

Class VII
Chapter 5
By
Net Explanations (Teachers)

Rulers and buildings

The Indian archeological history

As we've seen, India has had a glorious past and has been ruled by several different dynasties who left behind their cultural heritage in India. They built several monuments and structures! Such vivid structures help us study and analyze the prosperity of the kingdom. We know about the prosperous kingdoms of the South through the numerous temples built by them. The temples speak volumes about the great architectural techniques that the kingdoms inherited. Similarly, we notice a different form of architecture during the Sultanate and the Mughal period. You will also come across a completely different style of buildings that were built during the British era.

- Why were structures built?
- What technology was used for construction?
- Why do you think that the Rajasthani kings built forts and fortresses?

Importance Of Architecture

During this period, kings decorated their kingdoms with extravagant structures. They built reserved forts, palaces, gardens, residences, and tombs for the members of the royal family and weren't open to the public. Apart from this, kings also built structures open for the common public, structures such as temples, mosques, tanks, and wells. The forts and fortresses were strategically built to protect the kingdom during wars and battles. The Chittorgarh fort is one fine example. The public used architecture was meant for the comfort of the public.

Engineering Marvels: Skills and Construction

We obviously know that the ancient structures were made by minds who were too advanced and knew things that are beyond our imagination. The temples of the

South are one such fine example. Try to find out about the five most famous temples of the South.

The engineering skills were remarkable and this is evident with the way these structures were made. Wooden slabs were used for building small structures. However, to make exquisite structures better engineering skills were used! Between the 7th and the 10th century, there were several technological advancements. More rooms were added into structures and different archeological styles emerged. Several Intricate mosques, temples, and step wells were built between 8-13 th centuries.

The trabeate or the corbelled style was considered one very important architectural style in which the roofs, doors and windows were made by placing a horizontal beam across two vertical columns. They were later used in making temples, baolis and mosques.

- What were the famous temples built during this period?
- Where were the famous temples built?

The Marvels of India: The Ancient Temples

The Kandariya Mahadeva temple was built by King Dhangadeva of the Chandela dynasty dedicated to Lord Shiva. It had a pathway leading to the main hall(the maha mandapa), The maha mandapa is where dances and cultural programs take The murti or the idol of the lord was placed In the garbhagriha, here's where the people came to worship the deity. The Khajuraho complex had several royal temples where the commoners were restricted. The Rajeshwara temple of Thanjavur Is another remarkable temple of the period. It Is known to have one of the tallest shikhara during this period. Today, as you pass by the road, you must be seeing several cranes and JCBs. Modern machinery has Made it extremely simple to construct buildings and structures. Back then, a 90 tonne stone was lifted manually to the top of the shikhara, this required lots of manpower and hence, an inclined path was Built, to roll over heavy stones to the top of the shikhara. This path was destroyed only upon the completion of the constitution. The 12th century saw archeological advancements and the emergence of styles like Arcuate, where arches were made to carry the weight of the superstructure and the usage of limestone cement, which was a high quality cement.

- Were mosques also built during this period?
- Which famous mosque belongs to this period?
- What was the difference between the construction of mosques and temples?

Mosques: Another Engineering Marvel

The construction of mosques and temples showed the prosperity and the power of the kingdom. A few kings claimed to be incarnations of god and coined the names of temples after their own names. On the other hand, Sultans were believed to be the “Shadows of Gods” by the Persian court. An inscription, “Quwwat Al-Islam” declared that Alauddin was chosen by God himself to be crowned as the king. Building places of worship made the rulers believe that they had a closer connection with God than anyone else, hence kings often tried to make their capitals great centers of culture. They also constructed large water tanks and believed that the water stored in these tanks is precious. A famous water tank built by Sultan Iltutmish is the Hauz-i-Sultani. Water tanks were also often part of temples, mosques, and gurudwaras. They were meant for the common people's use.

The Destruction Of The Temples In The Medieval Era

As stated earlier, temples were meant to signify a kingdom's wealth and prosperity. Often the temples also contained lots of gold and silver. For this reason, temples were often destroyed and looted after a kingdom had been conquered by a king. For instance, in the 9th century, the pandyan king Sharimara Saivallabha attacked Sri Lanka and won the battle, a Buddha idol entirely made of gold and other valuables were looted from the temples. The Chola king, Rajendra 1 had built an exquisite Shiva temple in Thanjavur. This inauguration of this temple was warmly welcomed by the citizens of the kingdom and hence, lots of valuables were donated. It housed pricey antiques won from conquests. Sultan Mahmud Ghazni of Afghanistan attacked several temples including this one and destroyed the idol. He carried back the riches from the temple and added them to the treasury of his empire.

- What were the non-religious constructions during this period?
- How were the Mughal cities beautified?

The Mughal Constructions: Gardens, Tombs And Forts

All the Mughal emperors were big fans of architecture. Babur was immensely attracted to beautifully laid-out gardens and complexes. He built the Chahar Bagh, which literally translates to four gardens. It's named so because of its peculiar structure. The park is divided into 4 quarters symmetrically. Each quarter is bound by an artificial wall. Continuing the legacy, Akbar, Shah Jahan, and Jahangir all built intricate Chahar Bagh in Kashmir, Delhi, and Agra. Tombs are another important aspect of Mughal architecture, after the death of each Mughal emperor, they were buried in a tomb which was placed amidst a Chahar Bagh. This tradition was termed as "hashta bisht" and translates to "eight paradises". Shah Jahan was a staunch lover of beautiful archeological wonders. During his reign, he constructed marvelous archeological wonders. He built the famous Diwan-i-aam(the house of common people), and the diwan-i-Khas(the house of the elite). These halls are where Shah Jahan held meetings with the common people and the special people respectively. These halls were called "Chihil Sutun" or the "40 pillared halls". His pedestal was called as the qibla and faced towards the direction pointing towards the direction which Muslims face while praying. This idea signified that the emperor was the god's representative on earth. Shah Jahan's capital, Agra was decorated with several Chahar bagh, and the nobles often constructed their houses amidst the chahar bags. Shah Jahan built beautiful structures on the riverfront and decorated the banks of the river. The newly built city, Shahjahanabad had an exquisite palace on the river frontier, only the elites were allowed to access the riverfront , the commoners were compelled to build their houses away from the river bank.

- Did the styles of architecture never get intermixed?
- Were their known hybrid styles?
- Why did the Sultans and Mughals build extravagant tombs?

Regions And Empires

By the 16th century, different styles of architecture were influenced by each other. Elements of one style of construction were often adopted by others. For instance, the style of construction of elephant stables in the Vijayanagara kingdom was adopted from the neighbouring kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. In the Vrindavan region, the construction of temples was influenced by the Mughal style of architecture.

Similarly, by the 18th century, the architecture was all a mix of several styles and cultures!

Kings built worship places to depict their strength and dominance then. However, now we look at the archeological masterpieces as the legacy left behind by these rulers and admire them! They are all role models, since such marvelous structures were built all without modern machinery!

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