

RURBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE GARDEN LANDSCAPE OF HIMAYAT BAGH: AN ENDURING FEATURE OF THE *MOFFUSSIL* LANDSCAPE

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Abstract: This study focuses on Himayat Bagh and its role in the rural–urban development of Aurangabad (present-day Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar) during the medieval period. Using archaeological remains, historical records, and architectural study, the paper explains how Himayat Bagh was created as a Mughal garden within a mainly rural area while briefly discussing the earlier rural and semi-urban stages of the region during the Tughlaq and Nizam Shahi periods. The planning and architectural features of Himayat Bagh follow Mughal garden traditions and show the introduction of organized water systems and garden layouts. The study shows that Himayat Bagh became an important example of Rurban development in the mofussil landscape of Aurangabad during the medieval period.

Keywords: *Aurangabad, Aurangzeb, Mailk Ambar, Khadki, Mughal Garden, Himayat Bagh*

Introduction: Himayat Bagh, located in Aurangabad (earlier known as Khadki and now rechristened as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar), is an important example of Mughal Garden architecture in the Deccan. It was created in the seventeenth century as a pleasure garden within a mainly rural area. It is claimed that the garden was previously known as Muhammadi garden. The garden was later renamed as Himayat bagh after the Nizams grandson Himayat Yaar Jung.¹ This region shows the amalgamation of rural and urban features, often described as “rurban.” It was not only a place for recreation, but also an early sign of urban influence in the surrounding countryside. The rurban concept refers to a condition in which rural and urban elements come together and form a distinctive spatial, social, and environmental features that are similar across different regions. The terms “rurban” and “rurbanisation” were first used by Sorokin in 1927,

¹ Qureshi, D., & Qureshi, R. (2022). *The Glorious Aurangabad*. Vidya Books, p. 174.

based on the ideas of C. P. Galpin.² In simple terms, a rurban area is a place where rural activities such as agriculture exist alongside urban activities such as markets and gardens at the same time.

In the eighteenth century, cities were described as having large pleasure gardens.³ This suggests that gardens were a prominent urban element in the medieval period. Mughal gardens, known as *Char Bagh*, were planned as symbolic images of paradise. They usually had a symmetrical layout, water channels, shaded paths, and clearly arranged spaces.⁴ Himayat Bagh follows these ideas through its enclosed boundary, octagonal corner bastions, and planned system of paths and water structures. These features reflect the Mughal concern for order, beauty, and practical design, adapted to the local geography of Aurangabad.

Himayat Bagh is important for understanding the rurban character of Aurangabad as it is one of the best-preserved historic gardens in the region. Architectural remains of which are still visible, while contemporary historical records about the garden are widely available. The garden is located outside the medieval city area, which makes it possible to study its influence on the surrounding rural landscape. Therefore, Himayat Bagh provides a clear example of how rural and urban elements came together in the historical development of Aurangabad city.

To study Himayat Bagh as a rurban site, a detailed field visit was carried out. The remains were mapped, measured, and photographed with scale. This helped in understanding the garden's layout, architectural features, water system, and its relationship with the surrounding area. Historical sources such as *Tarikh-i Dilkasha* and other Mughal Akhbar were also studied. These texts helped to identify the location of the garden and to understand its period of construction as well as the historical background. The study of Himayat Bagh provides useful information about the connection between architecture, landscape design, and urban growth in medieval Aurangabad. It shows that Mughal gardens were not only symbols of royal perception and power but also important elements in shaping the spatial and social development of the region.

Research on Himayat Bagh in particular appears to be rather limited however, writings on it does appear in some of the historical works related to Aurangabad city. Dulari Qureshi and Rafat Qureshi, in their book *The Glorious Aurangabad* (2022), have discussed some of the monuments in Himayat Bagh. Their work provides information on the history of the garden and the art and architecture of the monuments. Shaikh Ramzan, in his PhD thesis *Medieval Aurangabad – A Cultural Study* (1982), has given details about the dam adjoining the garden and the Panchakki

² Hoffmann, E. M., Schareika, N., Dittrich, C., Schlecht, E., Sauer, D., & Buerkert, A. (2023). Rurbanity: a concept for the interdisciplinary study of rural–urban transformation. *Sustainability Science*, 18(4), p. 1743.

