

## **Punjab Public Library: An Amalgamation of Mughal and Colonial Architecture and its Impact on the Politics of the Subcontinent**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Punjab Public Library stands as a hallmark of combination of two buildings- one a bāradari built in the Mughal period with all the architectural details and qualities of that period, second a later constructed building during the British Rāj, and subsequently added extensions after partition to meet the demand of grander space. The intention of this research paper is to have a closer vision at the use of European style of architecture in addition to existing historical Islamic period's building. The research will explore the key elements that permit the Mughal and Colonial style of architecture to work side by side for the same purpose, respecting and promoting each other's architectural eminence. Old and new style of architecture at one place provides a timeline of certain society and these emblematic details represent the change and growth of our culture.

**Key Words:** **Historical, Contemporary, Architectural details, Mughal, British Rāj, Colonial.**

### **Introduction**

Libraries are developed in a society to facilitate the inhabitants to collect sources of information and provide physical access to the books and knowledge. Libraries play a pivotal role in the advent and development of a society. Punjab Public Library amongst other historical libraries is an example of its own. It has been established since more than a hundred and thirty-three years. The fast evolution in the demand of space and human needs lead towards the obligation to enlarged the existing space of the Punjab Public Library, thus combining the previous historical building of the Mughal Era, Main building erected during the British Rāj and the contemporary extensions after partition to meet the requirements of the modern trends and necessities. The relationship between the old and new architecture is important enhancing its cultural significance along to meet the modern day trends. Lahore was considered the center of art and literature and in 1849 when British Government gained the control of Punjab, there were many personal libraries of the nobles and authorized library of Sikh period was worth notable. Afterwards, British government with the help of local noblemen established many libraries like Library attached to the Lahore Club in 1850, Anārkalī Book Club and Punjab Civil Secretariat Library etc. However, all these libraries were designed to fulfill the

requirements of aristocrats and there was a need of a public library for common people. So a constitution was submitted to the Governor Punjab at 8 November 1884 for the execution of a public library that should be comprised of a reading room and free entrance for the public. First meeting of the public library was held on 14 November 1884 in Punjab Civil Secretariat where the name of the library was proposed as “Punjab Public Library Punjab.” (Chughtai, 2004) The library was established in the same year by the Lieutenant Governor of British Punjab Sir Charles Umpherson Aitchison in the historical building of Bāradari Wazīr Khān of the Shah Jahān’s time. (Government Punjab Public Library Bulletin, 2016) Later many blocks were added to it in order to meet the growing demand and challenges. These blocks were constructed not in the style of Mughal architecture but portrays the building style of colonial type and later contemporary style of architecture after partition.

The purpose of this research paper is to record the history and architectural details of this library as it is a combination of Mughal and British styles of buildings. The paper provides a closer view at the use of Colonial and Post-Colonial buildings as the extension or accumulation to the existing ancient building of Mughal era. How the later extensions are helpful in meeting the growing demand of the new buildings and space and how the library authorities are helpful in preserving the past and making it useful to serve the society. This research will focus on the elements that allow both style of buildings to work collectively, regarding and promoting the worth of both styles of architecture.

To address these research questions, the research methodology employed is qualitative and to record the history, various books on the history and architecture of Lahore are consulted along with surveys and interviews with the library authorities. Secretariat Archive Department is also accessed to get information about the history and architectural additions in *bāradari* during the time of British rule. Library bulletins and magazines are also accessed. The library authorities have provided maps and site plans of the library and the author does photography of the different portions of the buildings of the library.

## **Punjab public library**

**Figure 1– View of the front of Punjab Public Library.**



Source: photography by author.

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Punjab Public Library is situated in the heart of Lahore on the Library road where Lahore Museum embraces it from side and Anārkalī Bāzār, Mall, Tollinton Market, Punjab University old campus and National College of Arts overlook this precious building. Initially, there was only *Bāradari* as the building of library that now served as the reading room of the library. This was expanded by construction of five blocks in 1939 under British rule and later after partition. Auditorium and Bait-ul-Qur'ān and some other sections were indorsed in 1968. Total area covers is sixteen Canals and one Marla (Bābur, 2015).

