



DELHI SULTANATE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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Introduction

The disintegration of the Delhi sultanate started even during the reign of Muhammad Tughluq and Firuz Tughluq and the processes could not be checked by their incompetent succession. The situation was no better during the reign of the sayyid and Lodi Rulers and the result was there come to existence a large number of independent dynasties in various parts of the erstwhile Delhi sultanate.

Jaunpur

The city of Jaunpur was founded by Firuz Tughluq to perpetuate to the memory of his cousin and patron, Muhammad Tughluq, also known as prince Juna Khan. Mubarak Shah. He was the first to take up the title of the king and struck coins in his own name. The Qutub was also read in his name. Ibrahim Shah ruled for 34 years from 1402 to 1436. He was a great patron of learning. He established many schools and colleges. Husain Shah was the last ruler of the Sharqi dynasty.

Malwa

The history of Malwa is undoubtedly connected with that of Gujarat, Khandesh, Mewar and the Deccan. Its capital was Dhar until it was shifted to Mandu by Hushang. Sultan Muhammad Khalji was the founder of the Khalji Dynasty in Malwa. He extended the limits of his kingdom up to the Satpura range in the south, the frontier of Gujarat in the west, Bundelkhand in the east and Mewar and in the north. About Sultan Muhammad, Theodor Dr. Upendranath Day observes; "Muhammad was the greatest of all the sultans of Malwa.

Gujarat

Gujarat was a rich province and its richness was advertised by the famous loot of Somnath by Mahmud Ghazni in 1125 A.D. It was annexed to the sultanate of Delhi in 1297 in the reign of Ala-ud-Din Khalji in 1411, Ahmad Shah built the city of Ahmadabad on the left bank of the Sabarmati river near the old town of Asawal. The author of Mirat-i-Sikandari writes thus about Mahmud: "Notwithstanding his high dignity and royalty, he had an enormous appetite. The author of Mirat-i-Sikandari gives the following estimate of Mahmud Begarha: "He added glory and luster to the kingdom of Gujarat and was the best of all the Gujarat kings.

Mewar

Mewar had the credit of producing brave generals, heroic leaders, prudent rulers and brilliant poets. Hamir died in 1364 "leaving a name still honoured in Mewar as one of the best and most gallant of his princes and bequeathing well-established and extensive power" to his son. The next Rana of Mewar was Kumbha.

He was the most famous ruler of Mewar. Kumbha was responsible for the construction of 32 out of 48 fortresses built for the defence of Mewar. He was also responsible for the construction of Kumbhagarh. Dr. G.N. Sharma says that Kumbha was great not only in war but also in arts of peace. He was an accomplished scholar, a poet of high order and patron of learning.

Khandesh

The province of Khandesh lay in the valley of the Tapi river and it was bounded in the north by the Vinadhya, in the south by the Deccan plateau, in the west by Gujarat and in the east by Berar. Khandesh a part of the empire of Muhammad Tughluq.

Orissa

The kingdom of Orissa extended from the mouth of the Ganga to that of the Gothavari. It was consolidated a powerful kingdom by Anantavarman Choda Ganga who ruled for more than 70 years about 1076 A.D. to 1148 A.D.

Bengal

Bengal was conquered and brought under the sultanate of Delhi by Ikhtiyar-ud-Din Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji during the last decade of the 12th century. However, his successors tried to assert their independence. They were encouraged to do so by the fact that Bengal was far away from Delhi and was so very rich. Sultan Balban was able to re-establish his suzerainty over Bengal after putting down the rebellion.



Architecture and Literature

According to Sir John Marshall, "By the close of the twelfth century, then, when the Muslims established their power permanently to India, it was not longer a case of their having to be tutored by their new subjects in the art of building; they themselves were already possessed of a highly-developed architecture of their own, as varied and magnificent as the contemporary architecture of Christian Europe; and the Muslims, moreover, who conquered India men of Afghan, Persian and Turki blood-were endowed with remarkably good taste and a natural talent for building.

