

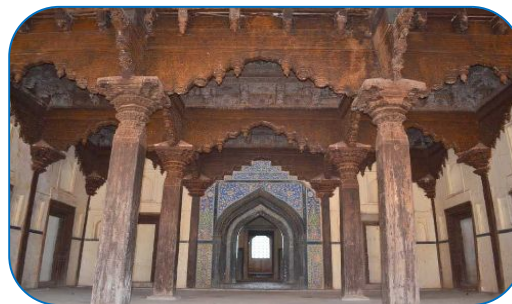


## RAGNIN MAHAL: A COLOURED PALACE IN BIDAR FORT

**Dr. Jayashree Prabha**  
Associate Professor , Govt. First Grade College, Bidar .

### ABSTRACT :

*A Distinguish Indo-Persian architectural style of Deccan came into vogue after the establishment of the Bahmani Dynasty in 1347 A.D. This was largely based in its early stage, on the imperial Tughluq style then in vogue in north India; but later it was influenced by the building art of Iran with which the later Bahmani Sultans had developed close contacts. In its earlier phase, the style, unlike such provincial styles as that of Gujarat, remained unaffected by the rich traditions of the local building art, and though at a later date, Hindu influence asserts itself in building methods as well as in the decorative field, it never rose to occupy a predominant position. The first phase of this style, marking continuous stages of its development, is represented by the buildings at Gulbarga, which are marked by in the contemporary Tughluqian style, while the second phase, coinciding with the shifting of the capital to Bidar, is characterized by an increasing use of Persian forms and decoration schemes; even a few buildings like the Madrasah of Khwaja Imaduddin Mahmud Gawan at Bidar and the Chand Minar in the Daulatabad Fort are topically Persian in style.*



**KEYWORDS :** Rangin Mahal, Coloured Palace, Mother of Pearl.

### INTRODUCTION

In 1424 A.D the transfer of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar, the architectural style enters in second phase which is marked by a greater assimilation of Persian influence, chiefly in the decorative field.

In Bidar Fort, the shattered remains of the beautiful palace buildings now cleared of the debris in to which they had fallen, must have been remarkable for their substantive architectural style which was definitely Persian in character, remarkable for their mass and outline and modified and adapted to local requirements. There is a liberal use of colours over surfaces, and the brilliant schemes of which have survived to give an idea of the stupendous effect it must have then produced.

These buildings were chiefly composed of a series of halls each known by a different name depending upon its purpose or the use to which it was put, such as Takht Mahal, Diwan-i-Aam, Gagan Mahal, Tarkash Mahal and Rangin Mahal. The beautiful of there was the Rangin Mahal literally means "Coloured Palace", and this name was apparently given to it on account of its walls being originally decorated with tiles of different hues, traces of which still exist on the façade of the eastern halls. Near the Gumbad Darwazaa royal tower has existed perhaps since the time when Ahmed Shah Wali Bahmani built the Fort. From this tower, which is mentioned as the Shah Burj in contemporary history, the Bahmani Sultans often reviewed their troops, which assembled outside the gate of the fort. In 1487 A.D when a party of Afaquis and Deccanis revolted against Mahmud Shah Bahmani and tried to murder him,

he took refuge in the Shah Burj. The rebels were subsequently punished, but as the Sultan had despaired of his life he considered the shelter afforded by the Shah Burj as auspicious, and he had a lofty palace built in its close vicinity<sup>1</sup>. The southern apartments of this palace were built by Ali Barid, who adorned them with wood-carving and mother of pearl work<sup>2</sup>. During Nizam's times the palace has been used as the court of the First Taluqdar of Bidar<sup>3</sup>, and a veranda and several partition walls have been built, which not only mar the general appearance of the building, but make it difficult to trace its original plan.

Access to the building is now obtained by two flights of steps which lead to a landing<sup>4</sup> from which, by passing through some rooms, the interior of the palace is reached. One of these rooms opens on a veranda which is modern, but there are two halls at its back towards the east, which from the style of their architecture appear to be of the Bahmani period. The hall at the north-east and is square in plan, but has a high-vaulted roof which is supported by squinches in corners. The hall measures 25 feet 4 inches each way at the base, and the domical ceiling is 23 feet 9 inches above the centre of the floor. The hall has a rectangular projection towards the east, and a window at the extreme end which opens in the south-eastern wall of the fort and commands views of the ramparts and the part of the city that is situated on that side. The walls of the hall are extremely thick, and the general style of the building gives an effect of heaviness<sup>5</sup>.

To the south of this hall there is another which was originally connected with it by an opening in the wall on that side. The latter hall also is square in plan, but is smaller than the former. It measures 18 feet each way, and has a pentagonal projection towards the east with a window at the end which opens upon the ramparts. This hall is entered from the veranda by an arch, the proportions of which are rather squat, the span being 11 feet 5 inches and the height up to the apex 13 feet 5 inches. This hall also seems to be of the Bahmani period, and may be added by Mahmud Shah Bahmani after the revolt of 1487 A.D. it has a rectangular extension towards the south, which has also an arched opening to the veranda. This narrow room was utilized either as a toilet chamber or as a wardrobe. There are three small rooms at the southern end of the veranda and two at the northern end. To the west of the latter there is a double room which opens on the court and had also a door towards the steps. All of these six rooms are of small dimensions, and their architecture is such that they may belong to any period, Bahmani, Baridi, or even later.

