

Mughal Era in India: Rich in Art and Architecture

Dr. Basayya Irayya Mathapati

Associate Professor of History, SMYK Government First Grade College, Telsang-591265,
Tq: Athani, Dist: Belagavi, Karnataka

ABSTRACT

The Mughal Empire ruled most of northern India between the 16th and 18th centuries. The Persian-inspired miniature painting techniques of India became very famous during this period. This paper highlights the Mughal painting style later spread to other Indian courts, both Muslim and Hindu, and later Sikh, and was often used to depict Hindu subjects. The Mughal art which was developed during Akbar, one of the prominent ruler of the empire. Shah Jahan's vision brought a delicate beauty and detail to Mughal architecture. The era of the Delhi Sultanate to Mughal rule witnessed a rich interplay between Islamic and Indian cultures, shaping the society, art, and literature of India.

Keywords: Islamic, Mughal, cultures, architecture, tradition, Hindu, art, and literature.

INTRODUCTION

The Mughal rulers were great patrons of art and architecture. Under their rule, architecture, painting, literature and music flourished and reached a high level of excellence. Mughal art and architecture represent a unique blend of Persian, Central Asian and Indian traditions, giving rise to a distinct Indo-Islamic style. India has seen many eras blooming on her soil. Each era has left its indelible lifestyle, thinking, languages, tastes and the whole culture was different. From Harappas to Mauryas, Guptas to Sultans, and Mughals to the English, India saw a metamorphosis in each era. People mixed, cultures inter-mingled, each century brought a new India, influenced by all, yet retaining its old identity. So, the whole of India was dotted with temples, mosques and churches, palaces, havelis and forts.

The biggest asset of India as a desirable tourist destination is its 5,000-year old historical and cultural heritage. Every region in India developed a culture of its own. The culture is a wide term, which includes the languages, rituals, beliefs, festivals and tradition, given by a father to his son and carried on with generations. Akbar's long reign was a period of expansion and consolidation; He was not only a brave warrior but also a man of exceptionally fine taste in art and architecture. To him also goes the credit of refining Sher Shah's administrative systems and putting in place a regular source of revenue for the empire, which stretched over the North India and was beginning to threaten the Deccan. The Mughal Empire made significant contributions to Indian history in terms of art, culture, and architecture.

Akbar was also a great lover of art and architecture. Some of the famous construction built by him is Humayun Tomb in Delhi, Buland Darwaja in Fatehpur Sikri and Akbar Fort in Allahabad. Humayun Tomb is a huge mausoleum of Humayun; built of red sandstone. It is another important Mughal architecture of Delhi. Buland Darwaja, as its name indicates is a huge door. Akbar also built a fort in Fatehpur Sikri which is said to be the residing place for the hundred queens of Akbar. Akbar Fort in Allahabad is a huge fort. It is in ruins, built on the bank of the Ganga River.

All the Mughal kings from Babur to the last ill-fated Bahadur Shah Zafar were known for their interest in art and architecture. It is other thing that some had deep interest in the art, while the others were simply carrying the tradition. For instance, Jahangir, the son of Akbar, was a gifted individual. His potential, however, was greatly diminished, especially in his later years, by an addiction to drink and drugs, and he gradually came to lose all interest in the intricacies of governance, preferring to leave all in the hands of his queen, Noor Jahan.

Jahangir's sporadic bursts of coherence and creativity-very much like his grandfather, Humayun-were nevertheless enough to hold the empire together and for art and architecture to continue to flourish. His liking for Kashmir led him to construct the Shalimar Gardens by the side of Lake Dal in Srinagar. The exquisite dargah of Sheikh Salim Chisti at Fatehpur Sikri is also attributed to him, as are certain additions and alterations in the royal forts of Lahore, Allahabad and Agra. Akbar, a very distinct style emerged. The initial use of styles of Bengal and Gujarat in monuments at Agra, then a distinctive style at monuments at Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi. Jahangir mention the new features added and changes witnessed with examples. "Under Akbar's successors, there was a shift towards more typically Islamic architectural designs" (Asher, Catherine

Blanshard 1992) Mughal art and architecture, a characteristic Indo-Islamic-Persian style flourished on the Indian subcontinent during the Mughal Empire.

