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## CULTURAL SYNTHESIS IN DECCAN DURING THE QUTB SHAHI PERIOD - (1518-1687)

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**Abstract:** The Qutb Shahis of Golconda did not show any discrimination in appointments to the public services based on religion, caste and creed. The Hindus and Muslims were equally eligible to all the posts starting from the lowest rank of a clerk, to that of the highest post of Prime Minister. The Sufis of Golconda contributed richly towards the formation of a society based on communal harmony. They preached and practiced tolerance in the folds of Islam. The policy of the Qutb Shahi government, towards Hindu pilgrims, was every clear and liberal. The government also granted lands to the trust boards to maintain temples in the kingdom. Music and Dance were also encouraged and patronized by the rulers. A strong Hindu influence is perceptible on some of the mosques constructed by the rulers. The art of the Qutb Shahi era was greatly inspired by Iranian art and traditions.

**Keywords:** Deccani Culture, Sufi, Communal Harmony, Nauroz' and Kuchipudi.

### Introduction

The Qutb Shahi Sultans ruled over a society which comprised of people of different origins, different faiths and different languages. In order to bring harmony in the kingdom, the rulers extended equal treatment and respect to all their subjects irrespective of their religion, class and creed. The people enjoyed not only freedom of worship, but also occupied administrative positions at different levels. The rulers thus promoted religious harmony in the society. The harmony is also known as toleration. It is recognition of right of others in the religious matters, or liberty to uphold one's religious beliefs without any interference and discrimination. The rulers were successful in forging unity in the society and promoted harmony and secularism in the State which became popular as 'Deccani Culture'.

### Appointment of Hindus in the State Services

The Qutb Shahi rulers did not show any discrimination in appointments to the public services based on religion, caste and creed. The Hindus and Muslims were equally eligible to all the posts starting from the lowest rank of a clerk, to that of the highest post of Prime Minister. Men of caliber were given preference and assigned important jobs. The instances of Rama Raju, under Sulthan Quli Qutb-Ul-Mulk, Jagadev Rao under Jamshid Quli, Murahari Rao alias Rai Rao under Ibrahim Qutb Shah and Akkanna and Madanna under Abul Hassan are noteworthy. These people of talent and ability could rise to the highest position, under the enlightened rule of the Qutb Shahi Sultans, next to the king in the State.

### Contribution of Sufi Saints to Religious Harmony

The Sufis of Golconda contributed richly towards the formation of a society based on communal harmony. They preached and practiced tolerance in the folds of Islam. Their devotees belonged to all religions and sects. The Hindus believed in them as much as Muslims. For example, when Shah Chirag came and settled down at Chichalam, there were no Muslims in the village. The Hindus, more so of Brahmins of the village looked after him and provided him with all facilities. His living among them, accepting their offers, confirms the liberal attitude of the Sufis towards Hindus and also the Hindus towards Sufis. It was just not one Sufi saint; the practice was common to all. Even now, their dargahs are the meeting places of the people of all religions. The Hindus fully or partially built most dargahs. For example, A Hindu named Kumar Raju built the outer Dalan of Meer Momin's tomb.

### Fairs and Festivals-Communal Harmony

Fairs are the faces of devotion with periodical marketing centers where fancy and other articles are available for sale. Festivals are the days / times of the religious social merriment. These provide occasion to develop mutual understanding, unity and harmony among the different sections of the people.

Mahakali Jatara in the name of Mankal Maisaram was performed annually during the Qutb Shahi rule. It seems that the word Mahakali becomes Mankal and the place name Mahesvaram becomes Maisaram due to the Persian influence on local people. The Muslim ruler Abul Hasan Qutb Shah had extended his support to the Hindu temple Mankal Maisaram by the influence of his Hindu Ministers Akkanna and Madanna. The common people including Muslims in and around Mankal Maisaram used to attend the Jatara with Hindu people side by side. According to the inscriptional sources, Abul Hasan also attended the Jatara along with Akkanna and Madanna to pay homage to the Goddess Mahakali.



