



Research Paper

## An overview of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty

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### ABSTRACT

The political scenario of Golconda rise is intervened with the disintegration of Bahamani kingdom and the 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 Deccani 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. Being an efficient military leader and a strategist and with his unique position as a war commander he was successful both in suppressing the revolt and in rescuing his overlord. The title of Qutb-ul-Mulk was conferred on him by Mohammed Shah. He was also appointed as subedar of Telangana which included Warangal, Golconda and Kodangal. Because of his martial and literary talents he was addressed as "Master of the Sword and the Pen". The Golconda fort was also given as a Jagir to Sultan. He gave it the name of Muhammed nagar and made it as his capital. This paper analyzes the an overview of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In 1463, disturbances broke out in the Telangana area of the Bahamani kingdom of Deccan. Sultan Quli Qutbul 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.

#### Objectives of the study

- 1 To analyze the an overview of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty
2. To describe the Socio Economic Conditions of Golconda Qutb Shahis.
3. To assess the socio-economic and religious conditions of people under the Qutub Shahis rulers

### II. METHODOLOGY

The research is based on secondary data. It's an exploratory and descriptive in nature given the nature of the present study, it was required to collect information from the secondary sources. Secondary information was collected from research studies, books, journals, newspapers.

**Qutub Shah 1 : Sultan Quli Qutub Mulk:** The founder of the Qutub Shahi kingdom did much to strengthen and improve the capital Golconda. He beautified his fortress capital with mosques, palaces and gardens. On the foundations of the old mud fort Sultan Quli built a massive citadel. This city called Muhammad Nagar, soon grew rapidly and earned fame as one of the leading cities of the east, well known for its trade in diamonds and precious stones. Sultan Quli's subjects thought highly of him and he governed kindly and well. But at the age of 99, the king died at the hands of his own son Jamsheed Quli.

**Qutub Shah 2 : Jamsheed Quli Qutub Shah:** Jamsheed, the third son, took over the reins of government with blood stained hands. His seven years reign was marked by the people's resentment over his patricide. However, Jamsheed Quli was educated and loved poetry. He died in 1550 of an incurable disease.

**Qutub Shah 3 : Subhan Quli Qutub Shah:** Subhan Quli Qutub Shah was 7 year old, when he became Sultan of Golconda, after death of his father Jamsheed Quli Qutub Shah in 1550 AD. Saif Khan also known as "Ainul Mulk" was sent from Ahmednagar for the performance of duties of regent during the boy's development. Subhan died same year and his father's brother Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah ascended the throne.

**Qutub Shah 4 : Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah:** The youngest son of Sultan Quli Qutub Shah, Ibrahim, lived in exile as an honored guest of the Raja of Vijayanagar. It was during this sojourn that he learnt to love Telugu and speak it almost as his second mother tongue. When he ascended the throne, Ibrahim patronized and encouraged the learning and writing of Telugu as few Muslim or non-Muslim rulers had done before him. Poets from all over the Deccan converged at Ibrahim's court.

During his reign, Golconda was further strengthened. Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah invited his nobles to construct buildings within its walls, Mosques, Schools, Alms houses, and the Dam at Hussain Sagar, Budwel and Ibrahimpatnam were all to his credit. Besides, Ibrahim was noted for his able administration.

**Qutub Shah 5 : Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah:** It was in the long, peaceful and prosperous reign of the fifth king Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah that the Qutub Shahi dynasty reached its zenith. Muhammad Quli was crowned king when only 15 years of age. He is best remembered as the great planner and founder of the city of Hyderabad. According to popular legend, the king was enamored of a dancer called Bhagmati, belonging to a small village of Chichelam where the famous Charminar now stands. He found Bhagnagar to perpetuate his love for her, the name of the city was accordingly changed by the king to HYDERABAD. Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah, like Ibrahim, patronized and encouraged the Telugu language as much as he did Arabic and Persian. He was himself an accomplished poet in Telugu and fostered local traditions and rituals. He was also the creator of the first Deccani poetry.

Muhammad Quli was hardly 48 when he died in 1612 after a fairly long reign of 32 years. He was a humane and just king, besides being a great builder and man of letters. Hayath Bakshi Begum was his only daughter who was married to his nephew and successor, Sultan Muhammad Qutub Shah.

**Qutub Shah 4 : Sultan Muhammad Qutub Shah:** The nephew and son-in-law of Muhammad Quli, Sultan Muhammad ascended the throne as the sixth Qutub Shah. A well versed scholar, he had a deeply religious temperament and was a connoisseur of good books. The Qutub Shahi chronicles were completed during his reign. He further contributed to the architectural achievements of the Qutub Shahi dynasty. The foundation of the principal mosque Mecca Masjid was laid during his reign in 1617. He also began the construction of the building of Sultan Nagar. These projects were however not completed in his lifetime.

**Qutub Shah 7 : Abdullah Qutub Shah:** Son of Sultan Muhammad, Abdullah ascended the throne at the age of 12, his mother administering the kingdom till he attained maturity. He lived a life of pleasure and ease. Though the Kingdom was extended during his rule, it came under Mughal pressure in 1636. Golconda was attacked in 1656 and as a result, heavy indemnity had to be paid. He died on 1st May, 1672.

