of Deshmukh of Hyderabad province.

The decrease of Maratha raids offered a reprieve to Ibrahim Khan. He emerged from the capital for the first time for the management and the punishment of the malefactors. The bandit leader Riza Khan, in conjunction with several zamindars hatched a plot to take him prisoner. Ibrahim Khan, instead lured Riza Khan to a personal meeting. At the meeting, the bandit leader, who had alternatively supported and attacked the provincial administration for a decade was murdered. In the battle that ensued, most of Riza Khan's followers were killed as well.<sup>19</sup>

The circumstances surrounding the Riza Khan's murder by the provincial governor of Hyderabad reflected the abysmal level of rot and degradation afflicting the Mughal power in the province. The continued decline of public order had resulted in uncertainty, fear and destabilisation for the general populace. For cultivators,

artisans, shopkeepers and commoners, such uncertainty was frequently resolved by robbery, mutilation forced migration or death. The mythical picture of the unconcerned peasant peacefully tilling his fields, while armies clash in distant places was far from accurate during the early 18th century in Hyderabad.

### **9.3 LIQUIDATION OF KINGS AND KINGMAKERS**

While the Mughal emperor Jahandar Shah was engaged with the harem, his mentor Zulficar Khan was busy in empowering himself. He was not only a minister but also the viceroy of Deccan. He made use of his position to enrich himself and his near relatives. On all sides, there was nothing but injustice and oppression. He studied to ruin the most ancient families, inventing pretences to put them to death, that he might plunder their possessions. Unhappy was the person he suspected to be rich, as wealth and vexatious accusations always accompanied each other. He took enormous emoluments and revenues for himself, while he disposed of money to others with a hand so sparing that even his own creatures felt severe poverty with empty titles, for he never allowed jagirs to any. The minds of high and low, rich and poor, near or distant, friends or strangers were turned against him, and wished his destruction. Hindus and Musalmaans agreed in praying to heaven for the fall of his power. Often does the midnight sigh of a widow ruin the riches of hundred years.

While Delhi was busy with palace intrigues; an avenger was preparing an army in distant Bengal. Its governor Farrukhsiyar, supported by two Saiyyad brothers, Saiyyad Abdullah and Hussain Ali marched to Agra, met Jahandar Shah and his army across the river Yamuna. Jahandar Shah was defeated and he mounted a fast elephant on his way to Delhi.<sup>20</sup> In early 1713 CE, Farrukhsiyar successfully seized the throne of Emperor at Delhi. His successful entry into the capital implied that the losers had to pay the price. The head of Farrukhsiyar's uncle was carried around the city on a spear while the body was placed on an elephant, from which was also hung the corpse of Zulficar Khan, head downwards. Several days were occupied with these executions, and for some time,

there was in Delhi a reign of terror. Lachin Beg, who was prominent performer in these murders, received the nickname of PasmaKash (Thong puller).<sup>21</sup>

Farrukhsiyar, the new emperor was joined by several chiefs, generals and nobles of his defeated rival. Amongst these was Chin Qilich Khan, who had entered into a private arrangement with the Saiyyad brothers. He was welcomed by Farrukhsiyar, and was rewarded with a mansab of seven thousand horses and the appointment

as subedar of Deccan with the title of Asaf Jah, Nizam ul Mulk. His name was to be designated with this title in future. As Farrukhsiyar was busy in liquidating his political enemies, Qilich Khan or rather Asaf Jah Nizam ul Mulk, with his characteristic caution withdrew from this scene of intrigue and bloodshed to Aurangabad and did his best to bring Deccan into some order and repose.

The Emperor Farrukhsiyar was a man of low mind and manners but was extravagant in his profusion and display. He succeeded in gaining certain popularity amongst the vulgar. He fell ill and was treated by an English physician, Mr. Hamilton. The Emperor recovered. Out of gratitude, he wished to reward the doctor. The far sighted English doctor refused to accept any fees. He merely asked for a Charter for the East India Company to allow them free trade at Calcutta. Thus, was at once granted. This innocuous act was to provide a crucial opening for British traders that eventually overwhelmed a major part of India in the coming centuries.

As Emperor enfeebled, his Empire was slowly crumbling to pieces and everyone was scrambling to secure something for himself. He was inspired with a strong jealousy of two Saiyyads, but dare not openly show because of their power and past obligations in securing the throne. In 1713 CE, Ahmedabad was engulfed in riots. They subsided but no steps were taken to punish the rioters. In 1714 CE, brutality scaled new heights in the treatment of Sikhs. Imperial forces, led by Diler Jung massacred some three to four thousand Sikh devotees at Gurdaspur. Around one thousand prisoners were sent to Delhi along with the Guru and his sons. They were paraded

**Lachin Beg, who was prominent performer in these murders, received the nickname of PasmaKash (thong puller)**



**After all were slain, Guru was made to cut off his son's head and then slaughtered himself as a finale**



before the Emperor, who ordered them to be killed in batches of a few hundreds each day. Guru and his sons were reserved for the last. When all had been slain, the Guru was made to cut off his own son's head, and was then himself slaughtered as a finale.

In 1715 CE, Nizam ul Mulk, Asaf Jah was recalled from Deccan and his place was usurped by one of the Saiyyad brothers, Hussain Ali. He entered into a humiliating treaty with Marathas, allowing them to collect the taxes of Chauth and Sardeshmukhi in the Deccan. Under this treaty, the Maratha officials were appointed to collect these taxes. Entry of a good number of Maratha Brahmins dates from that time onwards.<sup>28</sup> Deccan became critical as semblance of order restored by Chin Qilich Khan went haywire again. Roads became unsafe. Caravans were blackmailed or robbed. Trade was almost paralysed. Expeditions sent to bring order were surprised and defeated. And the Generals sent from Delhi to provide leadership in Deccan were tuned to only palace intrigues. The king makers of Delhi soon deserted their posts and returned to the capital, without the Emperor's leave.

