

## AN ANALYTICAL ARCHITECTURAL MEMO ON BRITISH COLONIAL RAILWAY STATION OF CHAKLALA CANTT RAWALPINDI

*Kaneiz Fatima*

### ABSTRACT

*Study evaluates the individual importance of an administrative building of British Colonial period of Rawalpindi. This research would be useful for those, who have negative opinion about the various reforms of British Raj done in subcontinent. They wanted to set a good managerial grip during their stay here and made good reforms for their own comfort and ease. However, the people of subcontinent took entire benefits of their reforms. In this context, this article concentrates on the historical and architectural significance of this railway station constructed during the early British period in India.*

*This paper gives a prologue about a new British architectural techniques and esthetic sense used in the Britishers era of Subcontinent. This study determines the useful role, origin, history of railway along with planning and mindset with new architectural elements of British style of masonry. Britishers tried to keep away the local masons from their buildings during the construction to avoid the amalgamation of local style in them especially in religious and generally in secular buildings. This information will help to evaluate the importance of this railway administrative building as a special historical architectural specimen, its utility and purposes. As a case study, this Railway station of Chaklala Cantt in Rawalpindi is an important architectural specimen of a nearly British colonial period of Subcontinent.*

**Keywords:** Administrative Buildings of British, Colonial Period, British Raj, Reforms, Architectural, Railway Station.

### INTRODUCTION

Britishers came here in subcontinent for trading objectives. Simultaneously their intentions for establishing political and religious agenda were at their priority basis. They wanted to stay in subcontinent for a long time to make their intentions fully done. Lord Canning served as the last Governor General of India who was appointed as the 1<sup>st</sup> Viceroy of Subcontinent. “He did many reforms for the people of united India. He made the Department of Telegraph and the department of Public Construction. He built

different roads and infused the system of Railway to make the means of transportation better” (Bismil, 1998, p. 468).

They built many religious, secular and administrative buildings to embed their deep-rooted program. They positioned their troops at the right places in cantonments. Britishers erected many administrative buildings to govern the entire political system with strong clutch. They furnished a compact system of transportation here. Railway provided an important mode of delivery in the outermost vicinities of Subcontinent, and brought them nearer for trade, tourism and political objectives.

British government opened first successful train track in Britain in 1830 from Liverpool to Manchester. After launching this successful train track, Britishers introduced Railway transport system in their colonies. In Subcontinent, the first train was brought on tracks in April 16, 1853 between Bombay and Thane. On 13 May 1861, the first train system was operated between Karachi and Kotri.

Sir John Lawrence, the first Lieutenant Governor General of Punjab initiated a great step in the construction of Railway line to connect Multan and Amritsar in Feb.8, 1859. “Sir John Lawrence inaugurated the Railway line in between Multan and Amritsar”. (Bismil, 1998: 495)

### **HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF RAILWAY SYSTEM**

Rail is a mean of transportation of goods and passengers by way of wheeled automobile running on rails. Railway is a safe transport system when it is evaluated to other forms of transport. Railway stations are actually work ports where trains load or unload passengers and goods.

Dr. Michael J T Lewis who is a famous researcher of early railways did much work on this topic. “It is a prepared track which so guides the wheels of vehicles running on it that they cannot leave the track(Lewis, 1974:41)”. If researchers go with this definition of Railways defined by Lewis then historical evidences show that this type of structure was there in 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. A Greek Diolkos was a railway track which was prepared by stone and used for transporting ships.



Fig.01. Ancient Greek Railway Track 1

In ancient Greece, first horse-drawn wagon-ways was also found. There were also many examples of cut-stone tracks present in different parts of ancient Rome.

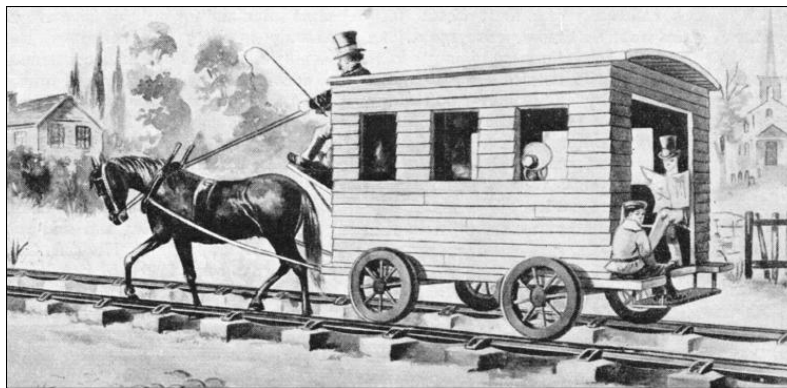


Fig.02. Ancient Wooden Rails and Vehicle

Railways with wooden bars and vehicles in around the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD to 15<sup>th</sup> century were commonly observed. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, the use of wooden Railway came in to existence to bear heavy loads and for other reasons. In fact, in mines people used to push wheel trucks of stones and coal. Resultantly, by this practice people got the idea to develop railways.