**Figure 2- A Rare Picture of Punjab Public Library Taken in 1940.**



Source: Urdu Nāma, p 70

## Punjab Public Library, Lahore Site Plan

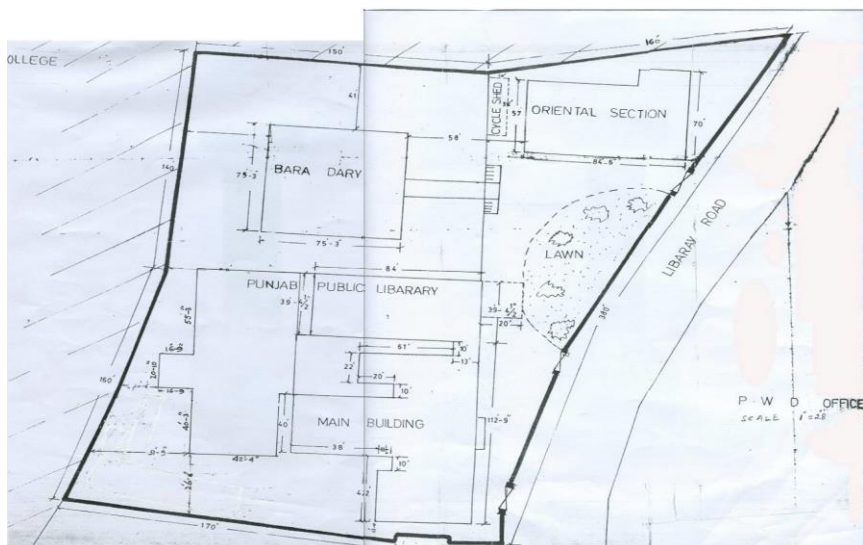


Plate 2- Site Plan of Library in Auto cad.



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

### **Bāradari Wazīr Khānas library**

The site presently occupied by the Punjab Public Library was once a historical garden, named Nakhlah u-Wazīr Khān built by Nawāb Wazīr Khān of Shah Jahān's time. Once a large garden of Date- palms, built in 1636, now only the central pavilion is existed and that is used as a reading room of the library now a days. (Rehmani, 2016)



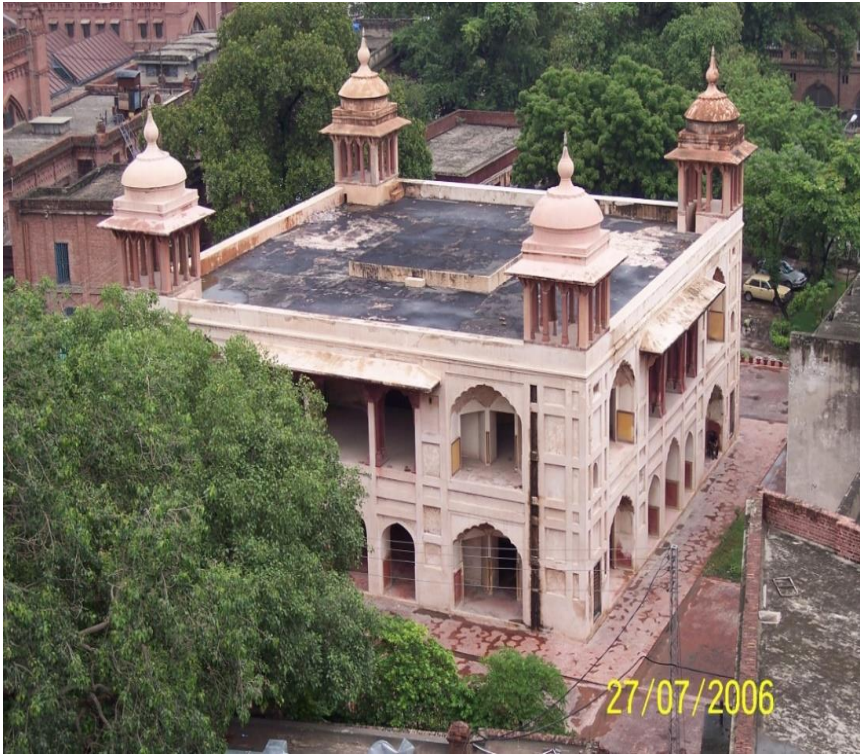
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**Figure 3- Frontal view of Bāradari Wazīr Khān as the reading room of the Punjab  
Public Library**