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Abul Hassan Qutb Shah donated Ten Thousand Hons for the completion of Hindu Uddemarri temples, and also participated in the celebrations of Uddemarri Jatara with Hindus. The inscription appearing in Telugu and Persian languages at Podur Siva temple is evidence to say that Muslim people attended the Podur Jatara. By the consent of Abul Hasan, Akkanna and Madanna granted three villages for the maintenance of this temple. A royal farman in Persian language with the signature of Abul Hasan indicates that he gave consent to erect Sri Venkatesvara temple at Golluru on the request of Akkanna and Madanna. The Sultan himself paid homage to Sri Venkatesvara by offering 'Nivedya' in Hindu fashion. Muslim people also used to attend this Golluru Jatara.

The Bonala Pandaga was also celebrated in Telangana region that to at Secunderabad, known as Mahankali Bonala Pandaga with religious fervor. According to an anonymous writer of the contemporary period, in some places there held an annual gathering, somewhat like country fair which is called 'Teertham' with a great **assemblage** of people in honor of their idols which are very numerous, some with extraordinary human figures, with many arms and heads. Another famous tribal (Hindu) festival was Sammakka and Saramma jatara celebrated in February once in a couple of years at Tadvai mandal in Warangal District with pomp and gay.

Basant or Vasant Utsav is an ancient Hindu festival celebrated to mark the change in season in the middle of March and ending at the end of May. This festival gave much scope for the mutual understanding and mingling of people of different social groups. The Reddies and Rayas who ruled Andhradesa during 14-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, also encouraged the celebration of this festival, Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah also celebrated this festival with much gay, who composed beautiful poetry to welcome the season and enjoyed it in accompaniment of music and mirth. Along with the king, his nobles with their retinue also enjoyed it and this had percolated down to the masses living in lanes and streets, where both Hindus and Muslims sang, danced and enjoyed the season.

All the people enjoyed this special occasion even though they believed in different faiths and spoke different languages. The kings and nobles took keen interest in this festival and it was celebrated year after year on a grand scale. Wazir Hasan, the author of the drama Chand Bibi Sultana, while describing this festival, mentioned how it was celebrated enthusiastically by the pretty wheat complexioned damsels of Telangana near the Lungur Houze of Golconda, while the members of the royal family and nobles looked at them from the roofs and balconies of their palaces.

During the period of Abul Hasan Tanashah, this festival gained a great significance with the construction of a temple at Bhadrachalam by Kancherla Gopanna, a revenue official of Palvancha Pargana. The people used to visit Sri Rama temple at Bhadrachalam and witness the divine marriage of sita and Rama. Abul Hasan, the Golconda king started the practice of sending 'Mutyala Talambralu' every year at the time of Sri Rama Navami. Further, he donated three villages i.e., Bhadrachalam, Palvancha and Sankaragiripatti for its maintenance.

The policy of the Qutb Shahi government, towards Hindu pilgrims, was every clear and liberal. The Hindus, including those from other parts of India, were allowed to visit their holy places in the kingdom of Golconda without any fear and hindrance. There was no pilgrim tax at any time during the Qutb Shahi period for visiting any temple. Tavernier, a French traveler, describes his meeting with a party of 4,000 pilgrims, in September 1652, going from Burhampur to some temples in the south. He met another procession of 2,000 persons at Daulatabad who were on their way from Tatta to Tirupati. Tavernier says that Tirupati was considered as one of the most holy places of India.

A religious festival serves two purposes i.e., social and religious. Idd for example, starts with prayers, a purely religious duty, but it was also an occasion to celebrate. The wearing of new clothes, preparation of sweets, meeting people and visiting relatives and friends are all social activities.

Dr. Zore writes in his book entitled Sultan Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah used to celebrate fourteen festivals in a year wherein not only the king, and his nobles but also the people at large took keen interest. Some of these comprised of Idd-e Ramzan, Shab-e-Barat, Shab-e-Meraj and birth-day of Sultan Mohammed etc. The festivals like Nauroz and Birth day of Sultan were considered utmost important which were celebrated by both the Hindus and Muslims. The policy that the Qutb Shahies adopted was simple to understand. They never compelled any one to participate in a purely religious duty if he did not like to do so. Instead, they universalized the social traditions of the religious festivals and invited people irrespective of religion, caste and creed to participate in them.

Moharram was observed with great devotion in Deccan during the Qutb Shahi times. The king had more than thirty palaces in the capital and each of them competed with the other in these arrangements. In fact, the Moharram is not a festival. It is a mourning time. Hence, the drinking of wine as well as eating meat, cutting of hair, even the sale and purchase of betel-leaf, was prohibited for



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fifteen days. It is further specifically stated that the first ten days of Moharram were held sacred not only by the Muslims, Shias and the Sunnis, but also by the Hindu.

