

## The Impact of Persian Architecture on the Indian Architecture

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**ABSTRACT:** The art of each nation or culture represents its ideology, customs, and traditions, or, in other words, the culture and civilization of that nation. Architecture is one of the most significant arts of Iranian civilization. Regarding the mythology, Iranian art is 6000-year-old and considering archeological resources, it is as old as its mythology. Due to dry and hot, and humid and cold climatic conditions, there are two architectural styles in Iran using vault Arch, and using wood coverage. Although ecological conditions and abundance of materials in each area were so effective and helpful, the king's power and Iranian ancient empire were other two elements paving the way for setting up whatever constructions in various districts and climates have been erected. The expansion of Iranian architecture and its long and old history indicate that the purpose of constructing these monuments was more spiritual and intellectual which has in turn resulted in constancy and uniqueness of Iranian architecture. As a country having a longstanding footprint in human civilization, Iran possesses so many architectural masterpieces. Obviously, The Achaemenid expanded their empire, which extended from India to the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and from Central Asia to some parts of Africa. They utilized the architecture of different nations under their authority to construct its structures. To discuss the influence of Iranian architecture, it is necessary to briefly review the aspects and features of Iranian architecture since the outset of the period after Islam. This criterion would better help to perceive the indispensable outcomes, the effect of Iranian architecture in India.

**Key words:** Impact, Iran, Architecture, India, Ancient, Islamic Art

### INTRODUCTION

Iran and India had artistic relationships over the far centuries and they share a common origin. The name of India has four times been mentioned in Avesta. India, therefore, famous for the land of seven rivers (Hapta Hindu) has been familiar with the Iranians long before the Christ. In Sanskrit, The original name of this river is Sindhu. In Zand - Avesta, we can read: "I, Ormazd established the fifteenth affluent territory. Hapta Hindu is among the best lands from the east of the river Hindu to the west of the River Hindu..." Accordingly, Iranian people named India and called the natives of this country Hindu instead of Sindu [1].

Resorting to developed architectural sciences of their epoch, the Achaemenid engaged in fostering the architecture of Iran. Iran resorted to simple and natural architecture after the Seleucid Empire. Brick, arch, and minaret were created in this era. These three elements yielded the creation of outstanding works. In Parthian time, minaret-shaped porches surrounding the yard of the edifices were built. This architectural style has first emerged in the Assyria architecture and was later applied to the constructions of Sassanid time and the majority of monuments of Islamic architecture in Iran (Fig.1). Crescent-shaped arches and minarets were developed in variant dimensions and brought about grandeur and magnificence of Iranian architecture having been used in Zoroastrian temples. Leveling method and the design of the stairs of Persepolis are the masterpieces of the Achaemenid architecture and are unique throughout the world. The Achaemenid palaces in Susa and Persepolis are the combination and adaptation of Medes Assyria, Elamite, Egypt, Ionia and Urartu in which many remarkable initiatives originate. The influences of Egypt and Ionia architecture are apparent in columns, their capitals, and bases. However, new modifications and innovations are inevitable. The Achaemenid engravings have been inspired by the Assyria engravings. Considering the elegance and delicacy, the Achaemenid engravings, however, are not compared to Assyria ones. Elegance and talent of Iranian fine arts are completely apparent in these engravings. By emulating the works of eastern and northern locations, the Achaemenid architects built the pillared auditorium and verandas [2].

The Sassanid architecture is a new approach towards this art. It is remarkably different from the previous forms and is basically a modern artistic school with particular features. These features were seen long after the advent of Islam. The pattern of Sassanid architecture was principally established with respect to central and eastern dry regions of Iran. The Sassanid architecture was founded based on vaulted ceilings, building the verandas cradle-shaped arches, and quad arches particular to temples [3]. Building minaret-shape covers on quadrilateral structures the construction of auditoriums, verandas with curved ceilings, the construction of fire temples quad arch around the central quad arch either simple or vestibule, decorations of plaster work, mosaic, engravings on

plaster inside the constructions and stone engravings on the rocks of the mountains are some important features of the Sassanid architecture[3].

