

# SECULAR ARCHITECTURE OF ADILSHAHIS OF BIJAPUR IN YADAGIRI DISTRICT

***M.N. Bennur\****

**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19473588>**

---

## ABSTRACT

---

*The Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur, who governed from 1489 to 1686 CE, occupy a distinguished place in the history of South India. Establishing Gogi and Bijapur as their capitals, they fostered a dynamic political and cultural landscape that extended into Yadgiri district. Regions such as Yadgiri town, Shahapur, and Gogi emerged as vibrant centres of architectural activity, reflecting the grandeur of their rule. The secular buildings constructed during this period offer profound insights into the socio-cultural fabric, administrative systems, and everyday life of the time. Notably, palaces, guest houses, pigeon houses [kabutar khana], and ammunition houses were designed in the Indo-Islamic architectural style, showcasing a remarkable synthesis of aesthetic elegance and functional precision. These structures were not merely residential spaces but served as crucial hubs for governance, communication, and security. Architectural elements such as domes, arches, and intricate ornamental details highlight the technical excellence and artistic sensibilities of the era. This study critically examines the architectural features, historical context, and cultural significance of these secular structures in Yadgiri district. By doing so, it brings to light the enduring legacy and architectural brilliance of the Adil Shahi period, offering a deeper understanding of its contribution to India's rich heritage.*

---

\* **Dr. M.N. Bennur**, Professor and Head, Department of History, S.T.C. Arts and Commerce College, Banahatti.

---

**KEYWORDS:** *Secular architecture, Palaces, Fortification, Kabutar Khana, Arches, Elephant Stable.*

---

## **Introduction:**

The Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, which ruled from 1489 to 1686 CE, stands as a remarkable chapter in the history of South India. With Bijapur and Gogi serving as their political centres, the Adil Shahi rulers established a strong and culturally vibrant administration. Under the reigns of Ibrahim Adil Shah I, Ibrahim Adil Shah II, and Mohammed Adil Shah, the regions of present-day Yadgiri district-particularly Yadgiri town, Shahapur, and Gogi-emerged as significant hubs of architectural innovation and development. During this period, the construction of secular buildings reflected not only the administrative efficiency of the rulers but also the richness of their socio-cultural life. Structures such as palaces, guest houses, kabutar khana, and ammunition houses were built in the Indo-Islamic architectural style, representing a harmonious blend of artistic elegance and functional design. These buildings played a vital role beyond mere habitation, serving as centres for governance, communication, and defence. Distinct architectural features like majestic domes, graceful arches, and intricate decorative elements highlight the technical mastery and aesthetic vision of the time. This study aims to explore the architectural significance and historical context of these secular structures, offering insights into the enduring legacy of the Adil Shahi period in Yadgiri district.

## **Firdaus Mahal:**

The secular architecture of Yadgir district represents a significant legacy of the Adil Shahi dynasty, reflecting the political authority, aesthetic sensibilities, and luxurious lifestyle of the rulers. Yadgir served as an important administrative centre under the Adil Shahis for a considerable period, during which several palatial structures were constructed within the third fortification, giving the area the character of a fortified enclave of elite residences, often described as a “hill-fort complex of havelis.” Among these structures, the remains of Firdaus Mahal stand out as an important example of secular palace architecture. Located beyond the eighth gateway,

the palace complex opens into a quadrangular courtyard that now contains fragmented structural remains. To the south lies the Moti Talab, while to the west are the ruins of the expansive Firdaus Mahal, indicating a well-planned spatial organization. Architecturally, the palace comprised a series of square chambers of varying dimensions along with a large central hall (hazara). The interiors were adorned with arched niches and decorative plasterwork, characteristic of Indo-Islamic architectural traditions. The western section features a prominent audience hall distinguished by a set of three concentric multi-arched bays. The front row of arches rests on octagonal single pillars, while the rear arches are supported by paired pillars, demonstrating structural sophistication and aesthetic balance. The walls are punctuated with smaller arched recesses, and the upper portions were embellished with lime-plaster ornamentation. Constructed using dressed stone blocks and mortar, the building exhibits robust engineering techniques. Traces of glazed or polished edging on the exterior suggest that the structure once possessed a refined decorative finish, although much of it has deteriorated over time. The proximity of the Moti Talab, built in 1546 CE by Ibrahim Adil Shah I, provides a chronological context for the construction of Firdaus Mahal, indicating that it likely belongs to the mid-16th century. Although the roof has completely collapsed, the surviving walls continue to testify to the former grandeur of the structure. In conclusion, Firdaus Mahal serves as a vital example of Adil Shahi secular architecture in Yadgir, offering valuable insights into the architectural practices, spatial planning, and cultural expressions of the Deccan Sultanate period.

