

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS OF LAHORE MUSEUM AND ITS PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

Lahore is the cultural capital of Pakistan and significantly known for its monuments. It is undoubtedly blessed to inherit such a diverse architectural heritage spanning over three historical periods, i.e. Muslims, Sikh and Colonial. Each one of them added magnificent landmarks to the building art of Lahore. However, British occupation of Lahore marks an era of architectural upheaval as the buildings of Indo-European style began to appear. Lahore Museum is one of many distinctive masterpieces of British architecture. It has been renovated and expanded in order to meet new challenges, requirements and environmental changes. But unfortunately, its expansion seems destruction of original forms in the name of conservation and preservation as it has greatly defaced and altered the original architectural as well as stylistic elements. This research paper aims at analyzing the architectural elements of Lahore Museum as well as current state of its preservation and conservation.

Keywords: Colonial, Gothic, Heritage, Transept, Vestibule, Jalliwork, Preservation, Conservation

INTRODUCTION

Lahore possesses unparalleled heritage including a vast range of monuments. It is regarded as the cultural hub of Pakistan and traditionally termed as *Pakistan ka Dil*. The architectural treasures of Lahore are the living documents on its history and the past glory. It witnessed the rule of different dynasties including Ghaznavid, Ghurids, Sultanate kings of Delhi, Mughals, Sikhs and British (Baqir, 1984). Lahore was at the height of its glory during the Mughal rule who adorned the city with wonderful monuments such as gardens, mosques, tombs and fort. But when the sovereignty was taken over by Imperial rule, a new chapter of architecture started. Lahore served as capital city of the Punjab during British Raj and their new policies led to its expansion and development (Lal, 1884).

The British introduced a different type of building art in Lahore which is termed as Colonial architecture. It shows the culmination of several architectural and stylistic traditions such as Hindu, Muslim, Gothic and Victorian. It was devised to symbolize

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supremacy and existence of crown rule (Metcalf, 2002). Imperial ideology brought many changes in the social life of Lahore as ideals, opinions, needs and aesthetics started to evolve. Thus, the style of architecture that developed in Lahore during British Raj, reveals a great contrast with already prevailed architectural as well as artistic traditions. It would be justified to narrate that Colonial architecture was conceived for colonizers rather than the colonized (Lari & Lari, 1996).

The colonial architecture of Lahore shows a variety of buildings, which are both functional and economical. (Gupta, 1985). Initially, British used the already existing buildings of Mughal period as offices and residences but later on erected wonderful monuments on a distinct pattern. However, nature of these British monuments is usually utilitarian which include libraries, colleges, universities, court, medical colleges, hospitals, museums, town halls and cantonments.

Lahore Museum is designated as the oldest one in Pakistan and stands among the prominent milestones of British architecture. It is located near the Anarkali and connects the surrounding of Mayo School of Arts (NCA) (Kipling & Thornton, 2002). It was originated as Industrial Arts Museum of Punjab in 1864 to project the arts and crafts. However, its current building was conceived in 1897 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Prince Albert Victor (grandson of Queen Victoria) laid down the foundation stone on 3rd February, 1890. It was completed in 1893 and opened for the public in 1894 (Aijauzddin, 2008).

GROUND PLAN

The layout of Lahore Museum is rectangular in shape and originally measured 1900 × 1000 from north to south. Walker (1894) mentioned total area of the plan as 27,850 square feet (Fig.1).

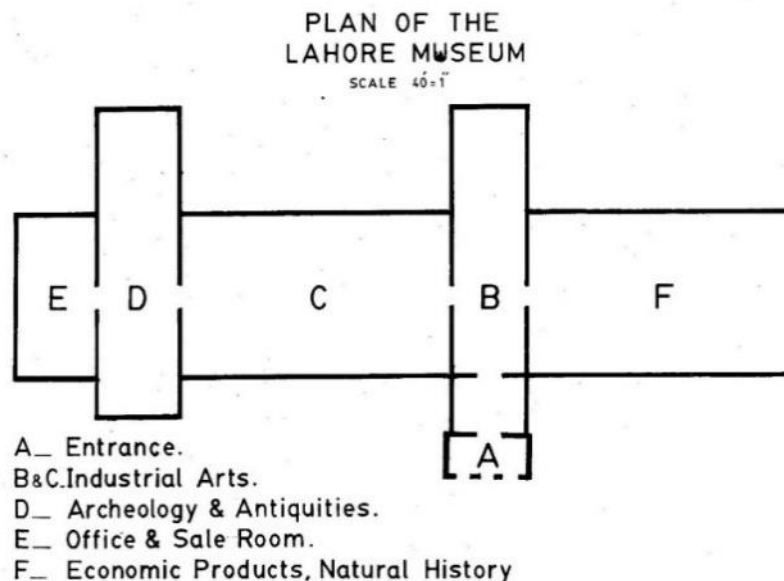


Figure 1 Ground Plan of Lahore Museum (1894)

