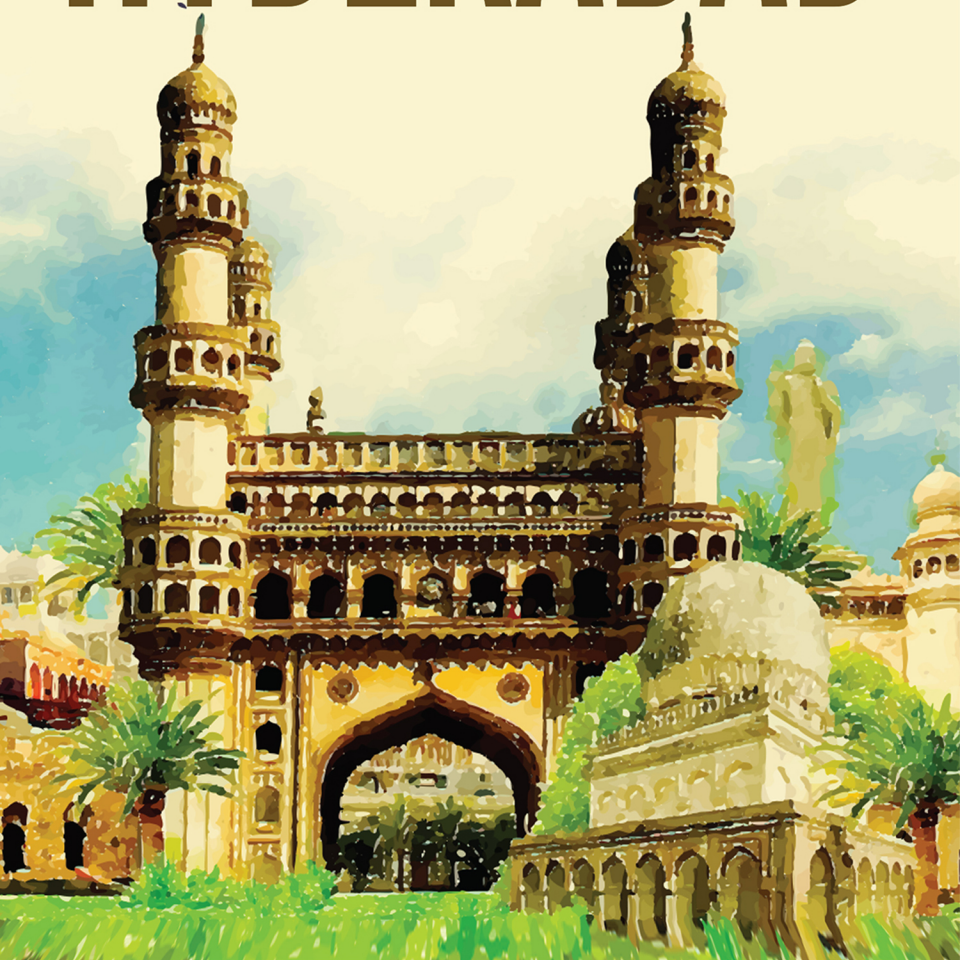


# LEGENDARY NARRATIVES OF **HYDERABAD**



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## **Notion Press**

Old No. 38, New No. 6  
McNichols Road, Chetpet  
Chennai - 600 031

First Published by Notion Press 2018  
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ISBN 978-1-64429-472-7

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# Contents

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<i>Foreword</i>		<i>vii</i>
<i>Ode to Hyderabad</i>		<i>ix</i>
Chapter 1	Legend of the Founding of the City of Good Fortune, Hyderabad	1
Chapter 2	Legend of the Charminar and the Mecca Masjid	13
Chapter 3	Legend of the Golconda Fort	21
Chapter 4	Legend of Shri Ram Bagh Temple	30
Chapter 5	Legends of Ashurkhana and Moula Ali	52
Chapter 6	Legends of Bonalu and Bathukamma Festivals	62
Chapter 7	Legendary Palaces, Mansions and Monuments of Hyderabad	69

## Contents

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Chapter 8	Legend of the British Residency or Kothi Residency	81
Chapter 9	Legendary Women Poets of Hyderabad: Mah Laqa Bai Chanda	86
Chapter 10	The Legendary Sarojini Naidu and the Depiction of Hyderabad in Her Poems	92
	<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>101</i>
	<i>Works Cited</i>	<i>103</i>

## Chapter 1

# Legend of the Founding of the City of Good Fortune, Hyderabad

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The majestic city of Hyderabad is steeped in history and culture. It is believed to be a “city of good fortune.” There are numerous legends associated with Hyderabad, and the city has its own unique cultural charm. Hyderabad is also known as the city of pearls and minarets. Many also call it the city of diamonds since many of the world-famous diamonds were mined in Hyderabad’s Golconda mines.

