

Architecture of Sharki dynasty in medieval India

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ABSTRACT

The unsettled conditions of the Sharki Dynasty did not allow it to live long its rulers, who were great patrons of art and architecture, in spite of their incessant military activity on almost all frontiers of their kingdom, did find time to develop their architectural interest. Their numerous buildings display original and distinctive features, and have been highly praised by eminent critics. The Sharki architecture as compared with that of other contemporary dynasties is markedly muslim. It is also unique in many ways. Two things continued to make Sharki architecture pre-eminent. One was the assiduous patronage of the Sharki rulers, and the other the deep artistic traditions of the local inhabitants. The Sharkies employed local artisans, who were Jain and Hindu, and who grafted their own rich traditions upon the Muslim ones. After the fall of the Tughluqs and the invasion of Timur at Delhi, the building operations came to a standstill. Delhi artisans were invited to take service in the rising provincial centres, especially Jaunpur, where the patronage of the rulers, as has already been said, also attracted and encouraged them. The kings of the East built many magnificent mosques, forts, palaces, madrasas, shrines and tombs in different parts of their kingdom. They rebuilt and founded new cities, and adorned them with beautiful buildings of all kinds. In comparison, the architecture of the Delhi dynasty during the same period is represented on by the tombs of Mubarak sayyid at Delhi and by those of Alauddin Alan Shah and his family at Badaun.

Key words: - Unsettled, architecture, incessant, contemporary, munificent

I INFLUENCE OF VARIOUS RULERS ON ARCHITECT

During the reign of the Sharki sultans there two important cities Zafarabad and Jaunpur, where most of the architectural and cultural activities took place. Zafarabad being the forerunner of the other needs to be mentioned first. Zafarabad is older than Jaunpur, but during the Sharki reign it was of secondary importance and was better known for its religious and literary activities than for its architectural attainments. It lies on the right bank of the Gumti at a distance of about four miles from Jaunpur. It had been a flourishing city of that part of the country before the founding of Jaunpur. In ancient days this region had been a great centre of culture and religion of the Buddhists as well as the Hindu. Ruins of their ancient stupas and temples can still be seen here. It is the same area where the mythical Raja Ram Chandra once ruled, whose capital, Ajodhya, lies in ruins not far from the modern district of Faizabad. Afterwards the Pala princes of Banaras ruled over this territory. The last Hindu rulers here were of the Gahadaval clan, whose last ruler, Jaya Chandra II, was finally overthrown by Shihab-ud-din Ghori in 1193. The walls of the old fort of Jaya Chandra still stand, and enclose a space of eight acres to the west of the town. Its ancient name is said to have been Manaichgarh, and its fort was known as Asni. From the conquest of Shihab-ud-din Ghori till the time of Sultan Firuz this area had been permanently under Muslim influence and had also served as a route between Delhi and Lakhnauti. Many Muslim sufis such as Shaikh Barah and later on Makhdum Sadr-ud-din Aftab-i-Hind and Madhdum Asad-ud-din Chiragh-i-Hind settled here. Afterwards a good number of disciples of both the latter also settled here and worked for the establishment of Islam.

II FACT ANALYSIS – VARIOUS FORTS

Very little is known of the ancient history of the old site of Jaunpur beyond the fact that in ancient times a city occupied the site of the present town. Brahmans derive the name Jaunpur from Jamadagani and assert the place was originally called Jamadaganipur, after this saint's name, for which they further find support in the sthāna of the said saint at Jamaitha, a place situated between Jaunpur and Zafarabad. The common people even today call it by the name of Javanpura and that argument has been supported by Mr. Ommaney's reading of an inscription found in Bundel Khand on the river Gumti. General Cunningham's error in reading Ajodhyapura as Yaminyapura in an inscription found in the wall of the Lal Drwazah Mosque of Jaunpur also led many to think in the same terms.

Sultan Firuz Shah visited this country a second time in 1359, when he marched against Sultan Sikandar, son of Haji Ilyas of Bengal. When Sultan Firuz reached Zafarabad he was compelled to stop here for about six months, owing to the rainy season. During his stay he one day found at a little distance to the west of the other bank of the Gumti opposite Zafarabad a few thriving buildings built by a dispossessed Rajput prince of the Gaharwar clan of Ratgarh. Sultan Firuz was so attracted by the scene and the flat country that he decided to build there a new town. His orders were carried out soon, and thus the foundations of the new city, which he named after himself, were laid down. It is said that one night he dreamed of his cousin, Malik Juna Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah bin Tughliq with result that he decided to name the city after him as Jaunpur, which later on came to be called Jaunpur.