One of the major components of Sassanid architecture in some ancient constructions is minaret. Some of these unique minarets are located in Firozabad, Fars. On one hand, these minarets notify the religious constructions of the Achaemenid era, the application of these minarets in mosque, on the other hand, is permanent and same. Therefore, minaret construction represents the constancy of this structure since the period before Islam. The Sassanid architectural structures are founded on vault, veranda, arch, and cradle-shaped arches. Building forked arches, horseshoe-shaped arches and also multifarious shapes are the other features of Sassanid architecture (Fig.4). These features inspire the vaulting which flourished in the architecture of Iran and Islamic nations in Islamic period. The horizontal design of Sassanid architecture is based on the porch yards of Parthian epoch. Ghirshman argues:

“The Sassanid art is an Iranian art with special and absolute manifestations. It originates from a very old world” [4]. This art also went beyond the eastern frontiers of the kingdom and served a foreign religion. The principles of Iranian art pushed out Buddhism which cast a shadow from Afghanistan to China over centuries (Figs 5-6). The Sassanid art which belongs to Iranian kings serves as a bridge between the ancient civilizations of Asia and the western civilizations of the middle Ages. Iran had an amicable relationship with the government of Gupta in India. The Indian authority finally laid the foundation of a national unity and established government. Iran played as an arbitrator and an agent to communicate the opinions and the arts of western reigns to India and through these channels entered this neighborhood country [4]. Along with the architecture based on leveled wooden ceiling; in following periods, doors and pillars converted into stone and the construction of vaulted arches continued in Iran. Pope argues, "Persia has always employed wood for the great Talars or porches, and tall wooden columns characteristic of Persian architecture since Median times have their counterparts today" [5].

Something which was permanently in all the architectural periods in Iran was the existence of verandas, central yard, porch, blind arcade and mantelpiece.

### **Iran and India ties in the early ages of history**

Considering the historical facts, the dynasty of Indian Maurians should be regarded as the inheritors of the Achaemenid dynasty. The remained works of this dynasty confirm that, in this era, Chandragupta's reign epoch (232-273 B.C) and Asoka (273-232 B.C) in particular, Iran and India had relations in different fields. Cyrus the great (530-558 B.C.) conquered the southern areas of Hindukush and Darius (482-522 B.C.) conquered the Indus-Punjab. Maurian's government reached the peak of the power in Asoka era. Although there is no remarkable historical work left from Chandragupta time, a lot of important works have been left from Asoka epoch, which represent imitation, and the effect of the Achaemenid architecture upon the Maurian. The Achaemenid government had been overthrown when the Maurian Empire came to power. However, as mentioned earlier besides the common originality, Iran and India also had relations in different fields. Due to the influence of the architectural art, their cultural relations were more influential. Although this art originated from religious customs and the developing aspects of Arian art, the Maurian tried to conceal this effect through the modifications in the forms and pictures. But the artistic principles were so flourished and strong that could not fundamentally be changed and the Maurian illustrated it in Indian guise. Maurian empire, on the other hand, patterned the Achaemenid to parallel their power to the Achaemenid power. Consequently, they inspired the Achaemenid's life appearance and tried to gather together the best artists in the imperial court to lay the foundation of palaces as beautiful and splendid as the Achaemenid ones. After the overthrow of the Achaemenid, the Greek's authorization in Iran, India was one of those countries to which Iranian artists immigrated to manifest their talents. The Indian historical era begins from the 7th century B.C. The country had been divided into three small and independent territories. The Magadh's capital city was transferred from Rajgirha to Pataliputra 475 B.C. Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurians has relations with the Achaemenid Empire and he could establish a powerful and independent government under the influence of the Achaemenid Empire. It was Chandragupta who could withstand the Alexander. The golden age of the Maurian government was established by Asoka by whom the government reached the peak of its splendor. Asoka, died in 232 B.C., had been succeeded in spreading India from east to west and found a powerful government by following the Achaemenid. Some works from this era clarify the influence of the Iranian art upon the region. Some of these works are the ruins of his one-hundred column palace in Pataliputra (in east near Patna) and the memorial columns carrying the holy commands of Asoka in Kharoshty language. Capitals discovered from Pataliputra, as the archeologist Wheeler, Waddell have asserted; are wonderful samples which display the Maurian artists (Fig.8). Regarding animals and polish; Saranat, Sanchi, Vaisali, Sankissa, two of Rampurva columns, etc., (Fig.9) in particular, are among the columns which have been carved and look like the Achaemenid columns with the similar capitals. The only difference between the Achaemenid and these Indian columns is that capitals have directly been placed on the columns in the Achaemenid columns, but in Indian columns, an animal has first been placed on a platform or in a tray and then on a platform [6]. By comparing the Mohenjodaro (the Indus valley) and Lurestan, it can be perceived that the existence of two-headed animals prove one common Aryan religious culture. The existence of animals including lion, bull, legendary lion, and winged human also confirmed the exertion of influence by the western Asia, Iran in particular. Furthermore, botanical designs and pictures such as, bee hive; lotus, wheel, and fable animals verify this influence. (Figs.10-11-12-13) Anyway, the Maurian artists' enjoyed and profited from the Iranian patterns and even Iranian artist and this point cannot be renounced. The main reasons