Back in Delhi, everything was ripe for a revolution. Farrukhsiyar had disgusted every one by his vacillation, his tyranny, and his unworthy favourites. The last was a Kashmiri of low birth, named Mohammed Murad, who had been rapidly promoted to the highest rank. Several of the old nobility and amongst others Nizam ul Mulk were recalled from their posts, and though received with apparent favour, were not granted other appointments. The Emperor openly spoke of removing Saiyyad Abdullah from the post of Vazir and of appointing Mohammed Murad in his place. Accordingly, the old nobility formed a secret combination, and rather than submit to the authority of a low upstart, agreed to support the two Saiyyads.

Saiyyad brothers were instrumental in putting Farrukhsiyar to Delhi throne. Now, they were poised to destroy him. The Emperor took refuge in his zenana. He was soon dragged out from amongst the shrieking women, taken to a small chamber at the top of the fort and there blinded. In this corner of sorrow and grief, they left him with nothing but an ewer, a vessel for the necessities of nature and a glass to drink out of it.

The unhappy Farrukhsiyar lingered on for two months in his miserable prison. He attempted an escape but failed. He then tried to bribe his jailor but failed again. Then, he broke into a passion and abused the two Saiyyads for their ingratitude towards him. Brothers got the report and orders went forth that Farrukhsiyar has to be killed. The executioners entered his cell with the bow string. "When the thong was thrown upon his neck, he seized it with both hands, and struggled violently with hands and feet, but the executioners beat his hands with sticks and made him leave go his hold. There is a common report that daggers and knives were used in that desperate struggle, but it appears that no such weapon was used."<sup>22</sup>

The unfortunate Emperor was then 38 years of age and from the time of his victory over Jahandar Shah, he had reigned for less than seven years. His tragic end was due in great measure due to his own fault and to the manner in which he worked against Saiyyads whilst openly acknowledging them as his chief ministers. He had forfeited the confidence of all the nobles, but he was still regarded by the people with affection, and when his body was carried to the tomb of Humayun, it was followed by a crowd of men and women chiefly the vagabonds and mendicants of the city, who had partaken of his bounty. They cried and groaned, tore their clothes, threw dust upon their heads, and scattered their abuse. The Bakshis of Hussain Ali and Saiyyad Abdullah were ordered to attend the funeral, and they did so with several of the principal men of the city. Stones were cast at them. No one would take the bread or the copper coins which were offered in charity. On the third day, some vagabonds and beggars met, cooked food, and distributed it among the poor and remained assembled all night.

The tragic end of Farrukhsiyar took place in January 1719. After liquidating him, Rafi-ud-Darajat, the grandson of Bahadur Shah succeeded as the Mughal Emperor. He was a teenager and was enthroned in such haste that there was not even time to change his clothes. All that was done was to throw round his neck a string of pearls. He was weak both in body and mind and was a perfect puppet in the hands of Saiyyads.

**He was weak both in body & mind and was a perfect puppet in the hands of Saiyyads**



The Saiyyad brothers not only garrisoned the fort and palace with their own soldiers but put their friends and dependents in every post of importance. Saiyyads had made and unmade Kings.<sup>23</sup> They were all powerful in Delhi. They did exactly as they liked. They scrambled for the royal treasures. The elder brother took a number of Farrukhsiyar ladies and transferred them to his own zenana. But the younger brother objected. The two brothers quarrelled over the division of plunder, including harem. Hatred and jealousy replaced the unity bond that had hitherto existed between them.

In the meantime, the new Emperor was dying of consumption. Just after six months of his reign, he begged to die in peace and throne to be bestowed upon his elder brother, Rafiuddaula. His wish was fulfilled by Saiyyad brothers. Three days afterwards, Darajat died. The new Emperor, like the last was weak in body and intellect and therefore yet another perfect puppet. Then coins were struck and khutba read in his name. But, beyond that, he had nothing to do with the government. Surrounded by creatures of the elder Saiyyad, he was not even allowed to leave the palace in order to go to mosque or hunting, or to speak to a courtier, except in the presence of one of the Saiyyads. His very clothes and food were chosen for him, and a guardian was appointed who looked after him as a nurse does after a child.

The Emperor did not live long. In September 1719 CE, he died after a short reign of less than four months due to dysentery and mental disorder. The unexpected death of their puppet left the Saiyyads clueless. The death was kept a secret for a week. In the meantime, they selected prince Mohammed Roshan Akther, a youth of eighteen years and a great grandson of Aurangzeb, who had been living in retirement at Fatehpur with his mother, a woman of much intelligence and tact. By end of September 1719, he was proclaimed the Emperor under the title of Mohammed Shah Badshah.

The new Emperor was fortunate in having an able councillor in the person of his mother. She did nothing to excite the jealousies of Saiyyads. The emperor was advised by her to let the powerful ministers do as they liked.<sup>24</sup> This absolute power gave rise to discontentment throughout the Kingdom. Later, filial bond broke between the

brothers. In 1720 CE, they got rid of Nizam-ul-Mulk by sending him to Malwa. The latter had kept himself aloof from the web of intrigues. The silent and ever patient Qilich Khan complied without a murmur, and equally silently, a body of nobles followed him. These men were discontented with their treatment by Saiyyads and looked upto Nizam-ul-Mulk as their patron. They formed the nucleus of an emerging force which was destined to win him a Kingdom.

