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SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE QUTB SHAHI DYNASTY 1518-1687 CE

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Abstract

The political scenario of Qutb Shahis rise is intervened with the disintegration of subsequent beginning of new era of historical development. Founded by Sultan Quli, this dynasty spanned 171 years in the history of Medieval Deccan from (1518-1687 AD) where eight kings of royal line namely Sultan Quli, Jamshed Quli, Subhan Quli, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah, Muhammed Qutb Shah, Abdullah Qutb Shah and Abdul Hasan Tana Shah have left a firm impression of their enduring strong personalities upon the Deccani land and people. They developed Deccan idiom and patronized new Deccan culture apart from promoting economic prosperity. The fall of the Bahamanis opened an altogether new phase in the making of medieval Deccan, where the rise of Qutb Shahi Sultans turned Golconda into a new dynastic centre. In the great tableland of Deccan, the dominions of these rulers formed a significant part, where beginning as an enclave around the great fort of Golconda, they gradually spread in all directions. Sultan-Quli, the founder of Golconda dynasty, traced his descent from a Turkish tribe 'Qara Quyunlu' - which had black sheep as its emblem. Initially, when disturbances broke out in and around Telangana area of Bahamani rule, Sultan Quli, a Turk who was a high ranking military officer under Mohammed Shah Bahamani, were sent to quell the trouble. This research paper is to be discussed about **“Society and Culture in the Qutb Shahi Dynasty 1518-1687 CE”**.

Keywords: Qutb Shahi Dynasty, Cultural Differentiation, Social Harmony, Universal Value, Peoples Festivals, Defensive Structure.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual.”

Elbert Einstein

In 1463, disturbances broke out in the Telangana area of the Bahamani kingdom of Deccan. Sultan Quli Qutub Mulk, a Turk who was a high ranking military officer under Muhammad Shah Bahamani, was sent to quell the trouble. He was successful and was rewarded by being made the Subedar of Telangana in 1495, with Golconda as his head- quarters. Subsequently, with the disintegration of the Bahamani Kingdom in the early 16th century, Sultan Quli assumed virtual independence. Thus, he founded the Qutub Shahi dynasty that lasted from 1518 right up to 1687 when Aurangzeb's armies swept the Deccan. This dynasty spanned 171 years in the history of South India. The eight kings of this royal line have left a firm impression of their strong personalities upon the land and its people. The Qutub Shahi rulers were great builders and patrons of learning. They not only patronized the Persian culture but also the regional culture of the Deccan, symbolized by the Telugu language and the newly developed Deccani idiom.

Historical Important of Qutb Shahis

Even though not located within the same complex, these three monuments together represent the earliest Qutb Shahi layer of Hyderabad's history and belong to the Qutb Shahi dynasty that ruled the region from 1518 A.D. to 1687 A.D. Qutb Shahi Islamic Sultanate was one of the five prominent dynasties that emerged in the Deccan following the downfall of the Bahmani Dynasty in 1518 A.D. Seven rulers of the Dynasty ruled for 170 years and successfully resisted the Mughal attack till 1687 A.D. It was the last kingdom to be absorbed in the expanding Mughal Empire. The monuments of the Qutb Shahi period represent different building typologies; Golconda is a fortified citadel and an early capital city of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. It is an ensemble of military structures, ramparts, gates, bastions, armoury; religious structures such as mosques, temples; residential structures such as palaces; water systems such as canals, fountains and landscaped gardens. The tombs of Qutb Shahis are a mausoleum complex, a royal necropolis which comprises the tombs of the Royal family and the officials who faithfully served them and also mortuary bath and mosques. Charminar on the other hand, is a ceremonial Gateway built to celebrate the foundation of Hyderabad, a new Millennial City, in 1591 A.D. The monuments are masterpieces of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty, and stand as testimony to the past glory of the Qutb Shahi dynasty and its creative achievements.



