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### ARCHITECTURAL VARIATION IN PRINCELY PALACES OF TELANGANA REGION (19<sup>TH</sup> CEN TO 1948)

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#### Abstract:

This paper mainly discusses the historical background of the Asaf Jahi kingdom for understanding the architectural history of Telangana, mainly focusing on the palaces of Nizam.

Identified as the gateway to southern India, the region was earlier known as Dakshinapath. It was called Golconda kingdom and also Hyderabad during the Qutb Sahi period, Mughal and Asaf Jahi period (16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> cen). The rulers built many palaces, added interesting water structures, worked on the civic structure and extended the forts too. Many other architectural edifices were introduced by them, bridges were built on Musi river in Hyderabad. The cities were planned and large lakes were dug along with a series of stepwells too, following the Kakatiya rulers. The paper further throws light on the architecture styles evolved over a period of time during three dynasties- Qutb Shahi, a brief period of the Mughals and the Asaf Jahi, focussing on Princely palace of Nizams. The palaces built post Subsidiary Alliance have seen the change in the planning and architecture. The European cultural influence is clearly visible as the nobles visited the other part of the globe and also frequented the British residency built on the northern bank of River Musi. These palaces are also unique as they all display the Deccani lime plaster work. Nizam Sikander Jah was the first Indian Prince who joined the British for Subsidiary Alliance (1798 CE), hence its more important to observe how the palace architecture varied with the advent of the British. The paper throws light on the planning ideas of these vast palatial structures and also the architectural components that display the variety of architecture in the Historic capital town.

Keywords: Asaf Jahi, British, Palace, Qutb Shahi, Chowmahalla, Subsidiary Alliance

## INTRODUCTION

In this study the author introduces the Architectural history of Telangana region that starts from the period of Sultan Quli Qutb-ul-Mulk. He was the *subedar* for Telangana under the Bahmani rulers, with Golconda<sup>1</sup> as its capital. In 1496, Sultan Quli declared his independence. After the downfall of Bahmani rulers in 1518, Golconda became the capital of Qutb Shahi Sultans (1518-1687). The seven sultans of this dynasty ruled not only Telangana but the entire Telugu-speaking land including parts of present-day Maharashtra and Karnataka too. During this period, the Golconda Fort was further strengthened. Sixteenth century Golconda was not only a major marketplace but also the very important resting place along the famed Goa-Machlipatnam (East-West coast) trade route. Mughal attacked Golconda in 1687 CE and Qutb Shahi dynasty ended. Mughals appointed their governors, who were called Nizams. The important phase in Architectural history of Hyderabad starts after the Subsidiary Alliance (1798 CE). The second Nizam, nawab Nizam Ali Khan was the first Indian Prince to sign this agreement. Finally, Nizam's rule ended in 1948 as the Hyderabad state emerged with Indian Union.

### The Qutb Shahi period:

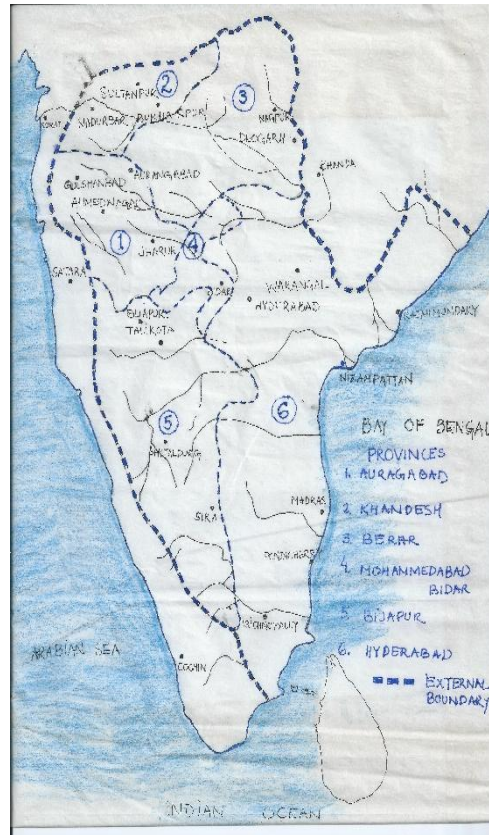
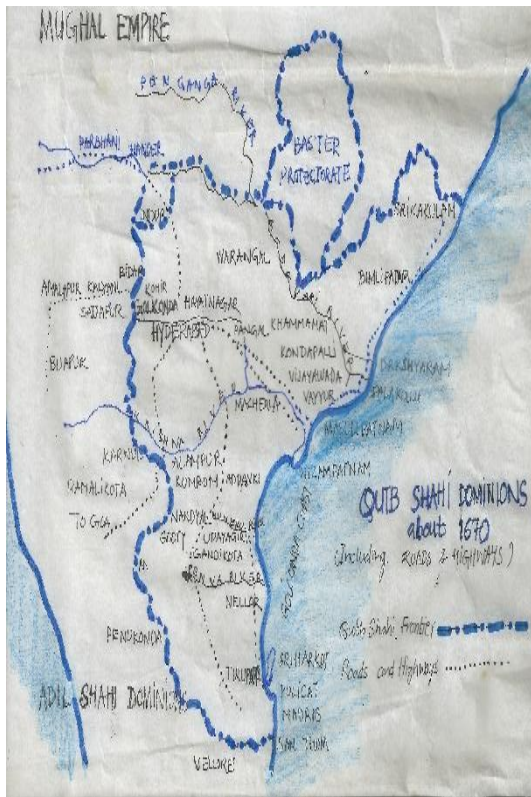