His increasing popularity alarmed Delhi. Hussain Ali, the younger brother considered him to be his rival. Fake charges were framed against Nizam and he replied each of them satisfactory. This infuriated Hussain Ali all the more. Now, he threw off the mask and declared that he wanted the province of Malwa for himself in order to better regulate the affairs of Deccan. Nizam-ul-Mulk was given the option of choosing amongst Agra, Allahabad, Multan or Burhanpur. This demand precipitated the simmering crisis. Now the young Emperor and his able mother secretly looked to Nizam as their liberators from Saiyyads. Emboldened by this silent imperial support, he resolved to openly break with Saiyyads.<sup>25</sup> He left Ujjain and first made a march as if moving towards Agra. Suddenly, he took a sharp turn and marched southwards towards Deccan. Town after town fell rapidly. Burhanpur was captured. When Saiyyads heard of the revolt, they ordered Governors of all adjoining districts lying en route to crush the rebellion. Alam Ali, Saiyyad's nephew and Dilawar Khan, moving from two directions were humbled with considerable slaughter. The leader being killed, his army scattered and the whole camp fell into the hands of Nizam. Several more nobles and chiefs of influence joined him.

The news of this catastrophe alarmed and warned Saiyyads that no further time must be lost. It was resolved to keep Abdullah in control of Delhi while Hussain Ali was to accompany the Emperor in his march against Nizam ul Mulk. Hussain Ali set off with an army of about fifty thousand men and the Imperial camp.<sup>26</sup> But scarcely had the two brothers been separated by a few days march, the conspiracy sanctioned by Emperor's mother but without their knowledge broke out. The objective was to liquidate Saiyyad brothers and it was achieved. Such was the gory end of the great Saiyyads, the king



makers of four Emperors who virtually ruled India. Their fate was not dissimilar to that of Zulficar Khan. Their towering ambitions drove them to attempt impossible tasks. It could not go on forever. Fate eventually caught up and consumed them, without any remorse.

#### 9.4 NIZAM-UL-MULK ARRIVES

In May 1713, Nizam-ul-Mulk had been appointed as the Subedar of Deccan. The Emperor, Farrukhsiyar was quite considerate and courteous towards him, to start with. The new appointee, after receiving a basketful of fruits from the emperor, was instructed to leave Delhi. After arriving at Aurangabad, the headquarters of Deccan Suba, the newly appointed Subedar got down to his task. The threat of Marathas, collecting Chauth and Sardeshmukhi as granted by the Prince Azim Shah since 1707, after the death of Aurangzeb became his top priority. Nizam-ul-Mulk's pride was too great to tolerate Maratha diktats. He ordered his faujdars and ziladars to oust the kamaishdars, and the Chauth and Rahadari collectors on behalf of Marathas.<sup>27</sup> Some highly placed Mughal officials had a secret arrangement with the Marathas to misappropriate for themselves, some twenty lakhs of rupees annually. The depleted finances started looking up, without any fresh burden upon the peasantry. His tight supervision and relentless punishment to the corrupt officials was like a whiff of fresh air to the oppressed populace. The prevalence of high prices of grain were also controlled.<sup>28</sup> The prices were pre fixed and anyone selling at a higher rate was warned with punishment.

**Making strategic alliances had always been the Nizam-ul-Mulk's forte**



Making strategic alliances had always been the Nizam-ul-Mulk's forte. He took advantage of dissensions prevailing between the two houses of the Marathas of Kolhapur and Satara. By striking the right alliance, he won the battle near Purandar, occupied the territory near Poona and gave it as Jagir to his Maratha Ally. In 1714 CE, during the Second year of his Subedari of the Deccan, Nizam-ul-Mulk started on a long tour with an army of six thousand horses and five thousand infantry. Munkipuram zamindars around Ahmednagar were collecting but evading payment of taxes. They

were duly disciplined. Then, Nizam-ul-Mulk marched towards Shahgarh to suppress the Maratha freebooters who had robbed three Iranians carrying rolls of cloth from Hyderabad. Finally, the turbulent Marathas around Jalna were tackled.<sup>29</sup>

Nizam-ul-Mulk was busy in settling matters in Deccan. However, his enemies, and they were so many were equally busy in unsettling him. In May 1715 CE, Nizam-ul-Mulk was superseded by the appointment of Hussain Ali Khan as Subedar of Deccan. He was none else but the younger of Saiyyad brothers, who had almost become the master of court affairs in Mughal darbar in Delhi at the cost of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar. Disgusted with the atmosphere of intrigues at the court, he preferred to be away and was appointed as faujdar of Muradabad Chakla. In 1718 CE, he was recalled by Farrukhsiyar on the suspicion of treachery, and after protracted negotiations, was removed from the post of faujdari of Muradabad Chakla in January 1719 CE.