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Within its stone fortifications that traverse a length of over seven kilometres, the Golconda Fort envelopes a medieval Islamic settlement. The historic structures range from military and defensive structures, mortuary baths, silos, mosques, gardens, residential quarters, pavilions and royal courts, showcasing the entire range of structures that catered to life in a medieval fortified town in India. Within the citadel or Bala Hisar are the Silah Khana, Nagina bagh, Ambar Khana, Akkanna-Madanna Offices, Ramdas Jail, Darbar hall, Baradari, Hammams, Mahals, royal courts that served the capital of the Qutb Shahis.

The Qutb Shahi tombs complex consists of 30 tombs, mosques and a mortuary bath. The tombs belong to the rulers of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty, their queens and children and the nobles who faithfully served them. It contains the epigraphically documented tombs of five of the dynasty's seven sultans, as well as those of another four members of the royal family, spanning the 130-year period from 1543 to 1672. The Qutb Shahi tombs collectively constitute an outstanding example of an Indo-Muslim dynastic necropolis and is the most extensive and best epigraphically documented in all of India. Charminar stands at the crossing of two arterial axes in the old city of Hyderabad and forms the symbolic fulcrum of the city, with its four gateways oriented towards the cardinal directions. Contemporary historical sources date the Charminar's construction to the year 1000 AH (1591 A.D.), as the first building in Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's new city of Hyderabad outside the Golconda fort. Of special significance is its date of construction that marks the beginning of the second Islamic millennium, an event that was widely celebrated in the Islamic world and therefore suggestive of Hyderabad being deliberately founded as a "Millennial" city.¹ Together, these monuments are a product of the same period; technology, skills and innovations, which developed during the rule of Qutb Shahi Dynasty. They are great markers of the grandeur of the Qutb Shahi Period (1518-1687 A.D.) and even today continue to dominate the cityscape of modern day Hyderabad. Charminar provided a point of origin and reference point for the planning grid that determined the layout of the city of Hyderabad. The city of Hyderabad served as the capital of the Qutb Shahis, the Asaf Jahi Nizams and is now the capital of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad continues to thrive even today and is the fifth largest city in India, with Charminar as the visual symbol of the city.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The Qutb Shahi monuments of Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs and Charminar are the oldest and most significant monuments of the sister cities of Golconda and Hyderabad, successive capitals of the Qutb Shahi Islamic Sultanate (1518-1687). The legendary centre of diamond trade, Golconda was a medieval fortified city complete with residential, military and courtly functions. The Qutb Shahi tomb complex was a grand royal necropolis in the distinctive Qutb Shahi architectural style. As the court grew beyond the confines of the Golconda fort, the urban metropolis of Hyderabad was founded with the monumental Charminar in the centre as a grand millennium marker. Unique in its architectural typology, the Charminar remains an acknowledged masterpiece of Islamic architecture.¹⁵⁵ With its unique form, architectural typology and location, it is among the most recognizable icons of Indian architecture.¹⁵⁶

The monuments of the Qutb Shahi period provide vivid testimony of the creative synthesis of Persianate and Indic cultural traditions with a unique Deccani identity. Qutb Shahi architecture began with Bahmani moorings and evolved a sophisticated architectural aesthetic within the Deccani paradigm, symbolising the zenith of Islamic architecture in South India.

Architecture

The Charminar is an acknowledged masterpiece of world architecture on account of its grand conception, design and execution. Charminar's most compelling quality is the originality of its unprecedented design that was to stylistically exercise a profound impact on the subsequent development of Deccani architecture. ¹⁵⁷ Based on a system of interlocking voids and solids is seen in the alternating rhythms between its lofty arches and towering minarets, it became the archetype for later Islamic buildings in India. Functionally, it does not conform to any of the familiar building types from the Indo-Islamic world, but serves as a monumental marker for the central node in Hyderabad's four-quartered design. Charminar is the archetype of the chaubara or "four-fold house" marking the intersection of four cardinal avenues, affording a series of impressive vistas. It is a singular monument as it embodies a singular design and ideas not seen in earlier structures. The urban ensemble of Charminar and the Char Kaman resonates deeply with symbolic and ceremonial meaning to commemorate the beginning of the second Islamic Millennium and is a remarkable example of Shia city planning. This symbol envisioned the universe as a domed quadrangular structure of immense proportions, carried on four arches and illuminated at its apex by the sun as the light of heaven and earth. The Charminar's ground storey is indeed capped by a low compressed dome adorned with a solar lotus at its apex.