### **Kabutar Khana**

The structure locally known as Kabutar Khana (Pigeon House), situated to the left of the Moti Talab, represents a distinctive yet lesser-studied component of the secular architectural landscape of Yadgir under the Adil Shahi dynasty. Architecturally, Kabutar Khana is a rectangular edifice characterized by its notably high enclosing walls, which suggest both functional and protective intent. The spatial design reflects a utilitarian approach, possibly intended for the rearing and housing of pigeons—an activity often associated with communication systems and leisure practices in medieval Deccan courts. The northern side of the structure, particularly on its left

flank, features an arched entrance, opening into a partially exposed interior defined by tall, open walls. The use of arches (kamanas) indicates the influence of Indo-Islamic architectural forms, even in utilitarian constructions, thereby highlighting the aesthetic integration within functional spaces. Despite its simplicity when compared to grand palatial structures like Firdaus Mahal, Kabutar Khana contributes significantly to understanding the everyday and auxiliary architectural practices of the Adil Shahi period. Its form, layout, and surviving features provide insight into the socio-cultural dimensions of courtly life, where even modest structures were designed with a blend of practicality and stylistic coherence. Thus, Kabutar Khana stands as an important example of functional architecture, enriching the broader narrative of Yadgir's historical built environment.

### **The Gogi Guest House**

Situated on an elevated terrain to the northwest of Gogi Lake, it stands as a remarkable testament to the refined leisure architecture of the Adil Shahi dynasty, where environmental harmony and architectural elegance converge seamlessly. Its strategic placement adjacent to the lake, along with the presence of a nearby Eidgah, underscores a deliberate spatial synthesis of recreational and ritual landscapes. Although the structure lacks direct epigraphical references, a critical analysis of regional inscriptions, architectural typology, and the informed perspectives of Syed Akhil Ullah Husaini suggests that such edifices were commissioned by the Bijapur Sultans as seasonal retreats, particularly during festive occasions and the summer months. This interpretation highlights the cultural ethos of the Deccan courts, where architecture functioned not merely as shelter but as an experiential engagement with nature and climate. Architecturally, the guest house is an elevated rectangular structure built upon a 12-foot-high platform, measuring approximately 40 feet along the north-south axis and 20 feet along the east-west axis, with an overall height of about 30 feet from the plinth. The building is distinguished by its open-arched design, forming a multi-faceted polygonal composition that allows for optimal ventilation and panoramic visual access to the surrounding landscape. The façade is articulated with a total of fourteen arches-five each on the eastern and western sides, and two each on the northern and southern

elevations-creating a rhythmic and symmetrical architectural expression. The projecting chhajja not only enhances the visual profile of the structure but also serves a climatic function, while the ornamental brackets beneath, resembling elephant tusks, add a layer of sculptural sophistication. Encircling the upper parapet are sixteen minaret-like decorative turrets-six each on the east and west, and two each on the north and south-imbuing the structure with a striking skyline silhouette. This intricate combination of features reveals a harmonious fusion of indigenous Hindu and Indo-Islamic architectural idioms, reflecting the syncretic cultural fabric of the Deccan region. Thus, the Gogi Rest House transcends its functional identity as a site of repose, emerging instead as a powerful architectural narrative of royal leisure, climatic adaptation, and aesthetic innovation, offering profound insights into the socio-cultural and artistic sensibilities of the Adil Shahi period.

### **Elephant Stable**

Located near the tomb of Fatima Sultana at Gogi and in close proximity to a well near the western gateway, it represents a functional yet architecturally significant component of the Adil Shahi dynasty period. This structure is associated with the practical use of elephants by the Adil Shahis for drawing water from the nearby well, indicating an organized system of water management supported by animals. The architectural layout includes arches measuring approximately 15 feet in height and 12 feet in width, reflecting both utility and structural grandeur. On the eastern and western sides, elevated platforms are constructed, each containing two open arches with recessed niches positioned between them. The roof of the structure is designed in an elongated circular (vaulted) form, demonstrating the application of Indo-Islamic engineering techniques in utilitarian buildings. The construction materials include finely dressed Shahabad stone, bricks, and lime mortar, complemented by plaster ornamentation, indicating a blend of durability and aesthetic consideration. However, at present, only the eastern and western walls of the structure survive. Field observations further reveal that, following the death of the elephant once housed here, a large tomb was constructed in front of the building, suggesting the cultural and symbolic importance attributed to such animals during the period. Thus, Aane Laala stands as an important

example of functional architecture under the Adil Shahis, offering insights into the integration of animal labour, water management systems, and architectural design in the socio-economic framework of the time.

