

## COLONIAL AESTHETICS AND ITS IMPACT ON POST-COLONIAL ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS OF LAHORE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*The research precedes study of architectural features inbuilt form and decorative elements on surface of the colonial buildings of Lahore. Significance of forms and comparative analysis between colonial and post-colonial aesthetics and impact of colonial aesthetics on later built post-colonial buildings of Lahore are major attraction of the paper. The aim and objectives of the research are to explore that which kind of foreign and regional influences were implemented by the architects of colonial period for the construction of the monuments. Why these were continued for later built construction and how they meet the prerequisites of contemporary architecture of the region, which further enhance arising trends in visual arts. After studying the literature, it is apparent that numerous scholars, critics and authors have remarked on the architectural monuments built during colonial period in general. But no body shed light on aesthetics of decorative elements in constructive form and on surface decoration of the colonial buildings and their influences on contemporary constructions and its elements in detail.*

*The present research provides in-depth study of the elements implemented for the formation of the buildings of British period and their impact on later constructed buildings. Thorough study of the elements in constructive form like, copulas, Chatries, arches, domical structure, building material, and surface decoration such as marble carving frescos, geometrical designs and floral patterns, lattice work, wood work, and decorative design patterns all are segments of the research. Source of inspiration, regional influences of Indian Sultanate and Mughal along with Greco-Roman, and Iranian inspiration on the techniques and decorative elements are also explored. Above all, break from tradition and continuity of all the above-mentioned elements in post-colonial period are mentioned with visuals and original photographs for better understanding of the study.*

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**Key Words:** Latticework, Stucco, fresco, Surface Decoration, Design, Patterns

## INTRODUCTION

Through the ages, South Asia has been witnessed because of its rich perspective of art and architecture in various areas. In this region, after Sultanate, Mughal and Sikh period, British rulers came in power with full swings. In 1619 the British obtained permission from Mughal Emperor Jahangir to trade in Indian Subcontinent. At first the Portuguese, Dutch and French came and gradually East India Company spread its trading network. Decline of the Mughal Empire in eighteenth century gave power to British officials to establish their hold all over the Subcontinent and expand territorial power in the region. British expand their trades from 1757 to 1857 and afterwards in 1858 the Company was dismissed and India came under British Government known as British Raj from 1858 – 1947.

## DISCUSSION

Architects promoted Gothic and Palladian or Neo-Classical styles and developed their styles with intermingling Hindu and Saracenic forms with western architectural elements and created harmony among the architectural elements of two diverse cultures. Their main purpose was to merge European architectural forms with native architectural elements. They built various magnificent, complexed monuments and focused on religious, educational, official, and public buildings such as markets, museum, general post office, hospitals and railway station. With the arrival of British Raj new trends spoke the language of European architectural elements in built form with amalgamation of South Asian traditional decorative techniques and material. Most of facades of these buildings portrayed unusual design composition directly influenced with western features, which were never considered before.

Lahore through the ages has its own importance because of its rich heritage. Though historical buildings witness the glory of diverse cultural heritage and speak the stories of the time. Like other areas of Subcontinent, British introduced new concepts and ideas having vision to maintain cultural heritage with amalgamation of European architectural embellishment in built form especially for facades and exterior of the buildings built of Lahore. With the merger of western building style and eastern decorative motives, techniques and material, a new hybrid style was developed. These buildings speak loudly and explain various aspects, influences, and fusion of different cultures and played a vital role to introduce new type of architectural composition.

Architects of the time were ambitious to prove their own identity and Bhai Ram Singh was one who designed marvelous building projects under the supervision of Lockwood Kipling. Kipling was inspired by the cultural heritage of Lahore and maintained the regional identity by merging Indo–Saracenic designs, motives and decorative techniques with European Architectural elements and played a vital role to introduce new type of architectural composition.

Traditional architectural heritage was the main source of the colonial architecture of Lahore. Architectural elements in built form such as brackets, *muqarnas*, projecting balconies, nave, eave boards, *jhatiri* and surface decoration with traditional techniques like fresco, stucco, lattice work, wood carving, marble carving, wooden ornamentation on ceiling with geometrical designs, all played vital roll for the monumental presentation of traditional values.

