

THE PATHAN ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA

—A HISTORICAL SURVEY

[The opinion expressed in the paper is unscientific and we do not agree with the author on many a point. This paper is published here as it represents Hindu viewpoints regarding the origin and development of early Muslim architecture. We hope readers interested in Muslim architecture will find it a further field of study

ED., I.C.]

THE 'Pathan' architecture in India presents a fascinating picture. From the day when Muḥammad Ghorī set foot in Delhi in 1191,¹ the Muslims played a prominent part in the development of Indian architecture. In order fully to grasp the significance of the modifications introduced by Muḥammad or his lieutenants, Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibak and Shams-ud-Dīn Iltutmish, we may describe the features of the architecture met in the country by Maḥmūd Ghaznavī at the time of his invasions.

Maḥmūd's expeditions are generally condemned by historians for the intense sufferings caused to the people of the country and for the prejudices formed against the new religion, Islam, since the common people associated it with destruction and rapine. But the invasions did at least one little service. They revealed to the foreigners the greatness of Indian architecture. The philosopher al-Bērūnī, who accompanied Maḥmūd on his invasions, writes of the Hindu edifices at Muthura in these eulogistic terms: "Our people when they see them (the edifices) wonder at them and are unable to describe them." Firishta also praises them in enthusiastic terms.²

These huge edifices, some of them costing 100,000 dinars and taking 200 years to build,³ do not exist today and it is difficult to picture their excellence at this distance of time. But from the ancient Hindu temples and palaces that lie scattered in the country, either entire or in ruins, it is clear that one of their chief characteristics was the ornamentation of the walls. Some of them were gigantic in size, as is seen in the South—among other places, at Rameshwaram, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura and Chidambaram. The decorations are so minute in execution that even the external walls and Sikhars or Vīmāns—every inch of them—are full of carv-

1. According to the inscription at the entrance to the Quwat-ul-Islam Masjid in the Quṭb area. *The Cambridge History of India*, III, makes it 1192.

2. See Newal Kishore edition, p. 29.

3. *Ibid.*

ings of statuettes, animal and other figures, wheels, rosettes, wavy curves, and other designs. From these edifices, historians deduce the wealthy condition of the people and the high cultural standard maintained by them.

Thus, when Muḥammad Ghorī occupied Delhi, he came into contact with people who already possessed a lofty conception of the science of architecture. Muḥammad realized that if he was to earn their esteem and not mere obedience, he must imitate and if possible emulate his subjects in the construction of lofty edifices. Hence he or his lieutenant, Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibak, planned the construction of the Quwat-ul-Islam and Quṭb Mīnār and it must be admitted that both were grandly conceived and minutely executed. In contrast to the simplicity of design and construction generally advocated by the Muslim divines, both of them appear somewhat ostentatious and incoherent, and it is pointed out that except in the buildings of Muḥammad and Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibak and their successors such elaboration is not to be met anywhere in the world.

Muḥammad's or more correctly Quṭb-ud-Dīn's reasons for a departure from the Muslim canon of simplicity were judicious and statesman-like. The stately Thakurdwara which gave way to the later Quwat-ul-Islam consisted of more than a score of temples each of which cost some four lakhs of rupees,¹ and in order to reconcile his Hindu subjects at least culturally to their new masters, it became necessary for the ruler to erect an equally grand, if not grander, building on the site of the temples razed to the ground. So he planned the Jāmi' Masjid, and raised the main entrance to its Liwan to the height of 55 feet and executed the detached pillar now known as the Quṭb Mīnār. Both are reckoned among the striking buildings of the world. The elegant and spontaneous carvings on the walls of the first and the graceful slope of latter, both, are equally admired. The effect of the two constructions must have been to reconcile the Hindu subjects to their new rulers, who appeared to them to be no less artistic and cultured than their predecessors.

This is the first achievement to the credit of the Crescent in India. Against the Muslim conception of simplicity and absence of embellishment, Quṭb-ud-Dīn evolved a new style of Muslim art, out of what he found in the country, in bold defiance of Muslim conventions. Thus it will be seen that the common assertion that the Muslims maintained their conquests merely with the help of their swords does not hold good, at least in India.² The Qur'ānic verse, لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ 'there is no compulsion in religion,' inscribed on the first storey of the Mīnār would seem to confirm our assertion that the Muslims of the 13th century

1. As is mentioned in the inscription on the inner eastern gateway of the Masjid.

2. The early Muslim bilingual coins or those showing figures of a horseman and bull or those mentioning his name as well as that of Prithviraj, and the appointment of Hemraj, Prithviraj's brother, at Ajmer, illustrate his liberal policy.

were inspired with the spirit of religious toleration and consideration for their subjects.

