

Islamic Architecture in Perspective: Conversations between Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism in Urban Indian landscape

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Abstract

Islamic architecture in India shows the earliest signs of cultural assimilation rather than cultural assertiveness- this is the main thrust of the paper. In its forms, texture, designs and symbolisms it is not only Islamic but also embeds indigenous specifics. To this extent, Islamic architecture is an embodiment of multiculturalism, manifest in the most exotic framework. The city of Delhi has been studied as a significant case in this regard, where Islamic monuments, gardens and town planning are replete with blending cultures, thus making Indo-Islamic art forms unique by themselves. This uniqueness is put to test in the contemporary times for two reasons: first, increased cultural and religious intolerance in the Indian society and second, the struggle of historic sites against enhanced urbanisation. Through the arguments proposed both these problems will be addressed. Islamic architecture is a historic reply to the former and stands out even in an era of increasing urbanisation. It therefore, becomes the epitome of diversity and shows that Islamic architecture was rather conversant with time and cultures than being antagonistic towards regional preferences.

Introduction

What does the architectural landscape of the cities of India suggest? Do they represent a clash of cultures? How can one understand the diversity in architecture in contemporary Indian cities, given the rising immigration and resultant decline in urban spaces? These questions are often subsumed within the larger problems of the Indian cities, those relating to immigration, inflation, health and hygiene issues. The growth of the cities, however, is neither sudden nor surprising. The development of the cities, which are now metropolitans, have unique histories and by looking at monuments and buildings the growth could be deciphered. According to Hosagrahar (2012: 283-84):

Urbanism in India today is a medley of contrasting forms. On the one hand are glass and steel skyscrapers of financial centres, the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) for multinational corporations, exuberant shopping malls and vast gated communities, all signs of a global modernity.

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On the other hand are countless historic towns with their palaces, mosques and temples, their lively bazaars, traditional neighbourhoods and living heritage.

The significance of the historical monuments and structures, especially in historic cities remain intact, and these architectural marvels have eventually become the hallmark of the places. This is true for the metropolitan cities as well, which flourished and expanded before the European colonisation. In the Northern parts of India, monuments built during the Sultanate and Mughal periods have upheld the legacy of the cities. To put differently, Islamic architectural edifices have remained unchallenged hitherto as emblems of several cities in India— not only because of their inherent uniqueness but also because of their multicultural tinge, which puts Islamic architecture within contemporary socio-political perspective that views certain cultures as ‘alien’ and therefore, unacceptable.

Islamic architecture has a unique place in the Indian society. These monuments are symbols of power, victory and grandeur, while at the same time representing emotions and imagination. There is a distinctness of Islamic architecture which is visibly present in some Indian cities. However, there is a subtle, albeit significant, observation: the Islamic texture of the architecture assimilates and is assimilated by other indigenous architectural traditions. This, along with the changing patterns of urban planning, shows two trends. The first one is an assimilation of distinct cultures under a singular banner of developmental architecture. The second is the starkness that is present between the medieval monuments, and the modern structures. These trends appear to be antithetical to each other since there is a hint of competition between them. However, on a closer scrutiny there is a conversation that exists between the two trends and the bridge is provided by Islamic architecture which is not only a representative of multiculturalism but is also conversant with cosmopolitanism, thus becoming the needed linkage.

While speaking of multiculturalism what indeed comes to our mind is a picture of peaceful coexistence between the various cultural, religious and ethnic sects and irrespective of their numerical strength the representation of all groups within a state. Though it emerged as a project of and a concept embedded in the western liberal democracies, it is also relevant for the post-colonial states because of the presence of different cultural and religious groups. India is one such land— being a multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic land, it has to accommodate many

categories of people. In the urban areas of India a good mix of many cultural groups have been witnessed. The intermingling of diverse cultural groups is also seen in art, aesthetics, music, dance, and literature. But the most grandeur expressions of multiculturalism is indeed reflected in the architectural landscape of India. Historically speaking also the architectural monuments themselves speak for the assimilation of the indigenous and external cultures and, in the present times, the presence of these along with the emergence of strong urban cosmopolitan buildings bear testimony to the emerging diversity in the architectural scene of the cities of India.

The challenge for the big cities of India today is to accommodate the religious structures with the demands of the cosmopolitan on the one hand, and to accommodate different religious monuments considering the shrinking urban space, on the other. If cosmopolitanism is seen as an emerging culture in India, then how is this to be accommodated with the traditional and religious culture which is indeed multiple in India? Does the cosmopolitan upsurge necessitate a compromise on religious constructions?

In this context, the city of Delhi has been studied. Though the thrust is upon medieval architecture, its development through the ages is albeit significant and would be discussed in at least some quarters. The most significant aspect, however, is the transition of the city from a walled city to a large sub-urban, the transformation attributable to colonisation and British rule. In some sense, 1857 was indeed a watershed year for the survival of Delhi, wherein the demography as well as local relations altered. As Gupta (1981: 20) points out: The exigencies of the Rising of 1857 jeopardized good relations,.....between those who supported the rebels,.....and those who sat on the fence or helped the British troops.....the cleavage cannot be simplistically stated as between a declining Muslim aristocracy and a nascent Hindu bourgeoisie, but between those who sided with the Emperor and those who were far sighted enough to back the British and thus set up a store of security and rewards for the future.

