

GIST OF N.C.E.R.T ARCHITECTURE

One of the first requirements of the new rulers was houses to live in, and places of worship. They at first converted temples and other existing buildings into mosques. Examples of this are the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque near the Qutab Minar in Delhi and the building at Ajmer called Arhai Din ka Jhonpra. The only new construction in Delhi was a facade of three elaborately carved arches in front of the deity room (garbha griha) which was demolished. In their buildings, the Turks used the arch and the dome on a wide scale. Neither the arch nor the dome was a Turkish or Muslim invention. The Arabs borrowed them from Rome through the Byzantine empire, developed them and made them their own.

The use of the arch and the dome had a number of advantages. The dome rose higher. Many experiments were made in putting a round dome on a square building and in raising the dome higher and higher. In this way, many lofty and impressive buildings were constructed. The arch and the dome dispensed with the need for a large number of pillars to support the roof and enabled the construction of large halls with a clear view. Such places of assembly were useful in mosques as well as in palaces. However, the arch and the dome needed a strong cement, otherwise the stones could not be held in place. The Turks used fine quality light mortar in their buildings. Thus, new architectural forms and mortar of a superior kind became widespread in north India, with the arrival of the Turks.

The arch and the dome were known to the Indians earlier, but they were not used on a large scale. The Turkish rulers used both the dome and arch method as well as the slab and beam method as well as slab and beam method in their buildings.

In the sphere of decoration, the Turks eschewed representation of human and animal figures in the buildings. Instead, they used geometrical and floral designs, combining them with panels of inscriptions containing verses from the Quran. Thus, the Arabic script itself became a work of art. The combination of these decorative devices

was called Arabesque. They also freely borrowed Hindu motifs such as the bell motif, the bel motif, swastika, lotus, etc.

The most magnificent building constructed by the Turks in the thirteenth century was the Qutab Minar. This tapering tower, originally 71.4 metre high, built by Iltutmish, was dedicated to the Sufi saint, Qutab-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, who was greatly venerated by all the people of Delhi. Although traditions of building towers are to be found both in India and West Asia, the Qutab Minar is unique in many ways.

The Khilji period saw a lot of building activity. Alauddin built his capital at Siri, a few kilometres away from the site around the Qutab. But he added an entrance door to the Qutab. This door, which is called the Alai Darwaza, has arches of very pleasing proportions. It also contains a dome which, for the first time was built on correct scientific lines. Thus, the art of building the arch and the dome on scientific lines had been mastered by the Indian craftsmen by this time.

Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad Tughlaq built the huge place-fortress complex called Tughlaqabad. By blocking the passage of the Jamuna, a huge artificial lake was created around it. The tomb of Ghiyasuddin marks a new trend in architecture. To have a good skyline, the building was put upon a high platform. Its beauty was heightened by a marble dome.

A striking feature of the Tughlaq architecture was the sloping walls. This is called batter and gives the effect of strength and solidity to the building. However, we do not find any batter in the buildings of Firuz Tughlaq. A second feature of the Tughlaq architecture was the deliberate attempt to combine the principles of the arch, and the lintel and beam in their buildings. This is found in a marked manner in the buildings of Firuz Tughlaq. In the Hauz Khas, which was a pleasure resort and had a huge lake around it, alternate stories have arches, and the lintel and beam. The same is and had a huge lake around it, alternate stories have

arches, and the lintel and beam. The same is to be found in some buildings of Firuz Shah's new fort which is now called the Kotla. The Tughlaqs did not generally use the costly red sandstone in their buildings but the cheaper and more easily available grey stone.

Another device used by the Lodis was placing their buildings, especially tombs, on a high platform, thus giving the building a feeling of size as well as a better skyline. Some of the tombs were placed in the midst of gardens. The Lodi Garden in Delhi is a fine example of this. Some of the tombs were of an octagonal shape. Many of these features were adopted by the Mughals later on and then culminated in the Taj Mahal built by Shah Jahan.

The Sufi Movement

Mystics, who are called Sufis, had risen in Islam at a very early stage these saints wanted to have nothing to do with the state - a tradition which continued later on. Some of the early Sufis, such as the woman mystic Rabia (d. eighth century) and Mansur bin Hallj (d. tenth century), laid great emphasis on love as the bond between God and the individual soul. But their pantheistic approach led them into conflict with the orthodox elements who had Mansur executed for heresy. Despite this setback, mystic ideas continued to spread among the Muslim masses.

Al-Ghazzali (d. 1112), who is venerated both by the orthodox elements and the Sufis, tried to reconcile mysticism with Islamic orthodoxy. This he was able to do in a large measure. He gave a further blow to the rationalist philosophy by arguing that positive knowledge of God and his qualities cannot be gained by reason, but only by revelation. Thus, the revealed book, Quran, was vital for a mystic.

