



THE QUTBSHAHI HYDERABAD AS DESCRIBED BY TRAVELLERS AND HISTORIANS

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Abstract :

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the 5th ruler of the Qutbshahi dynasty laid foundation of the Hyderabad city in 999 H./1590-91 A.D., exactly 400 years ago. There were many factors which are believed to have led to the foundation of the city of Hyderabad. The most important factor which is well known to each and every one but controversial is that Muhammed Quli after constructing the new city named it Bhagyanagar after the name of his beloved Bhagmati. Khafi Khan in Muntakhabul Lubab, Mustaid Khan Saqi in Maasir-i-Alongiri and Tavernier in Tavernier's travels in India have mentioned this tradition of founding of Bhagyanagar by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah. Among these historians and traveller two belonged to the Mughal empire and the last was a famous French traveller. In this way none of them had any connection with the Qutbshahi kingdom. Abdul Waheed Bidri in the book, 'Tarikh-i-Qutbshahi' which is an authentic history of that period has not mentioned this legend at all. He states that once Muhammad Quli went to Chichlam for the purpose of hunting and that place attracted him very much which he selected for his new city. The author of 'Haqiqat-ul-Alami says "owing to the ever-increasing population and congestion the atmosphere was being infected and the people had to face the danger of the diseases". As such the attention of the king was drawn for the construction of the new city. The one important factor for constructing the new city might be that the responsibilities and duties of the Government of a large kingdom was increasing day by day. Due to the increased Government activities the former capital, Golconda was insufficient to administer effectively. For the envoys of various foreign countries who visited Golconda, large and special arrangements were required to be made for their reception and their stay for longer periods. Besides, foreign scholars and merchants used to visit Golconda in large numbers. But the most important factor appears to be is that Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah who was a king of very high artistic and aesthetic taste was also anxious to build a splendid and civilised city. Whatever may be the factor for the construction of Bhagyanagar or Hyderabad city, it is a fact that this new city was matchless in the entire sub continent due to some specialities of different kinds.

KEYWORDS : construction of Bhagyanagar , famous French traveler.

INTRODUCTION :

The foundation stone of Charminar was the starting point for the construction of the new city of Hyderabad. From the chronogram "Ya hafiz" (999 H/1590-91 A.D.), the date of the construction of Charminar and the starting date for the construction of the city may be arrived at. This construction of the new city continued for a period of 7 years and from chronogram "Farkhundabunyad" (1006 H/ 1597 A.D.) the closing date of the construction of the city may be worked out². But as a matter of fact the construction of royal palaces and other buildings continued till the fall of Golconda i.e. 1687 A.D.

Charminar is one of the finest examples of the medieval architecture. Thevenot, the French traveller praises the architecture of Charminar very much. After describing the style of architecture and internal and outer details of the building he says, "nothing in the town seems so lovely as the outside of the building"³. The city of Hyderabad was constructed in a very planned way. For the construction of the city certain principles and conditions were under consideration so that the city might be beautiful and attractive and all kinds of amenities that were necessary for the good living might be provided for. About markets, shops and other buildings of the city Mir Alam furnishes the following information "four markets were established in the city when the construction of Charminar was taken up. Many bazars had shaded trees. The canals were also provided in some bazars. Most of the shops had porticoes for the protection of customers from rains and hot sun. There were more than 14 thousand shops in the market Apart from that, public baths, monasteries, schools, mosques, free kitchens, guest houses and Caravan sarais were built. The number of such buildings in the city were nearly 12 thousand"⁴. Tavernier, Who had visited Qutbshahi kingdom more than once writes in his book that there were four or five Caravan Sarais within the city itself and they were all double storied buildings.⁵ A big hospital was also established for the treatment of patients. The author of the "Tarikh-i-Zafra" mentions that royal physician and bone setters were in this hospital, Dar-ul-shifa. The patients were supplied with Wines and diet free of costs.⁶

The Mecca Masjid of Hyderabad is one of the magnificent mosques of the world. The successor of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah laid foundation of this grand mosque. For the construction of this great mosque thousands of labourers worked for a very long period. Tavernier saw this mosque when it was incomplete and he remarked "Had it been finished in all respects it had excelled all the boldest structures in Asia".⁷