**Qutub Shah 8 : Abul Hasan Tana Shah:** Abul Hasan, also known as Tana Shah, was Abdullah Qutub Shah's son-in-law. He proved an able ruler and a staunch defender in the face of the Mughal might. He is remembered as a benign and tolerant king who placed his people's prosperity and well-being above everything else. Tana Shah was the last king of Golconda. During his rule, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb seized the fortress of Golconda for a period of 8 continuous months. In 1687, the Mughals finally stormed the fortress after the gates were opened by a traitor. Abul Hasan was taken prisoner. He was held captive first at Bidar and then at Daulatabad (Aurangabad) where he died in prison after 12 years of captivity. Jan Sagar Khan, one of the nobles of Aurangzeb, accompanied Abul Hasan up to Daulatabad. He was later made the governor of the Deccan under the kingdom of Aurangzeb.

## **Social Conditions of Golconda 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.

### **Society**

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.

### **Superstitions**

There were many superstitions in society. Foreign travelers describe in their writings the social evils of the superstitions of the society of the day. There are superstitions in the society such as child marriages, dowry system, sati, prostitution etc.

### **Womens' Position**

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.

### **Dress:**

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.

### **Ornaments**

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.

The Qutb Shahi rulers gave religious freedom to both Hindu and Muslim could attain the highest office in the state at the bidding of the Sultan. In some respects, the knowledge and skill of the Brahmans made them indispensable to the administration, because while they were employed by the moores for writing and keeping accounts on palm leaves with a pen of iron, they are competent astronomers observing the course of the seven planets. Polygamy, though permitted, was not generally practiced. It is interesting that the practice of sati was not merely discouraged but actually prohibited and women were sometimes prevented from burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

Education seems to have been fairly general, for the moores have their children taught to read and write if they are capable. Some of the gentoos have also their children taught to read and write, and when they are fit, to learn the craft pertaining to their hereditary caste.

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 Shiah, 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 importance 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.

The Hindus loyally served the state and the state rewarded them along with their Muslim counterparts. The Qutb Shahs true to their policy did not differentiate among their nobles while awarding titles and Jagirs. There are a number of firmans belonging to different periods confirming this.

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 Hindu 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 Brahmmins 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 Brahmmins 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.

### **Qutb Shahi Architecture**

Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs and Charminar, located in Hyderabad, are the landmarks that together symbolize the Qutb Shahi Dynasty (1518 A.D. to 1687 A.D.). 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 Telangana. 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 Fort**

Golconda is a fortified citadel and an early capital city of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Within its stone fortifications that cover 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. The fort at one point housed precious diamonds such as the Hope diamond, Nassak diamond, and the Koh-i-Noor diamond, one of India's most precious gems.

### **Qutb Shahi Tombs**

The tombs of Qutb Shahis are a mausoleum complex, a royal necropolis (cemetery) which comprises the tombs of the Royal family and the officials who faithfully served them and also mortuary bath and mosques. The complex consists of 30 tombs, mosques and a mortuary bath. 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. The tombs are graceful structures with intricately carved stonework. The tombs display a distinctive style, a mixture of Persian, Pathan and Hindu forms. The material used for constructing these tombs was grey granite embellished with stucco (durable finish for exterior walls) ornamentation. The tombs form a large cluster and stand on a raised platform. They are domed structures built on square bases surrounded by pointed arches. Each tomb stands on a wide quadrangular terrace approached on all sides by flights of steps. The galleries of the smaller tombs are single storied while the larger ones are two storied.

### **Charminar**

Charminar is a ceremonial Gateway built to celebrate the foundation of Hyderabad, a new Millennial City, in 1591 A.D. 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. It was the first monument in the world constructed using lime mortar and granite, it was only after its construction that the architects throughout the world recognised the strength of lime-mortar in raising huge structures. It 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. Charminar provided a point of origin and reference point for the planning grid that determined the layout of the city of Hyderabad.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

The Qutb Shahi dynasty has been considered a "Composite" of Hindu Muslim religiosocial culture. The Qutb Shahi Society were heterogeneous consisting of the people from different lands, religions & sects. They 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 were 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. 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. Qutb Shahis tried to foster sense of harmony and maintained social equality by protecting their populace irrespective of their origin. Each kingdom possessed particular social identity, though games, past-times, food and dress culture were mostly similar. However society was not averse to common societal problems like sati, rigid caste-system, and superstitious beliefs. There was diverse activity in the society due to constant inflow and outflow of humans like mendicants, philosophers, traders, soldiers, ambassadors, poets and artists. This led to

intermingling and inter-synthesis of people at societal level. Their participation in each other cultural ceremonies and festivals of importance led to the emergence of a composite culture namely Deccani and Hyderabad cultures under Qutb Shahis and Nizams respectively. The atmosphere of equality, liberty and harmony provided by Sultans also led to cultural contribution to various aspects of art and literature and encouraged scholars and artists from distant lands to settle on Deccan soil.

During the reign of the Qutub shahis, new changes took place in the society. The new religion had an impact on the life of people. There have been changes in culture. People's attire and festivals have taken on a new look. As the Qutb Shahi lords practiced religious harmony the people also began to value their religion which resulted in changes in the society. However, the caste system in Hinduism continued. But there have been changes in the festivals in Hinduism. Influenced by Sufism, they nurtured religious harmony in the community and lived a peaceful life.

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