The Bawa Binda built on the Mall Road Lahore is considered one of existing examples of colonial buildings. It is an enormous double story building and its inbuilt form construction such as domical structure, arches and the floral motives of stucco work on pilasters and spandrels recall traditional trends of the surface decoration of the region. Colonial buildings are telling the stories of the time that how colonial architects Lockwood Kipling, Bhai Ram Singh and Ganga Ram designed tactfully by intermingling indigenous and European elements and made strong composition. It was their skill and mastery in their field which they handled successfully.

Lahore Museum built in 1902, is one of the Colonial architectural examples who have direct association with Indo-Saracenic traditional decorative techniques applied for surface decoration such as stucco work, lattice work fresco painting, wood and marble work. On the other hand, classical Hindu and intricate Islamic motifs are a part of its decoration. The entire building is masterly composed to fit in foreign influences intermingling with local traditional designs and techniques. Such as Greco- Roman, Iranian, Indian Sultanate, Mughals and Sikh designs are source of inspiration for its completion. The architect transmuted the architectural decoration, motives and concepts of Gothic, Hindu, Islamic, Sultanate and Mughal in perfect manner to lionize the rich heritage.

Bhai Ram Singh also designed public buildings of Colonial Lahore. His worthwhile projects the Lady Aitchison Hospital for Women built in 1886-87, the boarding house of Government College built in 1889–1904, the Prince Albert Victor memorial wing added to the Mayo Hospital in 1890, the Senate Hall of Punjab University built in 1905, the Infirmary and Main Building of the Queen Mary College Lahore built in 1910, are the prominent existing buildings of Lahore. The architectural features of the Government College built in 1873 and the Cathedral Church Lahore built in 1887, have in-built Gothic style. While architectural features of the General Post Office Lahore built in 1887 have combination of baroque style, and Palladian facade.

Symmetrical façade, domical structure, arcuate and trabeate system and the most attractive lattice work with various cursive and polygonal lined designs of Punjab University have importance of its own, which is matchless among the other buildings built in British Raj. The architecture of Punjab University mainly includes numerous indigenous features such as dome, terracotta *jallis*, brackets, multi foiled arched openings of verandas, kiosks, *chatrasi*, and *jhorakas*. Marble balcony incorporated on the southern wall of the Pharmacy Department, Punjab University Lahore, has direct influence of Mughal period.

The central hall of the Aitchison College with clerestory windows having foreign influence, octagonal turrets, pre-Mughal *chattris*, marble and bricked facing jharokas, shallow-relief patterns on the brickwork all work together to suggest Indo-Saracenic style with oriental and Muhammadan features of the building of Aitchison College Lahore. Architectural features like arches, brackets, domical structure, muqarnas, windows, projected balconies, nave, eave boards, columns, pillars, Gothic windows and ceilings are significantly considerable as historical evidence of diverse evolution or subsistence of colonial architecture in Lahore also reflects Hindu traditional elements. Side by side introduction of European elements like altered form of domical structure, Gothic arches, pediment, entablature, frieze, columns, pilasters, gable top, pitched roof, clear-story, brass finial and balustrades all elements having British and Greek or Roman influences also gave strong impact to the exposed red bricked surface of the structures.

Colonial architecture has been always become a source of attraction and inspiration for researchers and art historians, not only because of its uniqueness but also of remarkably unusual artistic work of its façade, inbuilt form and on surface. Sometime their direct source from colonial architecture of the west, its taste, creativity, aesthetics and application of design gave power to the creative thought of local architects.

## **IMPACT OF COLONIAL INFLUENCES ON POST-COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE**

After partition subcontinent went through a change and highlighted various aspects in architectural designs. Post-colonial architecture opened new dimensions with adoption of indigenous and British design elements with merger of innovative ideas having simplification and stylization by eliminating unnecessary details. The era raised a demand of innovative forms and designs to fulfill the demand of client rather than emperor or ruler. Forms were developed for functionality other than rich traditional surface ornamentation. That was a time when major buildings were designed by the foreign firms with the contribution of local architects. Architects understood modern design philosophies and new structural cuts with the fusion of indigenous elements. In result innovative hybrid architecture of Pakistan was developed. The fusion of traditional techniques, indigenous and British architectural elements had its own importance, which made history and opened new chapter in architectural style.

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## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

The architectural elements which have visible change in their appearance are as following:

### BRICKED VENEER

Brick structure has a long history since Indus Valley Civilization. The people used fired burnt bricks for their town planning. Similarly, the trend continued and initially sundried bricks were used and gradually new idea of burnt brick was developed. The practice was continued and several latter-built structures were constructed with bricks. Similarly, bricks were used for numerous historical buildings and every ruler built heritage according to his own taste and requirement of the time. Bricks were the major constructive material used for the construction of colonial buildings.



