

History of Architecture in India
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Lecture 10
Week 02 Review

Today we will review everything we have learnt in the second week of this course.

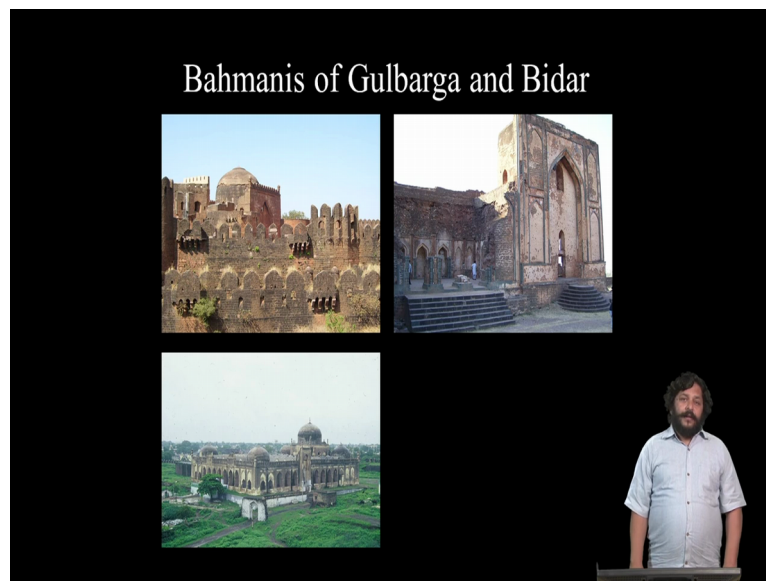
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We started off with the history of sultanate from the slave commanders of the Gorad kingdom who set a base in Delhi forming the Delhi sultanate. They built a number of buildings that were inspired by similar buildings in Afghanistan such as the Qutub Minar inspired by the Minaret at Jam. But yet the crafts traditions of these buildings were completely local employing local artisans and catering to local sensibilities. There were new ideas such as large, calligraphic bands that had never been seen on the subcontinent before.

The Delhi sultanate went through a succession of dynasties amongst whom the Khiljis and the Tughlaqs were perhaps the most successful. They conquered large parts of India but could hold them only for a short period of time. The people that they had appointed as military commanders of various provinces that they conquered soon declared independence by themselves and led to the creation of various sultanates including the powerful sultanate of the Bahamanis of Gulbarga and Bidar.

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The Bahamanis declared independence in 1347 from the stronghold of Daulatabad and very soon within 2 years moved their capital to Gulbarga in present day Karnataka. It is here that they strove to establish a style that was unique to their polity, a blend of nominally Iranian roots combined with local crafts traditions. They built large mosques of a kind never seen before and also big palaces as you see in the fort at Bidar which soon became the second capital in the 15th century.

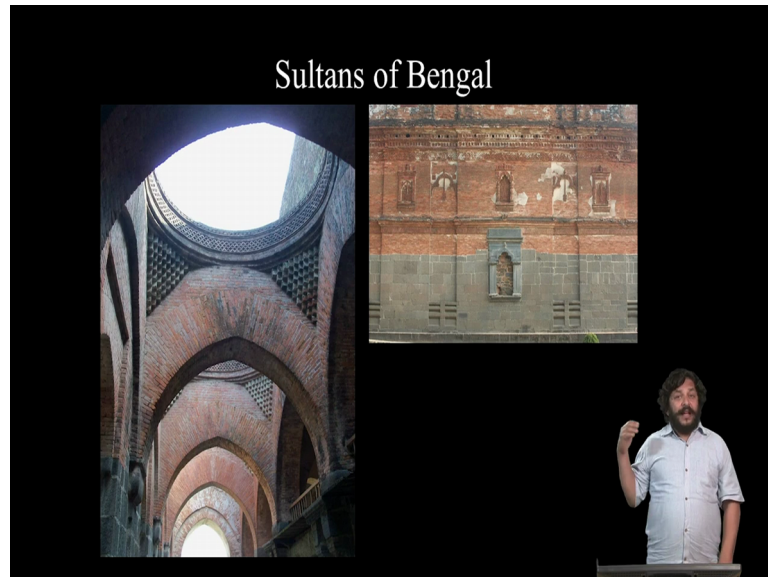
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Similarly the Muzaffarids of Gujarat who in 1411 declared independence and developed a style of architecture that is unique to the region drawing upon a rich legacy of temple architecture. Replicating motives and stock architectural elements from Jain temples at