³ Singh, A. (2018). Urbanisation in medieval India, Indira Gandhi National Open University p. 5.

⁴ B. Moynihan, E. (1979). *Paradise as a garden in Persia and Mughal India* (1st ed.). George Braziller, p. 3.

Nahar. Abha Singh's work on 'Urbanisation in Medieval India' (2018) is an important study on rurbanisation in the medieval period. It discusses in detail the urban characteristics of Mughal cities. The origin and development of Mughal gardens have been studied by Elizabeth Moynihan in her book 'Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India' (1979). Ebba Koch has also made an important contribution through her work 'The Mughal Waterfront Garden' (1997), which focuses on garden landscapes. Catherine Asher has examined Mughal gardens in her book 'Architecture of Mughal India' (1992). All these studies provides information about urbanization in Mughal cities and about Mughal gardens. However, a detailed study of the Himayat Bagh garden in Aurangabad is necessary. Such a study should examine the monuments in Himayat Bagh, their art and architecture, and the purpose for which they were built. It should also analyze the impact of the garden on the rural area outside Aurangabad city, which can add new insights to existing knowledge.

Site location and topography: Himayat Bagh (19°54'15"N 75°20'06"E) is located about 800 m north of the Qile Ark in Aurangabad. The area of Char Bagh is about 1,13,000 square meters.⁵ The garden and its surrounding area are located in a comparatively low-lying zone. The garden lies on the eastern bank of the Kham River which originates in the Jatwada hills to the north-west of Aurangabad.⁶ To the north-west of the garden, across the river, are the offshoots of Ajanta mountain range. This area was situated outside the medieval city of Aurangabad.

The elevation of the garden slopes gently from west to east, with an average height of about 618 m. The terrain is slightly undulating, and the central part reaches a lower level of about 616 m. From north to south, the land shows a gentle upward slope, with an average elevation of around 616 m.⁷



Fig. 1 Topographic Map of Himayat Bagh and Aurangabad City
(Source- Google Earth, edited by author)

⁵ Google Earth

⁶ Gazetteer of Aurangabad. (1884). Nizams Dominions, Times of India Steam Press. Bombay. P. 9

⁷ Google Earth

Historical background: Epigraphic evidence indicates that a settlement existed at this area from the historic period onward. Aurangabad is first mentioned as Rajtalak, with reference to Paithan, in an inscription from the Kanheri caves of the second century CE.⁸ A copper plate of Charudevi from the fourth century CE mentions Rajtalak.⁹ In the Yadava period, settlement activity probably existed around Khadki village near Sundar Nala, supported by temple remains. An inscription of the Tughlaq period dated 1333 CE mentions the construction of a hammam in Khadki, indicating early rurban development.¹⁰ After 1610 CE, under Malik Ambar and later Aurangzeb, Khadki developed into a planned city with palaces, mosques, nahars, a citadel, gardens, and city walls, while remaining surrounded by cultivated land. In the seventeenth century, contemporary writer Bhimsen Saxena mentioned “not a single piece of land was found there without cultivation.”¹¹ During the Mughal period, several constructions were carried out in rural areas located outside the city, which led to the beginning of rurbanisation in these regions. Himayat Bagh is one important example of this process.

The Himayat Bagh garden is not directly mentioned by name in contemporary documents. However, a garden is referred to in the text, and its location can be identified by comparing the textual description with the geographical setting. First, the text mentions a large tank built in the city by Malik Ambar. It also refers to a building constructed on the bank of this large tank, identified as the Qile ark. Since the city lay to the south of the Qile ark, the tank must have been located to its north. The text further records that in 1690 CE Aurangzeb ordered the construction of a garden on the farther side of this large tank.¹² On this basis, it can be suggested that the garden was situated to the north of the Qile ark, at some distance from it. Archaeological remains supports this location as well.

Later, in 1699 CE, Muharram Khan, who served as the superintendent of gardens, removed silt from the lake and sought Aurangzeb’s permission to plant a garden near Delhi Gate.¹³ These references indicate that the garden was developed in the late seventeenth century CE.