This charm is reflected in the warmth of its people, their lifestyle and the scrumptious Hyderabadi cuisine, which has become famous worldwide. In fact, the Hyderabadi biryani and Hyderabadi haleem have become legendary trademarks of Hyderabad.



There are innumerable legends centering on Hyderabad. However, the most notable and interesting legend centres around the establishment of Hyderabad. The language of Hyderabad has a distinct style of its own. The impact of Urdu, Hindi and Telugu, the regional language, is evidently seen. It reflects the true ambience of Hyderabad. The old city and the new twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad are symbolic of the rich Deccani cultural heritage of the present-day Telangana State.



The city of Hyderabad was founded by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah. He was born in April 1566. The king envisioned a city that would be like heaven on earth. The city he built was a walled city which had 13 gates and 7 windows. Presently it has only 2 gates. These used to be closed at night during the Qutb Shahi regime.

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's father was Ibrahim Quli Qutb Shah (1518–1580) who was the fourth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. He was the first ruler of the dynasty to use the title "Sultan." He was a great patron of Telugu, and he encouraged literature and learning of many languages. Many famous works written in Telugu were dedicated to him. He was fondly referred to as Ibha Ram or Ibharamudu.

He was a great scholar himself who composed poetry in Telugu, Urdu and Persian. During his rule, there was a feeling of amity and brotherhood among the people. After the

Bahmani king Mahmud Shah's demise in 1518 A.D., he declared independence and proclaimed himself as a ruler, declaring himself as Qutb Shah, a name derived from the earlier name of Qutb-ul-Mulk. He extended his kingdom to Machilipatnam.

Ibrahim Qutb Shah promoted the study of literature. Three famous Urdu poets Mulla Khiali, Syed Mahmood and Feroze lived during his reign. He employed Hindus for various administrative, diplomatic and military purposes in his kingdom. He was also instrumental in fortifying and repairing the Golconda Fort. He developed the Hussain Sagar Lake and Ibrahim Bagh. He is described in one of the inscriptions on the "Makki Darwaza" in the fort as the *Greatest of Sovereigns*.

The city of Hyderabad has a very interesting romantic legend associated with its establishment. Prince Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1565–1612), the son of Ibrahim Qutb Shah, fell in love with a local girl named Bhagmati. According to a popular legend, he named the city after her as Bhagnagar or Bhagyanagar. He later gave her the title of "Hyder Mahal" and the city was named Hyderabad. However, it is an imaginary tale for many who do not believe this story. Others believe that "Hyder" was an attribute of Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam. Hence the city was named "Haidarabad" or "City of Haidar" in his honour according to some.

The River Musi flows through the city and is believed to be named after Moses. It is a tributary of the River Krishna. It also has another name, Isi or Isa, which is the name of Lord Jesus Christ. The two join each other near the Golconda Fort.

Popular belief is that Prince Quli used to cross the river to meet his beloved Bhagmati even when it was in spate during the monsoon season. A bridge was built across the river by Ibrahim Qutb Shah in 1578. The bridge is known as the “Purana Pul” which also stands today. *Pul* meant bridge. Bhagmati used to live in a small hamlet named Chichlam on the southern bank of the Musi. Chichlam was located about 10 km from Golconda.

Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah was the fifth Qutb Shahi king of Golconda. He ascended the throne in 1580 and ruled for 31 years. The city of Hyderabad is situated about seventeen hundred and sixty feet above sea level. It is situated in 17 degree 22’N and 78 degree 27’E on the banks of River Musi. The original site is six miles from Golconda on the right bank of the Musi. It was a fortress town surrounded by stone walls, flanked with bastions having 13 gates and 12 *kirkees* or posterns.

It was built in the form of a parallelogram, six miles in circumference and two and a quarter square miles in area. The wall was fixed by major Suba Khan, the last Mughal subedar, and completed by the first nizam.

The Musi River divides the old city of Hyderabad from its northern suburbs, and it is spanned by four bridges. The eastern bridge, known as the Chaderghat Bridge, was constructed in 1831 by Colonel James Oliphant, who later became a director of the East India Company. Next to the Chaderghat Bridge is the Afzal Gunj Bridge. Towards the west is the Mussalam Jung Bridge, which was built in 1898 while the fourth one is the Purana Pul or old bridge.

