

Muhammad Zeshan Ashraf*

Identity Becomes Pride if Routed Through History

Abstract

Every culture sustains itself by taking pride in its identity. This statement is true in all cultural manifestations, with art and architecture being at the very forefront. Civilized nations realize the significance of this statement and ensure, through law and policy, to protect and preserve the icons of historical and cultural identity.

One such historical icon of cultural identity of Pakistan is University College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab Lahore. This is one of the highlights among historical architecture in Pakistan, and its image is synonymous with the great architectural reawakening of the Colonial Era. Designed by Bhai Ram Singh and standing tall for over a century, this building has fared comparatively well during its life for serving as a functional building. But even so, without any implementable conservative policies, unlawful interventions have continued to chew away at the very foundations of the historical character of this building.

Key words: architecture, historical monument, conservation.

Introduction

History is a connection of different stages of past and present that makes strong recognition to the society. These episodes of past, present and future are interconnected and may also be influenced by each other. Even the historical events and assumptions are elaborated on the basis of past experiences with respect to different stages of history.¹

The wonders and exceptions at present are the concepts and hard works done by people at different phases in the past. The wonders and spectacles are to be appreciated and gratification must be given to the person who actually commenced its origins. With the passage of time, the pioneers are put out of sight, and the actual pride gets fabricated to some other frame.²

Old buildings are the living signature evidences and architectural fabric of the area, they deserve great respect, feeling of ownership and regular maintenance to preserve and save for the future generations. They are like roots of the area that define its history, its transformation over time and depict the glories and difficulties it been through. Thus a "city with-out old buildings is similar to a river without water", meaningless and impression less. So giving individuality and respect to the building also salutes the heritage of the building. The standing structure is the standing ovation to the history.³

* Muhammad Zeshan Ashraf, Assistant Professor/Coordinator of M. Arch Program, Department of Architecture, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Allama Iqbal Campus Lahore.

So in this case, the “pride” is simply an architecture seen through the lens of history. Different events, stacked upon each other, shape up the experience and character of the building, and the people who belong to that place⁴ and conversely the architecture which belongs to the people of a place – give weight and meaning to the commonly shared perception, and subsequent defense, of “pride” itself.

The variation in significance and principle of architectural fundamentals has a direct link to the feudalism in drawing specific outcomes that subsoil within architecture and design limits. It is always a big causative factor as to how an architect operates in his relation to the requirement or function of the building.⁵ Architectural design values make up a significant component of what influences architects when they make their design decisions.

The College of Art & Design (AllamaIqbal Campus, University of the Punjab) is a one of the landmark heritage buildings of Lahore, designed by Bhai Ram Singh in 1905. The design of the building blends two major styles of architecture prevalent at the time: the Mughal architecture and the Colonial architecture. The college has seen many periodic interventions throughout the century.⁶ However these interventions were done on extemporized basis, solving problems without any keen sense of conservation criteria undertaken. This neglecting behavior can be seen throughout the history of the building. The interventions that are commissioned for adaptation of the building for new and evolving purposes is being done at the expense of its history, identity and leaving the building at risk of losing its character and individuality.

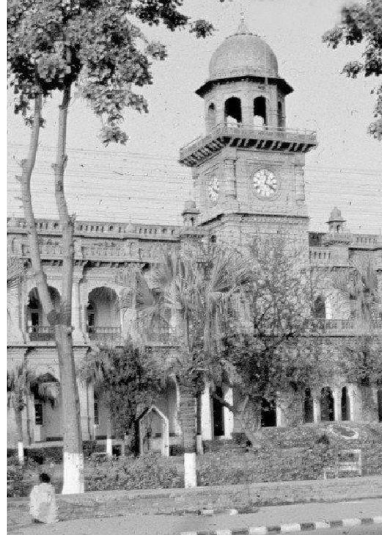
Historical significance

In 1869 the university started its life with the name “The Lahore University College.” On 14th October 1882, the university was conventionally constitute. The Charls Aitcheson Leiut was appointed the first Chancellor of the university who was also the Governor of the Punjab at that time. In 1903 the Lt. Governor Sir Charls Rivaz granted a land to the university. At that time that land was used by Robert’s Institute. The main hall of the university was constructed on that piece of land in 1905. The building was designed by the famous architect of that time known by the name of Bhai Ram Singh. Later on Bhai Ram Singh also designed the library of the university in 1911.⁷

