

City of gates

Reliving the pride and glory of architecture that stands as an antithesis to our modern-day glass buildings.

Centuries ago, the city of Aurangabad, meaning 'built by the throne', was defined by 52 imposing gates that fortified the periphery of the city. Today, only 13 of those gates exist as vestiges of a glorious past. Speaking of Aurangabad conjures up images of Bibi ka Maqbara, also known

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▲ Mohammod Gate overlooking the enterprising Panchakki.

city from the Maratha attacks and later used as the base for military campaigns in the Deccan.

The numerous gates of Aurangabad are outstanding remnants in the annals of history. Initially, there were four principal gates to the city and nine smaller gates. Some of the gates are Delhi Gate, Paithan Gate, Roshan Gate, Bhadkal Gate, Rangeen Darwaza, Kaala Darwaza, Kat Kat Gate, Buland Darwaza and Barapulla Gate.

The most prominent gates facing the cardinal points are named after the cities that lie far beyond in that direction: the Delhi Gate to the north, Paithan Gate to the south, Mecca (Makai) Gate to the west and the Jalna Gate to the east. These arched structures form the four principal gateways to the city. However, the Bhadkal Gate hogs the limelight for being the highest gate.

The architecture of most of the gates is the same: robust structures with high bastions and strong imposing doors having a strong essence of Islamic architecture. The Mughals were greatly influenced by Persian

Below: Naubat Darwaza, an imposing wall with a main arch, is the second largest gate after Bhadkal Gate.

Above: Paithan Gate to the south of the city overlooks the statue of Lokmanya Tilak.



culture and tradition and that is clearly visible in the architecture of the gates. They have been constructed with an outer stonewall and an infill that is a combination of stone, brick and lime. Wrought iron has been used to fill many of the joints, thus making them not mere objects of display but pillars of strength. On the whole, each gate varies in design, structure or direction thus, differentiating one from the other.

Paithan Gate, to the south of the city, overlooks a Lokmanya Tilak statue on one side, while on the other side it opens into a busy road and gazes at a minaret far across the street. Flanked

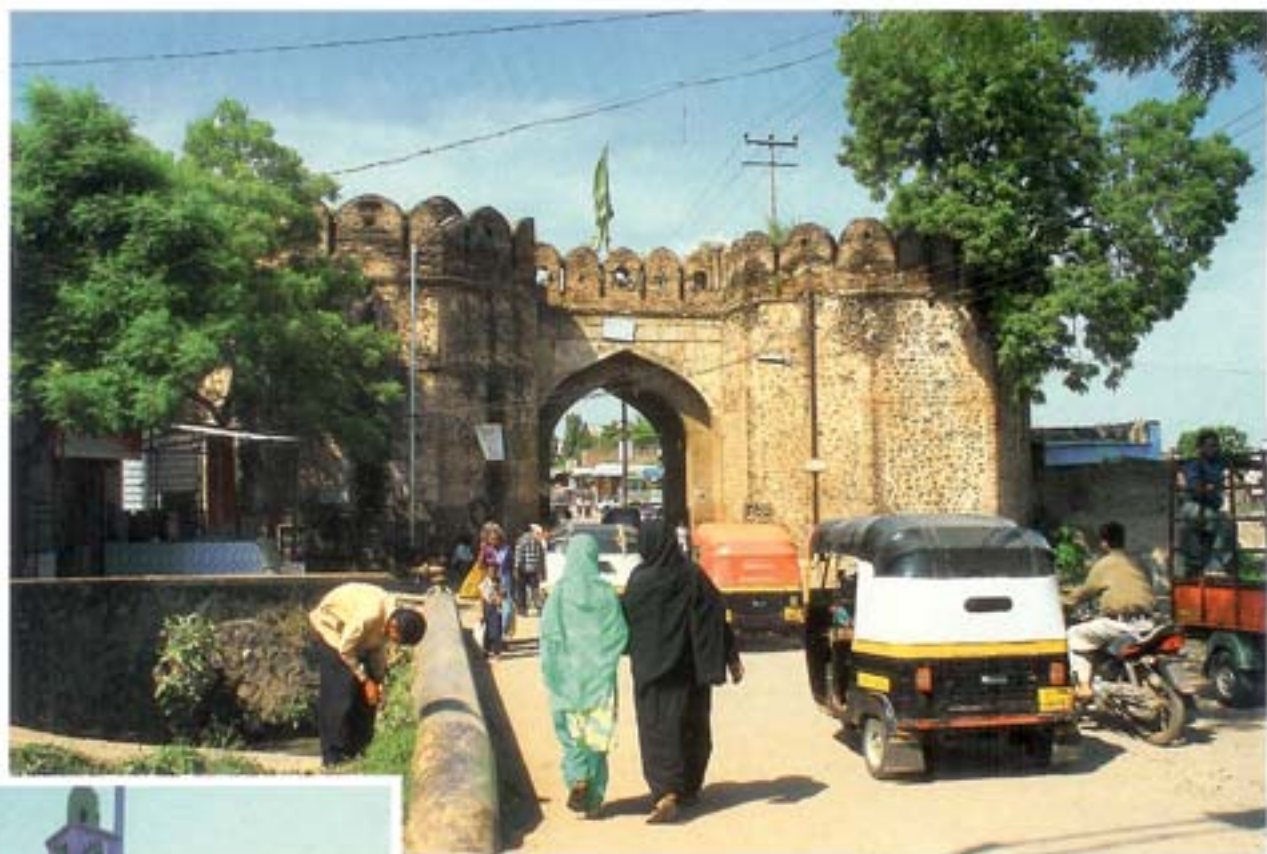
by two watchtowers and an arched niche, Paithan Gate resembles the façade of a castle. The gate to the north of the city is Delhi Darwaza. The watchtower of this gate has a striking similarity to a *gumbad/gumbaz* (dome) often crowned with a finial and has arched balconies at each level. A massive gateway greets the onlooking street and the watchtower.

