

History of Architecture and Culture III

Lecture 3

Gothic Architecture

Moving on to the Gothic architecture. As I already talked to you before, Roman Empire was the biggest empire in that period. Roman empire marked one period where the whole of Europe was rich in culture, architecture, in creation and that made Europe flourish into something that was never expected to be. So once the Roman empire fell, it took a long time for Europe to come up from what it was and to become something it is today. Striving from what was left behind for the Romans, in the Roman empire, they tried making things that could actually help them bring back what was lost. After much striving, creating things that reminded them of the past, somehow it was modern and postmodern back then, in their approach. The next style of architecture they came up with is Gothic Architecture.

So once, the Roman empire came down, various other people from the west of Europe that was once under the Roman Empire, tried to split themselves geographically into different countries. As you know in Europe, geographical conditions varied from north to south, east to west, its really varied. So based on that, the architecture of each of these countries varied. The condition of the Christian church as I said before was at its best at that point of time. The rise of churches happened, the rise of monasteries happened as I said before. The popes made emperors and kings, unmade them as well, threw people out, made people into power. So, that was the most important period where papacy reached a level where it grew above even the kings and emperors, that was the highest level of power, the pope has ever gained.

At the same time, what was happening in England was that, they were beginning to worship virgin Mary as much as they started worshipping Jesus Christ. So, lady chapels began to develop in England. The term 'Gothic', to understand this, we need to first understand about a man called Sir Christopher Wren. Sir Christopher Wren in the seventeenth century, gave this term called 'Gothic architecture'. This term was a reproach for the style of architecture, which he tried bringing back

from the departed, classic architecture like I said. Roman architecture that was lost, Romanesque architecture that was lost; all these types of architecture, that were earlier known as 'classic architecture', Christopher Wren tried bringing that back with a touch of uniqueness and he called it 'Gothic architecture'.

Right now, this term is given to the Medieval architecture in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries and those churches or those buildings that were formed then, we call them the Gothic architecture. If you see in the ppt, you can see Christopher Wren and here, a typical picture of Gothic architecture from back then.

Furthermore, Gothic architecture of the 13th Century was a slow evolution of the Romanesque architecture. The Roman architecture initially came about, then came the Romanesque architecture and finally the Gothic architecture. Everything was a seamless fusion and transformation from what it was previously. This basic differentiation between the Romanesque architecture and Gothic architecture is the pointed arch. Romanesque architecture did have arches but this concept of having pointed arches was brought in by Gothic architecture. Gothic architecture was basically characterized by arches because once you see the arch, you can tell if its Gothic or Romanesque. Gothic architecture had amortised using stones to an extent it hadn't been used before.

As you can see in the ppt, these are the different types of arches that has been used in the Gothic architecture. These are the lancet arches, the tudor arch, the Ogee arch and the three-centred arch. Now that we are learning English architecture in this lecture, Tudor arch you will come across in almost all the Gothic churches in England.

Cathedrals

Moving on, Cathedrals. Now, you might be budding with the question that we have already learnt about churches, why do we have to learn about Cathedrals? The reason being, churches are very different from Cathedrals. If you look into the ways the Christian pray, there are four types; chapels, churches, Cathedrals and there are Basilicas. Cathedrals are the most advanced form of Christian