A large number of splendid and beautiful palaces were constructed in Hyderabad for the residential purpose of Qutbshahi rulers and their families which added to the beauty and grandeur of the city. Daulat Khan-i-Ali was a collection of palaces such as Sajan Mahal, Hina Mahal etc. It was constructed in the centre of the city. Apart from Daulat Khan-i-Ali, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah got constructed Dad Mahal for the administration of justice and redressal of grievances. It had four storeys. Among the buildings constructed by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah the most magnificent was Khudadad Mahal which had eight storeies. As every storey of that palace was very spacious and extensive, every storey was named separately. Muhammad Quli after selecting a spacious and airy place of land got constructed a three-storied palace called Koh-i-Tur where he used to go to spend his time in luxury and comfort. This palace was located where the present Falaknuma palace now exists. Muhammad Quli has written poems on his palaces, buildings and gardens which serve as an important first hand information source. His successor Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah inherited the taste for the construction of buildings from his uncle. He also got constructed many palaces. During the period of Abdul Qutb Shah many palaces and big buildings were constructed. Abul Hasan Tana Shah, the last ruler got constructed Char Mahal only 4 years earlier before the fall of Golconda. Apart from constructing palaces and buildings the rulers of Qutb Shahi dynasty planted innumerable gardens in the entire city. Rafiuddin Sherazi in his book "Tazkirat-ul-Muluk", which he compiled in 1017 H/1608 A.D. says, "A large city with magnificent mansions was founded, every one of which had a large garden attached to it. Some of the trees in these gardens were so tall that they seemed to touch the very sky. Both bazars and houses were so full of trees that the whole city looks like one garden (bagh) and there is such a variety of fruits from Khurasan and Portugal that they have lost all their worth".⁸

The opinion of the following travellers and historians who had no connection with Qutbshahi dynasty should be considered as authentic and impartial. From their writings the picture of a beautiful and clean city emerges which had magnificent palaces, grand buildings and beautiful gardens in it. Muhammad Qasim Farishta who was a contemporary to Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah was well aware of

the Mughal cities of Agra and Lahore and a new city of Fatehpur Sikri founded by Akbar. But in spite of that he expresses the following opinion about Hyderabad.

"It is a city which, in respect of its elegance and charm, can never be found in the whole of India from North to South and from East to West".⁹

The French traveller, Thevenot reached Hyderabad in April 1666 A.D. and he stayed at Hyderabad for a period of 8 months. Abdullah Qutb Shah was the ruler during that period. The major portion of the third volume of his travels contains the detailed description of the rulers and the Golconda kingdom. He has praised very much the royal palaces, buildings, gardens and pleasant atmosphere of Hyderabad. According to another famous French traveller, Tavernier who had visited Golconda more than once, "the city has been planned with a good taste and it has good roads and highways"¹⁰. The Mughal historians have also expressed very high opinion about the city of Hyderabad. Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan writes in *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*. It is a very pleasant place, delightful to the body and the mind. The cultivated area is more extensive than fancy can picture, the houses are higher than one can imagine, the air is so moist, the fountains so pure and flowing, and the verdure so fresh that you may think that the flowers and herbs of the land have the colour of emerald and ruby". The Bhimsen book *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha* is the authentic contemporary history of Aurangzeb's Deccan campaigns. He was the eye witness of some of the important events and campaigns of the Deccan during the period of Aurangzeb. He came to Hyderabad a little while ago before the fall of Golconda. He had the opportunity to see Abul Hasan Tana Shah twice. He has given a detailed account of the palace of Abul Hasan Tana Shah in his book. He writes, "How can I give the description of the palace of this ruler? It is a huge wooden building and is so big and massive that if a man starts seeing it in the morning he will not be able to go through it till evening. It is no wonder that if a man goes alone there he gets lost. But the palaces of the old owner, which are known as Dad mahal are not so attractive. But the building whose foundation was laid down by Qutbul Mulk Abul Hasan on the banks of the river is quite attractive. There are four palaces, facing each other, and in the centre is erected a big tank. This tank is so big that boating is done in it for the sake of pleasure and that he used to enjoy boating in the water of that tank from evening till midnight. He used to get that entire area properly illuminated and having all the provisions at hand he used to gain full pleasure from those luxuries".¹² Apart from this Bhimsen had made mention of some other royal palaces and the famous monument of Charminar.

Not to speak of a common traveller or a historian even the Mughal princes were greatly impressed and struck by the grandeur and magnificence of the royal palaces. After the annexation of Golconda in the Mughal empire Prince Kambakhsh was made the subedar of Hyderabad. He ordered for the construction of a separate haveli for his residence at Hyderabad. Having received this information Aurangzeb wrote to the prince that in the presence of various Qutbshahi palaces at Hyderabad, construction of a separate haveli would show sheer extravagance. Kambakhsh replied that to stay in the Qutbshahi palace was more extravagant as they were so large and spacious that the question of their maintenance aside, it was not possible to light them up.¹³

Now we do not find any existence of grand and splendid palaces of the Qutbshahi ruler in Hyderabad. Even their vestiges are not available to look at. The constant Mughal onslaught badly damaged them and gradually their remains disappeared from the surface of the earth.

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