This reiterates the significance of the year 1857 in the creation of new areas, immigration away from the walled city and the subsequent growth and expansion of the city. The paper does not concern so much with this aspect of Delhi. It is more focused on the

prominence and significance of Islamic architecture and the reason for considering it an epitome of multiculturalism.

At the outset, the meaning of Islamic architecture in general and its usage in this article needs to be clarified. Islamic architecture, very simply put, is the form of designing buildings, monuments and other structures in a way as has been indicated in the religious books and discourses of Islam. In a way, Islamic monuments enshrine within them the physical representation of the message of Islam (Omer 2008). In other words, it is the practical translation of the message of Islam by the Muslims (Omer 2008). In this article, the meaning of Islamic architecture is a combination of the theoretical and the practical: those structures which bear distinct Islamic architectural features along with their historical origination which mostly happened in the medieval era. To this extent, those structures have been mentioned which were built by Muslim rulers in India and displays Islamic characteristics.

The paper proceeds in four sections. In the first section, there is a discussion of multiculturalism and its meanings and implications for the Indian society. In the second section, there is a focus on the city of Delhi and the various ways in which the city's Islamic architecture represents multiculturalism. In the third section, there is a discussion in which multiculturalism traverses with cosmopolitan and modern architecture and the way in which Islamic monuments strike a balance between the two. In the final section, the idea of the dangers of multiculturalism has been critiqued; there is an emphasis on understanding it in the Indian society through architecture.

Multiculturalism: Meaning and Implications for India

The literature on multiculturalism is vast— both in terms of the manner in which it is understood as well as different dimensions it brings into the study. The roots of the concept could be found in the western liberal democracies which emphasized on the cultural pluralism of the states (Ali 2000). Multiculturalism is a way of viewing human life (Parekh 1999). In this regard, culture is dynamic and not static and there are ways in which people get acculturated and maintain it: therefore, multiculturalism is not merely about pluralism but also about accommodation of other's value (Wax 1993). In the context of the American society, it is argued that multiculturalism could be seen as a move along the spectrum of 'political correctness' which flows from the process of 'construction and reconstruction of

identity' (Spencer 1994). In other words, multiculturalism is a form of performing the politics of identity. According to the Chicago Cultural Studies Group (1992), multiculturalism stands for rethinking 'cannons' in humanities and also to find cultural and political norms appropriate to be operative in a heterogenous society. They also point out that the phrase 'critical multiculturalism' intrinsically challenges existing norms and links together common rhetoric of difference and resistance (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1992).

It has, however, been argued by Hartmann and Gerteiss (2005) that the definitional concern for the term "multiculturalism" is that it has largely been a negative one, and has become a heuristic tool to highlight the distinction between the core type— multiculturalism ought to emphasize on homogeneity in the society rather than its heterogeneous characteristic (Hartmann and Gerteiss 2005): multiculturalism is best understood as a critical-theoretical project, an exercise in cultivating new conceptions of solidarity in the context of dealing with the realities of pervasive and increasing diversity in contemporary societies.

The concept of multiculturalism is further subdivided into four categories¹ (Hartmann and Gerteiss 2005). First, assimilationism which emphasizes upon importance of substantive moral bonds and this is the basis for moral cohesion and shared core values. Second, cosmopolitanism which defends diversity only in so far as it allows and expands individual rights and freedoms. Third, fragmented pluralism which argues that the social whole is dissolved into its component collective units and reiterates that value systems could be divergent or even opposed. Fourth, interactive pluralism which realizes the existence of distinct groups and cultures and posits the need to cultivate mutual understanding across these differences. Within these sub-categories the case of India could at best be understood by a combination of cosmopolitanism and interactive pluralism. This is because there is a mutual understanding of co-existence of different groups of people, yet each group emphasizes on its own identity. 'Genuine multiculturalism' argues for the acceptance of the limits of one's own culture and recognition of that of the others (Zimmerman 2003). At the same time, in India the Constitution binds people in spite of their differences, thus, in principle, giving equal rights to all

¹ This categorization has been taken from Hartmann and Gerteiss . (2005), "Dealing with Diversity: Mapping Multiculturalism in Sociological terms", *Sociological Theory*, 23 (2), pp. 218-240.

the citizens, and guarantees freedom to profess and practice any religion of their own choice.