architecture. It is a complete representation of what a Christian worshipper wants from a building. The basic and the foremost difference between a church and a Cathedral is that, a church is a smaller building that is run by a group of priests or a group of monarchs. But a Cathedral on the other hand, is a building that is run by the Bishop himself. There are many cases where the Bishop stays within the Cathedral. So, as I said, Cathedrals are representative buildings, they represent exactly what they want. Previously, if you look into churches, churches were evolved from what was existing in order to create a space where they can just come and worship. While a cathedral was perceived from scratch, made from scratch, which was made so that they can completely represent a basic Christian's understanding. Cathedrals in the medieval time occupied the foremost important space or a place of a national life. So all these European countries that I mentioned before, split into different countries, all these countries had a church or a cathedral as the most important part of their life. It was even more important than the prince or the kings. So the church plans, in England, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy; all these places are in the form of Latin Cross. The Latin cross basically has two arms. The smaller arm is from the north to the south, the larger arm from the east to the west. So, the main body of the church generally go to the east to the west. While, the north to the south, you have transepts. Transepts are nothing but the smaller arm of the church. This particular Cruciform planning has been an evolution of a Basilican church or maybe the tombs from the Constantine period. As I discussed previously, the Basilican church first came up with a plan of the cross, the Constantine tomb came up with it later. Even now, it is not sure from where was this evolved but it was an evolution of these two. So, a Cathedral can have two, three or five naves. They have an ambulatory and a radial chapel. An ambulatory is basically nothing but a covered aisle, an extension of a covered aisle. While, the Radial chapel is nothing but a lot of semi circular chapels dedicated to different people and they have a cover of a ribbed vault and two towers in the facade. The Cathedrals had two types of planning, the Basilican planning as you can see in the presentation. The one on the left is the Basilican planning and the one on the right is the Saloon plan. Basilican plan is more linear, while the saloon plan is more rectangular in shape. There is a basic difference between the French Cathedral architecture and the English Cathedral

architecture. The reason why I am talking about these two countries is because Gothic architecture was at its best, at England and at France. So, if you take a look at France, the principal entrance was basically on the left. It was always flanked by two towers and in England, it was either in the South and north. Instead of the towers, they had a Porch that protected the entrance. Basically, there are two different aspects to Cathedrals that make it different from others. A Cathedral has something called the Triforium. A Triforium is nothing but blind storey. The Triforium is the space beneath the sloping roof. You can see it right here, that is a Triforium. It is enclosed on the Nave side by series of arches, you can see here, there are a lot of arches. Above the triforium, there are series of clerestory windows. These are the series of windows that completely cover just below the roof. These windows were actually made in order to light the nave. These are the two important parts of the interiors of the Cathedral. In England, the normal preference in a Cathedral was to make the end square. As in, the sanctuary where the priest sits, that area is usually square in England and in other churches it was circular, as you can recall from the previous lectures. So, many cathedrals were enhanced in the later stages or later eras, just so that, they can give a square that is very visible in many of the English churches that it was not square before. It was later enhanced to give the square end.

The English Cathedrals were very conspicuous just because it is a very linear when compared to the width. The length is longer compared to the French Cathedral and the most important and the foremost difference between a French Cathedral and an English Cathedral is that, an English Cathedral always stands on an open space. The people gave a huge area to the church, so that whenever you are on a road, you can see by the end, there is a church because of the openness of the space in front of the church. It was green and there were very few trees in order to mark the ambience and the extravaganza of a church or a cathedral. Whereas in France, it was often surrounded by houses or shops. It is quite often when the French Cathedral shares walls with different buildings, shops or houses. If not, it is completely congested together. It kind of camouflages into the French streets and the majesty of a church is known only once you step inside a French cathedral, than from outside.

Basically, there were three principles of proportion in the Cathedrals. The Tetrastyle, the Hexastyle and the Octastyle which are self-explanatory because of the name. You can see a basic Cathedral here. In the picture, you can see the ambulatory I spoke about. It is an extension of the walking area and then you have the radial chapels. These Radial chapels are dedicated to different saints per say. You have the Rose window. Rose window was another main part of a Gothic church, almost all Gothic churches have a rose window. Rose window is nothing but a circular window in front of the church. Right in front of the church you can see the circular window, that shows it is a Gothic architecture that you are looking at. Then you have two Spires as I spoke about. There are very few churches that have only a single Spire that is above the Tribune. Other than that, many churches have double Spires. But spires are very important in a Gothic church. This is a transept that I was talking about, which is from the north to south. This is the plan and you can see it is in the form of a cross and this is the longer side which goes towards the west. You have a nave which is double the size of the aisle. This is basically the Cathedral for you.

English Medieval Architecture

Moving on to the English Medieval Architecture. England is one country that has one of the richest culture if you see from the present day point of view. English culture has always been spoken about, English Colonialism has been spoken about. Above all, English churches have always had space in history and they have one or two churches that are like the front face of the Christian architecture. The early existence of man on this island happened in the Paleolithic age. You can see rudely shaped flint implements that actually tell you that men lived here.