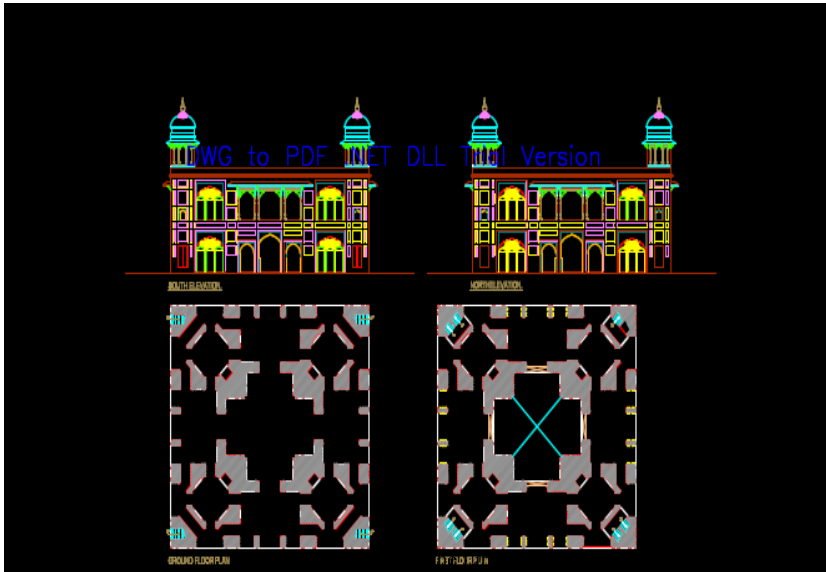
In 1759 Aḥmad Shah Durrānī stayed in the garden for some time after capturing Lahore and the garden with its *bāradari* remained in its original condition till 1766. (Reḥmānī, 2016) However, when Ranjīt Singh established his rule in Lahore, the garden was used to set up his cantonments and the Sikh forces from 1799 to 1839 occupied it. By that time, *chārbāgh* was vanished and only *bāradari* was left standing all alone. The site also served as a cantonment during the early days of British Rāj. In 1855, the building was converted into a district museum but in 1860 the museum was transferred to especially built hall, known as Tolinton Market. The *bāradari*, was once again converted into a military station. Later used as a petty court, then a settlement office and thereafter, the Telegraph office. After wards, it was used as a store for the Anārkalī library and the reading room of the book Club until it was shifted to Montgomery Hall in 1878. The building remained vacant from 1878 to 1884. Finally, in 1884, it was converted into library named Punjab Public Library and at that time, renovations were made to the *bāradari*. (Tufail, 1962)

Figure 4– View of Bāradari from the top elevation.



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

Plate 3– Plan of Bāradari in Auto cad.



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

### **Architectural details**

*Bāradari* with its twelve arches, three on each side is a double storied building, built on a raised platform and approached through a flight of steps. The central façade on each side has triple arched openings with multi-foil arch in the center and each corner has semi octagonal alcove. The twelve-pillared pavilions raised on square platforms are surrounded by projected eaves. Central hall has vaulted roofing. In the corners of northern and southern facades, there are flights of steps leading to the upper portion and then to the roof. Wooden doors protect these steps. The pillared pavilions have copulas along with the finial at the top. *Kankar lime* (a mixture of small pebbles and lime) is used to plaster the roof and façade of the pavilion. The platform of the *bāradari* is surrounded by four water ponds with fountain, one on each side. Originally, pavilion was decorated with fresco painting and *ghālib kāri*, now mostly disappeared. The plan of the *bāradari* has an exact resemblance with that of the pavilion of the *Bāghe- Mirzā Kāmrān* at Lahore. (Rehmanī, 2016)

**Figure 5- View of Multi-foil Arches of Bāradari.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.



**Figure 6– View of Bāradari from side.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

**Figure 7- View of Arched Pavilion**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.



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**Figure 8- One of the Water Ponds with Fountain.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

**Figure 9- Wooden Doors of Bāradari protecting the stairs leading to first storey**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

When *bāradari* was converted into library, few changes were made in its architecture as a wooden door was added in the central arched opening of each façade and the flanking openings of each façade and two openings of the arched alcove were blocked with masonry walls. The vaulted roofs were replaced with wooden roofs and original brick floor was substituted by cement concrete floor. Flight of steps leading to the upper portion were also blocked, except the one on the southwestern corner. Wooden railings were added to the arched alcoves of the first floor and forty-six wooden *almīrahs* were placed in the *bāradari* to keep the books. Regular white wash to the *bāradari* destroyed its decoration and its *burjies* were renovated and restored with the British period bricks but according to the original design. Later after partition, under the AMP Act 1975, building was declared protected and handed over to the Department of Archaeology in 1982 for its proper renovations. Many conservations were made to retain its original look, wooden *almīrahs* were removed from the site, and amendments and embellishments were dismantled to restore its original plan. Originally, the *bāradari* was plastered with plain and decorative *kankar* lime but in a poor condition was restored with *pakkākalī* and the vaulted roofs of the first floor were re-established in the original shape. (Rehmani, 2016). Now this historical *bāradari* stands within the premises of the library site as the symbol of our glorious past and serving as the reading room with its open ambience to serve the nation of today.

