



Historical places in Amravati District

Dr. Nalini K. Tembhekar

Associate Professor in History,

Govt. Vidarbha Institute of Science & Humanities, Amravati, Maharashtra

Abstract

Amravati district has rich cultural heritage from ancient to medieval period. The legend of marriage ceremony of Lord Krishna with Rukhmini is associate with the temple of Amba devi and Ekvira devi which are being emerged as the centers of shakta sect. During 11th century number of Jain followers might be the inhabitant of the district. They erected Jain temples in the district and nearby premises. In 13th century it was a religious centre for the Mahanubhav devotees. In 14th century this district came under the influence of muslim rule which was lasted till 18th century. Some significant mosques , fort and other historical buildings were built during this era,which are the symbols of Deccani style of Muslim architecture. Gawilgarh fort is the best symbole of engineering skill and architecture of Bahmani rulers.

Keywords: Vidarbha, Amravati, Temples, Mosques, Forts, Tomb

Introduction :-

Amravati district is a significant district of Vidarbha having rich cultural heritage. The places 'Kaudinyapur and Bhatkuli' are very close to Amravati City. It is said that those places were important during Mahabharat era. The real history of india starts from Mauryan, period (272 to 231 B.C) Shung dynasty (185-30 B.C.) Kanva dynasty (72-30 B.C) Saatwahan dynasty (230 B.C. to 220 A.D.) Vakataka dynasty (250 A.D. to 500 A.D.) Chalukya dynasty (543-757 A.D.) Rashtrakutas dynasty (753-982 A.D.) again chalukyias dynasty (975-1189 A.D.) ruled over Amravati division and Amravati district in ancient period. In medieval era the first Muslim invasion took place in 1294 A.D. when sultan Allauddin khilji conquered the region of Devgiri. He crossed satpura hills and halted at Ellichpur, for two days before marching to deogiri since that period Amravati division came under the Muslim influence. Bahamani dynasty (1347-1490 A.D.) Imad shahi dynasty, Nizam shahi (1574-1596 A.D.), Mughals dynasty (1596-1724A.D.), Nizam (1724-1853) and Bhosales ruled over this division as well as Amravati district.

In 1950, it was the part of central provinces & Berar and in 1960, it merged into Maharashtra state. All above period Amravati district was the center place of political activities. Some significant temples exist in this district with historical values are as follows.

Ambadevi Temple, Amravati :-

The Ambadevi temple is said to be the oldest temple in Amravati The idol of the goddess is considered to be self existent (Svaymbhu) and made by sand stone and sitting in a 'Lotus throne' position, covered with clothes and various ornaments. The original temple may be very old. It seems that, the new temple is built on the place of old one. Gazzetteer for Hydrabad assign districts (1870 AD) mentioned that.¹ This temple was built thousand years back. But the temple may be much older than the mentioned period. According to the legend related to this temple is, Rukmin the king of vidarbha in the Mahabharata era had a beautiful sister named Rukhmini. She wanted to marry with lord Krishna but was already betrothed to sisupal, the raja of chedi.

Rukmin refused to allow her to break her troth. But when she went to Amba devi temple to pay her vows before her marriage lord Krishna carried her off by force and married her, the wedding ceremonies being performed at this temple of Amba devi at Amravati. Rukmin was defeated hence he didn't return to his capital 'Kaudinyapura' and passed the rest of his life as a recluse at Bhatkuli, nine miles west of Amravati.

Today when we enter in the premices of the temple, there is a specious staircase. After climbing the stair case. We reach to the entrance gate of the temple the idol of Ambadevi is visible from here. The level of assembly hall is slightly below like a tank and always full with drvotees. There is a specious circumbutation path (ambutatory) around the sanctum (sanchary). Sanchary is connected to vestibule. Now the temple is completely renovated and we cannot identify the architectural structure of original temple. Today all the section of the temple, plinth base, capola, carnice, etc. are in proportional shape.

Ekvira devi temple, Amravati :-

It is within the Ambadevi temple premises. Amba nullah flows between Ambadevi and Ekvira devi temple. Ambadevi temple is at eastern side where as Ekvira devi's temple is at northern side. Both the deities are considered as sisters. The entrance gate of Ekvira devi temple is at western side. Assembly hall of the temple is specious having a number of pillars. Vestibule is

situated between the assembly hall and sanctum. Circumbutation path is specious. There is idol of Ekvira devi in the sanctum covered with vermilion, having crown and various ornaments. According to the legend related to this temple, circa 1640 A.D. a person Janardhan Swami.²erected a temple and placed there an idol which is recognized as Ekvira Devi.