According to Prof. H. K. Sherwani, there are different kinds of Telugu songs, connected with the Moharram festival, such as Jang nama, Panch thani pak and Murtiyas, which mean respectively the story connected with the war, the five sacred personalities and the dirges. These are his words; "The gusto with which these songs are sung to this day by the villagers is most remarkable... There is no doubt that the songs are the result of the mutual understanding between the two great sections of Hindus and Muslims. Prof. K. Ruknuddin says about the concept of integration that "though historically and culturally Moharram belongs to Muslims, all over the world, the people in Deccan come together to celebrate Moharram festival irrespective of their caste and creed. From the beginning to the end, each family in the village feels happy and enjoys the festival with a feeling of piety. Mostly, non-Muslims lift the Peerilu. Those who lift savari, they tried to be pure or tidy for these ten days. They do not touch meat and alcohol. They offer prasadam, play around Alva, and play drum and dress up in different characters. Village people make arrangements for money for this occasion" thus, Moharram festival is an example of integration which brings Hindu and Muslim people together.

Essentially 'Nauroz' is the festival of spring, just like the Basant. In fact, it seems that the Muslims have taken a leaf out of the calendar of Hindu festivals... The similarity of Nauroz with Basant was obvious in many respects as both were festivals of the spring and both were essentially Aryan in their origin. In response to the secularism shown by the king and his Persian nobles towards the native festivals, the people in general took active part in this festival in the same manner as they enjoyed the Basant. This festival of the season was marked with full enjoyment, including music and dance and social gatherings.

The religious festivals celebrated during the Qutb Shahi Period served as an instrument to achieve the purpose around which the religious policy of the Qutb Shahis was drawn. They helped them to create harmony in society sharing each other's joy and sorrows tolerating each other's religious traditions, beliefs and customs. It speaks of the wisdom of the Qutb Shahis that they were successful in using these occasions without hurting the feelings of any section of the society. They neither interfered in the established traditions of the festivals nor tried to interfere in the religious functions. Instead, they created a culture around them which was flexible in nature and could accommodate the socio-religious values, customs and traditions of all those who constituted the Golconda society.

### Donations to Hindu Temples and Persons

The temples got patronage from the benevolent Qutb Shahi rulers as they consolidated their rule; they found it expedient to adopt a policy of toleration, and even of encouragement to Hinduism and the Hindu subjects. No doubt, we notice cases of destruction of temples and construction of mosques in their places but they were few and on the other hand, there are several cases of kings and their subordinates donating liberally for temples.

The Qutb Shahi government also granted lands to the trust boards to maintain temples in the kingdom. We have an inscription dated A.D. 1530 at Kondapally of Bezwada Taluq, Krishna District, issued by Qutb-ul-Mulk. It deals with the grant of 26 places of land (Stalamulu) each to Kavuru and Kidrabad to maintain the trust house of a temple (not known).

Kollampudi village inscription of Narsaraopet Taluq, Guntur District by Kollampudi Singaraju deals with the construction of Nilakantesvara temple for merit to his parents in A.D. 1565.<sup>12</sup> Another Eepuru village inscription of Vinukonda Taluq, Prakasham District dated 1574 A.D. mentions that one Chennappa, donated Kesaripalakuchela land to meet the expenditure of Alladanatha temple's Dasami festival for every year.

Some of the temples were also repaired and some Hindus got donations from the Qutb Shahi government. It is confirmed by an inscription found at Jugutti village, Tanuku Taluq, East Godavari District by the order of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah, that one Somesvarudu and his auntie Laccamma arranged to renovate the temple and consecrated Arcaka idol of Lord Vasuki by Ravi Somalingam in A.D.1583. Another example is that Abdullah Qutb Shah granted a field as Amaram in the village of Cundi, situated in Kandukuri Sima to a Hindu Person belonging to the Valmiki caste in order that "he may keep in good repair the temples in our Sima".

An inscription from Jagarlamudi village, Tenali Taluq, Guntur District of the period of Mohammed Quli registers donation of the land for the maintenance of Sri Sangamesvara temple. And another inscription found at the temple in Simhachelam village, Vishakapatnam Mandal records the grant by Sarvappa Asvarayudu, who donated Narva village lands for the maintenance of Simhadri Narasimha Swamy temple, in A.D. 1604.