It was time for Farrukhsiyar to be liquidated and the Saiyyad brothers as kingmakers decided to put Rafi-ud-darajat as Emperor. Nizam-ul-Mulk kept up his calculated neutrality and stood with his loyalists in the enclosure of the fruit market, until he heard that Farrukhsiyar had been seized by brute force and thrown in a dungeon. On 7th February, 1719, the Saiyyad brothers offered Subedari of Patna to Nizam-ul-Mulk. He declined it. The presence of Nizam-ul-Mulk around the Court in Delhi had always been a source of worry for kings and kingmakers. He was inclined to accept the Subedari of Malwa. In March 1719 CE, he left the capital taking his all the family members along with the property. He did not leave even his son to represent him at the court. Quite silently, all his supporters followed the leader and joined him at Malwa.<sup>30</sup>

The trust deficit between the Saiyyad brothers in Delhi and Nizam-ul-Mulk was bound to widen. Hussain Ali, himself was desirous of governing the Deccan with Malwa, Gujarat, Ajmer and Agra, with Malwa as its headquarters. For achieving the objective, Nizam-ul-Mulk had to be eased out from Malwa. He was offered the alternative Subedari either of Allahabad or Burhanpur or Multan. The clash of ambitions between the two was bound to be followed with the clash of arms. On 9th May 1719, he set out from Ujjain, made three marches

towards Agra, turned towards Deccan, crossed the river Narmada and conquered Burhanpur without any opposition on 25th May, 1719.

Apart from a man of swords, Nizam-ul-Mulk, was a diplomat too. He assembled all the leading men of the town and exploited their sentiments against the Saiyyads. He sedulously impressed upon them as follows:

- 1) Whatever he did was for the honour and prestige of Emperor's royal house, while the Saiyyads were always trying to subvert the Timurid Dynasty.
- 2) The Saiyyads were ruining and disgracing all Turan and Iranis and that his own destruction was the first step in that direction.
- 3) The Saiyyads were pursuing the anti-Islamic policies, detrimental to the Empire<sup>31</sup>

All those exhortations, especially the slogan of monarchy in danger became the battle cry of anti-Saiyyads movement, fomented by the leader, Nizam-ul-Mulk. His unexpected movements created a scare and doubts in the minds of Saiyyads. After prolonged discussions, Dilawar Khan was asked to march from North and Alam Ali was directed to move from south with a hope to crush the Nizam-ul-Mulk in between. The latter was not sitting idle either. He confronted Dilawar Khan and subdued his army with considerable slaughter. The victor Nizam-ul-Mulk returned to Burhanpur and sent the coffins of Dilawar Khan to Alam Ali along with a few words of noble advice. But this was rejected with scorn. The Alam Ali march continued. Nizam-ul-Mulk marched from Burhanpur to the river Purna, crossed the river with his full army and awaited the inevitable.

On 1st August, 1720, the battle ensued on the banks of Purnah about twenty-five miles west of Burhanpur.<sup>32</sup> Khafi Khan thus describes the battle, "Alam Ali Khan received a severe wound, but for all that he kept the field. The elephant which carried him, unable to bear any longer the arrows and swords cut that he received turned tail. Alam Ali Khan, dripping with blood from his wounds, turned his face towards the army of Nizam-ul-Mulk, and cried out that his elephant had turned his back but he had not. All his arrows were exhausted, but such of the enemy's arrows as had struck his face

or his body, or his howda, he quickly pulled out and returned. He received so many wounds in succession that he sank under them and sacrificed his life for his uncles (Saiyyads). He was only twenty-two years of age but he was distinguished by all the determination and the bravery of the Barha Saiyyads.”

The news of defeat on both the flanks, made Saiyyads see the writing on the wall. A Firman, couched in diplomatic language were sent to Nizam-ul-Mulk appointing him the Subedar of Deccan. Nizam-ul-Mulk, being a past master of diplomacy responded with equal measure showing customary deference while addressing the Emperor. It read as follows:

“Nawab Amirul Umara! May you be preserved! In spite of his knowing your kindness and friendly feeling and of my writing several times and my sending trustworthy messengers, the said Khan (Dilawar Ali Khan) would not listen to reason and in the end brought on himself what happened to him. My feelings of friendship to you remain unchanged. Praise be to God! All has passed off harmlessly. As soon as my troops arrived, the rebels, making no stand, fled in all directions. The envious have represented the matter contrary to the truth and induced His Majesty to be displeased with me. I thank God that the truth has been re-established and my word accepted. A report in answer to the former is enclosed and I trust it may be brought forward at a proper moment. By God’s aid I will soon reach Aurangabad from where I will forward your family and your other belongings with the greatest care.”<sup>33</sup>

Technically speaking, 1720 CE may be reckoned as the date of commencement of the Nizam-ul-Mulk’s rule in the Deccan. But the formal climax had to wait for a few more years.

### **Mubariz Khan consolidates**

Within a month of appointing Nizam-ul-Mulk as the Subedar of Deccan, the new Mughal Emperor made crucial changes in Hyderabad. On 30th June 1713, Ibrahim Khan Panni was removed from the governorship. A firman was issued appointing Mubariz Khan as the new Governor.<sup>34</sup> In the early months of 1714, he set out firmly impressing upon the inhabitants of Hyderabad that a new regime had indeed begun. First

a pitched battle took place with a plundering Maratha force near Hyderabad. The raiders suffered 150 dead and 250 wounded. Next, he drove off Krishna Malhar who had occupied Elagandal town.

Soon thereafter, the governor's army besieged the fort of one Venkat, a local Telugu Nayak at Changapettah (one of the several native Nayaks who were controlling forts and collecting revenue in the fluid political ambiance), located just forty-two miles south of Hyderabad. At the height of hot season, Mubariz Khan himself brought the forty-two days seize to an end by a determined assault on the fort. The Mughal

**The victors  
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of slain troops**



troops overran the fort walls, killed Venkat, his son-in-law Birmal and a large number of their followers. In his army, 260 soldiers died. The victors erected a tower built with severed heads of slain troops. The head of Venkat was first sent to Hyderabad and subsequently, onwards to Delhi where it was presented as trophy to the Mughal emperor in public audience. To send a clear message to recalcitrant Nayaks, Mubariz Khan had the decapitated trunk of Venkat crushed under the feet of an elephant. Finally, to commemorate his hard-fought victory, the town and its fortress were renamed as Farrukhnagar.<sup>35</sup> Before returning to the capital, a detachment of army was sent to Gopalpeth in Pangal district to seize Venkat's brother.