The policy of adopting the Hindu feature of decoration continued for well-nigh a century and we find that the royal buildings continued to be ornate till the end of 'Alā'ud-Dīn Khaljī's reign. Shams-ud-Dīn Iltutmish continued his master Quṭb-ud-Dīn's policy, extended some of the former buildings, e.g., the Quwat-ul-Islam, the Quṭb Mīnār and the Alāhidīn-kā-Jhompara, and built others of his own. We find that he was as wise as his predecessor and continued the latter's policy in diverse ways ; for example, noticing that with the continued occupation of Delhi by the Muslims, the existing space in the Jāmi' Masjid was insufficient for the growing congregation of Muslims, he extended it in three directions, north, east and south, and made it three times of the size. He also raised the Quṭb Mīnār to 238 feet in height. But he made one or two modifications in his master's architectural ideas ; for example, while Quṭb-ud-Dīn allowed his artists freedom and spontaneity, Iltutmish reverted to the traditional motifs of the Muslims and the decorations, while they were just as ornate as those of his master, became more consonant with Saracenic designs ; his coins similarly, while they were better executed, adopted the Arabic characters ; and in contrast to his master's declaration of independence, he obtained a pontifical recognition from the Khalīfa of Baghdad in return for his loyalty to him. Thus it may be said that he was more orthodox than his master in his outlook and in his relations with the Muslim church.

Noticing the good impression made by the incomplete Quwat-ul-Islam and the one-storeyed Quṭb, he extended the former, as we have seen, and added several other storeys to the latter and made the one an organic part of the other. He also made an 'Īdgāh and a Masjid at Badā'ūn, where he had been governor before ascending the throne of Delhi, and dug extensive tanks both at Badā'ūn and at Delhi.

He had been so successful a ruler and had introduced so much stability into the Delhi empire that he ventured to nominate his daughter, Jalālat-ud-Dīn Raḍīya, as his successor. It may justly be said that Muḥammad Ghori, Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibak, and Shams-ud-Dīn Iltutmish among them laid the true foundations of the Delhi empire.

Unfortunately Iltutmish was followed for the next ten years by Sultāns who had no time left to turn to the peaceful pursuit of architecture in their mutual strifes and contentions with the nobility. At the end of this period, in 1246, Naṣīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd ascended the throne and with his accession was ushered in the strong government of Ghiyāth-ud-Dīn Balban, who as minister and later on as king continued to administer the kingdom for more than four decades. He inherited two serious problems, one the growing strength of the nobles whether belonging to the Shamsi order or not, and the other the continued invasions of the Mongols. Since Sultān Maḥmūd was a recluse, Balban came forward to tackle both.

problems, and after twenty or twenty-five years of patient effort, he at last managed to abolish the Shamsi order of the Forty, none then remaining to question his mandate or even his will. Since these 'Forty' nobles were the chief rebels against both the king and the people, their disappearance did good to the kingdom.

The second problem also he tried to solve. He raised new armies, placed his eldest son, Muḥammad Khān, on the widely extended frontier with headquarters at Multān, his second son, Bughrā Khān, on the Sutlej with headquarters at Samānā, and a distinguished nobleman, Malik Bektars, on the third line, his headquarters being at the capital itself. But the death of most of the prominent nobles, the departure of his second son, Bughrā Khān, to Bengal, and the retention of the superannuated soldiers in the Sultān's army weakened his defence, so that ultimately, in 1285, the Mongols penetrated his frontier at Multān and killed Muḥammad Khān.

In the field of architecture Balban's contribution is meagre. He had founded Ghiyāthpūr near the Quṭb area and the Qal'a-i-Marzgān as a counterpoise to his cruelties, for he granted to all the refugees who took shelter within the four walls of the Qil'a the privileges of an asylum so long as they remained quiet within its four walls. The constant wars that he waged against his nobles and the Mongols must have meant a severe drain on the state purse, and did not allow him to labour in the fertile field of architecture.

With 'Alā-ud-Dīn Khaljī was ushered in another fruitful period of Muslim architecture. Though illiterate and vainglorious in some of his schemes, on the whole he followed the sound policy of Quṭb-ud-Dīn and Iltutmish with the result that we have in his time further extension to the Quwat-ul-Islam, including repairs to the Quṭb Mīnār, the addition of the ornate and copiously inscribed 'Alā'ī Darwāza and of the larger though unfinished Mīnār corresponding to the Quṭb, and the digging of the Hauz-i-'Alā'ī. Though his architectural schemes, in some respects, are defective, and though in his inscriptions he compares himself with Darius, Alexander, and Solomon he is known as the last upholder of the policy of the early Slave Kings. In spite of his cruel policy towards both nobles and farmers, he continued to rule for more than twenty years, and during the last few years had no need to take any personal interest in the administration. The stability of the empire may have been due, among other things, to his wise policy in architecture.

