
SONERI MAHAL



The Golden Palace is situated in the area called Paharsinghpura on the outskirts of the main Aurangabad city, at a distance of about half a kilometre from the famous Bibi Ka Maqbara and inside the campus of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University at the foothills of the scenic Satara mountain ranges. This rectangular edifice, made of stone and lime, is a picturesque palace with mountains serving as a backdrop. Wild luxuriant pastures, farms and trees surround and add to its artistic splendour. The palace gets its name from the paintings made in pure gold water which adorn its interiors

This monument was built by a Bundelkhand chief who accompanied Aurangzeb into the Deccan. Some scattered references state that Paharsingh and his brother Juzarsingh were sent to Deccan by Shah Jahan, Paharsingh displayed his valour from time to time and remained loyal to the Mughals till the time of Aurangzeb. In 1651. Paharsingh attacked Gondvan and established his sway over the

region after which he built the town named Paharsinghpura. Later on, Soneri Mahal became the abode of Paharsingh and his family. This evidence is also supported by the presence of the memorial pedestal of Lala Hardaul, who was the step-brother of Paharsingh, just outside the palace. However, he died in 1653. Therefore, possibly the Soneri Mahal may have been built between 1651 and 1653. Interestingly, a sum of about rupees 50,000 was utilised in order to build this grand edifice and thus, when in 1934, this monument was sold to the Nizam of Hyderabad, it was priced at 26,400, taking into consideration its original building cost. The building was sold to the Nizam by the then king of Orcha Sawai Mahendra Virsinghdev Bahadur. The entrance of the palace is dominated by an imposing and an impressive gateway (Hathikhana) and a handsome arched enclosure wall. The Hathikhana is a robust rectangular structure with several pointed arches adding grandeur to its magnificence. The road through the Hathikhana leads to a pathway with a garden on either side which, in turn leads to the main building. A water reservoir that was made in between, divided the pathway into two. It was built in 2001-02 by the conservators in order to maintain the harmony of the building with its environs.

The Soneri Mahal itself is a two-storeyed rectangular structure standing on a high plinth. There is a pillared front hall, a number of rooms at the back and two narrow, but steep staircases leading to the second storey. This second storey houses a hall at the centre with antechambers on all its corners, followed by a terrace open on all sides. From here too, there are two staircases leading to an enclosed roof supporting the watchtower. All these floors get reduced in dimensions as they extend upwards. The Soneri Mahal, originally, was not quite as it looks today. Massive amount conservation and restoration work was undertaken in due period of time from the 1970s and numerous modifications were made to the original

structure after that. As of today, very limited traces of the original features are visible. Most of the arches, which were probably kept open by the builders of the monument for the purpose of letting the air play within the premises were filled with brick and mortar and closed down for the purpose of setting up a museum on the first floor. The edifice itself is a rectangular structure that stands on a high rectangular plinth. The garden surrounding it is also a massive rectangle in the middle of which the palace stands. So, it takes a form of a rectangle within a bigger rectangle. The main gateway is also in the form of a rectangular structure which affects the ground plan of the complex showing uniformity of architectural design.

Information provided by:

Assistant Director.

Department of Archaeology.

Aurangabad Division, At "Soneri Mahal".

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Campus.