The building of Lahore Museum is approached through a portico, measuring 30 feet square on north side. It further leads towards a vestibule that provide access to central gallery. The central gallery measures 96'-6" from north to south and 26'- 6" from east to west and accommodates rectangular halls on both sides (Tahir, 2015). Moreover, the rectangular hall on east side is connected to end gallery that accompanies a rectangular room, measuring 27' × 60".

However, the area of Lahore Museum was expanded up to 35,582 square feet in 1916 to meet the challenges and various new parts kept on adding to the original plan till 1929 (Aijauzddin, 2008). Consequently, the rectangular halls on the flanks of the central gallery are further delineated into two parallel galleries. A new gallery is also added on the western side of the building that resembles to eastern end gallery and measures 30' × 60'. It is surrounded by a verandah and a square room. The rear end of Lahore Museum manifests the projection of central gallery, consisting of two rooms of unequal size. Besides this, two more square rooms are also added on both sides of central gallery. On the whole, a verandah encircles the entire rear composition. (Fig.2).

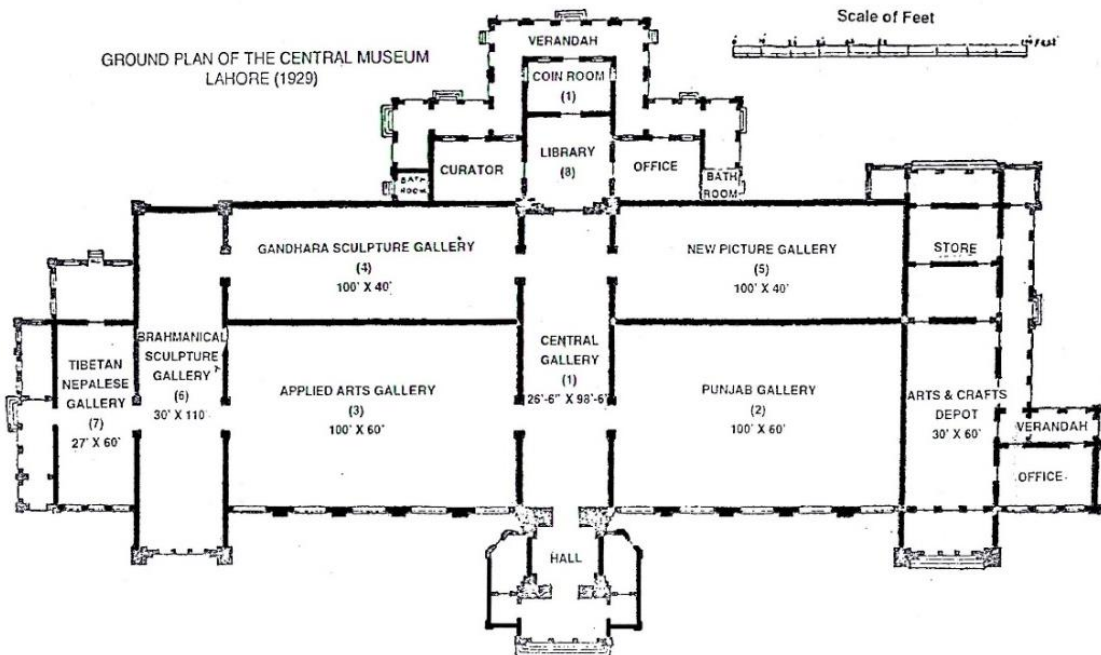


Figure 2 Ground Plan of Lahore Museum 1929

So, overall, the ground plan of Lahore Museum seems balanced and well proportioned in composition. It mainly comprises of three parts i.e. central Projection, western and eastern end galleries and corresponds to the English alphabet E. However, after partition, the plan of the Lahore Museum was again renovated and extended to cope with the increasing requirement of space and as a result a gallery was added on the rear end of left wing accompanied with covered area for offices (Fig. 3). This process of extension,

alteration and renovation is still continued, in order to meet new demands, conditions and structural changes.