- (a) **The Sharki Fort** – The dynast of Jaunpur had a very peculiar position, situated as it was in a fertile region in the heart of India and surrounded by the powerful dynasty of Malwa, Bengal and Delhi. To safeguard their position against formidable neighbors the Sharki rulers found it necessary to maintain a huge army. Sultan Mahmud Shah Sharki had 170,000 cavalry and 1400 war elephants. This was the largest army that any dynasty had in that period. To strengthen their defences and to station this army, the Sharki rulers built many forts and repaired many old ones. Most of them have vanished owing to the ravages of time. Only a few remain, and these too in a dilapidated condition. The modern district of Rai Bareilly alone has five fortresses of the Sharki period- and indication of the large number of fortified positions which the Kingdom of Jaunpur as a whole must have had at its height.
- (b) **Karar kot Fort** – This fort, situated on the north bank of the Gumti, was originally founded by Sultan Firuz of Delhi on the artificial mound of the ruined temple of Karar Bhir. Local traditions connect the temple with the name of the mythical Raja Ram chandra of Ajodhya, who is said to have built it at the spot where he had killed a man-eater gaint by the name of Karar Bhir. When in 1359 Sultan Firuz ordered the foundation of the new city of Jaunpur, this temple was dismantled and instead a fort was erected on the mound; this fort received the name of Karar Bhir Fort. The muhalla near the fort is also known as Karar Kot. A stone, built into the south-west wall of the fort is known as Karar Bhir and is still worshipped by the Hindus, who anoint it by way of worship.
- (c) **The Fort of Rai Bareilly** – Originally this was an old Hindu fort. When Sultan Ibrahim Sharki succeeded to the throne and made new establishments in different parts of his kingdom, the town of Rai Bareilly was also restored in 1417. At the same time Sultan Ibrahim found it necessary to strengthen his position by building a new fort on the ruined mound of the old Hindu fort. This fort, rising from an earthen mound, was a vast structure in the shape of a quadrangle. Now it is in a dilapidated condition and only a few fragments of it remain. One is the western gate, built of huge bricks, and the main entrance of the fort. The other is the ba'oli, a vast circular well; about thirty-five feet in diameter. The well is lined with huge bricks supporting balconies, and it also contains chambers on a level with the water. There is no elevated plateau inside it as the Dalmau fort has, but there is a fosse outside it which denotes that originally the work was obviously intended for military purposes.

III THE SHARKI MOSQUES OF JOUNPUR

- (a) **Fort Mosque**-This mosque stands inside the Karar fort and is the earliest example of the mosque architecture of the city of Jaunpur. One of its pillars bears a long Arabic inscription, according to which it was founded in Zu'l-qa'da 1377, by Ibrahim Na'ib Barbek, brother of Sultan Firuz. It was completed under the early Sharkies at the same time as the Jaunpur fort was constructed. This mosque is a long narrow building, being 130'-4" in length and 23 feet in breadth. It has a simple arcade which is supported on carved Hindu pillars of various designs but they have no plinth. The main position of the mosque is divided into three chambers by two lateral walls. The central room measures 37'-4" by 14'-10" and is spanned by two arches of fifteen feet which further divide it into three distinct portions carved by plastered domes. Both the side rooms are 40'-1" by 18'-10" and 8'-2" in height, with five bays in the length and two in the breadth. In the middle of each room there is a row of round pillars there is also a row of pillars against the back wall, but they are square in shape.
- (b) **Atala Mosque** – This mosque takes its name from the temple of Atala Deve, on the site of which it was erected. The story of its erection is that, when in 1359, Sultan Firuz visited this area and caught sight of this temple, he wanted it to be demolished. According to Khair-u'd-din Muhammad, the Sultan abandoned the idea when the local Hindus strongly and unanimously objected. But when Sultan Ibrahim Sharki succeeded to the Sharki throne, he could not resist his religious zeal, so he ordered the destruction of this temple. On its site the Atala Mosque was erected, with the material of the same temple as well as of those which had also once been demolished in its neighborhood. It was finished in 1408. The Atala mosque, an early specimen of the Jaunpur style, is the most ornate and most beautiful of all the Jaunpuri mosques. The splendid piece of architecture covers an area of 258 square feet. Its courtyard is 177 feet in diameter, around which on three sides are the cloisters and on the fourth the sanctuary. The west side where the sanctuary stands is divided into five compartments. At the back of the principal propylene is the central room. Next to it on either side is one oblong room, 62'-0" by 28'-8", of one story. Then there are two more small rooms in each corner.