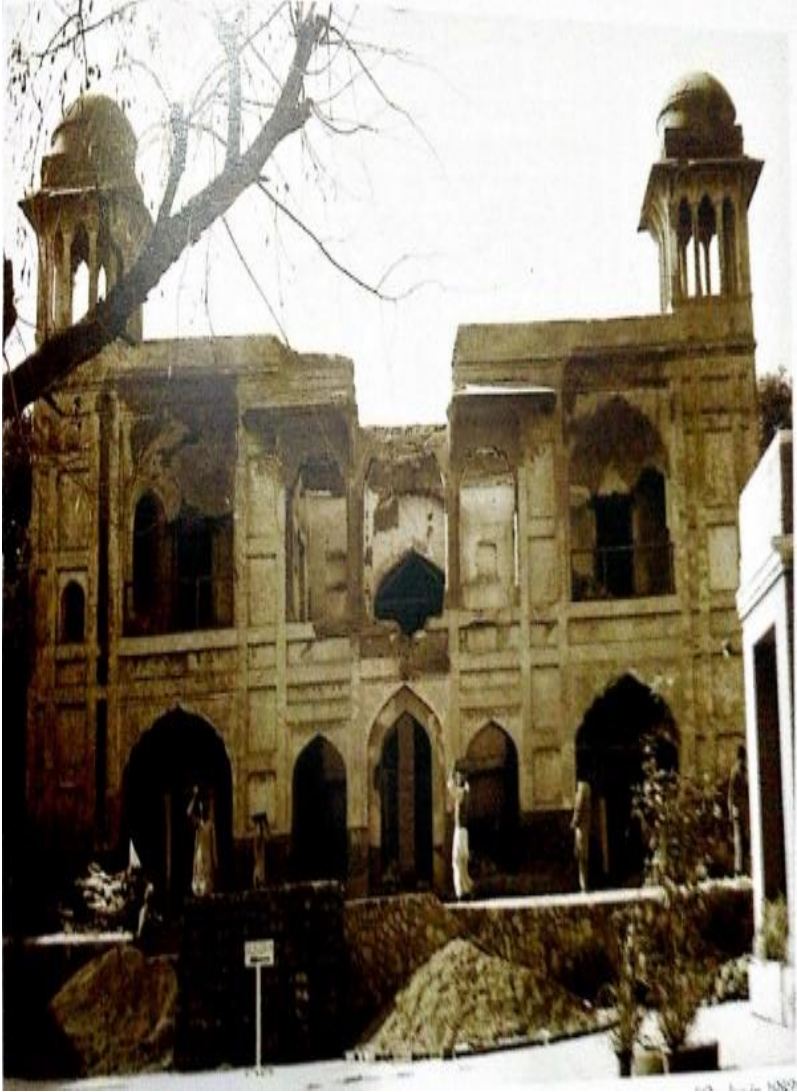
**Figure 10– Multi-foil Arch of the Bāradari.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

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21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Figure 11– General View of Nakhlah Wazīr Khān in 1952.



Source: Gardens of Mughal Lahore, p 77.

**Oriental section**

After the main gate, before approaching the *bāradari*, on the right side is Oriental section that also occupies Periodicals section. It was previously known as record section and was constructed in 1933. The rooms are high roofed with ventilators. The building is not in a good condition (Chughtai, 2004). Its Periodical section has rare magazines and newspaper inventory. Whereas Oriental section's other rooms are used as offices and digitalization section these days after renovations.



