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Development of Art and Architecture in Sultanate Period with Special Reference to Slave and Khali Dynasty

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Abstract

According to the existing research and discourses, Art and Architecture have been considered two most crucial things that reflect upon a country and its people. In Indian context, understanding them holds special significance. The word "Indian" comes with a heavy baggage of traditions, culture and ethos, which is unique and adds divinity to almost every act of life. Both art and architecture are narratives of this unique Indian baggage. There are significant examples of art works in the history of architecture. India is the only country with the largest and most diverse mixture of tradition and culture. The fascinating nation is so enticing where the exotic monuments and enchanting destinations speak volumes about the tradition and culture of Indian people. India is home to many of the finest cultural symbols of the world which includes, mosques, mausoleum, forts, sculptures, architecture, etc.. In this regard some of the prestigious and spectacular World Heritage Sites in India during Sultanate period can be discussed. They are the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, the Qutb Minar, Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra, Sultan Ghari mosque, Alai Darwaza, Jama 'at Khana mosque, Ukha masjid at Bayana etc.

Key words: Art, architecture, mosque, minar, squinch

With the establishment of Islam as the dominant political power in India, the country was confronted with a new religion and a new culture, alien in temperament as well as in spirit. Islam entered India through Western Asia, and the two countries that played significant roles in the Islamic phase of Indian history were Persia and Afghanistan. From millenniums before Christ, India and these regions are known to have fruitful cultural contacts in which each made significant contributions to the development of the other. Arthur Upham Pope has ably demonstrated how Indian ideas in art and architecture migrated to Western Asia and reached concrete forms under the technical ingenuities of the Persian builders. Indeed, many of the fundamental forms in Persian architecture, such as the pointed and trefoil arches, the transverse vault, the octagonal form of the building, the dome, etc., originated in India, but mainly as ideas and suggestions which reached practical realizations through the technique of Persia. "In short", Pope observes, "India has proposed and Persia disposed, but what India gave, she received back in a new form that enabled her to pass to fresh architectural triumphs."

The early Muslim rulers, were carried by their iconoclastic zeal to 'demolish the Indian temples in a ruthless manner. When, therefore, they proceeded to build mosques for their worship, they found in these broken Indian temples cheap materials for their new constructions. Of the principal fine arts, they patronized architecture alone, and it too bore rigid puritan character and was mostly devoid ornamentation.[1] Further, as artists, builders or craftsmen, naturally enough, did not accompany the victorious Muslim armies

to India, the early Muslim rulers had perforce to employ the builders and craftsmen, who or whose forefathers had built the old temples, for dismantling them and erecting with their materials the buildings of the new faith. The famous Quwwat- ul-Islam mosque, near Qutb Minar, for example, as an inscription at its entrance testifies, was built out of the materials of twenty seven demolished Hindu or Jain temples.[2] The task was facilitated by the fact that certain features were common to both forms of architecture, whether Hindu or Muslim, in spite of the fundamental differences between the two. We may cite, for instance, the plan of the open court encompassed by colonnades, characteristic of many Hindu and Jain temples as well as of every Muslim mosque. Hindu and Jain temples, built on this plan, could thus be easily transformed into mosques for the faithful, with only slight and minor alterations.

When the Muslim Power was firmly established in the country, the rulers imported experienced builders and craftsmen from the West, mainly Persia. The tradition that they brought was based on the accumulated experience of centuries in which, as already observed, India had also played not an insignificant part. The two traditions were thus again brought together and were destined to build up a new and individual style of Islamic architecture which was Islamic and at the same time Indian. Indo-Islamic (Indo-Muslim), or Indian in its Islamic manifestation, would be the correct description of this new architecture.

Yet, the broad features of such contributions may be briefly set forth, for a correct appraisal of the new style, on the basis of the work already done by Marshall [3] and Percy Brown [4] who have studied this problem with great interest and keen insight. The new architecture absorbed, or inherited, manifold ideas and concepts from the ancient Indian, so many indeed, that there was hardly a form or motif which, in some guise or other, did not find its way into it. But more important than these visible borrowings of out ward and concrete features is the debt which Indo-Islamic architecture owed to the Indian for two of its most vital qualities-the qualities of strength and grace.

