



A STUDY ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF MUGHAL EMPIRE

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Abstract:

The Indo-Islamic-Persian style was the distinguished and chief characteristic feature of the Mughal architecture which was flourished on the Indian subcontinent during the reign of Mughal Empire (1526–1857). This new style was a result of combination of elements of Islamic art and architecture, which were introduced to India by the Delhi Sultanate (1192–1398) and had produced great monuments such as the Qutub Minar which consist the features of Persian art and architecture. Mughal monuments are found chiefly in north India and many remains can be found in Pakistan too. Rolling vines and flowers, jewels, and crowns in greens, blues, and gold embellish Mughal buildings. The main aim of this paper is to describe the beauty of the Mughal Architecture which enriched the field of architecture in India.

Keywords: Mughal Empire, Indo-Islamic, Culture, Architecture.

1. Introduction:

Before concentrating purely on the architectural issues, providing some details about the Mughal Empire like a brief history, great rulers and major constructions and monuments will help the reader to comprehend the general conditions of the period.

The Mughal Empire is considered to be the most prominent Muslim rule for its good governance, and contribution to the development of the fields like architectural, cultural, administrative and many others. The rise and reign of Mughal dynasty is considered by many scholars as one of the most interesting episodes in the history of India. At the extremes of their power, Mughals ruled almost every corner of India. The empire emerged out of descendants of the Mongol Empire who were living in Turkestan in the 15th century. They had become Muslims and assimilated the culture of the Middle East, along with keeping elements of their Far Eastern roots. Besides being the founders of cities (Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan), architects (Shah Jahan), naturalists and horticulturalists (Jahangir), Mughals were also the authors of autobiographies (Babur, Jahangir), letters (Aurangazib) and poems (Babur).

2. Foundation of Mughal Empire:

2.1 Babur, the first Mughal Emperor:

In Arabic and Persian Mughal means Mangol or Mangolian. The Chagatai Turkic prince, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur was the founder of the Mughal Empire. He was born in Central Asia in 1483 into the ruling family of small kingdom Fargana. He was descendant of the Turkic conqueror Timurlane from his father's side and Genghis Khan, the Mongol ruler on his mother's side. Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi, sultan of Delhi, in 1526, in the first battle of Palnpat after which he imposed his rule on most of Northern India. The Empire he founded was of sophisticated civilization which was based on religious toleration. It was an amalgamation of Persian, Mongol and

Indian cultures. During this time, trade with the rest of the Islamic world, including Persia and through Persia to Europe, was encouraged. Babur had great thoughts regarding civilization, architecture and administration and he was the person who brought a broad-minded and confident Islam from central Asia to India. He also wrote an autobiography, *The Babur Namah*, a candid, honest and at times even poetic. By the time of his death in 1530, he had conquered all of Hindustan and established an empire that extended from the Deccan to Turkestan.

As Babur was aggressive and keener about expanding his territory, he did not concentrate on constructing buildings and monuments of architectural value but it is true that he paved the way for an empire that became famous for its architecture.

2.2 Humayun, the second Mughal Emperor (Humayun's Tomb, Delhi):

After Babur had died in 1530, his son Humayun at the age of 23 took the throne. He soon found himself busy in fighting his enemies on two widely separated fronts. In the west, Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, which had gained independence from Delhi, provided shelter for his enemies and in the east, his authority had to face challenges from the Afghan chieftains, under Sher Khan Sur (known as Sher Shah).

In 1539 Humayun, after occupying Gaur, was caught in an unknown territory and when he tried to withdraw his forces towards Agra, Sher Khan blocked his communications and defeated him at Chausa on the Ganges. In 1540, the two armies met once again at Kanauj, but this time the Mughal army was so demoralized that with the approach of Sher Khan, they fled in panic. Humayun exiled in Persia. The death of Sher Khan in 1554 became an opportunity for Humayun to regain his empire from the clutches of Afghans. He finally got succeeded in achieving the lost empire by 1555. Thus, Humayun's tenure is marked by aggressive fighting throughout his life.

A heterogeneous picture of Mughal architecture prevailed during the reign of Humayun which lasted upto the middle of sixteenth century. The Timurid style can be seen in almost pure imports such as the mosque at Kachpura, Agra.

2.3 Akbar, The Great

After the death of his father, Humayun, Akbar acquired the throne in 1556 when he was at the age of 13. During his reign, Akbar managed to restrain almost all parts of India, with some areas becoming tributary states. In the mean time, Bengal became an integral and core part of the empire in 1576. Besides his military conquests, he introduced a series of reforms to accumulate his power. Akbar practiced tolerance and he aimed at the unification of Hindu-Muslim through the introduction of a new religion called *Din-i-Ilahi*. Akbar became ill and died of slow poisoning on October 27, 1605.

Mughal architecture started gaining importance during the rule of Akbar. He built extremely and the style was exceptional. Most of Akbar's buildings are built with red sandstone, spared at times through marble inlay. Fatehpur Sikri located 26 miles west of Agra, was constructed in the late 1500s and becomes evidence to the era of his royal heritage. In Gujarat and many other places the presence of a style, which is a mixture of Muslim and Hindu characteristic features of architecture can be found. The great mosque is one such embodiment of architectural brilliance which can be unmatched in elegance and grandeur. The Tomb of Akbar's father Humayun, Akbar's tomb at Sikandra are some other examples of such finest works of architectural magnificence which highlights the Mughal architecture. The tomb placed in a garden at Delhi has a complex ground plan with octagonal chambers at center, which is joined by an elegantly facade archway, surmounted by cupolas, kiosks.

