

Sulthan Adil Shahi : Zenith of Trade and Commerce - A Study

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study significance of the **Adil Shahi** dynasty. The Adil Shahi or Adilshahi, was a Shia, and later Sunni Muslim, dynasty founded by Yusuf Adil Shah, that ruled the Sultanate of Bijapur, centred on present-day Bijapur district, Karnataka in India, in the Western area of the Deccan region of Southern India from 1489 to 1686. Bijapur had been a province of the Bahmani Sultanate (1347–1518), before its political decline in the last quarter of the 15th century and eventual break-up in 1518. The Bijapur Sultanate was absorbed into the Mughal Empire on 12 September 1686, after its conquest by the Emperor Aurangzeb. The founder of the dynasty, Yusuf Adil Shah (1490–1510), was appointed Bahmani governor of the province, before creating a de facto independent Bijapur state. Yusuf and his son, Ismail, generally used the title Adil Khan. 'Khan', meaning 'Chief' in various Central Asian cultures and adopted in Persian, conferred a lower status than 'Shah', indicating royal rank. Only with the rule of Yusuf's grandson, Ibrahim Adil Shah I (1534–1558), did the title of Adil Shah come into common use. Even then, Bijapur rulers recognized Safavid Persian suzerainty over their realm. Moreover, remains of tanks and lakes named Rangrez Talab, Quasim Talab, Fatehpur Talab and Allahpur Talab in the vicinity of Bijapur have been found. Manctelslo, a traveller who visited the Deccan area in 1638, wrote "Bijapur was one of the greatest cities in the whole of Asia, more than five "leagues" (i.e., 15 miles) the city had five great suburbs where most of the traders lived and in Scyanpur (Shahpur) were most of the jewelers dealing in costly pearls." The city became famous as a place of education during the Adil Shahi reign. Ali Adil Shah I himself was well versed in religion, logic, sciences, syntax, etymology and grammar. He was fond of reading to the extent that he kept with him big boxes of books, while on tour. All the sultans of the dynasty patronised the teachers and scholars.

Keywords: Adil Shahi, trade, commerce, Gardens, Pavilions, Bijapur, Karnataka

Introduction

The founder of the dynasty, Yusuf Adil Shah, may have been a Georgian slave who was purchased by Mahmud Gawan from Iran. Yet, Salma Ahmed Farooqui, states, Yusuf was a son of the Ottoman Sultan Murad II. According to the historian Mir Rafi-uddin Ibrahim-i Shirazi, or Rafi', Yusuf's full name was Sultan Yusuf 'Adil Shah Savah or Sawah'i (from the ancient town of Saveh, southwest of modern Tehran), the son of Mahmud Beg of Sawa in Iran, (Rafi' 36–38, vide Devare 67, fn 2). Rafi's history of the 'Adil Shahi dynasty was written at the request of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, and was completed and presented to the patron in AH 1017. The Indian scholar T.N. Devare mentioned that while Rafi's account of the Bahmani dynasty is filled with anachronisms, his account of the Adilshahi is "fairly accurate, exhaustive, and possesses such rich and valuable information about Ali I and Ibrahim II" (312). Rafi-uddin later became the governor of Bijapur for about 15 years (Devare 316). Yusuf's bravery and personality raised him rapidly in Sultan's favour, resulting in his appointment as the Governor of Bijapur. He built the Citadel or Arkilla and the Faroukh Mahal. Yusuf was a man of culture. He invited poets and artisans from Persia, Turkey, and Rome to his court. He's well known as a ruler who took advantage of the decline of the Bahmani power to establish himself as an independent sultan at