Oriental Section

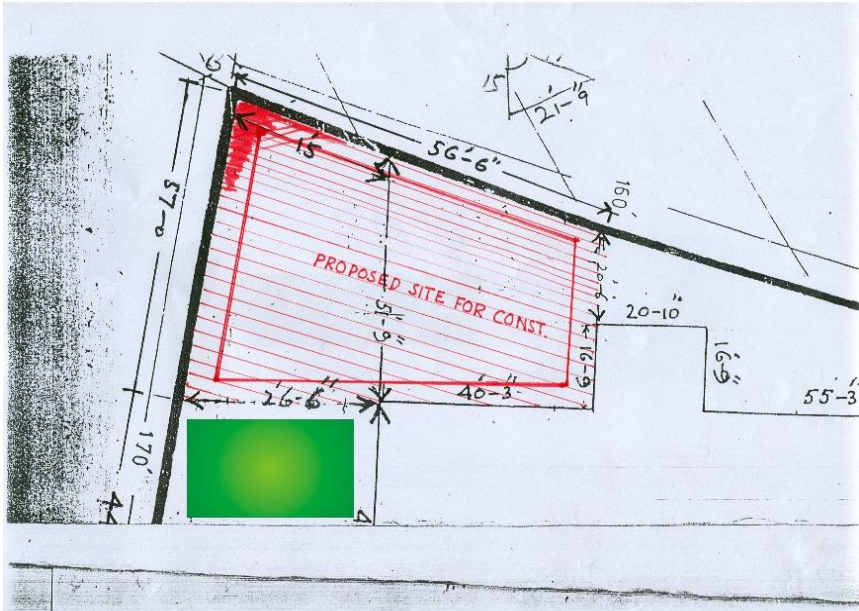


Plate 4– Construction Plan of Oriental Section.





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**Figure 12 – Entrance of Oriental Section.**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities

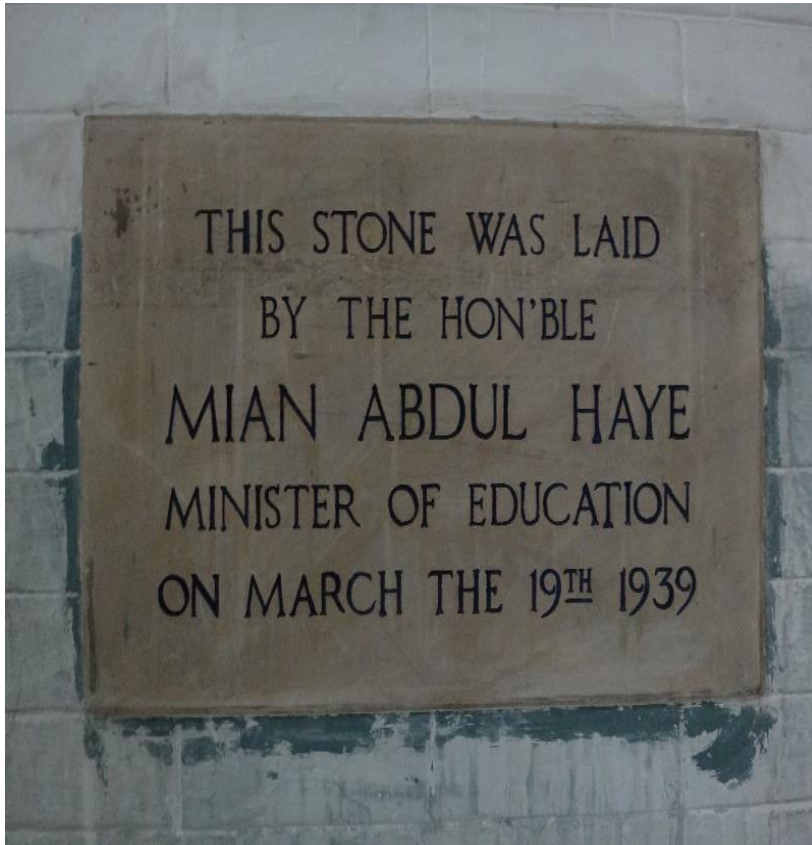
**Figure 13– Wall of the Oriental Section.**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

