

AR 6402

HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE & CULTURE –IV

LECTURE -1

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

Islamic Architecture

What is Islamic architecture, as we studied in our previous semesters to understand any particular style of architecture especially that has religious links we have to first understand the basis of the religion and philosophy. Basically Islamic architecture is nothing but any architecture that has any building style that has to do with the religion Islam, when the religion of Islam evolved various construction activities took place based on the Religious principles of Islam, they were not only religious but secular building which reflected the design principles. These included Mosque and funerary monuments, Funerary monuments are nothing but Toms because Muslims did not have the culture of cremating the dead, they built tomb in memory of the dead so that also became a style of architecture, then down to private dwellings and fortifications.

Basically Islam has a religion started and this became a way of life. It began to grow as an Islamic culture which automatically started reflecting in the architecture. Before understanding about the architectural part of it let's go back in history and see how initially Islam originated and started spreading throughout the world. They have a very interesting story in history that whom we call as Prophet Muhammad now was originally called as Al Amin. In this picture you see that he was actually a wealthy merchant who was travelling from Mecca to Medina and then on the way he met this particular angel called Gabriel and then he realised that he was the messenger of God so it was kind of enlightenment which started gaining more follower for Prophet Mohammed, then he started his journey from the holy place of Mecca to Medina, it was in this part of the world in Arabia that Islam actually originated this was somewhere in the 6th century. He was actually a very important personality not only religiously but also politically because in that time in Arabian region they were many countries which were revolting for various reasons. This origin of a particular religion unified the entire reason politically. You know it unified based on the religion, this is how Islam actually originated and then from here it's slowly started spreading to various parts of the world. As you can see in the

map this brown colour of ocean from where Mecca and Medina he travelled this is where it originated and from here his followers travel to various parts of Arabian, then Asia and even two parts of India and here different parts of Africa, so even parts of Europe, here towards Spain and other countries, basically from here Islam started spreading in various regions.

Since Islam started spreading to various parts of the world each part had its own unique regional component which added to the Islamic principles, so very varied style of Islamic architecture started evolving in these different places. Islamic architecture initially started based on the principles of the religion but once it starts spreading to different parts of the world based on the regional aspects it started creating a more variety in the architectural styles. Let's see some early examples of Islamic architecture one of the most the earliest example comes under the Ummaday dynasty. This was between the 6 and 7th century during this part you can see in the map, this green colour portion shows the extent of the Ummaday dynasty so in this period of time the capital shifted from Mecca to Damascus. Jerusalem city is not only concerned Holy by the Christian community but also by the Muslim people. It's considered as that there is a particular Rock in Jerusalem where Prophet Mohammed was supposedly waiting to meet God so it was also considered as the holy place by the Muslims, this particular Rock they built a shrine around it called the Dome of the rock, hence this was one of the earliest examples of Islamic architecture. You can see the picture here some more detailed version here so this building is called the dome of the rock this is located in Jerusalem. This is octagonal structure which you can see in this image in terms of planning, it has archways all around the building. It has a huge dome the central dome which is covered in gold leaf and all the surrounding walls are laid with Turquoise colour tiles, you can see the blue colour tiles, it's a kind of actually merges with the sky, so that the golden domes stands out. This was the first time an architectural monument was being built by the Islamic community, so they did not have any predecessors, they did not have any particular style to begin with, what they did was they used craft men and skilled people who are actually byzantine architects. You can see a lot of influences of Byzantine style of architecture in Islamic Architecture, so that is why the domes and other features started coming in. If you see the interior of the building, this is where the Rock is and you have actually here two Ambulatory or circulatory passages Around the rock

which has calligraphic images from the inscriptions and then about the rock is the big Golden drum and just below the Dome you have these openings all along the circumference. What it indicates is that as light passes through these openings it falls directly on the rocks, so as a person enters through the building he immediately sees the glow of the light that falls on the rock first and then he gets to see the actual rock.

This is the picture of the interior dome, this building set a very high standard in terms of elaborate building structures in Islamic architecture. This is an image of a palace that is ruined now these walls have now been transferred to a museum but this is one of the early examples of a palace as I mentioned earlier Islamic architecture does not be with the religious buildings but also secular and public building. This was one such example of a palace it was constructed in Jolland, you can see the plan here it is actually of fortified wall complex it had series of courtyard, pools it had a Mosque within it an audience hall and separate apartments, so it was kind of a hunting lodge or a palace or may be rulers stayed and relaxed for a while. Here you have these triangle kind of inscriptions on the wall surfaces and also there were some line sculptures found in the exterior, so probably this denotes kind of an Assyrian influence you have seen the example of Assyrian Architecture with the tall gateways and other things. There was similarity of such Assyrian influences in this particular Palace Complex.

Principles & Planning

It was during this dynasty that typical mosque format came into being till then there was not any particular format in which mosque was built. During this period that they formed a particular format, the format was based on what? Obviously it is a religious building so they have a set of religious principles based on which, they form the principles for architectural tool. If you see the plan of typical mosque it is square in nature, it has a huge Courtyard surrounded by hypostyle hall that is series of columns.