2.4 Nur-ud-din Jahangir:

Prince Salim, who was the only surviving son of Akbar, succeeded to the throne on November 3, 1605, under the title of Jahangir and he ruled India till his death on Oct 28, 1627. The extension of the Mughal territory came practically to a pause in his reign, and the empire suffered a severe blow with the loss of Qandahar. In spite of having vast imperial resources, no serious attempt was made to bring some of the great and unconquered areas of the Deccan under the empire.

Jahangir inherited the attitude of Akbar as he abundantly patronized the arts, painting, architecture, philosophy and literature, and ignored the military conquest. The period of Jahangir as Emperor is considered to be the richest period of Mughal culture. Scholars of India and West have praised this period as the age of Mughal splendor. Jahangir encouraged paintings of events and incidents which occurred in his own life rather than illustrated fiction.

He also encouraged portraiture and scientific studies of birds, flowers and animals, which were made into albums. Mansur and Manohar include his famous painters. Jahangir, who resided at Lahore, built less compared to his predecessors but brought the significant change from sandstone to marble in his monuments of architecture.

It is during the reign of Jahangir from 1605- 1627, that there was a decline in the Hindu influence on Mughal architecture. Jahangir's style was more Persian, like his great mosque at Lahore. Akbar's mausoleum was built during his rule. Jahangir played an exceptional role in the development of the Mughal garden. "Verinag" and "Chashma-Shahi" are beautiful gardens built by Jahangir. The Gardens of Shalimar and other pavilions on the shore of Kashmir's Dal lake were also built by him. The extreme use of white marble as a material was one of the striking features of Jahangir's time.

2.5 Shah Jahan, the Architect King:

The reign of Shah Jahan, which lasted from his accession of the throne on Feb 6, 1628 to 1658 is considered as the period of the greatest splendor of the Greatest Mughals. The empire witnessed a great measure of internal peace and the emperor found ample time to satisfy his taste for cultural pursuits and the Mughal armies were able to attend the expansion of the empire. It was Shah Jahan who gave perfection to the Mughal architecture. Shah Jahan began a series of unbelievable, splendid, and monumental architectural projects in Dehli. The city itself was surrounded by a wall of sixty feet. In the middle of the city he built for himself a magnificent palace along with the buildings that were associated with imperial administration within the Red Fort. Besides the buildings, he built for himself an extraordinary throne, the Peacock Throne, made of gold and covered in rare jewels which would cost over five million dollars.

Mughal architecture acquired perfection in the construction of Jama Masjid of Delhi during the rule of Shah Jahan. The Moti Masjid, which was built during his rule, is another beautiful creation and reminiscent of the style that was eminent in Mughal era. Shah Jahan's most famous building project was the Taj Mahal in Agra. When his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, died at the age of 39 while giving birth to her seventh child in 1631, the grief-stricken emperor wanted to build for her the most lavish and splendid tomb he could manage. With the amalgamation of both Persian and Indian architectural styles, the tomb and the grounds brought the Muslim idea of Paradise into reality. The Taj Mahal is a magnificent monument which took over twenty years of time to build and demanded the hard work of over twenty thousand men.

2.6 Aurangazib Alamgir:

When Emperor Shah Jahan fell severely ill at the end of September 1657, it became a signal for a struggle of succession to break out among his four sons—Dara Shiko, Suja, Aurangazib and Murad. Aurangazib was the third son of Shah Jahan and he was born on Oct 24, 1618. He ascended the throne on 21st July, 1658. Aurangazib ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent. His reign lasted for 49 years from 1658 until his death in 1707. Aurangazib was a notable expansionist like his forefathers and during his reign, the Mughal Empire, though temporarily, reached its greatest extent. During the reign of the orthodox Aurangazib, there was a decline of the arts. In this period the Mughal academy was dispersed. Many artists then started joining Rajput courts, where their influence on Hindu painting is clearly evident. Famous Badshahi Mosque was built by Aurangazib which had the huge praying area in the world till the construction of Faisal Mosque in Islamabad in late twentieth century. After the death of Aurangazib, a war of succession broke out among his four sons that had ultimately resulted the decline of the empire.

2.7 Treatment of flowers and nature in Mughal architecture:

By the seventeenth century, a predominantly floral decorative vocabulary had established itself as a mainstream ornament in the arts of the great empire of the Mughals. Flower and plant decoration occupied the place of the previously favored "typical Islamic" geometrical patterns. In the court arts of Shah Jahan, the new floral aesthetic showed its impact on all art forms and objects of court life, but it was in the buildings of the emperor where they were expressed in a noticeable way that everyone can see. The naturalistic flower representations of the Taj Mahal bring the involvement of the Mughals with plants and botanical studies to its monumental pinnacle. The close observation of the visual world had created an interest to the Mughals from the beginning. The founder of the dynasty, Babur expressed his interest in nature in detailed descriptions of plants, trees and animals which he saw on his peregrinations in his native Central Asia and during his conquest of India. He included these in his autobiography, an outstanding text both for its time and to have been written by a young Timurid prince of 16th-

century Central Asia. His great grandson Jahangir, the fourth Mughal emperor, also showed himself as a first-rank naturalist.

3. Conclusion

Indian heritage has a special place for Mughal architecture in India. Most of the Mughals were great builders who appreciated art and creativity and Indian architecture flourished under the Mughal empire. They had built monuments of ostentatious designs, elaborate splendor and impressive stature. The most beautiful example of Mughal architecture is Taj Mahal, and the white-marbled mausoleum and the Humayun's tomb are examples of the combination of Mughal architecture and Persian architecture enriched to the beauty in the field of architecture in India

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