



**A STUDY OF THE PALACES AND SUMMER HOUSES
CONSTRUCTED DURING LATER MEDIEVAL TO THE
END OF THE DOGRA RULE IN KASHMIR; HISTORY,
ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION**

Dr. Nazakat Hussain

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government Post Graduate College, Rajouri, University of Jammu,
Jammu and Kashmir

Cite This Article: Dr. Nazakat Hussain, "A Study of the Palaces and Summer Houses Constructed During Later Medieval to the End of the Dogra Rule in Kashmir; History, Architecture and Preservation", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 2, Issue 1, Page Number 240-243, 2017.

Abstract:

Palaces are the Royal Adobes of the Emperors, Kings and Chieftains since the establishment of the political system on the earth. The construction of these architectural specimens provided with highly artistic values. In this paper an attempt is made to elaborate the rare but attractive palaces and summer houses of this period. The topography, plans, designs, architectural values and master builders were equally important components for these monuments. The palaces and summer houses in the region were mostly used by the Governors during Mughal period. While the visit of the Mughal Emperors to Kashmir in summer the palaces were adorned for their welcome by their Governors. The Dogra Rulers also constructed summer houses in Kashmir to enjoy the beauty of Valley in summer. These monuments were constructed by Mughal Governors on the same architectural style which is found on the other parts of the country, the Mughal Traditional Architecture. The later Rulers of Kashmir like Dogras maintained their architectural characteristics.

Key Words: Palaces, Architectural Style, History, Preservation & Limestone

Objective:

- ✓ To understand the basic history of construction of Palaces.
- ✓ To study the purpose of the construction of Palaces Summer Houses.
- ✓ To study the material used for construction.

Introduction:

The Palace is a Royal Adobe constructed for the high ranked dignitary (American Heritage Dictionary.1992) of the administration of a country or a state. During the ancient and medieval times it was constructed with full protective walls like forts or fortresses. It was meant for the aristocracy, royal family and other important officials. These architectural ideas emerged since the establishment of the early political administrations. The forts were constructed for the protection of the administrative dignitaries of an empire or a state from foreign invasion and internal rebellions. Within the forts the palaces were erected for the Emperors, Kings and local Chieftains to protect themselves and their subjects. In India the earliest references of construction of royal residences were traced back to Mauryan Dynasty. Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Mauryan Dynasty, in Magadh Empire, constructed a palace within a highly protective fort in his capital Patliputra (Now Patna the capital of Bihar). The Gupta Period is called the Golden Age of Indian History witness the beautiful and full adorned Palaces. Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Emperors constructed palaces and summer houses on the various parts of the country. The local rulers used to construct their palaces in the same manner. In Kashmir the palaces were constructed with the same plans, designs etc., with few changes, but keeping in the view the topographically scenes is one of the salient features of the palace construction.

Palaces:

Pari Mahal:

The Pari Mahal or fairy palace is situated on the Zabanwan hill (Sufi 1974.515) to the south east of the Dal Lake. It was built by Prince Dara Shukoh who named it after his wife Pari Begum (her real name was Nadira Begum). He built it for his spiritual preceptor, Akhun Mulla Shah. It was the residential school of Sufism where apart from tradition and Quran astronomy and astrology were also used to be taught. Jahanara Begum believed that out of all the descendants of Taimur she and her brother were to go on the spiritual path as their forefathers had chosen this path in search of God (Hasrat 1952.66). This architectural specimen was built by Jahanara Begum and her brother Dara Shukoh. They carried on with the construction of these buildings for their tutor with the blessing of their father.

The structural remains and the garden of Pari Mahal provide a perfect fusion of buildings and gardens. The monument is divided into six terraces. The garden in Pari Mahal is different from other Mughal gardens of Kashmir. It is devoid of any waterfall, water chutes, cascades and the layout of canals, which used to be the general characteristic features of other building complexes found in the valley. There are ornamental fountain and lakes in five terraces. The terracotta pipes have been used for collecting water into tanks on various terraces.