A look at political developments at Delhi at this juncture would be appropriate. At the beginning of his reign, Farrukhsiyar in 1713 had appointed Chin Qilich Khan as newly titled Nizam-ul-Mulk as the viceroy to the six Deccan subas. In this capacity, the Nizam-ul-Mulk appeared as a faithful and zealous overseer of imperial interests. In May 1715, despite Nizam's efforts, the emperor recalled him and replaced him with Hussain Ali Khan, one of the Saiyyad brothers who had put Farrukhsiyar on the throne. This was an outcome of a bitter power struggle between Farrukhsiyar, his supporters and Saiyyad brothers at Delhi. Even though the new Viceroy ostensibly came to Deccan with full authority granted by the Emperor, he faced opposition stirred up by imperial agents.

In the context of imperial struggle at the Mughal court in Delhi, Mubariz Khan saw an opportunity to secure his position in

Hyderabad. Instead of aligning himself with the Emperor, he shrewdly decided to come to terms with the new Viceroy, Hussain Ali. In December 1715, both met in a cordial atmosphere at Aurangabad. Mubariz Khan made the necessary presents as per imperial protocol. While returning, he was secure in confirmation of his office as Governor of Hyderabad.<sup>36</sup> The icing on the cake was the appointment of Mubariz Khan's son as the imperial commander of Golconda fort. The price for Mubariz Khan's allegiance was to weaken the central administrative control over the entire fiscal structure of Hyderabad Province, including the crown districts, as well as the most powerful and strategic fortress. Mubariz Khan emerged from this venture into imperial politics with untrammelled powers over his possession. Hussain Ali Khan gave him a free hand in Hyderabad.

Fresh after his return and oozing with confidence, Mubariz Khan initiated a series of moves against the recalcitrant zamindars and trouble makers. In September 1716, the residual opposition at Shahpur fort, still surviving after the death of Papa Rayudu was neutralized.<sup>37</sup> From January 1717 onwards, he moved into Godavari-Krishna delta geography. Local zamindars were made to pay their arrears of tribute or, in the alternative put into confinement. He moved his camp to Gollapalli, Eluru, Khammamet, Kondapalli, Polavaram, Bhadrachalam, Paloncha, Chennur, Narsimhapalem and finally back to Rajahmundry. His single-minded focus was confirmed when troubles at the provincial capital could not distract his attention. Hayathnagar, a pleasure spot near the capital was plundered and bandits even prevented transport of grains in the city. The governor left the defence of the capital upto its commander, his eldest son and continued to pursue his objectives in coastal districts.

By January 1718, having completed the lengthy march, Mubariz Khan still did not return to the capital.<sup>38</sup> He confronted Appa Rao of Nuzvid and Subbana Rao of Gundugolam. Nuzvid, Gundu golam, Bellamkonda, Chintapalli, Madoor etc, were the forts situated in the present-day Krishna and Godavari districts. They were controlled

by native Nayaks during those uncertain political ambience. The prolonged conflict witnessed seize, followed by assault and climaxing in victory, though at a heavy cost. At long last, Mubariz Khan set out for the capital for his first extended residence there after over a year. He eventually concluded that all was secure in the interior. The ground reality was, however, quite different. Reports began to reach the coast as early as October 1718, that he planned to return soon.

In 1719, he did return for sure. In Bellamkonda, he recaptured the fort. Within ten days, he arrived at Chintapalli on 29th January, 1719 and caused the fort to be demolished. Towards the end of February, he destroyed the fort at Hyateapilly. In March, he re-crossed Krishna river and destroyed the fort at Madoor (modern day Moturu). The sweep of this campaign constituted a devastating follow up against recalcitrant zamindars and their fortresses.

During the year 1719 CE, the imperial power in Delhi had shifted in an uncertain manner after the liquidation of Farrukhsiyar. The Mughal nobles were competing desperately for regional holdings in the midst of uncertain future of Empire. The post of Viceroy of Deccan had become the most sought-after possession in the empire. Even the attractions of Delhi began to pale before the possibilities of independent rule in the vast tracts of the Deccan sub-empire. Mubariz Khan, already securely established in the eastern half of the Deccan at Hyderabad, thwarted the plans of whoever succeeded Hussain Ali Khan to the Viceroy's seat at Aurangabad. Indeed, Mubariz Khan's nemesis proved to be his old associate, a fellow Turanian noble, the Nizam-ul-Mulk, drawn back repeatedly to the Deccan both by events, but more so because of his attachment to the region.