Bijapur in 1498. He did this with a military support which has been given to him by a Bijapuri general Kalidas Madhu Sadhwani – brilliant commander and good diplomat, who made quick career by supporting Yusuf Adil Shah and then his son – Ismail Adil Shah. He married Punji, the sister of a Maratha Raja of Indapur. When Yusuf died in 1510, his son Ismail was still a boy. Punji in male attire valiantly defended him from a coup to grab the throne. Ismail Adil Shah thus became the ruler of Bijapur and succeeded his father's ambition. Ibrahim Adil Shah I who succeeded his father Ismail, fortified the city and built the old Jamia Masjid. Ali Adil Shah I who next ascended the throne, aligned his forces with other Muslim kings of Golconda, Ahmednagar and Bidar, and together, they brought down the Vijayanagar empire. With the loot gained, he launched ambitious projects. He built the Gagan Mahal, the Ali Rauza (his own tomb), Chand Bawdi (a large well) and the Jami Masjid. Ali I had no son, so his nephew Ibrahim II was set on the throne. Ali I's queen Chand Bibi had to aid him until he came of age. Ibrahim II was noted for his valor, intelligence and leanings towards the Hindu music and philosophy. Under his patronage the Bijapur school of painting reached its zenith. Muhammad Adil Shah succeeded his father Ibrahim II. He is renowned for Bijapur's grandest structure, the Gol Gumbaz, which has the biggest dome in the world with whispering gallery round about slightest sound is reproduced seven times. He also set up the historical Malik-e-Maidan, the massive gun.

Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze trade and commerce in the norm of the Adil Shahis. Capital Bijapur framed into a huge region with commercial systems and procedures. It was a seat of education, culture, trade and commerce, was called the Banaras of the South.

Thus Bijapur was fairly large town under the early Sultans of Adil Shahi dynasty. The capital progressed slowly, however, its star was in ascendancy since the accession of Sultan Ali Adil Shah I in 1558. His victory in the Battle of Talikota in 1565 and further campaigns in the Krishna-Tungabhadra regions brought enormous wealth. Hence he began to spend lavishly on its decoration. Under him every year saw some new building, a palace, a mosque, a bastion, or a minaret. His successor Ibrahim Adil Shah II added, so to say, a pearl necklace, Ibrahim Rouza to enhance the beauty of Bijapur, and Mohammed Adil Shah crowned it with a priceless gem called Gol Gumbaz. Thus the Adil Shahi monarchs poured their heart and soul in the capital city. The period between accessions of Ali Adil Shah I 1558 to the death of Mohammed Adil Shah 1656, can be called the golden age of the Adil Shahis as the kingdom flourished in all walks of life. During the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II the population of Bijapur is stated to have reached 984,000 and had an incredible total of 1,600 mosques. Under Mohammed Adil Shah the population further increased. Historian J. D. B. Gribble writes in and around the suburbs of Shahpur only a million people lived. Within fort walls when shelter became difficult the Sultans founded the suburbs of Fatehpur, Aliabad, Shahpur or Khudanpur, Chandpur, Inayatpur, Ameenpur, Nawabpur, Latifpur, Fakirpur, Rasoolpur, Afzalpur, Padshahpur, Rambhapur, Aghapur (wrongly called Ogapur), Zohrapur, Khadijahpur, Habibpur, Salabatpur, Yarbipur, Tahwarpur, Sharzahpur, Yakubpur, Nauraspur, Dayanatur, Sikandarpur, Quadirpur, Burhanpur, Khwaspur, Imampur, Ayinpur Bahamanhall, etc, these suburbs spread in circumference of fifteen miles of Bijapur. From all sides, the gates of Bijapur fort were thoroughly connected with roads, and the people had good amenities. Bijapur being the capital and big business centre attracted merchants and travellers in large number from the Deccan and many parts of India and foreign lands. Abdal, a court poet in his Ibrahim Namah writes,

(at the markets of Bijapur) the wealthy merchants of different countries sat in every direction (with their costly items).. In Bijapur the merchants could stay in the Sarais (inns) attached to the mosques or other public buildings. Such Sarais are found at Taj Boudi, Sandal Masjid, Bukhari Masjid, Ballad Khan Masjid etc. Nawab Mustafa Khan, a celebrated noble of Mohammed Adil Shah built a big Sarai in the west of Bijapur, which is now used as the District Jail.

From different parts of world many envoys, merchants, travellers, etc. visited Bijapur in its heyday of magnanimity and grandeur, and they left behind their valuable accounts of past grandiosities of Bijapur. In 1013 corresponding to (1604–1605) the Mughal Emperor Akbar, commissioner Mirza Asad Baig, one of grandees of his court to Bijapur for diplomatic dealings. He was a person who saw Agra and Delhi in their glorious days. He wrote his account called, "Haalat-e-Asad Baig or Wakiat-e-Asad Baig". From his account we shall be able to form some idea of the position which Bijapur occupied among the wonder cities of India in the Medieval Ages. He cites in his impression of the city the grandeurs of the Adil Shahi court and its customs:

On 17th of Shaaban I marched forward with attendants that were with me to meet Adil Khan (Ibrahim Adil Shah II), and was introduced to him in a building upon that lake Gagan Mahal at Bijapur appointed for such ceremonies. It was a very pleasant spot appropriately furnished. In two or three houses the rooms were in a perfect tip-top condition, and after prayer on that day Adil Khan came, with all pomp and circumstances, followed by a retinue of elephants... that palace, which they called "Hajjah" (?) All around the gate of my residence were lofty buildings with houses and porticoes; the situation was very healthy and airy. It lies in open space in the city. Its northern portico is to the east of a "Bazaar" of a great extent, as much as thirty yards wide and about two Kos long. Before each shop was a beautiful green tree, and the whole "Bazaar" was extremely clean and pure. It was filled with rare goods, such as are not seen or heard of in any other town. There were shops of cloths sellers, jewellers, armourers, vintners, fish-mongers, and cooks... in the jeweller's shops were jewels of all sorts, wrought into variety. of articles, such as daggers, knives, mirrors, necklaces, and "laso" into the form of birds, such as parrots, doves and peacocks, etc. all studded with valuable jewels, and arranged upon shelves, rising one above the other. By the side of this shop will be a baker's with rare viands, placed in the same manner, upon tiers of shelves in like manner. Then a clothier's, then a spirit merchant's with various sorts of China vessels, valuable crystal bottles, costly cups, filled with choice and rare essence, arrayed on shelves, while in the front of the shop were jars of double-distilled spirits. Besides that shop will be a fruiter's, filled with all kinds of fruits and sweetmeats, such as pistachios nuts, and relishes, and sugar-candy and almonds. On another side may be a wine merchant's shop, and an establishment of singers, dancers and beautiful women adorned with various kinds of jewels, and fair-faced choristers, all ready to perform whatever may be desired of them. In short, the whole "Bazaar" was filled with wine and beauty, dances, perfumes, jewels, of all sorts, plates, and viands. In one street were a thousand bands of people drinking, and dancers, lovers, and pleasure-seekers assembled; none quarrelled or disputed with one another and this state of things was perpetual. Perhaps no place in the wide world could present a more wonderful spectacle to the eye of the traveller... (for Emperor Akbar) I purchased for Rs. 25900 emeralds, "pokhraj", "Nilam" and birds made of jewels. I purchased the diamond and "Dugdugi" for Rs. 55000 and agreed to pay the price after Mir Jamaluddin approves.

Trade as mentioned in Foreign accounts

Bijapur was one of the greatest cities in the whole of Asia, more than five “leagues” (i.e., fifteen miles) the city had five great suburbs where most of the traders lived and in Scyanpur (Shahpur) were most of the jewelers dealing in costly pearls.

Conclusion

The scholars used to meet at different places in the city and hold learned discussions among them. The Mosques had the Maktabas (elementary schools) where Arabic and Persian were taught and the books were supplied by the administration for free. The students who performed excellently in the annual examination received prizes and were later appointed to the high and honourable positions. As a result of state patronage, a bulk of literature in Arabic, Persian and Urdu were written, and languages like Sanskrit, Marathi and Kannada also flourished. In the south of the kingdom, the official transaction was carried out in Kannada. Pandit Narhari, a court poet of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, composed the poetic excellence on his master, called, Nauras Manzarf. During the reign of the Adil Shahi dynasty, Trade and Commerce in the capital city of Bijapur was among the best in India. It was a thriving centre of culture, trade and commerce, education and learning, etc. It was known for its own culture called, Bijapur Culture. People from all over the country went and settled there, and Bijapur became a place where different communities with their own traditions and culture lived together. Bijapur flourished especially after the accession of Sultan Ali Adil Shah I in 1558. His victory in the Battle of Talikota in 1565 and further campaigns in the Krishna-Tunghabhadra regions brought enormous wealth, and he used it to massively beautify the city. His successor Ibrahim II added Ibrahim Rouza to enhance the beauty of Bijapur, and Mohammed Adil Shah crowned it with the Gol Gumbaz. The city and its suburbs had an elaborate water supply system. The Adil Shahi rulers constructed dams, and lakes (like the famous Begum Talab which supplied drinking water to the city), and also constructed numerous big and small wells. According to the historical documents, at one point in the city, there were 700 wells with steps and 300 wells without steps.

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