Together, these Qutb Shahi monuments provide a unique testimony to the vibrant cosmopolitanism that characterized the medieval period in India and in the Deccan region in particular. Other Deccani sultanates were similarly multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, but the Qutb Shahi Sultanate appears to have been at the forefront of this cosmopolitanism. The founder of the dynasty and many



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influential nobles were immigrants from Iran. The success of the Qutb Shahi state depended critically on the ability of these "westerners" (gharbians) to form alliances both with members of the deeply rooted class of Deccani Muslims, and the local Telugu-speaking Hindu elite. In a manner that is more striking than at any other site, the Qutb Shahi monuments reveal the innovative and inspired blending of Persianate and Indic cultures that flowed from the successful integration of this multi-ethnic society.

In Golconda fort, the medieval diamond trade drew travelers from the world and the blending of cultures is manifest in a succession of constructional phases. The uppermost circuit of 14th century walls represents a local Indic architectural tradition. The Qutb Shahis introduced the Persianate style of elevated citadel (bala hisar) and fortified lower city (pa'in shahr). The Iranian urban traditions are best seen in the axial alignments of defensive gates, commercial streets, ceremonial portals and audience halls¹⁵⁸. The accurate acoustical system and water system at the fort are the most innovative advances in the defence technology at Golconda.

It was with Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's founding of Hyderabad in 1591 (AH 1000) to commemorate the beginning of the second Islamic millennium¹⁵⁹ that the full synthesis of Indic and Persianate cultural strains was achieved. Although this was a Persianate impetus, the planners were drawing on ancient Hindu cosmological traditions of the central ritual node (chaubara) from which the four-quartered capital would unfold. In its formal expression however, the Charminar was inspired by a venerable Persian image of the cosmos, known as the chahar taq or "four arches".

The monument provided inspiration for the design of another Charminar, constructed in 1807 in the city of Bukhara in Uzbekistan¹⁶⁰ and now included as part of the World Heritage Site "Historic Centre of Bukhara". Although the Bukhara Charminar functions as a gateway rather than as part of the larger urban armature, it nonetheless follows its design quite closely.

Dynasty of Qutb Shahi --- On Cultural Perspective

The monuments of the Qutb Shahi period provide a unique testimony to the social, economic, cultural, political and technological landscape of the period of the Deccani Islamic Sultanate in medieval India. The Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs and Charminar epitomise the flourishing of Deccani art and architecture and are unique expressions of the religious and artistic flowering of the Islamic Sultanate in Southern India.

Golconda Fort lay on an important trade route from the port town of Masulipatam to hinterlands and thus grew as a great trade centre and an international market place for textile, printed cloth and the famous Golconda diamonds and one of the leading cities of the East. Given the vicinity of diamond mines, it flourished as a diamond trading centre and thus played a significant role in the economics of the region. The Qutb Shahi rulers were patrons of a culture which is sometimes dubbed the Deccani culture, a result of the synthesis of cultures from the indigenous dakhani culture of southern India to the mingling of the cultural nuances and ideas brought by the afaqi settlers from other parts of the Islamic world and the many travellers that swarmed to the diamond trade centre of Golconda. The twin capital cities of Golconda and Hyderabad were witness to a unique flowering of art, architecture, language, literature, music, cuisine and costume reflected subtly but perceptibly in the miniature paintings architecture and the Shi'a culture of the period.