In the same century, a revolution came and iron rails and wheels replaced wooden rails. However, in 1820, a road was constructed with stone rail in England. The proper mechanical work with railway was completed in first two decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century in England and Whales. Most historians agree that Liverpool and Manchester Railways opened in 1830 and they are the archetype of modern railway. Its founder George Stephenson who started his work in 1820s is considered the inventor of first steam locomotive engine of railway. However, name of Richard Trevithick stands as an inventor of first locomotive in the world in 1804. “No doubt British engineers

successfully got employment in all over Europe and built earliest and most important railway (Gourvish 1996; Channon 1996; Ambler 1999)".

"Soon entrepreneurs in United States started planning the Baltimore and Ohio railway road on quite different and organized scale (Stover 1997; Vance 1995; Ditts. 1993)". Thus on a large-scale, a proper railroad system started to develop. It was the time of industrialization when commercial rivalries produced a system from one port to another to meet the new economic challenges and for the growth of rapid transport.

## **HISTORY OF RAILWAY IN SUBCONTINENT**

The first passenger train was started in 1825 between Stockholm and Darlington to buy and sell of wool. Moreover, it was the trade of cotton among other things that prompted the journey of the first ever train in Subcontinent.

Dalhousie introduced a new system of internal communication in India. He inaugurated a new chapter in the history of British Era of India. He worked as the Governor-General of India from 1848-1856. He was called the father of Indian Railways. Dalhousie made his famous efforts for the development of Railway in 1853 and succeeded to convince the home authorities to uplift the need of the railways and set down the main lines for its development.

Lord Dalhousie conceived the idea of a network of railways connecting important places with the ports and providing both for advantageous and commercial needs. Progressively all-important cities and towns were connected with railway lines to facilitate trade business and minimize distances. The railways played a key role historically in uniting India.

The idea of rail network had come into being in 1847, when Karachi became a major seaport of British East India Company in 1843. Lord Dalhousie granted the special permission to Sir Edward Henry Frere, commissioner of Sindh to initiate a survey of railway line in 1858.

No doubt 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1861 was a remarkable day in the history of united Indian railway that the first railway line was inaugurated between Karachi city and Kotri. Then different sections of this railway track were completed in the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is the twist of fate that the present positions of railway line from Peshawar to Karachi closely follow a historical line of stride of Alexander through the Hindu Kush to the sea.

## **HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE OF "CHAKLALA" RAILWAY STATION:**

"Chaklala" is a major populated area of the city "Rawalpindi" in the Punjab province of Pakistan. After the British assault of this area soon after the drop of the Sikh realm and their occupation of Rawalpindi in 1850, the city transformed in a permanent barracks of the British army till 1851. Around in 1870, a railway line from Rawalpindi to Peshawar was put down and train service was opened on 1 October 1880.



Fig.03.Chaklala Railway station

Lord Dalhousie evolved the city of Rawalpindi a headquarter of the Northern Command and then this city became the leading British Military cantonment during the British Raj. In 1881, a railway line and a beautiful colonial style building as station connected Rawalpindi. After having this link, Rawalpindi became the largest cantonment of South Asia.

Chaklala Railway station is situated on the main railway track from Rawalpindi to Lahore associated with strategic dry port, which handles cargo trains. Great Trunk Road is on the western side of Chaklala British built Chaklala Railway Station in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. “It was constructed in 1890,” said Mr. Zafrullah, who is Station Master of Chaklala Railway Station. It was the busiest station of that time due to the proximity to the garrison. “The station could be the goldmine for railway, but now station is condemned to be a silent spectator to incoming and outgoing trains (Express Tribune, April 19, 2014).



Fig.4.Chaklala Railway Station Track

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION OF CHAKLALA RAILWAY STATION PLAN

The rectangular plan of Chaklala Railway Station shows two parallel arms on both sides of the pyramidal roof. These two arms provide flanks beautifully the basic layout of the Chaklala Railway Station. Pointed architecture in all buildings remained the typical characteristic of their architecture built during the British period in subcontinent. This kind of architecture was called Gothic style of building.



Fig.05. Building of Chaklala Railway Station

### ROOF

The roof of the building is built on Jack Arch method. This roof was commonly in practice due to different advantages. This kind of construction saves the economy during construction, as the Britishers were good planners. It also helps the interior building from intense climatic changes. It provides the builder ease to finish his work speedily. Jack Arched Roof provides liberty to the designer to create spaces for various functions. It was typical colonial style of architecture during British Raaj. Almost all-administrative kinds of buildings, such as Lahore railway station was built on the same style.