From the court a view of the upper walls of the palace may be had. These were once richly adorned with tile work arranged in arched shaped and rectangular panels. The colour scheme now visible consists of white patterns on a dark blue background. There may have been other colours also, but as the tiles have been exposed to the inclemencies of the weather for several centuries, they have completely faded. The designs consist of floral and calligraphic devices exhibiting a highly developed technique and refined taste. Among the religious texts inscribed on the walls an invocation (*Du'a*) may still be read;

*"And provide him (the Sultan) through the grace of our prophet, Muhammad, with an abode which may be everlasting, exalted, and delightful"*<sup>6</sup>.

The court had a water channel with fountains and a cistern in the middle, the dimensions of the cistern are: length 9 feet 6 inches; breadth 6 feet 10 inches; depth 2 feet 6 inches. These were filled up with rubbish in the course of time, but the Department of Archaeological Survey of India has cleared them.

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Qasim Ferishtah, *Tarikh-i-Ferishtah*, part-I, p.709-11

<sup>2</sup> In the inscription of Ali Barid which was installed in the same palace.

<sup>3</sup> The Office of the first *Taluqdar* under the Nizam's Government is analogue to the office of Collector in British India.

<sup>4</sup> During Nizam's period the landing been roofed over, and round masonry pillars have been built to support the roof towards the east.

<sup>5</sup> Yazdani, Ghulam, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, p.49

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.46

At the southern end of the court is the hall and pavilion built by Ali Barid who was the first of the Baridi dynasty to assume the regal title after his two predecessors had carved out a territory for themselves from the Bahmani dynasty. To day the hall has been disturbed by the insertion of some modern walls and doors, but originally it had two apartments, each containing five bays. The total length of the hall is 52 feet and the width 20 feet. The divisions are arranged by means of columns, which are of wood and most beautifully carved. The designs are both Muslim and Hindu. An interesting feature is presented by the ornamental scalloped arches arranged by means of struts, which appear to be the forerunners of the cusped arches of the Mughals in later times. The walls of the hall were originally decorated with tile work which unfortunately has been destroyed in the course of repairs made in comparatively recent times, but specimens of it may be seen in the spandrels of the doorway which leads to the royal pavilion. This doorway is built at the back of the hall and consists of two arches, one at the outside and the other inside, with a passage between them. The outer arch is a little larger in size, its span being 6 feet and its height up to the apex 8 feet 3 inches. This arch has a black stone moulding above the doorway imposts, while below are tiny shafts most elegantly carved. The moulding is of the rope pattern type. In the spandrels are lovely floral designs worked out on tiles, and above the doorway is a Persian verse inscribed on the same. The verse because of its appropriateness is worthy of being quoted here:

*"Since in my eye (lit. 'the royal chamber of my eye') always rests the image, It is my prayer (oh Sultan!), that my sight may remain only as long as that vision"*<sup>7</sup>.

While the inner arch is decorated by mother of pearl work, inlaid in black stone. Inside are several rooms of various dimensions. The room has beautiful decorations of mosaic tiles, mother of pearl work and Dadhu work etc.

Adjacent to the court, on its western wall there is another palace whose walls were decorated by encaustic tiles, traces of which are still seen on the walls. The hall has a vaulted roof and consists of three divisions with arches. It appears dignified. It is of Bahmani period as evident from the architectural style. Another hall and two rooms are to the east of the previous hall. The vault above the steps has a shape similar to that of a lantern. The hall on the roof measures 29 feet 2 inches by 11 feet 56 inches and is flanked on either sides by another two rooms<sup>8</sup>.

### CONCLUSION:

The Rangin Mahal, however beautiful its wood carving and however fascinating its tile-mosaics and mother of pearl work, suffers by the smallness of its dimensions and betrays a feebleness of spirit and lack of vision on the part of the builders. But the plan of the palace and its structural parts have been altered so extensively at various periods that it is difficult to visualize it in its original form or to appraise correctly its beauty and its defects.

Behind the western enclosure wall of the palace is a large well, which is approached by a ramp on the left side of the road. The masonry work of the well has been raised to a great height, so that the water when drawn to that level might flow into the cistern and fountains in the upper storey of the palace.

### REFERENCES:

1. Sherwani, H.K., and Joshi, P.M., *History of the Medieval Deccan*, 2 vols, Hyderabad
2. Sherwani, H.K., *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*, Delhi
3. Yazdani, Ghulam, *Antiquities of Bidar*, Delhi
4. Yazdani, Ghulam, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
5. Nayeem, M.A., *The Heritage of the Bahmanis and Baridis of the Deccan*, Hyderabad

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.47

<sup>8</sup> Nayeem, M.A., *The Heritage of the Bahmanis and the Baridis of the Deccan*, p.60