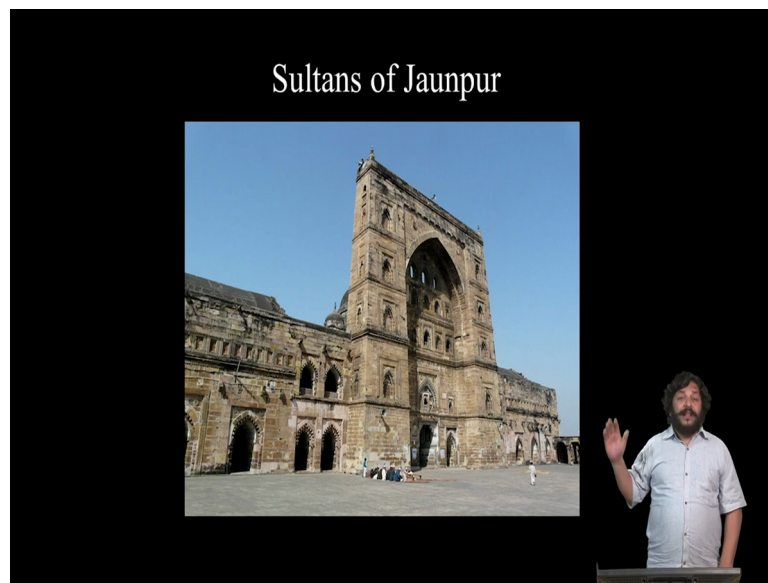
various places like Dilwara, the Gujarat sultans developed and evolved an architecture which was really very distinguished from the other sultanates. The material too, the yellowish sandstone that they used was unique to them but really tied in with the region.

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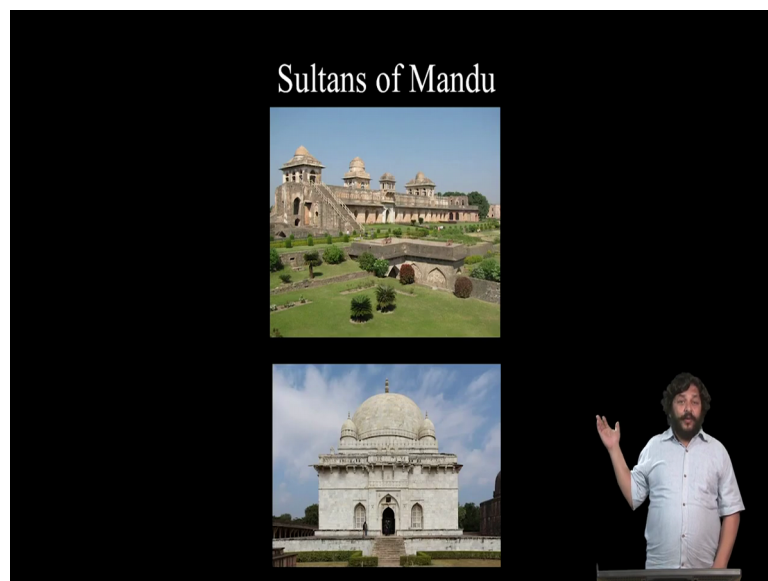
The sultans of Bengal, a land where building construction stone is very scarce, embarked in a completely different strategy of using stone only where it matters in important basement bands of buildings as you see in the Adina mosque on top. They also draw upon a long expertise in using brick and terracotta which has been used in Buddhist monuments of Bengal for a long time. In fact this rich ornamentation of brick and terracotta which evolves rapidly under the sultans of Bengal becomes the basis for the brick temples of Bengal that you see at various places.