- (c) **Jhanjri Mosque** – This mosque which also gives its name to the adjoining muhalla, was erected by sultan Ibrahim sharki with the material of Vijaya Chandra's temple of Mukatghat, said to have been demolished by sultan Firuz. This mosque is also known by the name of Chachikpur. Sultan ibrahim built it for the convenience of the celebrated saint, Sayyid sadr Jahan Ajmal, who had once been his prime minister and who, after retiring from that post, used to live in the Muhalla of Shikhuwarah, which is quite close to it. Like other buildings this mosque also suffered the fate at the destructive of Sikandar Lodi, who pulled down a part of its court walls along with its main eastern gate. Later on floods in the Gumti seriously damaged this noble piece of architecture so that the grand dome on its central chamber and some other part crumbled afterwards. Subsequently its stones and bricks were appropriated for other public and private buildings, notably the great bridge built by Muniam Khan Khan-i-Khanan.
- (d) **Khailis Mukhils Mosque** -This mosque is known variously as the Darbiya mosque or Khalis Mukhlis mosque or Chahar ungli Mosque. It was built by two chief nobles of Sultan ibrahim Sharki. Malik Mukhlis and Malik Khali, in 1430 in honour of a celebrated saint, Sayyid Usman Shirazi. It stands on the old site of a favorite temple of Raja Vijaya Chandra. The ruins of this temple still exist on the norther side of this celebrated mosque. The mosque is commonly known as the Chahar ungli Mosque, because of a stone three inches in length in the south pier on the left side of the main entrance. It was reputed to have the virtue of measuring exactly four unglis, about four inches in length, irrespective of the hand measuring. Many Hindus worship this stone and many Muslims too revere it. The mosque is a plain, serviceable structure and consists of the usual great propylene, domed hall, two wings and a large square enclosure some 66 feet in depth, with a flat roof supported on ten rows of pillars somewhat in the Hindu style. The whole structure of the building is simple. Its gates along with the walls were also pulled down by the orders of Sikandar Lodi. It remained for years in a dilapidated condition, but it has now been repaired and is in use.
- (e) **Lal Darwazah Mosque**- This mosque was built in 1447 during the reign of sultan Mahmud Sharki, by Queen Bibi Raji, who as mentioned by Khair-u'd-din Muhammad, dedicated it to sayyid 'Ali-Da'ud, a celebrated saint of Jaunpur, whose descendants still live in the Muhalla Namaz Gah next to this mosque. This Muhalla was so name by Bibi Raji, who also built here a monastery and a college. The college was staffed by capable ulama and scholars as professors, and admitted students from all over the country, many of them on scholarships. To commemorate his name Queen Bibi Raji also founded a village which still exists and is called sayyid Ali-pur. The Lal Darwazah mosque owes its name to the vermilion painted, lofty gateway of Bibi Raji's royal place that once stood adjacent to it. It is situated in the extreme north west of the city into the aforesaid muhalla, which is also known by two other names Begam Ganj and Lal Darwazah. The style of the architecture of this mosque is similar to that of the jame mosque and Atala mosque.
- (f) **Jami-ush-Sharq**- This is one of the splendid and large mosques of Jaunpur. It stands in the purani Bazar on the Kathan road in Muhalla umar Khan . Its foundation were laid by sultan Ibrahim sharki in 1438, but it was completed sometime in 1478 by sultan husain sharki. According to Khair-u-'d-din Muhammadm sultan Ibrahim started building this mosque near the residence of Khwaja isa to save him the trouble of walking a mile for his Friday prayers. Shortly afterwards sultan ibrahim sharki died, leaving the building incomplete. Neither sultan mahmud sharki ever busy with his local wars, nor sultan muhammad, deeply involved in conflict with the Lodi power, found time to complete the edifice. Sultan Husain sharki, despite his many wars, was able to carry the construction of the mosque to completion in 1478, just a few years before his final overthrow by Bahlul. Sikandar Lodi did not spare this mosque and destroyed its splendid, inscribed gate. At the same time he pulled down the royal residential quarters which were adjacent to it, including a college as well as the cloister of the mosque, the destruction of which very seriously affected the domes and the walls of the rest of the building.
- (g) **Chihal situn Mahal**- Sultan Ibrahim sharki, who was the most cultured ruler of the sharki dynasty, made up his mind to change his residences and build a new palace. It took a long time to be built up. The author of Subh-i-Sadiq mentions that when this palace was on the verge of completion, he one night overheard the labourers talking, one saying to the other: " The palace of the sultan (Ibrahim sharki) is practically finished and now there will be no need of workers. Where shall we get our means of subsistence from? " Next day the sultan ordered the edifice to be dismantled. The foundations of the building were laid afresh. After very prolonged labour the new palace came into being, and was name Chihal

