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Islamic Architecture of Muslim rule in Kashmir; A study of some Mosques and Their Architectural styles and Preservation

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Abstract

Kashmir has its unique architectural style and values. The wooden architecture is the chief building taste of Kashmir's master hands. It is entirely due to the climatic and seismic conditions of the happy Valley. The pyramidal roof provides not only attractive look, but also help the heavy snow to slide down to save the architecture from destruction. A few numbers of buildings, Pather Masjid, Masjid of Akhun Mullah Shah and Hari Parbat Fort, constructed during the period of Muslim rule were erected with grey limestone. The wooden structures occasionally affected by calamities such as earthquakes and fire flames. The construction of Mosques in the region bears two types of plans the square and groups of squares, Shah Hamdan Mosque follow the farmer and Jami Masjid of Srinagar represents the later.

Keywords: Wooden architecture, jamia masjid, pyramidal roof, indo-Islamic, etc

1. Introduction

1.1 Content

The construction of mosque witnesses various developments in various stages and has changed in its architectural style from time to time and places to places. In the beginning when Islam was spreading in West Asian countries, there was no specific artistic style of mosques, on any type of additions i.e. arch, *dome*, *mehrab*, *mimber*, *aiwan*, *dalan* minar etc. The first mosque of Islam was constructed by Prophet Mohammad in 622 A.D. in Quba in Madina in Saudi Arabia. It was the simplest plan which was designed and constructed by putting palm logs and leaves ^[1]. In India the first mosque is Quwatul Islam in Delhi built after the establishment of Muslim Rule in India. It was beautify with introducing arches and *domes* during early medieval period ^[2]. It has attained specific structure by introducing some necessary parts as *Mehrab* (concave recess), *member* (Plinth), *sahan* (open place), *Minar* (minaret) it is the one of the features of Syrian Church ^[3]. It is not seen in Kashmir's style of Architecture except Hazaratbal Mosque which has been shaped in the pattern of Praphat's Mosque Masjid-i-nabavi, in Madina.

The most striking feature of architecture of Kashmir is timber, its chief building material. Two types of plan have been undertaken to raise the construction of mosques. The first has single square Hall while the other comprises of group of Halls. The Shah Hamdan and the Madani mosques are the example of the farmer and Jami Masjid at Nohatta, Srinagar the later. The square chamber covered with a wooden pyramidal roof, rising in the tiers and covered with a slender and pointed spire. The tiers may go up to four in number. Only two mosques, the Pather Masjid and the mosque at Hari Parbat were built entirely of stone displaying the Mughal master hands of architecture as adopted in the cities like Delhi, Agra a Lahore etc. The only difference is that local grey limestone was used ^[4].

Jamia masjid Srinagar; The most attractive and impressive representation of wooden structures in Kashmiri style of architecture is the Jamia masjid of Srinagar, constructed by Sultan Sikander Butshikan in 1339 A.D ^[5]. The chief designer of the mosque was Sadaruddin Harasani ^[6]. The structure was burnt, but was rebuilt by Sultan Hassan (1472-84) and extended during Sultan Zainul Abdin, his son and successor in 1503-04 A.D. Ibrahim Magrey, the Wazir of Sultan Hussan undertook the complication of structure by providing picturesque attraction ^[7]. During the reign of Jahangir a fire broke out and nearly three thousand houses were burnt. Jamia Masjid was also badly affected by the drastic fire flames at the occasion of Eid ^[8]. By the order of Jahangir Malik Haider Chadura rebuilt the mosque in 1620 A.D. (1029 A.H.) ^[9]. The inscription on the main entrance of the mosque shows that Malik Haider Chadura built it.

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The mosque again caught fire during the reign of Aurangzeb in 1672 A.D. while the governorship was in the hands of Iftikhar Khan (1672-75 A. D.). It was the third occasion when the mosque devastated by the fire ^[10]. The inscription on the southern doorway of the mosque mentions the interest of Aurangzeb for its reconstruction ^[11]. The plan was the same as it was originally constructed in fourteenth century ^[12]. It was reconstructed during Aurangzeb's times ^[13] by using the bricks and wooden pieces of equal size of bricks ^[14].

