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Abstract

The medieval past matters deeply in modern India. The most prominent people, dynasties, and historical incidents from this period are common subjects of public discussion even today. This investment in the past is generally healthy for Indian society as people robustly debate how to best interpret their history and its possible lessons and meanings for the present. But there is an ugly side to modern India's attraction to its younger self. History, especially during the medieval period of so-called Islamic rule, is often flattened and rewritten in modern India until it bears only the faintest resemblance to any reality of what actually happened. Moreover, the battle over India's past increasingly begins and ends in the present. The truth of any given historical narrative is irrelevant to many, and medieval history is often brazenly altered to reflect modern day political agendas, some of them profoundly troubling. The battle concerning India's Islamic past frequently revolves around the Mughal Empire, the most well-known and certainly the most powerful of precolonial India's many Islamic polities. The last Mughal ruler died well over a century ago, and the Mughals had ceased to exercise substantial political power by the mid-eighteenth century. However, as the Mughals recede further into the past, their valence in debates over India's future is conversely growing. The recent renaming of Aurangzeb Road in Delhi reminds us all of a modern reality: Mughal history and interpretations thereof matter in today's world. Huge gates, forts, mausoleums, mosques, palaces, public buildings and tombs were the main structures during Mughal period. The specimens of medieval architecture created, have become the common heritage of both the Hindus and the Muslims. Costly decorated buildings with gems and articles is one of the important distinguishing features of the Mughal architecture. The buildings were constructed mostly of red sandstone and white marble.

Key Words: Architectural lag, Medieval Period, World Heritage, Golden Period.



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DISCUSSION AND RESULTS: Vijayanagara Architecture of the period (1336 – 1565 AD) was a notable building style evolved by the Vijayanagar empire that ruled most of South India from their capital at Vijayanagara on the banks of the Tungabhadra River in present-day Karnataka.^[1] The architecture of the temples built during the reign of the Vijayanagara empire had elements of political authority.^[2] This resulted in the creation of a distinctive imperial style of architecture which featured prominently not only in temples but also in administrative structures across the deccan.^[3] The Vijayanagara style is a combination of the Chalukya, Hoysala, Pandya and Chola styles which evolved earlier in the centuries when these empires ruled and is characterized by a return to the simplistic and serene art of the past.^[4]

Hoysala architecture is the distinctive building style developed under the rule of the Hoysala Empire in the region historically known as Karnata, today's Karnataka, India, between the 11th and the 14th centuries.^[5] Large and small temples built during this era remain as examples of the Hoysala architectural style, including the Chennakesava Temple at Belur, the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu, and the Kesava Temple at Somanathapura. Other examples of fine Hoysala craftsmanship are the temples at Belavadi, Amrithapura, and Nuggehalli.

Study of the Hoysala architectural style has revealed a negligible Indo-Aryan influence while the impact of Southern Indian style is more distinct.^[6] A feature of Hoysala temple architecture is its attention to detail and skilled craftsmanship. The temples of Belur and Halebidu are proposed UNESCO world heritage sites.^[7] About a 100 Hoysala temples survive today.^[8]

At the same time it must also be accepted that a period of 100 years (1556-1658) covered by the reign of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan has a special significance for the promotion of architecture. Likewise there was some activity in this area in the period of Babur and Humayun. Therefore, it is said that the Mughal period was the golden period of Indian architecture.^[9]

The architecture of India is rooted in its history, culture and religion. Indian architecture progressed with time and assimilated the many influences that came as a result of India's global discourse with other regions of the world throughout its millennia-old past. The architectural methods practiced in India are a result of examination and implementation of its established building traditions and outside cultural interactions.

Though old, this Eastern tradition has also incorporated modern values as India became a modern nation state.

The economic reforms of 1991 further bolstered the urban architecture of India as the country became more integrated with the world's economy.^[10] Traditional Vastu-hastra remains influential in India's architecture during the contemporary era.

Main features of Golden Period of Medieval Architecture:

1. Huge constructions:

The Mughal rulers built magnificent gates, forts, mausoleums, mosques, palaces, public buildings and tombs etc.

2. Synthesis of Persian and Indian style:

The specimens of architecture created under the Mughals have become the common heritage of both the Hindus and the Muslims. It is a happy blend of Hindu and Muslim architecture.

3. Specific characteristic:

A common characteristic of the Mughal buildings is “the pronounced domes, the slender turrets at the corners, the palace halls supported on pillars and the broad/gateways.”

4. Costly decorations:

The Mughal emperors in general but Shah Jahan in particular decorated his buildings with costly articles. One of the important distinguishing features of the Mughal buildings is their ornamentation as compared with the simple buildings of the previous Muslim rulers of India.

5. Building material:

During the Mughal period, buildings were constructed mostly of red sandstone and white marble. Although all the Mughal rulers except Aurangzeb took great interest in architecture, yet Shah Jahan surpasses all in the field of architecture. There is no doubt that architecture reached the pinnacle of its glory during the period of Shah Jahan.

The period of Shah Jahan (1627-1658) witnessed a glorious outburst of activity in the development of architecture. Shah Jahan's period is usually called the 'Golden Age of Mughal Architecture' and he is given the titles of 'Prince among the Builders' and 'Engineer King'. His most important and impressive buildings are the Taj Mahal, Red Fort and Jama Masjid. These buildings are extremely beautiful and soft.

Shah Jahan mostly made use of marble in place of red stone. With a view to enhance the beauty and effect of the ceilings, he made full use of gold, silver, precious and coloured stones. At several places, the pictures of trees, animal scenes and other flora and fauna have been depicted.

FINDINGS: Huge gates, forts, mausoleums, mosques, palaces, public buildings and tombs were the main structures during Mughal period. The specimens of medieval architecture created, have become the common heritage of both the Hindus and the Muslims. Costly decorated buildings with gems and articles is one of the important distinguishing features of the Mughal architecture. The buildings were constructed mostly of red sandstone and white marble.

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