behind these patterns are sharing the same cultural aspects, commercial relations, and political factors. In this relation, Gharavi according to Kumara Swami argues the current Iranian elements have been transformed to India before the Maurians. Swami adds that there was an outstanding relations among the artistic schools and certain social and official foundations of western Asian nations and Indian Aryans. The civilizations as Sumerian, Hittites, Assyria, Crete, Trojan and other regions of Asia Minor, Phoenicia, and finally the Achaemenid which highly developed, greatly changed Indian artists and send India many artistic aspects including winged lions, Griffin, holy animals, belligerent animals, sun chariot with four horses, flower rings, crown with different shapes, life tree, water in the mountain, date palm, bee hive, blue lotus , marginal bushes and flowers, red lotus, crenellated and crenate decorations of the wheels, beads, hawk bell and tumbler-shaped designs and figures related to lotus and scientists call it Persepolis and also the signs on the pressed coins, spiral artistic figures, the swastika, labyrinth, and twisted pictures. This scientist claim that the design of hawk bell and red lotus seen in the works both schools originally created in western Asia [6].

Most of the researchers of this era believe that the Maurian art possesses a native artistic origin and include the foreign factors in itself. These factors are not foreign though. They undoubtedly represent a common origin. It is worth mentioning that the reason why these capitals are similar to the Greek is that the Achaemenid art blends Iranian and Helenian art, as a result it has similarly been effective with this very new form in India. Persepolis and Pataliputra share some common aspects, for instance, squared hall, the equal and regular column distance, sandstone columns, the whole design of the building , the existence of the moat around the monument all confirm that this hall has simulated Persepolis. In this regard, Gharavi contends that there are some carvings and statues in Bhaja caves at the distance of 4 miles from the south of Karle cave near Lonavla, in Jamalgarhi caves at a distance of 36 miles from north east of Peshawar, and in Natova Gumbha in Orissa; all of which contain Persepolis methods [6]. Although some apparent changes happened in the Iranian people beliefs after the advent of Islam, the architecture art didn't lose its methods. The construction of tombs, tower, and monuments have been adopted from ancient Iran. Different styles of Iranian arts were also extended with the expansion of Islam throughout the world and the archeological terminologies were also transformed. The Sassanid art considerably influenced the Islamic architectural art. Rezvanian contends that although the mosques were founded based on the Islamic principles as Kaaba ward, the existence of altar painting prohibition, epigraph inclination, minaret application, etc. however, the acme of architectural art in Safavid epoch which employed veranda, covered and colorful potteries indicate thousand-year development of Iranian art which, in turn, illustrates the everlasting Iranian talents in architectural field . Wherever Islam arrived, figures developed towards geometric ones. Iranian art entered its evolution and peak of delicacy in Safavid era and the construction decoration such as colorful tiles, plaster works, inlay and lattice aesthetically reached its highest point (Figs.14-15-16-17). The native architectural and artistic designs of Islamic conquerors harshly contradict each other. Despite the fact that the Indian architecture is harsh and complicated, simple and rich, close to holy mountain full of hidden caves, the Islamic architecture is inclined to brightness, clearness, equality, and dignity [7]. Vaulted arches and diverse curves are the phenomena which existed in pre-Islamic era in Iran and have developed over the centuries. The creation of minaret on a quadrangle stand is one of the indicators of Iranian architecture which has extended to other territories like India. Dome is another construction which existed in pre-Islamic era in Iran and it technically, aesthetically and outwardly hit its peak point after Islam. Veranda also existed since Parthian epoch and was very functional in Sassanid era and was considered as the masterpiece of the Iranian architecture in the Islamic period of Iranian quad veranda masques minaret, in which fire and