Around this time, the Sufis were organised in 12 orders or silsilahs. The silsilahs were generally led by a prominent mystic who lived in a khanqah or hospice along with his disciples. The like between the teacher or pir and his disciples or murids was a vital part of the Sufi system. Every pir nominated a successor or wali to carry on his work.

The monastic organisation of the Sufis, and some of their practices such as penance, fasting and holding the breath are sometimes traced to the Buddhist and Hindu yogic influence. Buddhism was widely prevalent in Central Asia before the advent of Islam, and the legend of the Buddha as a saintly

man had passed into the Islamic legend. Yogis continued to visit West Asia even after the advent of Islam and the yogic book, Amrit-kund, had been translated into Persian from Sanskrit.

The Sufi orders are broadly divided into two: Bashara, that is, those which followed the Islamic Law (shara) and be-shara, that is, those which were not bound by it. Both types of orders prevailed in India, the latter being followed more by wandering saints. Although these saints did not establish an order, some of them became figures of popular veneration, often for the Muslims and Hindus alike.

The Chishti and Suharwardi Silsilahs

Of the bashara movements, only two acquired significant influence and following in north India during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These were the Chisti and Suharwardi silsilahs. The Chisti order was established in India by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti who came to India around 1192, shortly after the defeat and death of Prithvi Raj Chauhan. After staying for some time in Lahore and Delhi he finally shifted to Ajmer which was an important political centre and already had a sizable Muslim population. Among the disciples of Shaikh Muinuddin (d. 1235) were Bakhtiyar Kaki and his disciple Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar. Farid-ud-Din confined his activities to Hansi and Ajodhan (in modern Haryana and the Punjab, respectively). He was deeply respected in Delhi, so much so that streams of people would throng around him whenever he visited Delhi. His outlook was so broad and humane that some of his verses are later found quoted in the Adi-Granth of the Sikhs.

The most famous of the Chisti saints, however, were Nizamuddin Auliya and Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi. These early Sufis mingled freely with people of the lower classes, including the Hindus. They led an austere, simple life, and conversed with people in their dialect, Hindawi or Hindi. Nizamuddin Auliya adopted yogic breathing exercises, so much so that the yogis called him a sidh or perfect.

After the death of Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi in the middle of the fourteenth century, the Chishtis did not have a commanding figure in Delhi.

The Suharwardi order entered India at about the same time, as the Chishtis, but its activities were confined largely to the Punjab and Multan. The most well-known saints of the order were Shaikh

Shihabuddin Suharwardi and Hamid-ud-Din Nagore. Unlike the Chistis, the Suharwardi saints did not believe in leading a life of poverty. They accepted the service of the state, and some of them held important posts in the ecclesiastical department. The Chistis, on the other hand, preferred to keep aloof from state politics and shunned the company of rulers and nobles.

The Bhakti Movement

However, the real development of Bhakti took place in south Indian between the seventh and the twelfth century. As has been noticed earlier, the Shaiva nayanars and the Vaishnavite alvarsh disregarded the austerities preached by the Jains and the Buddhists and preached personal devotion to God as a means of salvation. They disregarded the rigidities of the caste system and carried their message of love and personal devotion to God to various parts of south India by using the local languages.

Although these were many points of contact between south and north India, the transmission of the ideas of the Bhakti saints from south to north India was a slow and long drawn-out process. The ideas of Bhakti were carried to the north by scholars as well as by saints. Among these, mention may be made of the Maharashtrian saint, Namadeva, who flourished in the first part of the fourteenth century, and Ramananda who is placed in the second half of the fourteenth and the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Namadeva was a tailor who had taken to banditry before he became a saint. His poetry which was written in Marathi breathes a spirit of intense love and devotion to God. Namadeva is said to have travelled far and wide and engaged in discussions with the Sufi saints in Delhi. Ramanda, who was a follower of Ramanuja, was born at Prayag (Allahabad) and lived there and at Banaras. He substituted the worship of Rama in place of Vishnu. He enrolled disciples from all castes, including the low castes. Thus his disciples included Ravidas, who was a cobbler by caste; Kabir, who was a weaver; Sena, who was a barber; and Sadhana, who was a butcher. Namadeva was equally broad-minded in enrolling his disciples.

The seeds scattered by these saints fell on fertile soil. The brahmanas had lost both in prestige and power following the defeat of the Rajput rulers and the establishment of the Turkish Sultanat. As a result, movements, such as the Nath Panthi movement challenging the caste system and the

superiority of the brahmanas, had gained great popularity.