The next gate on our agenda was the Mecca Gate or the Makai Gate to the west. Our guide informed us that most of the gates used to have cannons mounted on them, however, today, Mecca Gate is the only one that retains a cannon. In between the Delhi and Mecca Gates lies the Quil-e-Ark. The citadel built by Aurangzeb in AD 1692 comprised of several structures such as Diwan-e-Aam, Diwan-e-Khas, Mardana Mahal and Janana Mahal, two other mosques and fortified walls with five gates.

Doors of art

Mohamood Darwaza and its fortified wall encircles the enterprising Panchakki (water wheel). The waterfall at Panchakki is supplied through the *neher* (canal) with a series of siphons built along





Above: Mughal structures awe the viewer and assert the exalted status of their imperial patron.
Left: Roshan Gate amid a bustling city road and many a hawker oblivious to its presence.



as the Taj of the Deccan, and the Ajanta and Ellora caves. But call it the City of Gates and not many souls know what is going on.

During my bumpy rickshaw ride through the dusty, bustling and meandering streets of Aurangabad, I wondered when this self-inflicted torture would end. As I gazed out of my rickshaw, I was incognisant of the fact that I was headed to a place where history had been witnessed but not recorded. It was a bright summer day and I had managed to trace my way to the gate, through a labyrinth of alleys. Traversing the confusing maze of lanes, dotted with vibrant *melos* (fairs) that flaunted their goods was the most tedious part. The arched entrance of Bhadkal Darwaza or Victory Gate magnified as we drew closer to it. That was just the first of the Gates of Aurangabad.

The gateways to history

Originally known as Khadki, Aurangabad is situated on the Kham River in the Dudhana Valley between

the Lakenvara Hills and the Satara mountain range in Maharashtra. It was founded by Malik Amber in AD 1610 at a crossroad of one of the region's major trade routes and was incorporated in the Mughal Empire in AD 1637. Renamed in honour of Prince Aurangzeb, when he became the Viceroy of the Deccan in AD 1653, the walls were built by him as a mode of defending the

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its route. It originates close to the Jatwada Hills and travels a distance of about 6 km before emptying out into the tank at Panchakki. The force of this falling water is used to turn the blades of a mill for grinding corn, hence the name Panchakki.

Rangeen Darwaza is one of the most beautiful of gates. A *pishtaq* or a recessed arch niche within a frame is the defining point of this gate. Mughal buildings awe onlookers and further stress on the exalted status of their imperial patron. Cusped arches, graceful slender minarets

▼ Below: The gateway that leads to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar University.

Above (right): Bhadkal Gate is one of the highest gates, it has a massive arch, which allows vehicles to pass through.

and mesmerising domes give these structures an ethereal grace. Buland Darwaza is the biggest of them all. It differs from the other gates in its architecture, with two levels and a main arch whose entrance can accommodate a local bus. Its walls have floriated patterns on its surface all around the arcs.

Begumpura was also fortified in AD 1696. This city wall is terraced and has solid masonry. Standing at not more than 14 ft in some places, the total length of the wall is a little over 6 miles, although it is now in ruins. Rauza or Khuldabad (meaning heavenly abode) was once an important town around which Aurangzeb built a wall with seven gates. The place is also famous for the Bhadra Hanuman or Hanuman in a sleeping posture.

A famous poet used doors in a metaphor, when he said, "there are things known and there are things unknown and in between are the doors (*darwazahs*)". The gates in Aurangabad interspaced between the precincts of the city do have a lot to tell us, things known...



things unknown... it is up to us to explore the nexus between the city of Aurangabad and the city gates. Although they have outlived their functional relevance, they continue to act as bookmarks of a time gone by.

Fact file

Getting there

By Air: Jet Airways has daily flights to Aurangabad from Mumbai.

By Rail: Aurangabad is a section on the Manmad-Kachiguda line on the South Central Railway. Passengers from Mumbai and Delhi change lines at Manmad Railway Junction, 114 km away from Aurangabad.

By Road: Mumbai-Aurangabad (via Manmad) 375 km; Jalgaon, a railhead on Central Railway, is only 59 km from Ajanta.

Accommodation

The city of Aurangabad offers a host of stay options that cater to all budgets.

For more information: Log on to www.maharashtratourism.gov.in

