

## **Bidar** (1/27/2008 to 1/28/2008)

The city of Bidar is not on the way to much, trains from Bombay heading south blow by town with little more than a honk of the horn, and few tourist make the effort to get to this provincial backwater town, tucked away in the far north of Karnataka. The city was once the capital of the Bahmani kingdom set up by invaders from Persia and as such is the home of some Persian influenced Islamic architecture mostly dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. I happed to arrive in town the day before the second annual Bidar Ustav festival. While I could have seen most of the “sites” in the half day I arrived I decided to take a more leisurely tour of the town and check out the festival the following day. The festival held amidst the ruins of Bidar’s 15<sup>th</sup> century fort was what I have come to know as the standard Indian festival. There were some tug of war competitions, wrestling, kite flying, booths selling food, and an evening cultural program which consisted of Indian music and dance. Being the only foreigner in attendance my presence seemed to be much more of an attraction than any of the planed events, including the Red Arrow stunt air show put on by the Indian Air Force which runs a large fighter pilot training center on the outskirts of Bidar. There were well over a thousand Indians in attendance, and I must have told each and every one of them my name and country. I got a minor reprieve from the nonstop inquisition when I was invited to sit with the mayor and former district supervisor in the V.I.P. seats to watch the wrestling. Again I think more people were watching me than the wrestling as the largest cheer of the day came when I was wrapped with a safer (Indian turban). It was a fun day but rather exhausting to have to answer the same questions over and over, even more than usual, and it was really hard to just lay back and become an observer for a while. Being a foreigner in untouristed areas of India is a good way know what its like to be a celebrity, kids calling out your name (or something close to it, Michael, in my case), people asking for autographs, and having pictures taken with you. At least I could leave town and become anonymous again, unlike the international celebrities. I’m just fine with my celebrity being limited to places like Bidar and Hindoli. I don’t feel the need to be any more famous than that.



**Khwaja Mahud Gawan  
Madrasa (1492), Bidar**



**Tile work on the Khwaja Mahud Gawan Madrasa (1492), Bidar**



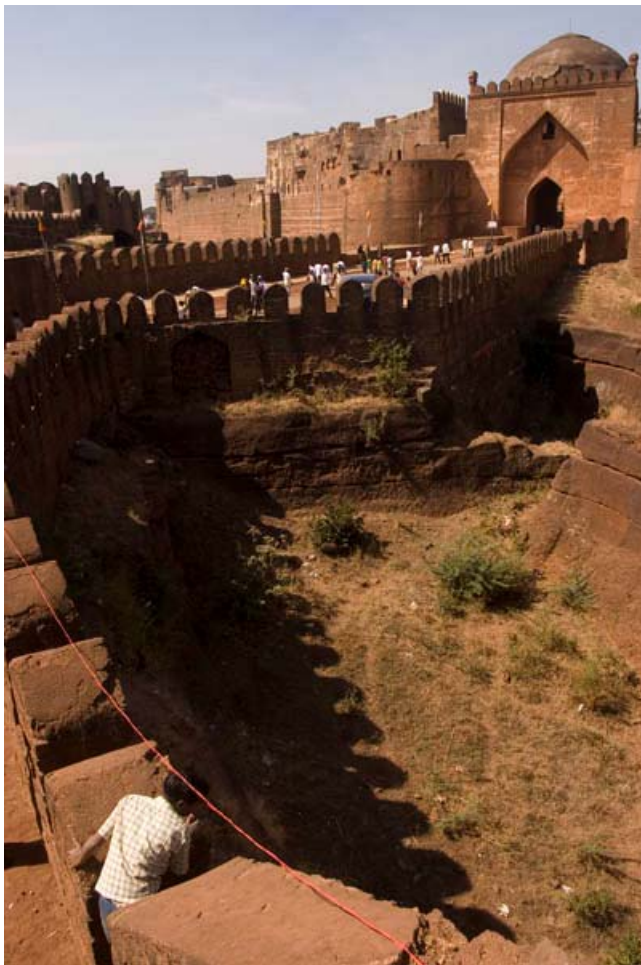
**Little girl getting water at the Khwaja Mahud Gawan Madrasa, Bidar**