Politics of Qutb Shahis

The group of Qutb Shahi tombs constitutes an outstanding example of an Indo-Muslim dynastic necropolis. Although many other Indo-Muslim dynasties also produced such necropolises, that of the Qutb Shahis is unique on three counts. First, it is a more complete dynastic complex than any other in India, as it unites in one location the tombs of five of the dynasty's seven rulers as well as four other identified members of the royal family. Second, its chronological span of 130 years is longer than that of any other documented necropolis in India. Third, because of these first two factors, the necropolis provides unique testimony not only for the stylistic development of Qutb Shahi architecture, but also for the dynastic politics within the family. Because the Qutb Shahi necropolis includes nine tombs of members of the royal family, all firmly datable by means of their epitaph inscriptions, the complex affords the best controlled means of understanding the developing Qutb Shahi architectural style and its chronology. The earliest tomb-that of the dynasty's founder Sultan Quli (d.1543)-reveals its dependence on late Bahmani traditions of tomb design, while the tomb of the next to last ruler, Abdullah (d.1672) exhibits all of the distinctive qualities of the fully formed Qutb Shahi style. In between, every intermediate stage is represented, and several unusual variants as well, including the tomb of Muhammad Quli (d.1612) with its Iranian-inspired post and beam porticoes (talar), and the so-called tomb of Jamsheed (d.1550) with its unusual two-storeyed octagonal plan.

The complex also provides invaluable evidence shedding light on the nature of dynastic politics within the Qutb Shahi family. Tombs were built not only for the ruling sultans, but also for their wives and consorts, and for sons who were excluded from the succession. The spatial relationships between these various tombs are often highly instructive. Thus, until the 1620s, the original



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necropolis was confined to the southwestern block of the present enclosure and contained the monumental tombs of Sultan Quli (d.1543), Ibrahim (d. 1580), and Muhammad Quli (d.1612). Additionally, there was the small tomb of Ibrahim's son, Mirza Muhammad Amin (d.1596), which occupied the same terrace as his father's tomb, and numerous smaller tombs lacking inscriptions and most likely belonging to various members of the Qutb Shahi elite. Although this area also contains two structures that are popularly identified as the tombs of the Sultans Jamsheed (d. 1550) and Subhan (d.1550) -with whom Ibrahim fought a succession dispute- neither contains epitaphs confirming this identification, and moreover, they are built in the fully developed style of the mid-seventeenth century, making it impossible that they should belong to these two rulers. At least during the sixteenth century, it would appear that Jamsheed and his son Subhan were excluded from the royal necropolis, as if to deny that their reigns had ever occurred.

Golconda Fort is an outstanding example of military architecture, with its impregnable defence mechanism, unique water supply and distribution system, as well as the unique sewage disposal mechanisms and extraordinary acoustical system unparalleled in the architectural history of the Deccan and perhaps the military architecture of India. Golconda is one of the biggest fortresses in south India and has commanded the geo-politics of the region as well as the coveted diamond trade over seven centuries and governed the trade and destiny of South India.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

Golconda Fort, Charminar and the Qutb Shahi tombs are the oldest layers of the original Qutb Shahi city of Hyderabad. All three structures are protected under National and State protection and possess a high degree of authenticity. While Charminar and Qutb Shahi tombs are intact and have a high degree of integrity, Golconda possesses the haunting quality of ruins set within the old fortified city. Apart from a number of minor structural repairs and regular maintenance that has been documented since the early nineteenth century, the buildings still exhibit their original structural fabric and design. The greatest management challenges that face the monuments today are those of urban developmental pressures and striking a balance between Hyderabad's past, present and future.

Management and Protection

Charminar and Golconda Fort have been declared monuments of National importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Thus, Charminar and Golconda Fort come under the jurisdiction of Archaeological Survey of India which is custodian of the monuments and is also responsible for their protection and management. Further, according to a Government Notification of the Government of India, a special 100 metre and further 200 metre boundary has been delineated beyond the core zone of the monument, declared as the 'prohibited' and 'regulated' areas respectively for the purpose of various operations such as mining and construction (Order No. S.O. 1764 dated 16 June 1992, published in the Gazette of India, Part II, Section 3, sub-section (ii) dated 4 July 1992). The Qutb Shahi tombs are managed by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Further, special Heritage Precincts have been created under Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (Now HMDA) Zoning Regulations, 1981 (Regulation 13). These include Charminar area, which comprises the historic core of the historic city and includes many historic localities, street facades, structures and buildings around Charminar. Golconda Fort Area includes the complete area of the fort within the outer walls, Qutb Shahi tombs and the Shekhpet Sarai.