The great mosque is composed of four huge and wide colonnades representing the magnificence of the Jamia Masjid. The space covered with pyramidal colonnade is not the invention of the Muslim in Kashmir, but it resembles with the architectural style of the stupa court of the Buddhist monasteries or the prototype of Hindu Temples ^[15]. The roughly square building is of the Indo- Islamic character ^[16] measured about (240x240 sq ft), each side having a colonnade with pyramidal roof. The western colonnade represents the *mehrab* usually indicating the direction of Khana-i-Kaaba. The other three, eastern, northern and southern colonnades have arched entrance. It also has a stone slab with Persian inscription in *Nastaliq* script. The centre of the mosque is an open space with a large tank or *Houze* represents a fountain in the centre enhancing the beauty of the mosque. Each square colonnade is capped with two tiered pyramidal roof which raises forming with a pinnacle giving it a characteristic perception of the *sikhara* or a spire of a Buddhist or a Hindu temple to support roof decorated huge pillar of Deodar trunk had been used. The pillars are 378 in number in the building. They are varying in height from 25 to 50 meters. The pillar which support the roofs of colonnades are higher while the rest are less in height. Each pillar stands on the plinth of sand stone adding the beauty of the mosque. The umbrella moldings were probably constructed during Aurangzeb's time.

In 1819 A.D. Diwan Moti Ram, the Sikh governor of Kashmir prohibited the entry of Muslims for *Azan* and to offer *nimaz* (prayers). ^[17]. It was only possible for Muslims to say *azan* and perform *nimaz* by the *farman* of Sheikh Ghulam Muhaiuddin (1842-45A.D.) ^[18]. His religious tolerance allowed Hindu to construct a temple on Shankracharya Hill in Srinagar and new lingam was also installed ^[19].

The Mosque also attracted the Dogra ruler Maharaja Rinbir Singh, the son and successor of Maharaja Gulab Singh, who constructed water ducts for ablution. It was a kind of magnificence, which was not witnessed even during the Muslim rule in Kashmir. Maharaja repaired the mosque three or four times ^[20]. He allowed only Friday prayers. The members of the cost committee, Khawaja Rahim shah, Azam Drabu and Gafoor Shah Naqshbandi collected huge funds and Maharaja Ranbir Singh granted Rs 6000 for its reconstruction, and Rs 9000 for the repair of Lachmi Kul ^[21].

Mosque of Shah Hamdani: The mosque is better known as *Khankah-i-muallah* situated on the bank of river Jehlum in Srinagar above Zaina Kadal. The place for present mosque was selected by Ali Hamdani. He was known to be one of the most renowned scholar and saint of the fourteen century Muslim World ^[22]. He was born in Hamdan in 1314 A.D. after completing his education, he travelled all around the Muslim world ^[23]. But his visit of Kashmir became an important event. He reached Kashmir in 1372 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Qutubuddin (1373-89 and choose Alluddinapura for his residence where he constructed a *sufa* to perform *Nimaz* and used to recite Quran during dusk and dawn ^[24]. In 1393 Sayyed Mohammad Hamdani, son and successor Syed Ali

Hamdani arrived in Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413). Sultan Sikander was a great builder and built the *Khankah* in 799 A.D. later known as *Khankah-I-Moulla* ^[25]. This architectural style was an example and a pioneer and adopted by the subsequent Kashmiri rulers till the time of Mohammad Shah ^[26]. Sultan Zainul Abdin (1420-70) and Amir Shammusiddin Iraqi in the days of Malik Ckhak's rule extended and reconstructed by providing a new artistic look. The mosque is the prototype of every mosque in Kashmir. The mosque does not exactly resemble a Chinese temple and is unlike the Indian architecture ^[27]. But it was a novelty of wooden structure evolved in the Valley for the first time. The foundation of Mosque is composed of the material remains of ancient monuments. It is nearly square in plan. The lower portion of the walls is constructed by decorated logs of deodar (cedar) finally carved and placed alternatively. The wooden structure provides with *archades*, and *varandahs*. One of the outstanding features is the pyramidal roof which covers the whole building. The crowned three tiered pyramidal is covered with the layer of a mixed material of grass and earth over the birch bark. There is a wide pavilion under the steeple, which is supported by small wooden pillars. Decorated beautiful lattice work on ceiling and walls indicate the deftness of the master hands involved in executing the woodwork which is the distinction of the province. Each corner of the roof is provided with hanging bells. A golden ball is fixed on the summit of the pyramid. Such type of construction of the roof is common in the valley, which is the typical feature of Buddhist or a Hindu temple ^[28]. The walls were ornamented which resembles with Orion style ^[29]. The mosque is in two stories, the lower portion having a large hall which is decorated with finally carved wood while the upper story is quite simple. There are fourteen chambers out of which seven are on each southern and northern side of the hall. These small chambers measures as 63x43 sq ft. The carved and decorated pillars support the entire hall from the four corners. Each pillar is about 20 ft in height. However the mosque with eight sided pillars with foliated bases and capitals, arched and recessed *mehrab*, paneled walls, painted ceilings and fine lattice work represent unique architectural beauty. The balconies on the upper story linked with stairs on both ends ^[30].