Under the impact of Islam new forms, features, and decorative ideals were also introduced, thus enriching Indian architecture as a whole. Among the characteristic features which Islam was responsible for introducing, mention should be made of the minar and the minaret, the pendentive and the squinch arches, stalactite and honey-combing, and the impressive half-domed portal.

The fusion of the Indian and the Islamic architectural traditions has justly been described as a kind of biological fertilisation leading to the birth of a new school of Indian architecture, rightly called Indo-Islamic or Indo-Muslim, This architecture may be divided broadly into two distinct phases, the first covering the period of the Delhi Sultanate, and the second that of the Mughuls, The monuments of the first phase admit of a subdivision into two principal groups,-those erected under the aegis of the Delhi Sultans themselves, and those under the patronage of the ruling dynasties of the succession States of the Delhi Sultanate. Fergusson[5] described the first as representing the 'Pathan' style. But, as noted above, of the five dynasties of the Delhi Sultans only the last one was of Pathan extraction, Ferguss0n's nomenclature is thus historically inaccurate, and has to be discarded. "The architecture evolved under these dynasties", observes,Percy Brown,[6] "was that associated with their rule at Delhi, the capital city and the centre of the imperial power." His designation of the monuments of the first group as forming the 'Delhi' or 'Imperial' style and second groups as 'provincial style' seems to be more appropriate.

DELHI OR IMPERIAL STYLE

After the second battle of Tarain, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, a general of Muhammad Ghuri, occupied Delhi and established his government at the citadel known as Qil'a-i-Rai Pithaura.[6] This was the first of the 'Seven cities' of Delhi. Delhi,

which continued to be the seat and symbol of imperial power till the last days of the Mughuls, contains'a series of noble monuments, of which the earliest and one of the most remarkable is the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque [8] erected by Qutb-ud-din at Qil'a-i-Rai Pithaura to commemorate the capture of Delhi and dedicated to the might of Islam. It consisted of an open quadrangular court encompassed by colonnades of which the western formed the prayer chamber, i.e. the sanctuary proper. It had gateways set on the other three sides, the main entrance on the east being domed. The northern and the southern colonnades had each three rows of columns, the eastern, four, and the western, five. The colonnades were correspondingly divided into two, three, and four aisles. At each extremity of the colonnades, at their junction with one another, there was a storeyed pavilion. The columns, the architraves, the ceilings, etc., are all richly carved, and, when entire, the design was not an unimpressive one.

The mode of erection of this mosque may be said to have been characteristic of the beginnings of Islamic architecture in India. There is an inscription which states this fact plainly and blandly, and every part of the building, such as the walls, columns, capitals, architraves, ceilings, etc., fully bears this out. "It is no wonder", says Percy Brown,[9] "that the interior structure of- the Qutb mosque, though an assemblage of elegantly carved stonework, had more the character of an archaeological miscellany than a considered work of architecture." He calls it "mainly a patchwork of older materials, beautiful in detail, ...but as a whole a confused and somewhat incongruous improvisation."

As an individual work this expansive facade is itself an impressive production. The bold lineaments of this huge mass have been emphasized by exquisitely chiselled decorative bands framing the arches. The ogee points of the arches impart to the facade a certain appearance of lightness, "necessary in such a massive volume." In the decorative patterns one may recognize an inter-mixture of Hindu as well as Islamic ideals. The rich floral devices with their curly and sinuous tendrils are definitely reproductions of Hindu motifs, while the Tughra inscriptions with their straight lines are emphatically Islamic in conception (Fig. 3). The execution, too, is superb and flawless. According to Marshalls [10] "No doubt it was a Muslim calligraphist who set out the scheme and penned in the texts, but it was only an Indian brain that could have devised such a wealth of ornament, and only Indian hands that could have carved it to such perfection."