Integrity – The Dynasty

The conservation works for the monuments have been going on for over 100 years and thus they are in good state of preservation and maintain high level of integrity. While Charminar and Qutb Shahi tombs are intact, Golconda's character is that of fortified walls enclosing various structures, both intact and as ruins. This character has been scrupulously maintained by the custodian of the site, the Archaeological Survey of India. At least as important as the integrity of the individual monuments is the spatial integrity of the three component sites. Golconda is unique in having most of its Qutb Shahi-period urban armature largely intact, including its successive lines of fortifications and its gateways and thoroughfares. Additionally, much of its Qutb Shahi architectural fabric is also still present, affording the visitor with an excellent sense of the sixteenth century city and how it interacted both with the earlier architectural heritage of the Kakatiya period and with its larger physical setting. Even much of the original hydraulic system of the fort is well preserved and visible. The one area of the site that has suffered a significant loss of integrity is the palace area that lies at the foot of the eastern flank of the citadel. Most of these palace buildings are in a very poor state of preservation, having lost their superstructures and even major portions of their walls. Although this lack of integrity makes it difficult to comprehend the nature and functions of the various buildings in this key zone of the city, it is in fact part of the historical and archaeological record of the site, since the palace zone appears to have been burned following the fall of the fort to the Mughal forces in 1687. The Charminar itself is almost perfectly intact, but the integrity of its site has been partially compromised over the years. Absolutely essential to maintaining the site's integrity is the continued preservation of the four wide avenues that radiate out from the Charminar, as the monument's entire *raison d'être* is to define the central point from which these avenues unfold. Equally important is the continued preservation of the four symbolic gateways to its north-the



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Char Kaman-which originally defined a large, open plaza (jilau khana) before the Qutb Shahi palace which adjoined this space on the west. Even though the palace complex itself is no longer preserved, and even though the four corners of the jilau khana have been filled in with commercial buildings since at least 1772 (Shorey 1993), the Charminar zone still affords an excellent sense of the city's original layout and significance.

Since its founding in 1591, Hyderabad has been subject to continued growth and development and is now India's sixth largest urban agglomeration, with a combined population of 7.5 million. Accordingly, the city's Qutb Shahi monuments face constant threats from the pressures of further development and urban expansion, and many of these monuments have vanished or have been irreparably transformed. At the same time, however, many monuments remain well preserved and almost completely intact, thanks to their continued use and to a long-standing awareness that they are key parts of the local cultural heritage. The three zones of this nomination-Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi tombs, and Charminar area-have been chosen not only for their outstanding universal value, but also because they are among the Qutb Shahi monuments that possess the highest degree of integrity and authenticity.

The Social Conditions of Qutb Shahis

As usual our Indo-Persian chronicles deal more with life at the court than with the life of the common man, while on the other hand the description of the people, as given by European travellers and merchants, gives us a fair insight into the life of the generality. There may be stray reference to the social set-up in the Indo-Persian chronicles, but that is always by the way and sometimes even in a sneering tone. The reason why European travelers take pains to delineate the ways of the people, Hindu and Muslim, is that everything seems so totally strange to them. It is rather quaint that as Europeans were familiar with Spanish Muslims whom they called Moors, so the European travelers call the ruling aristocracy in the Sultanates of the Deccan, "Moors" in contrast with the name gentile or "Gentoos" given to the Hindus.