lantern were placed, existed in the Iranian architecture before Islam and was named Mazaneh after Islam. India also highly developed in Islamic period (Figs.18-19). Some of these unique masterpieces (e.g. Tajmahal) are among the most exquisite and comprehensive construction. Some instances of the above-mentioned features have been remained in different periods in India. These instances include all aforementioned features. The influence of Iranian architecture has clearly been observed during Mughal Empire particularly since Homayun's time. Homayun's construction is the advent of a new age in the Indian architecture. This period has to be called the age of development and splendor. The magnificent, beautiful, luxurious structures having been built in the heart of pleasant gardens display the poetical, genius and Iranian architectural spirit. Some of these constructions are as khan-e-khanan's tomb in Delhi, Akbar's tomb in Skandare, Jahangir's tomb in Lahore, and Safdarjang's monument. Safdarjang's tomb, built in fourth lunar century, is the last splendid construction who's Chahar-Chatre (Quadrangle Canopy) looks more like the color of mosque minaret in Iran rather than Indian Chatre (Canopy ). Furthermore, the emperors' edifices and dwelling palaces have also been set up in the middle of pleasant Chahar-Bagh ( Boulevard). The magnitude and the splendor of the construction are the first things which catch the eye in Homayun's monument. In addition to marbled minaret, the constructional materials blend black and red stones. Except the Chatre (Canopy) surrounding the minaret, all the structure is Iranian and this style of Iranian architecture is seen in all Indian Babur epoch for three centuries from this time up. The minaret of Homayun's construction is an absolute Iranian minaret which reached its highest perfection and attraction by Indian Mongols. The abundance of constructional materials certainly plays a critical role in the creation of such masterworks. Constructing tombs in the centre of the large gardens through which a river passing is the central feature of the Mongolian architecture (Fig.20). This architecture has been taken from Iran's architecture and has most probably constructed by the Iranian artists. Anyway, the application of the four-veranda octagonal plan, minaret, large cupola, the placement of dome on the platform in Chahar- Bagh, blind arcade, plaster work, stalactite and taking advantage of stone columns, delicate capitals, stone and windows, and making dents showing vase, jug,

etc on the house China are the most important Iranian features which became widespread in Islamic period in India and many instance have been left in the palaces and mansions, tombs, mosques, and monuments.

### DISCUSSION

The development and accomplishment of Indian art must be significant results of the immigration of the Iranian artists who employed their knowledge in these artistic works with respect to Maurian emperors' tastes. We may conclude that the influence of Iran upon India was due to a cultural exchange as the Indians used to work in the court of the Achaemenid [8]. The art of ancient India hit the peak of its accomplishment in the Maurian epoch. Although they highly thrived to display Indian traditional art, their inclination towards the western Asia, particularly Iran, is inevitable. Anyhow, the Achaemenid and Maurian arts share a permanent relation and similarity and it is evident that in spite of deep influence of Iranian art on Indian art, the Indian art has retained its genuine Indian spirit. The existence of pictures as wheel, steal, bee hive, decorative flowers, the triangular eyes of animals, etc. confirms the similarities and the cultural effect of Iranian art on Indian art. The reason why the archeologists highlight these effects is certainly that these works didn't exist before the Maurian in India. As a result, it becomes certain that these have come from the west of Asia, particularly Iran. The Iranian constructions represent the Iranian spirit and thought. Even though only ruins have been left from some constructions, they clearly display the Iranian talent and its exalted cultural level. The ancient Iran's architectural art is functional in building the religious and national constructions after 25 centuries and has kept its originality. In spite of the modern architectural development, Iran's architecture is still an inspiring art [8].

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