



THE MUGHAL EMPIRE - ITS ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Satbhai Ravi Subhashrao

Abstract

The Mughal Empire at its zenith commanded resources unprecedented in Indian history and covered almost the entire subcontinent. From 1556 to 1707, during the heyday of its fabulous wealth and glory, the Mughal Empire was a fairly efficient and centralized organization, with a vast complex of personnel, money, and information dedicated to the service of the emperor and his nobility.



Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com

Introduction

Much of the empire's expansion during that period was attributable to India's growing commercial and cultural contact with the outside world. The 16th and 17th centuries brought the establishment and expansion of European and non-European trading organizations in the subcontinent, principally for the procurement of Indian goods in demand abroad. Indian regions drew close to each other by means of an enhanced overland and coastal trading network, significantly augmenting the internal surplus of precious metals. With expanded connections to the wider world came also new ideologies and technologies to challenge and enrich the imperial edifice.

The empire itself, however, was a purely Indian historical experience. Mughal culture blended Perso-Islamic and regional Indian elements into a distinctive but variegated whole. Although by the early 18th century the regions had begun to reassert their independent positions, Mughal manners and ideals outlasted imperial central authority. The imperial center, in fact, came to be controlled by the regions. The trajectory of the Mughal Empire over roughly its first two centuries (1526–1748) thus provides a fascinating illustration of premodern state building in the Indian subcontinent.

The individual abilities and achievements of the early Mughals—Bābur, Humāyūn, and later Akbar—largely charted this course. Bābur and Humāyūn struggled against heavy odds to create the Mughal domain, whereas Akbar, besides consolidating and expanding its frontiers, provided the theoretical framework for a truly Indian state. Picking up the thread of experimentation from the intervening Sūr dynasty (1540–56), Akbar attacked narrow-mindedness and bigotry, absorbed Hindus in the high ranks of the nobility, and encouraged the tradition of ruling through the local Hindu landed elites. This tradition continued until the

very end of the Mughal Empire, despite the fact that some of Akbar's successors, notably Aurangzeb (1658–1707), had to concede to contrary forces.

Literature Review

Mughal empire is a fascinating period of Indian History. This is because; the mughal history is so recent so as to blend with the issues of the current times. Many of the monuments of Mughal period are still in use, whether it be mosques, mausoleum or forts. From 1556 upto 1707, Mughals rule expanded to cover nearly all of the present India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. In this time the Mughals produced great rulers- Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan, and Aurangzeb. However from Akbar to Aurangzeb, the Mughals rule had moved from one pole to another in its policies of religious tolerance and relations with its subordinate rulers. Akbar had consolidated the Mughal rule and expanded it through diplomacy, warfare, matrimonial alliance, and a tolerant religious policy. The Mughal Empire continued to expand under his successors Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. From Aurangzeb's time a decline set in. Aurangzeb had ruled over the largest expanse of the Mughals till date. After his death, the Mughal rule declined, and many regional kingdoms came up. This also happened along with the emergence of British East India Company as a political power.

Objectives

The main aim of this study is to provide a view of Mughal Empire in India. The study also includes the various Mughal Rulers and their impact on Indian people, its Arts and Architecture. The Mughal artistic tradition was eclectic, borrowing from the European Renaissance as well as from Persian and Indian sources. Kumar concludes, "The Mughal painters borrowed individual motifs and certain naturalistic effects from Renaissance and Mannerist painting, but their structuring principle was derived from Indian and Persian traditions.

Hypotheses

India in the 16th century presented a fragmented picture of rulers, both Muslim and Hindu, who lacked concern for their subjects and failed to create a common body of laws or institutions. Outside developments also played a role in shaping events. The circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in 1498 allowed Europeans to challenge Arab control of the trading routes between Europe and Asia. In Central Asia and Afghanistan, shifts in power pushed Babur of Ferghana (in present-day Uzbekistan) southward, first to Kabul and then to India. This was visible in paintings, music

and architecture. Although, Babur and Humayun would have followed a liberal policy in such matters, they did not live long, and therefore could not give shape to durable policy. Akbar by giving shape to a durable policy of tolerance promoted development and intermingling of art forms, which hitherto would be considered heretic. His patronage also removed the stigma of sacrilege attached to arts like painting under the orthodox Islamic laws as followed by some of the rulers of the Sultanate.

