



## **CULTURAL SYNCRETISM UNDER THE BAHMANI AND QUTB SHAHI RULE IN TELANGANA**

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### **ABSTRACT :**

The Deccan region of India, notably Telangana, underwent a time of cultural mixing during the control of the Bahmani (1347–1527) and Qutb Shahi (1518–1687) empires. These two Islamic kingdoms not only created strong capitals for their governments in the area, but they also promoted a unique mix of Persian, Turkic, and native Telugu and Deccani cultural elements. This article talks about how religion, language, art, architecture, literature, and everyday life brought these cultures together. The Bahmanis, who governed from Gulbarga and then Bidar, developed a hybrid culture that let Hindus and Muslims live together. The Qutb Shahis of Golconda, who came after them, carried this combination to new heights by absorbing local customs, supporting the use of vernacular languages like Telugu and Dakhni Urdu, and erecting large monuments that revealed Indo-Islamic traits. This study combines court documents, inscriptions, literary works, and old buildings to illustrate that these dynasties were open to everyone. They helped build both temples and mosques, and they also helped poets and painters from varied backgrounds. The Qutb Shahi court was a place where people from different cultures could meet and share ideas. Sufi, Bhakti, and folk traditions all thrived there. This article looks at how Telangana's heritage altered over time as a diverse and evolving phenomenon by looking at the cultural synthesis that occurred during the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi periods. The tradition of this epoch of syncretism still shapes Telangana's identity, which adds to its rich and varied cultural fabric.

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**Keywords:** Telangana, Bahmani Dynasty, Qutb Shahi Dynasty, Cultural Syncretism, Deccan History, Indo-Islamic Architecture, Dakhni, Telugu Literature, Religious Pluralism, Golconda

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### **Introduction**

Telangana's history is unique since it has a combination of diverse types of government, cultural traditions, and religious practices. The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties had a big impact on the area. During the 14th to 17th centuries, they ruled the Deccan region, especially Telangana. This led to a lot of cultural interaction and synthesis. During this time, a new culture grew that mixed Persian, Turkic, Arabic, and native Telugu and Deccani traditions in many parts of life, including language, architecture, literature, art, and religion.

After the Delhi Sultanate lost control of the Deccan, the Bahmani Sultanate was founded in 1347. It helped build a mixed society by recruiting local leaders, striking arrangements with Hindu authorities in the area, and preaching religious tolerance. Their capital cities, first Gulbarga and then Bidar, became places where Islamic and indigenous customs merged. The Bahmani kings helped Persian scholars and local craftsmen, which led to a mix of cultures and ways of doing things in the government and society.

The Qutb Shahi dynasty (1518–1687), which was a branch of the Bahmanis and made Golconda their capital, continued this practice and built on it when the Bahmanis lost power. The Qutb Shahis were highly conservative Muslims, but they were also tolerant to other languages and beliefs. They fostered indigenous customs, Hindu temples, Telugu poets, and the expansion of Persianate court culture. They also helped Dakhni Urdu become a literary language. The Golconda court was a busy place for Indo-Islamic art and ideas. It showed how well North Indian, Persian, and South Indian parts could fit together.

During these times, cultural mixing wasn't just happening in royal courts. It was a part of everyday life in many ways, such as structures that combined Islamic domes with native styles, religious tolerance that let mosques, temples, and Sufi dargahs live together, and literature that showed a mix of languages and cultures. The Sufi and Bhakti movements also thrived during this time. They all encouraged personal commitment, social equality, and cultural acceptance, even though they had distinct theological beliefs.

The changes that took place in Telangana during the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi periods are a great example of how cultures can mix and alter to fit each other. This time stands out for its pluralistic spirit and respect for groups, even though it was a time when religions and cultures were often at odds with each other. The syncretic legacy of these kingdoms still shapes Telangana's character today. You can see this in its buildings, languages, art, and religious practices.

This article looks at the different aspects of cultural syncretism in Telangana during the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi periods by looking at their policies, contributions to art and architecture, literary developments, and the daily cultural practices that came out of this unique historical setting.

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## Historical Background of the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi Dynasties

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties made substantial changes to the culture, politics, and society of Telangana and the rest of the Deccan region. Emerging in a period marked by the fragmentation of the Delhi Sultanate's authority in the south, these dynasties laid the foundation for independent regional powers that embraced both Islamic governance and indigenous cultural traditions.

The Bahmani Sultanate began in 1347 when Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah took over. In the Deccan, it was the first independent Islamic monarchy. Zafar Khan, a Turkish nobleman, led a successful insurrection against the Tughlaq dynasty. This is how he got the name Bahman Shah. At first, the Sultanate's capital was in Gulbarga (now Kalaburagi in Karnataka), but it moved to Bidar in the middle of the 15th century. The Bahmanis were in charge of a huge area that comprised parts of what are now Telangana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. They ruled with a centralized administrative system based on Persian models, but they also hired a lot of indigenous Hindu officials and fighters, including the Marathas and the Telugu Nayakas.