The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque grew in size and dimensions with the gradual increase of the congregation of the faithful at Delhi. Subsequent monarchs enlarged it from time to time. The original mosque remained, however, the nucleus, and later enlargements and additions were made with the original mosque as the focal point. In such additions and enlargements one may closely follow the course of the early phase of Indo-Islamic architecture and its development. In A.D. 1230, Sultan Iltutmish enlarged the mosque quadrangle to more than double its size. His project involved addition to the mosque enclosure on the north, south and east, together with the extension of the prayer chamber and the huge arched screen in front by throwing out Wings on the north and south. Marshall [11] recognizes in this a greater assertion of Muslim ideas in the building tradition at Delhi, and observes "that the new work was fundamentally Islamic in character and manifestly designed, if not executed, by Muslim craftsmen." "In Qutb-ud-din's screen", he continues, "the inscriptions were the only part of the surface ornament which were Muhammadan; all the rest was Indian and modelled with true Indian feeling for plastic form. In Iltutmish's work, on the other hand, the reliefs are Hat and lifeless, stencilled as it were on the surface of the stone, and their formal patterns are identical with those found on contemporary Muslim monuments in other countries."

Just outside the enclosure of the original Quwwat-ul-Isl-am mosque on the south, and within the enlarged court of Iltutmish's mosque, stands the Qutb Minar, which appears to have been intended as a ma'zina or tower from which the Mu'azzin could summon the faithful to prayer. From the various inscriptions in situ it appears that Qutb-ud-din began the construction of the minar when he was the Viceroy at Delhi. He could finish only up to the first storey, and it was Iltutmish who finally completed it.[12] As originally designed, it rose up to a height of 225 feet, tapering as it went up, and consisted of four storeys.

As it now stands, the minar consists of five storeys, separated from one another by richly decorated balconies supported on highly ornate stalactite alcoves. The surface is further embellished by vertical ilutings and horizontal bands of inscriptions richly interwoven with intricate foliated designs. The vertical Hutings in the ground storey are alternately round and angular, those of the second only round, and those of the third angular only. The two uppermost storeys are plainly circular in design. The stalactite alcoves, apart from their utilitarian purpose, furnish also a rich decorative scheme. Up to the third storey the tower was built of grey quartzite faced with rich red sandstone, the two upper storeys being of red sandstone faced with marble.

Because of the appearance in the minar of certain short Nigari inscriptions, it is sometimes believed that the tower was essentially of Hindu origin. The Muslims, according to this view, were merely responsible for recarving the outer surfaces. "As a fact", observes Marshall, "the whole conception of the minar and almost every detail of its construction and ornamentation is essentially Islamic. Towers of this kind were unknown .to the Indians, but to the Muhammadans they had long been familiar, whether as ma'zinas attached to mosque or as free-standing towers like those at Ghazni. Equally distinctive also of Muslim art are the calligraphic inscriptions and the elaborate stalactite corbelling beneath the balconies, both of which can be traced back to kindred features in the antecedent architecture of Western Asia and Egypt."[13] It should be noted in this connection that the stellar shape of the Ghazni tower closely resembles that of the third storey of the Qutb Minar, of which the bottom storey is slightly elaborated-stellar flutings alternating with rounded ones. Fergusson regarded the Qutb Minar as the most perfect example of a tower known to exist anywhere in the world.[14] Marshall's concluding observations are also worth quoting in this connection: "Nothing, certainly, could be more imposing or more fittingly symbolic of Muslim power than this stern and stupendous fabric; nor could anything be more exquisite than its rich but restrained carvings.'' [15]