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An inscription found at Macherla village, Guntur Mandal registers the grant of a land by Ramadaka Rama Chandrudu, for the maintenance of Chennakesava Swami temple, in A.D. 1619. Another inscription of Kuvvam village, Chengalpattu District (T.N) deals with the donation of banana tope of Lepakshi village, Hindupur Taluq Ananthapur District to Tervikkolesvara Swamy temple for its maintenance, in A.D. 1670. An inscription registers the grant of land by the local Reddies and Karunams for the maintenance of Satna Nandeswara Swami temple of the same village.

Bhadrachalam temple owes its origin to Gopanna (Ramadasu) whose famous story reveals the construction of the temple, his imprisonment in Golconda and his release. Tanashah had endowed three villages, Bhadrachalam, Palvancha and Sankaragiri patti for the maintenance of the temple. It was founded in March 1652. Abul Hassan Tanishah on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami started the practice of sending Mutyalatalambralu every year.

The three villages, Bogavaram, Cherukuru and Veerannapatnam were endowed to Bramaramba Mallesvara Swami temple of Srisailem for its maintenance, which is situated on the bank of Krishna. A Farman (18<sup>th</sup> February 1684) of Abul Hasan Tanashah, confirms the award of jagir assignment to Bhadrachalam temple and Bramaramba Mallesvara Swami temple situated on the banks of Godavari and Krishna rivers respectively resounds the magnanimity of his heart.

Asvarao, a general of Mohammed Quli, donated Srikurmam to the temple of Kurmanatha under the orders of the king. Hasan Beg, the son of the Sultan, ordered the construction of a sluice and stone steps to the tank attached to the temple at Palivela, East Godavari District, besides planting a Palmyra grove.

We have an interesting example of stipend in cash by the Qutb Shahi government to temples in the State. Tareeq-e-zafra refers to Rs. 64,925 was allocated for the temples in the State as stipend for the year A.D.1685-1686 and it might have been continued for the year of A.D.1686-1687 also.

Not only temples, but also 'Agraharas' were granted to Brahmins by the rulers and their subordinates. One Lal Khan presented Uppunutula village as an Agrahara to three Brahmins for the religious merit of Mohammed Quli Padsayaningar, the act of piety of Seku Isa (Sheikh Isa). Mir Jumla Amir Mohammed Sayyed Nawab granted Madhurapura in the Krishna District as an Agrahara to a Brahmin for having performed the sarvatomukha yajna at the instance of Mangalagiri pantulu. Sultan Abdullah granted a plot of land as Inam to Appakonda, belonging to a village situated in the Subah of Hyderabad.

### Water Sheds

The maintenance of water sheds, to provide drinking water was an absolute necessity during the period is evident by a number of references in the contemporary inscriptions. To perpetuate this charity, the donors entrusted their management to the temples by making a permanent land or monetary endowment for the purpose.

Some of the donors who instituted watershed service through the temple also made provision for planting and raising of trees, probably, intended to give shade to the people who come for water. An inscription of Ghanpur village of Vanaparathi Taluq, Mahabubnagar District says one Malik, son of Yar Ali had dug out a well for drinking water to the village people in A.D.1528 during the period of Qutb-ul-Mulk. Another inscription of Satyaveedu village of Chittoor District deals with a well dug out by Peta Krishan Bhupathi for drinking water to the above village people. One Vemula Ragavayya, according to an inscription from Kondapadu village (Guntur District) granted a piece of land to the temple and another piece to Tammala Veeraiah in that village as Chalivendra-Manya for constructing some well, supplying water to the water-shed or Chalipandali and raising 100 trees, in the year A.D.1576.

Another inscription of Sanigaram village of Husnabad Taluq, Karimnagar District issued by Syed Muzaffer, a local chief by the order of Abdullah Qutb Shah mentions the construction of a dam on Peddacheruvu in A.D.1664 and 540 Hons were spent for this construction.

In addition to this, Qutb Shahis and their subordinates arranged to dig wells to cater to the needs of drinking water in the kingdom to get merits and sacred benefits. We have some inscriptional evidence that Eepuru village inscription of Tenali Taluq, Guntur District deals with the well for drinking water to said village people, which was dug out by Mokhasai Agashiram Saheb in A.D.1668.