Figure 1 Qutb Shahi Roofing technique

The Qutb Shahs were great builders, they built many palaces and added to the structures, built by Kakatiya rulers. As the fort was getting congested, the fourth Qutb Shah, Mohammed Quli shifted his palace from Golconda to the south of the Musi River. He planned the city with Charminar as its centre and four roads perpendicular to each other. This divided the city in to four parts. About two fifty feet to the north of Charminar are Charkaman (the group of four gateways, built in 1592 CE), and the famous garden complex bordered by the *Kamans* or the four gateways. In the northeast was built the Dar-ush-Shifa, the first General Hospital in 1595 CE. Shifting of the palace complex gave way to the building activity in this new area, which continued till the fall of Qutb Shahi dynasty, to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

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<sup>1</sup> Golconda originally was a Kakatiyan outpost.



### The Mughal attack

The Mughals attacked on Golconda Fort in 1687 CE. The majestic **Qutb Shahi palaces** near Charminar are said to have been destroyed by the victorious Mughal army. Between the years 1687-1724, Hyderabad remained under Mughal control. Building construction activity was at a halt in this period. The Mughal Governor ruled from Aurangabad was known as the *Subedar* of Deccan. In 1724, the Asaf Jahi ruler started building the city walls to defend against Maratha attack.

Between 1734-1803 Malkajgiri Baradari was built, which was one of the Nizam's palaces from early Asaf Jahi period. The Shaw Wallace Co Ltd<sup>2</sup> owns this historic complex at present. Inside a fortified wall, remains of main Baradari with multi-cusped arches and a huge well stand till date.

<sup>2</sup> The scholar visited the site in 2008.

### The early Asaf Jahi Period:



*Figure 2 Shahi Khilwatkhana*

As the Mughal Empire decayed and began to disintegrate, the then Subedar became independent. The construction of the city walls was completed in 1740 CE. The Asaf Jahi rulers built their palaces in the south west of Charminar – beginning with the Chowmahalla. In 1750 CE, Khilwat was built. The major construction activity came after 1763 CE, when Nizam Ali Khan, Asaf Jah II, shifted his capital back to Hyderabad. Now, localities like Begum Bazaar came up outside the Walled City. In 1770 CE, Hyderabad once again became a major capital city, now ruled by the successful Nizams of the Asaf Jahi dynasty.



*Figure 3 Malkajgiri Baradari, notice the fortified entrance gateway and wall*

In the year 1784 CE- Purani Haveli<sup>3</sup> was built. Around late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> cent was built Majhli Begum ki Haveli by the second Nizam. The wood-work of the arched verandah at the entrance of the Haveli, with its ornamental niches made in lime made it a great architectural edifice.

In 1798CE, Subsidiary Alliance for military and political cooperation was signed between the Nizam and the East India Company. Thereafter, in the north of the city, a British cantonment was established, followed by the **British Residency** in the year 1805 CE on the north bank of the River Musi. In 1834- Zenana Mahal was added to Purani Haveli Palace Complex.