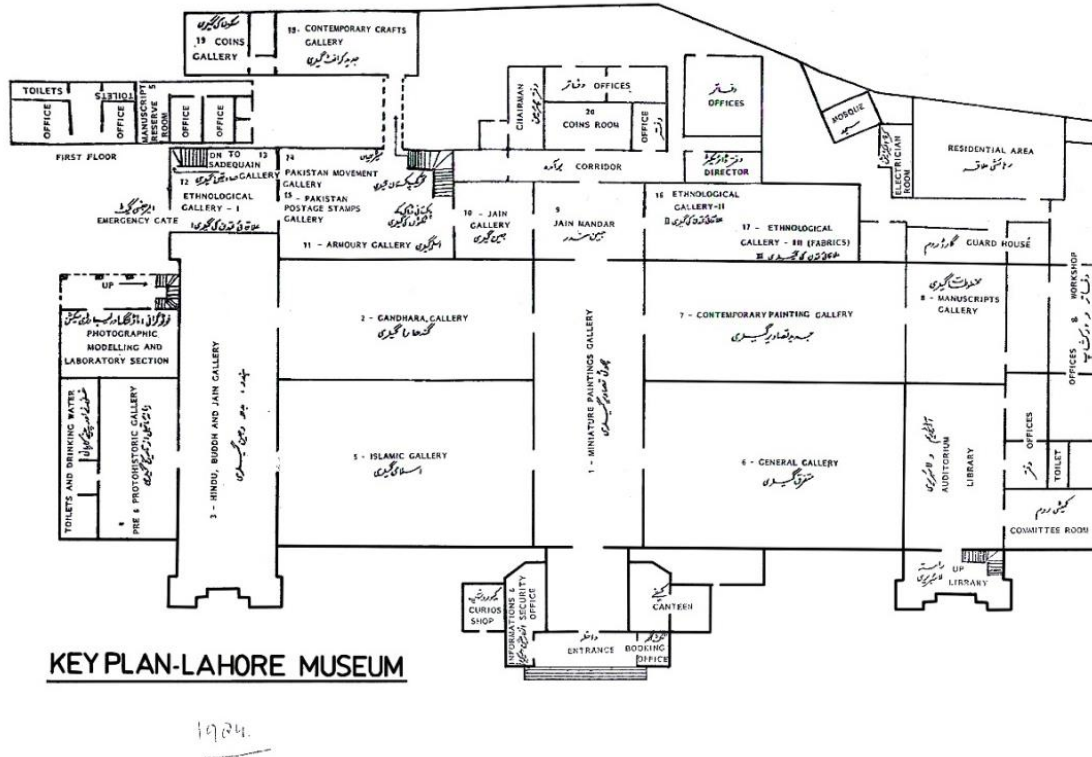


Figure 3 Ground Plan of Lahore Museum (1984)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The building of Lahore Museum exhibits the magnificent conception and serene architectural details. Its symmetry and formality mark a certain stage of transition in the building art of Lahore. The front elevation of Lahore Museum shows central transept, abutted by wings in the form of arcades. These wings end into projected galleries on both sides (Fig.4 & 5). Access inside the building of Lahore Museum is provided through a pillared porch which is covered with a marble façade. It leads towards a vestibule that helps to approach central gallery.