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At the north west side of the temple there is a well. It is said that from this very place lord Krishna took rukhmini away to Dwarka. The surrounding of the temple is always crowded with devotees. Both the temples are the important centres of shakta sect and can be develop for religious tourism.

Ridhapur :-

Ridhpur is a village of taluka Morshi, about 8 k.m. east of Chandur Bazaar on the Ellichpur-Chandur Bazaar-Morshi road. It is famous chiefly as the headquarter of the Mahanubhav sect. The mahanubhav is a small sect of hindus. It became sacred place due to the vicinity of shri. Govindprabhu and Chakradhar Swami and known as Kashi of Mahanubhavs. This place is very well known for the Leelas of Shri Gundam Raulji alias Shri Govindprabhuji.³His followers believed that he was the incarnation of Lord Krishna. Chakradhar swami propagated this sect in all over Maharashtra. By birth he was Guajarati but he had an excellent knowledge of the Marathi. He was 13th century figure in vishnaism. He is credited as the founder of the mahanubhava sect in vaishnavism in 1267- other sources list govind prabhu as the founder and Chakradhara as its first apostle. Chakradhar propagated a religious movement as well as social movement.³ He taught his disciples to inculcate in the worship of lord Krishna and initiated them to break off all former ties of caste and religion. Govindprabhuji spent maximum time of his life at Ridhpur hence it is considered as chief seat and place of pilgrimage among the devotees. This sect also has an establishment near poona. And the 'Jaikisnya' sect in the Punjab is said to be a branch of the same sect. it expanded till Afganistan.

The head of the sect is a mahant, with whom are associated number of priests. Among the mahanubhav buildings, the Rajmath and the Krishna mandir are the most important. Sarvatirth temple is located at the backside of Rajmath. In the surrounding area there are some temples and mathas of mahantas related to this sect. Two fairs are held here yearly at chaitra purnima and Ashad Purnima and about 5,000 people attend the festival of all castes.

.Shri Adinath Digamber Jain Temple: This Temple is situated in BhajiBajar Amravati. The Temple has a basement and the idol of Tirthankara Adinath,Rishabhanath and other Tirthankara`s are eastablished here. At the bottom of each idol there is an inscription which mention the date samvat 1153(A.D.1097)⁴

According to the date, the idols might be placed here in the last decade of eleventh century. The idols are of marble having three feet height and in a symmetric size. These are placed in the big niches of the thick walls of the basement. Besides this some small idols are placed on the upstairs of the basement which also mentioned the date samvat 1153.

There are thick walls at all sides of the temple and it is a small building like a castle. 25 to 30 years back of the establishment of the idols. There was a king named 'Eel', ruled over Ellichpur who was the follower of Jainism. He might be an independent king or the tributary of Yadawas.⁵

Achalpur Taluk : Achalpur is a taluk of Amravati district. Its old name is Ellichpur, which was former capital of Berar. It lies about 40 k.m. to the north-west of Amravati. The town is full of old buildings of greater or less importance. Such buildings having with historical importance are as follows.

Tomb of Dulha Shah Abdul Rahman Ghazi Ghaznavi : This tomb is considered as the oldest building of Achalpur. It is situated on the north-east bank of the Bichan river. From the distance look it seems almost imposing with the two great archways, the small lantern window overhanging the river and a cluster of white domes behind. When Allauddin Khilji invaded Devgiri region he halted at Ellichpur for two days, that time he built this building⁶. After that it got repaired many times. Passing in through the large gate one finds a spacious courtyard containing the graves of many forgotten worthiest small and great. There is one in particular which has some very creditable stone tracery. Close at left hand a small masjid built originally by subhedar Miyan Manzur, two hundred years ago, but restored by Ghulam Husian the last of the Nawabs⁷. Through this one enters the innermost court, wherein are the resting places of Ghazi himself and of his mother Malika-Jahan. These are said to have been erected by Safdar Khan al Sistani the lieutenant of Ala-ud-din Hasan, the first Bahmani shah⁸. They are covered with a mass of tawdry colors'. The legend tells of a wandering Muhammadan fakir who was maltreated by King Eel of Ellichpur and fled to Ghazni to appeal for help. The great Mahmud's nephew Dulha Saha Ghazi was celebrating his bridal when the holy man arrived; but he left the feast to lead a jihad against the king Eel and died fighting as a good muslim⁹. Now a days a urse helds here at 10th rabi-ul-avval for every year. Aasfahi Rulers (Nizam) of Haydrabad provided fincial support to this tomb¹⁰. Nawab's of Ellichpur also repaired it. The main significance of this tomb is that, it is surrounded by a fortification wall which was built by Mudhoji and Raghuji Bhonsle's of Nagpur.¹¹ It has flight of stone steps on either side leading to a broad barahdari on top. Half way up each flight is a small domed halting place. The barahdari has six windows and two doors and is surmounted by four small minarets. Each gate of the wall has a Persian inscription commemorating its builder. Nawab Ismail Khan Pannhi assigned lands and revenues of Khandali village to look after the tomb and for the expenditure of Nagarkhana.¹²

