

Water Architecture of the Adil Shahis of Bijapur in the Raichur Region

M.N. Bennur

Head, Department of History, S.T.C. College, Banahatti.

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ABSTRACT:

The Adil Shahis of Bijapur, who ruled the Deccan region from 1489 to 1686 CE, not only engaged in political and military contests with the Vijayanagar Empire but also undertook remarkable developmental projects in the territories they controlled. During the reigns of Ibrahim Adil Shah I, Muhammad Adil Shah, Ibrahim Adil Shah II, and Ali Adil Shah II, special emphasis was placed on water architecture in the Raichur region. Recognizing the vital role of agriculture and irrigation in consolidating their power, they designed extensive water management systems, including tanks, wells, and canals, to ensure the prosperity of their lands.

The Raichur region, in particular, became a showcase of their expertise in water engineering. Iconic structures such as the Balahisar Well, Shankar Baioli Well, Diddi Bagilu Well, the Joda Well Complex, Alal Kor Well, Gorkal Tank, Aralihalli Tank, Siddarampur Tank, and many others stand as enduring symbols of their vision. These projects not only facilitated agriculture and livestock management but also reflect the artistic and functional brilliance of Adil Shahi water architecture.

KEYWORDS:

Beg, Makki, Killa (Fort), Doab, Alal Kor, Tank.

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Introduction:

The Adil Shahis of Bijapur waged relentless battles against the rulers of Vijayanagara to gain control over the fertile Raichur Doab region. Following their decisive victory in the Battle of Talikot in 1565 CE, the Adil Shahis firmly established their supremacy. To strengthen the economic foundation of their kingdom and to support the people in agriculture and cattle rearing, they undertook remarkable developmental works. In Raichur, they built numerous tanks, wells, and canals, which not only enhanced irrigation but also reflected their vision for prosperity. These contributions are proudly recorded in contemporary inscriptions. The Deccan region of India witnessed a remarkable era of architectural and engineering achievements under the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, which

ruled from 1489 to 1686 CE. While their reign is often remembered for political maneuvering and military campaigns, the Adil Shahis also made significant contributions to the development of irrigation and water management systems. Their strategic focus on water architecture not only strengthened their economy but also ensured agricultural prosperity in regions under their control, particularly in the fertile Raichur Doab.

The Raichur region, known for its agricultural potential and proximity to the contested territories of the Vijayanagara Empire, became a focal point of Adil Shahi infrastructure development. During the reigns of Ibrahim Adil Shah I, Muhammad Adil Shah, Ibrahim Adil Shah II, and Ali Adil Shah II, the rulers emphasized the importance of irrigation for sustaining agriculture, supporting livestock, and

maintaining socio-economic stability. Their administration recognized that water management was not merely a utilitarian necessity but also a symbol of royal patronage and governance. The Adil Shahis introduced a sophisticated network of tanks, wells, canals, and reservoirs to harness and store water efficiently. These structures were often built in Islamic architectural styles, blending functionality with aesthetic appeal. Inscriptions in Persian, Arabic, and Kannada languages found across Raichur provide historical evidence of the construction, renovation, and endowment of these water systems. Notable examples include the Balahisar Well, Shankar Baioli Well, Diddi Bagilu Well, Joda Well Complex, Alal Kor Well, Gorkal Tank, Aralihalli Tank, and Siddarampur Tank. Each of these structures was designed to serve local communities, support agriculture, and ensure water availability throughout the year, reflecting the ingenuity and foresight of Adil Shahi engineers and rulers.

The Wells of Raichur :

Raichur is often called the land of drought. To support agriculture, numerous tanks, wells, and canals were constructed here, many of which showcase striking Islamic architectural designs. References to these works are found in Persian and Arabic inscriptions. The water architecture built by the Adil Shahis includes both square and rectangular wells, several of which still stand as silent witnesses of history.

1. Balahisar Well :

Located at the foot of the Balahisar Fort, this well is mentioned in a Persian inscription dated September–October 1501 CE. The record states that during the reign of Adil Khan, Haji Beg constructed the steps of this

rectangular well.

2. Shankar Baioli Well :

Near the Khali Mosque, a Persian inscription refers to the Shankar Baioli Well. The inscription, now preserved in the Hyderabad Museum, records that during the reign of Yusuf Adil Khan, Nimatullah Shah Bali's disciple, Nuruddin Karim, built this well. It was documented by Yusuf-ul-Yajis's son, Haji Husain, on December 8, 1501 CE.

