

## INDO-SARACENIC ARCHITECTURE

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### ***Abstract***

*This project deals with the complete information, about Indo-Saracenic Architecture in India. Various information about the architectural styles, elements used for construction and its other tourism potential are elaborately discussed in this project. The project also gives information about the historical data of Indo-Saracenic Monuments. All the necessary details for a tourist who would like to visit Indo-Saracenic monuments are clearly described. The rich cultural heritage is explained to enable or to understand more about the country's importance.*

**Keywords:** *Indo saracenic architecture, dome, arches, minarets.*

### **Islamic Style**

Islamic style performs a dominant role in Indo-Saracenic architecture in India. In the Islamic style magnificent gates, forts, mausoleums, mosques, palaces, public buildings and tombs etc were built. The architecture created under the Mughals (Islamic rulers) was a common heritage of both the Hindus and the Muslims. A common characteristic of the Mughal buildings is the domes, the slender turrets at the corners, the palace halls supported on pillars and the gateways which is also one of the principle characteristics found in the Indo-Saracenic buildings. The Mughal buildings are richly decorated with costly articles. These buildings were constructed mostly with red sand stone and white marble. The Mughal period in the Indian history is one of the glorious periods that have enriched the country. Some of the main characteristics of Mughal style found in Indo- Saracenic architecture are:-

### **Bulbous Dome**

In the Indo-Saracenic architecture one of the main characteristic is the Onion shape Bulbous Dome which is found in most of the Indo-Saracenic buildings in Chennai. The Bulbous dome is a hemispherical structure evolved form arch, usually forming a ceiling or roof. It resembles the shape of an Onion. These domes are often larger in diameter and their height usually exceeds their width. These Domes can be seen in all the monuments which were constructed by the Mughals. The Dome is also known as Qubba in Arabic. The Dome is considered as a symbolic representation of the vault of the heaven. The interior decoration of a dome often emphasizes this symbolism, using intricate geometric, stellate, or vegetal motifs to create breathtaking patterns. Some of the examples with Bulbous Domes are Egmore Railway Station, Chennai Museum and the Alai Dawarza in Delhi etc.

### **Overhanging Eaves**

The overhanging eave is the next major characteristic features in all the Indo-Saracenic buildings. It is a protruding structure which provides protection for the lower walls. The eaves are the edge of the roof which overhang the face of the wall and normally project the beyond side of the building. The eaves form an overhang to throw water clear of the walls and may be highly decorated as part of an architectural style. An Overhanging eave is the edge of a roof, protruding outwards, beyond the side of the building generally to provide weather protection. These eaves are also known as Chhajja which was adapted into the Indo-Saracenic architecture which flourished during the British period during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. E.g Tomb of Salim Chishti, Fatehpur Sikri, India.

## **Vaulted Roofs**

Vaulted Roofs are ceilings with intersecting arches. The term vault is used for arched form used to provide a space with a ceiling or roof. These roofs can be seen in mausoleum which was built during the Islamic period. One of the finest examples of vaulted roof mausoleum is Gol Gumbaz in Bijapur, Karnataka. The parts of a vault exert lateral thrust that requires a counter resistance. When vaults are built underground, the ground gives all the resistance required. When the vault is built above ground, various replacements are employed to supply the needed resistance to the monument.

## **Domed Kiosks**

Kiosk is widely found in Islamic architecture, an open circular pavilion consisting of a roof supported by pillars. The word has been applied to a wide variety of architectural elements. The summer palaces of the sultans of Turkey were called kiosks. The early Persian mosque, having a domed central area, is known as the kiosk mosque. A kiosk is a small, separated garden pavilion open on some or all sides. Domed Kiosks can be found in all the Mughal Monuments through out India especially in palaces.

## **Chhatris**

Chhatris are an elevated, dome-shaped pavilions used as an element in Indian architecture. The word Chhatri means "canopy" or "umbrella." The word Chhatris usually referred to memorial built over the site where the funeral (cremation) of an important person. Such memorials usually consist of a platform girded by a set of ornate pillars which hold up a stone canopy. The word chhatri is also refer to the small pavilions that mark the corners, roof of entrance of a major building. These pavilions are purely decorative and have no utility, but they are a classic folly which represents the status and wealth. e.g. Humayun's Tomb in Delhi and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

## **Minarets**

A minaret is a distinctive architectural structure found adjacent to mosques. It is a tall spire with a conical or onion-shaped crown. Minarets are either free-standing or taller than associated support structure. The basic form of a minaret includes a base, shaft, and gallery. The styles vary region to region and from period to period. Minarets provide a visual focal point and are traditionally used for the Muslim call to prayer Adhan. It was a tall thin building with stairs outside and small windows to let in daylight. At the top, there was an opening for the muezzin to call out the prayers so everyone would know that it was time to pray. Stairs circle the shaft in a counter-clockwise fashion, providing necessary structural support to the highly elongated shaft. The gallery is a balcony that encircles the upper sections from which the muezzin may give the call to prayer. In Chennai the Senate house is the best example of Indo-Saracenic architecture with Minarets.

## **Pavilion**

Pavilion refers to the subsidiary building that is positioned separately or as an attachment to a main building. In the traditional architecture of Asia, palaces or other large houses may have one or more subsidiary pavilions that are either freestanding or connected by covered walkways in the buildings of Mughal architecture. These pavilions can be found in the forts, palaces of British architecture in Indo-Saracenic style.