For Parekh (1999), a multicultural society cannot be stable and long lasting without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens and this must be based on a shared commitment to the political community. This forms the basis for the Indian state where diversity is vast in terms of it being multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic. Rajan (1998) raises the question whether group rights erode or enhance the idea of rationality and universality. Arguing within the 'left liberal' framework, she says that they do not erode such concepts. She argues that the reality of multiculturalism in India raises problems for the concept of majoritarian rule by putting forth the question of group-differentiated rights on the political agenda. Ali (2000) also argues that in the Indian context recognising, protecting, and promoting the cultural differences is important and thereby the project of multiculturalism could be used to counter the arguments posed by the right wing about the cultural homogeneity of the Indian state. In the context of India, therefore, there is an emphasis upon cultural pluralism and, what Hartmann and Gerteiss (2005) have called a 'negative' meaning of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism in India can also be understood as a historical process in the sense that it has seen rehabilitation of different religious and lingual groups over a long period of time. According to Jupp (1986), there are several levels at which multiculturalism could be understood. For instance, at the 'descriptive level' it could be understood as communities having variegated culture because of the difference in the source of origin. It could also be understood at the 'public policy level' where multiculturalism helps to resolve the problems arising out of cultural differences with the minority sections. In the case of India, both these levels are important to consider: regional and religious histories lead to differences in acculturation whereas at the administrative level it is important to reconcile differences not necessarily by universalising cultural practices but by providing space and representation to the diverse cultural factions.

The assimilation has been largely natural and prolonged as is evident by historical accounts. Leaving aside the debates of categorization, it is also pertinent to view how multiculturalism has emerged and the manner in which it is manifested in

India. By studying the architectural patterns of the historic cities, which are incidentally enough the first ones to become metropolitan cities of India, one could decipher both the legacy as well as challenges posed to multiculturalism of India. Architecture is the most vivid and magnificent expression of cultural assertions. It is for this reason that a study of the architectural landscape would enable to appreciate the diversity in India and the manner in which all the groups are accommodated. The aura of Islamic architecture does not lie in its oft-cited distinctiveness but in its under-narrated rapprochement between the previous and the contemporary and between the local and the foreign.

The main purpose of the paper is to study the state of multiculturalism in India as is suggested by the architectural picture of the big metropolitan cities of the country and understand the manner in which this has taken place. Over here, the emphasis is upon the assimilative and representative nature of Islamic architecture. To demonstrate the point of Islamic architecture as symbolic of multiculturalism, the city of Delhi is studied as a specific case. This city is, at once, historic and contemporary, traditional and modern, urban and urbane, and all these characteristic features are reflected in the buildings, constructions, and planning of the past and the present. It is for this reason that Delhi becomes an intriguing city to study for describing the state of multiculturalism in India. Every place is unique in itself, but being the capital city as well as one of the oldest in India, it is indeed pertinent to observe for understanding the trend towards which India is moving. The rich historical legacy of the city is all the more compelling to see how the rich traditional legacies are mixed and assimilated within the increasing urbanisation and cosmopolitanisation of Delhi.

Islamic Architecture in Delhi: A Cultural Dialogue

Delhi, the national capital territory of India, is also one of the oldest cities of the country. It is said that the city was built seven times and the remains of the first few cities are still not found. The most favourable description of Delhi is given by Spear (1937) in his book *Delhi: A Historical Sketch*:

(Delhi) was a famous capital before the days of Alexander, and has survived all the vicissitudes of time and fortune to become one of the youngest and certainly the most magnificent of recent imperial cities.....(If it

has frequently changed its site, its character and even its name, it has preserved through all a continuous thread of existence.

There are local accounts and narratives that suggest the growth and expansion of Delhi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries out of the walled cities. There is ‘an unrecorded growth of the Muslim presence mainly southwards and eastwards beyond Dehli by the settling of immigrant groups’, which is the area around Sufi shrine of Shaikh Naizam-ud-din Auliya (Digby 2004). Therefore, not only the role of monarchy but also that of Sufism was significant in the expansion of Delhi. The historical significance of Delhi has been assessed by many historians. For Krafft and Ehlers (1995), Delhi symbolizes India’s historical heritage between Hinduism and Islam, not just in its religious aspect but also in representing cultural diversity and political leadership.

The significance of Delhi could also be understood as the advantage that a strategically located capital has for the empire. Hence, Krafft and Ehlers (1995) say that capitals mirror the political culture of states and governments, and their location, lay-out, architectural designs, and iconography are expressions of ideologies that the ruling empires have. Similarly, for Blake (1986), a capital for the rulers in the pre-modern times stood as a symbol of the ruler’s power and wealth and also an example of his ability to build a beautiful and harmonious city around himself. For Sir Herbert Baker any capital city has to be an embodiment of the spirit of the British empire; hence political expressiveness of the British empire was found to be more fitting with European classicism though the impression of creating a grand capital city had come from the Mughal empire as is evident by the use of red sandstone as building material, decoration of turrets, chattris and porticoes as well as the placement of the new city adjacent to Shahjahanabad (Metcalf 1986).

