

MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE OF KASHMIR A CASE STUDY OF JAMIA MASJID SRINAGAR.

Sabeen Ahmad sofi

Research Scholar, Department of History,
RDVV, Jabalpur, M.P., India.

Abstract: *The mosque occupies a central position in Muslim religious, social organization, political and intellectual importance. Jamia masjid Srinagar presents a remarkable religious zeal, with which Islamic institutions came to be established in Kashmir, contains all the features of wooden style of architecture. The mosque is located at the heart of old city nowhata, Srinagar. The main characteristic of the mosque is its brick work and on plain it is square. The mosque is having a central open courtyard and a pillared colonnade around it. In the center of the mosques courtyard a tank and baradari are built. The mosque is considered to be the most attractive and impressive representation of wooden structures in Kashmiri style of architecture. The arrangement of the wooden pillars and the construction of the roof are something unique which has not been found anywhere in the country. The pyramidal roof is very attractive look and also helps the heavy snow to slide down to save the architecture from destruction.*

Key words: Mosque, Architecture, Muslim, wood, palm, logs, stone, etc

Introduction;

The word 'mosque' masjid in Arabic, is the Muslim gathering place for prayer, which means 'place of prostration'¹. It is the place where Muslims to perform Namaz [Salah]. In the center of the wall facing Makah is the mihrab or nich, which marks the direction of the kabah at Makah, and to the right of this nich, is the Mimber or pulpit, from which the khutba, or Friday oration, is recited². The construction of mosque has witnessed various developments in various stages and its architectural style has changed from time to time and place to place. After hijrat [from mecca to Madina] in 622 A.D., Prophet Muhammad [slw] decided to build a mosque at Quba five miles away from Madina. This mosque appeared to be the first mosque in Islam as extremely very simple and plain, which was constructed by putting palm logs and leaves³. Quatul Islam mosque in Delhi is the first mosque of India .it was in the later stages that the arch and domes were introduced in the architecture of the mosque during medieval period⁴.

The Muslim architecture in Kashmir replaced the stone constructing material by wood, by the Muslim builders⁵. It was also one of the reasons for the use of wood, which wood was easily available in abundance quantity and was less liable to damage during the earth quake accidents⁶. In Kashmir arch was firstly introduced in the mosque of rinchana and is also known as first mosque built in the city⁷. Kashmir is a heaven for the artist with a romantic temperament, the architectural style of Kashmir has its uniqueness .thus the Islamic art and craft, in Kashmir proved for its prosperity and the Islamic architecture signifies the composite cultural symbol of Kashmir.⁸

Jamia masjid;

This grand old Jamia masjid of Srinagar is known as one of the sacred shrines of Islamic followers. The type of its architecture, its massiveness, complexity, size and perfection of design makes it one of the most extraordinary achievements of early Islamic art in the valley⁹. Originally the mosque was built by sultan Sikandar, has laid its foundation in 1398 A.D. and completed it in 1402 A.D.¹⁰. Sadaruddin Harasani the great engineer from khurasan was invited by sultan Sikandar to Kashmir and the estimate and the plan of the mosque was drafted by him. It was the only mosques have the capacity of 40000 worshippers at a time¹¹.

It has been claimed that the ground on which the mosque stands was sacred to the Buddhists and men from Ladakh called it tsising tsublak king. Thus this mosque even in the late 19th century was named as Bodo masjid¹². There are four doors on the four sides and four high minarets rising to the sky and decorated with wonderful sculptures, has passed through many vicissitudes¹³. In the Jamia masjid both stones and wood are used as architectural material. Thus it is the mixture of Mughal and Kashmiri style of architecture¹⁴. The mosque was thrice burnt down and thrice rebuilt. Once in 1479A.D.that it was rebuilt by sultan hasan shah, the grandson of sultan Zain ul abidin, and that it was finally so shaped by Ibrahim and Ahmad magre in 1503 to 1504 A.D.¹⁵. Mosque was again destroyed by fire during the region of Jahangir at the time of eid 1620 A.D. Jahangir order its re construction under the supervision of Haidar Malik of chadura¹⁶. The mosque was again caught fire during the reign of Aurangzeb in 1672A.D. while the governorship was in the hands of iftikhar khan [1672 to 1675 A.D.].It was the third occasion when mosque was devastated by the fire¹⁷. The plan is the same as sultan Sikandars original construction¹⁸. Although a considerable portion of the mosque was raised on its original construction in brick masonry still its interior contains a large amount of wood work¹⁹. The final re-construction effected by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb seems to have followed in most respects the original plan²⁰.

The mosque is composed of four huge and wide colonnades representing the magnificence of the Jamia masjid. The space covered with pyramidal colonnade is not the invention of Muslim's in Kashmir, but is the reminiscent of the architectural style of the stupa court of the Buddhist monasteries or the cellular prototype of Hindu temples²¹. The mosque is a quadrangle and roughly square in plan, its northern and southern sides being 384 feet in length²². Each side having a colonnade with pyramidal roof. The western colonnade represents the mehrab usually indicating the direction of khana- I- Kaaba. The main wall of the mosque had all screened arched windows. However southern gateway surmounted by a pyramidal pinnacle in wood is the main entrance of the mosque. The wooden pillars in systematic rows and the style of roof are unique in their structure, nowhere found in other parts of the country²³. There are about 78 wooden ornamented posts of 25 to 50 feet in height²⁴. The main gate is also known as the shahi-darwaza. All the four sides of the courtyard there are great verandah halls, the roof of which is totally based on chobi-pillars²⁵.earlier above the ceiling of the wooden roof but below the

earth layer there was the use of birch bark for resistance as a water proof. But its character completely changed in 1653A.D. when the birch bark on wooden planks covered with mud was replaced with tin [iron] sheet²⁶.

During afghan rule the mosque was twice repaired, once by haji karim-dad khan in 1776-77 A.D. and the second time by sardar azad khan in 1788-89 A.D.²⁷. In the time of Sikhs, the mosque was closed under the orders of Diwan Moti Ram in 1820 A.D., The Muslim's were forbidden to say 'azan' and to offer prayers²⁸. But the gate was reopened after 25 years by Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, a governor of Kashmir under Sikh rule, to perform call for prayer²⁹. In dogra times over Kashmir rambir Singh, the son and successor of mehraja repaired the said mosque was three or four times³⁰. He allowed only Friday prayers. The mosque was reopened and rebuilt by the support of the zamindars of valley and with the cooperation of the archaeological department of government of india³¹.



Jamia masjid Srinagar northern and western colonnades.



Jamia masjid Nowhatta, Srinagar (plinth and cedar pillars)

Conclusion;

in conclusion we can say, Jamia masjid of Srinagar is one of the historic masjid in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. The masjid is used not only ritual purposes but also learning and socialization purposes. The wooden architecture of the mosque and its large array of lofty pillars is the taste of Kashmirian master hands. Sufi mention in his book, 'the arts and crafts of Kashmir manifest the artistic expression of the imagination and the soul of the people of valley and are a mirror of the culture and sentiments'. During the time of sultans of Kashmir, Kashmir became a Centre of Islamic culture, architecture, arts and crafts; they provided patronage to artist and artisan class for the promotion of local style of Islamic art. Jamia masjid Srinagar is one of the buildings stand supreme and speak the glory of the age.

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