Hauz Katora: Hauz katora is an important historical monument of Achalpur taluk. It is about 4 k.m. from the town. It was built by Allouddin in the Imadshai dynasty¹³. It is octagonal Tower of bricks, mortar and sandstone. The architecture of it is in the style known as Pathni style. The tower stands in the midst of a artificial lake whose diameter is about 100 yards and depth is about 15 feet. Water was supplied to this lake through a canal by 'Deotalaw' of Gawilgarh¹⁴. It was a place of amusement for an emperor. Various lotus and other water plants were planted here. The tower stands 81 feet in height and has three stories. It is said that the fourth and fifth stories were removed by one of the Nawabs to provide materials for his own palace. The minars were in ruins in the time of Akbar. The tower has arched doors of all its eight sides and inside having a beautiful carving. But now it is in a dilapidated condition.

Idgah of Achalpur: Among the other monuments of achalpur Idgah is an impregnable construction. It is situated on a big ground at sultanpura road of the city. It was constructed in 1347A.D. by sultan Imadul Mulk, the nephew of Mohammad Tughluq ¹⁵ It is said that Imadul Mulk built it in the memory of conquering Ellichpur. It is 46 meters in length and 15 meters in height. Through the ages, it has been several times repaired but its original design is intact. There is a huge pulpit and a dome on arched pillars reached from its base by 14 stairs. Behind it is a vaulted wall of the Idgah. There were two minarets in it but the minaret of the left side has fallen. Stoned arched walls and shaded dome are the main architectural feature of the Idgah.

Jama Misjid: This mosque is situated in the fort of Ellichpur. It was built by Imad-ul-Mulk Mushir Surtej Turkman, the son in law of Muhammad Tughluq in 1348 A.D. ¹⁶ But before completing its construction he died in a war. It is fifty feet in height having 108 pillars and looks very magnificent. The mosque has an inscription which gives an information that Ali Mardan Khan, The governor of Ellichpur, subsequently restored it in 1696-97 in the time of Aurangzeb. ¹⁷ The dome of the mosque looks very attractive. It has two small domes on its both sides. There are 11 arches at the front side of the mosque. There is a spacious ground having a big water tank in front of the mosque.

Chawkchi Mosque: The construction of this mosque was started to be built by Shahistekhan, the maternal uncle of Aurangzeb. ¹⁸ There is an inscription on the mosque erected in 1708-09A.D. According to it, this mosque was constructed by Mirza Beg. It is square in shape having two domes and three arches. There is a water tank on the ground of the mosque.

Khan-i-Zaman Nagar Mosque: Two fine mosques were built by Khan Zaman at Khan-i-Zaman Nagar near Ellichpur, the governor of Berar in 1667A.D. under Aurangzeb. One mosque consists of a proper hall with battlemented parapet wall around and a cornice work on bracket on the façade. There are three arches in it and the central dome which has been placed on a large drum is its roof. There are two slim finial like minars at rear corners of the mosque. The mosque betrays the Mughal influence as well as the style which was in vogue in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. ¹⁹ The other mosque is more impressive than the first. It has two square pylons in the Imad Shahi style, each crowned by domed kiosks resembling a miniature tomb. At front side there are five arches, the intermediate three are of uniform size and the other arches of the side ones are wider and of segmental type.

Amner Tomb: The tomb of Lal Khan Niyazi at Amner in Amravati district built in 1690A.D. consists of a square hall, its dome placed on octagonal drum. At each corner stands a kiosk. The most outstanding feature of the tomb is the curvilinear treatment of the cornice and parapet in the middle of its sides. The projecting bay in each of its sides, which contains a pointed arched recess, is having deeply coved cornice and parapet rising in a large curve.