The celebrated mosque at Ajmer known as Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra,[16] erected a little later than Qutb-ud-din's mosque at Delhi, resembles the Delhi prototype in style as well as in construction. Being more than double in size, the several constituent parts of the Ajmer mosque are correspondingly more spacious and dignified. The Ajmer mosque was a more organized composition, apparently the experiences gained in the construction of the earlier building had been put to use. Instead of a number of narrow aisles as at Delhi, a single broad aisle surrounds the Ajmer quadrangle, and the domes and pillars in the prayer chamber, as well as in the other three colonnades, are strictly uniform and symmetrical in arrangement. Each of the mosques represents, more or less, a re-assemblage of the spoils of the earlier buildings. At Ajmer, however, the architect evinced a better sense of composition, no doubt as the result of previous experience, and created, out of materials of strange and apparently unfamiliar forms, a prayer hall of solemn and impressive beauty. The exquisite *mihrab* in white marble, set in the back wall of the sanctuary, is a notable feature of this mosque, while the circular bastions, iluted and banded as in the Qutb Minar, at the two corners of the eastern facade, add to the beauty of the entire design. Qutb-ud-din had built this mosque about

A.D. 1200. Iltutmish subsequently beautified it with an arched façade in front of the prayer chamber. It is essentially a copy of the earlier screen at Delhi, with, however, two minarets over the parapet of the central archway, one on each side. The proportions between this facade and the prayer chamber behind are more pleasing; the engrailed arches flanking the central one represent a refreshing novelty; the decorative patterns are admirable of their kind, and their workmanship is faultless.

At Malkapur, at a distance of about three miles from the Qutb, stands the Sultan Ghari [17] which Iltutmish built in A.D. 1231-32 as the mausoleum of his eldest son, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. Situated at an isolated position, it was built in the manner of a fortified square enclosure, with the cenotaph accommodated within a flat-roofed underground chamber in the centre of the walled court. The central chamber is octagonal in shape and its top rises above the level of the court.

The interior is approached by a narrow stairway communicating with a small door in one of the sides of the octagon. Built of grey granite, the exterior has a stern and solid appearance, in spite of the relief lent by arched openings in the walls and the bastions. The interior, however, has a calm and charming effect, because of its sober design, as well as on account of the use of marble in the exterior facing of the tomb chamber and in the colonnades. The massive portal leads to a pillared portico of pleasing design (Fig. 10), while, along the western cloister is provided a small mosque sanctuary with a domed central nave containing a *mihrab* of an elegantly shaped foliated arch, and with colonnades extending from side to side. The' description in the *Futuhat-i-Firuz Shahi*, that Firuz Shah restored some fallen pillars and four towers in the mausoleum of Iltutmish, seems to apply to this monument, and not to the tomb of Iltutmish which will be discussed presently. Except for the *mihrab* in the mosque sanctuary in the western cloister, every part of the building seems to be of Hindu extraction, and there is a view that the tomb chamber itself represented originally a Hindu edifice. It is clear that the pillars, brackets, architraves, the decorative motifs, the arches, and even the domed ceiling of the mosque are of Hindu design and workmanship.

Behind the northern range of Iltutmish's extension of the Qutb mosque stands a single compact chamber, of less than 30 feet side is the mausoleum of the emperor.[18] It is built of red sandstone within and grey quartzite without, the exterior surface being further relieved by red sandstone. On the north, south, and east, there are arched entrances, while on the west there is a *mihrab*, flanked by two smaller ones. The chamber was covered by a low domical roof (now fallen down), supported on squinch arches thrown across the corners. The arched entrances as well as the squinches were built up in oversailing courses. Though simple and unpretentious, this mausoleum is one of the most ornate monuments of early Indo-Islamic art. The ornamenta- tion on the outside is comparatively sparse and consists of bands of inscriptions flanking the arched passages. The entire surface of the interior walls was elaborately carved with calligraphic inscriptions in Naskh, Tughra and Kufic characters, or with floral arabesques and geometric patterns of a bewildering variety, and further relieved by insertions of white marble.

To the period of Iltutmish may also be assigned certain other structures in the outlying districts, such as the Hauz-i-Shamsi, the Sharnsi-Idgah and the Jami' Masjid at Badaun [19] (U.P.), and the Atarkin-ka-Darwaza at Nagaur[20] (Jodhpur). In subsequent periods they have undergone successive restorations which have obliterated, to a very large extent, the nature and character of the original monuments.