Monuments in Himayat Bagh: Himayat Bagh is rectangular in plan measuring about 477 meters in length and 236 meters in width, enclosed on all four sides by a stone compound wall. At each corner of the compound wall, there is an octagonal bastion containing rooms. The main entrance to the garden is on the eastern side. At the centre of the garden complex stands an semi-underground octagonal pavilion. There is a pathway leading from the entrance gate to the octagonal pavilion. The distance between entrance gate and pavilion is about 238 meters. Barra-

⁸ Gokhale, S. (1991). *Kanheri inscriptions*. Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, p. 52.

⁹ Hultzch, E. (Ed.). (1980). *Epigraphia Indica (1905-06): Vol. VIII*. Archaeological Survey of India, p. 145.

¹⁰ Tewari, R. (2016). *Indian Archaeology, 2006-07: A Review*. Archaeological Survey of India, p. 149.

¹¹ Saxena, B. (1972). *English Translation of Tarikh-i-Dilkasha: Memoirs of Bhimsen Relating to Aurangzib’s Deccan Campaigns*, p. 20.

¹² Saxena (1972), p. 10.

¹³ मोगल दरबारची बातमीपत्रे १६८५-१७०० (पगडी सेतुमाधवराव, Trans.; Vol. 1). (1978). महाराष्ट्र राज्य साहित्यआणि संस्कृती मंडळ, p. 232.

daris are located at the midpoint of the northern and southern sides. Pathways run along the fountains between the octagonal pavilion and the two Barra-daris, distance between which is 104 meters. At the centre of the western compound wall, there is a stone canopy with a bangla roof. Another pathway connects the octagonal pavilion to the stone canopy on the western side. To the southern side, outside the compound wall, there is the Shakkar Baudi. (water reservoir).



Fig. 2 Map of Himayat Bagh
(Source- Google Earth, edited by author)

The main monuments of Himayat Bagh are discussed below.

Entrance Gate: The gateway faces east and is located at 19°54'13"N latitude and 75°20'13"E longitude. It is rectangular and measures 6.78 m by 3.55 m. The gateway features a large Tudor arch containing a smaller multifoil arch. The space between the arches has net pendentive decorations, typical of Mughal design. The façade has blind niches with multifoil arches and star-shaped geometric designs in stucco, and old red paint patches are visible. Stone platforms are provided at the base, and inside the gateway there are alcoves and stone platforms, possibly used by guards. The multifoil arch has a wooden door. The rear elevation differs in design, with a multifoil arch in stucco and a bangle roof. The frame of the gateway is decorated with stucco, adding to its detailed design.



*Fig. 3 Façade of Entrance Gate
(Source- Photograph by Author)*



*Fig. 3 Rear side of Entrance Gate
(Source- Photograph by Author)*

Octagonal pavilion: The octagonal pavilion is located at the center of the garden complex at a lower elevation of 616 m. Its position is recorded at latitude of $19^{\circ} 54' 15.90''$ N and a longitude of $75^{\circ} 20' 5.28''$ E. It is a semi-underground structure designed to keep the interior cool. Each side of the pavilion has seven four-centered arches, three of which are windows that provide light and ventilation. The side measures eight meters in length. The entrance is from the east. Inside, there are compartments with beam-and-lintel entrances, and the ceilings are vaulted with squinches at the corners. According to oral information, there was a fountain in the central chamber of this pavilion. Water circulates near the pavilion through a watercourse, the remains of which can be seen near the south corner. Two staircases on the front side lead to the roof. On

the north and south sides, oblong reservoirs with twenty-seven fountains each are present. The fountain tank measures 96.3 meters by 6 meters. Water for the fountains was supplied through a qanat known as Nahar-e-Ambari. The combination of windows and the pavilion's below-ground structure helps maintain a cool atmosphere. It is likely that this pavilion served as a summer palace for the royal families. The sub-terranean structure is 2.7 meters in depth while the structure above the ground measures around 1.7 meters.



*Fig. 5 Façade of Octagonal Pavillion
(Source- Photograph by Author)*

Barra-daris: The Himayat Bagh complex contains two Barra-daris, located at the middle of the northern wall (19° 54' 19.6488" N, 75° 20' 6.6876" E) and the southern wall (19°54'12"N, 75°20'04"E), which face each other and share similar architectural features. Both Barra-daris are aligned with the central octagonal pavilion, with a fountain located between each Barra-dari and the octagonal pavilion. The southern Barra-dari is built on a raised platform that includes rooms in the basement and an entrance on the southern side. This Barra-dari is a rectangular structure with three blind multifoil arches supported on pilasters at its entrance. The central arch contains a rectangular wooden door, flanked by rectangular windows. The building has a simple bracketless eave below the parapet, and a stairway on the eastern side provides access to the roof. The northern Barra-dari has a similar architecture but differs in having two floors. Based on the art and architectural features of the Barra-daris, it appears that the structure was built in the early eighteenth century during the Asaf Jahi period.