But, the Mughal architecture was at the zenith during the reign of Shah Jahan. Building profusely, Shah Jahan not only changed existing fort and palaces greatly but also built an entire new city and a fort-Shahjahanabad with its great Jama Masjid in Delhi and the Red Fort in Delhi and Agra. But all these were to be overshadowed by the piece de resistance-the Taj Mahal at Agra, arguably the most perfect mortuary building in all Islam. It is a huge marble structure which Emperor Shah Jahan got built in the memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It is located on the bank of Yamuna River; and attracts a large number of tourists. Akbar , A very distinct style emerged. The initial use of styles of Bengal and Gujarat in monuments at Agra. Then a distinctive style at monuments at Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi. Jahangir , mention the new features added and changes witnessed with examples. The Mughal period witnessed a remarkable outburst of cultural activity across the fields of architecture, painting, music, and literature. "Stonework was of high quality and marks one of the most sophisticated aspects of Mughal decoration. Carved stonework included ornately sculpted pillars and corbels, flat panels carved in low relief with depictions of flowers, and pierced marble screens known as jalis. Pietra dura, known as parchin kari in the Indian subcontinent" (Dadlani, Chanchal; Sharma, Yuthika (2017:57). Mughal architecture reached its zenith during the reign of Shah Jahan, who constructed Taj Mahal, the Jama Masjid, the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore.

The Red Fort consists of outer walls in a near-perfect rectangle except where they border the course of the Yamuna to the north. The Red Fort was a defensive structure, a last resort for an attack that seemed impregnable and even impossible during the heydays of the Mughal Empire. The walls themselves are clad with finely-dressed red and pink sandstone, the joints of which are surprisingly fine. The massive round bastions set off the main Delhi and Lahore gates, massive defensive entry portals which tower over the walls. The entries from these gates meet in a square public place which finally leads off to the hall of public audience, or the Diwan-i-am. "During the reign of Shah Jahan (1628–1658), a classical Mughal style was consolidated and remained essentially in use until the end of the Mughal period"(Asher, Catherine 2020). During the patronage of the Mughals in India from the 16th to the 18th century, Indian architecture was greatly influenced.

The other buildings in the complex are the tiny Moti Masjid-a mosque entirely in marble. This, though started by Shah Jahan, was completed by his son Aurangzeb, and is different in style, with the extra decoration that was the first sign of impending decadence and decay. The Shish Mahal or the Hall of Mirrors, the treasury and magazine or Daulat Khana, the emperor's private chambers and harems for the queens. Most of the Mughal structures are built of red sandstone; and are located on the banks of rivers. Mughals were very fond of mausoleum. The Taj Mahal and Humayun tomb are mausoleums. And the Mughals used to keep the entry door of the building very large. "Mughal architecture was derived from three main architectural traditions: the architecture of Islamic Persia and Central Asia, local Indo-Islamic architecture, and indigenous Hindu architecture" (Petersen, Andrew 1996:199). A new style emerged in the Mughal era as a fusion of the Persian miniature with older Indian traditions, and from the 17th century its style.

Mughals ruled for more than 200 years in India. They exploited our people and resources. But, at the same time, they left huge heritage after them, The Taj Mahal, Humayun Tomb, etc. We owe to them. It is these buildings we feel proud to be associated with. These buildings add glory to our nation; and bring a number of tourists every year. The Mughals constructed magnificent forts, palaces, mosques, tombs and garden complexes, many of which continue to be admired for their beauty, balance and grandeur. "In the Indian subcontinent, more monuments survive from the Mughal period than any other period. Major monuments of this time include mosques, mausoleums, palaces, gardens, and fortresses" Sinopoli, Carla M. 1994:293) Mughal architecture is a reflection of India's rich cultural tapestry, blending Persian, Indian, and Islamic influences.

Take for instance, the desert state of Rajasthan. With the Thar at its background and shifting sand-dunes, mirages and camels, the vast palaces, forts and havelis present a very distinct aura. The Rajput Culture with bright 'Bandhani' colours, intricate designs and the Royal background gives a very different look. Its unique architecture in the series of palaces in Pink City (Jaipur), Lake Palace in Udaipur and sand-coloured forts in sand-dunes in the city of Jaisalmer, coupled with the folk dances and art, gives it a distinction of 'Epitome of Cultural Tourism in India'. "Decorative motifs included geometric and floral designs, as well as elaborate inscriptions in Arabic, Persian, and even in local languages during the late Mughal period" (Burton-Page, John 2008: 36). The Mughal Empire architecture was in full bloom between the 16th and 18th centuries.