The mosque destroyed by fire for the first time during the time of Sultan Hassan Shah (1772-84). He rebuilt it in 1779 ^[31]. It also caught fire during the tenure of Abul Barkat Khan who was the deputy governor of Kashmir appointed by Emperor Mohammad Shah. It was again rebuilt by the order of Sultan in 1733 A.D. ^[32].

Pathar Masjid

Pathar Masjid in Zaina kadal situated on the right bank of Jehlum River. There are two other stone structures constructed during the Mughal period. One of them is a fort on Hariparbat another one is the mosque of Akhun Mullah Shah. Both of these structures were in grey limestone which is available in Kashmir ^[33]. The Mosque has been built by Noorjehan, the wife of Emperor Jahangir; in 1622 A.D. it is known as Shahi Masjid also ^[34]. The mosque was constructed under the supervision of Malik Haider Chadura. The interior is divided into three passages by two rows of arches composed of heavy and massive stones. The passage is extended to one end to another. The roofs of compartments handsomely ribbed and vaulted. The façade consists of nine arches including a large one in the centre. The structure represents the Mughal architectural and artistic value of mosques in Agra, Delhi,

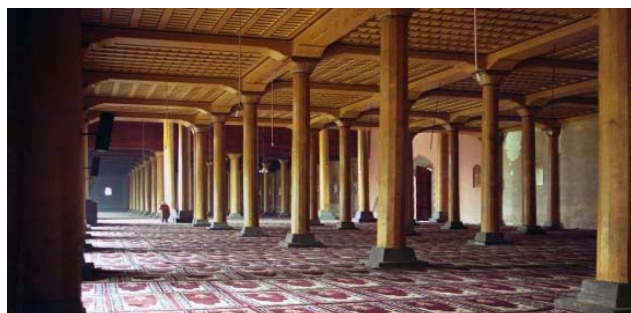
Lahore [35] and some other parts of India. Due to non-availability and difficulty of transportation of white marble the attention was paid on local material i.e. grey limestone. The construction of the mosque has been undertaken on the plinth of heavy stone boulders used as foundation, a few feet deeper from ground level. The enclosure of the mosque has been executed in bricks. A porch in the centre with four arched openings on either sides of the entire hall meant for prayers. The construction of the arches credited to Noorjahan's personal interest [36]. On both the northern and eastern sides of the prayer hall are windows openings executed in stones. The stone pillars support the domes, in the interior of the mosque. The central dome is largest of all. On the either sides of the porch staircase and small windows for ventilation have been provided. The roof was laid out by stone slabs and the gaps were filled with terracotta pipes. The usual square tank or a *Hamam* for ablution is not seen.

The Muslims were forbidden to perform *nimaz* in the mosque by the *fatawa* of Muslim Scholars because at the time of construction Noorjahan spent money which got from her golden sleeper. The restoration of almost all the parts of the mosque has already been undertaken. The roof and walls were subsequently repaired in 1976 A.D [37]. During the repair water proofing of the roof was done and arches on southern sides were rebuilt [38]. The floor of the prayer hall has been paved with the finally dressed with the stone slabs. The main entrance also repaired by replacing the damage stones [39]. The domes ceiling and the archway pillars were plastered [40].

Images



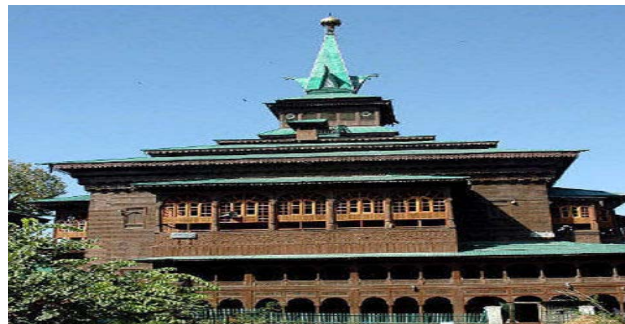
Jamia Masjid Nohatta, Srinagar (Northern and Western Colonnades)



Jamia Masjid Nohatta, Srinagar (plinth and cedar Pillars)



Pathar Masjid Srinagar (Stone Mosque), front view



Shah Hamdan Mosque Srinagar (*Shekhar* on pyramidal roof)

Conclusion

Wooden architecture has a specific significance in the archaeological history of Kashmir. Kashmir is considered as seismic zone of severe intensity. Wooden architecture is a product of this geographical phenomenon. The wooden architecture of Kashmir added fuel to the incidents conflagration, which is preceded or succeeded by the earthquake in Kashmir. The calamities' of earthquake and catastrophic fire incidents of Kashmir valley are recorded by the chronicles in quite a large number such incidents has also been attested by several travelers, accounts.

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