



The Historical Legacy: Mausoleum of Hakim Mir Mohammad Momin Astarabadi (1553-1626 AD), a vital heritage site in Hyderabad, India

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ABSTRACT

The medical legacy of Hyderabad is a testament to its historical significance, dating back to a period when Europe was ensconced in the Dark Ages. Over four centuries ago, the city proudly housed the most advanced hospital of its time, demonstrating a commitment to healthcare that included inpatient and outpatient facilities, a residential medical college dedicated to innovative research on disease treatment through dietary regulation, accommodations for outstation attendants, and a sophisticated quarantine system to combat the spread of infectious diseases like the plague. Nestled in the heart of Sultan Shahi, not far from the iconic Charminar, lies the Daira Hazrat Mir Mohammed Momin, a mausoleum that stands as a living testament to nearly four centuries of Hyderabad's history. This sacred site serves as the final resting place of Mir Momin, a distinguished figure whose contributions have left an indelible mark on the city's medical and cultural landscape. In recognition of its historical significance and meticulous preservation, the Government bestowed a Heritage Award upon this location in April 2014.

Our teams have had the privilege of visiting this serene site, delving into the rich history and architectural marvels of the mausoleum. Mir Momin, also known as Hakim Mir Mohammed Momin Astarabadi, made a significant impact on Hyderabad's development. Arriving in Golconda Hyderabad in 1580 during the reign of Sultan Mohammad Quli, within a short span of five years, he rose to the esteemed position of 'Peshwa' (Prime Minister). His multifaceted expertise spanned Medicine, political sciences, poetry, and architecture. Notably, Mir Momin played a pivotal role in shaping the city's future, contributing significantly to the planning and development of Hyderabad. Beyond his administrative role, he left a legacy in the field of medicine by authoring significant works in Persian. His enduring impact is reflected not only in the historical mausoleum that houses his remains but also in the cultural and intellectual heritage of Hyderabad. Mir Momin's journey stands as a testament to the intertwining of medicine, governance, and culture in shaping the identity of this vibrant city.

Keywords: *Hakim Mir Mohammad Momin, Daira Mir Momin, Heritage, Unani Medicine*

Introduction:

Hakim Mir Mohammad Momin Astarabadi, commonly referred to as Mir Momin, stood as a distinguished figure encompassing the roles of a renowned physician, a Persian poet, and a high-ranking official within the court of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Born in Astarabad (present-day Gorgan in Iran) during the 16th century, Mir Momin later undertook a migration to the Deccan region of India.



Entrance Daira Mir Momin (Mausoleum)



Mir Momin (Mausoleum)

Having relinquished a career at the Safavid court in Iran, Mir Momin arrived in Hyderabad, India, where he served as a minister and close advisor to Abdullah Qutb Shah, the seventh ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty in Golconda (now a part of Hyderabad, India).



Grave of Mir Momin



Hakim Mir Mohammad Momin (1553-1626 AD)

The Qutb Shahi dynasty, reigning from 1518 to 1687, established its kingdom with Golconda as its focal point, near present-day Hyderabad. Beyond his notable political and administrative roles, Mir Momin gained recognition for his significant contributions to both medicine and Persian poetry. His poetic works became integral to the rich literary tradition of the Deccan during the Qutb Shahi period. Themes of love, mysticism, and philosophical contemplation were often interwoven into Mir Momin's poetry, reflecting the cultural and intellectual milieu of the Qutb Shahi court, where Persian language and literature thrived.¹

As one of the early Iranian migrants to the Golconda Kingdom in the 16th century, Mir Momin left an indelible Iranian influence on the city of Hyderabad. Welcomed by the young Sultan Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda, he ascended to the position of Peshwa, the prime minister, becoming a highly influential personality during his reign. Mir Momin played a pivotal role in the administration and governance, notably serving as the first prime minister during the reign of Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah. His influence extended to the planning of Hyderabad, including the strategic location of the iconic Charminar. As an architect, a devout scholar, and a luminary in Islamic studies, he received the commission from the Sultanate to conceive a city in accordance with the principles of the Holy Quran. His visionary approach seamlessly integrated Persian, Indian, and Islamic architectural styles, resulting in structures that served as a harmonious embodiment of the diverse cultures prevalent during that era.²

Education:

He studied with his uncle Mir Fakhruddin Samaki, who was a very eminent educationist and graduated in theology from Moulana Syed Nooruddin Al Moosavi Soshtari. He worked as a tutor for the prince of Iran and had other distinguished duties at the court of the King.



Dar-ul-Shifa (House of Cure), A building with arches and a courtyard

Medicine:

His contributions to medicine are significant from the aspects of knowledge and practice. He has also performed his duty as a physician in the royal court. He had special command not only over the nature of diseases, principles of treatment and their complete management but also over the use of single drugs, their functions, properties and uses. He was an expert in weights, measurements, and dosages of drugs. Mir Momin also worked as a physician in the famous hospital "Dar-ul-Shifa" during Qutb Shahi's reign.