### OFFICES

Building has single compartment/barrack with high roof. It is divided in small administrative rooms that are used for offices according to the utility purpose. The main compound has two arms. Left arm is smaller than right arm in size. Now it is divided into

five offices. One is at the left arm, second one is a spacious than others and three remaining rooms are at the right arm.

### **VERANDAH**

A roofed porch that extends towards outside of the main building of Chaklala Railway Station is a beautiful representation of a covered space. It provides a fine-looking portico supported by heavy iron pillars. This scheme works by two ways. It saves the offices from direct sunlight and rain and simultaneously demonstrates the esthetic and witty sense of the British Architect.

A hanging wooden zigzag frill on the edges of the shade enhances the overall view of the building. Walls are constructed with English brick masonry. Masonry is left exposed externally whereas lime plaster layer was made on internal side.

### **VENTILATORS AND FIREPLACES**

High wall ventilators keep the whole building airy and bright. These ventilators break the monotony of the façade. Five broad ventilators crowned with round arches show the immense preference towards natural means for achieving light, ventilation and indoor thermal conditions in this building. Technically made fireplaces in all offices used to keep the interior warm in winter season. These are the typical expressions of administrative buildings built during British Raaj.



Fig.06. Wooden fringe on the Façade of the Chaklala Railway Station

### **WOODEN BORDER**

A descending wooden border on the periphery indicates the boundary of the Verandah. This fine quality wood is still safe from any kind of wooden insect. This is a delicate decorative architectural feature of colonial period of subcontinent.

**WAITING AREA**

Fig.07. Waiting Area of Chaklala Railway Station

A tin roofed shelter supported by iron pillars, is as waiting area of passengers. Here are benches made up of fine quality wood represent the durability. This beautiful covered area saves the passenger from rain and heat of the Sun.

**CONCLUSION**

Chaklala Railway Station is not merely Railway Administrative building at Rawalpindi but presents a new kind of building style of British Colonial period. This style was a great contribution and addition in the history of architecture by the Britishers. It is a small and simple building but has a great significance in the history of railway. This Railway Station has fulfilled all needs and requirements of transportation of goods and passengers from pre partition time to now without any break.

Britishers took intense care in all kind of utility and administrative principles in the construction of this railway station. They built this small building for purely administrative purpose but left their typical kind of architectural style as our cultural heritage.

Britishers added great work in the architectural history of Subcontinent. Soon after annexing the Rawalpindi, they build many churches here in Gothic and Scottish gothic styles which was a typical mode of building in Europe. Similarly, the Railway Station of Chaklala was built slightly pointed by following the basic techniques of gothic Architecture. Principles of Symmetry, Unit to whole scheme, natural light and circulation to use-space were followed strictly.

Beside these facts, the Pakistan Railway Ministry gives this neat and clean railway station less importance. However, the former minister of Railway Khawaja Saad Rafique granted the permission of tickets booking as it was not functional earlier.

Chaklala has been a great utility since the time of British period. Therefore, Government must observe and notice the potential and utility of Chaklala Railway Station same as the British government realized in 19<sup>th</sup> century. No doubt, they gave ease to our lives by their discoveries but we could not look after these developments.



**REFERENCES**

- Beck, Sanderson. (2008). *South Asia 1800-1950*. World Peace Communication.
- Begg J., (1912). *Annual Report on Architectural Work in India for the year 1911-1912*, Calcutta: Government Printing Press India.
- Begg, J., (1908). *Annual Report on Architectural Work in India for the year 1907-1908*, Calcutta: Government Printing Press India.
- Davies R. H. (1860). *The Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the year 1860- 61*, Lahore: Government Press Lahore.
- King, A. D. (1976). *Colonial Urban Development*, London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul.
- Krishen. (2001). *Climate Responsive Architecture*, Dehli: Tata McG-Hill.
- Lal, K. (1941). *Tareekj e Punjab*, Lahore: Majlis e Tarakki e Adab.
- Latif S. M. (1994). *Tareekh e Punjab*, Lahore: Takhleekaate e Lahore.
- Lewis, E. H. (1963). *Generation of Electric Power*, Lahore: Publication Committee of P.W.D.
- Ling, C.S. (2007). *The Effect of Geometric Shapes and Building Orientation*, *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries*.
- Mustafa, Ghulam B. (1998). *Tareekh e Punjab*, Lahore: Nadeem Younas Printers
- Railway Board, *History of Indian Railways constructed and in progress*, (1927). Simla: Govt. of India Press.
- Smith, (1957). *Early History of India*, Oxford.
- Smith, R.T. (1868). *Tropical Architecture*, London: Royal Institute of British Architects.
- Yasmeen, L. and Sami, R. (2010). *Pakistan Railways in Historical Perspectives Pakistan Railways*.