## **Main Building**

**Figure 14– Periodical section within the Oriental Section.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

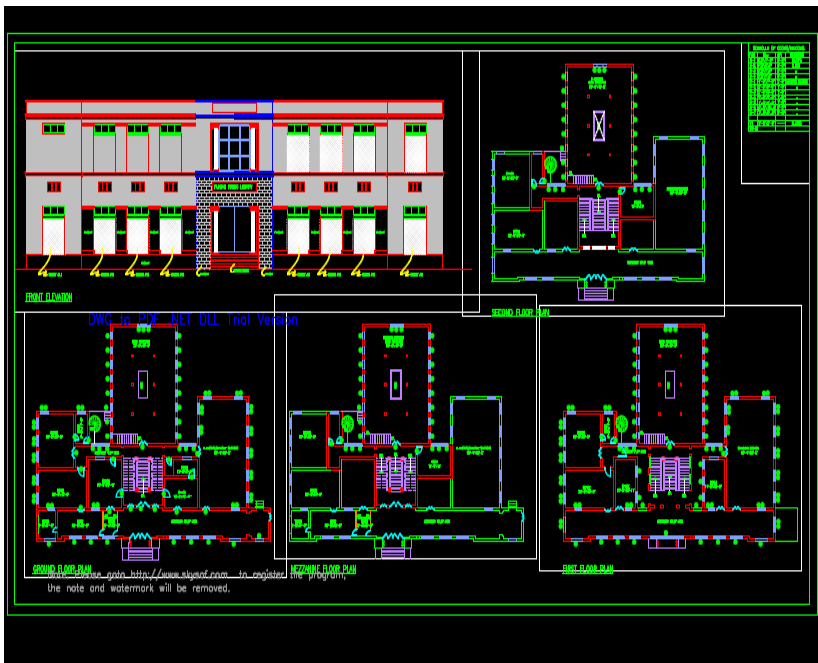
The construction of Main library building was started in 1939 during the period of Rāj to meet the requirement of growing demand of space. This building is not an extension of existing Wazīr Khān's Bāradari but a separate complete unit constructed in the European style of architecture. The style of construction is simpler with flat roofs unlike the neighbouring British style of architecture of Lahore Museum and Tolinton Market. The building is two-storied high. The front elevation has rich detailing of brickworks, emphasized entrance using brick steps, marble fronting on the sides of the entrance door and windows with perforated *jālī* pattern made of cement at regular intervals of the plastered wall. Ground floor plan is comprised of mainly offices, E-library leading to book stacking area. Front corridor on the ground floor is 10 ft. and 6 inches wide while the back corridor is 4 ft. and 9 inches wide. The mezzanine floor also has offices, E-library, book stacking area along with English counter. Whereas first and second floors are comprised of offices, children section and book stacking areas.

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21<sup>st</sup> Century*



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

**Plan of main building of colonial style of construction**



**Plate 5– Plan of Colonial Style of Main Building Built in 1939.**

Figure 17– Outer Portion of the Main Building



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

Figure 18– Stairs leading to Mezzanine Floor.



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.



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21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**Figure 20– Jālī work of the Main Building.**



Source: provided by the Library authorities.

**Figure 21– Book Stacking Area of Main Building.**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities

### Extension new block

In addition to the main building, an extended library block was built later on where passage and verandas that are 7 ft. wide lead to a large lecture hall, microfilm printing room and children reading hall, opposite to the hall on the ground floor. Children reading hall was established in 1982 taking into account the interest of children. There are more than 7000 books available in this section (Ghafoor, 2017).The same layout is copied on first floor except the children section, which is replaced by ladies section. All the doors used in this extension are also made of wood and preferred material for windows is steel and glass.

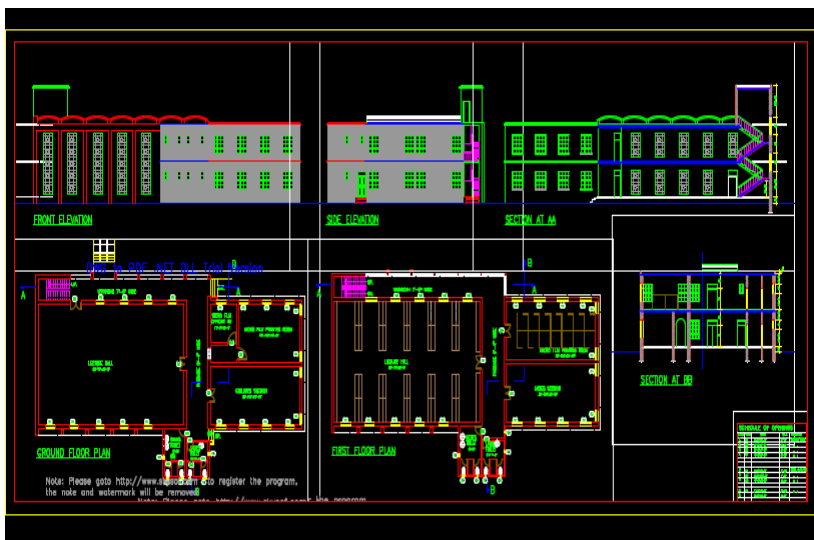
Figure 22- Outer Look of Extension New Building