Gawilgarh Fort

Gawilgarh is a well-fortified mountain strong hold north of the Deccan plateau, in the vicinity of Melghat tiger reserve, Amravati District, in Maharashtra. The fort area is surrounded on all the sides except the north by precipitous slopes. The fort is in round shape and surrounded the area near about 10 to 12 km. and may be the biggest fort of south India in extension. Now there are many shattered buildings, lakes, temples, mosques and tombs scattered everywhere. The exact

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The exact date of construction of the existing fort is not known but the Persian historian, Firishta, records that Ahmed Shah Wali, the ninth King of the Bahamani dynasty, built Gawilgarh. When he was encamped at Ellichpur in 1425.²⁰ Likely this was the date when major fortification was carried out. It was subsequently repaired and improved by Fateh-Ullah Imadul-Mulk, who was governor of Gawil. Taking advantage of the disintegration of the Bahmini Sultanate, he captured all Berar, proclaimed his independence and founded the Imad Shahi dynasty of Berar Sultanate in 1490. Berar was invaded by Murtaza Nizam Shah (1565-1588) of Ahmednagar in 1574 AD.²¹ He appointed Bahram Khan, as commandant of the fort in 1577. He also repaired the fort. Then it remained under the control of Bhonsale of Nagpur and then it was captured by Britishers. The fort combined two forts, an outer and an inner. The outer fort was to deter an attacking enemy while those inside retreated to the inner fort, which was protected by a ravine, and only had one entrance. The inner fort was protected by several gates, the first of which was the least defensible. After breaking through that first gate, however, an assaulting army would turn sharply to the left and follow a narrow passage up to a second gate, all the while being attacked by the defenders from above.

Gawilgarh Mosque: The most conspicuous of the remains upon the hill is the great masjid which stands upon the highest point towards the south side of the plateau. The whole structure is built of rock stones. It has seven arches. The interior hall was three bays deep from front to back. The entrance of the mosque is through a large gateway. The domes are bulky and in rows. The main central dome is larger than the others. It was built by Ahmad Shah²². The mosque had two minarets out of which one has disappeared. It is a fine example of lattice work. A small amount of blue tiling has been used on the face of the mosque.

The fort has seven gates and has inscriptions in Persian recording the date of building of each gate. Among them Delhi darwaza is significant. It is between the inner and the outer fort. Behind it there is a 'Burjaband Darwaza', in western side, there is 'Wastapur' darwaza and the 'Pir Patha' darwaza, the south western gate of the fort. The Delhi gate has a group of sculptured symbols on its face, above the archway. In the centre is a palm tree, and on either side of this and below it a lion passant, looking inward with a small elephant below each paw. Above the lion, on each side, is an eagle displayed, double-headed, holding in each of its beaks a small elephant.

In the western face of the fort is a fine bastion with an inscription which contained that, in Gawil, Bahram built a bastion. Bahram Khan was commandant of Gawilgarh under Saiyid Murtaza Subzawari, Murtaza.

Nizam Shah's governor of Berar, and the fort was repaired in 1577 owing to the prevalence of a rumour that Akbar was then marching on Berar²³. What is known as the outer fort of Gawilgarh, which lies between the Delhi darwaza and the deserted village of Labada, was probably built by the Bhonsla Rajas of Nagpur. It takes a whole day to see the fort. By using the slope of deep valley from south to north, five lakes have been built named Bhimtalao, Khambtalao, Devitalao and Dhobitalao, many of them are full with water still now. There is a building named Rani Zarokha. It is beautifully constructed and a symbol of Hindu-Muslim architecture, it is said that Britishers attacked on the buildings like Darbargruh, Sabhagruh etc. during the revolt of 1857, so that the revolutionaries shouldn't take the resort of Gawilgarh fort²⁴. There are 10 cannons in the fort. Two of them, named 'Kalbhairav' and 'Billie' are of considerable size. During the second Anglo-Maratha war, in 1803, Britishers had to take great efforts to conquer this fort. The commander of

the fort of Bhonsale's named 'Benisingh' fought very furiously and died in front of the gate but he didn't surrender till his death. It was one of the centre place of the politics of Vidarbha and Berar in medieval period.

Conclusion: Both Hindu and Muslim architecture originated in religion. Ambadevi and Ekvira devi temple, Jain temple, Mahanubhav temple and Mosques, Tombs of Muslim era are the symbols of it. The Muslims constructed Mosques of stones and bricks for their congregational prayers. They introduced numerous new architectural features and thus improved the style called the Deccani style in architecture.

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