Mughal influence on South Asian art and culture

A major Mughal contribution to the Indian subcontinent was their unique architecture. Many monuments were built by the Muslim emperors, especially Shahjahan, during the Mughal era including the UNESCO World Heritage Site Taj Mahal, which is known to be one of the finer examples of Mughal architecture. Other World Heritage Sites include Humayun's Tomb, Fatehpur Sikri, the Red Fort, the Agra Fort, and the Lahore Fort. The palaces, tombs, and forts built by the dynasty stands today in Agra, Aurangabad, Delhi, Dhaka, Fatehpur Sikri, Jaipur, Lahore, Kabul, Sheikhpura, and many other cities of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.^[29] With few memories of Central Asia, Babur's descendents absorbed traits and customs of the Indian Subcontinent,^[30] and became more or less naturalised.

Mughal influence can be seen in cultural contributions such as

- Centralised, imperialistic government which brought together many smaller kingdoms.
- Persian art and culture amalgamated with Indian art and culture.^[32]
- New trade routes to Arab and Turkic lands.
- The development of Mughlai cuisine.^[33]
- Mughal Architecture found its way into local Indian architecture, most conspicuously in the palaces built by Rajputs and Sikh rulers.
- Landscape gardening

Although the land the Mughals once ruled has separated into what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, their influence can still be seen widely today. Tombs of the emperors are spread throughout India, Afghanistan,^[34] and Pakistan.

The Mughal Economy

Moghul India had a good deal to impress Western visitors. From the time of Akbar to Shah Jehan the court was one of the most brilliant in the world. It was cosmopolitan and religiously

to lerant. Literature and painting flourished and there were magnificent palaces and mosques at Agra, Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lahore. The nobility lived in walled castles with harems, gardens fountains and large retinues of slaves and servants. They had huge wardrobes of splendid garments in fine cotton and silk. In order to cater for their needs, a number of handicraft industries produced high quality cotton textiles, silks, jewellery, decorative swords and weapons. These luxury industries grew up in urban centres. The urban population was bigger in the Muslim period than it had been under Hindu rulers, for caste restrictions had previously kept artisans out of towns (2). Most urban workers were Muslims. The main market for these urban products was domestic, but a significant portion of textile output was exported to Europe and South-East Asia. Other export items were saltpetre, indigo, sugar, opium and ginger. Europeans had great difficulty in finding products to exchange for Indian goods. They were able to export a few woollen goods and some metals, but the only things the Indians really wanted in exchange and which were worth the cost of transporting so far were precious metals. There was, therefore, a constant flow of silver and gold to India, which absorbed a good deal of the bullion produced by the Spaniards in the New World. It was this phenomenon which most impressed and disturbed Europeans in their relations with India.

Conclusion

The mughals began their rule in India as timurids under Babur (mention the year), who defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the 1st battle of Panipat. Mughals during the reign of Babur and Humayun aggressively took to territorial expansion which continued up till Akbar's reign and by Shahjahan's reign the expansion was complete.

Mughals in India were responsible for the most efficient administrative system along with heterogeneous nobility and a relatively happy subject population who received recognition based on merit and not religion. They introduced the mansabdari system which was followed until the decline and yielded maximum profit for the state and at the same time took care of the peasants. Akbar's reign is seen as the most prosperous period as he was able to carve out 50 years of peace, religious toleration and cordial relations with neighbors especially the Rajputs along with a great administrative setup. Jahangir was noted for his addiction to opium but Mughal paintings of his time were in their most refined form Shahjahan although more orthodox when compared to Akbar, ruled peacefully and took up some of the best architectural projects. Aurangzeb's rule was marked for its crisis and his orthodox Islamic beliefs and he is claimed to have desecrated numerous Hindu temples but before arriving at

any conclusion we must take into consideration the various socio political and economic crisis which led to this attitude of the emperor and must observe closely the factors which must have led to the decline of Mughal empire in the 18th century.