Fig 1. Front elevation of Aitchison College Lahore



Fig 2. Contemporary Building in DHA Lahore



Fig 3. *Jami* Mosque Bahria Town Lahore built in 2014.



Punjab University, General Post office, High Court, Tolerton Market, Government College, Aitchison College, Lahore Museum all are dominant examples of the interest of British government towards the use of bricks as major building construction material. Exposed red brick veneer and cut brickwork, use of terracotta *jalli* work *Chatri*, balusters, pilasters, cupolas, and cornices, domed *chattris*, *jharokas* articulated facades of the above-mentioned colonial buildings have rich impact in brick appearance.

In Post-colonial architecture, architects achieved the expression by intermingling traditional, colonial and modern elements. Colonial and traditional elements have been emerged in modern straight or polygonal, curvilinear lines and stylized formation of the buildings followed simplicity with sharp and soft contours. For the sake of change or versatility, *Gutka* red bricked tile and coloured especially in turquoise and blue shades of ceramic glazed tiles of post-colonial period replaced red bricks of colonial veneer. Traditional architecture leaves an impact on later built monuments and maximum use of exposed burnt bricked surface was handled tactfully to enhance aesthetics, forms, and design of the building. In British Raj facades were preferably ornamented with architectural elements in built form in simple red brick construction, in comparison with modern buildings having straight and curvilinear designs for front elevation.

After partition Pakistani architects performed in collaboration with foreign architects. And Nayar Ali Dada was one of them who followed simple line of elevation and his mostly designed projects followed bricked or tiled exteriors with bold impression. Later built buildings by Nayar Ali Dada reflects red bricked veneer in simplified linear structure and addition of turquoise and blue



Fig 4. Exterior of Mall of Lahore: Contemporary building of Lahore

ceramic tiles. Bahria Town Mosque Lahore and burnt bricked house in Defence Housing Society Lahore are the best examples of the burnt bricked construction of contemporary buildings.



Fig 5. Close up of the Modern Jharoka built in Mall of Lahore.

### Balconies

Post-colonial exterior also has been ornamented with inbuilt form structure of balconies. But these balconies are not exact copy of traditional forms. In modern era these are redesigned with some creative lines by following the traditional layout but addition of new forms and shapes make them unusual and unique. Such kind of expressive means of expression reflects the fusion of stylization and simplification in built form and surface decoration.



Fig 6. Conversion of clearstory in dormer gabled windows - Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/70087337926648567/>

### LATTICE WORK

Colonial latticework with verity of geometrical design patterns in terracotta echo Mughal *jaalis*. It has strong roots in pre-Mughal period also enhance the aesthetics of the buildings of the British Raj and later on it was adopted for contemporary buildings ornamentation with verity of designs in diverse materials, which enhance aesthetics of the buildings.





