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Though the Muslims had evolved a distinct style of architecture, they could not ignore the influence of Hindu architectural ideals, this resulted in the development of Indo-Islamic style of architecture. While retaining the Hindu characteristics of solidity, balance and grace, the craftsmen developed Islamic features like the use of brick and mortar, arches, domes, minarets and geometric designs.

Art and Architecture During the Delhi Sultanate Period

Of the many buildings belonging to the Sultanate Period architectural style developed at Delhi during this period, the earliest ones were the Quila Rai Pithora with the Ghazni Darwaza on the western side of the fort. The construction of the Quwwat-ul Islam Masjid began in 1193, this happens to be the first mosque to be built in Delhi after the Muslim conquest in India. The 12th C Hindu motifs, like tasseled ropes, bells, cows and leaves are seen decorating the mosque.

Among the many historical remains at Delhi, the most notable is the Qutb- a name given to the group of monuments embracing the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and its grand Minars that were built by Qutubuddin Aibak to commemorate the fall of Delhi. Another important monument begun by Qutubuddin Aibak, and later finished by Iltutmish, was the Qutb Minar.

Balban constructed a palace in Delhi called the Kushk-i-Lal before he became king. He made the Qila-i-Mazghan near this palace after he became king.

The next landmark in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture was seen in the regime of Alauddin Khilji. By this time, Indian workmen had mastered the art of fitting their beautiful style of embellishments to Islamic architectural forms. The fusion of the best features of these two styles is found in the Alai Darwaza.

During the Tughlaq period, the spirit and tone of Indo-Islamic architecture underwent a distinct change. Monuments were now characterized by rigid simplicity and puritanical austerity in striking contrast to the lavish and elaborate ornamentation of the earlier period.

The monuments of the Sayyids and the Lodis were mostly funerary. The domes were bigger in size and elevation. An important feature was the introduction of what was known as the double dome which greatly influenced later buildings.

Art and Architecture During the Mughal Period

Some features of Mughal architecture are:-

- The Mughals were known for the construction of mausoleums, mosques, forts, gardens and cities.
- Most of the Mughal buildings show a uniform pattern in both structure and character.
- The Mughal buildings were known for their geometry and symmetry.
- They were known for their grandeur and richness.
- The materials used for the construction of the Indo Islamic buildings include Red Sandstone, White Marble, and semi-precious and precious stones
- These buildings are marked by unique minarets, arches, domes, inlay works and decorative panels
- They also include geometrical landscaping with waterways and plant beds.
- The Pietra Dura style of inlay work became a feature of this period.
- Massive vaulted gateways.
- Delicate ornamentation.
- Provision of large courtyard and halls.
- Use of Kiosks with cupolas at the four corners.

Babur built two mosques at Sambhal and Panipat in 1526. He is also credited for the laying of gardens at Dholpur and at Ram Bagh and Zahra Bagh at Agra. Humayun didn't contribute much, only initiated Dinpana. He built two mosques one at Agra and the other at Hissar.

Akbar built many buildings such as forts, gardens, mosques, etc. He initiated Akbar's Tomb. He even established the city of Fatehpur Sikri. Jahangir completed Akbar's Tomb. He along with his wife Nur Jahan built the tomb of Itimad-ud-daulah at Agra.

Shah Jahan built great architectural wonders including the Taj Mahal, Red Fort in Delhi, Moti Masjid, Diwan-i-Khas, Jama Masjid Delhi. He also added palaces and new structures to Agra Fort. Aurangzeb, Did not promote art and architecture. He added mosques within Red Fort. He built Bibi ka Maqbara in Aurangabad.

Mughal Gardens

The Mughal's complex palatial buildings, splendid tombs and the beautiful mosques may have impacted the visual character of their domain, but it was the gardens they constructed which truly transformed the face of the Mughal empire. From Delhi to Agra to Kashmir and Lahore, the Mughal gardens have significantly contributed to the landscape of the city.

On the basis of shape Mughal gardens can be classified into rectangular garden, long butterfly garden, circular garden and terraced garden. Salient features of Mughal gardens were as follows: -

- Pools
- Canals
- Fountains
- Charbagh style
- Variety of plants

It was Babur who first introduced, the concept of the planned Charbagh, which was pervasive throughout his ancestral homeland of Ferghana and his kingdom of Kabul where he built the first Mughal Garden of South Asia in Punjab. The Mughal gardens were huge walled enclosures with corner towers or bastions, a central place for resting surrounded by water. Flowers were lavishly used and midget plants were grown for fruit trees.

Famous Mughal gardens include Bagh-e-Babur, Humayun's Tomb Garden, Shalimar Garden, Taj Mahal Garden, Yadvindra garden etc.

Indo- Islamic Art

The art of painting in India became known through two principal developments- Buddhist Frescos and the paintings of Mughal and Rajput schools. Painting was not encouraged by the Delhi Sultans as the Quran prohibits the representation of living beings. The Mughals, however encouraged this art and Humayun was the first Mughal emperor to show an interest in painting.

The paintings of Akbar's time were mostly confined to book illustrations and portraits. Mughal Paintings reached a high degree of perfection under Jahangir and Shah Jahan, with Jahangir taking more interest in this form of art than his father. The two most eminent painters of his reign were Abul Hasan and Ustad Mansur. Most of the subjects including natural themes and objects like flowers, trees, hills, birds, beasts and clouds were drawn from real life.

The excellence of Mughal paintings depended not only on the taste of the emperors, but also on their prosperity and with the disintegration of Mughal empire, many artists migrated from the capital to other centers of power, such as Lucknow, Hyderabad, Mysore and Bengal.