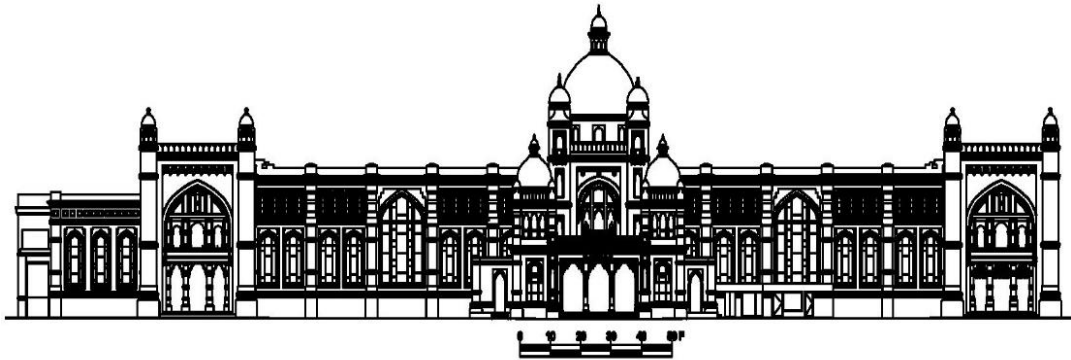


Figure 4 Front Elevation



Figure 5 Frontal View of Lahore Museum

The vestibule is basically a three storeyed structure and supported by four engaged turrets (Fig. 6). The turrets on the front accommodates two portions. The lower one contains arched entrance and a window with a screen of geometric *jalliwork*. It symbolizes the Mughal influence (Vandal & Vandal, 2006). The upper part, however, is marked by an arched window and a small balcony which is topped by onion shaped cupola (Fig.7). The elevation of vestibule reveals considerable features as it is the combination of Hindu and Muslim architectural traditions. It comprises of a high frame, distributed into two parts. The lower one accommodates a frame of beam and bracket arch. It is supported by the pillars and measures 20' in height (Fig. 8). The use of beam and bracket arch embodies entirely indigenous impact. The upper part measures 23' in height and comprises of a high arch, deeply penetrated into the mass of the frame. The intrados of the arch is decorated with a balanced fringe of pot shaped device which shows close analogies with Alai Darwaza. Moreover, the spandrel of arch is embellished with a screen of geometric and abstract interlocking along with three circles containing lotus flower (Fig.9)

As far as the inner penetration of arch is concerned, it is also resolved in two parts. Lower part incorporates three pointed arched panels, serving as windows. Each panel is supported by square pillars. These arches are serving as windows. Upper part accommodates a tracery along with recessed triangles on either side. It is generously decorated with perforated geometric designs. The most prominent element in the

architectural composition of vestibule is its onion shaped dome. It rests on a high drum, covered with arched windows. A frieze of miniature petals is provided as a dividing line between drum and dome. Furthermore, dome is crowned by a cupola and a pointed finial, enhancing the grace of the structure (Fig. 10).

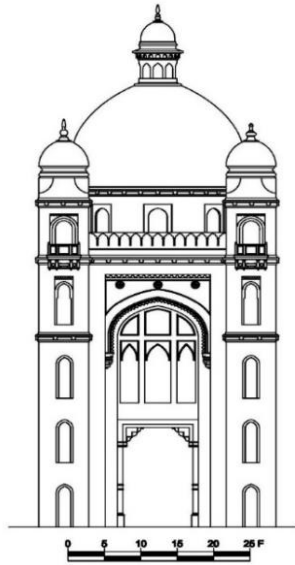


Figure 6 Elevation of Main Entrance



Figure 7 Frontal Turret



Figure 8 Arched Entrance



Figure 9 Upper Storey of Vestibule



Figure 10 Dome Crowning Vestibule

The rectangular wings, similar in architectural order are set between the transept of main entrance and eastern and western end galleries. Both measures 97' in width and 37'-10" in height and divided into five panels with the help of buttresses. Each panel illustrates the skillful use of stained-glass windows, set within blind arched panels (Fig. 11). Such composition seems to be inspired by French High Gothic Design (Kleiner, 2010).



Figure 11 Wing Between Main Entrance and Western End Gallery

The wings are attached to end galleries which reveal identical architectural elements. Their front is slightly projected and accommodates a high arched panel. Moreover, turrets of 44' in height are added on both sides of arched panel, in order to manage its thrust. The monotonous surface of these turrets is interrupted with projected lines of brick masonry, supplemented with flower petals. Besides this, cupola marked by finial is the crowning element of each turret- a typical Indian Device.

The arched frame is, however, recessed and measures 40' in height and 23' in width. Its fringe is gracefully adorned with miniature pots shaped devices that shows Indian influence. The internal space of main arch is enunciated into three parts. The lower one incorporates triple arched openings, supported by square pillars and measures 14'-9" in height. The middle part includes three arched windows, demarcated through compound piers. The upper most part is, however, triangular and resembles to pediment in appearance. It signifies a rectangular panel with two lancets within panel demarcated by half pillars. The incorporation of lancets is entirely a new feature that marks the impact of Gothic architectural traditions (Fig.12 & 13)