The education, skills, achievements and training demonstrate the majestic situation in which an indigenous Sikh young man of brilliant capabilities had the obstinacy to outdo his British masters. His proficiency and aptitude was dotted by a constituent of the British system of government, which led to his enrollment as an apprentice in the Lahore School of Carpentry which was established in 1874. Even after western education Ram Singh, never forsaken his folklore rituals nor did he averted from contemporary art and challenges of architecture and thus incorporated the two cultures in an innovative and splendid manner.⁸

The building in discussion follows an Anglo-Indian style of architecture. The features of the building consist of arches and surplus of cupolas in varying sizes. This double storey designed building is stylized in the mode of raj buildings, presenting an in-depth arcaded verandah on the front side. On the top of the projecting porch a weighty set of clock on the tower is positioned which dominates

the center of the front façade of the building and is a subject of admiration of the local passersby.



Journey of College of Art and Design through time (20th to 21st century)

This building is regarded as a piece of art by many locally known scholars and artists and is a constant source of inspiration to aspiring young artists studying at this campus. Acknowledged and publically renowned, Allama Iqbal Campus serves as a College of Arts and Design with adjoining Pharmacy and IT Department to hone the abilities and personalities of the students to perfection with the motto of this campus being Faith, Unity and Discipline. Bhai Ram Singh, in a continues visage of struggle from the colonial engineers/ architects of the era, succeeded in putting his distinguishing mark on the face of historical city of Lahore merging the rich eastern architecture of the region with the Hi-Tech and

somewhat flat concepts of the West culture. Ata-Ullah, N. (1998). This aspect of Ram Singh's creative genius, fusion of two streams, also has value in the context of present day debates on Identity and Relevance.

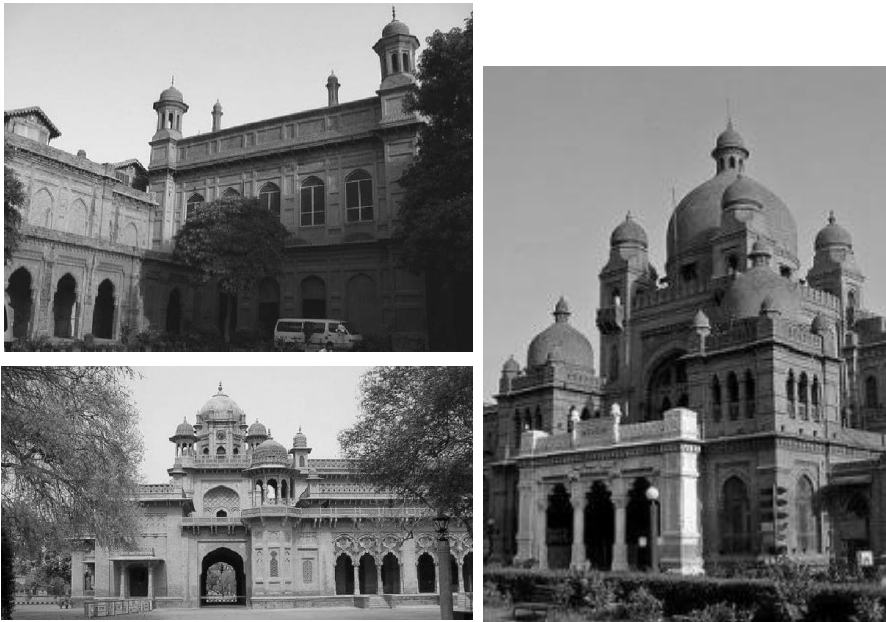
Work of Ram Singh (in association with John Lockwood Kipling)

National College of Arts (Mayo School of Arts)