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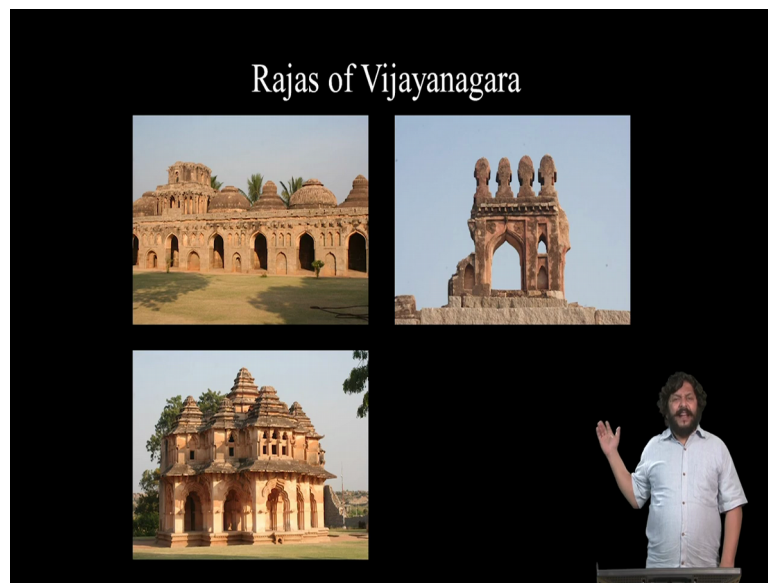
The sultans of Jaunpur whom we have not looked at in any kind of detail also tried and evolved an architecture idiom that expresses their own identity very different from the other sultanates.

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We have not seen the sultans of Mandu who probably provide inspiration for the Mughals, Akbar and his successors to build buildings, to build (04:30) completely in marble. They too have a regional idiom that is unlike the neighbours, the Bahamanis to the south and the sultans of Gujarat to the west.

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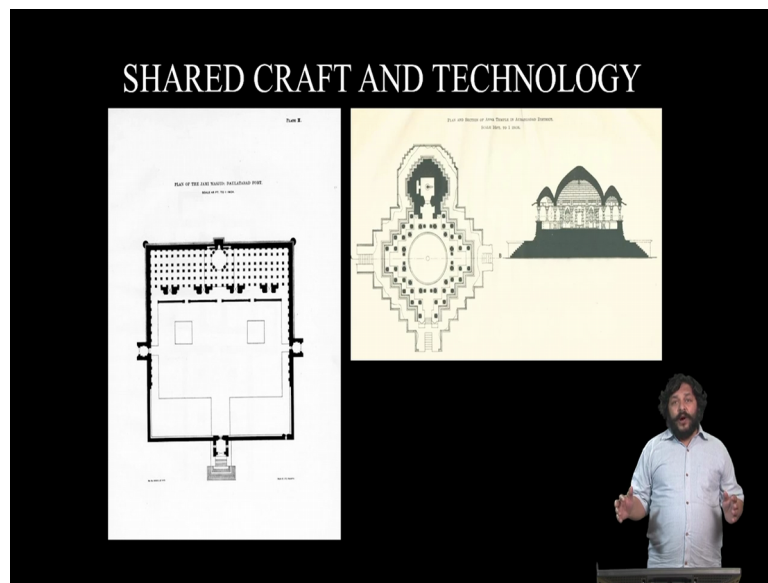


And lastly let us not forget that the Rajas of Vijayanagar also have declared independence after serving at the court of the sultans of Delhi. In 1337 the two brothers Hariharan Bukka come back and established what is then a small kingdom that grows to be enormously large and covers a large part of the Indian peninsula.

But the architectural vocabulary they used for their non religious buildings is completely that of sultanate India deriving initially from aspirations of the Delhi sultanate but eventually evolving to become a hybrid language in its own right (bo) borrowing profusely elements from all the sources that it has connections with being part of a greater Indian world and even greater world of the Indian Ocean.

But yet retaining a core of local sensibility using artisans that are local who have built temples for years before but are also in the employ of the various sultans in the region. And it is the elephant stables that you see on your top left, the Lotus Mahal built in the 16th century on your bottom left and the detail of the kind that you see above that really define the hybridity of the Rajas of Vijayanagar.