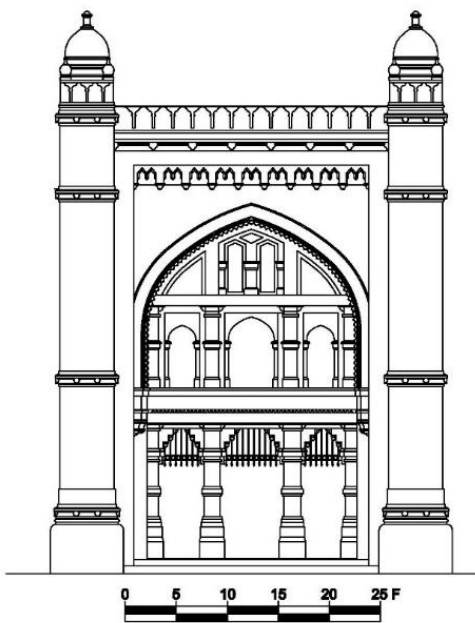


Figure 12 Elevation of Western End Gallery

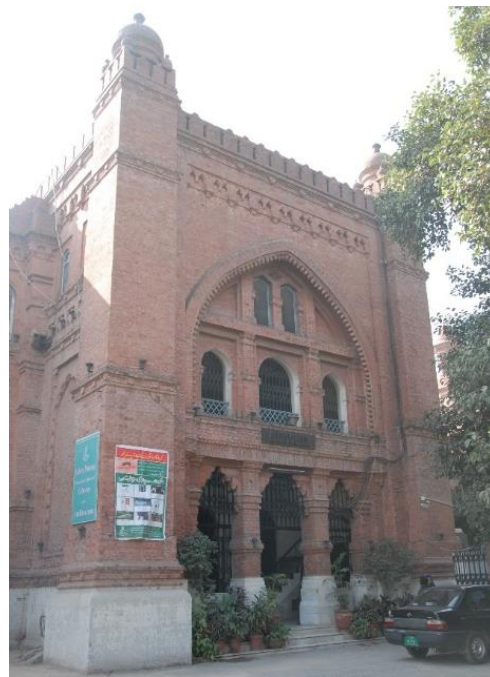


Figure 13 Western end gallery

Eastern end gallery is further connected to a room which is rectangular in shape and measures 26'-2" in width and 32'-6" in height. It rests on high plinth and flanked by buttresses on either side. The significant feature of its front elevation contains three large stained glass arched windows, set within frames. Small petals are attached to the intrados of arches in an elegant manner to give an aesthetical impression. Moreover, a tier of recessed squares is running above arched panels. Each square also incorporates a diagonal square in a very symmetrical order (Fig.14).