References

- Smith Vincent A, *A History of Fine Art in India & Ceylon, ed. II*, (D. B. Taraporevala: Bombay, 1969), 175.
- Nath Ram, *Colour Decoration in Mughal Architecture*, (D. B. Taraporevala: Bombay, 1970), 29-30.
- Sarkar S. J., *Glimpses of Mughal Architecture*, (India, 1953), 40
- Nath Ram, *Colour Decoration in Mughal Architecture*, (D. B. Taraporevala: Bombay, 1970), 29.
- Smith E.W., *The Mughal Architecture of Fatehpur Sikri, Part 4*, (Allahabad, 1898), 21. Tod James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajsthan, vol.I*, (London, 1920), 337; Nath Ram, *Colour Decoration in Mughal Architecture*, (D. B. Taraporevala: Bombay, 1970), 29-30; Nath Ram, *History of Decorative art in Mughal Architecture, 1st edition*, (Motilal Banarsidas: Delhi, 1976), 92.
- Smith E.W., *Mughal Colour Decoration of Agra, part 1*, A.S.I. New Imperial Series, vol.XXX, (Allahabad, 1901), 20.
- Koch Ebba, "The Baluster column: a European motif in Mughal architecture and its meaning", *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays*, (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2001), 91.
- Nath Ram, *Mughal Inlay Art*, (D. K. Printworld: New Delhi, 2004), 5.
- Smith Vincent A., *A History of Fine Art in India & Ceylon, ed. II*. (D. B. Taraporevala: Bombay, 1969), 175.
- Nath Ram, *History of Decorative art in Mughal Architecture, 1st edition*, (Motilal Banarsidas: Delhi, 1976), 92.
- Brand Michael, "Mughal Ritual in Pre-Mughal Cities: The Case of Jahangir in Mandu" *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre 1-2*, (1991),
- Gascoigne Bamber, *The Great Moghuls*, (B. I. Publication: New Delhi in association with Jonathan Cape London, 1971), 155; Burn Sir Richard, "The Mughal Period", *The Cambridge History of India*, (S. Chand & Co.: Delhi, 1971), 165.
- Burn Sir Richard, "The Mughal Period", *The Cambridge History of India*, (S. Chand & Co.: Delhi, 1971), 165
- Gascoigne Bamber, *The Great Moghuls*, (B. I. Publication: New Delhi in association with Jonathan Cape London, 1971), 156.
- Burn Sir Richard, "The Mughal Period", *The Cambridge History of India*, (S. Chand & Co.: Delhi, 1971), 165
- Gascoigne Bamber, *The Great Moghuls*, (B. I. Publication: New Delhi in association with Jonathan Cape London, 1971), 156.
- Beveridge, H., *The Tuzuk –I- Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir, Vols. I, II*, (L. P. Publication: Delhi, 2006), 365.
- Brand Michael, "Mughal Ritual in Pre-Mughal Cities: The Case of Jahangir in Mandu" *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre 1-2*, (1991), 9.

- Beveridge, H., *The Tuzuk –I- Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir, Vols. I, II*, (L. P. Publication: Delhi, 2006), 364.
- Davies, Philip. *The Penguin guide to the monuments of India, Vol II*. London: Viking, 1989.
- Tadgell, Christopher. *The History of Architecture in India*. London: Phaidon Press, 1990
- Satish Chandra, *Medieval India (Part-2, Mughal Empire)*, (Har-Anand, 2001)
- S.A.A. Rizvi, *The Wonder That Was India (Vol-2)*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987)
- J.L. Mehta, *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval Times (Vol-2)*, (Sterling, 1988)
- The other being F. Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572–1730* (Cambridge, 2004).
- L. P. Peirce, *Imperial Harem-Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1993).
- Moynihan, Elizabeth B. *Paradise as Garden in Persia and Mughal India*, Scholar Press, London (1982). p100
- With his son Shah Jahan. Jellicoe, Susan “The Development of the Mughal Garden” MacDougall, Elisabeth B.; Ettinghausen, Richard. *The Islamic Garden, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington D.C. (1976). p 115*
- Koch, Ebba. “The Char Bagh Conquers the Citadel: an Outline of the Development of the Mughal Palace Garden,” Hussain, Mahmood; Rehman, Abdul; Wescoat, James L. Jr. *The Mughal Garden: Interpretation, Conservation and Implications*, Ferozsons Ltd., Lahore (1996). p. 55
- Neeru Misra and Tanay Misra, *Garden Tomb of Humayun: An Abode in Paradise*, Aryan Books International, Delhi, 2003
- Jellicoe, Susan. “The Development of the Mughal Garden,” MacDougall, Elisabeth B.; Ettinghausen, Richard. *The Islamic Garden, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington D.C. (1976). p109*
- Moynihan, Elizabeth B. *Paradise as Garden in Persia and Mughal India*, Scholar Press, London (1982)p 121-123.