The Mayo School of Arts presently The National College of Arts is a red brick building with an impressive construction, bordering the main Mall road, opposite to the main campus of Punjab University and next to the Museum. Ram Singh used his skills and acquaintance with the details of woodwork minutiae and carpentry to improve the degree of the exposed elements i.e. brick surfaces; the building facades were further divided into panels, and the cornice, pedestal and the beam levels are highlighted through complex brick features using diverge range of sizes and decorative elements i.e. terracotta Jalli work. The edges of the north division, the central frontage of the college directed towards the Mall, was emphasized with towers and *chattris*, while decorative embossing such as the stucco work under the roof, improvised the elegance of building and surface. A drinking fountain made up of marble was specifically considered for the heart of the courtyard.⁹

Aitcheson College

For designing this much important building, an all-India competition was organized and the Mayo School of Arts submitted an entry prepared by Ram Singh. The Main College building comprise classrooms, a library and reading room, science laboratory, play room, hall and offices. It is composed of a three-tiered building having a central hall similar to a church nave with clearstory windows. This being the highest part follows a chain of classrooms figuring the second floor, whereas the verandahs outline the third tier. The turrets of octagonal shape are triumphed by domes which spots the corner of the central block, whereas the cupolas, *chattris*, domes and finials generated an exceedingly articulated skyline. The dome that covered the entrance has smaller domes all-around to organize it proportionately, giving it visual effect of the masterpiece.¹⁰ The demarcated domes and *chattris* were also lined in decorative brickwork, reflecting of the proficiency of woodcarving, which was the strongest point of Ram Singh. Throughout the structure there are eave brackets in red sandstone, the red/pink marble is used for shielding the column and the arches with the sporadic use of complex *Jharaukās* done in white marble minutiae and some obscurely meticulous opening bespeak of the mastery of minutiae by the architect. The verandahs are paneled with inter-lacing Moorish arches and red marble *Jāli*. The inside of the Hall was decorated with stucco tracery details, murals and a magnificent balcony resting on sandstone brackets. The brickwork required and attained a soaring level of skill. On the whole, effect of building was a strong traditional yet gratifying the contemporary demands of the time. For sure Ram Singh was courageous enough to learn from both the Indian tradition skills and the new European influence and thus generated an exclusive masterpiece and highly textured veneer, which is still vigorous and amiable.



Work of Ram Singh in association with John Lockwood Kipling (National college of arts, Aitcheson College and Lahore museum.

Lahore Museum

The Museum is an imposing building abutting the Mayo School of Arts building, with a 70 foot high dome and a 350 foot frontage along the Mall. While the scale of the building itself was impressive, the design was such that critics of the time commenting on the building referred to it as ‘an ornament to the city’.Lahore Museum.¹¹ The brick faced building was set back from the Mall with a red sandstone drinking fountain placed in the center of a well-manicured lawn, which now abuts the edge of the Mall due to the widening of the road. The visitor’s access is through a white marble entranceway leading to a verandah which has a deodar wooden ceiling laid in a geometric pattern and a marble floor. The choice of a white marble entrance set against the brick-faced building draws attention to the imposing building. ^{12, 13}

Salient features of College of Art and Design

Location	Mall road
Frontage of building	225 ft
Depth of building	95 ft
Area (approx.)	24000 sft

To go through the journey of the study of the Anglo-Indian style of Punjab University Hall designed by the Bhai Ram Singh, one should begin by entering the main gate which is opposite to the most famous building of Lahore Museum. The comparative analysis of Kipling’s Anglo-Indian Museum with Punjab University

Hall shows that Punjab University Hall is not much impressive but it is however extremely beautiful and amazing structure. In 1905, the foundation of the institute was laid. As the design of this building belongs to late Anglo-Indian style, the building is comprises of lancet archways and a plethora of cupolas in various sizes. The double story building, now the university's College of Art and Design planned in the way of Raj Buildings with a deep verandah in the front. A huge clock tower is placed above the extended outwards porch which dominates the center as it rises above the main configuration and corner towers.¹⁴ The main square portion of the central tower shows a huge clock on its four sides while an octagonal Clifton like structure grabs the last stage and is composed of capped domes finished up with a finial. Due to the corner towers the boundary of the building becomes prominent, also these towers carries symmetrical domes. Each verandah has an inlet which is also comprises of ornamental columns terminating over and above the ramparts forming a tower limiting by small cupolas. This building's reddish-pink trace of colour is not smooth as the other buildings have across the road but it merges well with the surrounding environment. There is another building near the College of Art and Design with the similar features now houses the Pharmacy Department.¹⁵