*Fig. 6 Barra-dari of Southern Side
(Source- Photograph by Author)*



*Fig. 7 Barra-dari of Northern Side
(Source- Photograph by Author)*

Shakkar Baudi: The Shakkar Baudi (19°54'09"N 75°20'08"E) is located along the southern wall of the garden, slightly towards the east. It is a rectangular tank measuring about 27 × 80 m, enclosed on all four sides by stone masonry bonded with lime mortar. At the centre of the eastern boundary of the tank, a semicircular well has been excavated. From this side rises a two-storied water-lifting wall built of brick and lime, designed for drawing water.

The lower storey contains six four-centred arches, while the upper storey has three hollow round arches, through which water could be manually lifted. This structure is attached to the southern compound wall of the garden. From the watercourse on this wall, water was carried by a siphon system up to the compound wall and then conveyed through a covered pipeline made of brick,

lime, and terracotta pipes towards the Barra-dari. From there, the water was probably carried to supply the Baradari and the plantation in the garden. There is a small-diameter deep well on the southern side, adjoining the water-lifting wall. It appears that the construction of water lifting wall took place in two phases. The four-centred arches of the lower storey suggest that it was built in the early eighteenth century, while the round arches of the upper storey indicate construction in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Overall, this work seems to have been carried out during the Asaf Jahi period.



*Fig. 10 Shakkhar Baudi and water-lifting wall
(Source- Photograph by Author)*



*Fig. 11 Terracotta Pipeline near Barra-dari
(Source- Photograph by Author)*

Dam: The dam is built on the Kham River and is oriented towards the south. It is located at 19° 54' 22.50" N, 75° 19' 57.13" E, at the north-western corner of the garden, where it is attached to

the compound wall. The dam on the Kham River runs in the same direction as the northern wall and is built in stone masonry. On its southern side, a lower stepped portion is attached. It is possible that the original dam was built at the same time as Himayat Bagh, as it is directly attached to the garden complex. At the far end, another dam-like structure is connected to the main dam. This addition belongs to the British period, as seen from the different masonry and the use of round arches. It is placed at an angle in relation to the original dam.

During the British period, the Panchakki Nahar was reused to supply water to the cantonment area, and cast-iron pipes were installed from Panchakki Nahar system.¹⁴ The total length of the dam is about 107 metres.¹⁵



*Fig. 12 Medieval Dam on Kham River
(Source- Photograph by Author)*

This study indicates that the foundational period of the garden belongs to the Mughal period between 1690 to 1700. The entrance gate, compound wall, octagonal pavilion, stone canopy, and dam are identified as Mughal-period structures based on their artistic and architectural features. Subsequently, during the Asaf Jahi period in the early eighteenth century, the Shakkar Baudi and the Barra-daris were constructed, as indicated by their architectural style. Later, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the upper storey of the water-lifting wall of the Shakkar Baudi was added and the dam was expanded, as suggested by the round arches found there. After the creation of the garden, rurban activities was observed here throughout the medieval period.

¹⁴ Ramzan, S. (1982). *Medieval Aurangabad: A Cultural Study* (p. 413) [Doctoral dissertation, Marathwada University].

¹⁵ Google Earth

Hydrology of Himayat Bagh: The garden was created along the bank of the Kham River, which served as a natural source of water for the garden. Considering the possibility of water scarcity during the summer, a dam was constructed on the river at the time of the garden's creation to store water. The qanat system known as Nahar-e-Ambari, built by Malik Ambar, is located near the garden. The builders dug an underground canal from this qanat to the garden. To regulate the pressure of the water flow, a Bamb was constructed near the entrance gate of the garden. Through this qanat system, water was supplied to the fountains, the octagonal pavilion, and the plantation areas of the garden. This water was potable as well. During the Mughal period, these were the main sources of water supply.

