Triumph over nature: the Dayal Bagh temple at Agra

Rohita Sharma1(✉), Ila Gupta2

1. Research scholar, Dept. of Humanities & Social Sciences., Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Uttarakhand 247667 India
2. Associate Professor Dept. of Architecture & Planning, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Uttarakhand 247667 India

Corresponding author: Research Scholar, Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India, Mail: rohitasharma2009@gmail.com, (09719831742)

Received 22 February; accepted 28 March; published online 01 May; printed 16 May 2013

ABSTRACT

India is most popular in the world for its architecture. This paper refers a building which excels in the art of carving and inlay. This is a green building and important thing is that there is no green colour. It is not a Temple, not Church and not a Gurudwara. The outer structure of this building is base on different religions. The architecture shows the unity in diversity by its structure, decoration and theme. Dayalbagh has a rich history and unique culture which reflects in this monument in the form of inlay and fine grained designs. Present paper highlights the decoration of that building. What was the reason behind making this type of building who were the founder and by whom this building is being constructed? The visual language of inlay designs and their interpretation is searched in the philosophy of Radhaswami faith and the jest of people of Dayal Bagh. It is claimed that after its finishing point this will be better than the Taj. This paper deals with some points as aesthetic qualities, different motifs, rasa and inlay decoration which shows that this building is better than Taj-Mahal.

Keywords: Marble, Carving, Inlay, Green

1. INTRODUCTION

This beautiful structure is being constructed in memory of the founder “Radha-Swami Faith”. This is the true and real “Dhwanyatmak” (Maheshswan 1969) name of the supreme creator. The name Radha-Swami was given out by the Supreme Creator himself (Farquhar, 1915). Radha-Swami is no religion at all, but rather than an amalgam of the teaching of the saints, not meant a particular saint but all of the world” (Singh, 1966). This name has no connection with Lord Krishna or his consort Radha. According to Radha-Swami faith redemption cannot be achieved without a Saint or Sat-Guru. Guru has a significant place in every body’s life. The great saint Kabir Dass ji had also written, only the people who take the shelter from Guru can get the God or Moksha.

“KabirMarga kathin hai,Muni Jan baithe thaki Thakir chali gaya gho satguru ki rakhi” (Shrikant,2009)

Kabir also compared guru and God who is great and conclude that Guru is great who show me the way to God so at first we should bend in front of Guru.

“Guru Gobind dau khare,kako lage pau , Bbihari guru apno ,jin govind diyo bathyeyen” (Shrikant et.al)

Eck has written in her study of “Darshan” that in Hinduisum, “God is eminently visible although human beings have not always had the refinement of sight to see” (Dians, 1981). To find the God first everyone has go to Saint. This building shows love to the great saint Parma Purush Puran Dhani Swami Ji Maharaj, who was the founder of Radha-Swami faith, was born on the city of Agra at Parani Gali on Janamashthmi in 1818 AD (Juergensmeyer, 1991). He was a great Saint. There are many people who follow their words as a great saint. In Charan Singh’s view Swami Dayal is one link in sacred chain that includes not only the medieval saints but their ancient predecessors, figures such as Jesus and Buddha (Singh, 1978). According to their followers he was the carnation in Human form of the Almighty. “The swami Ji married at an early age to Narayani Devi, a woman of caste whose family had settled in the new industrial city of Faridabad located between Agra and Delhi” (Juergensmeyer, 1991).In school it is said that he read the books as if he already knew their content (Singh, 1966). In his adult life he would spend days without food or sleep he would not even feel that “call of nature” (Rai) “He would go off to the field outside Agra, where he could escape notice and remain in solitude” (Juergensmeyer, 1991). This holy building is situated in Swami-Bagh Agra. It is concern that the ancestors of Swami ji came from Punjab.Swami Bagh is about five kilometers from Agra city. Its literally mean “the garden of the supreme lord”. Maharaj Saheeb departed from this world from 1907.

2. ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPLE

Samadh is a Hindi word. In Radha-Swami faith it does not mean by grave (Mazar) or tomb or a memorial (yaadgaar). “An immense marble and granite building is being constructed as both a place of worship and tomb” (Juergensmeyer, 1991). It stands for spiritual equanimity, spiritual ecology or conscious merger in the Supreme Being. “One has to begin with the Samadh. A Samadh place is a resting place for the physical remains of a great religious personage (Lawrence, 1991). The
foundation of this ground structure was laid by third master Maharaj Saheeb in 1904. The main structure of 110 feet x 110 feet and its height including dome and kalaasha will be 193 feet. A platform 55 feet broad runs all around the main structure and height of the plinth is 20 feet above the ground level. The pillars are in octagonal in shape and marble monoliths each supported on a carved base of marble and covered with an even more elaborately carved cap of marble. On the northern and southern sides, there are in front of the octagonal pillars, cylindrical and marble monoliths. The rest is masonry work of brick and stone in line covered with marble slabs. The whole building looks like a garden. The interior and the exterior walls of the building are decorated with flowers, plants, creeper and trees by inlay and carving, which give the spontaneity. The entrance of the Samadhi is decorated by tree on the upper side and then flowers. The side walls are also decorated with flower like kena, lotus, Marigold and many others. The main quality of this temple is the plenty of nature and this is the reason that no one can forget the natural things. The rose and the sunflower on the pillar create welcoming effect and in waiting for us and as we look them, it is similar as chatting with us (Figure 1). On the other hand, no one can get a chance to see the plant of wheat, Bajra and Jawar because everyone is busy in modern life and no one desire to go in nature due to hectic schedule. So it is very hard to see the vegetation of grain and cuisine seeds in its original form. Every type of flower, fruit and creeper are decorated here in carving and inlay work. Colour is also used on carving at some places in the temple as in the interior, at the place of Samadhi in present time there are some decorative pillars having grape-vine are painted in green yellow and brown colours. There are some motifs of books on the right side of exterior wall in carving. It shows that a guru is like a candle of knowledge, so the people come here to get some knowledge. May be the intention of all things is to show the authenticity and feeling of nature so one who came here gets the natural feeling from these motifs. The roof and the floors are also decorated with flower. The border is decorated with creeper and circle, square, and octagonal shapes are made in the middle one by one. These different design are fully decorated with different motifs and coloured stones. The monument is a unique monument in itself its builders hope that when finished it will rival the Taj Mahal (Juergensmeyer, 1991).

3. TECHNIQUE AND MATERIAL
This building is made of marble in nar-mada (man-woman) techniques. In the interview with their worker, it is also known that there is no any iron-rode in the beam or roof and the whole building is in nar-mada style. The marble of different colours as white, pink, green yellow, import from different parts of India as Makrana (Jodhpur), Amba Ji, Baroda, Jaisalmer, and Gwalior. The carving in marble is very superior. If we compare it with Mughal carving work than it will be scored high, because every leaf, every flower and every vegetable is in its original form and the tree of mango look like its original leaves, Here this style is different from Mughal because there artist had been used flowers and fruits with different leaves.

4. THEME OF THE BUILDING
This building is based on the theme of unity. The unanimity of different religions and their symbols, vegetables and fruits has been used here. Structure of the building is made in the form of Temple, Mosque, church and Gurudwara. “To the western eye it looks like a cathedral with minarets encircling a giant turnip shape dome” (Juergensmeyer, 1991). The same theme is also based on the different ornaments used in this building. In a deeper way the true significance of vegetative and floral themes was that they gave a tremendous sense of life to the ornament. There are many stories to attract the different religious people in one faith “other stories recall that he could make tree wither and elephant appear (Rai).

5. PERSONAL TASTE OF RADHA-SWAMI FAITH
Natural vegetation was very much visually depicted on this building. The monument had always feeling of the combination of manmade and natural beauty. Every flower and vegetable is carved out in very natural way. Swami loved nature very much .He used to walk in the fields; “He would go off to the field outside Agra, where he could escape notice and remain in solitude” (Juergensmeyer, 1991). Swami ji always convey the message that the work is worship for God so their pupils do many work by themselves and many factories milk dairy shop opened in Dayal Bagh “During the 1930s is what great miracle can be performed by God force like other force of nature e.g. steam, electricity etc. when building up an idea structure of human society” the editor of an newspaper went on to state that Dayal Bagh was as grand. An achievement for the city of Agra in the social realm as the Taj-Mahal had been in the architecture” (Juergensmeyer, 1991). In spite of guru ji being a strict follower of saint mat he accepted all the religion on his architectural monument, as the half moon, star and the motifs from all religion. “Since they felt bound to no orthodox, individual saints were free to adopt spiritual resources available to them according to their various personal religious visions and styles.” “His sanctified personality standing independent of conflicting bases of Hindu and Muslims authority” (Daniel, 1987). This picture shows unity in diversity. It is also thinking that this monument will be a very good example of the symbol of love and union as well as natural decoration Figure 2.