Moving on to the Neolithic age, the Iberians came with polished stones and arrows and they lived in burrows. Then came the Bronze age and happened the Celtic invasion. The Celtic invasion is nothing but the Aryan invasion. Celts were basically Aryans and they were very civilized even back then. They had clothes, ornaments, gold ornaments on them, that is the reason why the Celts stood out. That was one of the first time when civilization actually happened in England.

Then came Julius Caesar. When Julius Caesar landed in Britain, this was recorded in the commentaries and that led to the beginning of the Roman occupation in Britain and Britain became the Roman colony that led to further development of land, buildings, it became a space where people can inhabit. They were amazing buildings, exceptional architecture, literature, culture, art, architecture, everything grew there and then came the Norman Conquest. The Norman conquest somehow linked England to the rest of the continent and that actually was the basic reason why it was formulated into one separate country and it had its own identity outside the Roman empire after the Roman conquest. Then happened, the conquest of Wales and the rest is history.

The first example of English architecture that you will be seeing today is the Salisbury Cathedral. Salisbury Cathedral was built in AD 1220 - 1258. It was almost 38 years of construction that you can see into one of the most famous churches in the world. It was built on a plain level sight. All they did was they created a huge lawn with very few trees and built a church there, that's what happened there. You can see the plan of the Salisbury Cathedral. You can see the long Nave and the thinner aisles on either sides. If you can see the Nave is exactly twice as much as the aisle is. You have two transepts - north and the south transepts and the central tower from in between. You have space for the choir, you have the bishop's space. Further on, you have the Lady Chapel, as I said the English are very staunch when it comes to worshipping Mother Mary. You have the Lady Chapel across England, almost all the English churches have Lady Chapels. As I said, this particular cathedral is surrounded by a green sward of a wide 'close', broken only by a few elm trees. It's almost entirely an example of Early English style of architecture and it is a characteristic English Gothic architecture. If you say English Gothic, it is Salisbury Cathedral because it only has traces of gothic architecture, it is pure rich gothic. It has double transepts as I said and a central tower here in between. Wherever this transept and the Nave join, that is where the tower comes in English architecture. As I said in the French architecture, it is near the entrance and the English architecture at the tower where the Nave and transept joins. Then there is a decorative spire. Actually the spire of this particular church is decorated so beautifully and it is 404 ft in height and it is the tallest and loftiest

in England. If you see this is the Spire of the church and it is decorated beautifully with the Gothic architecture. Here you can see in this picture, Gothic pointed arches, just everywhere you see it is pointed, this is classic Gothic architecture. The Western facade, those are unimpressive. There is a fine vaulted north porch which projects boldly out of it and that is the most fascinating part of this particular Cathedral.

Moving on to the next Cathedral, it is the Westminster Abbey. The Westminster Abbey as we discussed in the previous lecture was an example of a Monastic establishment and it stands out on what was once a thorny island. They built this church in a completely uninhabited area and this is one of the most visited places in England today. This is particularly the plan of the Westminster Abbey, one of the biggest monuments. If you can see, you have around 12 or 13 chapels and 9 monuments inside the particular church and if you see, these are the chapels that are dedicated to different saints and these are semi circular and around the particular church. This church is said to be standing on another church which was built by Sebert in AD 616, this church was later brought down and Westminster Abbey was constructed there. As I told you in the previous lecture, the Benedictine Monastery was found by S Dunsten in AD 960 and this particular Abbey was one of the biggest examples of Benedictine monastery and this is particularly the largest Benedictine foundation ever. It is partly rebuilt by Edward the Confessor just before the Norman conquest and dedicated to St.Peter. As I said, the Norman conquest brought in a lot of architectural changes and a lot of cultural changes in England that was never happening before. So, this particular church also is dedicated St.Peters. If you see, almost all the Christian churches, most of them are dedicated to St.Peter. This happened in AD 1055 - 65. If you see the Westminster Abbey, it is the one church that has evolved, right from when England was nothing to when England became something. This particular Abbey moves along with history and it has evolved with England. So even when England wins the war, they used to say, Westminster Abbey won, long live Westminster Abbey! That's how important Westminster Abbey is to the culture. You can see the facade of the Westminster Abbey in the presentation. It was Norman or Romanesque to Medieval or Gothic, when it was constructed it was Norman, then

