
Chapter 5

Rulers and Buildings

❖ Types of structures

- The two main types of structures built between the eighth and the eighteenth century were for the private rest and recreation of rulers and for public activities.
- Structures for rulers included forts, palaces, garden residences and tombs.
- Structures for public were temples, mosques, tanks, wells, caravanserais and bazaars.

❖ Engineering skills and construction

- Architecture became more elaborate between the seventh and the tenth centuries. Architects began adding more rooms, doors and windows to buildings.
- The trabeate style of architecture involved construction of roofs, doors and windows placing a horizontal beam across two vertical columns. The trabeate style was used in the construction of temples, mosques, tombs and in buildings attached to large-stepped-wells.
- The technological developments of the twelfth century were as follows:
 - Arcuate form of architecture where the weight of the superstructure above the doors and windows was carried by arches.
 - Increasing use of limestone cement in construction.

❖ Building Temples, Mosques and Tanks

- Temples and mosques were constructed not only as places of worship but also to demonstrate the power, wealth and devotion of the patron.
- The kings had a keen interest in the construction of temples as they sought divine sanction for their right to rule. Even the Persian chroniclers described the ruler as the shadow of God.
- Construction of public facilities like water tanks earned a lot of praise and respect for the rulers. An example was Hauz-i Sultani constructed by Iltutmish in Delhi.

❖ Destruction of temples

- Temples built by one king were targeted during attacks by rival rulers as they symbolized a ruler's religious beliefs along with his power and wealth.
- 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 the defeated rulers.

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- Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni also attacked the temples of defeated kings and looted their wealth and idols. The main purpose behind these was to be credited as a hero of Islam.

❖ **Gardens, Tombs and Forts**

- Architectural styles became more complex under Mughals. Babur, Akbar, Humayun, Jahangir and Shah Jahan were personally interested in art, architecture and literature.
- There were several important architectural innovations during Akbar's reign. The central towering dome and the tall gateway, first used in Humayun's tomb, were the defining aspects of the Mughal architecture.
- Chahar baghs or gardens with four symmetrical quarters, described by Babur in his autobiography, were also built by later Mughals.
- Shah Jahan's reign saw the different elements of Mughal architecture being fused together in the form of a synthesis. A lot of construction was undertaken during his reign, especially in Agra and Delhi.
- The buildings of Shah Jahan's time also portrayed the king as God's representative. He sought to create an association between royal justice and imperial court. Forty-pillared halls served as venues for public and private audience, the *diwan-i khas o am*.
- The most famous building of Shah Jahan remains the Taj Mahal. It was a white marble mausoleum with a river front garden. The river front design was a way to control access to the river by the nobles.

❖ **Region and Empire**

- There was a sharing of ideas across regions which influenced construction designs all over India.
- The creation of large empires that brought different regions under a single rule helped in the fusion of artistic forms and architectural styles. The Mughals adapted regional architectural patterns in the construction of their own buildings.
- Even though the authority of the Mughal rulers declined in the eighteenth century, their architectural styles were adapted by other rulers who established their own kingdoms.