

Concept Note

International Conference

***Art and Architectural Traditions of India and Iran:
Commonality and Diversity***

05 to 07 December 2018

Organised by:

India-Arab Cultural Centre

Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University), New Delhi, India
In collaboration with Iran Cultural House, New Delhi

The proposed conference is an attempt to put into perspective the dynamics of the *Art and Architectural traditions of India and Iran: Commonality and Diversity* from early Islamic period. The people of India and Iran, two ancient neighbouring civilisations, have enjoyed close historical links through the ages. Over the years they interacted and enriched each other in the fields of language, religion, art, culture, architecture, food and other traditions.

The aim of the conference is to understand the long history of contact between India and Iran and how to translate this into vibrant and mutually beneficial interactions. As they share a great deal of historical background imbued with richness of art, architecture, socio-cultural and political exchange. This should cover not only trade in goods and services, but also bilateral and multilateral investment, but also in the field of Art and Culture. This would again enrich and reconnect the ancient civilisations of Iran and India, which is connected by works of art, culture and architecture. Therefore, the historical and cultural linkages of Iran with India continue to be of abiding interest for both.

The regions which stretch from India (especially northern India), to Iran, Afghanistan, the Central Asia had close interaction throughout history. The peoples of these regions with different ethnic backgrounds, cultures and languages have been intermingling for many centuries. In the archaemenian period, art and architecture

traveled to India during the Mauryan period, to leave their mark on the styles of pillar with their animal capitals. But it was during the reign of Sakas and Kushanas that a cultural and religious exchange took place, which strengthened their relationship. Besides, the region, for many centuries served as a transitional link between China, India, Western Asia through Central Asia and India as a connecting path to the region.

The peoples from Iran and Central Asia migrated from their original home and settled in various part of India. They established the Delhi Sultanate (late 12th Century) and later the Mughal Empire (16th Century) on the Indian sub-continent and ruled during the next few centuries. The relationship between the Safavid dynasty of Iran and the Mughals of India were often cordial. In an era of cultural exchange, trade and interactions among the people of these empires brought about an exchange of intellectual and artistic ideas. The development of such exchanges between these great empires was further augmented by cultural, artistic, and political contacts with their European and East Asian neighbours. History is the witness to these interactions, and on account of these, the influence of Central Asia and Turkey can be seen in various aspects of Indian art, language, culture, architecture, gastronomy, and overall the lifestyles of the people. Besides, various Sufi saints came from Iran and Central Asia and settled in India and greatly influenced the socio-religious milieu of the sub-continent.

It was with the rise of Islam in Middle East that it eventually went on to spread its distinctive elements to the other parts of Central Asian region. Iran as a centre for Islamic civilisation thrived with its art, culture, and architecture. It eventually reached the borders of present day Pakistan and India, where with travellers like Al Beruni, of Iranian origin from Khwarizm in North of Iran visited India during the period of Mahmud Ghaznavi of Ghazna. He mentioned in his chronicle the study of Indian customs, traditions and way of life in *Kitab-ul-Hind*. We get know of the relation between Iran and India through such chronicles and travellers, who left their account shedding light in the context of art, culture and society of that time during the imperial period of the Delhi sultanate.

The advent of the Mughals in India was in the year 1526, but it was in the reign of Humayun that Persian artist Abdus Samad of Shiraz, Mir Sayyid of Tabriz, were

brought from Iran to India. Subsequently, it was under Akbar that real patronage of art started. He went on and established the '*Karkhanas*', (a work centre under state supervision during the Mughal periods) as each painter was an expert in painting a particular body part, flora or fauna in scene, it was a collective effort from which one miniature painting was made. New colour palette of turquoise blue, emerald green, lapis, veridian and brilliant white was added to the Indian saffron, indigos and vermilions, these featured in the miniature paintings as their distinctive class and style. The Persian and Turkish masters worked with Indian craftsmen, they combined the Indian and Persian forms, lines and colours and created a unique blend of their own style. The Mughal portraiture has its root in Persian Painting, allegorical portrait of Jahangir is one the most suitable examples of this. The various themes of hunting scenes, war, even construction of buildings, and landscape, court scenes are other examples. The significant change in harmonious forms of art and architecture was clearly visible in the era of the Mughals. The advancement in the field of architecture, Persian artisans were brought to India, with this incorporation of Persian style in the architecture, construction of palaces and forts, mosques and public buildings. The synthesis of Indo-Iranian style, had huge domes bulbous in shape, large halls, colossal gateways, minarets positioned at corners and fine embellishments like *pietra dura* are some of the other signature features of Mughal architecture. The marvels of the Mughal period were Humayun Tomb, Akbar's tomb in Sikandara near Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal which is a perfect synthesis of the Indo-Iranian style, its forms to be the zenith of Mughal architecture. The decoration and design also featured the influence of Iranian cypress with kalpavriksha (desire fulfilling tree) on the arched *mehrab*.

To discuss these issues, India-Arab Cultural Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, (a Central University) New Delhi, India, will be organising a 3 Day International Conference on *Art and Architectural traditions of India and Iran: Commonality and Diversity* from 05 to 07 December 2018, in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. Papers are invited on the proposed conference in an attempt to put into perspective the dynamics of the Art and Architectural traditions of India and Iran from early Islamic period on the following broader themes, from social scientists drawn from different disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, architecture, and museology who are interested in the above subject. Those desiring to participate in the conference are

requested to send in their paper titles and a 200-word abstract by 31 October 2018 to the following email addresses nrkhan@jmi.ac.in or conference.iacc@gmail.com.

The broad themes and sub-themes of the conference include, among other things:

1. Historical Background: India, Iran and Central Asia
2. Key component in Art and Architectural traditions of India and Iran.
3. Similarities and Diversity in the technologies.
4. Materials and Mediums: Stonework, Brickwork, Ceramic Tiles and Ceramic Mosaic and Stucco/Plasterwork
5. Different art forms like: Carpets, Miniature, Ceramics, Metalwork, stone carvings and Arts of the book.
6. Tradition and indigeneity in Mughal architecture in India
7. Timurid and Safavid in Iran
8. Impacts of Regional traditions in Indian Architecture
9. Contemporary Developments in art and architecture

Important Dates:

- Last date for sending abstract: 31 October 2018
- Abstract confirmation: 06 November 2018
- Last date for submission of full paper: 20 November 2018

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