situn Mahal, (the palace of Forty pillars). It had three grand storeys and was an architectural masterpiece, where sultan Ibrahim sharki spent his whole life in social and cultural activities.

- (h) **Mahal Bibi Raji** – Sultan Mahmud sharki beloved queen, the sayyid princess of Delhi, made up her mind to have a new residence. Accustomed to the comfort of the palace of Delhi, she did not find her father-in-law's palace to her taste. She was deeply religious and her acts of piety have been recorded in the pages of sharki history. She built quite a few mosques among which Lal Darwazah Mosque predominates on account of many novel ideas such as the Zanana galleries. She ordered the erection of a new palace, the remains of which still stand near the jami mosque, Jaunpur. This beautiful palace, known as Bibi Raji Mahal, was oblong in shape and covered an area of 190 feet in length and 140 feet in width.

IV ACHIEVEMENTS OF SHARKI ARCHITECTURE

Brown remarks that the sharki rule was a period of great architectural activity, and the architecture created at Jaunpur exercised great influence on the architectural achievements of other places. Brown further remarks that if only sikandar Lodi had not ruthlessly destroyed or mutilated the monuments of the sharki rulers, their buildings would have produced a provincial manifestation of Indian Islamic architecture of more than ordinary interest. The buildings which have survived mainly comprise mosques, tombs and shrines, as well as dismantled palaces and forts, of these the building which is most characteristic in style is the Attala Mosque. This is the earliest example of Jaunpur Mosque architecture and in its freshness and vigour of style thoroughly expresses the stimulating intellectual influences by which it was surrounded. Indeed it furnished the model for all Jaunpur mosques, though none excelled it. The last example of the architectural style of the sharki to be cited is the jami mosque, which was built by sultan Husain, and with that their building career came to an end. The Atala mosque as compared with the Jami Mosque is an architectural gem of the sharkies, while the latter betrays signs of decadence in its depth of recesses and projections and in the treatment of the great propylene. The crying imperfection in the Jami Mosque is its front elevation. This disjointed and unfinished structure, bold and daring in its original conception, could not be a success. Here it seems as if the Jaunpur architects aesthetic sense failed them. It is also because, while the construction of the Jami Mosque was taking place, the dynasty of Jaunpur was passing through a severe political crisis. At the same time the long famine had upset the whole economy.

V CONCLUSION

Thus of the above facts it can be said on the basis that sharki sultan Jaunpur was a great patron of the Architecture of Jaunpur which rulers have built the buildings, Evidence of his art interested appears and this building is very strong and beautiful. It shows the real and early coherence of Hindu-Muslim art ideas. In the medieval period the Delhi sultanate and the provincial architecture developed rapidly, as well as in Jaunpur, there was a rapid development of architecture in different parts of India, but different styles of architecture developed, one of them also the architecture of Jaunpur. Is on the characteristics of the Delhi sultanate and the provincial architecture seem to be similar, where the vaulted craft and the Turkish arch-dom combination style began in the arch-dome. However, the architecture of the central empires was built and said to be in collaboration with many regions prevalent in India. It is likely that Jaunpur's contribution to medieval architecture was not less than that of the Delhi sultanate.

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