The first full-fledged hospital in Hyderabad, Dar-ul-Shifa (House of Cure), was commissioned by Sultan Quli Qutub Shah under the guidance of Mir Momin in 1595. This architectural marvel stands as a testament to the remarkable vision of its designer and revered saint, Mir Momin. The enduring grandeur of this monumental structure, overseen by Mir Momin, serves as a lasting tribute to his multifaceted talents. Originally an extensive medical facility, Dar-ul-Shifa boasted state-of-the-art medical amenities. The majestic edifice that once housed the hospital still stands proudly today, although the current remnants only represent a fraction of its former expansive grounds.

Every day, the beds of this ancient hospital buzzed with activity as they accommodated a multitude of patients. Initially rooted in Unani practices, Dar-ul-Shifa later embraced Ayurveda, marking a pioneering fusion of traditional healing methods. Notably, it held the distinction of being the first two-storeyed hospital in the medieval world. Revolutionary for its time, Dar-ul-Shifa introduced the ground-breaking concept of providing free medicines and food to the public, a compassionate initiative that holds historical significance. The establishment went above and beyond by offering free residential quarters for the attendants of non-local patients. During times of calamities such as floods, famines, and disease outbreaks like plague and cholera, Dar-ul-Shifa played a pivotal role by providing specialized treatment. The bygone era in Hyderabad bore witness to the existence of specialized hospitals for various ailments and an exclusive quarantine centre, setting it apart as an exemplar envied by many contemporary cities.³

Death:

Mir Momin Astarabadi finds his final resting place at the graveyard in Daira Mir Momin, Sultan Shahi, Hyderabad. The location derives its name from the tomb of this esteemed individual. Historians note that Mir Momin himself oversaw the construction of this burial site during his lifetime. In addition to fulfilling his responsibilities within the empire, Mir Momin remained dedicated to his medical pursuits. Mir Momin's legacy extends beyond his administrative role, as he has authored essential medical books during

his time. His commitment to both governance and the field of medicine underscores the multifaceted nature of his contributions to the historical and intellectual landscape of Hyderabad.



Works:

Only two books, *Ikhtiyarat Qutb Shahi* and *Risala Miqdariya*, are attributed to Mir Momin Ali's name. These books are popular because of their academic excellence and practical uses.

1. *Ikhtiyarat-e-Qutb Shahi* (Qutb Shahi's choices)

This compilation by Hakim Mir Mohammad Momin Astarabadi stands as a significant work in the Persian language, focusing on selected medical prescriptions and writings about pharmacology. Commissioned for the ruler of its time, Quli Qutb Shah, the book, titled "*Ikhtiyarat-e-Qutb Shahi*," is a testament to the Qutb Shahi rulers' patronage of literature, art, and culture. The Qutb Shahi rulers, known for their appreciation of Persian language and culture, fostered an environment where scholarly pursuits thrived. In particular, Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah engaged in discussions on medicine and scientific subjects with physicians, scholars, and learned individuals. During these discussions, the book '*Ikhtiyarat Badeyi*' served as a reference for accurate information. Compiled by Haji Zain Attar, based on *Qanun-e-Minhaj*, *Jami of Ibn Baitar*, *Taqwim Al-Advia* etc, this treatise on single and compound drugs had some inaccuracies, prompting Sultan Quli Qutb Shah to enlist Mir Momin to correct and enhance its reliability. Mir Momin undertook the task at the ruler's behest, resulting in the creation of '*Ikhtiyarat Qutb-Shahi*.' While it started as an explanatory and critical note on "*Ikhtiyarat Badeyi*" of Haji Zain Attar, Mir Momin elevated "*Ikhtiyarat Qutb-Shahi*" to a distinct and superior status. The book was meticulously crafted by consulting original sources and contemporary experts. To enhance clarity, the original text was presented alongside appendices and additions. Mir Momin's "*Ikhtiyarat Qutb-Shahi*" gained immense popularity in the field of Unani medicine for its authenticity and comprehensive coverage of the subject. This work not only corrected the errors of its predecessor but also established itself as a reliable and esteemed resource in the realm of medical literature.⁴

Content Overview

"*Ikhtiyarat-e-Qutb Shahi*" offers a comprehensive catalogue of medicinal substances organized in alphabetical order. The content is bifurcated into two distinct parts, providing valuable insights into the world of Unani medicine:

Part 1: Single Drugs

This section serves as a repository of information on individual drugs. It encompasses:

Names: A systematic presentation of the names of various single drugs.

Properties: Detailed descriptions of the properties inherent to each drug, elucidating their medicinal characteristics.

Substitutes: Information on alternative drugs that can be substituted for the ones listed.

Correction of Mistakes: Insights into rectifying any errors or inaccuracies, ensuring the reliability of the information presented.