Modernity and its spatial expressions in Delhi preceded the bold, authoritarian, and elegant designs of modern New Delhi (Hosagrahar 2001). The difference of opinion with regard to what the architecture of India should be like is clearly reflected by the following (Irving 1982):

Lutyens swiftly rejected the proposal to use Indian draughtsmen for “orientalising” the New Delhi designs. Such a tactic, he argued, contradicted “the essence of fine architecture”, in which plans, elevations, and sections composed a single, integral

organism. Emblematic ornament was acceptable if discreetly subsumed within the controlling geometric system. Universal classical principles were quite capable of comprehending within their framework the exoticism of Indian ornament. But such decoration could not be allowed to seize command and actually determine the architectural outline and profile, as in the popular Indo-Saracenic style Lutyens had scorned in Bombay. Rather, in the manner of the Palladians, decoration had to be “within reason”.

However, Dickie (1985) argues that the gardens of Lutyen’s palace in Delhi also bore resemblances to the Mughal garden architecture:

The attempt to introduce the lush gardens of Central Asia into the dusty plains of Hindustan produced a hybrid, or mutation; and this mutation, the Indo-Islamic garden, is still a living art form, as evidenced by the garden Lutyens’s coadjutor, W. R. Mustoe, of the Horticultural Department, designed for the Viceroy’s House in New Delhi, as well as by the new garden in the Lawrence Gardens (Jinnah Bagh) at Lahore.

This reveals the acknowledgement of the British colonialists of the contributions that were made by Mughals to garden architecture, which were ultimately reflected in the choices they made for designing their bungalows and architectural designs. It is for this reason, that in spite of British colonialism, the architectural landscape of Delhi is known for the Indo-Islamic and not European art forms.

The differences between the old and new parts of Delhi is often developed very starkly. According to Hosagrahar (2001), transformation of Delhi’s landscape from picturesque to dysfunctional occurred through a disarray of synchronic activities— all engaged in building the city. For Sharan (2006), modern Delhi is ‘unaesthetic’. This is said especially in comparison with the Mughal Islamic architecture which was rich and grand and was reflective of authority and power, while at the same time, utilising local patterns and designs. Though the Islamic architectural characteristics were peculiar, such as domes and minarets, the *jali* works, serpentine patterns and use of jewels and studs for decoration and ornamentation were indigenous. Hence, there was a willingness to incorporate the local nuances for a finesse in architecture.

In the early colonial period also, there was appreciation of Mughal architecture as is evident by some of the private houses built during early and mid-nineteenth century. The house of Sir Thomas Metcalfe is one such example. The following passage marks the acceptability of the contemporary Indian architecture (Spear 1951: 160-61).

Sir Thomas was a great builder. He built first, about 1830, his mansion of Metcalfe House on the banks of the Jumna. The grounds extended to Alipore Road over the site now occupied by the temporary Secretariat.....he adapted a Muslim tomb close to the Qutub Minar as a country retreat.....

However, there was scepticism with regard to the building of British monuments using the Indian tactics of architecture during the later colonial period. As Irving (1982) points out, Lutyens did not much respect either the Mughal or Hindu ‘contraptions’ and defended Classic architecture as the ideal for the British empire in India. The Muslim rulers, to this extent, were willing to adopt regional preferences in their mannerisms, culture as well as aesthetics. On the aesthetic front, this was both plausible as well as harmonious. Although the ruler-ruled dichotomy existed, there was a growing interest in local culture as manifested in forms of art and also in architectural patterns. This, however, was not the case with British colonisers, who emphasised heavily upon Classical European architecture. At the same time, it needs to be argued that the dismissal of Mughal style was more of a political rhetoric and less of cultural glorification since the former was itself a combination of Islamic (or Timurid), indigenous and European ‘sources’ (Asher 1995:1-2). Therefore, the European patterns were very much incorporated within Mughal architecture, contrary to the belief of it being averse to European styles altogether.

The changing patterns of town planning and monuments document the hybridity and variety that Delhi epitomizes. The overemphasis on the differences between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Delhi does not deter from thinking of Delhi as a whole city which has developed into different phases during different time periods. Therefore, the cultural picture of Delhi is composite and in spite of the fact that particular groups are strong in some areas, the aspect of cultural hybridity cannot be understated. This evidence lies in the religious monuments and cultural centres spread across the city.

Another aspect related to the architectural landscape is the regular presence of urban, official and commercial buildings which is becoming a common scene in

Delhi. It has become an important commercial hub and at the same time its historic significance remains intact. Limiting the ‘size of the city’ is, according to Ewing (1969), dangerous because it might limit overall economic growth of the city as well as ‘discouraging rural-urban migration’ through authoritarian means— and this is definitely not a feasible option for a democratic country. The challenge then is to preserve its historic legacy and at the same time make it an urban upgraded city with all the facilities and privileges of a developed region.

