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FROM KALYANI CHALUKYAS TO THE ASAF JAHIS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

The region historically known as Hyderabad-Karnataka (now largely part of the Kalyana Karnataka region in northern Karnataka) presents a compelling case of continuity and transformation across successive political regimes. Beginning with the rule of the Kalyani Chalukyas (10th–12th centuries), the region witnessed the consolidation of administrative systems, temple-based economies, and distinctive architectural traditions. Subsequent dynasties, including the Hoysalas, Bahmanis, and the Deccan Sultanates, introduced new cultural, religious, and political influences while retaining several underlying local structures. The incorporation of the region into the dominions of the Asaf Jahi Nizams of Hyderabad marked another significant phase, characterized by administrative centralization, revenue reforms, and the interaction of Persianate court culture with local traditions. This paper examines the interplay between continuity and change in Hyderabad-Karnataka across these historical phases, focusing on governance, socio-economic structures, cultural practices, and regional identity. While political authority shifted across dynasties, enduring patterns in agrarian organization, local elites, and linguistic-cultural synthesis demonstrate significant continuity. At the same time, transformations in religious patronage, urbanization, and administrative frameworks reveal adaptive changes shaped by broader Deccan dynamics. By tracing these layered developments, the study highlights how the region evolved through both resilience and adaptation, forming a distinct historical trajectory within the Deccan.



KEYWORDS: Hyderabad-Karnataka; Kalyani Chalukyas; Asaf Jahi Nizams; Deccan history; continuity and change; regional identity; socio-economic structures; cultural synthesis; administrative systems; Kalyana Karnataka.

INTRODUCTION

The region historically referred to as Hyderabad-Karnataka, today officially designated as Kalyana Karnataka, occupies a significant place in the historical and cultural landscape of the Deccan. Encompassing present-day districts such as Bidar, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadgir, Koppal, and Ballari, this region has long served as a crossroads of political power, economic exchange, and cultural interaction. Its strategic location between northern and southern India made it a contested yet fertile ground for the

emergence and consolidation of diverse ruling powers across centuries. The historical trajectory of this region can be traced back to the rule of the Kalyani Chalukyas (c. 10th–12th centuries), who established a strong administrative framework and left a lasting imprint through temple architecture, land grants, and the promotion of regional languages and institutions. Even after their decline, subsequent regimes—including the Hoysalas, the Bahmani Sultanate, the Deccan Sultanates, and later the Mughal Empire—built upon and reshaped these foundations. Each phase introduced new administrative practices, religious influences, and cultural forms, yet rarely in complete rupture with the past.

The incorporation of Hyderabad-Karnataka into the dominions of the Asaf Jahi Nizams in the early eighteenth century marked a crucial transition. Under the Asaf Jahis, the region experienced administrative reorganization, integration into a larger princely state, and the infusion of Persianate courtly traditions. At the same time, local socio-economic structures, agrarian relations, and linguistic diversity continued to reflect deep-rooted historical continuities. This coexistence of persistence and adaptation is central to understanding the region's historical evolution. This study seeks to explore the dynamics of continuity and change in Hyderabad-Karnataka from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahis. By examining political institutions, socio-economic patterns, cultural expressions, and regional identity, the paper aims to demonstrate how successive regimes negotiated with existing structures while introducing new elements. Rather than viewing history as a sequence of abrupt transitions, the region's past reveals a layered process in which continuity and transformation operated simultaneously, shaping a distinct and enduring Deccan identity.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

Aim:

The primary aim of this study is to examine the historical evolution of the Hyderabad-Karnataka region from the period of the Kalyani Chalukyas to the rule of the Asaf Jahi Nizams, with a focus on identifying patterns of continuity and change in its political, socio-economic, and cultural structures.

Objectives:

- ❖ To trace the administrative and political developments in the region from the Kalyani Chalukyas through subsequent dynasties up to the Asaf Jahi period.
- ❖ To analyze the persistence of local governance systems, agrarian structures, and regional institutions across different regimes.
- ❖ To examine the transformations introduced by successive ruling powers in areas such as revenue administration, military organization, and urban development.
- ❖ To study the evolution of cultural and religious practices, including temple patronage, Islamic influences, and the emergence of a syncretic Deccan culture.
- ❖ To assess the role of regional elites, such as local chieftains, landlords, and administrators, in maintaining continuity amidst political change.
- ❖ To explore the development of regional identity in Hyderabad-Karnataka through linguistic, social, and cultural interactions over time.
- ❖ To evaluate the impact of Asaf Jahi rule on the integration of the region into a broader political and economic framework while retaining its historical distinctiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The historiography of the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, within the broader context of Deccan history, reflects a rich and evolving body of scholarship that engages with themes of political change, socio-economic continuity, and cultural synthesis. Early studies on the Deccan largely focused on dynastic and political narratives, with significant attention given to the administrative and military