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

### Plan of extension new block

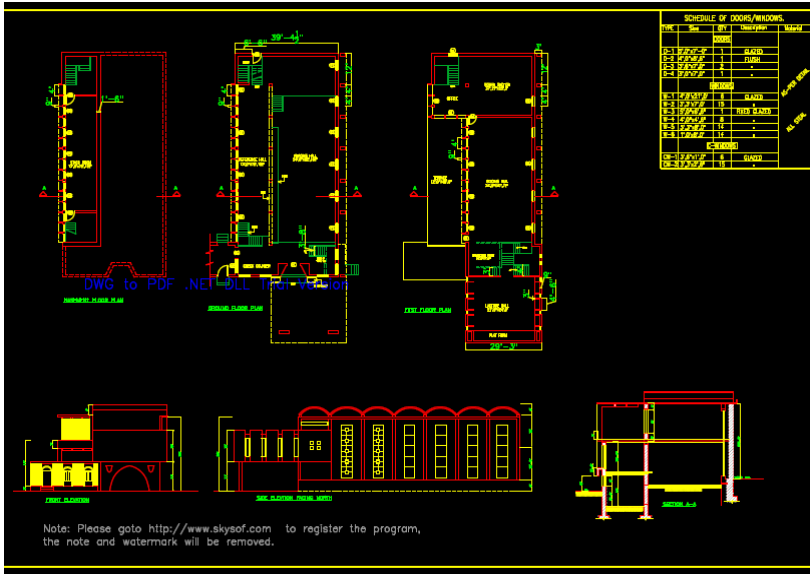
Plate 6- Plan of Extension of New Block in Auto cad.



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**Plan of Bait ul- Qur'an section**

**Plate 7- Plan of Bait ul- Qur'an Section in Auto cad.**



**Figure 23- Auditorium in Bait ul- Qur'an Section.**



**Figure 24- Auditorium in Bait ul- Qur'ān art Galary.**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

### **Bait ul- Qur'ān section**

Bait ul Qur'ān section consists of two floors and one basement. Ground floor houses a large reading hall accompanied with a reference hall while first floor consists of anIslamic reading chamber along with a terrace. It also has a segregated reading hall for females.

### **Auditorium**

Auditorium is a large rectangular hall on the ground floor with sitting arrangement and a stage, built in 1968. The backdrop of the stage is a painting composed on six panels by National artist of PakistannamedŞādequain. On the left of the entrance of the auditorium, stairs lead to the basement, which is comprised of the binding section.

**Figure 25- View of Bait ul- Qur'an Hall**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.



**Figure 26- View of Bait ul- Qur'an Hall**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

### **Bait ul- Qur'an hall**

Stairs lead to the first floor where two large rectangular halls, a committee room and Bait ul- Qur'an are situated. This is the important section of the library, where ancient hand written Qur'anic Manuscripts are placed. Some were ownership of important Islamic dignitaries like ḤaḍratUsmān, ḤaḍratImāmJāfarṢādiq, MuḷānāRum, TipūSultān and AurengzebAlamgīr. Besides this, the section has many historical manuscripts written in Arabic and Persian. This section was founded by Commissioner Lahore Division Mr. MukhtārRasūl in 1968 and was inaugurated by General Mūsa. Renowned Pakistani artist Shakir'Ali's Qur'anic calligraphy is the hallmark of this section. (Ghafoor, 2017)

**Figure 27- Logo of Punjab Public Library.**



### Plan of reading hall

Plate 8- Plan of Reading Hall in Auto cad.