As the Bahmani Sultanate weakened due to internal strife and factionalism—especially between the Deccani (local) and Afaqi (foreign) nobles—it eventually fragmented into five successor states known as the Deccan Sultanates: Ahmadnagar, Berar, Bidar, Bijapur, and Golconda. The Golconda Sultanate, which Sultan Quli Qutb-ul-Mulk started in 1518, became the most important force in Telangana. Sultan Quli, who used to be a governor under the Bahmanis, declared independence and made Golconda the capital of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah later transferred the government to Hyderabad.

The Qutb Shahis ruled Telangana for almost 170 years (1518–1687). They were recognized for their stable government, good tax systems, and strong military. They kept and built on the Bahmani cultural policy, which encouraged a mix of Persian courtly culture with Telugu and Deccani traditions. The Qutb Shahi monarchs were also big fans of architecture. They built famous buildings including the Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs, Charminar, and Mecca Masjid, which merged Persian-Islamic styles with local ones.

The Qutb Shahis were Shia Muslims, but they were open-minded about other religions and used Hindu customs in court events and celebrations.

In 1687, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb took Golconda after a long siege, which ended the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Despite their fall, the cultural synthesis championed by both the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi rulers left an enduring legacy, influencing the region's identity well into the colonial and post-independence periods.

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## Religious Tolerance and Patronage

One of the most interesting things about Bahmani and Qutb Shahi reign in the Deccan, especially in Telangana, was how they dealt with religious tolerance and support. Both dynasties were Islamic, with the Bahmanis being Sunni and the Qutb Shahis being Shia. However, they both ruled with a conscious policy of including and living peacefully with the mostly Hindu people in the area. This openness helped make Deccani civilization known for its syncretism and acceptance of other cultures.

The Bahmani kings knew from the start how important it was to keep peace in a region with many different cultures and religions. They hired Hindus for a variety of administrative and military roles, including the Telugu-speaking Nayakas and the Kannada-speaking soldiers. The sultans often made deals with local chiefs for marriage and diplomacy. Temples were not only able to run without hindrance, but they were also sometimes repaired or even supported, especially when it was politically necessary. Hindu scholars and astrologers who were well-known were able to work in Bahmani courts, which was not common at the time.

The Qutb Shahi dynasty made religious diversity even more official. While the Qutb Shahis were ardent Shia Muslims and maintained strong linkages with Persian religious traditions, they did not force their sectarian beliefs on the wider people. Instead, they backed a wide range of religious events. For instance, temples got money from the government, and local festivals like Bathukamma and Bonalu were recognized and celebrated. Sultan Ibrahim Quli Qutb Shah was recognized for his liberal policies. He spoke Telugu well and supported Telugu poets, which helped to bring together the cultural and theological differences between the rulers and the ruled.

The Qutb Shahi kings also supported Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam that emphasized love and spiritual union. The shrines of Sufi saints and the saints themselves became important places for Muslims and Hindus to meet and talk about religion. The Bhakti movement, which focused on devotion rather than ritual, also grew during this time. The Sufi and Bhakti traditions had a lot in common when it came to spirituality, which made it possible for cultures to mix across denominational lines.

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties created a unique cultural environment in Telangana by promoting tolerance and a variety of ways of running the government. Their open-minded approach not only reduced sectarian violence, but it also created a strong legacy of people living together that still shapes the region's cultural identity today.

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## Art, Architecture, and Language Fusion

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties had a huge impact on the development of a unique Deccani style in art, architecture, and language. This is especially clear in Telangana. During this time, there was a lively mix of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and native Telugu and Kannada cultural elements. This mix not only changed the look of the area, but it also had an effect on its language and literature.

Both dynasties played a big role in building huge buildings that combined Islamic and Indian architecture. The Bahmanis started building forts, mosques, madrasas, and tombs with domes, arches, and minarets that were decorated with calligraphy and flowers. This was especially true during their later years in Bidar. The Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan in Bidar is a good example of this mix because it has Persian-style tilework and an Indo-Islamic layout. The Bahmanis mostly controlled from outside of Telangana, but their successors brought their style of building to the area.

The Qutb Shahis ruled directly from Golconda and had a big impact on Telangana's architectural history. The Golconda Fort, Charminar, Qutb Shahi Tombs, and Mecca Masjid are some of its most famous buildings. They combine Persian-style design with local materials and craftsmanship. The

combination of granite, stucco work, lotus patterns, and bracketed arches shows how South Indian temple architecture and Islamic architectural ideas have come together. These monuments were also cultural emblems of religious unity, and many of them were built with the cooperation of Hindu engineers and craftsmen.

Miniature painting was very popular in the arts. It was based on Persian styles but used Indian themes and colors. Sufi saints, royal portraits, floral patterns, and mythological topics were common subjects for court artists. Deccani paintings from this time show a strong love of color, decoration, and lyrical storytelling, even though they aren't as well-known as Mughal art.

Another thing that stood out about this time was the mixing of languages. Dakhni Urdu became a literary language during the Qutb Shahis. It took words and phrases from Persian, Arabic, Marathi, Telugu, and Kannada. It became the language of court poetry and common music, which shows how diverse Deccan culture was. At the same time, Telugu got royal support, and poets like Addanki Gangadhara Kavi wrote poems praising the Qutb Shahi kings for their tolerance and greatness.