Part 2: Compound Drugs

The second part delves into the realm of compound drugs, offering:

Formulations: An excellent compilation of formulations, providing insights into the combinations and preparations of compound drugs.

Ingredients: Detailed information on the constituents that form the basis of each compound drug.

Main Constituents: A breakdown of the primary components of each formulation.

Uses: A comprehensive exploration of the practical applications and medicinal uses of the compound drugs.

This meticulous organization of content in "Ikhtiyarat-e-Qutb Shahi" not only serves as a valuable resource for practitioners of Unani medicine but also contributes to the historical and scholarly understanding of medicinal practices during the Qutb Shahi period.⁵

Manuscript Overview: "Ikhtiyarat Qutb Shahi"

The Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad safeguards two copies of the esteemed manuscript, shedding light on the intricacies of "Ikhtiyarat Qutb Shahi."

Copy 1:

Content: This copy spans 902 pages, with 21 lines on each page, showcasing the elegance of Nastaliq script.

Inclusion: It meticulously catalogs a total of 2714 single drugs, presented in alphabetical order and featuring their names in various languages.

Scribe Date: The colophon indicates the scribe date as 1040 AH (1630 AD).

Copyist: Crafted by the skilled hand of Mohammed Momin Arab Bin Shirazi, also renowned as Arab Shah Shirazi, a distinguished scribe of the Qutb Shahi court.

Seal: The seal of Hyder Yar Khan, dated 1167 AH, embellishes the first and last pages.

Copy 2:

Content: Extending across 976 pages, each page adorned with 21 lines in exquisite Nastaliq script.

Provenance: Written by Nizam ibn Abdullah Al-Saidi Al-Shirazi for the library of Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah.

Transcription Date: The date of transcription is recorded as 1039 AH (1630 AD).

Colophon: The completion note in the colophon specifies that the manuscript was finalized on 1st Ziqada, 1039 AH (1630 AD), in the capital city of Hyderabad during the reign of Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah.

Presentation: A fascinating historical detail is found on folio 466, where a carving reveals that the book was presented to Mir Mehmood Ali on 22nd Ramazan 1072 AH (1662 AD) by Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah.

These two copies not only serve as invaluable repositories of medicinal knowledge but also offer glimpses into the historical context of their creation and ownership, enriching our understanding of the Qutb Shahi period in Hyderabad.^{6,7}

2. Risala Miqdariya (The Booklet of Weights and Measures): In-Depth Overview

Risala Miqdariya, the second work authored by Hakim Mir Momin in Persian, holds historical significance in the realm of weights and measures during the Qutb Shahi period. Here is an in-depth overview:

Background and Motivation:

Hakim Mir Momin wrote this treatise at the encouragement of King Quli Qutb Shah. The pressing need for standardized weights and measures across various domains, including business, religious practices, and medical applications, prompted the King to seek an authoritative guide for the people.

Preface:

Mir Momin, in the preface, emphasizes the essential nature of accurate knowledge of weights and measures for law and medicine. He explicitly mentions that the treatise was written in response to Sultan Mohammed Qutub Shah's request.

Manuscript Details:

The original manuscript, bearing the seal of Sultan Mohammed, is preserved in the Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad. This adds historical authenticity to the treatise.

Risala Miqdariya not only addresses the practical concerns of standardization but also reflects the collaborative efforts between rulers and scholars in the Qutb Shahi period to enhance knowledge and governance in diverse fields.

Content Structure:

The book is structured into a foreword, different chapters, and closing notes. Each section meticulously deals with sources, arguments, and conclusions.

Foreword:

Mir Momin provides general remarks about the book's contents in the foreword. He highlights that the information presented is extracted from authentic books on medicine, religious laws, and medical encyclopedias.

Chapters:

The subsequent 12 chapters are dedicated to various measures, comprehensively enumerating important measures with references to authoritative sources.

Closing Chapter:

The final chapter is divided into three sections. The first details five standard stone weights, the second covers distances (miles, Farsakh, and Bareed), and the third provides general information about mensuration.

Popularity and Legacy:

The book gained immense popularity, becoming an authoritative reference on weights and measures. Widely consulted, it solidified its status as a go-to source in the field.

Enduring Legacy: Together with Mir Momin's other work, "Ikhtiyarat Qutb Shahi," these two treatises stand as pillars in the history of medical literature. Mir Momin's enduring legacy persists through these works, contributing significantly to the understanding of medical practices and standards during the Qutb Shahi era.
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Conclusion:

The rich medical heritage of Hyderabad, as evidenced by the works of Hakim Mir Momin and other historical figures, signifies a valuable resource that deserves further exploration. There is a need to uncover more medical heritage sites in Hyderabad, delving into their historical significance and establishing connections between them. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the medical practices, advancements, and cultural influences that have shaped the city's healthcare landscape over the centuries.

Declarations

1. Ethics approval and consent to participate: Not Applicable
2. Consent for publication: Not Applicable
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