At 'Alā-ud-Dīn's death the Muslims had already ruled over the country for more than a century and their Hindu subjects, though occasionally restive, observed loyalty and obedience to their masters. So the Muslim government had leisure to ponder over this policy of conciliating the Hindus by the adoption of some of their ideals. The question came into prominence after Quṭb-ud-Dīn Khaljī's murder by his successor, and Khusru Shāh's efforts to introduce a government in which, besides the

high nobles, low-born Parwari Muslims and Hindus had a considerable share. Ghiyāth-ud-Dīn Tughluq Shāh, Khusru Shāh's successor, became the leader of a reaction against the rule of the low-born Hindu and Muslim Parwaris, dismissed them from the government, and restored Islam to its former eminence. Emboldened by his success against the heterodox government, he resolved to introduce modifications in architecture also. He discarded the ornate style of his predecessor and reverted to the severe simplicity of design advocated by his Ulema. Hence, though he came to the throne at an advanced age and ruled only for five years, he is credited with the introduction of a new style, simple and plain in the extreme. His city of Tughluqābād bears eloquent testimony to his conceptions. The fort stands on a rocky foundation, scarped to the height of 25 feet, and above it rises the main wall to another 40 or 50 feet with an additional 7 feet for the parapet. The huge semi-pentagonal shape with a deep ditch all round and the numerous turrets, bastions, towers and gateways add to its solemn grandeur. The only weakness lies in the filling-up by loose sand and rubble of the casing between two ashlar granite walls; for though the process made them sufficiently thick, actually they contained within only loose rubble.

The new style emphasized slope in every part of a building, in the walls or the buttresses at their angles, turrets and towers. The first work in the new style was built at Multān and was introduced by Ghiyāth-ud-Dīn to serve as his mausoleum after his death. The building is octagonal in shape and appears to be pyramidal from the noticeable slope maintained on all its eight faces; it has battering turrets at its angles. Since his death occurred unexpectedly at Afghānpūr, his son, Muḥammad Tughluq, gave away the Multān building to Shaikh Rukn-ud-Dīn, a noted local divine, who had been present at the fall of the structure which caused the death of Tughluq Shāh. Thus today the Multān building covers the bones of a saint instead of a Sultān.

Tughluq Shāh's death introduces us to Muḥammad Shāh, his son, considered by the historians as one of the great men of all ages. We shall confine ourselves here to his architectural works, among which may be mentioned Ghiyāth-ud-Dīn Tughluq Shāh's mausoleum, the Jahānpanāh city, the Lal Gumbad in Delhi, the Daulatābād Fort, and the mausoleum raised on a tooth at Bir. All of them are noticeable works.

Let us first consider his father's mausoleum. It lies to the south of Tughluqābād and is joined to it by a viaduct and looks like a fortified adjunct to the main fort. The mausoleum has several significant features. Though built in Tughluq Shāh's style, the slight touches of white and black stone inlaid in red and the marble dome at the top and picturesqueness to it and the contrast with the formidable surrounding walls pleases the visitor. But a still more significant feature remains to be mentioned. The mausoleum was situated in the midst of a large artificial lake and the approach to the building lay over a viaduct, which, because

of the disappearance of the lake, appears meaningless today. To the Muslims, a mausoleum is a place of mourning, and it is expected that the relatives of the dead and other sympathetic visitors will pay their respects and offer prayers there for the benefit of the departed soul. Such a spot was therefore purposely made as solemn as possible and all that detracted from the solemnity of the environment was studiously avoided. Muḥammad did not subscribe to this idea *in toto*. While the main hall containing the tomb is spacious, and has a prayer-niche at one end, he surrounded the whole by a lake and thus added cheerfulness to the scene. Even from this single building historians might have drawn conclusions which are in consonance with the other original conceptions of this great ruler. We are not aware of any earlier building in or outside India having the features of this mausoleum, and it is to the credit of Indian Islam that, in such non-essentials, it tolerated the innovation.

The same feature may be seen in a lesser degree in the Lāl Gumbad in Delhi. Built by Sultān Muḥammad to serve after his death for his own tomb, it was given away by his successor, Fīroz, to Kabīr-ud-Dīn Auliya', one of the local saints, Muḥammad being buried by the side of his father in Tughluqābād. The inlay work of the Gumbad may be noted, but the lake was never intended and the central dome looks, from outside, conical and not so full as the dome of Tughluq Shāh's tomb. In the absence of the latter, the Lāl Gumbad might have passed for a striking piece of work, but in its presence and in the presence of the numerous elegant buildings of the Mughals the Gumbad hardly attracts any attention from the ordinary visitor.