Muslim nobles had granting villages for the upkeep of choultries, digging wells. They also constructed sluices for the benefit of the people and also for the merit of themselves and their Kings. For example, Hassan Baig, a member of the royal family, ordered the



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construction of a sluice and stone steps to the tank attached to the temple at Palivelpula, East Godavari District besides planting Palmyra grove.

## Literature

The literature of the period both in native languages and languages like Persian and Arabic also reflect the religious and cultural synthesis.

## Persian

The Muslim population, which constituted the ruling class, was naturally set on the road to literary progress through Persian, the official language of the State. The Hindu subjects especially the upper and middle classes, began to learn Persian simultaneously with the local languages, so that they might build their official career and attain high positions in the administration.

## Telugu

The Qutb Shahi Sultans belonged to Turkey tribe of Persian nation, Persian was their mother language. Even though, they adopted Telugu as their second mother language. Though their official language was Persian. Persian, Deccani Urdu and Telugu literature developed simultaneously in a congenial atmosphere under the Qutb Shahi Rule. Telugu language rose to a high pinnacle of glory.

Maringanti Sri Rangacharya and his family had flourished in the kingdom of Gloconda under the rule of Qutb Shahi kings during 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Appalacharya, Sri Nrusimha, Narsingappa, Konetiraya, Jagannatha, Rangappa, Venkatacharya are said to be the scholars, poets and authors of that family. One person, Appalacharya is referred to in 'Yayati Caritra' of Ponnaganti Telaganna in which, it is said that Appalacharya had introduced a poet named Telaganna to Ameen Khan. The other person Jagannatha is referred to in a book called 'Rajaniti Ratnakara' in which he was mentioned as 'Sata Avadhana' and was honored with 'Kanakabhishekam'.

Ponnaganti Telaganna lived during 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He belonged to a town called Potla Cheruvu, the present Patancheruvu in Medak District. Ameen Khan, a feudal Lord of the king of Golconda, patronized Telaganna. It appears that Ameen Khan, his sons and his wives also had a natural taste for Telugu language and literature. Telaganna had rightly dedicated his work 'Yayaticaritra' to Ameen Khan. In return, he was profusely rewarded with silk clothes, gold ornaments, gold coins etc.

A poet named Saarangu Tammayya lived in the later part of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when Mohammed Qutb Shah was ruling the kingdom. This poet appears to have had contact with the ruler. He dedicated his work 'Vajayanti Vilasam' to his favorite God Sri Rama.

Among the Sultans of this dynasty, Ibrahim Qutb Shah (A.D.1550-1580) had given a great encouragement to the Telugu poets. When Ibrahim Qutb Shah was at Vijayanagara during his exile, he developed a taste for Telugu Literature. After he came to power at Golconda, he patronized Telugu poets. Telugu poets praised him as Malkibharam and Ibharam. Kandukuri Rudrakavi was a great poet during that period. The first work of Rudrakavi is Nirankusopakhyanam and it was written during the reign of Ibrahim Qutb Shah. The second work of Rudrakavi is 'Sugreeva Vijayam'. This is a 'Yakshaganam'. The third work of Rudrakavi is Kandukuri Janardhanasatakam. Ibrahim Qutb Shah donated him Chintalapalem Agraharam. This Agraharam is in the present Prakasham District of Andhra Pradesh. Addanki Gangadhara Kavi also lived in the court of Ibrahim Qutb Shah, Gangadhara Kavi had composed 'Tapati samvaranopakhyanam'. Shankara Kavi had written Harischandropakhyanam. He said that he got poetry by the grace of God 'Sasankamouli' i.e., Siva. He dedicated his work to Eduri Ellaiah. At the end of this work, there is a reference that 'Kutupanamalak' made Eduri Ellaiah as a village officer of Korkolanu, which was in Jalliseema. The historians decided that 'Kutupanamalak' was the King Qutb Shah of Golconda. Inscriptions and village 'Kaifiats' were also recorded in Telugu language during this period.

In this way, the Qutb Shahi kings of Golconda became patrons of Telugu literature directly or indirectly. Perhaps, this was the reason, why Telugu literature had survived in Telangana, even during the rule of Mohammadans, though their mother tongue was not Telugu.