These concided with the Islamic ideas of equality and brotherhood which had been preached by the Sufi saints. People were no longer satisfied with the old religion; they wanted a religion which could satisfy both their reason and emotions. It was due to these factors that the Bhakti movement became a popular movement in north India during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Among those who were most critical of the existing social order and made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim unity, the names of Kabir and Nanak stand out. These is a good deal of undertainty about the dates and early life of Kabir. Legend has it that he was the son of a brahmana widow who abandoned him after his birth and that he was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver. He learned the profession of his adopted father, but while living at Kashi, he came in contact with both the Hindu and Muslim saints. Kabir, who is generally placed in the fifteenth century, emphasised the unity of God whom he calls by several names, such as Rama, Hari, Govinda, Allah, Sain, Sahib, etc. He strongly denounced idol-worship, pilgrimages, bathing in holy rivers or taking part in formal worship, such as namaz. Nor did he consider it necessary to abandon the life of a normal householder for the sake of a saintly life Kabirstrongly denounced the caste system, especially the practice of untouchability, and emphasized the fundamental unity of man. He was opposed to all kinds of discrimination between human beings, whether on the basis of castes or religion, race, family or wealth.

Guru Nanak, from whose teachings the sikh religion was derived, was born in a Khatri household in the village of Talwandi (now called Nankana) on the bank of the river Ravi in 1469. Sometime later, he had a mystic vision and forsook the world. He composed hymns and sang them to the accompaniment of the rabab, a stringed instrument played by his faithful attendant, Mardana. It is said that Nanak undertook wide tours all over India and even beyond it, to Sri Lanka in the south and Mecca and Medina in the west. He attracted a large number of people towards him and his name and fame spread far and wide before his death in 1538.

Like Kabir, Nanak laid emphasis on the one God, by repeating whose name and dwelling on it with love and devotion one could get salvation without

distinction of caste, creed or sect. However, Nanak laid great emphasis on the purity of character and conduct as the first condition of approaching God, and the need of a guru for guidance. Like Kabir, he strongly denounced idolworship, pilgrimages and other formal observances of the various faiths. He advocated a middle path in which spiritual life could be combined with the duties of the householder.

Nanak had no intention of founding a new religion. His catholic approach aimed at bridging distinctions between the Hindus and the Muslims, in order to create an atmosphere of peace, goodwill and mutual give and take. This was also the aim of Kabir.

The Vaishnavite Movement

Apart from the non-sectarian movement led by Kabir and Nanak, the Bhakti movement in north India developed around the worship of Rama and Krishna, two of the incarnations of the god Vishnu. The childhood escapades of the boy Krishna and his dalliance with the milk-maids of Gokul, especially with Radha, became the themes of a remarkable series of saint-poets who lived and preached during the 15th and early 16th centuries. They used the love between Radha and Krishna in an allegoric manner to depict the relationship of love, in its aspects of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Like the early Sufis, Chaitanya popularised musical gathering or kirtan as a special form of mystic experience in which the outside world disappeared by dwelling on God's name.

The writings of Narsinha Mehta in Gujarat, of Meera in Rajasthan, of Surdas in western Uttar Pradesh and of Chaitanya in Bengal and Orissa reached extraordinary heights of lyrical fervour and of love which transcended all boundaries, including those of caste and creed. This is seen most clearly in the life of Chaitanya. Born and schooled in Nadia which was the centre of Vedantic rationalism, Chaitanya's tenor of life was changed when he visited Gaya at the age of 22 and was initiated into the Krishna cult by a recluse. He became a god-intoxicated devotee who incessantly uttered the name of Krishna. Chaitanya is said to have travelled all over India, including Vrindavan, when he revived the Krishna cult.

But the one who probably influenced the saint poets most was Vallabha, a Tailang brahmana, who lived in the last part of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century.

Literature

Sanskrit Literature

Following the great Sankkara, works in the field of Advaita philosophy by Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, etc., continued to be written in Sanskrit.

Besides philosophy, works in the field of kavya (poetical narrative), drama, fiction, medicine, astronomy, music, etc., continued to be written. A large number of commentaries and digests on the Hindu law (Dharmashastras) were prepared between the twelfth and the sixteenth century. The great Mitakshara of Vijnaneshwar, which forms one of the two principal Hindu schools of law, cannot be placed earlier than the twelfth century. Most of the works were produced in the south, followed by Bengal, Mithila and western India under the patronage of Hindu rulers. The Jains too, contributed to the growth of Sanskrit. Hemachandra Suri was the most eminent of these. Little attempt was made to translate Islamic works of Persian literature into Sanskrit. Possibly, the only exception was the translation of the love story of Yusuf and Zulaikha written by the famous Persian poet, Jami. This might be taken to be an index of the insularity of outlook which had been mentioned by Albiruni earlier.