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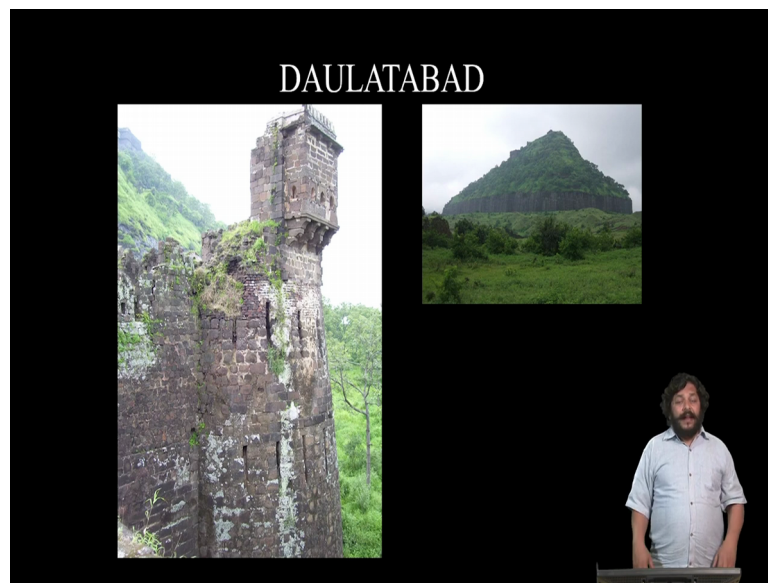


Again as we saw in a whole talk on the temple at Anva, the way regional construction guilds operate is to work with materials and techniques that they are comfortable with because craft technologies are very different from design technologies. Designs move, designs are mobile whereas building construction is really local. It takes a long time to move. Designs can be passed outside the human body through paper, through words, the transmission of design is not inherently tied with the human body like construction technology is.

A mason learns by gesture; a designer learns through books. A mason learns from his father; a designer learns from anybody who might be his teacher. The designer tends to write down his ideas of design whereas the only documents that a mason leaves behind for us are the stones that he has carved. But yet if one can read the masonry as well as one can read text, there is a greater story to be told, a story that unifies buildings that are Hindu, that are Muslim, that are Jain and that are Christian or of any faith for a given period and region.

In a given region, at a given time the same guilds of masons are working for all patrons as is evidence in the temple at Anva and the Jami Masjid at Daulatabad, both of whom have a completely different design philosophy but the actual construction of a dome resting on an octagon is where local masons fail in copying models from Gujarat and therefore we know it is the same guilds of masons working at both places.

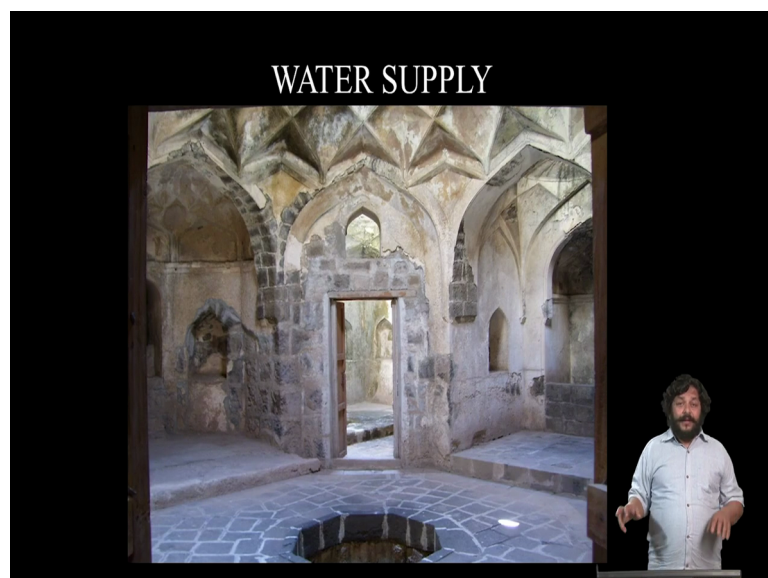
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And lastly we saw the great fort of Daulatabad which is a palimpsest of architectural history for over 800 years. Every successive dynasty has added their own layer to this fort embellishing it with ornament of its time, improving it with enhanced military technologies through the centuries and each successive dynasty has tried to leave behind a lasting legacy of their accretions and additions at the fort of Daulatabad.

This fort has been the capital of at least four dynasties, a place from where several dynasties have declared independence, a very monumental site in the history of the Deccan. Daulatabad also boast of a fantastic water supply system that would be replicated at various cities across the Deccan.