In the Qutub shahi dynasty Muslims, Hindus and Christians were lived together. The Qutb Shah Sultans belonged to the Shia sect of the Muslims. Shias had taken high positions in administration of Qutb shahis. After Shias, Hindus played the main role in Administration. Hindu society were divided into four Varnas i.e. Kshatriya, Brahmins, Vaishya and Shudra. Brahmins have a high priority in this. The book Hansa Vinshati states that along with the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra castes, there are castes like Reddy, Velama, Kapu, Balija, Potter, Black Smiths, Carpenters, Gold Smith, Weavers, Fisherman, Washman, Barbers, etc.

In the society the Brahmins received the Agraharas as a gift from the Sultan. The Reddy Velama and Kamma were empowered to land tax officers. Other castes in the society continued their life by following their occupations. The villages were made self-sufficient while doing various occupations in the rural area. Each caste lived in the village. Through this the caste system in the period was further strengthened. In the society, the Reddy Velama and Kamma belonged to the Shudra class but they are considered to be the upper class. However, religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims prevailed. Hindus are an enthusiastic participant in Muslim religious festivals. The Sufi saints gave priority to religious harmony. The Dargahs established during the Qutub Shahi period are still a symbol of religious harmony today.

Culture of People in Qutb Shahis era

The culture of the people is very different in the Qutb Shahi Dynasty. During the Qutb Shahi period women's positions were not fine. She was only valued in domestic life. The contemporary Telugu author Ponnaganti Telaganarya in his work Yayathi Chritra informs about the position of women. Widower women position was very horrific. She is not permitted to outside of house. Education was banned to women. Women of rural area spent most of their time in agricultural activities working as labour. Some women followed their cast based profession like weaving. Prostitution was permitted by Government. According to Tavernier, there were twenty thousand prostitutes were granted licenses by the Government to carry on their profession. The close relationship of the Government of Vijayanagar with that of Golconda during the early years of the reign of Ibrahim Qutub Shah led to the dovetailing of cultures and incidentally to the similarity in apparel. The "Kuleh" (pers, kulah, cap) and the Cabaya (Arab, Qaba, long coat) became parts of the dress of the elite, both Hindu and Muslim. Among women the sari of twelve cubits covering a bodice with sleeves coming up to the elbows, was the rule, while the heads of women were generally covered when they went out. Some Hindu women wore only saris without a bodice, others a short bodice covering only the breasts while some wore a bodice which might be long enough to cover the navel. Among the more rich classes of society the sari as well as the bodice had borders of varying width of gold and silver embroidery. Among the muslim women the alternative dress was the dopatta of about four and half yards of cloth, one end of which was tucked on to the pajama or trousers, which were embroidered and kept in check by girdles with embroidered ends.



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Culture and lifestyle.

The Qutb Shahis kingdom was very wealthy and the people were affluent, it is no wonder that not merely women were laden with ornaments but even men wore ear-rings, and these who could afford it had strings of pearls loosely hanging round their necks and jeweled bands round their arms, women wore ear-rings. Sometimes six or seven in each ear, finger rings, toe rings, gold or silver bands round their waists, many varieties of neck ware and ornaments round their wrists, arms and necklaces, even a ring or a jewel on the side of the right-nostril and sometimes even on the bridge of the nose.

Religious Culture

The Golconda Sultans took great interest in two muslim religious anniversaries, namely the birthday of the Prophet and the Day of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain. The latter anniversary was sacred to the Shiahs, the persuasion to which the Sultan and the royal family belonged, and the celebrations continued for ten days of the month of Muharram, the first month of the Hijri year; the former fell in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, the celebration of which had gone out of use during the reign of the kings father, Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah. The Qutb Shahi rulers gave more important to Muharram. The drinking of wine as well as meat eating, cutting of hair, even the sale and purchase of betel leaf, was prohibited for fifty days. It is further specifically related that the first ten days of Muharram were held sacred not only by the muslims, shiahs and the sunnis, but also by the Hindus. The other festival was the Prophets Birthday. It is strange indeed that even on this sacred occasion the general rejoicings and illuminations lasting for a whole month, and alms-giving which reached the limit of thousands of hons, were accompanied by song and dance musicians and dancers from Hindustan and Iran performed before eager audience. We are also told that wine drinking was the order of the day during the month. Scents were used by all and sundry and betel leaves distributed in lakhs.

