

Quadrant II – Notes

Paper Code: HSS 105

Module Name: Indo-Persian Architecture: Forts, Palaces and Mosque

Module No: 05

The medieval period saw great developments in the field of architecture in India.

Islam came to India in the 7th and 8th centuries CE chiefly through Muslim traders, merchants, holy men and conquerors.

The religion spread in India over a time period of 600 years.

Muslims in Gujarat and Sind had begun construction work in the 8th century itself. But it was only in the 13th century that building activity on a large scale began by the Turkish State after the Turkish conquest of North India.

Muslims absorbed many aspects of local architectural traditions and amalgamated them into their own practices.

Architecturally, a mix of many techniques, stylised shapes and surface decorations evolved through a continuous amalgamation of architectural elements from the various styles. Such architectural entities that showcased multiple styles are known as Indo-Saracenic or Indo-Islamic architecture.

Styles:

- Imperial Style (Delhi Sultanate)
- Provincial Style (Mandu, Gujarat, Bengal, and Jaunpur)
- Mughal Style (Delhi, Agra, and Lahore)
- Deccani Style (Bijapur, Golconda)

Decorative forms

- Designing on plaster through incision or stucco.
- Designs were either left plain or filled with colours.
- Motifs of varieties of flowers (both Indian and foreign) were painted or carved.

In the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, tiles were used to surface the walls and domes. Blue, green, yellow and turquoise were the popular colours.

In the wall panels, surface decoration was done by the techniques of tessellation (mosaic designs) and pietra dura (a decorative art that is an inlay technique of using cut and fitted, highly polished coloured stones to create images).

Other decorative forms: arabesque, calligraphy, high and low relief carving and a profuse use of jalis. The roof was generally a mix of the central dome and other smaller domes,

chattris and tiny minarets. There was generally an inverted lotus flower motif and a metal or stone pinnacle atop the central dome.

Construction materials

The walls were quite thick and made of rubble masonry. They were then coated with chunam or limestone plaster or dressed stone. The stones used were sandstone, quartzite, buff, marble, etc. Polychrome tiles were also used. Bricks were used from the 17th century.

Forts

Forts symbolise the seat of power of a ruler. Many large forts were built in the medieval times.

They were constructed using great heights so that they were unable to be captured by enemy forces. Many complex features were added in the structure and design so as to make the walls of the forts challenging.

Chittor Fort

The Chittor Fort or Chittorgarh is the largest fort in India. The fort was the capital of Mewar and is located in the present-day town of Chittor. It sprawls over a hill 180 m in height spread over an area of 280 ha above the plains of the valley. The fort area has several historical palaces, gates, temples and two prominent commemorative towers.

Gwalior Fort

It is a hill fort near Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India. The fort has been controlled by a number of different rulers in its history. The present-day fort consists of a defensive structure and two main palaces, Gujari Mahal and Man Mandir, built by Man Singh Tomar.

Daulatabad Fort

It is also known as Devagiri or Deogiri. The historical triangular fortress in the city was initially built around 1187 by the first Yadava king. It stands on a conical hill, about 200 meters high. Special features: only one entrance/exit, no parallel gates, Spikes on the gates, Complex arrangement of entryways, curved walls, false doors.

Golconda Fort

It is a fortified citadel and an early capital city of the Qutb Shahi dynasty located in Hyderabad, Telangana, India. The whole of the Golconda Fort complex and its surrounding spreads across 11 km of total area. It was originally known as Mankal, later it was fortified by the Bahmani Sultans and then the ruling Qutub Shahi dynasty. Because of the vicinity of diamond mines, Golconda flourished as a trade centre of large diamonds, known as the Golconda Diamonds.

Jodha Bai Mahal

Jodha Bai was an Empress of the Mughal Empire-Rajput wife of Emperor Akbar. The largest of all the palaces, Jodha Bai's Palace housed Akbar's queens. Here architectural elements of

Gujarat, Mandu and Gwalior are blended with traditional Islamic designs. Its blue-tiled roof is the only splash of colour in Fatehpur Sikri.

Hindola Mahal

It was built by Hushang Shah, as a Durbar hall. The walls are inordinately thick and slope like those of a castle. The slope of over 77 degrees gives a swinging appearance to the building, hence the name. The plan is 'T' shaped.

Jahaz Mahal

It was built by Mahmud I early in the last half of the 1400's. The palace is a double storeyed structure, 360' long and 50' wide, extending along the edge of Kaphur Lake and Munja Lake. The shape, dimensions and position gives the illusion of a ship, hence the name.

Jama Masjid

Large mosques sprang up during the medieval times in India. Generally, a city had one Jama Masjid and this place became the centre of the town for religious, commercial and political activities. Generally, Jama Masjids were large with open courtyards. The mihrab indicated the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca and so people faced the mihrab while offering prayers.

Makkah Masjid or Mecca Masjid

It is a congregational mosque in Hyderabad. It is one of the largest mosques in India. The mosque was built between the 16th and 17th centuries, and is a state-protected monument situated in the heart of the old city of Hyderabad. Muhammad Qutb Shah, commissioned bricks to be made from the soil brought from Mecca, and used them in the construction of the central arch of the mosque, thus giving the mosque its name.

The Haji Ali Dargah

It is a mosque and dargah(tomb) or the monument of Pir Haji Ali Shah Bukhari located off the coast of Worli in the southern part of Mumbai. He was a Sufi saint and a wealthy merchant from Uzbekistan. Near the heart of the city, the dargah is one of the most recognisable landmarks of Mumbai. An exquisite example of Indo-Islamic Architecture, the dargah contains the tomb of Haji Ali Shah Bukhari.