The floods in 1908 wreaked havoc with the inundation of Hyderabad and its suburbs, causing a loss of 3,000 lives and 24,000 houses. As a preventive measure to combat future challenges and prevent further disasters, two large dams were constructed across the Musi and its tributary, the Esi, about 13 miles from the city. These dams play a dual role, both as flood regulators and water reservoirs.

The Osmansagar Dam, covering 18 sq.miles and built at the cost of Rs. 58 lakhs, supplies drinking water to the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The Himayatsagar Dam covers 33 sq. miles and cost about Rs. 93 lakhs to build. It is used for irrigation purposes. There are many well-laid parks and guesthouses for recreational purposes offering facilities for picnics, boating, fishing and other sports.

Quli Qutb Shah modelled the city of Hyderabad on the lines of an Iranian city *Isfahan*. He married Bhagmati in 1589 after waiting for 11 years. She converted to Islam in 1605 A.D. and died in 1611 CE. However, no tomb or mausoleum of Bhagmati has been found. According to local folklore, the Prime Minister Allama Mir Mohammad Momin, Mir Jumla, was averse to Bhagmati's fame. Hence, he did not leave any traces of her fame and identity. He was a great administrator, scholar and poet who wrote his *Deevan* or collection of poems.

A portrait of Bhagmati done around 1750 CE is displayed in the State Museum in the Public Gardens. A copy of this portrait can be seen in the Salarjung Museum also. The writings of Abul Faizi, Nizamuddin Baksh, Abdul Baqi Nihawandi and Khafi Khan, Abul Fazal, Firishta and Badayuni discuss Bhagmati. The name of Bhagnagar village can be found in

archival records. Bhagmati also finds mention in the travel accounts of Bernier, Tavernier, Thevenot and Careri who visited Hyderabad 60–80 years after Md. Quli's rule ended.

Sultan Quli Qutb Shah was a versatile poet, builder and great ruler. He built the Purana Pul, Hussain Sagar Lake and Charminar. He is the first poet who wrote a complete anthology in "Dakhni." Mulla Wajahi wrote a book called *Qutb-e-Mushtari* which is a collection of the tales of Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah's romances. This work was presented to the king on his coronation and is considered as one of the classics of Dakhni literature. His other works include *Sabras* and *Taj-ul-Haqa-eq.*

Sultan Quli also had an extensive knowledge of Hindi classical music. He mentions various ragas like *Asavari*, *Dhanasree*, *Gauri*, *Malhar*, *Kalyan*, *Basant* and *Ramkali* in his poems.

"The Sultan even composed poems on games played by his subjects. These include pieces on *chaugan*, or polo, kabaddi, which he calls *khamaddi*, and on a game peculiar to the girls of the Deccan called *pokhariphu*." (Sherwani, H.K. "The Foundation of Haidarabad," 1967:66)

These verses were written by him to describe his feelings for his beloved:

*"Beloved! Promise to come near me and my heart  
truly glad;  
For the continuous absence of thy winsome face has made  
Qutb Shah  
So restless and so uneasy*

*Even the angel Gabriel threw dust on his face for his intense  
sorrow*

*At the martyrdom of Hussain, and the very hearts  
of the angels  
Became gory due to their lament for his death.”*

(Sherwani, H.K. “The Foundation of Haidarabad,”  
1967:58 lines 14–19)

## The Dakhni Language

The rulers of the Deccan wanted to preserve and develop their identity; they selected the locally spoken *Dakhni* as the court language. Initially, it was a derivative of *Hindavi*, which was the language during Alauddin Khilji’s rule. Dakhni borrowed extensively from the languages like Telugu, Kannada and Marathi spoken in the nearby territories. Hence, it has retained a distinct style and a unique charisma of its own that can be observed to this day in the typical “Hyderabadi language.”

The colloquial language which is spoken by the localities is a potpourri or a mixed bag of different languages and styles – Hindi, Urdu and Telugu. There are different dialects spoken in the Telangana style, the Andhra style and the Rayalaseema styles of Telugu, the mixture of Hindi and Urdu has given rise to the typical Hyderabadi style of speaking. The earliest literary work was the first *masnavi* ballad of Urdu called *Kadam Rao-Padam Rao*, which is a story of the bravery of two princely brothers. This was written by Fakhr-e-Deen, Nizam of Bidar, during 1421–1434.

Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah is the first *Saheb-e-Dewan* (poet with a collection of poems) Urdu poet. “He appointed *patta-metta* Somaraju Kavi as the poet laureate of the kingdom, while another Telugu poet, Ganesha Panditulu became the ‘*Kutubshahi samasthana panditulu*’ or head pandit of the Qutb Shahi state.” (Sherwani, H.K., The Foundation of Haidarabad, 1967:44) His poetic work is titled *Kuliyat-e-Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah*, and it has been edited by Dr. Zore.