During the period of Balban a monument which provides a notable landmark in the development of Indo-Islamic architectural style is the tomb of Balban.[21] It stands in a ruined and dilapidated

condition in the south-east quarter of the Qil'a-i-Rai Pithaura. It consists of a square chamber of 38 feet side, covered by a dome, with an arched doorway on each of its four sides, and a smaller chamber on the east and west. Composed of coarse masonry, whatever decoration there was has now vanished. But the importance of the building, as Percy Brown recognizes, is not in what it is, but in what it signifies. Every arch in this building is put together, not by horizontal oversailing courses in keeping with the indigenous mode, as has been done in the previous buildings, but by means of radiating voussoirs, a fact which is of more than ordinary significance**.**

With the accession of 'Ala-ud-din Khalji to the throne of Delhi (A.D. 1296), the torpor into which the art of building had fallen seems to be broken. With his reign we reach a decisive phase in the history of Indo-Islamic architectural style. This forceful and relentless monarch had vast and ambitious architectural schemes. One of these, as noted above, was his scheme of erecting an immense congregational mosque at the Qutb, including within its perimeter the two mosques previously built.[22] The death of the monarch in A.D. 1316 put an end to his ambitious scheme at a relatively early stage of construction. The foundations and the main walls of this vast extension may still be seen, mostly up to the height of the plinth; while the huge inner core of the projected minar, carried up to a height of about 75 feet, gives some idea of the architectural aspi- rations of this despotic ruler.

One relatively small component had, however, been completed by Alla-ud-din Khalji. This is known as the 'Alai Darwaza [23] after the name of its royal builder, and represents the southern entrance hall to his enlarged court in the east. As Marshall [24] says, the 'Alai Darwaza "is one of the most treasured gems of Islamic architecture". According to an inscription on the building, it was built in A.D. 1310-11 and consists of a square hall covered by a dome. It has arched doorways, one on each of its four sides. It stands on a high plinth the sides of which are elegantly decorated by bands of ornament. It is built of red sandstone, but the surface is picked out by white marble defining the architectural lineaments, and further adorned by bands of calligraphic inscriptions and decorative patterns. On either side of the central arched passage the surface of each wall is divided into two stages, each stage being further sub-divided into vertical rectangular panels. Such panels in the lower stage are designed in the shape of arched openings with stone grilles. All ornamentations, including arabesques and decorative inscriptions, have been executed in a harmonious combination of red sandstone and marble, and they lend to the facades a polychrome effect of rich and superb design. Much of the beauty of the facades is, again, due to the central arched entrances, as much for their refined curves as for their symmetrical proportions and manner and mode of decoration. The arches on the south, east and west are each of the pointed variety, of the shape technically known as the 'horse-shoe' or the 'keel'. They are built of radiating voussoirs of dressed stone and signify a definite advance on the previous practices. The decorative scheme of each arch enhances further the beauty of the facade. The bands of inscriptions in white marble around the outlines, the fringe of spear-heads on the intrados, and the rectangular framework, with ornamental patterns and inscriptions in white marble, skilfully balance the structural as well as the plastic scheme of the whole.

In the composition of the 'Alai Darwaza it is easy to discern the marks of mature architectural style with distinct evidence of an expert direction and intelligent supervision. It is not unlikely that some extraneous influence, connected with a developed architectural style in Western Asia (Percy Brown [25] would ascribe it to that of the Seljuk Turks), has something to do with this marked progress in Indo-Muslim building art. According to Marshall, "The key notes of this building are its perfect symmetry and the structural propriety of all its parts" [26] There is no doubt that the Alai Darwaza represents the flowering of the style in

unprecedented splendour and magnificence It is only a part of Ala-ud-din's grand architectural project at the Qutb which' if completed would surely have been one of the greatest artistic achievements produced under Islamic rule in India.