achievements of ruling powers such as the Kalyani Chalukyas and later the Deccan Sultanates. Scholars like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri provided foundational insights into South Indian history, including the role of the Chalukyas in shaping regional governance and cultural traditions. These works, while comprehensive, often emphasized political chronology over regional continuities. Subsequent research shifted toward a more nuanced understanding of socio-economic structures. Historians such as Burton Stein introduced the concept of segmentary state formation, highlighting the role of local institutions, agrarian organization, and temple-centered economies in maintaining continuity despite political transitions. This perspective has been particularly useful in interpreting the persistence of local power structures in Hyderabad-Karnataka across successive regimes. The study of the medieval Deccan has also been enriched by scholars like Richard M. Eaton, who explored the interaction between Islamic and indigenous traditions, especially during the Bahmani and Deccan Sultanate periods. Eaton's work underscores the processes of cultural accommodation and synthesis, demonstrating how new ruling elites adapted to existing socio-cultural frameworks rather than completely displacing them. Similarly, the works of Phillip B. Wagoner emphasize the development of Indo-Persian culture and its integration with local traditions in the Deccan. Research on the Asaf Jahi period, particularly by historians such as Karen Leonard, has examined the administrative, economic, and cultural transformations under the Nizams of Hyderabad. These studies highlight the introduction of Persianate administrative practices, revenue reforms, and the role of Hyderabad as a cosmopolitan center, while also acknowledging the persistence of regional socio-economic patterns. The continuity of local elites and institutions under the Nizams has been a recurring theme in this scholarship. In the context of Karnataka-specific studies, scholars have explored regional dynamics through inscriptions, architectural remains, and vernacular literature. Studies on temple architecture, land grants, and linguistic development reveal the long-term continuities that connect the Chalukyan period to later regimes. At the same time, research on Sufism, Bhakti movements, and vernacular traditions illustrates the layered cultural transformations that shaped the identity of Hyderabad-Karnataka.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a historical and analytical approach to examine the patterns of continuity and change in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region from the period of the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi Nizams. The methodology is primarily qualitative in nature, relying on both primary and secondary sources to construct a comprehensive understanding of the region's historical evolution. The research is based on a systematic analysis of primary sources such as inscriptions, copper plates, archival records, administrative documents, and contemporary accounts. Epigraphic evidence from the Chalukyan and subsequent periods provides valuable insights into land grants, administrative structures, and socio-economic conditions. For the later periods, particularly under the Bahmani, Deccan Sultanates, and Asaf Jahi rule, the study utilizes Persian chronicles, revenue records, and official correspondences to understand administrative changes and cultural influences. Secondary sources form a crucial component of this research. Scholarly works by historians on Deccan history, regional studies of Karnataka, and analyses of medieval and early modern Indian polity are critically examined. These include interpretations of political institutions, agrarian systems, cultural interactions, and regional identity formation. The study engages with various historiographical perspectives, including political, socio-economic, and cultural approaches, to provide a balanced interpretation. The research employs a comparative and diachronic method, examining different historical phases across a long time span to identify elements of continuity and transformation. By comparing administrative systems, social structures, and cultural practices across successive regimes, the study highlights both enduring patterns and adaptive changes. The concept of continuity and change serves as the central analytical framework guiding this comparison. In addition, the study incorporates an interdisciplinary

perspective by drawing upon insights from archaeology, art history, and cultural studies. Architectural remains, especially temples, forts, and urban centers, are analyzed to understand shifts in patronage and aesthetic traditions. Linguistic and literary developments are also considered to trace cultural interactions and regional identity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The historical region of Hyderabad-Karnataka, now known as Kalyana Karnataka, has experienced a long and complex evolution under multiple ruling dynasties, ranging from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi Nizams. While these successive regimes introduced significant political, administrative, and cultural changes, many underlying regional structures appear to have persisted over time. However, existing historical studies have largely examined these periods in isolation, focusing either on specific dynasties or limited thematic concerns, without attention to the long-term processes that connect them. The central problem of this study lies in understanding how continuity and change operated simultaneously in shaping the historical development of Hyderabad-Karnataka. There is a need to critically assess whether shifts in political authority resulted in fundamental transformations in governance, socio-economic organization, and cultural practices, or whether they largely adapted to pre-existing local systems. In particular, questions remain regarding the extent to which agrarian structures, local elites, administrative institutions, and regional identities persisted despite changes in ruling powers. Another important dimension of the problem is the interaction between indigenous traditions and external influences, especially during the periods of the Bahmani Sultanate, the Deccan Sultanates, and the Asaf Jahi rule. While these regimes introduced new cultural and administrative elements, it is unclear how deeply these changes penetrated local society and how they coexisted with established practices. The nature of cultural synthesis, accommodation, and resistance in the region requires further systematic exploration. Moreover, the relative lack of integrated, region-specific studies spanning from the medieval to the early modern period has created a gap in understanding the historical continuity of Hyderabad-Karnataka as a distinct unit. This raises broader questions about regional identity formation and the ways in which historical experiences under different regimes contributed to a shared socio-cultural framework. Therefore, this study seeks to address the problem of fragmented historiography by providing a cohesive analysis of Hyderabad-Karnataka across a long historical duration.