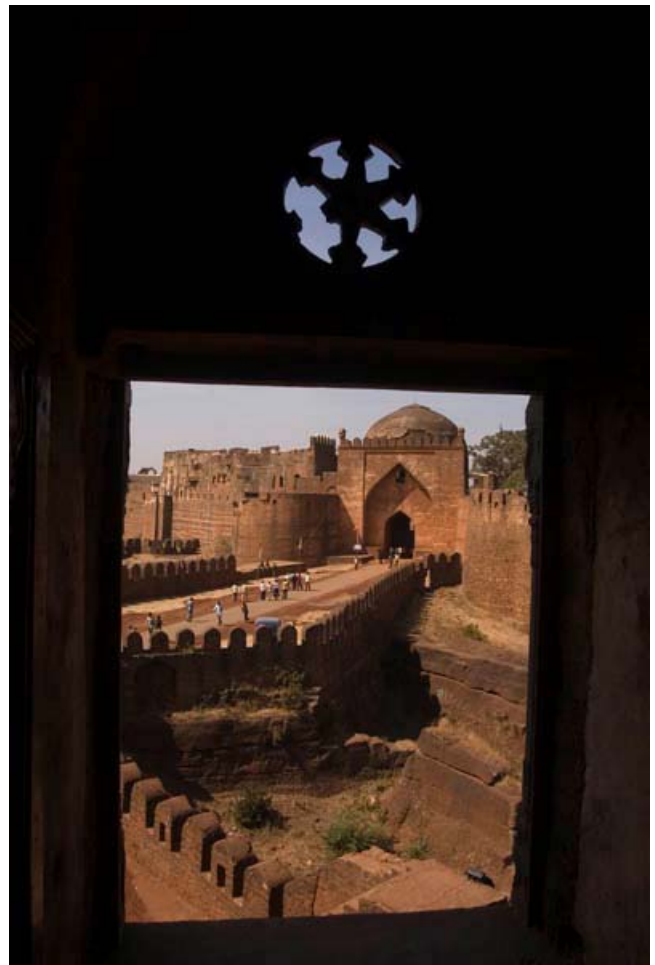
**Tombs of the Bahmani kings, Bidar**



**Entance to Bidar's fort.**



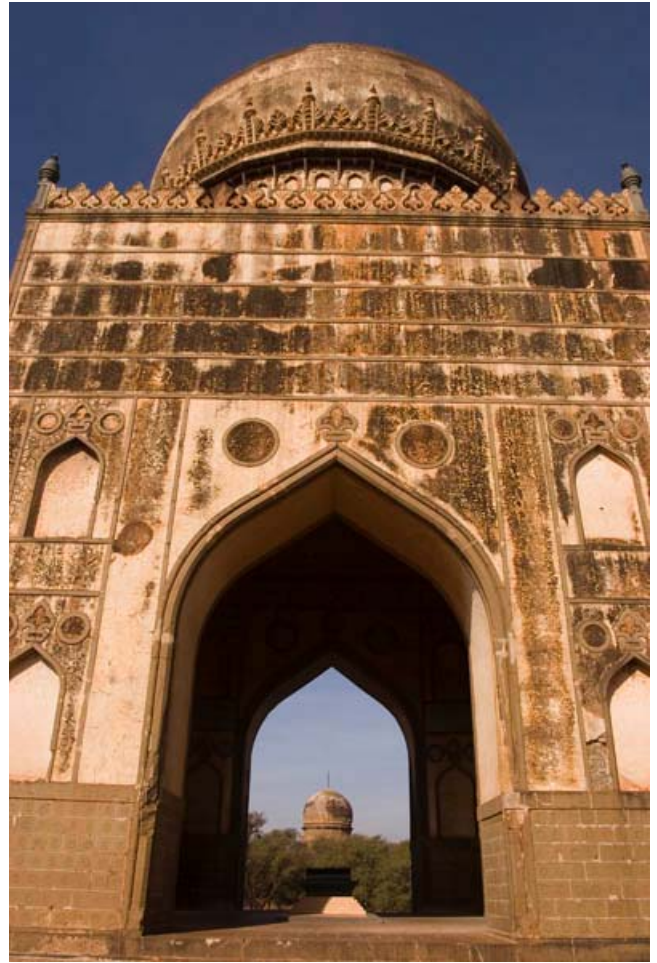
**Entance to Bidar's fort.**



**Entance to Bidar's fort.**



**Tile work on one of the tombs of the Bahmani kings (15<sup>th</sup> century), Bidar.**



**Tomb from the Barid Shahi dynasty (16<sup>th</sup> century), Bidar.**



**People gathered around the wrestling ring Bidar fort, Bidar.**



**Me sitting with the VIPs, during the festival Bidar. From left to right, myself, the former district supervisor, and the mayor of Bidar.**