Ala-ud-din's architectural projects included also the foundation of the new city of Siri [27] the second of the seven Cities of Delhi. It was began about 1303 A.D . Within the new city he also erected a palace of thousand pillars but this has completely fallen into ruins. The only vestiges of the new city that now remain are some fragments of the encircling walls. "But even these few remnants with their round and tapering bastions their lines of loopholes their flame shaped battlements inscribed wlth the *Kalima* and their inner beam supported on an arched gallery" supply interesting information regarding the military architecture of the period. At the western extremity of the new city Ala-ud-din built also a magnificent tank covering an area of nearly 70 acres It was known as *Hauz*-i-*Alai* or *Hauz*-i-*Khas* tank.[28]

The fine Jama 'at Khana mosque [29] in the squalid environment of the Dargah of Nizam-ud-din Auliya betrays obvious affinities with the Khalji tradition and was very probably built towards the close of Ala-ud-din's reign. Marshall [30] descrlbed it as the earliest example of a mosque in India built wholly in conformity with Islamic ldeas and with materials specially quarried for the purpose Bullt of red sandstone It has three compartments adjoining on another the middle one being square and the side ones oblong in shape each approached through a broad arched entrance in the facade. The arches are of the pointed variety and fundamentally resemble those of the 'Alai Darwaza. All the arches are framed by wide bands of inscriptions above, and embellished by fringes of spear-heads on the intrados, again, generally in the manner that we find in the 'Alai Darwaza. The central compartment, approximately of the same dimensions as those of the gateway hall, is roofed by a single dome. The manner of transition from the square to the octagon is also the same, but a certain advance may be recognized in the provision of an intervening triforium between the octagon and the circle of the dome. Around the base the dome has eight arched recesses, alternately closed and pierced through the thickness of the Wall. The adjoining compartments are each divided in their middle by a double-arched screen. Each of these compartments is covered by two small domes, the transition from the square to the octagon being made, not by quenches, but by triangular pendentives at the corners. The walls of these compartments are made of plastered rubble, and on this account it has been suggested that they were built later than the central component. But the homogeneous treatment of the entire facade renders such a View rather improbable. The 'Alai Darwaza and the Jamat Khana mosque are fundamentally of an identical style. Percy Brown,[31] however, recognizes a different note in the latter which he explains by stating that, due to the disorders that clouded the closing years of 'Ala-ud-din Khalji, the style, as expressed in the 'Alai Darwaza was losing its forcefulness. The Ukha masjid at Bayana [32] (Bharatpur), built by Qutb-ud-din Mubarak, the last of the Khalji rulers, represents a provincial version of the imperial style. Situated at a distance from the capital, it betrays obvious signs of weakness, and illustrates in a striking manner the rapid disintegration of the high-water mark of the style attained during the time of 'Ala-ud-din Khalji.

Conclusion

We know that art and architecture play an important role in promoting social and economic goals through local regeneration, attracting tourists, the development of talent and innovation, improving health and wellbeing, and delivering essential services. These benefits are 'instrumental' because art and architecture can be a means to achieve ends beyond the immediate intrinsic experience and value of the art itself. This review concentrates on identifying robust

research that explores to what extent arts and culture bring these benefits to individuals, communities and society. Art can describe a building's function; it can imbue a space with a spiritual quality; it can visually enlarge a space by creating an illusion; it can confer status; it can demonstrate wealth; it can convert a neutral space into one suited for a particular ritual; it can ascertain claims about a building's owner or users; it can establish links between cultures or attempt to recover values of the past; in short: art plays a vital role in shaping a building's identity. Architecture is not the making of an exquisite object for the select few, but has a much broader function in society.

Throughout the ages art has played a crucial role in life. Art is universal and because art is everywhere, we experience it on a daily basis. From the houses we live in (architecture) to the movies we see (theatre) to the books that we read (literature). Even in ancient culture art has played a crucial role. In prehistoric times cave dwellers drew on the wall of caves to record history. In biblical times paintings recorded the life and death of Christ. Throughout time art has recorded history. Most art is created for a specific reason or purpose, it has a way of expressing ideas and beliefs, and it can record the experiences of all people. Most art has some sort of reason or purpose behind it. It might be religious, symbolic, literal, traditional, customary, or just a preference by the artist.

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