In 1720, the liquidation of Saiyyad brothers in Delhi was followed by Mohammed Shah assuming the Emperor's role on the Mughal throne. He summoned Nizam-ul-Mulk to Delhi as imperial wazir. Mubariz Khan felt easy as he became completely independent. The Nizam-ul-Mulk, once established at Delhi wasted little time in inquiring into the salaries of Mubariz Khan, his sons and companions. He

dug deeper into the fiscal issues between Hyderabad and centre. Discovering large arrears, the Nizam made a sharp demand upon Mubariz Khan's representative at court (one of his sons) for payment of the revenues of the crown lands at Hyderabad.<sup>39</sup> An altercation followed and the Nizam, unable to force payment, openly showed his displeasure. The enraged wazir, made two subsequent attempts to transfer Mubariz Khan to other governorships; first to Kabul and later, Gujerat (present-day Gujarat, pronounced as 'Gujerat' that time). There the matters rested, for Mubariz Khan, determined to maintain his hold on Hyderabad, could not be dislodged at this late date by imperial orders alone. Only direct military intervention in Hyderabad could accomplish that task.

With the Nizam safely at a distance and distracted at Delhi, Mubariz Khan resumed his uninterrupted campaign against the zamindars at Hyderabad. The governor first repulsed a Maratha assault in the interior. By late 1721 CE, he returned to Krishna, then marched to Rajahmundry and returned by March 1722 to Vijayawada. Disgusted due to lack of progress during prolonged negotiations, Mubariz Khan left abruptly for Hyderabad, carrying with him a number of coastal zamindars. They were all confined in Golconda fort. In June 1722 CE, the news of their incarceration triggered a revolt. The zamindars retaliated by employing harsh measures to terrify peasantry from cultivating their fields. The idea was to deny the flow of revenues whatsoever to the provincial treasury. Mubariz Khan responded equally harshly by directing his fauzdars to destroy the forts of such recalcitrant zamindars. The swiftness and ferocity of the reaction squashed any further challenge to Mubariz Khan's regime.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-1723 CE, Mubariz Khan returned to the coast in person. For some reason, with all his characteristic energy and resources, he continued to camp for more than half a year in front of the Nuzvid fort.<sup>41</sup> It was here that Mubariz Khan was brought, yet again into the vortex of imperial politics. Mohammed Shah appointed Mubariz Khan as the Viceroy of Deccan. Inayat Ullah Khan, his father-in-law urged him to accept the royal appointment. Buttressed by an official appointment, a promised subsidy of 5,00,00,000 rupees and an army to be sent from



Delhi by the Emperor, Mubariz Khan would be in a favourable position to meet the Nizam in a head on engagement, if the need arose.

Unfortunately, Mubariz Khan, about to see the fruition of a project of many years standing, continued to besiege Nuzvid for several weeks, before settling the terms with local chief, Appa Rao. He delayed still further assembling his army, before finally marching to Aurangabad. The upshot of this delay was that Nizam-ul-Mulk too having learnt about Mubariz Khan's appointment had immediately set out for south and reached Aurangabad before his opponent. The final winner was going to be decided in the battle field, soon.

## **9.5 BIRTH OF A NEW KINGDOM**

Message was sent to Nizam ul Mulk asking him to come to Delhi and take up the duties of a minister. Nizam was however not too anxious to occupy the post. His experience of intrigues at the imperial court was disgusting. He had resolved to make himself independent in Deccan. But, as his rivals were removed, he deemed it advisable to consent. So, after regulating his affairs in Deccan, he marched leisurely towards Delhi and arrived there in the middle of 1721 CE. Nizam-ul-Mulk was the most prominent personage in the empire. He enjoyed a reputation for great shrewdness and caution, but also for boldness in seizing and utilizing his opportunity.<sup>42</sup>

In February 1722, Nizam-ul-Mulk was appointed Wazir by the Emperor. He tried to streamline the flow of state funds but faced multiple obstructions. His reforms were torpedoed by a hostile court, especially those who had benefitted due to its mismanagement. Many rivals came in his way, in particular, Koki Padshah, a woman of great charm and intelligence colluded with Emperor's close companions. She demanded large sums under the name of peshkash for the Emperor and for herself. The coterie around the Emperor was busy in carrying insinuations against Nizam-ul-Mulk. Even Haider Ali Khan, the commander of the artillery started meddling in revenue and civil affairs. He was keen to become Wazir, but appointment of Nizam-ul-Mulk shattered his hopes. He turned against Nizam to calm his frustration.<sup>43</sup> But, Nizam-ul-Mulk kept his head low, vision straight and resolve intact while performing his duties.

Nizam-ul-Mulk always had Aurangzeb's model of administration before him and wanted to re-establish the same. In July 1723, he did some frank talking to the Emperor. He told that the system of Izara of the Kalisa lands was very injurious to the country. He went on and added that bribes and peshkash were disgraceful to the Emperor and adverse to his good name. Thirdly, he said that the 'Jizya' ought to be collected as in the days of Aurangzeb. Fourthly, the Mughal Emperor should reciprocate the gesture of Shah Abbas to Humayun, by helping the Shah of Persia in repelling the Afghans.<sup>44</sup>

**Nizam-ul-Mulk always had Aurangzeb's model of administration before him and wanted to re-establish the same**



These puritanical reforms suggested by the new Vazir along Aurangzeb's lines, were considered unrealistic. The dominant nobles in the emperor's court favoured a reversion to Akbar's policy of non-discrimination. Nizam-ul-Mulk's vision to reverse the clock of history back to Aurangzeb's time was not the flavour of those times. The Emperor agreed with Nizam-ul-Mulk in principle, without the bother of even carrying out the reforms. Nizam-ul-Mulk, too smelling his embarrassment, intended to resign from the post of Wazir. However, being a prudent person, he temporised and waited for a suitable opportunity to carry out his designs.