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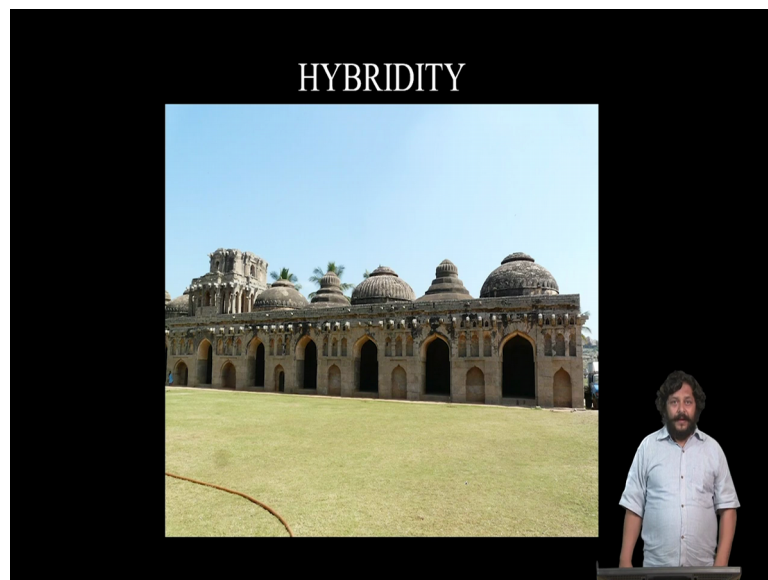


The water supply deserves a special note because it is only under the sultanates that you find cities being sighted in places where it was not possible to have large settlements before. Traditionally in India, cities were always located on the banks of rivers, in river valleys or in places where the water table was high enough to rely completely on wells. It was with the arrival in the 13th century of the sultanate kingdoms across India that you have the great introduction of the Persian wheel.

You have an introduction of canals and underground water convenience technologies and you have an improvement in military technology, both architecturally and also in terms of gun casting. Paper comes along and the whole world changes till the arrival of the Mughals who decide that they will move back to an older pattern of locating to cities which are along river banks.

But this period of 200 to 300 years is very important as it really is a technological improvement in water management. The Mughals will slip back into an older pattern but the Deccan being special, it is the Marathas under the Peshwas who as a last memory of the water technology of the Deccan will built for the city of Pune a very extensive and elaborate water supply system modelled along the lines of what you have in the Deccan sultanates.

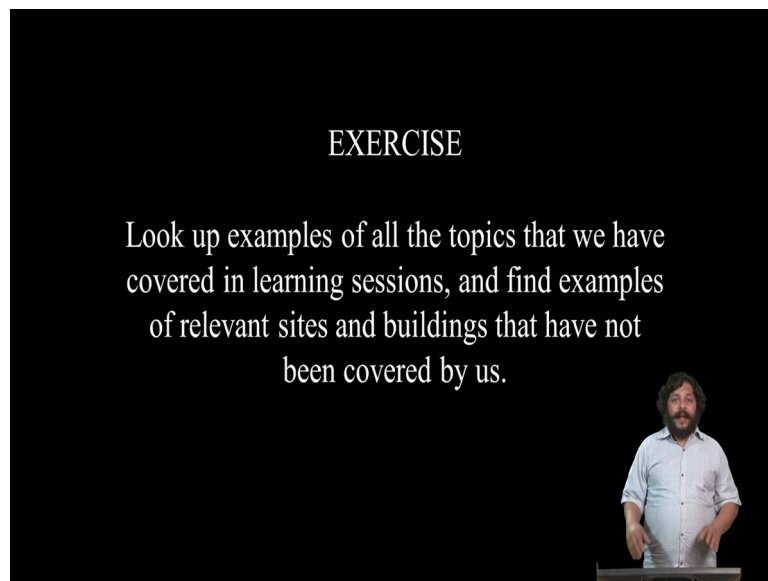
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The question of hybridity should not be forgotten as scholars have really fetishized the idea of things being hybrid and that is because they believe that there are things that are pure. Most things in the world as they evolve are in a continual and we have chosen to define certain points as pure or high points of architecture, of painting, of language or of culture.

But in essence everything is a hybrid on a moving grid because we choose to stop at certain points and call them pure. Everything in between is defined as hybrid. But let us celebrate hybridity because after all architecture like most human creations is a story of the movement of peoples, of change, of an exchange of ideas and of the creation of better and beautiful things.

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And so as an exercise let us look at examples of all the topics we have covered in the learning sessions this week and look at examples of relevant sites and buildings that we have not covered in any kind of detail and try to fit them in the rubric that we have discussed. Thank you.