Fig 7. Quid-e-Azam Library Built during Colonial Period

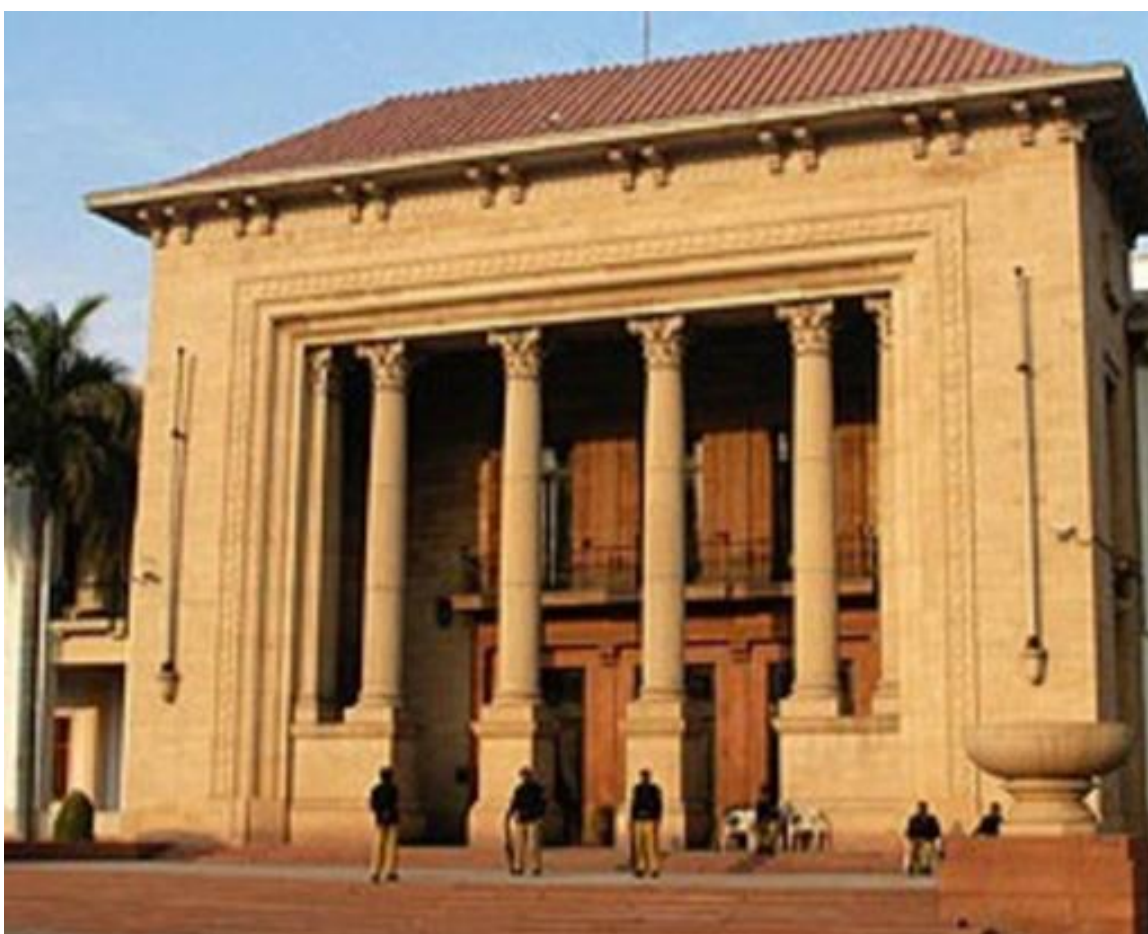


Fig 8. National Assembly Lahore



Fig 9. Contemporary House built in Lahore

### **PITCHED ROOF AND GABLE POINT**

Façade of Government College Lahore, High Court Lahore and Church Architecture built during British Raj reflects direct foreign influences by adding Gothic arches, Gothic style of clock tower, vaults, pitched roof with ornate gables, canted bay windows, painted iron railings, sliding sash, pyramidal, conical and pointed turrets to draw the eye upwards. In Pitched roof with Gable point is preferably used for modern houses. British introduced it on flat plane areas of the region without thinking that it is an element of northern areas where snow is in abundance. It is continued for contemporary construction of the town and clerestory of west was converted into dormer windows or flat openings in clear glass were designed for versatility.

### **COLUMNS, PEDIMENT, FRIEZE AND ENTABLATURE**

Colonial buildings of Bawa Dinda Singh the Mall Road Lahore, Quid-e-Azam Library and National Assembly built in British Raj, showed typical Greco-Roman architectural style of front elevation of the buildings, with entablature, Doric, and Corinthian orders with flat and fluted shafts and pseudo ionic orders are also used for the buildings of the Mall Road Lahore. Later on, these true styles were formed in pseudo Corinthian and Doric orders because exact proportions, forms and details especially for Corinthian are not followed the original one.

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**SURFACE DECORATION**

Stuccowork, fresco, marble carving, floral and geometrical design patterns, woodwork, latticework, and decorative motives in colonial buildings recall Mughal aesthetics towards art and architecture. In Post-colonial era stuccowork, wood and marble carving, geometrical and floral designs presented with simplified lines and innovative compositions.

**CONCLUSION**

Architecture communicates the strength and aspects of the nation and rules of the time. It talks about the creative ideas of the architects according to availability of the material, its utilization, according to the geological and climatic factors of the region. Architects of colonial period played vital role to maintain coherence and coordination between local material, traditional techniques and western influences, which made building value to achieve impressive expression of the colonial architecture of Lahore.

It is concluded that architectural elements used for colonial buildings provided solid foundation to the Post-colonial architecture of Lahore and helped modern architects to maintain legacy of the region with mixing western forms in stylized manner. For the construction of the house of Kamil Khan Mumtaz, Behria Town Mosque Lahore, houses in Defence Housing Authority, and Banquet Halls built in Lahore Cantt are the live examples of contemporary buildings having visible influences of colonial period.

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