Gribble's description is apt. "A man of this stamp was not likely to be long without enemies, and no sooner had he arrived in Delhi and taken up the duties of his post than intrigues were organized against him. On every side he found himself opposed and thwarted, and there were not wanting unworthy favourites to warn the Emperor that he was only substituting another King maker in the place of those who had been removed. Nizam-ul-Mulk was too wise and shrewd to throw away the substance of power which he had already won in Deccan for the shadow which depended on the fickle favour of a royal master, and accordingly he made up his mind to leave at the earliest opportunity, and never to return in the capacity of a subject."

Emperor too had guessed the intentions of Nizam-ul-Mulk and before getting rid of him, heaped upon him all conceivable favours. Groaning under the weight of the sudden shower of generosity,

Nizam-ul-Mulk decided to abandon the Wazirate.<sup>45</sup> He took leave on the pretext of change of climate and proceeded on a hunting excursion to his Jagir at Muradabad. On reaching Agra, he got the intelligence that Marathas had invaded Malwa and Gujarat which were under his eldest son Gazi-ud-Din's charge. Nizam-ul-Mulk sought permission to take up expedition against Marathas. He got the permission, moved towards Malwa, crossed Narmada and cleared Maratha's incursion. From there, he moved and camped at Sirah near Sironj. There, he got the intelligence from the Deccan about the evil designs of Mubariz Khan. Nizam-ul-Mulk hastily returned towards Deccan and reached Aurangabad in June 1724. As is rightly pointed out by modern historians, "Nizam-ul-Mulk always looked upon the Deccan as the land of his dreams. He had spent most of his youth there and since the dispossession of the Saiyyads, he considered it his own by rights of the Sword." The moment had arrived for Nizam-ul-Mulk to realize his dream.

On reaching Aurangabad in June 1724, the Nizam assembled a large body of Maratha troops under Baji Rao Vishwanath, who organized and supplied his army. After adequate reinforcement, Nizam-ul-Mulk wrote letters to Mubariz Khan. The replies were haughty, proud and non-conciliatory. Nizam-ul-Mulk kept his cool and calm. He again sent several admonitory letters, reminding Mubariz Khan of old obligations. Nothing could change Mubariz's plan and he marched towards Aurangabad, after wasting two months in correspondence. Nizam-ul-Mulk was quite prepared for the final challenge. He too marched out of Aurangabad and encamped by the tank of Jaswant near the city. He wrote more letters to prevent the impending war and save the lives of people, but Mubariz was blinded by the dream of Subedari of Deccan and no remonstrations were of any avail. On 11th October, 1724, a ferocious battle was fought near the town of Shakar Kheda in Berar, about forty miles from Aurangabad. Mubariz Khan was killed as Nizam-ul-Mulk emerged victorious. After a few days, he went to Aurangabad and then to Hyderabad to restore peace and order.

After the victory, the Nizam buried the dead, treated the wounded and

then brought his army back to Aurangabad. In a few days, he set out on a 270 miles march towards Hyderabad city. Khwaza Ahmed Khan, Mubariz Khan's eldest son refused to accept defeat. He sent orders to all his subordinates and the zamindars, to render neither obedience nor revenues to the approaching Nizam. Finally, after a year, Khwaza Ahmed Khan seeing no prospect of any meaningful resistance, surrendered on generous terms. Thus, in early 1725 CE, Hyderabad came under the control of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty for the first time.

The Mughal court at Delhi was shocked but was powerless to do anything, Nizam-ul-Mulk had become more powerful than ever and Mohammed Shah in Delhi had no other choice but to acknowledge the fait accompli. This was done with alacrity and grace. Elephants and jewels were sent to this powerful vassal with the title of Asaf Jah and directions, "To settle the country, repress the turbulent, punish the rebels and cherish the people." This, the victor surely did.



*Asaf jah-1 – Nizam of Hyderabad*

From 1724 CE onwards, Nizam-ul-Mulk laid the foundation of Asaf Jahi dynasty.



**384** *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

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&  
Index



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# Index

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## A

Afaquis 28, 40, 45, 47, 57, 59, 64, 71,  
167, 205, 206, 207, 220, 255,  
267, 340, 341, 347, 348, 349,  
350, 351  
Aftabgir 327, 339  
Agrahas 4, 16, 17, 18  
Al Hamdulillah 24, 36  
Al-Kharaj 77, 89, 90, 102, 129, 133,  
134, 314,  
Amir Hazib 316, 328  
Amir-i-Majlis 324  
Amir-ul-Umra 34, 139, 150, 151  
Atish Khana 153

## B

Badrid-o-Bam 137  
Bakshi 131, 143, 231, 235, 239, 243,  
347  
Barbardaran 139, 151  
Barkat 169, 181  
Bhogini 199, 210, 211  
bighas 112, 124

## C

Caliphs 98, 103, 124, 130, 136, 137  
Chaap 273  
Charminar 231, 311, 346, 356, 357  
chatr 189, 192, 327, 339  
Chisti Order 170, 182, 191  
Chowkis 137, 149  
Cordoba 25

## D

Dabir 131, 139, 143, 242, 273, 344  
Dabir-i-Faramin 261  
Dabir-ul- Muwalik 261  
Dad Mahal 220, 232, 346  
Dakhanis 40, 65, 85, 135, 148, 167,  
168, 191, 195, 294, 365  
Dakshnapatha 14  
Darogha 324, 336, 468  
Darul Shifa 220, 232, 356  
Deshmukh 257, 270, 282, 377  
Deshpandya 271, 282  
Diwan-i-Insha 261, 273  
Diwan-i-Buniyat 263  
Doab 26  
Dwarasamudra 7, 19