## Music and Dance

Music and Dance were also encouraged and patronized by the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Methwold, a contemporary English official of the East India Company enchanted by the dance that he saw (they must have been the 'Kathakali' and the 'Kuchipudi' variety) and said that "they were admirable to behold and impossible to express in words" but avers that music and dance had become the monopoly of the prostitutes. Evidently, the best among the dancers had to dance before the king or the provincial governors, as the case might be, at least once a year. They were also invited to sing or dance not merely at social functions such as wedding or circumcision but also



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when large vessels arrived at a port, and even at the celebrations of religious festivals such as the month-long celebrations of the Prophet's Birthday.

Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah was precursor in patronizing music amongst all the Qutb Shahi rulers. Besides encouraging musicians, he even penned poems on Raga Ragini systems and they can be gleaned from his collection 'Kulliyat' that is now preserved at Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad. Mohammed Quli too frequently conducted 'Shaheries' (private evening parties especially with music) in his palace. Eminent singers and dancers used to exhibit their talents much to the delight of the audience. The famous musician who adorned his court was Meer Jumla Mohammed Ameen-ul- Mulk.

Quli Qutb Shah, in his 'Kulliyat', makes frequent mention of music and dance during the celebrations of various festivals like Basant, Mirag-ki-Id and Nauroz etc.

In the words of Prof. Sadiq Naqvi "Mohammed Quli used to organize music concerts in which master musicians from different parts of the kingdom, mostly Hindus, were invited to participate. He in person used to preside over these concerts and reward the musicians richly. On one occasion, the famous 'Vaggeyakara Kshetrayya' participated in a concert. He defeated the musicians in the Sultan's service and was awarded a sum of money as an 'Inam' for his performance. He then composed Padas praising Sultan Quli."

Ibrahim Qutb Shah was a great lover of music. A Persian poet Hazi Abarkul states that the golden canopy erected at the Golconda palace of Ibrahim resounded with the music of flute, harp, lute and guitar.

The Kuchipudi and Kathakali styles of dance were popular in Andhra even prior to the advent of Qutb Shahis. Kuchipudi is a dance-drama. It was in A.D.1678 that the last Sultan of Qutb Shahi dynasty Tanashah and his Prime Minister Madanna were at Kuchipudi village on their way from Vijayawada to Masulipatnam. It was in the late night that the Sultan heard the beat of 'mrdangam' and vocal music and, on enquiry he was informed that the local boys were dancing in front of a temple. Sultan desired that the boys should be asked to give their performance before him. The Sultan was so delighted to see the dance and then he granted the entire village of Kuchipudi to the Brahmin family who dedicated their lives to this art. It was due to such liberal patronage that the Kuchipudi style of dance is still alive in Andhra region. The successors of those families are still living in the village today, enjoying the lands and devoting themselves to the art of dance.

It is interesting to note here about the existence of Bhagmati and Ragamati the two great court dancers who kept up the aesthetic excellence of dance in the Qutb Shahi era. According to Tavernier, "nearly twenty thousand dancers dwelled in the court of Abdullah Qutb Shah." Premamati and Taramati, the two Hindu dexterous dancers flourished during this period and the pleased Sultan constructed two marvelous mansions (close to the Golconda fort) for these dancers. The existence of two cites i.e., Taramatipeta situated in between Hyderabad-Vijayawada Road and Premamatipeta near Shirampalli (near Hyderabad) stands as a testimony to the secular cultural amalgam that sprouted at Golconda. Abul Hasan deserves praise for achieving crowning glory for the field of dance and justifiably he earned the suffixing surname Tanashah (The child saint or the king of taste) due to his utmost devotion to arts. Taramati, the celebrated dancer continued to be the Qutb Shahi court dancer continuously for five years from A.D.1672-1677. Abul Hasan Tanashah's stately mansion daily reverberated with the tinkling of her anklets. According to a cultural review of Natyakala, it is said that "the dancer, who's, feet never touched the ground," making her way each day for five years from the roof of her house to the king's palace on a mountaintop in dancing was on a tight rope half mile long. The tombs of Premamati and Taramati, the two dancing girls of the Qutb Shahi court near Golconda fort, would confirm the above statement.

Qutb Shahis also cultivated a taste for performing arts. During this period, local dance like Phukri-Phu performed by the Banjaras while flyingkits. as well as the physical feats executed by the Nats formed as an important feature of the Golconda festivity.