But, one jewel which attracts the bulk of tourists is in the once Mughal Capital-Agra. The great Mughals gave India the architectural splendour and influence of Persia. It reached its zenith with the symbol of Mughal romance-the Taj Mahal. Its architectural perfection gave it a place as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Today, Taj Mahal has become

synonymous with 'India', Mughal architecture blended Indian and Turko-Iranian styles. Iconic works like Humayun's tomb, Fatehpur Sikri, and Buland Darwaza marked this golden era. Mughal emperors and elites consciously used architecture as a way to publicly display their presence and power. The extensive architectural patronage of the Mughals was made possible by their considerable wealth, which exceeded that of other contemporary Muslim empires like the Ottomans and Safavids" (Bloom, Jonathan 2009). The reign of Shah Jahan, the fifth emperor, was the golden age of Mughal architecture and the arts.

it the Ancient Indian beauty in the form of caves of Ajanta-Ellora, the Sun Temple at Konark, the Khajuraho Temples or the Dravadian style stone-carved temples of Hoysalewara and Ranganathaswamy or the Medieval glory of Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Fatehpur Sikri and other forts and mausoleums with Islamic influence of Persia, Turkey or Afghanistan; or even the English and the Portuguese influence in Victoria Memorial, the Gateway of India and churches in Goa; each one symbolizes the glory of India in the different eras.

All these eras gave India some spectacular masterpieces which are not found anywhere around the globe. Some masterpieces are objects of awe and mystery, not only because of their unique craftsmanship, challenging the modern technological growth but because of their technological superiority. No one has been able to solve the mystery of the Shaking Minarets in the mosque and tomb of Raj Bibi in Ahmedabad. The Bhool Bhulaiyan in Lucknow and the acoustic wonders of Gol Gumbaj speak for themselves. In fact, you can never have enough of India when it comes to the architectural wonders and excellence.

Another aspect of the Indian Culture is its vibrant and colourful festivals. India is the mother of the oldest religion-The Hinduism and subsequently Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Islam and Christianity also experienced the motherly affection of this great country. The festivals still carry on the gaiety and colours of past. The festive season in India coincides with the Tourist Season and with 33 crore Gods and Goddesses; one surely cannot miss out the colourful extravaganza whenever he visits India. In fact, the real cultural experience of India is unaccomplished without these festivals.

India's Dance and Music festivals also have cultural roots. The Taj Mahotsava in February, Khajuraho Dance Festival at Khajuraho Temples in March and Konark Dance Festival in November, give an opportunity of seeing all internationally acclaimed faces of the Indian Classical dance and music (both vocal and instrumental) on one stage. Around 14 such festivals are arranged all over the country.

CONCLUSION

India has a cultural history with Islam, which was embedded in the culture of the Mughals. The regional diversity is attributed to the fact that the historical roots of development of each region culturally depended much on the dynasties ruling it and also on their proximity to other cultures. This limited regional influence was seen in the languages, cuisines, dressing sense and even in dance and music in each region. The local perceptions and feelings gave way to regional beliefs and traditions. Mughal architecture is an Indo-Islamic architectural style that developed in India under the patronage of the Mughal Empire.

REFERENCES

1. Asher, Catherine B. (2020). "Mughal architecture". In Fleet, Kate; Krämer, Gudrun; Matringe, Denis; Nawas, John; Rowson, Everett (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Three. Brill.
2. Asher, Catherine Blanshard (1992). *Architecture of Mughal India*. The New Cambridge History of India, Part I. Vol. 4.
3. Burton-Page, John (2008). *Indian Islamic Architecture: Forms and Typologies, Sites and Monuments*. Brill.
4. Bloom, Jonathan M.; Blair, Sheila (2009). *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art & Architecture*. Oxford University Press.
5. Dadlani, Chanchal; Sharma, Yuthika (2017). "Beyond the Taj Mahal: Late Mughal Visual Culture". In Flood, Finbarr Barry; Necipoğlu, Gülru (eds.). *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*. Wiley Blackwell.
6. Petersen, Andrew (1996). "Mughals". *Dictionary of Islamic architecture*. Routledge.
7. Sinopoli, Carla M. (1994). "Monumentality and Mobility in Mughal Capitals". *Asian Perspectives*. 33 (2):