

# Informative, engrossing reading



**D**EFINITELY a painstaking effort, and indicative of the author's deep love for the city, *Aurangabad, Jewel of the Deccan* by Rashmi Jolly is an informative and engrossing book.

You may be fascinated to know that there is reference to the city, now called Aurangabad, in the history of the Satavahana dynasty which ruled over that part of the Deccan around 220 BC.

Delving into the past, Rashmi informs

that Aurangabad, as a city, is referred to in the Kanheri inscriptions of the Kanheri Chaitya Cave no.4, dating back to 2 BC and in the In-

troduction she lists the various dynasties that have ruled over Aurangabad over the last 2000 years: Satavahana 220 BC, Vakatakas 250-550 AD, Chalukyas 550-748 AD, Rashtrakutas 748-973 AD, Yadavas 1069-1271 AD.

After 1271 AD, Muslim rulers of the Sultanate of Delhi began dominion and we should thank the author for providing a significant fact that should put paid to those amongst us who nurture hatreds and biases, because of our mistaken interpretation of Indian history: "Malik Ambar, an Abyssinian born in 1549, was a staunch enemy of imperial Mughal hegemony. He was appointed Peshwa to the kingdom of Ahmadnagar and he continued to play a key role in the resistance of the Deccan against the Mughals. In this task he received help from the Mahrattas whose power, it may be said, he was the first to develop, and it was under his banner that Shahji, the father of Shivaji, laid the foundation of Mahratta greatness."

Rashmi adds, "This formidable Peshwa died in 1626 and it was only during Aurangzeb's rule that the Mughals progressively annexed the Deccan Sultanates."

Aurangabad is named after Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal Emperors, who first came and resided there as a Governor.



The city rose to bigger fame when he became Emperor in 1681.

This book is a very elaborate armchair travelogue, and Rashmi Jolly

has provided interesting information about places to visit in and around this ancient and historical city. How many of us know that the walled city had 52 gates or Darwazas, of which only 13 have survived? While masjids, dargahs and temples abound, not many know that the Bibi ka Maqbara we have heard about is located here. Closely modelled on the Taj Mahal, this ornately carved tomb of Begum Rabia Durani, wife of Aurangzeb, was built by her son, Prince Azam Shah in 1678 as a memorial to his beloved 'Bibi,' meaning mother. There is also the Daulatabad Fort, dating back from the Yadava dynasty, around 1069 AD.

The author has taken it upon herself to enlighten us about the world famous Ajanta and Ellora caves. The 29 Ajanta caves date back to the 2nd century BC, and the murals in these rock-cut caves are among the greatest surviving paintings of any ancient civilisation. The exquisite carvings, with verandahs and pillars having intricately detailed decoration, are a fascinating testimony to ancient Indian art. The 34 Ellora caves date from the 6th century AD onwards. Nice to know that they comprise of 12 Buddhist caves, 17 Hindu caves and 5 Jain caves!

Rashmi also writes about the lesser

known 9 Aurangabad caves, dating from the 5th century AD, which incorporate the Tantric element which was gaining importance around that period.

For those of us setting off for Aurangabad, Rashmi Jolly has provided detailed information with addresses and phone numbers of flight timings, airfares, hotels with room charges, tour operators, essential city services, including hospitals, etc. ■

● **AURANGABAD, JEWEL OF THE DECCAN**  
by Rashmi Jolly

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