Figure 4 Zenana Mahal, Purani Haveli 1834, notice the semi-circular arches with a prominent key-stone in centre, very European in nature

The area on the north, earlier not populated was called Secunderabad, after the name of Nawab Sikander Jah, the third Nizam. This followed the growth of the new area on the north of the river including the construction of the churches, convents, and other civic structures in the European style. Secunderabad became the major sports centre and a hub of social activity. Both Secunderabad and Hyderabad are linked by Hussain Sagar Lake<sup>4</sup>. Originally the Puranapul<sup>5</sup> was the only bridge over Musi, built in 1578 CE. The British Residency was required to be connected to the south part of the river, so a new bridge was built in 1839, known as Chaderghat Bridge. Another one, Afzalgunj Bridge (known as Nayapul today), was constructed later in 1857-61.

In the period of Nawab Afzal-ud-Daula, the fifth Nizam (around 1857-69), Afzal Mahal was added to the royal palace complex, located in the south-west quadrant of the Walled City. The Sixth Nizam Mir Mehboob Ali Pasha in the year 1884 CE built Mehboob Mansion, along with a race course, in Malakpet for his wife, she was fond of horses. Mehboob Mansion has a beautiful mix of Indian and European architectural elements. The grand main entrance gateway imitated the European castle's entry.

One more major event in the building history of the city is the introduction of Rail Network in 1874 CE. Because of this, bringing the construction material from different parts of the Indian subcontinent and western world got easier.

<sup>3</sup> The palace was renamed as khadeem ki Haveli or Purani Haveli (literally meaning- the older palace) after Nizam shifted to Chowmahalla Palace.

<sup>4</sup> A man-made water body

<sup>5</sup> Originally called Pul-e-Narva

In 1900, Sardar Mahal was also built in the south-east quadrant of the Walled City. The elliptical and semi-circular arches, heavy lime mouldings, the louvered and panelled doors and the grand Corinthian pilasters clearly display the European architecture.

The seventh Nizam was Mir Osman Ali, son of Mir Mehbboob Ali. He purchased two palaces, Bella Vista<sup>6</sup> (built in 1931 CE, for his younger son Azam Jah) and Hill Fort<sup>7</sup> (for elder son Moazzam Jah, built in early 1900's by Sir Nizam Jung). Before ascending the throne, Mir Osman Ali also purchased King Kothi palace<sup>8</sup>, built by one Kamal Khan in 1900's.

Falaknuma Palace was built in 1894 by the Paigah noble Sir Vicar-ul-Umrah, and purchased by the Seventh Nizam. It is now functioning as a boutique hotel run by the Taj Group. Falaknuma means 'the mirror of the sky;' standing on a hill top this palace is still one of its kind in Hyderabad because of its interiors, frescoes, upholstery, and the exquisite dining table for 101 guests.

Chiran Palace, inside KBR Park would be the last in the list as it is more like a big luxury villa built on 6000 Sq meters of land. Prince Mukarram Jah, grandson of seventh Nizam moved to this place in 1967 post his coronation.

To understand the architectural variation, we also need to understand the structure of Nizam's court. Paigah nobles, the army chieftains, were close to the Nizam. The other important designation was of a Diwan, the Prime Minister. There were some Hindu nobles too who played an important role in the Asaf Jahi court. There were important Jagirdars<sup>9</sup>, close associates of the Nizam. Most of these nobles built palatial residences often called Devdis, still stand in different historic pockets of city. Many of them were conserved and repurposed, some were demolished and many of them still crying for attention.

The other nobles' palaces also need a mention here as they vied each other in grandeur of the structures they built. Errum Manzil is one such palace originally built by Nawab Fakhr-ul-Mulk.

#### **ARCHITECTURE OF THE PALACE:**

Main entrance of the palace was designed to be impressive. After entering from the main gate there were series of courtyards. There were different components in the palatial complex like Khazana, Tosha Khana, Mezkhana, Farrashkhana (house of pearls) and Bawarchikhana (kitchen) other than most important of all the men's apartment- *mardana* and women's apartment- *zenana*.