6. SUBJECT MATTER
The whole building has ornamented with carving, inlay and paintings. These are the ancient art of the India. This building is like a pearl in the Hindu architecture. There are different motifs which are made in this building as flowers, vegetables, trees, leaves and creepers. The most frequent motif is lotus. The lotus flower was depicted in dissimilar perspective at different places as carved inside called auspicious motifs, full bloomed or sometimes only a bud could be seen. Floral motifs were mostly used on panel capital and tail of pillars and most popularly on the dado centers as plant, bud flowers leaves and branches in natural form. It is concern that Hindu used vegetation design chiefly trees in their naturalistic form and there is rarely any attempt toward stylization. Depiction of different exotic fruits was also found in this monument. Which also give an idea that Guru ji were the man or power, who planted such kind of exotic fruits in their garden. Natural leaves and the grape vine creepers are clearly visible in the interior and exterior of the monument. Vegetative motifs played an imported role in the reproduced nature with a great deal of accuracy.

7. SYMBOLISM
However this shows the hidden meaning of symbols. The way the design elements are shaped the section positioning of all the motifs may be indicating the message of goodwill. They have characteristic themes like longevity, prosperity, happiness and so forth these meaning are conveyed not by words but by the vegetative words.
8. AESTHETICAL PHILOSOPHY

According to Nath (1986) Rasa is the cause of Ananda which leads to creation and sustenance. In Indian context there are eight Rasas in the Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni: sringar, hasya, karuna, raudra, veera, bhayanka, bibhatas and adbhut. According to CoomaraSwami (1971) art is a metaphysical statement. When rasa is applied to art and aesthetic experiences the word significance a state of heightened delight or ananda. This kind of pleasure can be experienced only by the soul. In Dayal-Bagh temple craftsmen wanted to communicate emotions, thoughts visualization, ideas through their designs, motifs, symbols and style. The most dominating rasa are Shanta rasa, Sringar rasa and adbhuta rasa.

9. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this is clear that the architecture has a symbolic meaning as the guru or saint want to see everyone with an eye, in the same way the artist used different colours, different motifs of vegetables, flowers and fruits and make a wonderful architecture. In spite of these artist used the moon the sun and the stars. They also used the different motifs which are auspicious in about every religion. All these type of ornamentation enhance the beauty of this building. Due to all these qualities it may not be wrong to say that this monument is a triumph over nature.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

1. This work, within the limit of available resource, has provided useful information about mural decoration in the Dayal Bagh Temple Agra.
2. This research shows that mural technique to decorate the outer or inner façade is still continuing in contemporary period.
3. University in diversity has important role not only in Indian ritual but also at every aspect of life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Much thanks to our guide for his constructive criticism, and assistance towards the successful completion of this research work.

REFERENCES

1. Coomaraswamy AK. The Arts and Crafts of India & Ceylon, Delhi, 1971, 209-219
2. Daniel G. The saint studies in a devotional studies of India (Clean and lineage among the saints: seed, substance, service), ed. Karine schomer & WH. Moleod Pub. Narendra Prakashan, Delhi, 1987, 305
8. Prastap SS. The Biography of Swami Ji Maharaj, 4
10. Shrikant P. Knowing Saint Kabir (life and Teaching), Pub. Hindology Pustak Mahal, Delhi, 2009, 60
11. Singh C. Light on St. Mathew (Beas: Radha-Swami Satsang Beas, 1978, 3-4
12. Singh C. The Masters answers to Audience in America, (Beas: Radha-Swami Satsang Beas), 1966, 17