## E

Ekasila 3, 15  
El Dorado 16, 28

## F

Firman 131, 280, 304, 305, 387

## G

Gajapati of Orissa 46, 58  
ghanima 115, 127

## H

Habashis 77  
Habshis 40, 65, 85, 148, 195, 207, 336,  
338

Hasil 281, 284, 285, 286

## I

Ikshvakus 3, 15  
 Ilm-I-Safina 164, 176  
 Ilm-I-Sina 164, 176  
 Infidels 17, 73, 185, 225, 226, 247, 250,  
 251, 259  
 Inquiyyad Nama 228, 240  
 Iqta – 133

## J

Jaandars 317  
 Jagir 17, 28, 29, 71, 75, 130, 145, 148,  
 318, 320, 384  
 Jama-i-Khana 138, 150  
 Jambudwipa 3  
 Jawa-i-Kamil 268  
 Jazirah 94, 98, 110, 111, 113  
 Jihad 93, 94, 173, 185, 186  
 Jizyah 77, 89, 95, 98, 115, 127, 128,  
 129, 365

## K

Kakati 3, 15  
 Kali Age 3, 15  
 Kam-naseeb 222  
 Kanhar(Kannada) 15  
 Karkhanas 7, 131, 143, 327, 335, 336  
 Khanaqah Stage 167  
 khandan-i-khilafat 224, 236  
 Kharaji 129, 265, 276, 277  
 Khatt-i-Khurd 268, 280  
 Khaybar settlement 79  
 Khirqa order 179  
 Khushroz 319, 331  
 Kondaveedu rulers 25, 40, 52  
 Kondavidu Reddy 12, 24  
 Kotwal 131, 139, 140, 267, 273

## L

Lashkari(warrior) 59

## M

Ma Saheba 340, 352, 353, 354  
 Madarasa 70, 82  
 Majlis-i-Diwan Dari 260, 272  
 Malik Maqabul 12, 24, 29  
 Mallika-i-Jahan 317  
 Manzar-i-Rabbani 258, 270  
 Meinwar 270, 282  
 Misahah system 94, 106, 107, 108, 109  
 Moorish (Muslim) 142, 154  
 Mufti 131, 143, 208  
 Muharram 99, 336, 344, 346, 348  
 Muhtasib 131, 143  
 Mukhdumah-i-Jahan 317  
 Munniyan 123, 135, 140, 152  
 Musunuri 4, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 165

## N

Nanda dynasty 9, 21  
 Nak bakth 349  
 Naqsabandi order 171  
 Naquibs 316, 328  
 Nauroz 319, 331  
 Nayankaras 7, 19  
 Niybut-i-Khudavandi 258

## O

Omrahs 316, 318  
 Orugallu 8, 13, 14, 20, 21, 24, 25, 52,  
 53, 54, 165, 166

## P

Padmanayaks 6, 13, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,  
 25, 40, 51, 52, 53, 54, 165, 175,  
 211  
 Pagodas 251, 279, 289, 291, 298, 299,  
 304, 305, 306  
 Paragana 61, 123, 135, 148, 257, 259,  
 281, 282  
 Pasma Kash (Thong puller) 367  
 Persian Commonwealth 314, 338  
 Peshawa 255, 267, 272

## 392 *Telangana - Land & People (from 1323 to 1724 CE)*

Pirzadas 169

### Q

Qadi-al-qudat 96

Qadiri Order 171, 183

Qara Quyantulu Dynasty 207, 219

Qasbas 105, 117

Qazis 136, 139, 148

Qiladar 131, 143, 275

### R

Recherla Padmanayaks 12, 22, 23, 24

Royal harem 7, 318, 327, 330, 331

Rudramba 11, 22, 23

### S

Sadr-i-Jahan 136, 148

Sarai 220

Sarsimt 262

Saiyyads 250, 369, 379, 380, 381, 382,  
383, 386, 387, 394

Salalashkar 139

Shah Bandar 255, 267, 274, 289, 305

Shahnama 125, 135, 137

Shamshir-e-Deccan 243, 255

shikar 160, 336

Shikar Gah 138, 150

Shia 87

Simt 262, 274

slaves 30, 40, 43, 44, 111, 120, 146,  
148, 162, 202, 204, 242, 292,  
296, 297, 319, 323, 335, 348

Suharawadi order 171

Sufi 7, 28, 138, 163, 175, 176, 177, 178,  
179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184,  
185, 186, 187, 188, 191, 192,  
193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 202,  
212, 214, 219, 350

Sunni 87

Syphilis 148, 160, 163

### T

Tahsil(Taluq) 147, 449, 450, 465

Takht-e-Firoza 8, 20

Taifa stage 167

Tarika stage 167

Taraf, a province (or Suba) 44

The rightly guided Caliphs 136

Tilanga 14, 16, 17, 18

Tilang country 2, 14

Telingana 2

Tilinga 3, 15, 16, 18

### U

urdu 7, 200

Ushri 117, 129, 265, 276, 277

### V

Varaha 2, 14, 18

Vetala 10, 21, 22

### W

wakil-i-dar 316, 328

Wakil-i-Saltanat 129, 140, 141, 144

Wazir 85, 106, 118, 119, 131, 143, 145,  
229, 349, 392, 393

### Y

Yavanas 4, 14, 16, 18

Yazid 87, 99, 100, 110

### Z

Zaban-i-Dilli 200

Zakat 113, 115, 125, 126, 127, 278

Zalim(cruellest) 51, 63

Zamindar 257, 271, 282, 283, 309,

Zimmi 127, 267, 278, 279

