

RULERS AND BUILDINGS

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➤ INTRODUCTION

◆ Structures During 8th and 18th Century :

1. Between the eighth and the eighteenth centuries kings and their officers built two kinds of structures
 - (i) The first were forts, palaces and tombs – safe, protected and grandiose places of rest in this world and the next
 - (ii) The second were structures meant for public activity including temples, mosques, tanks, wells, caravan serais and bazaars.
2. Kings were expected to care for their subjects, and by making structures for their use and comfort, rulers hoped to win their praise.
3. Construction activity was also carried out by others, including merchants. They built temples, mosques and wells. However, domestic architecture – large mansions (havelis) of merchants – has survived only from the eighteenth century.

➤ MONUMENTS

◆ Engineering Skills and Construction :

1. Monuments provide an insight into the technologies used for construction.
2. Take something like a roof for example. We can make this by placing wooden beams or a slab of stone across four walls. But the task becomes difficult if we want to make a large room with an elaborate **superstructure**. This requires more sophisticated skills.
3. Between the seventh and tenth centuries architects started adding more rooms, doors and windows to buildings.
4. Roofs, doors and windows were still made by placing a horizontal beam across two vertical columns, a style of architecture called “trabeate” or “corbelled”.
5. Between the eighth and thirteenth centuries the trabeate style was used in the construction of temples, mosques, tombs and in buildings attached to large stepped-wells (baolis).
6. Two technological and stylistic developments are noticeable from the twelfth century.
 - (1) The weight of the superstructure above the doors and windows was sometimes carried by arches. This architectural form was called “arcuate”.

- (2) Limestone cement was increasingly used in construction. This was very high quality cement, which, when mixed with stone chips hardened into concrete. This made construction of large structures easier and faster.

◆ **Building Temples, Mosques and Tanks :**

1. Temples, Mosques and Tanks Temples and mosques were beautifully constructed because they were places of worship. They were also meant to demonstrate the power, wealth and devotion of the patron.
2. Take the example of the Rajarajeshvara temple. An inscription mentions that it was built by King Rajarajadeva for the worship of his god, Rajarajeshvaram.
3. The king took the god's name because it was auspicious and he wanted to appear like a god.
4. Through the rituals of worship in the temple one god (Rajarajadeva) honoured another (Rajarajeshvaram).
5. The largest temples were all constructed by kings.
6. The other, lesser deities in the temple were gods and goddesses of the allies and subordinates of the ruler. The temple was a miniature model of the world ruled by the king and his allies.
7. As they worshipped their deities together in the royal temples, it seemed as if they brought the just rule of the gods on earth.
8. Muslim Sultans and Padshahs did not claim to be incarnations of god but Persian court chronicles described the Sultan as the "Shadow of God".
9. As each new dynasty came to power, kings wanted to emphasise their moral right to be rulers. Constructing places of worship provided rulers with the chance to proclaim their close relationship with God, especially important in an age of rapid political change.
10. Rulers also offered patronage to the learned and pious, and tried to transform their capitals and cities into great cultural centres that brought fame to their rule and their realm.
11. It was widely believed that the rule of a just king would be an age of plenty when the heavens would not withhold rain. At the same time, making precious water available by constructing tanks and reservoirs was highly praised.
12. Sultan Iltutmish won universal respect for constructing a large reservoir just outside Dehli-i kuhna. It was called the hauz-i Sultani or the "King's Reservoir".
13. Rulers often constructed tanks and reservoirs – big and small – for use by ordinary people. Sometimes these tanks and reservoirs were part of a temple, mosque or a gurudwara (a place of worship and congregation for Sikhs).

◆ **Why were Temples Destroyed :**

1. Because kings built temples to demonstrate their devotion to God and their power and wealth, it is not surprising that when they attacked one another's kingdoms, they often targeted these buildings.
2. In the early ninth century when the Pandyan king Shrimara Shrivallabha invaded Sri Lanka and defeated the king, Sena I (831-851), the Buddhist monk and chronicler Dhammakitti noted: "he removed all the valuables. The statue of the Buddha made entirely of gold in the Jewel Palace ... and the golden images in the various monasteries – all these he seized." The blow to the pride of the Sinhalese ruler had to be avenged and the next Sinhalese ruler, Sena II, ordered his general to invade Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas. The Buddhist chronicler noted that the expedition made a special effort to find and restore the gold statue of the Buddha.
3. Similarly in the early eleventh century, when the Chola king Rajendra I built a Shiva temple in his capital he filled it with prized statues seized from defeated rulers. An incomplete list included: a Sun-pedestal from the Chalukyas, a Ganesha statue and several statues of Durga; a Nandi statue from the eastern Chalukyas; an

image of Bhairava (a form of Shiva) and Bhairavi from the Kalingas of Orissa; and a Kali statue from the Palas of Bengal.

4. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was a contemporary of Rajendra I. During his campaigns in the subcontinent he also attacked the temples of defeated kings and looted their wealth and idols. Sultan Mahmud was not a very important ruler at that time. But by destroying temples – especially the one at Somnath – he tried to win credit as a great hero of Islam. In the political culture of the Middle Ages most rulers displayed their political might and military success by attacking and looting the places of worship of defeated rulers.

➤ MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

◆ Gardens Tombs and Forts :

1. Under the Mughals, architecture became more complex. Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and specially ar bagh a arden at ari, 1637. har bagh n's tomb, 1571. chahar limar hmir, 634. har baghs 67 Shah Jahan were personally interested in literature, art and architecture. In his autobiography,
2. Babur described his interest in planning and laying out formal gardens, placed within rectangular walled enclosures and divided into four quarters by artificial channels.
3. These gardens were called chahar bagh, four gardens, because of their symmetrical division into quarters. Beginning with Akbar, some of the most beautiful chahar baghs were constructed by Jahangir and Shah Jahan in Kashmir, Agra and Delhi.
4. There were several important architectural innovations during Akbar's reign. For inspiration, Akbar's architects turned to the tombs of his Central Asian ancestor, Timur.
5. The central towering dome and the tall gateway (pishtaq) became important aspects of Mughal architecture, first visible in Humayun's tomb. It was placed in the centre of a huge formal chahar bagh and built in the tradition known as "eight paradises" or hasht bihisht – a central hall surrounded by eight rooms. The building was constructed with red sandstone, edged with white marble.
6. It was during Shah Jahan's reign that the different elements of Mughal architecture were fused together in a grand harmonious synthesis. His reign witnessed a huge amount of construction activity especially in Agra and Delhi. The ceremonial halls of public and private audience (diwan-i khas or am) were carefully planned. These courts were also described as chihil sutun or forty-pillared halls
7. Shah Jahan's audience halls were specially constructed to resemble a mosque. The pedestal on which his throne was placed was frequently described as the qibla, the direction faced by Muslims at prayer, since everybody faced that direction when court was in session. The idea of the king as a representative of God on earth was suggested by these architectural features.
8. The connection between royal justice and the imperial court was emphasised by Shah Jahan in his newly constructed court in the Red Fort at Delhi. Behind the emperor's throne were a series of pietra dura inlays that depicted the legendary Greek god Orpheus playing the lute. It was believed that Orpheus's music could calm ferocious beasts until they resided together peaceably.
9. The construction of Shah Jahan's audience hall aimed to communicate that the king's justice would treat the high and the low as equals where all could live together in harmony.
10. In the early years of his reign, Shah Jahan's capital was at Agra, a city where the nobility had constructed their homes on the banks of the river Yamuna. These were set in the midst of formal gardens constructed in

the chahar bagh format. The chahar bagh garden also had a variation that historians describe as the “riverfront garden”. In this the dwelling was not located in the middle of the chahar bagh but at its edge, close to the bank of the river.

11. Shah Jahan adapted the river-front garden in the layout of the Taj Mahal, the grandest architectural accomplishment of his reign. Here the white marble mausoleum was placed on a terrace by the edge of the river and the garden was to its south. Shah Jahan developed this architectural form as a means to control the access that nobles had to the river.
12. In the new city of Shahjahanabad that he constructed in Delhi, the imperial palace commanded the river-front. Only specially favoured nobles – like his eldest son Dara Shukoh – were given access to the river. All others had to construct their homes in the city away from the River Yamuna.

◆ **Region and Empire :**

1. As construction activity increased between the eighth and eighteenth centuries there was also a considerable sharing of ideas across regions: the traditions of one region were adopted by another.
2. In Vijayanagara, for example, the elephant stables of the rulers were strongly influenced by the style of architecture found in the adjoining Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda.
3. In Vrindavan, near Mathura, temples were constructed in architectural styles that were very similar to the Mughal palaces in Fatehpur Sikri.
4. The creation of large empires that brought different regions under their rule helped in this crossfertilisation of artistic forms and architectural styles.
5. Mughal rulers were particularly skilled in adapting regional architectural styles in the construction of their own buildings.
6. In Bengal, for example, the local rulers had developed a roof that was designed to resemble a thatched hut.
7. The Mughals liked this “Bangla dome” so much that they used it in their architecture.
8. The impact of other regions was also evident. In Akbar’s capital at Fatehpur Sikri many of the buildings bear the impact of the architectural styles of Gujarat and Malwa.
9. Even though the authority of the Mughal rulers waned in the eighteenth century, the architectural styles developed under their patronage were constantly used and adapted by other rulers whenever they tried to establish their own kingdoms.