

Chapter 5 Rulers And Buildings

1. How is the “trabeate” principle of architecture different from the “arcuate”?

Answer: The “trabeate” principle of architecture is different from the “arcuate” because in the trabeate principle of architecture roofs, doors and windows were made by placing a horizontal beam across two vertical columns. But, in the arcuate principle of architecture, the weight of the superstructure above the doors and windows was carried by arches.

2. What is a shikhara?

Answer: The highest roof of a Hindu temple is called a shikhara. The Rajarajeshvara temple at Thanjavur had the tallest shikhara amongst temples of its time. Constructing it was not easy because there were no cranes in those days and the 90 tonne stone for the top of the shikhara was too heavy to lift manually.

3. What is pietra-dura?

Answer: Pietra dura is the coloured, hard stones placed in depressions carved into marble or sandstone creating beautiful, ornate patterns. Behind the emperor, Shah Jahan’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 coexisted together peaceably.

4. What are the elements of a Mughal chahar bagh garden?

Answer: Char bagh gardens were garden placed within rectangular walled enclosures and divided into four quarters by artificial channels. These gardens were called chahar bagh i.e., four gardens because of their symmetrical division into quarters. The chahar bagh garden also had a variation that historians describe as the “riverfront garden”. In this dwelling was not located in the middle of the chahar bagh but at its edge, close to the bank of the river.

5. How did a temple communicate the importance of a king?

Answer: Temples were constructed as places of worship and meant to demonstrate the power, wealth and devotion of the patron. The temples were miniature models of the world ruled by the king and his allies. For example, the Rajarajeshvara temple was built by King Rajarajadeva for the worship of his god, Rajarajeshvaram. Generally, the names of the ruler and the god were very similar. The king took the god’s name because it was auspicious and he wanted to appear like a God and through the rituals of worship in the temple, one god (Rajarajadeva) honoured another (Rajarajeshvaram).

6. An inscription in Shah Jahan’s diwan-i khas in Delhi stated: “If there is Paradise on Earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.” How was this image created?

Answer: During Shah Jahan’s reign, 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 o am) were

carefully planned. These courts were placed within a large courtyard and were described as chihil sutun or forty-pillared halls.

The audience halls were specially constructed to resemble a mosque, and the pedestal on which Shah Jahan's throne was placed was frequently described as the qibla, i.e., the direction faced by Muslims at prayer. The idea of the king as a representative of God on earth was suggested by these architectural features.

7. How did the Mughal court suggest that everyone – the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak – received justice equally from the emperor?

Answer: The Mughal court suggest that everyone – the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak – received justice equally from the emperor in the following ways:

- a. The connection between royal justice and the imperial court was emphasised by Shah Jahan in his newly constructed court in the Red Fort in Delhi.
- b. Behind the emperor, Shah Jahan'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 coexisted together peaceably.
- c. 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 creating a world where all could live together in harmony.

8. What role did the Yamuna play in the layout of the new Mughal city at Shahjahanabad?

- d. **Answer:** The river Yamuna played a major role in the layout of the new Mughal city at Shahjahanabad. 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. 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.