Mohammad Quli’s son-in-law Sultan Mohammad Qutub Shah, who was his successor, was a poet who wrote in Hindi, Urdu and Persian and used the title of “*Zille Ilahi*.” Later, he used the title of Sultan. Many great literateurs like Allama-Ibn-e-Khatoon, Maulana Hussain Amlu and Mullah Mohammad Abdul Hakeem visited Hyderabad during his tenure.

The early period of Dakhni literature was the period of Mir Momin, Wajahi and Ghawwasi and Mohammad Quli. The Prime Minister Muhammad Ibn-e-Khatoon was also avidly interested in literary activities. Ibn-e-Nashati was another distinguished poet of this period. His well-known classical work was the *masnavi Phoolbun*. Other noteworthy poets like Syed Ballakhi, Shah Raju, Meeranji, Abid and Meeran Yaqub wrote mostly on mystical and ethical themes.

Secunderabad: Sikandar Jah Asaf Jah the Third died on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1829 at the age of 62, after a reign of 26 years. The area where the contingent of troops was stationed, which is located on the other side of the Hussain Sagar Lake, was named in his honour as Secunderabad. In this manner, the city of Secunderabad was established.

## Legendary Narratives of Hyderabad

The Secunderabad Cantonment was under the British till February 1947 and was returned to Mir

Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad.



There are many prehistoric cairns discovered in Hyderabad and its neighbouring regions, which shows that the history of the city goes back thousands of years. One such Cairn Circle or megalithic burial site is the “Hashmatpet Cairns” located in Secunderabad. The other megalithic burial sites are at Moulali, Kothaguda and Hyderabad Central University campus near Lingampalli. In 2008, a new site was discovered at Kethepalli near Ramoji Film City. The site was reportedly first discovered by Dr. Walker in the nineteenth century and dates to second century B.C.

Another excavation was taken up during the nizam’s rule in 1934–35 under the supervision of D.G. Mackenzie.

The next excavations took place in 1971 with the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute. In 2001, the last round of excavations was done. Sites at Mir Alam Tank, Bowenpally, Kukatpally and Gurranguda were recorded by the Archaeological Survey of India. A Neolithic site was also located at Begumpet.

According to a city historian Dr. Mohammad Safiullah who was quoted in an article in *the Times of India, Hyderabad*: “A close observation of the material discovered in the cairns shows that the history of Hyderabad predates the Qutub Shahis and the Kakatiyas. Hyderabad is not just a four-century-old city. It has a history of more than 12,000 years if the megalithic burials are taken into consideration. However, the city’s history goes back to more than 50,000 years if we take the prehistoric burial sites into account.”

## Hussain Sagar Lake or Tank Bund

This beautiful man-made lake is named after Hazrat Hussain Shah Wali, who was a great saint and the son-in-law of Ibrahim Qutb Shah. He was a descendant of Hazrat Khwaja Bande Nawaz of Gulbarga. His tomb is situated at Toli Chowki in Hyderabad. This lake joins the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. It has a circumference of 11 miles and was built during the Qutb Shahi times.

“Ibrahim Qutb Shah named Khairatabad after his daughter Khairiat-un-Nissa Begum. The king wanted a tank to be constructed and named after him. Since Hussain Shah Wali was the secretary of the public works department, the tank was constructed under his supervision. It was ready after

## Legendary Narratives of Hyderabad

two years but was popularly known as “Hussain Sagar” instead of Ibrahim Sagar. The name Hussain Sagar was given by the labourers who were working day and night. Later, the king had to construct the Jalpalli Tank and name it after himself. The village was named “Ibrahim Patam.” (Fairs Festivals and Social Functions of Hyderabad, Dharmendra Prasad: 90)



It is used for boating and yachting now, while its bund, one mile long, carries a fine cement road connecting the twin cities. Hence, this is also known as Tank Bund.

The Naubat Pahad is a hillock overlooking the southern shore of the Hussainsagar, and at present, the Birla Mandir is located on the Naubat Pahad. Adjacent to it is the Fateh Maidan where Aurangzeb’s forces halted on their march on Golconda. A long road connects the Tank Bund to Abid Road, passing the Madrasa-i-Aliya which is a fine building.

Nearby is St. Joseph’s Cathedral, which is situated in Gunfoundry. It was built in the year 1875. It is the Church of the Archbishop of Hyderabad.

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