How this came into being is that when Prophet Mohammed initially started teaching his disciples his house was actually a very simple and modest brick structure with an open Courtyard and a colonnaded structure around. It was a small house but this small house was taken as a prototype and the mosque was also built on that particular pattern. So

if you see the image these are the typical parts in a Mosque, usually the prayer mats are laid along the kiblah. Kiblah is nothing but the axis which faces Mecca. Muslims usually face Mecca and pray, that axis is called as kiblah and then you have the minarets or the towers it is their prayer Towers then lecturn to place the Quran and mihrab is the wall in the west. West is nothing but the wall towards Mecca, so you have in nish in that wall that is the mihrab and to the right of the mihrab is small raised pedestal called as the minbar, so usually a preacher in a Mosque use this space for preaching the people gathered in the courtyard and then you have a place called Dikka. Again here it is a small platform raised on columns so usually Quran recited from this platform and then you have Ablution fountains where you cleanse your hands and feet. A typical Mosque began to look like this, you can see that there are no sculptures involved, there are no human figures involved, and there are no sculptures of animals or celestial figures as we saw in Hindu architecture. It is a very simple planning, very open and well lit in nature, not much of architectural decorations.

After the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown, certain members of the dynasty travel to Europe in parts of Spain, they built this great mosque of Cordoba, this is nothing but it was actually a Roman Cathedral. It was on the ruins so they built Mosque from the ruins. You can see in the picture, it is one of the most beautiful structures, which was actually a cathedral but now a Mosque you can see the interiors. If you see the plan this was actually a cathedral initially later it expanded and became the Mosque that was in Spain and then the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad they build this great mosque at Samarra. If you can see the structure is very unique and this minaret was the largest ever built during that time, this kind resembles a ziggurat in Sumerian Architect, hence we can say that there was a lot of Persian influence in building this particular structure. Then this was a time a format developed called as four Iwan Mosque, this was in Persia four Iwan Mosque was nothing but it has 4 large hypostyle halls early we saw just one but this had 4 halls with barrel vaults that each face towards an internal Courtyard.

As Islamic culture became more and more diversified with less centralised political structure, architecture also became increasingly more varied. This is an example of a buildings constructed during the Seljuk Turks period, what they did was they rule portions of Mesopotamian and Persia, they combined elements from Syria into the Persian style, they invented this particular roofing system called the

turbe. These were built for Domes and funerary monasteries. This particular Dome is a unique feature that was invented by the Seljuk Turks. It was actually derived from the chapels and tents of early styles. In addition to this Seljuk also build a particular style of building called Medresas. It was nothing but religious school, they weren't as open as Mosque they were very closed in terms of planning and spatial arrangement and the Turks also built bridges, can see a typical plan of a religious school here, you can see there aren't open courtyard.

The Ottoman Empire in 1453 the Ottomans captured Constantinople and named it Istanbul that's now Turkey and they converted the famous building Hagia Sophia into a Mosque which was actually a Cathedral, what they did was they added minarets in the exterior and in the interior they added inscriptions from the Quran, you can see it is one of the largest structures famous for Islamic architecture and you can see the interior of the Dome again with clear story lightings.

Now we saw about how Islamic architecture evolved through various dynasties. Now we will see about Islamic cities, Islamic culture started evolving more and more and particular style of city planning also came into being. Traditional Islamic cities if we see they followed Islamic law and Islamic teachings on both social and cultural aspects of community life, that reflected in there city planning, not only they responded to the local condition but also certain architectural features were there. One of the important thing is, it is a congregational Mosque mostly any traditional Islamic city if you see the congregational mosque will be the centre of the city and it grew from the Mosque so all other administrator activities and commercial activities was surrounded around this congregational Mosque. That was the most Central feature and again religion and commerce also had a link so there were markets spaces around the congregation Mosque and how these markets were arranged is that the market that was selling more expensive commodities like gold and other things well located closer to the Mosque and the less important items were located further away. These are some examples of traditional Islamic markets, this image represents a typical city life in ancient Islamic city you have a congregational mosque, you have the market spaces happening around it.

The another building typology called as the Caravanserai, it was nothing but road side inn where usually travellers who are travelling for long distances with camels, loaded with goods and other things they needed

to take a day or two off, this was the place for them to rest. Since trade was a thriving activity these building structures came into existence. If you see a typical plan of caravanserai was mostly square or rectangular there was just one opening and was usually wide enough for people to enter with animals like camel along with goods, there was a central Courtyard in the centre and small niches for travellers to take rest or store goods and some caravanserai also had elaborate baths and even to wash animals etc. Basically this was the kind of culture that was happening in Islamic city if you see the elevation of any Islamic city you will see that it is very simple, plain and even the height of structures are also not very elaborate very low height. But in contrast to the simplicity of the exterior all the interior of the residences and other Public buildings were richly decorated, hence the kind of philosophy exist, thou it was simple on the outside it allows for individual freedom of expression in the interior part of the house, it brings out the individuality of that particular person in the dwelling.