Literary Development

These firmans from the period of Abdullah were issued in two languages Persian and Telugu, the Persian was the court language whereas Telugu was the language of the people. The Persian text of the firman was translated word to word in Telugu and was attached to the Persian text, so that the Hindus living in parganas and villages could understand them with great ease. These firmans which are large in number establish that the Hindu were awarded large Jagirs along with the Muslim nobles. It was just not the nobles who enjoyed lavish patronage of the Sultan but even the petty officials working as Deshmukh, Majmuadar, Nargud in parganas were the recipients of lavish awards of the Sultan. It was the sense of equality which was created by the Qutb Shahs among the Hindus which brought them near to the throne and created loyalty among them. Their religious freedom was never curbed and there was no interference in their personal laws. The cases cropped up were referred to the local Brahmins by the Government officials. The attitude of the Qutb Shahi Muslim nobles was helpful. They not only allowed the construction of temples in their Jagirs but also granted Agraharas. Ibrahim Qutb Shah made some pious donation which made the people happy and favorable to Qutb Shahi regime. Similarly, an epigraph of 1586-87 A.D. from Hasayapeta village in Nellore District records the grant of a village as Agrahara to several Brahmins by a Muhammadan officer Lal Khan. The practice of granting villages to the temples did continue till the last Sultan of the Qutb Shahi dynasty Abul Hasan. The Hindus were allowed to visit their temples without any fear or hindrance. There was no pilgrim tax at any time during the Qutb Shahi period for visiting any temple.

Even the Hindus belonging to other parts of India were allowed to visit the temple situated within the Qutb Shahi Kingdom. The religious policy of Qutb Shahs was to use the religious institutions of all religions and sects to foster the spirit of brotherhood and tolerance. They did not differentiate among the Muslim and non-Muslim institutions in this regard as they patronized both the Hindu and the Muslim institutions alike. The Muslim institutions during the Qutb Shahi period were the mosques, Ashur Khanas and Dargahs of the Sufi Saints. In addition to these the religious festivals such as Muharram, Idd, Milad-un-Nabi, Ghadeer Vasant and Mirag were celebrated on a large scale, therefore these celebrations also become a part of the institutions. The policy adopted by Qutb Shah's in patronizing these institutions was to create better understanding and participation of the people. The Muslim religious institutions under the Qutb Shahs generally contributed to religious tolerance, while doing so the covenants of Islam were neither changed nor experimented with.

Summing Up

This Qutb shahis never tried to impose their faith on others. Instead, they allowed complete freedom to the people of other religions & sect. Equal opportunities were made available to their subjects in all matters of the State. Even the top positions of the administration were occupied by nobles belonging to different religions & sects. The Qutb Shahi rulers was particularly liberal in patronizing the Telugu poets. His court represented a true picture of the integrated society in which the Hindu & Muslim poets and Scholars had equal status. This policy was not reserved for the matters of state & administration alone but it was extended to the religious institutions also. It was an important feature of the Qutb Shahi Kingdom the Sufis of the period belonged to both the sects of Muslims.



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Their preaching & practices were not different, they all stood for a liberal outlook. The Qutb Shahs patronized them all. Overlooking the traditions of the period some of the Qutb Shahi ruler had matrimonial alliances with the Sufis. Qutb Shahs used the religious festivals to promote religious harmony in the society which created an atmosphere of brotherhood. It is significant, therefore to observe that constant efforts of the Qutub Shahs & their patronage of the Muslims & Hindu institutions all through their rule resulted in the integration of the heterogeneous society of the Qutub Shahi Kingdom. These policies channelized the sentiments of the masses and had a profound influence on the political, social economics & cultural life of the people while promoting multiculturalism where all people could coexist in peace and harmony.

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