

Central Asian Hangover: Mughals in India

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Mughals came to India, adopted it, lived here, died here but never really made it their home. They always craved for their home land in central Asia- Fraghana in particular. India for them was virtually a field of activity, to measure their reach, physical capacities and manoeuvring capabilities. It was here only that they experimented with what Central Asia had taught them.

Mughals originally belonged to a region which was mostly arid, less hospitable and recalcitrant to the man's labours. It needed ever-vigilant brains, ever-ready physical prowess and undiminishing efforts to yield to human activities. 'Survival of the fittest' was the rule; those who succumbed perished without any trace. Geo-political situation, as always was such that you had to trust but none. No body had to be taken for granted.

Au contrarie to India where land was plenty, its fertility assured and ever ready to be exploited Central Asia was an expanse of "No-Land". It was virtually a desert ocean interspersed with steeps and oasis as a patchwork. In Central Asia land needed to be claimed, once procured needed to be consolidated and every consolidation in turn needed a mechanism to protect it from ever hostile surroundings. It was not to be allowed to go into the hands of other contenders, the desert included. Any lapses in its look after would spoil all the life's labours.

When Mughals came to India they came with a set psyche; Besides their fear psychosis- a kind of neurosis,- a perception of threat of loosing what had been claimed and possessed with great efforts, they had an acute sense of possession, they were possessive and wanted the thing they possessed to go with them. They gave it

their style, name and mark. The Mughals were highly individualists. They never allowed, despite encouraging local arts, music painting and dresses-their own styles, aesthetic sense and approach to the sublime things, to get diluted or merged with those of their subject people. They remained in India with élan, keeping their own tastes very dear to them. Right to the last great Mughal they maintained their language and used it as the only means of their expression. Like every other vigilant, self conscious, politically alive ruler they did allow the local customs, dialects and languages and cultures a space to grow but hardly compromised with their native habits, customs and language. The biographical writings and monuments provide ample evidences about where their heart was. They always felt insecure in India.

Central Asia which always gave them maximum trouble was their foremost priority .They tried, with setbacks, to keep routes to it, safe and under control. Their sense of insecurity made them design their monumental edifices and socio-political institutions in such a way that they could provide them maximum security. Though subject people were always a welcome induction in their political edifices they were always considered and used as well oiled tool. Strategically important offices were held necessarily by their Central Asian Retinue. They remained psychically distanced from their subjects though as political exigency demanded they tried to bridge the gape through various ways- one being the matrimonial alliance. The matrimonial relation with the local war lords or heads or members of powerful groups or clans or communities were always one sided. Most of the illustrious Mughul daughters remained and died vestal vergins; local bridegrooms were unacceptable. Mughals were no doubt the connoisseurs of art and literature they encouraged translations from and into local languages. The local artists like Tansen were credited very high. But Central Asian music and musical instruments were what they

cherished more. If the literature in the shape of biographies, paintings, inscriptions and numismatics is any evidence then they kept their Central Asian "expression" aspects of art and style very much intact and helped their popularization in India. Indians were always the other. They themselves were the superior race destined to rule.

True to their Central Asian character Mughul hardly tolerated equals. They never shared their rule and never entertained any interference. They bestowed tastes and a share of their exploits to "others" but never allowed them to share of their exploits. (The saintly Hamayun did try but lost everything). They of course took pride in flaunting their possessions. They were exhibitionists in their own way. A cursory look at their achievements and the monuments they have left behind will suffice to project them as perfectionists. They paid attention to even minutest details to satisfy their sense of perfection. They were aestheticians par excellence.

From the forgoing statements we may safely, conclude that

1. Mughals considered themselves a superior race addressed themselves as "we"
2. Mughals considered the Indians, in general, as a subject race-"The Other"
3. They were neurotic- had developed an acute- "Fear Psychosis"
4. They were possessive-
5. They were highly individualistic
6. Never gave in to the idea of power sharing
7. They were perfectionists par excellence
8. They never tolerated equals, Believed in order and hierarchy of positions
9. They were fond of flaunting their "sovereignty and "possession"

India was their domain and the Garden they laid out their domains in miniature. These gardens, wherever they are Kashmir Lahore or Agra, betray their Psyche, - the mind set beside their aesthetics.

The Gardens are laid to a scheme, well ordered, well protected to satisfy their sense of possession, individualism and counter poise their sense of possession, individualism and counter poise their threat perceptions.

The protective walls are high and strong as if to keep the ownership rights safe and maintain a most intimately private possession out of the reach of uninvited interference.

The Gardens, which are laid in terraces reflect the hierarchical order the Mughals believed in and through the maintenance of which they ruled and controlled an empire like India. Higher Terraces were always reserved for the Empire himself even his queens and concubines had to be contented with their own portions; lesser mortals having lower Terraces. Emperors garden parties and affairs were considered His most private affairs and hence never written about.

Sense of proportion and order which formed the aesthetics of the Mughal Emperor are at work in the arrangement of lawns, canals, and cascades and fountains. Any disorganization or disharmony would have been abhorring to the finer Mughal tastes. The perspectives are well maintained; any break in order is immediately counter balanced by an innovation or modification.

Mughal gardens are symbolic representation of Mughal Psyche, glory, power and sovereignty.