it slowly evolved to Romanesque and from that it became Medieval and finally it had Gothic influences. It was not built as a gothic church, it evolved as a gothic church. As I said, it evolved from Norman church to Gothic church and it met each and every stage of development of Christian architecture. So, successive phases of Early English architecture is very much prominent in this particular church and it comprised of Abbey church and a square cloister court, surrounded by open arcades of various dates. If you see in the plan, this is the huge Cloister court, everything surrounds this. The outer court the inner court, were called the Dean's yard and Little Dean's yard, respectively. So there were two courts in this particular church. They were called Outer Dean's yard and Little Dean's yard respectively and this formed the main part of the particular church. Most of the existing monastic buildings date back to the 14th century and that was the time of Abbot Litlington. So the greater part of the Abbey church was rebuilt later on a granular stage by Henry III. That was when this Gothic architecture started evolving in this particular church. The church is basically French in character and its early example of construction in a geometric style. So it had twisted columns that was very different in this church when compared to other churches of the Gothic origin. It had twisted columns of glass mosaic finish which is still existent in the present church. The interior of this Abbey betrays the French influence. As I said, the exterior has a lot of French influence but the interiors completely betrays this French influence. It is really lofty, tall and it has huge clear storeys. In French churches, you don't see this kind of loftiness. That is like a particular feature of the English Gothic churches. The North transept facade is emphatically French with cavernous porches and rose windows. As I said, the Rose windows are a huge part of this Westminster Abbey, as of many other Gothic churches. The Nave continued westward by Edward III and others, adhered to the 13th century general design. If you see in the plan, this particular Nave continued westward. It grew as the church evolved, the length of the Nave evolved. As I said, this particular Nave is a direct example of the English Gothic architecture. Compared to the width, the Nave is extremely long and that itself is a direct example of a Gothic architecture in England. A cylindrical pier is surrounded by four detached shafts of Purbeck marble, this Purbeck marble is used particularly in this particular church and that is what this church is made of in the interiors and this was usual

in the early English periods. Again, the western towers were added later in AD 1735 - 40. If you see, in this picture, you can see the western towers. This was not a previous part of this church. This was later a gothic addition that happened in 1735 - 40 by John James or Nicholas Hawksmoor. So, the extreme length of this church is very famous. As I said, it is 511 ft and 6 inches in length. It has unusually spaced Triforium which is used for coronation ceremonies and the 102 ft high nave vault is the peculiar aspect about this church. It is the highest Gothic vault in England.

Another aspect to this church is that, it has a tomb of Henry VII and his queen Elizabeth of York, this particular tomb is enclosed in a remarkable gun metal screen of Gothic design. You can see in this picture, each and every carving, each and every design over this particular tomb is a direct implication of the Gothic touch in this particular Abbey. On the extreme east, you have the most celebrated chapel of this particular Abbey, the chapel of Henry VII. If you see, all the other chapels are pretty small and it was almost equal in size. Here, you can see the chapel of Henry VII, this is particularly the most famous part of this Abbey when compared to every other part of this Abbey. People usually come to this particular Abbey to see Henry VII's chapel and the buttresses of the previous Gothic period have been given place to octagonal piers between which, windows form a mere screen. As in, the Buttresses are so much that the windows form a mere screen in this particular church. This Abbey is impressive because of the triumph of the English Gothic architecture. Although everything else evolved, but this church stands to remain Gothic and no more evolution happen to this particular church. It has grown into the English National symbol and has woven itself to the stone of English history. It represents the growth of centuries in England, it shows what all came, what all happened and what it became. This church itself is one example where you can see each and every phase of the English architecture and how England evolved from a Roman empire to a Gothic style. It was built, altered, adorned and repaired. Yet it is still epitome of English architectural art.