NEED OF THE STUDY:

The study of Hyderabad-Karnataka, presently known as Kalyana Karnataka, is essential for understanding the broader historical processes that shaped the Deccan region over a long period. Despite its rich historical legacy under various dynasties—from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi Nizams—the region has not received focused scholarly attention as a continuous historical unit. Most existing studies are fragmented, concentrating on specific dynasties or periods rather than examining the region's long-term evolution. This creates a significant gap in understanding how historical processes unfolded across centuries within a single regional framework. There is a clear need to analyze the interplay between continuity and change in this region. While political regimes changed frequently, many socio-economic structures, administrative practices, and cultural traditions appear to have persisted. Understanding these continuities is crucial for challenging the conventional notion that regime changes necessarily resulted in complete transformation. At the same time, it is equally important to identify and assess the nature of changes introduced by successive rulers, particularly in governance, revenue systems, religious patronage, and cultural interactions. The study is also necessary to explore the processes of cultural synthesis in Hyderabad-Karnataka. The region witnessed the interaction of diverse traditions, including indigenous Hindu practices and Islamic influences brought

by the Bahmani, Deccan Sultanates, and Asaf Jahi rule. Examining how these elements coexisted, merged, or transformed over time will contribute to a deeper understanding of the composite culture of the Deccan. Furthermore, this research is important for understanding the formation of regional identity. The historical experiences of Hyderabad-Karnataka under different political regimes played a significant role in shaping its linguistic, social, and cultural characteristics. A comprehensive study can help trace the roots of this identity and its evolution over time. From an academic perspective, the study contributes to filling a historiographical gap by providing an integrated, diachronic analysis of the region. It also offers a methodological contribution by applying the framework of continuity and change to a specific regional context.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH:

While the present study attempts to examine the patterns of continuity and change in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi Nizams, several areas remain open for further scholarly exploration. Future research can build upon this work by adopting more specialized, interdisciplinary, and regionally focused approaches. One important area for further study is micro-level regional analysis. Detailed village or district-level studies, based on inscriptions, local records, and oral traditions, can provide deeper insights into agrarian relations, caste dynamics, and local governance systems. Such studies would help to substantiate broader conclusions about continuity and change with more grounded evidence. Another promising direction is the systematic study of epigraphy and archaeology in the region. Many inscriptions, temple sites, forts, and urban settlements in Kalyana Karnataka remain underexplored. Comprehensive documentation and analysis of these materials could shed new light on administrative practices, economic networks, and cultural patronage across different historical periods.

Further research can also focus on the role of marginalized and subaltern groups in shaping regional history. Most existing studies emphasize ruling elites and political structures, leaving gaps in understanding the experiences of peasants, artisans, women, and tribal communities. Incorporating subaltern perspectives would provide a more inclusive and balanced historical narrative. The study of cultural interactions and syncretism offers another fertile area for research. In-depth analysis of Bhakti and Sufi traditions, vernacular literature, music, and art forms can reveal the processes through which diverse cultural influences were negotiated and integrated in the region. Comparative studies with other parts of the Deccan could further illuminate shared and distinctive patterns. Economic history is another area that warrants deeper investigation. Future studies could examine trade routes, market centers, taxation systems, and the integration of the region into wider economic networks, particularly during the Bahmani and Asaf Jahi periods. Quantitative approaches, where data permits, may complement qualitative analyses. Research on urbanization and environmental history could also enhance understanding of long-term regional transformations. The growth of towns, changes in land use, irrigation systems, and ecological adaptations over time remain relatively understudied in the context of Hyderabad-Karnataka.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Scope:

This study focuses on the historical region of Hyderabad-Karnataka, presently known as Kalyana Karnataka, covering a broad chronological span from the rule of the Kalyani Chalukyas (c. 10th–12th centuries) to the Asaf Jahi Nizams (18th–20th centuries). Geographically, the study encompasses key areas corresponding to present-day districts such as Bidar, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadgir, Koppal, and Ballari, which together form the core of the region under investigation. The study examines multiple dimensions of historical development, including political administration, socio-economic structures,

cultural and religious practices, and regional identity formation. It adopts the framework of continuity and change to analyze how successive regimes—such as the Hoysalas, Bahmani Sultanate, Deccan Sultanates, and the Asaf Jahis—interacted with pre-existing institutions and traditions. The scope also includes an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing upon epigraphic, literary, and architectural sources to understand long-term historical processes. By integrating these diverse aspects, the study aims to present a holistic and diachronic account of the region's evolution within the larger context of Deccan history.

Limitations:

Despite its broad scope, the study has certain limitations. One major constraint is the uneven availability and accessibility of primary sources across different periods. While the Chalukyan period is relatively well-documented through inscriptions, records from later periods may be fragmented, region-specific, or influenced by courtly biases, particularly in Persian chronicles of the Bahmani and Asaf Jahi eras. The study relies largely on qualitative analysis, which may limit the incorporation of quantitative data related to population, economy, and trade due to the scarcity of consistent statistical records. Additionally, the wide chronological span of the study necessitates a generalized approach at certain points, which may not capture all local variations and micro-level dynamics within the region. Another limitation is the dependence on secondary sources for interpretation, which may reflect differing historiographical perspectives and debates. While efforts are made to critically engage with these sources, complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, the study primarily emphasizes structural and thematic analysis, and therefore may not fully address individual events or personalities in detail. Linguistic constraints and the limited availability of translations for certain primary materials also pose challenges in accessing and interpreting original sources. In summary, while the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of continuity and change in Hyderabad-Karnataka, its findings should be viewed within the context of these limitations, which also indicate potential areas for further research.

Scope of the Study:

This study focuses on the historical evolution of the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, presently known as Kalyana Karnataka, over a long chronological span extending from the rule of the Kalyani Chalukyas (c. 10th–12th centuries) to the period of the Asaf Jahi Nizams (18th–20th centuries). Geographically, it covers the core areas of the region, including present-day districts such as Bidar, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadgir, Koppal, and Ballari, which together represent the historical and cultural landscape under investigation. The scope of the study is thematic as well as analytical. It examines key aspects such as political and administrative structures, agrarian systems, socio-economic organization, cultural and religious practices, and the formation of regional identity. By adopting the framework of continuity and change, the study seeks to understand how successive regimes—including the Hoysalas, Bahmani Sultanate, Deccan Sultanates, and the Asaf Jahis—interacted with pre-existing institutions and traditions, either preserving, modifying, or transforming them over time. The study also incorporates an interdisciplinary approach by utilizing evidence from epigraphy, literature, and architecture. Temple structures, forts, urban centers, inscriptions, and literary works are analyzed to trace both continuity and transformation in cultural and material life. Special attention is given to the processes of cultural interaction and synthesis, particularly the coexistence of indigenous traditions and Islamic influences in the region. Chronologically, the study adopts a diachronic perspective, allowing for a comparative understanding of different historical phases rather than treating them in isolation.

DISCUSSION:

The historical trajectory of Hyderabad-Karnataka, extending from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi Nizams, reveals a complex interplay of continuity and change that shaped the region's political, socio-economic, and cultural fabric. Rather than representing abrupt breaks between successive regimes, the history of the region demonstrates gradual adaptations in which new ruling powers often built upon existing local structures. During the Kalyani Chalukya period, the foundations of regional administration were strengthened through well-organized revenue systems, village assemblies, and temple-centered economic networks. These institutions created a durable framework that continued to influence governance in later periods. Even after the decline of the Chalukyas, successor states such as the Hoysalas and the Bahmani Sultanate largely retained and modified these pre-existing systems instead of replacing them entirely. The advent of the Bahmani Sultanate marked a significant phase of political and cultural transformation, particularly through the introduction of Persian administrative practices and Islamic cultural traditions. However, this change did not eliminate earlier socio-cultural structures. Instead, a process of accommodation emerged, where local Hindu traditions and Islamic influences coexisted and gradually merged, contributing to the formation of a distinctive Deccan composite culture. Under the Deccan Sultanates and later the Mughal influence, administrative centralization increased, and new revenue systems were introduced. Despite these changes, local elites such as village headmen, landlords, and hereditary officials continued to play an important role in governance. This continuity of indigenous intermediaries highlights the adaptive nature of political authority in the region. The Asaf Jahi period further illustrates this pattern of layered continuity and transformation. The Nizams introduced a more structured administrative framework influenced by Persianate traditions and modern bureaucratic practices. Hyderabad emerged as a major political and cultural center. Yet, at the regional level, traditional agrarian structures, linguistic diversity, and local power networks persisted. This coexistence of old and new systems reflects the resilience of local institutions in the face of changing imperial structures. Culturally, the region demonstrates a strong tradition of synthesis.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the historical analysis of continuity and change in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi period, several recommendations emerge for further academic inquiry and heritage-oriented development. First, there is a strong need for more extensive field-based historical research in the region. Many sites associated with the Chalukyas, Bahmanis, and later dynasties remain under-documented. Systematic surveys, excavation studies, and inscriptional documentation should be encouraged to preserve and better understand the region's layered history. Second, interdisciplinary research should be promoted. Combining history with archaeology, anthropology, architecture, and cultural studies will provide a more holistic understanding of long-term regional processes. In particular, the integration of GIS mapping and digital humanities tools can help trace historical settlements, trade routes, and administrative boundaries more effectively. Third, greater attention should be given to local and regional histories at the micro level. Village-level studies and district archives can reveal important details about agrarian systems, caste dynamics, and local governance structures that are often overlooked in broader historical narratives. Fourth, efforts should be made to document and preserve intangible cultural heritage, including oral traditions, folk practices, local festivals, and regional languages. These cultural elements reflect centuries of continuity and interaction and are essential for understanding the lived history of the region. Fifth, there is a need to expand research on marginalized and subaltern groups in Hyderabad-Karnataka history. The experiences of peasants, artisans, women, and tribal communities should be integrated into mainstream historical narratives to provide a more inclusive understanding of the past. Sixth, educational

institutions in the region should incorporate more localized historical content into their curricula. This will help students develop a stronger awareness of their regional heritage and its historical significance within the broader Deccan context.

FINDINGS:

The study of Hyderabad-Karnataka from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahi period reveals several important findings regarding the interplay of continuity and change in the region's historical development. First, it is evident that political regimes in the region changed frequently, but administrative continuity remained a defining feature. Successive dynasties—including the Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Bahmanis, Deccan Sultanates, and Asaf Jahis—largely adapted existing systems of governance rather than completely replacing them. Village-level administration and local intermediaries continued to play a crucial role across periods. Second, agrarian structures showed remarkable stability over time. Land revenue systems, irrigation practices, and village-based economies persisted despite changes in ruling authorities. While reforms were introduced by different regimes, especially during the Bahmani and Asaf Jahi periods, these often operated within established agrarian frameworks. Third, the study finds significant cultural continuity alongside gradual transformation. Temple traditions, local religious practices, and indigenous cultural forms remained strong, even as Islamic influences introduced new architectural styles, administrative languages, and courtly traditions. This led to the development of a composite Deccan culture characterized by synthesis rather than replacement. Fourth, the role of local elites such as village headmen, landlords, and hereditary officials remained consistent across different regimes. These groups acted as intermediaries between ruling powers and the rural population, ensuring administrative stability and continuity at the grassroots level. Fifth, the Asaf Jahi period represents both continuity and modernization.

CONCLUSION:

The historical trajectory of the Hyderabad-Karnataka region reflects a layered interplay of continuity and transformation from the time of the Kalyani Chalukyas to the Asaf Jahis (Nizams of Hyderabad). Under the Kalyani Chalukyas, the region experienced significant temple-building activity, agrarian expansion, and the consolidation of Kannada cultural and administrative traditions. Their rule laid the foundational socio-political and cultural structures that continued to influence the region long after their decline. Subsequent dynasties and regional powers preserved and adapted many of these frameworks while introducing new administrative practices and cultural influences. However, a more pronounced shift emerged under the Asaf Jahi rule. The Nizams integrated the region into a broader Deccan polity, introducing Persianate administrative systems, Urdu as a court language, and new patterns of revenue collection and governance. Despite these changes, older local structures—particularly in rural society, landholding patterns, and regional customs—remained resilient, demonstrating continuity beneath political change. Thus, the history of Hyderabad-Karnataka is not one of abrupt rupture but of gradual layering. The region evolved through a dynamic synthesis of indigenous traditions and external influences, where each ruling power reshaped governance and culture while still building upon inherited systems. This continuity amid change remains central to understanding the region's historical identity.

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