During the Asaf Jahi period, in the early eighteenth century, the Shakkar Baudi was constructed as an additional water source. This Baudi is located outside the garden, along the southern compound wall. Because the elevation of the Baudi and the garden was nearly equal, natural flow of water was not possible. Therefore, a water-lifting wall was built, through which water was carried under pressure into the garden, and it was drawn up using bullocks or a traditional lifting device. To carry water into the garden, pipelines made of brick, lime, and terracotta were used. Remains of these pipelines can still be seen near the southern compound wall, between the Shakkar Baudi and the Barra-dari, however the exact method of water circulation for plantations during medieval period could not be accurately traced. This water was mainly used for the Barra-dari and for irrigating the garden plantations. Later, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the water-lifting wall of the Shakkar Baudi and the dam on the river were expanded. This indicates that human activities in this area continued during this period.

Plantation in Himayat Bagh: At present, no traces of the original plantation in the garden are visible. However, in the late seventeenth century, references are found to the production of fruits such as melon¹⁶, orange, pomegranate, and mango¹⁷ in the city, which were presented as gifts to members of the royal family. Although these records are not directly related to Himayat Bagh, it possibly can be assumed that similar fruit trees once existed in the garden.

Cultural Activities around Himayat Bagh: Chandni Chabutra, located on the southern side of the garden, was an important center for cultural gatherings. It hosted mushairas, qawwalis, and mehfilis where poets, scholars, and Sufi saints such as Baba Shah Musafir and Siraj Aurangabadi came together.¹⁸ Such cultural activities flourished in this area due to the establishment of the garden.

Conclusion: The contemporary writer Bhimsen Saxena, in his book *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, noted that “not a single piece of land was found there without cultivation.” This indicates that large-scale farming was practiced around the Aurangabad city area during the medieval period. The

¹⁶ मोगल दरबारची बातमीपत्रे (1978), Vol. 1 p. 219.

¹⁷ मोगल दरबारची बातमीपत्रे (1978), Vol. 1 p. 232.

¹⁸ Qureshi, D., & Qureshi, R. (2022). p. 176.

Himayat Bagh area is located outside the city, along the riverbank. Even before the garden was created, agricultural activities were already prevalent in the area. Based on research using available sources, it appears that the garden was created for the royal family. While constructing Himayat Bagh, the builders appear to have followed traditional features of Mughal gardens, such as the char bagh layout and the use of the riverine and hilly landscape. Possible reasons for developing the garden in this rural area could be its close proximity to the royal residence, the Kile Ark as well the existence of a functional water management system, near garden in form of a qanat known as Nahar-e-Ambari.

The octagonal pavilion in the garden was mainly used by the royal family as a place to enjoy a cool environment. While constructing it, the builders selected a relatively lower elevation, indicating their knowledge of the physical landscape. Since the Shakkar Baudi and the garden land were at almost the same ground level, the builders constructed a water-lifting wall near the Shakkar Baudi and created an artificial water-conveyance system. This shows that the architects possessed technical knowledge of how to utilize the physical landscape even when it was not naturally suitable for water conveyance. Because of the development of a recreational monument such as the garden, an urban element was introduced in this rural area and the process of development began. The pathways constructed to access the garden created easy routes of communication to this area located beyond the limits of the city. The facilities built as part of the garden's water management system, such as the dam and Shakkar Baudi, encouraged agriculture and the cultivation of fruit trees in the region. After the creation of the garden in the medieval period, cultural activities began to take place at the Chandani Chabutra in the surrounding area. It indicates that the establishment of Himayat Bagh, prompted a continuous construction activity in the area during the medieval period. The area appears to have transitioned from a rural phase to a Rurban phase. Thus, over time, rural and urban features came together in this area, reflecting a process of Rurban development and the emergence of Himayat Bagh as an important mofussil area associated with the city of Aurangabad.

Water management system erected in association with Himayat bagh such as Shakkar Baudi and Dam, are still utilized by locals for various utilitarian purposes. At present, the garden is managed by an institute known as Fruit Research Station where crops such as mango, tamarind, wood apple, custard apple, ber, fig, and marking nut are cultivated and studied.¹⁹ The historic water-management system remains in use and continues to support these agricultural activities. In this way, the creation of the garden during the Mughal period contributed to the development of this area.

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