Thus, music and dance got high place among the fourteen 'vidyas' and sixty-four arts of the day and were valued by all sections of medieval Andhradesa. Like the expression of devotion to the god by the Hindus, through their art forms of music and dance, the Muslims also prayed their 'Allah' through Nats and Qawwalis with music. Throughout this period, music played a prominent role in the religious ceremonies of Sufis. Many musicians (Qawwals sing Qawwalis) from far-off countries thronged to this state. Sufi Urs, which is being, conducted even today stands as a testimony to the fact that music was not considered a taboo under the Qutb Shahi regime.

### Paintings

A distinct style of painting took shape, borrowing various features from Indian Persian and western painting styles during the Qutb Shahi period. Many remarkable paintings of the Qutb Shahi era have survived and they speak of the sophisticated taste and the



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high standard of life attained during the period. They vividly depict daily life and culture in various facets such as profiles of the Sultans, nobility, people, glimpses of the royal traditions, dresses and ornaments worn, style of living, manners, leisure and pass-time features, arms, armor, and marching of processions etc.

As stated by Dr. M.A.Naem,” the Qutb Shahi culture was based on the shiah cultural pattern of the fifteenth century Turkman and Iran. Considering Qutb Shah’s ethnic identity to their Turkman heritage, it is but natural that the roots of the Golconda school of painting also lie in the art of the fifteenth century Tabriz and Baghdad. Moreover, the impact of the Vijayanagara art is also perceptible in some of these paintings. These Golconda paintings represent the Persian orientation of the Qutb Shahis, which they derived from their native land Persia. They are still regarded as masterpieces, because, they favored Indian theme in Persianized colors. The Qutb Shahi paintings were appreciated in most of the Western Countries and Persia was the first country to merchandise with the cotton paintings of Tilang (Telangana) in large quantities. Western Europe too imported Golconda paintings and the Qutb Shahis earned huge amounts from the export of these paintings, which was on the factors to elevate Golconda as one amongst the wealthiest kingdoms of India.

A new phase in the Golconda painting started with the accession of Ibrahim Quli. It evolved in the form of manuscripts in the miniature. His association with the Hindu Vijayanagara kingdom is reminiscent from the Deccani paintings, also evoked prior to A.D.1565. His exuberant paintings also evoked the Turks, Iranians and artists of Bukhara, Bakhaz (in Korasan) and Shiraz to flock to his court. Anwar-i-Suhaili, possibly the first miniature manuscript written during his rule, which is still in the Victoria and Albert Museum, (between A.D. 1550-1560) gives a vivid description of the sixteenth century’s conspicuous feature of Golconda’s intersecting arcades, palatial structures, windows, balconies etc. This proves to be a striking example of the depiction of manuscripts in miniature paintings.

### Architecture

Minus architecture, one cannot speak about the culture of a particular region. The Qutb Shahi architecture can be divided into three major categories viz. (1). Religious architecture, like the mosques and Ashur Khanas, (2). Tombs (3). Secular architecture like the royal Palaces, Hammams and other Public Buildings.

A strong Hindu influence is perceptible on some of the mosques constructed by the rulers. Referring to the Toli masjid, built by Musa Khan, a dignitary of the court of Abdullah, the Annual report of the Archaeological Department of H.E.H. the Nizam’s, Dominions for 1916-17 says thus, “the chief features of the building are its decorations, which show a strong Hindu influence”. For example, the circular earthen pot (Kalasa), which is so common, a motif in Hindu archaeological ornamentation is largely adopted here: the shafts of the minarets rise from pot-shaped bases; the façade is adorned with rows of black basalt pots cut in relief. Again, elephant tusk brackets, which are absolutely Hindu in origin, have been used profusely in the mosque. Further, there are niches in the pillar-and-lintel style identical in form with niches in temples for the accommodation of images.

Even Hindu imprecations, forming parts of inscriptions on mosques, were adopted in toto. Thus, we have the following imprecation in Telugu, forming a part of the Poonamalle mosque inscription: “therefore, all people should protect this mosque. Those that protect it will get the merit of making the sixteen great gifts; those that cause obstruction to it will incur the sin of killing a cow at Kasi.”