It is not correct to describe, the architecture of the sultanate period as "Indo-Saracenic" or "Pathan" as done by scholars like Fergusson. Likewise it is not correct to describe it as entirely Indian in "soul and body" as done by Havell. About the architecture of the sultanate period, it is stated that the earlier buildings with the exception of the Qutub Minar were built on defective and crude architectural principles and lacked correct proportion and symmetry.

According to Sir Henry Sharpe, "the monolithic Puritanism of Islam delighted in the simplicity of the unbroken dome, the plain symbolism of the pointed arch and the slenderness of the minaret.

Salient Feature of the Architecture during the Sultanate Period

I. A Mixture of Indian and Iranian Styles: Architecture was that from the very beginning there was the mixing of Indian and Iranian styles. The initial buildings of the Turks shown that Indian style was adopted in them it was due to two reasons.

- a) Firstly, the builders were Indians, and
- b) Secondly, they were considered out of the temples broken during the war.

II. Pointed Arch, Narrow and High Towers and Use of Domes: A look at the towers, places, mosques, forts and tombs of this period shows that during his period generally pointed arch like the English alphabet 'B' in reverse shape and very high towers, were used.

III. New Style Place of Worship: 'The Quwat-ul-Islam Mosque' in Delhi was considered over broken temple. The mosques in Ajmer called 'Adai-din-ka-jodhpurah' was constructed either after breaking a "Buddhist monastery" or a Hindu temple. The places of worship were neither decorated with statues nor with human paintings.

IV. Tombs of New Style: Tombs were considered during the sultans period often in memory of sultans. Wazir-khan-i-jahan Telangani, eight-doored tombs were considered.

V. Many Types of Stones and Good Quality Lime was Used: During the sultanate period many coloured stones like red, light black, yellow and white marbles were used.

VI. Scientific Constructions: During the sultanate period buildings were constructed in scientific manner a thing which they had learned from the Arabs. They had adopted it from Byzantine Empire.

VII. New Style Of Decorating The Buildings: During the sultanate period human and animal figures were not used to decorate the buildings but rather various types of flowers and leaves, geometrical designs and the Quranic (Ayats) were used for this purpose.

Development of Architecture: During the Sultanate Period

a) Slave Dynasty: The founder of the so called slave dynasty was Qutubuddin Aibak. Some of the most important architectural examples of Slave Dynasty are as under:

i. Quwaat-ul-Islam Mosque

Qutubuddin Aibak constructed the first Mosque called 'Quwaat-ul-Islam Mosque'. Some scholars say that its construction started in 1195 A.D. and was finished in 1199 A.D. Some scholars also say that this mosque was constructed by desecrating a Vishnu Temple whereas other scholars hold that it was constructed on the site of Kila Rai Pithora.

ii. Qutub Minar

Aibak began the construction of the second important building called Qutub Minar. According to some historians the tower was originally 71.4 meters or 225 feet high. The circumference at the base is 15 meters reduced by just 3 meters at the top. Its height also raised to 91.4 meters or 234 feet old by Dr. Nandlal Chatterji, Sir John Marshall.



iii. The Tomb of Iltutmish

This tomb is unpretentious in its form and dimensions. It is a simple square chamber. However, its date is very elaborate.

iv. The Sultan Ghar

This was built in 1231-32 A.D. its plan is not like the tomb of Iltutmish of any other tomb in India it stands in the middle of a square fortress-like enclosure with round turrets at the four corners.

v. The Adhi-Din-Ka-Jodhpura

This was built at Ajmer in 1200 A.D. by Qutb-ud-Din Aibaq. Probably it was also constructed by breaking a Buddhist monastery. Later on, Iltutmish beautified it with a screen. According to Sir John Marshall it is so called because it was really built in 2 ½ years.

vi. The Tomb of Balban

This is a simple structure comprising a square domed chamber, 38 inches across, with an arched entrance in each of its sides and a smaller chamber to the East and West. Unfortunately, very trace of decoration has disappeared from the tomb and what is left is a mere shell. It is a symbol of a reaction against the Hindu influence of the Hindu artisans.

Conclusion

Qutub Minar was the best example of architecture during the reign of sultanate period. They newly used the colours and paintings. They used flowers and leaves. The sultans contributed many things for the history and architecture, literature. So we can identify the reign of sultans through the tombs, monuments, Qutub Minar, etc....

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