## **Cusped Arches**

The cusp in architecture is the intersections of lobed or scalloped forms, particularly in arches (cusped arches) and tracery (ornamental stone work). The three lobes of a trefoil (cloverleaf form) are separated by three cusps. Cusped forms appear commonly in early Islamic work. The monumental cusped arch had become the standard Mughal style component by the end of 17<sup>th</sup> Century. In addition, the central arch is surrounded by rectangular frame and flanked by single storey, stacked cusped arches and side towers, a

compositional scheme used in Mughal buildings. The British builders also used the cusped shape arch universally and frequently enriched it with representations of leaves, flowers, or even human heads at the tip.

### **Byzantine Style**

Indo-Saracenic architecture includes few characteristics of Byzantine Style, which is visible from the buildings like Senate House of Madras University and the Chepauk Palace, the first Indo-Saracenic monument built in Chennai. The Byzantine architecture is the style of architecture followed by the Romans. Early Byzantine architecture was built as a continuation of Roman architecture. Byzantine architecture is characterized by massive domes with square bases, rounded arches, spires and extensive use of glass mosaics. Byzantine architecture has much more in common with Christian architecture with many churches, imperial chapels, and mausoleums were built.

### **Byzantine Dome**

Byzantine Dome is a primitive form of dome and the barrel vault is of great quality. The most distinctive feature was the domed roof. The Dome which had always been a traditional feature became the prevailing motif of the Byzantine architecture. These Domes were constructed of bricks or some light porous stone. The Byzantine domes and vaults were believed to be constructed without temporary support or centering by the simple use of the large flat bricks and this distinct system derived from the eastern methods. The windows were formed in the lower portion of the dome where it creates the illusion that the dome is resting on the light that comes through them like a floating dome of heaven. Light is the mystic element that glitters in the mosaics and marbles. Byzantine domes make the building look higher from the outside and lighter from inside which reflects the idea that the church is a place to worship the God which is in the highest place, the light weight of the dome helps up to flight spiritually to his realm. In Chennai the monuments which include Byzantine Domes are the Chepauk Palace and the Senate House at the Madras University.

### **Gothic Style**

Gothic is the culmination of the ideals and artistic forms of medieval Christian art. Its cradle is in the heart of France. In 12<sup>th</sup> century it spread through Europe, to become an international style which lasted well into the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The name Gothic was given to the style by the late Renaissance critics. The Gothic style is rich in sculptural decoration, with pointed arches and stained glass windows. The Gothic builders made systematic and exhaustive use of architectural principles for balanced and perfect equilibrium. The Gothic architects used architectural principles and worked effectively with the pointed arch, the ribbed vaulting, the clustered column, and the flying buttress. After France it was in England the Gothic art flourished most. Many cathedrals in England were built in Gothic style. The British architects planned the buildings in such a way suiting the Indian climatic conditions with Indo-Gothic style known as Indo-Saracenic. The finest example of Indo-Saracenic monument in Indo-Gothic style is the Madras High Court with Gothic Dome and the Central Railway Station with the Gothic spire in Chennai.

### **Pointed Arches**

The Pointed arches is also called the French arc brise (broken arch) is formed of two segments of a round arch, butted against each other without keystone. It is used for vaulting by the Gothic builder to raise the building. The use of the pointed arch enabled the builders to perfect the ribbed vaulting became a chief characteristics of Gothic style. In Gothic buildings, the weight of the roof was supported by the arches rather than the walls. For the smooth curve at the base of the arch, the centre of these arcs must be on the same level as the springing points. The pointed arches give the structures amazing strength and stability.

## Stained Glass Windows

The most important form of Gothic art was the stained glass window. The stained glass windows are closely tied to the architectural developments of Gothic style. Most of the innovations of Gothic art were developed by adding more stained glass windows to churches. These stained glass windows were the multimedia stories of European era. Since very few people could read at the time, stained glass windows offered illiterate Christians a glorious glimpse into the tales of the Bible. There are two standard Gothic shapes of stained glass window the tall window with the pointed arch and the round rose window. The British architects also introduced these stained glass windows in Indo-Saracenic architecture. The best example is the Connemara Library with Stained Glass Windows in Chennai.

## Spire

A spire is a tapering conical or pyramidal structure on the top of a building. In Gothic style a Spire is the tall pointed roof of a tower or the tall pointed structure on top of a steeple. It is also known as pointed four sided pyramidal roof or roof like construction upon a tower. Spires may be octagonal or square and may include broaches, gabled dormers (spire faces), steep pinnacles (corners). It is also an elongated slender form that was a spectacular visual culmination of the building as well as a symbol of the heavenly aspirations. The Britishers started the construction of Spire in 12<sup>th</sup> century. Inspiring the Gothic style the British architects also implemented Spires in the Indo-Saracenic architecture. The best example of Indo-Saracenic monument with Spire is the Central Railway Station in Chennai.

## Pinnacle

Pinnacle is an architectural ornament capping of towers and buttresses (a structure of stone or brick built against a wall). It is originally forming the cap or crown of a buttress or small turret, but afterwards used on parapets at the corners of towers and in many other situations. The pinnacle looks like a small spire. It was mainly used in Gothic architecture. A tower may be decorated with pinnacles, each one capped by a finial. Simple pinnacles were used on Romanesque churches, especially to mask the abrupt transition from square tower to polygonal spire and they were far more prominent in developed Gothic architecture. They appeared at every major corner of a building, flanked gables, and decorated parapets and buttresses.

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