The art of the Qutb Shahi era was greatly inspired by Iranian art and traditions. Yet, it soon got indianised with the free and full assimilation of Indian art-forms and motifs. The pillars, the door-jambes, lintels, the lotus, vase of plenty (Purna-Kumbha) and the elephant-head motif with a raised trunk, which are the Hindu motifs, have been freely adopted, mingled with alien forms and synthesized to suit architectural needs. The conceptual unity, architectural symmetry, artistic elegance, monumentality, interesting color combination produced by enameled tiles, stucco and cut-plaster workmanship to depict beautiful floral and geometrical designs are some of the outstanding decorative features of the Qutb Shahi architecture. Besides, the beautifully designed calligraphic panels on mosques and tombs add extra charm to old Hyderabad architecture. Largely, this architecture is called as **Deccani** architecture.

### Conclusion

The Qutb Shahi Sultans did not show any discrimination in the government appointments on the grounds of religion, caste and creed. The Hindus and Muslims were equally eligible to all posts starting from the lowest rank of a clerk to the highest post of Prime Minister. The Sultans of Golconda have opened the corridors to the men of talent and caliber. They were given preference and assigned important jobs. Merit was the criteria for all purposes. The foresighted and benevolent Qutb Shahi Sultans liberally granted lands and cash to the maintenance and construction of Temples and ‘Agraharas’.



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Festivals were the days / times of the religious social merriment. They provided an occasion to develop mutual understanding, unity and harmony among the different sections of the people. The Hindus could worship their village deities without fear, participated in fairs, festivals, and made pilgrimages. The Qutb Shahi government permitted them to visit their holy places without imposing any tax. The Hindus enjoyed their religious freedom of conscience as that of their Muslim brethren with pomp and gaiety. Both Hindus and Muslims celebrated the festivals like Moharram and the Birth Days of Sultans amicably with great joy. Peerilu were installed at almost all the villages of Telangana region. These celebrations are continuing even today. It is interesting to note that during the period of Abul Hassan Tanishah, a new practice of sending the 'Mutyala Talambralu' to the temple at Bhadrachalam on the day of Sri Rama Navami, was launched. Since that time, till today, this tradition has been in vogue. These festivals were a hallmark of unity in diversity and communal harmony of those times.

In the words of Prof. A. M. Siddiqui "All the Qutb Shahi kings were tolerant, humane and just, their guiding principle was benevolence. They treated their Hindu subjects as liberally as they treated the Muslim community. They even went to the extent of declaring Tuesday as a weekly holiday. They donated Jagirs and large tracts of arable lands for the upkeep of Hindu temples and for the performance of religious ceremonies".

In the words of Dr. N. Venkataramanaiah regarding Sultan Quli "the policy which he adopted in his relations with his Hindu subjects was based on two fundamental principles namely, tolerance in religious matters and lack of discrimination in the exercise of political rights...(the Qutb Shahi Sultans) believed that it was expedient to allow a large measure of freedom to the Hindus who formed the bulk of the people, subject to their rule, so that they might establish their power on firm and lasting foundations. This fact perhaps explains why they condemned the acts of intolerance perpetrated occasionally by some of their over-zealous subordinates".

The same author writes elsewhere "of all the Muslim dynasties that ruled India, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda were the most enlightened. True, they plundered and destroyed Hindu temples in the enemy's territory during the course of invasions, but within their own dominions, the Hindus enjoyed a measure of religious freedom, not known in other Muslim kingdoms. The Qutb Shahs did not show any discrimination in appointments to public service on grounds of religion. The Hindus and Mohammedans were equally eligible to all highest positions under the government. They never regarded themselves as alien conquerors; superior to the people over whom they held sway. They were of course, Muslim but, like their subjects, they were Andhras".

We, find the Qutb Shahis, after consolidating their power, did not hesitate to patronize the religious and charitable institutions of their subjects for promotion of good will in the Society. During the rule of the Qutb Shahis, there was a close interaction between the Hindu and Muslim people. The Muslim government of the Qutb Shahis liberally promoted the various aspects of culture like education, literature, music, dance, art and architecture etc. The Qutb Shahi rulers and their subordinates liberally encouraged not only the Muslim but also the Hindu scholars and artists. The celebration of Hindu and Muslim festivals by both the sections of the people led to cultural synthesis and religious harmony in the society. This phenomenon had become popular as Deccani Culture in our Country.

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