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<sup>6</sup> Presently ASCI is functioning from this palace

<sup>7</sup> Not in use at present

<sup>8</sup> Not in use at present

<sup>9</sup> Some of them are descendants of Kakatiya and Vijaynagara rulers

SN	Name of the palace	Date and style	Elements
1.	Malkajgiri Baradari	1734-1803, Mughal and Qutb Shahi	Fortified entrance, a huge stepwell, multi-cusped arched pavilion, Qutb Shahi, Mughal and Rajasthani elements
2.	Khilwat at Chowmahalla	1750, Persian, Mughal, Rajasthani	A walled complex with palaces, lots of fruits and flower trees, an entrance gate- 'Jilukhana' with staging courtyard and house of drum beaters. Series of courtyards, palace with pointed arches, use of large wooden windows Persian architecture elements, Mughal and Rajasthani ( <i>Chattri</i> ) elements
3.	Masarrat Mahal (Purani Haveli)	1784, Mughal	A walled palace complex, a huge yellow door with a <i>khirki</i> (postern). Series of courtyards, lots of fruits and flower trees, water fountains (added later)
4.	Majhli Begum ki Haveli	1763-1803 Mughal and Rajasthani	Wood-work, multi-cusp arch pavilion
<b>Subsidiary Alliance 1798 by the second Nizam and construction of British Residency in 1805</b>			
5.	Zenana Mahal (Purani Haveli)	1834, European influence	Semi-circular arches with Bold keystone associate with British Architecture
6.	Afzal Mahal (Chowmahalla)	1857-69, European influence	Pointed arches, Deccani lime plaster work
Accession of Sixth Nizam			
7.	Mahboob Mansion	1884, European influence, with Mughal in interiors	European Architecture on lower storey, first floor with Mughal architecture elements, two entrance gateways (one big and another small) with European elements
8.	Falaknuma Palace	1894, European influence	European elements, Italian interiors, drapery from France, design is similar to Versailles Palace
9.	Nazri Bagh (in King Kothi)	1900's, European influence	European architecture elements, gothic arches, semi-circular arches, segmental arches, triangular pediment, series of courtyards with fountains
10.	Sardar Mahal	1900, European influence	European architecture elements, gothic arches, semi-circular arches, segmental arches, triangular pediment, series of courtyards with fountains
Accession of Seventh Nizam			
11.	Hill Fort	Early 1900's, European influence	Standing on hill top, it looks like a Gothic castle with arched openings
12.	Bella Vista	1931, European influence	Triangular pediment, over the main entrance, semi-circular and segmental arches, wooden staircase with grand railing.



Figure 5 Purani Haveli Palace entrance, notice the Darwaza and Khirki(postern)

### FINDINGS/ANALYSIS:

The influence of British architecture is seen in the palaces of Nizam after construction of British Residency. Designed by British, the construction work was actually done by the Indian masons. British Residency is built with semi-circular arches, domed and jack-arched roofing, and vaulted roof in the basement, which became a model for many new royal structures. Use of steel as a reinforcing member became common. Impressed by British culture, the imitation of architecture also found its way into Hyderabad palaces. The Dining halls and ball room became a need for the palaces. The Roman façade and Palladian façades became popular amongst the city nobles. The complete vocabulary of classical architecture and ornamentation was there, displayed in British Residency. A significant change could be observed in the small and big elements of the prime structures of the city after the role of British starts in politics and also with construction of British Residency.

Introduction of semi-circular/classical arches, with circular columns and pilasters became some of the main features of the building. The classical style of railings with the Palladian and Victorian facades, were appreciated, though the Qutb Shahi and Mughal features were also getting constructed in the city.

Square Columns, pointed arches, trussed roof, use of timber as a structural material became a part of common practice in the buildings of the city. Mehboob mansion and sardar Mahal present beautiful examples of the Indo-European mixed way of construction. In these buildings the elliptical arches in the interiors give a grand look. The wooden flooring was provided in formal spaces. The jack-arched roofing and Madras Terrace technique made their way

Lot of stucco work was taken from the pattern books imported from Europe.

### STRUCTURAL AND NON-STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS:

Foundation has been made with locally available material rubble, dressed and undressed stone, brick, timber. The plinth has been noticed with dressed stone to avoid ingress of water in most of the structures. Walls are lime plastered in most of the palaces. The columns, brackets and beams are of different materials like, wood, stone, brick and also plastered with lime (ornamental lime plaster in many layers).



Doors, windows, ventilators: The openings are made in wood. The post are sometimes made in stone (dating back to Qutb Shahi period), exquisite glass etching is seen in the palaces of Hyderabad. The cast-iron railings are seen in various ornamental pattern making an inevitable part of garden. The fountains add value to the open areas and cool the surroundings. The bamboo chicks were in use on huge openings.