Daulatābād Fort is another of Muḥammad's significant creations, and on the strength of it some historians have pronounced him to be the founder of South Indian military architecture. A northern fort like Tughluqābād or the later Akbarābād or the Lal Qil'a of Delhi boasted of high walls, a surrounding ditch, the glacis, scarps and counterscarps. At Daulatābād Muḥammad further developed some of these features and added other novelties of his own. To mention a few of these novelties, he chose a hillock for the site where a small contingent could hold its own against the foe for an indefinite period. The circuitous path that led to the citadel at the top allowed the garrison of the fort to maintain a withering fire on the attacking force from all angles. The ramparts with their different tiers of loopholes, far more numerous than in the north, were another noticeable feature. Then again the citadel was ingeniously isolated from the lower storeys of the fortress, so that even when the rest of the fortifications were occupied by the enemy the citadel could be defended. The fortress, besides possessing several 'Ambār Khānas or granaries for the storage of grain, had the advantage of excellent water in its various storeys, including the citadel. The principal means of isolating the citadel was a tunnel-like pathway which had at its upper end an iron gridiron lid, on which in case of an attack fuel was lighted, the

intense blaze and the dense smoke thus caused rendering it impossible for the invaders to make any headway. The Muslims in India have many achievements to their credit, and the ingenious novelties introduced at Daulatābād are some of them.

After Muḥammad, came his cousin Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, who was a scholar and had been carefully trained by his predecessor in all that went to make a good man. At Muḥammad's death, he gave the first illustration of his goodness. When, after his cousin's death in Tattah, he was requested by the divines in the camp to ascend the throne, he refused on the plea of age and religious tendencies. But the exigencies of the movement made the Ulema more insistent and Fīrūz ultimately gave his consent. There are numerous other instances of his goodness.

Such an ascetic ruler could not appreciate the all-embracing genius of his cousin or the deep significance of some of his architectural works. So he reverted to the more easily comprehended style of Ghiyāth-ud-Dīn Tughluq Shāh, and introduced simplicity and slope into all his buildings. But the features that suited a fort did not agree with a Masjid or a mausoleum.

Sultān Fīrūz's works have mostly perished. What remain are his tomb, the Kotla Fīrūz Shāh, a few Masjids, repairs to the public buildings of his predecessors, and additions to the buildings of the local saints. But they do not allow us to commend his taste. They have hardly any originality or architectural excellence of their own. Even his mausoleum, surrounded as it was by a college, does not look striking in anyway.

Where the Sultān shone, was in planning a comprehensive scheme of public works for the benefit of his subjects. The list of them is a long one, and includes the digging of canals, laying-out of orchards, and the foundation of towns, hospitals, Masjids, monasteries, baths, etc. The first two obtained for him a large revenue, and they as well as the others were intended to relieve his people, who had suffered untold miseries in his predecessor's reign. So, though not a striking contributor to the architectural history of India, he holds an honoured place among the benefactors of the land. In fact Fīrūz may be called the father of the utilitarians: for whereas former rulers had refrained from any projects which would bring in revenue, Fīrūz's schemes relieved his subjects and added to their wealth as well as to his own.

His minister, Khān-i-Jahān II, has several buildings to this credit, among which may be mentioned more than one Masjid and his own mausoleum. They were built in the prevailing style and seem to be devoid of all decorations. But the Khān-i-Jahān is credited with making a bold experiment in mosque-architecture. Both in the Khirki Masjid at Jahānpanāh and the Kālī Masjid in the Nizām-ud-Dīn area he introduced a covered passage running from end to end, from east to west as well as from north to south, thus dividing the open space into four smaller courtyards. This device, by which the bare-footed votaries in approaching the Liwān

avoided the heated pavements of the courtyard in summer and also the rains of the wet season, was undoubtedly an improvement on the entirely covered mosque recently (in 1367) built at Gulbarga. But Khān-i-Jahān's experiment was not taken up by others, and for a valid reason. The basic conception underlying a Muslim gathering at a mosque is group-worship, and the larger the group the greater the impression of solidarity on the minds of the votaries. The covered pathways divided the courtyard and hence the worshippers also, thus preventing them from realizing one of the chief aims of the group-gatherings.