So, the art, architecture, and language of the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi kingdoms were strong examples of cultural syncretism. This is similar to how tradition and innovation, foreign and local, faith and function all lived together in peace in Telangana.

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## Literature and Court Culture

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi empires made the Deccan, especially Telangana, a great place for writers and thinkers. Their courts were famous for being places where people from many languages and religions could learn and share culture. Scholars, poets, musicians, and artists of all kinds thrived there. The combination of Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Indian regional characteristics created a unique Deccani cultural environment, which is most clear in the literature and courtly practices of the time.

During the Bahmani period, Persian was the main language used in court, government, diplomacy, and literature. Many Persian poets, theologians, and historians were supported by the Bahmani sultans. Mahmud Gawan, a scholar and minister in the Bahmani court, is one of the most famous people on the list. He built a famous madrasa in Bidar and welcomed intellectuals from all over the Islamic world to come. People in the area spoke Telugu and Marathi, although these languages were not used in formal court settings at this time. But the cosmopolitan setting planted the seeds of language mixing that would later grow under the Qutb Shahis.

The Qutb Shahi dynasty took court culture to new heights, notably under rulers like Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who was both a king and a famous poet. He is known as the first important Deccani Urdu poet and wrote lyrical poems in Dakhni Urdu, a dialect that has been influenced by Persian, Arabic, Telugu, and Marathi. His *Diwan* (poetic collection) is full of poems on love, devotion, and the grandeur of Hyderabad, which is the emotional and cultural core of his kingdom.

Aside from Urdu, Telugu literature got support from the royal family, which is unusual for a Muslim kingdom to do for a Dravidian language. Under the patronage of Qutb Shahi, court poets like Addanki Gangadhara Kavi and Kshetravaya wrote both religious and non-religious poetry. The mixing of Telugu with Persianate themes and the use of courtly metaphors in regional languages show how people thought at the time.

Music, dance, and scholarly debate were all a big part of court culture. The kings held *mushairas* (poetic symposiums), *qawwalis*, and talks about philosophy and religion. There were both Shia and Sunni professors, Sufi saints, and Hindu pundits there, which made for an exciting intellectual milieu.

So, literature and court culture throughout the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties not only reflected the diverse society of Telangana, but they also helped to mold it, leaving a lasting effect on the region's cultural character.

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## Legacy of Cultural Syncretism in Modern Telangana

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi regimes left behind a legacy of cultural syncretism that still affects the social and cultural fabric of modern Telangana. The coming together of many religious, linguistic, and cultural traditions throughout this time set the stage for a society that values pluralism and shared heritage and is open to all.

The Charminar, which located in the middle of Hyderabad, a city founded by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, is one of the most lasting monuments of this mixed past. The city's layout, cosmopolitan nature, and architectural environment all show how Persian-Islamic styles were mixed with native South Indian styles on purpose. Scholars and visitors still go to places like the Qutb Shahi Tombs, Mecca Masjid, and Golconda Fort. These buildings show how great the architecture and culture were at the period.

This time period also had an effect on Telangana's linguistic identity. Dakhni Urdu, which came from the courts of the Qutb Shahis, is still a lively spoken language in and around Hyderabad. It has Telugu and Marathi inflections, which set it apart from normal Urdu and show off the mixed culture of Telangana. During this time, Telugu poets and writers received a lot of support, which helped to solidify Telugu's status as a literary language of the people.

People of all religions celebrate religious holidays and cultural events in Telangana today. These include Bonalu, the Urs of Sufi saints, and the Bathukamma festival. This shows how people have respected each other and shared traditions for hundreds of years. The fact that both Hindus and Muslims worship Sufi saints shows how syncretic traditions have continued across time.

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi legacies are, in a way, a lesson from history of how powerful it is to include people from other cultures. Their authority helped create a unique Deccani identity that is cosmopolitan, peaceful, and strong. This identity is still a big part of Telangana's culture in the 21st century.

## Conclusion

The Bahmani and Qutb Shahi dynasties had a big impact on the culture of Telangana, setting the stage for a civilization where people of different religions, languages, and artistic styles could live together peacefully. Their authority lasted for hundreds of years and was marked by an open and welcoming approach to art, architecture, literature, and government. They mixed Persian, Arabic, and Turkish influences with native Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi traditions. The architectural wonders of Golconda and Hyderabad, the rise of Dakhni Urdu literature, and the multilingual court culture that welcomed both Persian poets and Telugu bards are all great examples of the attitude of syncretism they encouraged. Their religious tolerance went beyond legislation; it was a part of everyday life, as shown by their shared festivals, Sufi shrines, and support for a wide range of creative genres. Telangana's mixed culture—its mix of languages, similar religious traditions, and collective memory—still echoes the legacy of the ancient Deccan sultanates in today's world. As arguments about identity and heritage become stronger in India, the example set by the Bahmani and Qutb Shahi monarchs shows how important it is for people of different cultures to live together and respect each other.

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