
ARCHITECTURE AS A SOURCE OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

Monu,

Research Scholar (M.Phil),

Registration no : 17 UAH7,

Department of Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology,

Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra

Email: monuthory@gmail.com

Abstract

The culture and history of India is dynamic, unique and intriguing. It is amongst the first civilizations to have come into existence. Historical records trace the beginnings of this great nation to the Indus Valley Civilization, which was one of the oldest known civilizations in the world. Some of the most striking aspects of the discoveries in the Indus Valley are the town planning and architecture, art and crafts. Much has been known about the town planning and architecture of the Harappan civilization. The cities boasted of well-planned roads (wide and straight) and houses provided with an efficient drainage system and ventilation. The continuity between Harappan reliefs and the Buddhist art, as well as between the Paśupati form of Śiva in Harappa and its representation in later Yoga system was noted by scholars.

Keywords : Striking, Town Planning, Architecture, Drainage, cities.

Introduction

Architectural sources are considered a major part of ancient Indian history. Through architectural sources we can get information about political, religious, administrative, economic and social aspects of ancient Indian history. Architecture plays an important role in making the history of human life. Since the prehistoric era, humans needed some shelter for survival. In the beginning, man made natural mountain caves his shelter. Over time, humans started cutting mountains and making caves for habitation. With the development of human civilization, the place of residence of people also changed. Man left the rock shelters and settled on flat land. He built houses made of stone, mud and wood for his living. Remains of ancient architecture are important sources of early human history. Architectural sources in ancient Indian history – Study of architectural sources have been conveniently divided into the following forms –

Secular

Residential ruins, furnaces, public buildings

Religious

Ancient temple, Vihar, Chaitya, Stupas and Yagya- Altars

On the basis of architecture, various forms of ancient Indian history can be reconstructed.

1 Sources helpful in reconstructing the history of administrative systems – city planning :

In the excavation of Indus Valley, evidence of many types of buildings has been found from Mohenjodaro. 1 fort (city - protective rampart) 2 Roads and drains 3. Housing Scheme 4. Furnaces- 5. Raj Prasad 6. Auditorium 7. Khanagaar

Fort

The forts of ancient times are divided into two parts –

1. Upper City

2. Lower City

In Harappan civilization, they have been found from places like Mohenjodaro, Kalibanga, Harappa etc. The city found in Mohenjodaro is divided into two parts. The city situated on the mound is probably considered to belong to the upper class.

2. Roads and drains:

Roads were constructed according to a well- planned plan. The network of main roads divided each city into five- six sections. Roads intersecting each other at right angles were spread from north to south in the city area of Mohenjodaro. The major roads in Kalibanga extended from east to west. The roads in Kalibanga were unpaved. Drains: In the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, there was a system of drains made of baked bricks to drain water and sewage from roads and streets. Their width and depth were determined as per requirement. Often the drains were covered with large baked bricks. Large drains have been found covered with stone slabs.¹

3. Housing Scheme

The housing plan of that time is studied as an architectural source in the history of ancient India. From Banawali we have found houses of different sizes and types belonging to that time. Caste system was prevalent. Evidence is found of Kalibanga and Yojana, the major centers of Harappan culture. In the Harappan civilization from which it is estimated that at that time.

4. Furnaces :

We have found remains of some furnaces from Kalibanga in Harappa. From this it is estimated that it might have been used for melting metal.

5. Irrigation system :

We have found evidence of a well from the Harappan archaeological site Banawali. These were used for irrigation system of agriculture. Even in Mohenjodaro we find evidence of wells in every house. They used them for daily activities. Apart from this, we have found evidence of a pond from Dholavira which may also have been used for agriculture.

6. Raj Prasad :

Remains of Maharaj Prasad of the Moors have been found in the fort Vidhan of ancient Pataliputra in Kumrahar. According to VastuVidya, it was divided into three classes. In the first art, sheds were made for elephants and horses and brothels or courtyards were made for soldiers. In the second class, Sabha or AasthaMandap was made and in the third class, Dhavalgriha or Prasad portion was kept.

7. Auditorium :

And during Harsha's time, we have found Harappan period, Vedic period, Maurya period, Gupta period, Kushan period and Hash Bhavan. Which is called auditorium. Chairs were made to sit inside these buildings. Looking at this building, it is estimated that the king's meetings were held in it.

8. Sananagar:

The most notable monument is the bathhouse located in Mohenjodaro. There is a water pond in the middle of its courtyard. Mackay estimates that priests lived here and performed worship. Probably the bathroom was for the common people. It was used on the occasion of religious ceremonies.

2 Sources of architectural economic system :

Related to economic life, we find plowed fields, cattle sheds, ports etc. as architectural sources. Which throws light on the economic life of ancient times. Looking at the splendor of the cities discovered from the excavations, it becomes clear that Harappa was a very fertile area for agriculture. The main occupation of the people there was agriculture. The bones recovered from the excavation show that they also reared animals. We have received

¹ShyamSharma, - Ancient Indian Art, Architecture &Iconography,Jaipur, Research publication,2012, P.61

plowed fields from Kalibanga. In which horizontal plowing has been done. This shows that they practiced agriculture in this way. Markets have been found in the north and commercial buildings in the west of Lothal city. The factories of artisans working in conch shells and copper were located in the market.

The most important achievement here is a huge size circle made of baked bricks. Which has been described as the dock of ships, this shows that they used to do business through sea route and ships were used. The dockyard suggests that it was a famous port. This is the oldest dockyard in the world. There was a warehouse adjacent to it where the incoming goods were kept temporarily. Here trading ships used to come and go from Egypt and Mesopotamia.²

3. Sources of architecture related to religious life:

Architectural sources play an important role in the history of ancient India. We get information about the religious development of a particular period from the art sources like Stupa, Vihar Chaitya temple etc. Architecture has had special importance in India since prehistoric times.