The topmost terraces had a reservoir and a pavilion. The pavilion was built of local rubble stones. The two small arches have been provided to its facade. A reservoir is connected to the terrace which finally

connected to a canal with the help of earthen pipes. The gushing canal fed by a spring which is about half kilometre away in the hills. Each terrace is connected with the lower one by a few steps on the corner to descend down. The facade of the retaining wall of the first terrace is adorned with arcade to beautify its front elevation. It is provided with a series of Manteca recessed arch. There are two more arches on either side of the stairs each of them is surmounted by a niche. The second terrace is connected with the first by stairs. In the middle of former is a rectangular tank which receives water from the first terrace through water chute. The third terrace is elegant and distinctive part of the garden. It can easily be approached through a brick arch gate on the east. There are royal residential quarters along the gate. A *hammam* is situated in the north of the royal residential quarters. It is connected with a room said to be designed for heating water with the help of earthen pipes to provide hot water in winter or cold weather. On the southern and western half of retaining walls there are similar rooms or chambers. The retaining wall of south side has a pavilion. The water flows down into the tank of the next terrace through the earthen pipe. The water flowing into the canals in this terrace presents a picturesque scene. These three higher terraces were meant for the royal use. The remains of earthen pipes and a tank beyond the retaining wall are visible on the fourth terrace.

The next terrace like other terraces has a pavilion and a tank whole upper portion of the wall is provided with perforated square holes. The retaining wall of the pavilion has a double row of arches. The opinion of certain scholars that the perforated square holes were made for the use of pigeons is quite wrong (Kak 1971.98). It may be a peculiar feature of the monument for beautification. In the last terrace of Pari Mahal a water tank is in the middle which is usually fed through earthen pipes. Finally the waterfalls in Dal Lake. The entire building is enclosed with massive walls. On the ends of the each walls octagonal bastion are located to support and beautify the structure.

The government undertook a project of renovation of Pari Mahal. Under this project of conservation which started in 1970's (IA A Review1976-77.108) ruined stone masonry of arches of *baradari*, (IA A Review1984-85.146) the retaining wall of terraces bastions steps, tanks, roofs gate parts and rooms of the royal residential apartments and some other structures were restored to their original shape (IA A Review1987-88.204)

Palace of Amir Khan:

The palace was erected by Amir Khan (Forestor 1997.14) an Afghan governor of Kashmir on the eastern side of the Dal Lake. The palace was fortified by a massive stone wall of about a meter width. It is difficult to guess the height of the fortress because of its dilapidated condition. The royal residential apartments had all the characteristics of a palace. The garden attached to it is a typical specimen of Kashmir architecture as they were constructed in the terraced style, plans and designs. The building material of palace would have been of inferior quality as it could not survive. It was destroyed and no attempt of its renovation has been anticipated during the succeeding periods. The palace and the garden do not exist today.

Rani Mahal:

Rani Mahal or Palace is magnificent monument overlooking the natural spectacular view. The structural remains of Rani Mahal provide a glimpse of the perfection and master skill of the artisans regarding the construction based on Mughal architecture. It is the unique structure on the Imperial Route (The Mughal Road) from Lahore to Srinagar situated on the eastern end in a Rest House or *sarai* built during Mughal period at Nowshera (Rajouri) (Tuzuk 1909.181). The architectural specimen is a double storied building constructed with dressed grey limestone.

During their visit to Kashmir Jahangir and his consort Nurjahan ordered to build a royal residence meant for their stay. It was named after her as Rani Mahal. The upper story of this palatial complex had been used by them as it had all the essential amenities needed by the royalty. A decorated *baradari* provides a charming and beautiful scene of the river Tawi and beyond the river the green refreshing breeze of Pir Pangal range keeps the palace cool during hot weather.

Deodar wood has been used in the ceiling of the palace. The existence of Wood in its original form displays its long-lasting characteristics. The wooden doors of the Palace open towards the south. To approach the decorated upper Portion there is a flight of steps constructed with gray limestone. A feature of the palace is its mural painting on the external surface of the western wall still exists in spite of preservation. It needs immediate preservative steps to be taken to save it from destruction. The paintings seem to be based on the real event showing a queen walking in the garden. Red and green colours dominate the mural. The depiction of beauty of nature which attained the highest degree of interest during the period of Jahangir is quite apparent in the observation of the murals. Such type of natural demonstration has been the characteristic feature of Jahangir or the Mughals paintings. The Rani Mahal is still in good condition but it needs regular preservative measures to save them for posterity. The neglected monument could be the heritage site to promote the tourism if preserve and renovate.

Palace at Shahabad:

It was built by Nurjahan (Vigne 1987.80) the famous and worthy queen of Emperor Jahangir. It lies at Shahabad in Anantnag district of Kashmir. It was originally the royal residence of Akbar's nobles till the period

of Samad Khan. The elegant monumental square building had been constructed with dressed limestone. The *baradari* or widows opens to riverside which kept the royal building cool and fresh during summer. The decorated wooden doors and roof have enhanced the elegance of palace quite considerably. The wooden door and roof have enhanced the elegance of palace quite considerably. The wooden architecture is of typical Kashmiri style of architecture. Fine wood carving of Kashmiri artisans is well known since very early times. They attained an unmatched skill because of the royal patronage during Mughal period.