Once again, Islamic architecture comes to the rescue of the city. Some examples could be cited to explain this point. Old Delhi, which was developed during the Mughal period, is a pertinent example. In this area, one comes across historical monuments and different religious places— mosques, gurudwaras, Hindu and Jain temples. Some of these places date back to the medieval times. This is regularly interspersed by public offices, gardens, new roads and markets, and also has railway networks around the area. Symbolically, the area represents a compatibility between different cultures and also a compromise between the historic and the contemporary. The Mehrauli area in New Delhi is yet another example of such a diverse representation. This, again, was a place that was first inhabited by the early Islamic dynasties and witnessed the first signs of Islamic architecture in India. But the most significant example is that of the erstwhile capital of the Tughlaq dynasty: Tughlaqabad. This city was not inhabited for a very long time, though it was built as a symbol of the new royal authority of the Tughlaqs (Shokoohy and Shokoohy 1994). It has been argued that the remains of the city are also rapidly deteriorating with the growing urbanisation (Shokoohy and Shokoohy 1994). However, even in this decline the most significant aspect is the growth of housing locality around the Jami mosque of the Tughlaq period (Shokoohy and Shokoohy 1994), which shows the relevance of Islamic architecture even in the growing urban spaces in Delhi. Therefore, by studying the architecture of Delhi one could infer the state and significance of multiculturalism in India, and see how it is accommodated with the emerging needs of the urban population.

Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism in Conversation

To study the architectural patterns, it is pertinent to have an understanding of the synchronisation of the indigenous with the foreign. Vellinga (2006) speaks for the

uniqueness of vernacular architecture and argues for its significance by the use of human agency, change and adaptation to the cultural and environmental circumstances; therefore interaction of the new styles with the old ought to take place along with the historical discourse. This seems to be an appropriate method to study multicultural architecture as well as a useful approach in understanding the amalgamation of the new or modern with the old or traditional. In the case of Delhi, as well as other medieval and ancient cities of India, it is indeed interesting to see how the mutual accommodation between cultures take place. Islamic architecture, though, has its own place and reminiscences.

The Islamic monuments of Delhi are themselves a product of assimilation of different traditions. For instance, the plan of the city of Shahjahanabad appears to have been based on a design from the ancient Hindu texts on architecture (Blake 1986). At the same time, like most other Mughal cities, this was also a garden city, and the significance of the garden lies in the Quranic depiction of paradise as a garden (Blake 1986). In this sense, there is a sensibility that is evident in amalgamating two different religious and cultural traditions. Another such example, is the iron pillar that stands in the Qutub Minar complex, which is a Buddhist relic and is believed to have been brought from somewhere else. The use of pillars was indeed a bridge between the ancient rulers of India and the Delhi Sultans because it indicated a continuity from the past, rather than a break from the same. As Flood (2003) argues:

Essentialist notions of Islamic cultural practices have combined with traditional disciplinary divisions to obscure the transcultural nature of these pillars, which were central to the self-conscious articulation of an imagined relationship between the sultans of Delhi and the Indian past.

This is an epitome of the acceptance of diversity and representing it symbolically through architectural planning. Flood (2003) argues that rather than being ‘trophy’ of authority, the pillars were ‘transculturation’ on part of Delhi Sultans to establish acceptance in the newly built empire. This sensitivity was more than mere political correctness— it was an attempt to continue with the indigenous cultural and ritualistic traditions to portray the Sultanate’s intentions of co-habitation with the local population. Also, the later repair of the Qutub Minar balconies brought in a touch of the Gothic style with the

construction of the balustrade (Liddle 2011). Hence, there is an authentic Indian stylisation which is seen in Islamic monuments through the accommodation and reliance on indigenous techniques.

Another architectural feature which bears resemblance to Eastern Indian styles is the baluster columns that were introduced during Shah Jahan's reign in mid-seventeenth century. According to Koch (1982), Closer proto-types for the Mughal baluster column are found, however, in eastern India, where balusters and baluster columns occur in Buddhist and Hindu architecture and sculpture.....

This became a characteristic feature of Indian, and not merely Mughal architecture, the resemblances for which could be seen in eastern and central Indian architecture.

Yet another manner in which assimilation is seen is the development of the erstwhile imperial cities into developed industrialized areas. The Qutub institutional area where a number of private colleges (FORE management school, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, International Management Institute, etc.), and organisations (Guild of service, working women's hostel, etc.) exists at a short distance from the Qutub complex is a good example because it marks the culmination of the modern and the historic.

Walking through Old Delhi one would sense the presence of various religious sects. As a part of the city built by Shahjahan, there are many mosques of historic significance, and some of them are still functional. A look at the city map would exhibit a layout with an interspersed pattern including madrassas, mausoleums, monasteries, mosques, temples, *serais*, and *bazaar* (Naqvi 1986). Jama Masjid, one of the oldest and biggest mosques in India, is located around the Chawri Bazaar. A *madrassah* and hospital was also built along with the mosque. Fatehpuri Masjid, located at Chandni Chowk, and Sunehri Masjid are two other mosques built during the same period. Another significant mosque is the Fakhru'l Masjid or the Lal mosque located near the Kashmiri Gate. Krafft and Ehlers (1995) have observed that a number of small mosques in the *mahalla* or neighbourhood existed and this system reflected the sectarian, cultural, regional, and social heterogeneity of the Muslim population, and, at the same time, it also served as spiritual centre for the *mahalla* residents, providing the essential group identity.