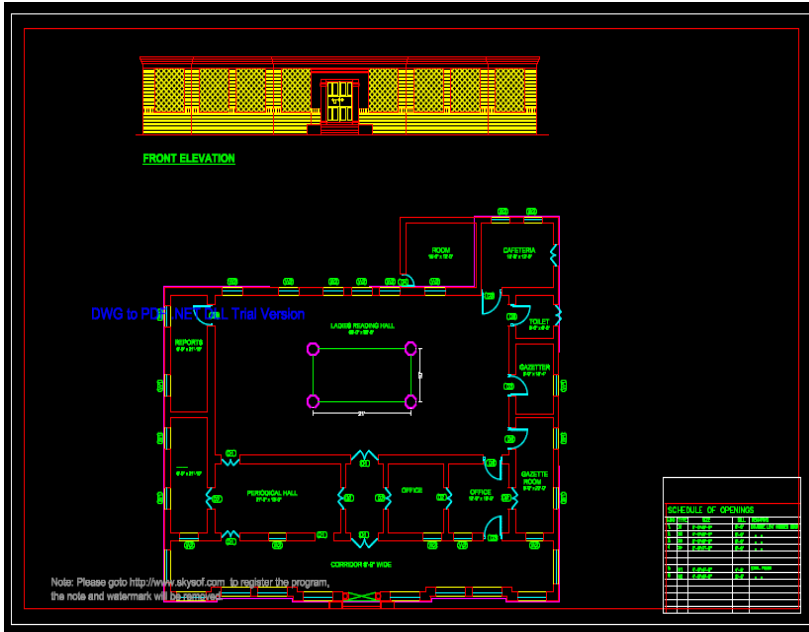


Figure 28- Interior to view of Reading Hall.



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

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**Figure 29- Upper Portion of Reading Hall**



Source: provided by the Library Authorities.

The paramount feature of the library is long established and rare collection of books. In the beginning for the newly developed library, Sir Charles gave off 75 books from his personal library. Many other local noblemen also donated many priceless books of Urdu, Persian and Arabic. These collective efforts have piled up 25000 books before formal inauguration of the library (Tufail, 1962). Now the library has an approximate collection of more than 370,000 books, bound volumes of magazines, newspapers, reports, the old gazettes of Punjab, Pakistan and undivided India, and more than 1500 manuscripts. Moreover, library holds rare collection of books in all fields of knowledge in English, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Punjabi, Hindi, Gurmukhi and Sanskrit and in some other local languages. (Government Punjab Public Library Bulletin, 2016)

### **Mughal and colonial architecture and its impact on the politics of the subcontinent**

Owing to the imperial domination almost every aspect of society was influenced. In the same way the Mughal and the colonial architecture had its clout upon the socio-political and economic lives of the people of the subcontinent. Mughals and the colonial powers like Dutch, French, the Portuguese and the Britishers left an everlasting impact through their architectural designs of buildings. The Mughals though were more interested in building gardens, forts, and tombs yet the European colonial masters were more interested in building libraries, hospitals and universities.

Initially the colonial masters were interested in carving out archetype to influence the local population. It was a way to assure their authority upon the local people. The culmination of the colonial architecture may be observed through the

lens of a triangulated architecture, popularly known as the Indo-Saracenic architecture. This Indo-Saracenic architecture shared the features of Indo-Islamic and western elements. The articulated form of such architecture can be seen in the edifices of institutional, civic and effective constructions like, post offices, railway stations, rest houses and other government buildings. The colonial masters built such buildings in a large number in the whole subcontinent; especially all provincial capitals were teemed with such architectural designs. The colonial masters where imported the architectural designs from the west, also got inspired from the local Indian architecture.

## **Conclusion**

Lahore with its multi- dimensional cultural heritage in art and architecture stands as a symbol of center of interest of all the ruling dynasties of the Sub-Continent. Lahore with its architecture was a combination of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh buildings in their respective style of architecture. It was the capital city of the Mughal emperor Akbar and is an illustrative of Islamic style of architecture. It was also the center of Sikh Realm and is symbolic of their architectural style but by the end of the British Rāj, with addition of their style in architectural buildings, the city stood reformed with a dual- faced eccentricity. There was old city with its historical architecture on one hand and there were colonial additions of the cantonment and the Civil Lines on the other hand. There was an explicit contrast in the urban pattern, living styles and house designs of the local and European culture. The pivotal point of this colonial city became the area of Anārkalī Bazaar with the Mall as a major connection with the cantonment. This area was the center of British administration with Government College, Punjab University Old Campus, Mayo School of Arts, Museum, Tollinton Market, Public Library and hospital buildings in distinguishable style of construction. However Anārkalī Bazaar, the temple, the shrine of Abd ul-Rāziq Maka'i along with the attached mosque known as NilāGumbad and Bāradari of Wazīr Khān ensured that the city is originally an Indian City. (Vandal & Vandal, 2016)

Punjab Public Library is an example and symbolic of old and new Lahore. The overall effect of the library is the image of strong in tradition yet fulfilling the contemporary demands. Both, the Mughal traditional style of building and the later European influenced buildings created a unique composition and highly distinguished buildings create a dynamic and delightful effect. The Colonial and later added architecture of the library is the reflection of our requirements, evolution and progress as a nation, whereas *bāradarias* a part of the library stands as a silent reminder of grace of Islamic style of architecture during the Mughal Era. It is a perplexed amalgamation of varied architectural styles each retaining its individuality and purpose.



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