1. Stupa-

Stupa is called Dhup or Yupa in Pali language. In the Jatakas the word 'Yup' has been used as a high mound or monument. Yup means to gather or pile up. The word stupa has been used for a high mound of earth. Based on literary references, the tradition of stupa may have existed before Buddha, but the tradition of building stupa became widely popular only after Buddha's death. According to Buddhist tradition, originally eight stupas were built over the remains of Buddha. According to the Mahavansh, Emperor Ashoka had built 84 thousand stupas in different cities of the country. It is known from Divyadaan that Ashoka had opened seven initial stupas.

Stupa construction technique

There is discussion regarding the process of building stupas in Buddhist literature. In Mahavansh, the big stupa has been called Mahachaitya. The word "Shiladhup" has been used for a stupa made of stone.³ Before building the stupa, a strong foundation of stone or pieces of stone was laid. Which was called "PashanKuttiya". Bubble shaped thuha was made on top of it. Which was called egg. Harmika containing Shatravali was made on its flat head.⁴

The stupa was covered with Veshtini or Vedika. Vedika arches were constructed. The technique of stupa construction mentioned in Buddhist literature is seen in the huge stupas of Buddha Sanchi, Mathura, Amravati and Nagarjuna Code. Notable stupas are as follows:-

1. The Stupa of Sanchi
2. Sarnath Stupa
3. Bharhut Stupa
4. Amaravati Stupa
5. Chanheti Stupa (Yamunanagar)
6. Adibadri (Yamunanagar)
7. Assandh (Karnal)

²Vimal Chand Pandey - Political and cultural history of ancient India,Allahabad, central book depo,1671, page-45

³Vasudeva Upadhyaya- Stupa, Cave- Chaity, pp.-4

⁴UdaynarayanUpadhyay and Gautam Tiwari Indian Architecture and Art, New Delhi, MotilalBanarsidas publication,2018, p.78

2. Stone altar –

The stupas and viharas of the Maurya period were surrounded by altars. , The ruins of some of these are found. Remains of a Vedic period have been found in Bodh Gaya. These were built during the time of Ashoka. It is called "Bodhimanad". Apart from the bricks of the Maurya period stupa, a fragmented stone umbrella has been found from Sanchi. The remains of stone altars are the result of the fact that the use of stone in architecture had started at that time.

3. GuhaVihar-

Seven cave buildings of the Maurya period have been found. These cave buildings have been found at Barabar and Nagarjuna hills of Gaya. Of these seven cave buildings, three were built by Ashoka's son Dasharatha. The name of the first cave is 'Karan Chaupar' Guha, the second cave is 'Sudama' Guha and the third is 'Lomaharsh Rishi' Guha.⁵

4. Pillar

In the field of architecture, Maurya's prominence lies in the skill of building stone pillars. This stone pillar is a huge stone. Ashoka had built many pillars during his reign.⁶ Fa Hien has described 6 pillars, in addition to meditation, Hsin Tsang has mentioned 15 pillars. The list of pillars received so far is as follows-

1. Sarnath Pillar
2. Sanchi pillar
3. Rampurva pillar with lion title
4. Rampurva pillar with the title Taurus
5. LauriyaNandangarh Lion Pillar
6. LoriaArraj Column
7. Allahabad Pillar
8. Kaushambi Pillar
9. Lumbini Pillar
10. Swallow Column
11. The goat pillar
12. Sakashya column
13. Two pillars of Delhi⁷

5. Temple-

Temple is an important part of Indian architecture. We get information about various basic elements in the temple architectural remains. The gradual development in the architectural construction of the temple, the stylistic characteristics in different styles are helpful in the spread of different religions and the mutual religious relations.⁸ The outline of the temples built is helpful in historians in analyzing the object arrangement. Along with this, it is also helpful in giving a new direction to the study of monuments and making efforts to present a glimpse of the cultural, religious and economic life of the contemporary society through architectural construction.⁹ In ancient India, many temples were built by cutting rock inscriptions which are as follows:-

⁵Upadhyaya Vasudeva- Ancient Indian Cave Stupa, Temple, p.1

⁶Shyam Sharma - Ancient Indian Art, Architecture and Sculpture, BC, 104

⁷ParameshwariLal Gupta- Indian Architecture, Page-155

⁸Upadhyaya Vasudeva- Ancient Indian Stupa Caves and Temples, p.18

⁹Amar Singh- Sculptures in Gwalior Fort Temple, Page-196

1. Kailash Nath Temple
2. GangacodeCholapuram Temple
3. Mahabalipuram Temple
4. Rajarajeshwar Temple
5. Korganath Temple
6. Mahalinga Swami Temple
7. Hoyshaileshwar Temple
8. Ranganatha Temple of Srirangam
9. Temple of Mandagappattu
10. Martand Temple¹⁰

conclusion –

Architecture has a special place in the ancient history of India. This throws light on the political, religious and economic life of ancient history. The article further dealt with the continuity between Harappan and historical art and writing and it filled in the gap in the post-Harappan, pre-Buddhist art of India by calling attention to the structures in northwest India (c. 2000 BC) that are reminiscent of Puranic ideas. It summarized evidence related to the Vedic ideas of sacred geometry and its transformation into the classical Hindu temple form. We have also explored the connections that tie the details of the temple form and its iconography to fundamental Vedic ideas related to transformation. Indian temples reflect the tradition and talent of the country. The monuments of the Maurya period throw light on Indian architecture and religious life.

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¹⁰Aggarwal Rabindranath- Ancient Indian Remains, Page-150