Presently, in the very same area one would find the presence of other places of worship also². Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib, a holy place for the Sikhs, is located very close to the Fatehpuri mosque. First established in 1783, its present structure came into existence in 1930. At less than half a kilometre, the Gauri Shankar temple stands which is an important Shiv temple in India. On the same road, one would find the Digambara Jain Temple (Lal Mandir), and also a Jain Bird hospital. The hospital combines the qualities of being a representation of the cultural ethos of the Jains, i.e. the protection of bird life as a daily ritual, as well as a veterinary hospital. Another temple in Kinari Bazaar, represents the Svetambara sect of the Jain religion. Also many churches were built during the British rule in India. St. James Church is one of these and is located at the erstwhile imperial capital city of the Mughals, very close to the Fakrul mosque. The case of Old Delhi is very interesting by itself because it is one of the older parts of the present city, and has witnessed the rise and fall of Mughal imperialism.

By no means, however, is it an exception. The Qutub institutional area also presents a similar picture. There were many mosques built after the invasion from West Asia and Central Asia. However, at present there are many temples- both Hindu and Jain- as well as religious centres in the same area. Even in parts of New Delhi the religious constructions are in sync with each other. Hence religious sects have their own establishments and the presence of diverse religious holy places also bears testimony to the cultural and religious sensitivity in India. Not only this Delhi has also been the hub of many cults including Sufism. The *Dargah* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya dates back to 13th century. In some ways the *dargah* shows the process of evolution of Sufism in distinct Indo-Islamic terms (Lawrence 1986). Even today this *dargah*, which is located in New Delhi is visited daily by followers of all religious communities.

Besides being religiously heterogenous, Delhi also shows a combination of the traditional and the cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism presupposes a positive attitude towards difference (Rebeiro 2001). The process relates largely to the European

² Map references are taken from Gaynor Barton and Laurraine Malone's *Old Delhi: 10 Historic Walks* (1988, 3rd Impression 2010), Pub by Rupa Publications Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi.

Modernity and the same could be extended to India. According to Rebeiro (2001), Market places and urban centers emerged with citizens that experienced new forms of individuality, etiquette and public space aspiring to new secular ideologies and modes of Republican, democratic governments.

The scope of cosmopolitan obligations is in principle universal; it covers relations between all human beings (Dobson 2006). According to Appiah (2006), cosmopolitanism has two important qualities. One, people have obligations towards each other because of the ties of kith and kin and who are bound together by the ties of citizenship. Second, people take an interest in the beliefs of others so as to understand what makes their lives meaningful and significant. That is to accept that there are differences between human societies and they could not converge into a monolith. Pogge (1992) emphasizes on moral cosmopolitanism and says that all persons stand in moral relation to one another and therefore one another's status must be respected as a moral concern. This is the essence of cosmopolitanism in general and could be applied to the Indian scene, for the acceptance of the existence of diverse communities requires such respect. The very existence of myriad religious places of worship reflects cosmopolitanism in some quarters. The other dimension of this phenomenon could also be found in the co-existence of the religious and the secular buildings. So what is traditional or cultural is interspersed by the modern, the urban, and the commercial. Here again, the significance of Islamic architecture lies in the manner in which it stands out amongst other monumentations in spite of the assimilative tendencies.

The Old Fort in New Delhi is located near the Mathura Road. Built by Sher Shah and later modified by Humayun, this is now a historical site with the Sher Mandal, Qila-e-Kuhna mosque, and Lal Darwaza being the main attractions. This site is also thought to be the site of the ancient kingdom of Indraprastha. The mound of Purana qila suggests both a favourable site for settlement as well as the possible accumulation of the debris of centuries (Spear 1937). Though not much remains exist, its references could be found in ancient texts. Spear (1937) argues that the mound is probably reminiscent of the epic days of Mahabharata and was the capital city of the Pandavas, Indraprastha. Though there's no direct evidence to connect Indraprastha with Delhi, it could be one of the five 'pats' or places around which the Kuru war was

fought as all the other four sites are found even today around the same region³. Adjoining the Qila is the National Zoological Park which was established in 1956 by the Indian Board for Wildlife. Pragati Maidan owned by the Indian Trade Promotion Organisation and meant for big exhibitions in India, is located very close to the Old Fort. The area is a commercial hub and the historic has merged with the contemporary, thus relegating the medieval Islamic components to the background.