**Wrestling at the festival in Bidar.**



**Man displaying his elaborately decorated kite for the kite competition at the festival in Bidar.**



**Finding a seat in the ruins to watch the festivities, Bidar.**



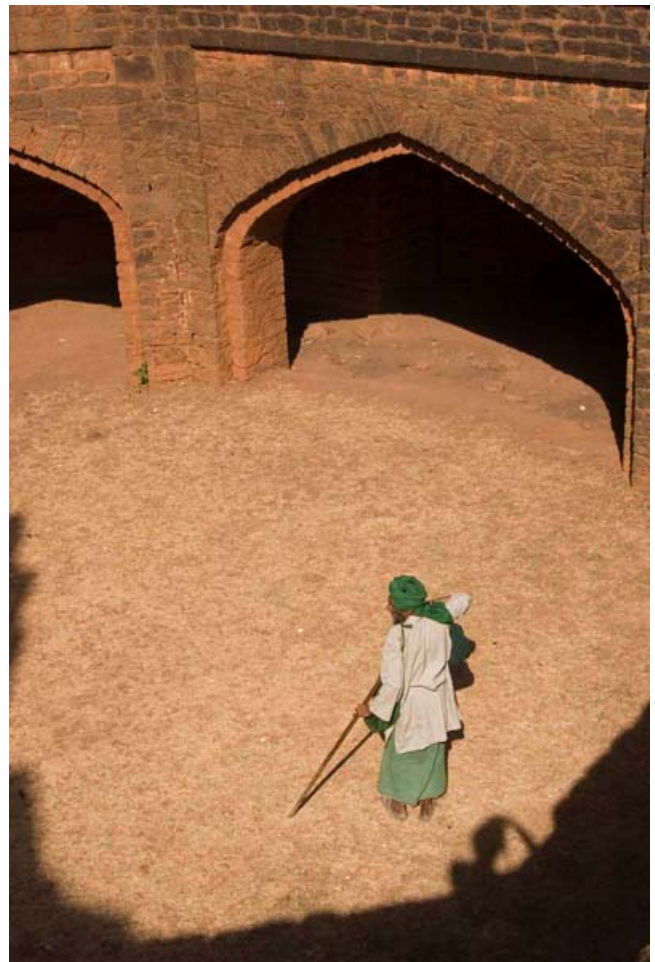
**Ice cream vendor at the festival in Bidar.**



**Women sitting dressed in colored saris to make the Indian flag at the festival in Bidar.**



**Performers at the festival in Bidar.**



**Bidar Fort.**



**Crowd of people watching a hot air balloon at the Bidar. Festival.**



**Indian Air Force's Red Arrow stunt flying team at the festival in Bidar.**



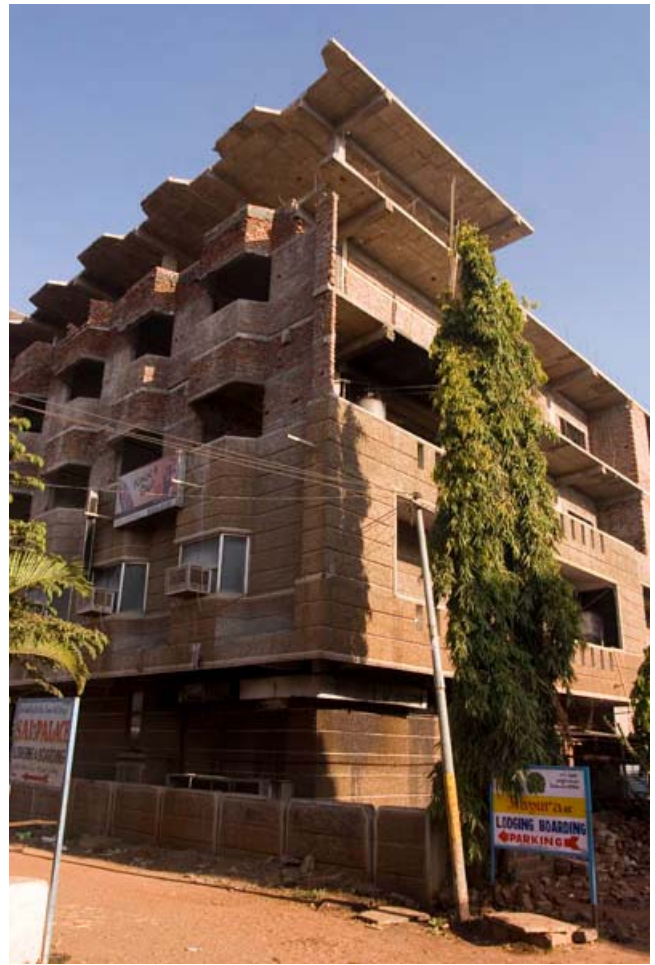
**Sunset Bidar fort.**



**As a self proclaimed terrible speller, I'm probably the last person who should take amusement out of others misspellings; however, I don't think I've ever made this mistake in any of my emails, Bidar. Correct me if I'm wrong.**



**When they widen streets in India they just cut the buildings in half but that doesn't make them any less livable, Bidar.**



**My hotel in Bidar. I walked past this building several times looking for the hotel, figuring this building looking like it belonged in post Israeli raid Beirut, could not possibly be it. The guide book I had from 2002 said the hotel was just being built then, I think it's been under construction for 6 years. But at little over \$3 for a room with a hot shower it worked for my purposes.**