Arabic and Persian Literature

Although the greatest amount of literature produced by the Muslims was in Arabic which was the language of the Prophet and was used as the language of literature from Spain to Baghdad, the Turks who came to India were deeply influenced by the Persian language which had become the literary and administrative language of Central Asia from the tenth century onwards. In India, the use of Arabic remained largely confined to a narrow circle of Islamic scholars and philologists, most of the original literature on the subject being written in Arabic. A few works on science and astronomy were also translated into Arabic. In course of time, digests of the Islamic law were prepared in Persian with the help of Indian scholars. The most well-known of these were prepared in the reign of Firuz Tughlaq. But Arabic digests continued to be prepared, the most famous of these being the Fatawa-i-Alamgiri, or the Digest of Laws prepared by a group of jurists in the reign of Aurangzeb.

With the arrival of the Turks in India during the tenth century, a new language in Iran and Central Asia from the tenth century onwards and some of

the greatest poets of the Persian language, such as Firdausi and Sadi, lived and composed their works between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. From the beginning the Turks adopted Persian as the language of literature and administration in the country. Thus, Lahore emerged as the first centre for the cultivation of the Persian language. However, the most notable Persian writer of the period was Amir Khusrau. Born in 1252 at Patiali (near Badayun in western Uttar Pradesh), Amir Khusrau took pride in being an Indian. He says: I have praised India for two reasons. First, because India is the land of my birth and our country. Love of the country is an important obligation... Hindustan is like heaven. Its climate is better than that of Khurasan... it is green and full of flowers all the year round... The brahmanas here are as learned as Aristotle and there are many scholars in various fields...

Khusrau wrote a large number of poetical works, including historical romances. He experimented with all the poetical forms and created a new style of Persian which came to be called the sabaq-i-hindi or the style of India.

Khusrau has praised the Indian languages, including Hindi (which he calls Hindavi). Some of his scattered Hindi verses are found, though the Hindi work, Khaliq Bari, often attributed to Khusrau, was in all probability the work of a later poet of the same name. He was also an accomplished musician and took part in religious musical gatherings (ama) organised by the famous Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya. Khusrau it is said, gave up his life the day after he learnt of the death of his pir. Nizamuddin Auliya (1325). He was buried in the same compound.

Apart from poetry, a strong school of history writing in Persian developed in India during the period. The most famous historians of this period were Ziauddin Barani, Afif and Isami.

Through the Persian language, Indian was able to develop close cultural relations with Central Asia and Iran. In course of time, Persian became not only the language of administration and diplomacy, but also the language of the upper classes and their dependents, at first in north India and later of the entire country with the expansion of the Delhi Sultanat to the south and the establishment of Muslim kingdoms in different parts of the country.

At first, there was little interchange between the two. Zia Nakhshabi (d. 1350) was the first to

translate into Persian Sanskrit stories which were related by a parrot to a woman whose husband had gone on a journey. The book Tuti Nama (Book of the Parrot), written in the time of Muhammad Tughlaq, proved very popular and was translated from Persian into Turkish and into many European languages as well. He also translated the old Indian treatise on sexology, the Kok Shastra, into Persian. Later, in the time of Firuz Shah, Sanskrit books on medicine and music were translated into Persian. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir had the famous historical work Rajatarangini and the Mahabharata translated into Persian. Sanskrit works on medicine and music.

Regional Languages

During this period, literary works of high quality were produced in many of the regional languages as well. Amir Khusrau had noted the existence of regional languages and remarked: The use of the common language by the Bhakti saints was, undoubtedly, an important factor in the rise of these languages,. In fact, in many parts of the country, these early saints fashioned these languages for literary purposes. It seems that in many regional kingdoms of the pre-Turkish period, regional languages, such as Tamil, Kan-nada, Marathi, etc. were used for administrative purposes, in addition to Sanskrit. This must have been continued under the Turkish rule, for we hear of Hindi knowing revenue accountants appointed in the Delhi Sultanat. Later, when, the Delhi Sultanat broke up, local languages, in addition to Persian, continued to be used for administrative purpose in many of the regional kingdoms. Thus, literature in Telugu developed in south India under the patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers. Marathi was one of the administrative languages in the Bahmani kingdom, and later, at the court of Bijapur. Nusrat Shah of Bengal had the Mahabharata and the Ramayana translated into Bengali. Maladhar Basu also translated the Bhagavata Gita into Bengali under his patronage.