
MILITARY ARCHITECTURE UNDER THE ADILSHAHIS OF BIJAPUR

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Abstract—

Bijapur Sultanate, ruled by a dynasty called, “AdilShahi” was in power for a period of two hundred years (1489-1686). Bijapur history covers a very important part of the history of Medieval Deccan. The Adil Shahi sultans were gifted with a keen zest for social life and gentle arts.

Keywords— Architecture , history

INTRODUCTION

Architecture was the main field in which the Muslim rulers in India gave expression to their love of beauty. It created an opportunity for their mind and the Hindu mind to influence each other. The architecture that developed in Bijapur under the patronage of the Adil Shahi Sultans was an example of this influence. The Adil Shahi rulers were great patrons of architecture. They made Bijapur one of the most magnificent cities in the whole of India. The royal court was a centre of the masters and admirers of art and architecture. Artists, Musicians and painters of eminent position and universal reputation such as Malik Sandal, Faruq Hussian and Malik Yuqut were patronized by the rulers. Consequently , to quote Percy Brown, “the art in Bijapur immediately proceeded to find itself and to develop into the most aesthetically and constructionally competent manifestation of architecture in the whole of Deccan.”¹

MILITARY ARCHITECTURE :

The Military architecture being represented by the huge system of fortifications, Barracks, parapets or bastions, walls, gates, cannons, trenches and store houses. Two factors promoted the development of this architecture. First, the profuse supply of varieties of stones and finally, the rich experience of the Adil Shahi rulers which they inherited from their Turkish ancestors. Their fortifications excelled the other contemporary forts of the Deccan. Stone and mortar were used to give a strong and nice effect to their military architecture. The Bijapur kingdom was full of forts. At the time of its capture by Aurangzeb, the kingdom had one hundred and twenty forts.² These forts were also served as barracks and prison houses. Many forts were constructed during Ali's regime. Basatin-us-saltin records that a profuse military activity was conducted during Ali's time. He entrusted the construction of forts, bastions and curtain walls to his ministers. And each noble played his role in the execution of different sections.³ Forts, bastions and curtain walls were built in Naldurg, Dharwad, Raichur and Bijapur under the supervision of his ministers such as, Kishwar Khan, Mir Ni! Mat-Allah and Taher khan. The constructional skill of these forts and bastions is remarkable.

A brief study of the important features of the fortification and bastions seems to be necessary here. The citadel or Ark-Qila was constructed by Yusuf Adil Khan⁴. Ferishta records that in his reign this citadel of Bijapur was built of stone. Ibrahim Adil Shah I built two strong curtain walls to this fort and Ali Adil Shah I constructed the outer wall surrounding the Bijapur city. The walls of the outer fort consist of ninety six bastions of burj with their connecting curtain walls and five principal gates, namely, the Makka gate, Shahpur gate, the Bahmani gate, the Allapur gate and the Fath gate. One important feature of these gates is that on every gate there is

an inscription giving the date of construction and the name of the person who had laid the inscription. On Makka gate a beautiful inscription is laid giving the date 978. H/ 1570 A.D.⁵

Similarly the bastions of the Bijapur fort were remarkable for their variety in designs and details. They were defensive structure also. In order to understand the importance of the bastions a word of explanation seem to be necessary here. A high wall protects the platform running from bastion to bastion. The bastions are semi-circular in plan and on them seven large guns were mounted. Some of them are of huge dimensions. The pivot of the carriage is placed in a hole in the centre of the platform and huge piece of artillery is held tight. During firing, by wedges between it and the stone wall, it prevents undue strain on the pivot from the recoil. On each of the leading bastions a stone tablet has been set which commemorates its construction. The best example is the Zahir Khani burj of Raichur built by Ali Adil Shah I. Out of the ninety six bastions, three are worthy of mention. The Serji burj, the Landa Qasab and the Hydar burj. It was not only strong but had a great diameter. It was on his burj the great bronze gun Malik-i-Maidan, the largest piece of cannon was placed. This was furnished with bomb proof power chambers and water tanks. Secondly, the Landa Qasab in the South of Fateh gate was the most formidable of all the bastions and one of the largest in Bijapur. It was built in 1609 A. D. finally the Hydar burj was situated not upon the line of the walls, but upon a lonely position inside the town. It was the loftiest Gun platform in Bijapur and is very conspicuous object for miles around. It is also called as Upri or Upli burj. It raise to a height of about 80feet. There is a stone tablet in Persian on the top of the narrow staircase, which records the building of the tower by Hydar Khan, a general who served under Ali I and Ibrahim II. The important feature of this burj is that, is the highest tower in the city.⁶