Khān-i-Jahān's mausoleum is a small tomb, octagonal in shape, with three open arches on each face, and a large central dome on the terrace surrounded by eight smaller ones. The whole tomb seems insignificant in size or elevation and the eight subsidiary domes are almost hidden when looked at from the ground. But this insignificant building had the honour of serving for a century or more as a prototype for all the royal tombs. Thus the Sayyid, the Lodī and even the Suri kings had for their model this humble tomb of Khān-i-Jahān Tilangānī, and some historians have even traced the octagonal plan of Shēr Shāh's, Humāyūn's or Mumtāz Begam's tombs to it. The principal reason for this adoption of Tilangānī's mausoleum as a model seems to be psychological rather than architectural. Tilangānī was the revered Sultān Fīrūz's minister. In their love for Fīrūz, they accepted his minister's mausoleum as their model. It was no mean achievement of Fīrūz and along with him of Indian Islam that while he was denying himself every material comfort, his contemporaries and posterity showered on him and on his minister every token of their love and respect. Even Tīmūr during his brief stay in Delhi offered his meed of praise to the departed emperor by reading a Khutba in his Masjid and carrying away the plan of it for the purpose of erecting a similar building in his capital, Samarqand.

After Fīrūz Tughluq's death, a pall of inanition spread over the architectural field, and except for the tombs of the rulers there was hardly any noticeable building in the period. Fīrūz's simple and pious life had cast a cloud over the earthly ambitions of his successors, and it was very slowly that Indian architecture rid itself of this static and anæmic state, so that it took more than two centuries before the austere Tughluq style was finally discarded.

The story of the replacement of the sloping walls and batters by straight walls and the slow process of improvement may be briefly told here. Khān-i-Jahān Tilangānī's tomb became the prototype for the tombs of the Sayyid and Lodī kings and even for those of later periods, the only exception being that of Bahlūl Lodī. The Sayyid mausoleums, being built by potentates of limited means, were planned and executed on a modest scale, but they increased the size of the edifice and introduced some embellishments in plaster and colour, e.g., they added stunted turrets, Guldastas, diminutive kiosks or Chhatrīs, fuller domes and pin-

nacles. They also attended to surface decoration and cautiously introduced colour and coloured tiles in beautifying the walls, and in one of them, *viz.*, Muḥammad Shāh's tomb, even a lantern was introduced for a pinnacle. This mausoleum or that of Muḥammad's uncle, Mubārak Shāh, is a fair specimen of what was achieved by the Sayyid rulers.

The improvements continued even after the supersession of 'Alā'-ud-Dīn 'Ālam Shāh by Sultān Bahlūl, and we find further embellishments in the Lodī buildings, *e.g.*, the central dome was fuller and its neck or drum was more elevated and provided with fenestrations, and colour and coloured tiles were freely used. We may also note three other architectural developments of the Lodī period: first, the large dimensions of the mausoleums of the rulers and their nobles. The former, with the exception of Bahlūl's, kept to the Tilangānī model while the latter followed a square pattern; secondly, the device of the double dome, first introduced in Sikandar's reign in Tāj Khān's tomb and adopted, later on, in Sultān Sikandar's mausoleum also. The device is a simple one and may be briefly explained. The dome had a double casing, the outer one rising to a great height while the inner one formed a lower shallow cover to the empty space above. The advantages of the device were that while the outer casing could be made as high and dignified as was desired, the inner or lower one was nothing more than a saucer-like covering to the hall below, its main purpose being to prevent the bats and other nocturnal birds from resting in the dark hollow space enclosed. Thirdly, Sultān Sikandar's mausoleum, unlike those of the Sayyids, rested in the centre of a large open enclosure surrounded by crenellated walls. For the Mughals it served as a motif; only they increased the size of the enclosure and planned therein a handsome garden with its numerous parterres of flowers, water channels, chutes and cascades. The Lodīs thus contributed very materially to the growth of Muslim architecture in India and in more than one direction suggested lines of improvement to their Mughal successors, *e.g.*, the colours and the coloured tiles suggested the delicate mosaic work of semi-precious stones in marble or the Lodī kiosks and relief works gave way to the equally or more graceful marble ones.

In concluding the history of 'Pathan' architecture, it may be noted that, at its commencement, state policy rather than the rigid canon of the church directed the activities of the architects, and hence we notice a feverish anxiety on the part of the Muslim conquerors to conciliate their Hindu subjects. At the close of the period, on the other hand, a more balanced and realistic view is adopted, the orthodox architectural views are scrutinized and if necessary ignored, and a healthy vigorous tradition is established which if allowed free development would lead to still better results. The lofty and graceful Tāj with its beautiful relief and mosaic work and exquisite garden appears as a logical culmination of the young but vigorous Lodī architecture.

S. K. BANERJI.