Another way in which assimilation of the old and the new takes place is with the conversion of pre-modern monuments into a public place. Here again, Islamic architecture is the cynosure of the city. The gardens of Delhi designed during the Sultanate and the Mughal periods are the best example of these. The gardens were conceived in a similar form by the garden architects as the description given in the religious Islamic texts. During Shah Jahan's reign, the garden was included inside the palace premises, thus becoming 'a metaphor of paradise on Earth' (Koch 1997). This was also in contrast to the earlier Mughal rulers as Babar who built the gardens out of the city walls in order to symbolise a new centre of power and authority (Koch 1997).⁴

The process of modernizing and renaming of the gardens dates back to the colonial period. After independence some of these have been transformed into public parks. The British treatment of garden sites was definitely not an isolated act of intervention in a culture vastly different from their own, but was governed by the rules of colonialism (Sharma 2007). The gardens were well managed by the British. The difference lay in the fact that for the Mughals the gardens were also symbolic of paradise, whereas for the British it was meant for attracting European tourists as well as to fulfil the recreational needs of the British colonizers (Sharma 2007). In the aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny, some gardens such as the Qudsiya Bagh were remodelled into a war memorial by the British (Sharma 2007). At present, the Qudsiya Bagh forms a modern public park north of the Kashmir Gate of Delhi, in which only a few remains exist such as an entrance gateway and the exterior wall of the northern baradari which could testify to its past glory but even these are now disfigured by enlargements (Goetz 2001).

³ Panipat, Sonapat, Baghpat and Tilpat are known other four sites which are also around the same region. Percival Spear makes a note of this in his book *Delhi: A Historical Sketch* (1937).

⁴ Koch (1997) points out that Babar's gardens had very little to do with the concept of paradise for which the later Mughal gardens became famous.

When the city of New Delhi was being built the gardens of the southern hinterland had to be observed and renovated (Sharma 2007). One such site was the complex of Nawab Safdar Jung's tomb. To enhance the visual experience of the tomb, the plan focused on the site's horticultural management (Sharma 2007). The horticultural interventions with the Charbagh patterns of the Mughal style was altered by the laying out of the grounds as grassy lawns and planting trees along formal lines, transformed the nature of the garden (Sharma 2007). At present also it is opened for public viewing. Similarly, the Lodhi Garden was renamed Lady Willingdon Park. But after independence, it was once again named the Lodhi Garden. Another example of partial or complete transformation of historic monuments is the Siri fort. This is the earliest evidence of a city which was built by Ala-ud-din Khilji. Very close to the ruins of the city is the Siri Fort Sports complex which was developed for the 1982 Asian Games and also renovated for the 2010 Commonwealth Games hosted in Delhi. Siri Fort auditorium is located in the same complex where cultural and literary programmes and festivals take place regularly. Siri is also an important institutional area in Delhi. Some archaeological surveys are still taking place in order to rediscover some of the older walls of the fort.

Yet another way in which cultural assimilation or pluralism is reflected is in the design, patterns and lay-outs of the monuments themselves. One could begin with the Qutub complex. Page (2001) observes that besides being constructed on the site of a demolished Hindu temple, the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque embodied in itself a definite portion of that structure up to the plinth level. Also Page (2001) points out the Hindu artisans used materials from Hindu shrines to build the mosque but the sculptured figures were hidden from view because they were considered profane by the new Islamic masters and Quranic verses were inscribed on the back of these slabs. Mujeeb (2001) says that the main gateway of the original mosque lay on the east as the doorway to the temple, hence reflecting the discretion used by the indigenous stone masons. Compared to the mosque, Page (2001) argues, the Qutub Minar is consistently Saracenic in character, and features of typically Hindu origin are non-existent. But Mujeeb (2001) says that they were the Hindu masons who insisted that in order to ensure stability, horizontal pressures must be eliminated and therefore the pronounced taper of the minar. Also, the ornamentation and decorative mouldings

below the balconies seems to be reminiscent of the decorative treatment of the temple walls. He goes on to say that the Minar was meant to be a symbol of power for the Muslim rulers; beautification of the monument was probably the idea of the indigenous stone masons involved in the making of these monuments.

Another example comes from early Mughal architecture. In the Humayun's tomb one would find six-pointed stars at all major gates and arches of the tomb which is argued by Nath (1976) to be representing the union of Shiva and Shakti, though there are others who do not agree with this. For instance, Lowry (1987) argues that the six-pointed star was a symbol of the relation of Mughal Emperor Akbar with his father Humayun and represents more than one architectural traditions:

Just as the tomb is both a private resting place for a single person and a dynastic site, the six-pointed stars serve to symbolize both Humayun and his descendants. Akbar's need to associate himself with his father may have been a reflection of his belief that through Humayun he possessed a divine light that distinguished him from all of his rivals, including his brothers. This light, according to Abu'l Fazl, originated with the semi-mythical Mongol queen Alanquva, who, after having been widowed, "was reposing on her bed [one night] when a glorious light cast a ray into the tent and entered the mouth and throat of that fount of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light in the same way as did Her Majesty... Miryam [the Virgin Mary]". This light initiated a line of noble rulers that included Chinghiz Khan and Timur as well as the Mughals and "was the beginning of the manifestation of his Majesty, the king of kings (Akbar), who after passing through divers stages was revealed to the world from the holy womb of her Majesty Miryam-makani for the accomplishment of things visible and invisible.