The Gun used by the Adil Shahi Sultans during the time of wars also deserve our attention while studying the military architecture. There were nearly ninety six cannons built during this period. In order to understand the constructive genius of these pieces of military architecture. It seems necessary to state one or two examples. The Landa Qasab, the Malik-i-Maidan and Karak Bijli are the best examples. These cannons are still lying in different places in Bijapur. The Landa Qasab is the largest Gun used during this period. It has been placed on the Niamat bastion of Bijapur. The length of this cannon is 21 feet 7 inches, the diameter of its muzzle is 4 feet 4 inches and its bore is 4 feet, 5 inches. The weight of this cannon is 47 tons. The Malik-i-Maidan is the largest piece of ordnance in the world.⁷ The builder of this cannon must have been the genius of a high order. The metal is an alloy of 80.427 parts of copper to 19.573 parts of tin. The dimensions are 14 feet 10 inches in the diameter of Breech, 5 feet 5 inches is the diameter of muzzle, 2 feet 4 inches is the diameter of the bore and 14 feet 3 inches is the length of the cannon. The most striking feature of this Gun is the great muzzle which has been shaped into the head of a lion or Dragon with open jaws. An elephant is crushed to death between the sharp curved fangs, which symbolically depicts the Gun's strength and capacity for destruction.

The gate ways form the next important item in military architecture. They were artistic and strong. Each one flanked by the two massive circular towers and guarded above the door by a battlemented wall. Each gateway had two sets of doors one inside the other. They were so constructed that if the outer was forced opened by the enemy, the protruding battlements afforded cover to the besieged who could shoot at the enemy, capering with the inner, from wooden beams, fixed together with iron clamps, strengthened with massive bars and bristling

with 12 inches Iron spikes. The Macca gate was the strongest and the most complex of all the rest⁸

Before dealing with the royal and civil architecture of Bijapur, it seems necessary to understand whether this architecture was influenced by any foreign styles or it has its own individuality. Scholar such as Herman Goets, Henry Cousens and Fergusson who have are opinion that the first phase of the Bijapur architecture (from the time of Yusuf to Ali Adil Shah I's time) was influenced by Persian and Turkish architecture and the second phase (from the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II) the Bijapur architecture was influenced more by the Hindu architecture, especially in the ornamental designs and the decorative patterns. It did not have any European influence, though Bijapur had contacts with Portuguese during the early period of the Adil Shahi rule. Sherwani remarks in this connection that “ the Portuguese never intermixed with the indigenous people. They upheld their own western culture. Hence, we do not find any influence of the Portuguese either on the dress as upon the architecture⁹ .

The architecture produced by the Adil Shahi Sultans was neither Islamic nor Hindu, but a mixture of both. It is otherwise called as the Dakhni School of Indo-Saracenic architecture. The conception of building which was born in the minds of the rulers was executed and molded by the Hindu artisans, the outcome of which could be the splendid monuments of mixed styles. Form where did the Bijapur Sultans get these artisans and the architects? It was from Vijayanagar. After the disintegration of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the battle of Banihatti all the artisans, architects and dancers migrated to Bijapur either as prisoner of war or as refugees¹⁰. And they were employed in the building activities at Bijapur by the Sultans, with the result exuberant building activity began and magnificent edifices were raised in the later part of the 16th and 17th centuries at Bijapur. Ferguson remarks that during that period their capital was adorned

with a series of building as remarkable as those of any of the Muhammadan capital of India with an exception of Agra¹¹.

The architectural abilities of the Bijapur builders were of a very high order. The quality of their work was almost superb, and they have left behind these structures a rare beauty and elegance. Their system of intersecting of arches was unique implying long years of constant practice in all branches of the building art. Many years after their rule, the high standard of masonry work was sustained without any sign of degeneration. Bijapur is one of the few kingdom in India for superb monuments in countless number. The architectural heritage of the Adil Shahi Sultanate is outstanding.

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