3. Diddi Bagilu Well :

Close to the Makki Gate and near Banda Baioli, an inscription in Persian and Naskh script, dated 1582 CE, belongs to the reign of Ali Adil Shah I. It records that Khundiludar Yusuf Ali completed the construction of this well.

4. Joda Bavi Structure :

At the Manvi Fort stands the Joda Bavi complex, linked to the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II. A Kannada inscription dated 1607 CE states that Dupada Tammayya, the headman of Narasapur,

constructed this well. Another Kannada inscription from 1625 CE records that Dupada Timmayya of Sarajapur built a second well in the same locality. Field studies confirm that both wells are rectangular. The inscriptions also reveal that Ibrahim Adil Shah II permitted the local Desais and Gowdas to continue governing the area.

5. Alal Kor Well :

Originally built during the Vijayanagara period, this large, curved well was later renovated under the Adil Shahis, as mentioned Malik Murad's inscription. Located on the western side of the fort, it supplied water to the people through a reservoir built in 1583 CE, according to a Persian inscription. These wells of Raichur not only served as lifelines for agriculture and daily use but also stand as masterpieces of medieval water architecture, reflecting the vision of the Adil Shahis and the cultural legacy of the region.

The Lakes of Raichur Region:

1. Gorkal Lake :

In Gorkal village of Manvi taluk, Raichur district, an inscription engraved on a stone lying in the village tank field mentions that Malik Sandal Rustum Khan of the Bijapur Adil Shahi dynasty constructed the tank during the 16th-17th century CE. Another inscription is found on a stone fixed to the outer wall of the Anjaneya temple at Agasi-

ya Baily in the same village. Dated Monday, October 21, 1616 CE, it records that Sujaath Khan Saheb, the then official of Gorkal, along with his assistant officer Sharat Khan Saheb, and the village headman Mallanna, joined together to impose certain regulations on the village accountant Mettigowda, Bar Balavati, and others. As the fields in the village had become barren, the officials ordered that they be revived through cultivation and that, for a period of five years, a fixed quantity of grain be supplied as tax. From these records, it is evident that during the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, tanks were constructed to promote irrigation, and the crops grown with this water were a source of revenue to the state. Thus, these inscriptions clearly highlight the importance given to irrigation and agricultural development in the Bijapur Adil Shahi period.

2. Aralihalli Lake :

This lake is located in Sindhanur Taluk. Since the Sindhanur region was under the rule of the Adil Shahis, a fort was renovated and, for the benefit of farmers, a lake was also constructed. According to an inscription engraved on a rock in the fields of Aralihalli village, on Wednesday, August 26, 1646 CE, Jomarahat, a worker under Abesani Ayyan, together with Shannubhog of Mukundi village, undertook the construction of this lake. The local Gowdas and Shannubhogs were also responsible for building other water bodies in the area, such as the Aytikidi Lake, Sugu-ru Sagappan Lake, Atutalupur Lake, KotegarTipurang, Mukundi Upar Canal, and more. The inscription further mentions that the revenue from these works was to be shared in the ratio of two parts for the cultivators and one part for the king.

3. Siddarampur Lake :

Also located in Sindhanur Taluk, Siddarampur village preserves an inscription engraved on a rock near the stone mantapa of Andara Kallumatti. Dated Wednesday, March 22, 1523 CE, it records that Avadukundi's Shannubhog Somarasa, along with his sons Sirugarasa, Somarasa, and Nagarasa, built this lake as an act of merit for their parents Somarasa and Kamamma. The record also states that Nagarasa, a devout follower of Lord Virupaksha and Lord Vittala, built a mantapa on the lake embankment. This lake, originally.

Conclusion:

The water architecture of the Adil Shahis of Bijapur in the Raichur region stands as a remarkable testament to their vision, engineering

skill, and commitment to agricultural prosperity. Through the construction of tanks, wells, canals, and reservoirs, they not only ensured year-round water supply for farming and livestock but also demonstrated an understanding of sustainable resource management that was centuries ahead of its time. These structures reflect a perfect blend of functionality and aesthetic beauty, incorporating Islamic architectural principles while adapting to local topography and community needs. The inscriptions and records associated with these water systems reveal the meticulous planning, social responsibility, and cultural patronage of the Adil Shahi rulers. In essence, the water architecture in Raichur is more than just a network of irrigation systems—it is a symbol of the dynasty's foresight, their dedication to public welfare, and their lasting legacy in the Deccan region. Preserving and studying these monuments not only honours the ingenuity of the past but also inspires modern approaches to sustainable water management and regional development.

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