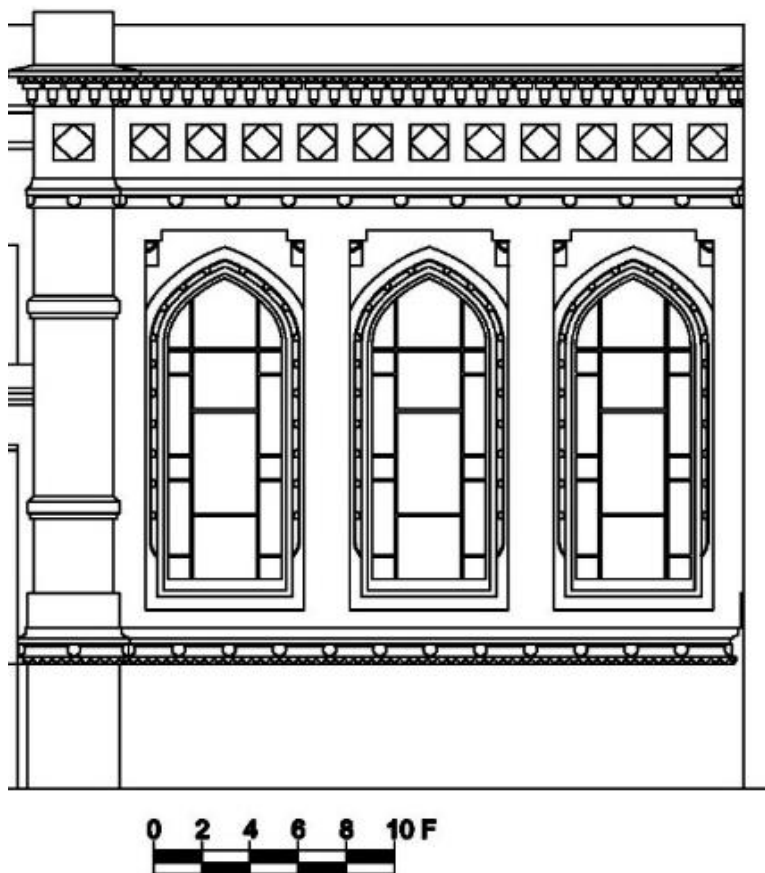


Figure 14 Elevation of Rectangular Room Beside Eastern End Gallery

CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF LAHORE MUSEUM

Different utilitarian buildings which display the ideals of imperialism in Lahore have been subjected to change in term of alteration, repair, renovation and expansion, during the course of last seventy three years. These changes involve the process of conservation and preservation in order to retain ingenuity and worth. In other words, conservation and preservation mainly include protection and restoration to keep the original condition of any monument alive for as long as possible. Thus, the primary objective of conservation and preservation is to protect the heritage from loss and depletion and to save it for future generations. These are some following considerations which must be considered while repairing any monument:

1. Originality/authenticity of the building must be maintained.
2. Symmetry and harmony of the plan must be retained.
3. Architectural style must not be damaged.
4. Artistic elements must not be deteriorated.
5. Individuality of features must not be suffered.
6. Technical faults must be avoided.

However, it is pretty sad and unfortunate that the conservation and preservation of Colonial buildings is certainly deprived of such measures and unable to face new challenges. It is greatly minimizing the potential and distinctive character of British heritage as it failed to carry the original forms. Thus, it seems destruction rather than protection and restoration.

The building of Lahore Museum has also been modified, renovated and enlarged according to the functional requirement since 1947. But this addition and alteration has greatly debased and deteriorated the harmony, authenticity and grace of actual architectural elements. There are so many draw backs in the conservation and preservation of Lahore Museum which can be classified as follows:

7. Change in brick size
8. Defacing of architectural elements
9. Poor artistic approach
10. Irregular plan
11. Unplanned alteration
12. Deterioration of original architectural elements

These are some pictures indicating the debasement and deterioration of original structure of Lahore Museum.



Figure 15 Defacing of Architecture



Figure 16 Abnormal Addition on Eastern Side



Figure 17 Deterioration of Structure



Figure 18 Interruption in Symmetry of Original plan



Figure 19 Failure of Aesthetics

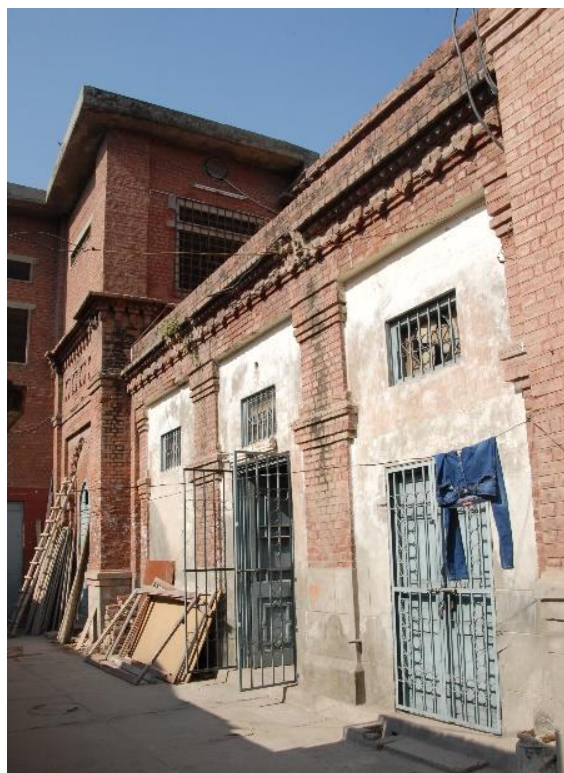


Figure 20 Poor Alteration on Back Side

CONCLUSION

The architecture of Lahore Museum is the amalgamation of both European and Indo-Islamic ideals. The architect tried to incorporate Indian architectural and decorative elements with western impact. Thus, whether derived from foreign or indigenous influence, the design of Lahore Museum clearly manifests transformed features to fit the colonial environment rather than parent forms. On the whole, Colonial heritage of Lahore marks an era of utilitarian architecture and no doubt, nature of utilitarian buildings is always subject to extension according to utility and requirement. However, the extension and alteration of Lahore Museum in term of preservation and conservation is not satisfying as it failed maintain its originality, beauty and uniformity. Addition of new parts in the building of Lahore Museum is destroying its individuality and potential rather than to manage challenges of space requirement. Furthermore, the agents which are responsible for the physical and chemical deterioration as well destruction of Lahore Museum, such as weathering must be considerably addressed. So that our glorious heritage may be saved for future generations.

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