By Lowry's interpretation (1987), there is a clear resonance between the genesis of the Mongols and Timurids with the Christian beliefs of the birth of Christ. This is a diversification of the representation of symbols in the Humayun's tomb which could be seen as Islamic but also as Sanskritic as well as Christian, thus, unravelling the interpenetrations between different religious symbolisms. Additionally, as Dickie (1985) argues, the Mughal gardens borrowed, relied and remained faithful to the Roman idea of garden, namely, 'hortus', which is also responsible for bringing horticulture to the Indian plains. The beauty

of Islamic architecture in India lies in the utilisation of the techniques that was known to the architects of the period which mixed with other indigenous conditions to reproduce new forms of architecture.

Delhi is hence representative of different cultures, and shows sometimes an amicable and sometimes a tacit relationship. This aspect is by no means Delhi centric. This is replete in almost all the historic cities of India, especially those which witnessed Muslim rule at some point. The idea to study Delhi and observe the multicultural facets of the city stems from the need to understand the state of multiculturalism in cities of India today, where, what is essential is the peaceful accommodation of the various cultural and religious pluralism that the country is known to uphold, while at the same time envisaging a plan which would include the urban features. What is important is to understand that the urban spaces are indeed limited, and the cosmopolitan and the cultural would have to be reconciled within a given space. This is the most crucial challenge that has to be coped up with in order to study multiculturalism in India.

Conclusion

The main intention of the purpose is to argue for a society which is multicultural and cosmopolitan at the same time. For some observers, the historical and exotic structures of the medieval period have given way to homogenising tendencies of the present era: yet the historical masterpieces are unmatched hitherto and continue to be symbolic in aspects of culture, tradition and people (Hosagrahar 2012: 283-84). The reason for studying multiculturalism through Islamic architecture is two-fold: firstly, it brings to the fore the interactions between cultures and traditions several centuries back and its representation through monuments and structures; secondly, in the contemporary Indian scenario, it puts Islamic architecture, its relevance, symbolism and resilience through the ages. Rather than being antithetical to the indigenous cultures, it was rather assimilative and bore the earliest signs of diversity. This also contradicts the anti-multicultural narrative, which reiterates the differences and divergences between cultures rather than their strength and capability to accommodate.

Eller (1997), in this context, argues that the dangers of multiculturalism has been overstated. The worries of multiculturalists, argues Eller (1997), is that the centre of

intellectuals and cultural attention on the European or European-derived elements of America while the rest are pushed to the category of the 'other'. He also cites emotional danger which excluded groups develop transform into 'low self-esteem' and, therefore, have dangers of low occupation. Another danger is an intellectual one. Knowledge would be incomplete because it includes only a part of the total knowledge. He points out that knowledge, value, and culture could be renegotiated and recontested, and this multiculturalists argue must be restructured to reflect the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity.

Anti-multiculturalists claim that multiculturalist argument denies common identity. They argue that multicultural concepts would fragment the society and result in its collapse. In the context of American society, Takaki (1993) argues that the 'campaign against multiculturalism' reflects anxiety on part of the dominant sections of the society, who attempt to understand themselves through the lens of others. Diversity, argues Eller (1997), is a reality which could not be done away with; therefore the need to debate upon it and engage with it.

It is also a heated debate today whether or not multiculturalism is a relevant concept in the age of globalization. The main aim of multiculturalism is to give the diverse groups due representation irrespective of their numerical strength, rather than giving privilege to any one of them. There are several ways of deducing whether or not a society or people follow multiculturalism— education systems, curriculums, religious festivities and so on. To observe whether there has been any historical exegesis of cultural assimilation which could make society stable in spite of different cultural facets is to look back to the development of the particular society. This impedes a case by case study and looking into historical records to argue if this is reminiscent of past experiences of a society. Although the concept appears to have a western ethnocentric bias, it could nevertheless be used to study social patterns in other parts of the world. India is one example where assimilation of the indigenous and the outsider is a historical process. Delhi, being at a commercial and strategic location, was both more vulnerable to invasion as well as more susceptible to outside people. Therefore over a period of time it became home to various civilizations and architecture is indeed the most magnificent manifestation of these.

The key purpose of the essay has been to outline some of the non-political aspects of multiculturalism. By studying art, literature, epigraphs, and monuments one could sense the manner in which the society has thought about ‘other’s’ culture. Though history is replete with examples of ethnic and cultural clashes, it is also important to enquire into the process of inclusion or exclusion. At the same time, it is important to not just look into the present situation but also to analyse the differences with the past. In spite of the oft proclaimed diversity what comes into conflict is the ‘communal’ element of the Indian society which has often culminated into riots and bloodshed. However, the hybridity of the Indian society has not been compromised upon. Multiculturalism holds promise for stability of the Indian society, and for that reason studying the patterns of development of different regions could bring results. Islamic architecture and monuments could be helpful in discerning these patterns of compromise and assimilation. With growing cultural assertiveness in contemporary times, medieval architecture could be crucial in breathing rationality and balance in the society.

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