### **Shahapur Palace Complex**

The Shahapur Palace complex, located within the fortification of Shahapur Fort atop an elevated hill terrain, represents a highly sophisticated ensemble of secular and semi-royal architecture attributed to the Adil Shahi dynasty. This architectural cluster-comprising the palace, audience hall, ammunition depot (maddina mane), mosque, rest house, and soldiers' quarters-reflects an integrated model of fortified royal habitation, administrative, and military preparedness. Access to this elevated complex is itself architecturally dramatic, marked by a series of five successive gateways ascending from the foothill that houses the temples of Sadguru Gangadhareshwara Temple and Mahalakshmi Temple. The fifth gateway opens into a fortified plateau, where a circular artillery bastion strategically dominates the axis, underscoring the defensive priorities embedded within the site's planning. Opposite this bastion lies a north-facing gateway, leading into a spatially organized complex. To its right stands a mosque, oriented eastward and associated with the royal household, constructed on an elevated plinth measuring approximately  $25 \times 25$  feet with a height of nearly 30 feet. This indicates not only its significance but also its privileged association with elite occupants of the fort. In front of this mosque, toward the east, lie the fragmented remains of the Shahapur Palace-an originally two-storied structure aligned northward, now reduced to surviving walls, entrance arches, and recessed niches. The palace, measuring nearly 100 feet in length and 50 feet in width, reveals a grand scale indicative of royal occupancy. Its entrance, positioned close to the defensive fort wall, features a vertically tiered arrangement of three arched openings across two levels, with a singular arch crowning the uppermost-an arrangement that enhances both monumentality and access. The internal spatial configuration demonstrates a carefully articulated sequence of halls and chambers. A hall immediately beyond the entrance, measuring approximately  $50 \times 30$  feet, likely functioned as a primary audience or gathering space. This is followed by a narrower rectangular chamber ( $50 \times$

10 feet), leading further into a more confined space of  $25 \times 11$  feet, whose walls are adorned with arched niches, emphasizing both utility and decorative refinement. Flanking this central hall are subsidiary chambers on the east and west, each measuring around  $15 \times 10$  feet, provided with independent entrances suggesting specialized functional or residential uses. Toward the southern side, an additional chamber measuring  $25 \times 7$  feet adjoins the granary structure. Notably, the southern wall of this chamber contains a large central arch (approximately 7 feet high and 6 feet wide), flanked by ornamental niches and smaller recessed alcoves, some of which retain traces of green pigment—an indication of interior decorative schemes. Despite its ruined condition, the architectural remains allow for a precise reconstruction of its spatial layout and scale. The use of stone masonry, lime mortar, and brick, combined with elements of Persian stylistic influence, underscores the sophistication and cross-cultural aesthetic sensibilities characteristic of Adil Shahi architecture. Thus, the Shahapur Palace complex emerges not merely as a royal residence but as a multidimensional architectural statement where defence, administration, religion, and daily life were seamlessly integrated within a fortified landscape, offering profound insights into the authority and cultural grandeur of the Deccan Sultanate period.

## Conclusion

The Adil Shahi dynasty significantly shaped the architectural and cultural landscape of the Yadgiri region between 1489 and 1686 CE. The development of secular structures such as palaces, guest houses, kabutar khana, and ammunition houses reflects a well-organized administrative system and a rich socio-cultural environment. Built in the Indo-Islamic style, these structures demonstrate a fine balance between functionality and artistic excellence. Their distinctive features, including domes, arches, and decorative elements, reveal advanced technical skills and aesthetic vision. This study highlights the historical importance of these buildings and underscores their lasting contribution to the architectural heritage of the region.

---

---

## References:

1. Cousens, H. (1916). Bijapur and its architectural remains. Government Central Press.
2. Joshi, S. K. (2008). Fort and fortification of Bijapur. Karnataka Itihasa Samshodhana Mandala.
3. Nayeem, M. A. (2008). The heritage of the Adil Shahis of Bijapur. Hyderabad Publishers.
4. Patil, C. S. (1999). Karnatakada kotegalu (Vol. 1). Prasaraanga, Kannada University.
5. Verma, D. C. (1974). History of Bijapur. Kumar Brothers.
6. Yazdani, G. (Ed.). (1932). Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica 1929-30. Government of India.