Palace of Vernag:

Vernag is famous for its Mughal garden. Mughal Emperor Jahangir and his empress Nurjahan built a beautiful garden which is irrigated and kept cool by the soft water of Chashma-i-Vernag. Within the garden a beautiful palace was also erected by him during his time. It is provided with octagonal water tank, which used to be full of fishes. Empress Nurjahan once put an inscribed gold ring in the nostril of a fish. The tank is connected with the fountainhead by the small channels. The adorned palace overlooks the other building. The palace is a nice example of architectural skill and interior decoration. The canal along with its fresh breeze passing through the palace is a perfect way of cooling it in warm weather. The nice woodwork is evidence of the deft hands in carving of the typical Kashmiri style of interior decoration.

Dogra Palace at Rambagh Srinagar:

It was built by one of the Dogra rulers of Kashmir in Rambagh Srinagar. The palace was used by them during their stay in Kashmir in the summer season. Therefore it is also called as the summer palace. The double storied building has been constructed keeping in mind the typical Kashmiri wooden architectural characteristics.

Palace of Ali Murdan Khan:

Ali Murdan Khan, a Mughal Governor of Kashmir was a great builder, who may be credited to have built a royal abode in Nowshera (Srinagar) (Didamari 1995.292). A beautiful garden having canals, fountains and cascades were attached to it. The palace is now in dilapidated condition.

Jharogah-i-Shahi:

The palace is situated on the Hari Parbat fortress which was built by Emperor Akbar during his first visit of Kashmir (Verma 1985.80). The entire monumental specimen is constructed by the grey limestone. The stone work was handled by the master builders from different parts of India. It is an open building which provides a picturesque scene. The entire city of Srinagar can be easily seen from this palace. The system of canals full of clean water and ambient greenery enhance the beauty the royal adobe.

Royal palace at Achhabal Garden:

It was built by Emperor Jahangir in the middle of 1612-19 A.D. (Bernier 1934.413) in Achhabal garden which is situated in Anantnag district of Kashmir. The elegant building was erected for the stay during their visit to Kashmir in summer. The water flows through a canal passing through the summer house where a monolithic seat is placed in the middle.

Palace at Zaina Lanka:

A palace was built by Akbar in 1591 A.D. on the Zaina Lanka which was originally built by Sultan Zainul Abidin (1420-70 A.D.) (Badauni 1973.398). He was the great Sultan of Medieval Kashmir. The seven storied palace was constructed with deodar wood which was laterally gutted by the devastated fire. In 1591 A.D., Akbar the Emperor of India ordered his Governor to construct a beautiful summer house on the beautiful island; in the Dal Lake The limestone building does not exist today.

Conclusion:

The palaces constructed during aforementioned period of study were constructed keeping in view the topographical protected locations and picturesque scenes in the highly protected fortress or forts and overlook the surrounded areas. The geometrical use was handled with the master hands with innovative ideas, the plans, architectural designs and other architectural component are found in the palace monuments. A few of them were preserved by the state government and most of them have been ignored. These monuments could be the source of attraction of tourists which will boost the tourism industry if Jammu and Kashmir if these beautiful structures preserved and renovate.

References:

1. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language Houghton Mifflin (Trade); 3rd Revised edition 1992
2. Sufi, Ghulam Mohiuddin (1974). Kashir. V. II. Lukhnow
3. Hasrat, B. J. (1952). Dara Shukoh. Calcutta
4. Kak, R. C (1971). Ancient Monument of Kashmir. Delhi
5. Forester, George (1997). A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern part of India Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia and into Russia by Caspian Sea. 1782-84. Vol. II Delhi
6. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, (Eng. Tr.) Henery Beveridge 1909. Vol.I New Delhi
7. Vigne, G. T. (1987). Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardu (The Country adjoining the mountain course of Indus and the Himalaya, North Punjab) Vol. II (1st Published 1984)

8. Didamari, Khawaja Mohammad Azam. Waqiat-i-Kashmir (Persian), (Urdu Tr.) Dr Khawaja Haider Yazdani (Edt.) Wahid Qureshi. Lahore. 1995
9. Verma, Amrit (1985). Forts of India. Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India.
10. Bernier, Francis (1934). Travels in the Mughal Empire A.D. 1656-1668. (Edt.) V. A. Smith. Oxford. London
11. Al-Badauni. Muntakhab't-Tawarikh (Eng. Trans.) W. H. Lowe Delhi 1899 (Re-print 1973)
12. IA- A Review 1976-77
13. IA- A Review 1984-85
14. IA- A Review 1987-88