The Woolner Hall

The most important part of the College of Art & Design, and indeed the focal point in its planning is the Woolner Hall, which is also known as "Main Hall" of College of Art & Design. This was considered as the biggest hall in town at that time it was constructed. The best features of the hall are its grandness, scale and interior (Teak wood floor and balconies all around in internal walls).

Hall size	150ft x 60 ft	height 38 ft
Area of hall	9000 sft	
Veranda area	10ft wide veranda all around the hall	

Addition Later on, around 1941, two wings were attached to the Eastern and Western side giving the building its present U-shape.

Usage The University Hall was meant to be used as an examination hall and for convocations, and had a balcony at the first floor level, which could be used by the women attending the convocation.

Internally the wall surfaces are decorated with wooden balustrade and the wooden floor and ceiling completed the interior composition of Hall.

Time line of building

- In 1905 Lt. Governor of Punjab, Sir Charles Montgomery Rivazlayed the foundation of the WoolnerHall(The Main Hall) of the University of the Punjab Lahore. Construction begun under the supervision of Bhai Ram Singh who was also the architect of this building. It was for the first time in history that the name of an architect appeared on the foundation stone.
- In 1941 building of Fine Arts Department added to the main building in the form of two additional halls.
- In 1942 proper inception of graduate courses at the Department of Fine Arts.
- In 1947 after partition of the subcontinent, considerable structural changes to the building are approved and construction begins.
- In 1988 the Fine Arts Department acquired the premises of the adjacent Islamiyat Department.
- In 1989 Pharmacy Department moved to nearby campus and Fine Arts Department expanded more in space.
- In 1998 the Fine Arts Department changed into Institute of Art and Design and the building of English Department was also merged to the expanding requirement of the institute.
- In 2004 the Institute of Art and Design changed into The College of Art and Design and the main building of the old campus, Including the Woolner Hall, become under the college jurisdiction.

History of Intervention

Minor interventions were made during regular maintenance and as per requirement of department like air conditioning and exterior lightning, which in real has destroyed the original charm of this historical building.

Major intervention found in this building that is the roof structure of Woolner Hall Due to rain water originalsagwan (Teak) wooden roof structure deteriorated and replaced with steel structure in early 80's.

Photographic Documentation (Inappropriate intervention)



Interventions: AC out-door units, electric ducts, electric DB, paint on wooden railing, electric cables, fiber glass shed, Security grills, paint on wood, Spot lights

Woolner hall Interior views



Interventions: ceiling fans, hanging lights, paint on doors, windows and handrails, Paint on sand stone brackets

Conclusions

The entire transformation of colonial style of architecture into fusion of colonial and Mughal architecture, that merged the latest western construction techniques with the aesthetic exuberance of the existing Mughal architecture, is equal to a significant milestone in the history of the subcontinent.

The culture of our region the subcontinent, on account of being in sharp contrast to the Western ideologies, takes a certain honor in homegrown values. For this particular reason, the British occupation was never really accepted by the people of the subcontinent. Subcontinent also is one of the only places where the British Colonialism was soundly defeated without bloodshed. The point under

consideration here is that what we call "pride" is the honor we take in the vernacular.

Bhai Ram Singh's fusion of Western technology and Mughal architecture itself is considered a source of pride. That he, a local Sikh, pioneered an innovation in a land occupied by a far more advanced people, is testament to his genius. That is why the architecture of Bhai Ram Singh is a source of "pride" for us. That is the reason why College of Art & Design needs to have a proper, responsible code for conservation not only of the stone and walls, but of that intangible aspect that provides us with the "pride".

In short, the identity of College of Art & Design becomes our pride if we consider the history that how it was designed and built, the innovation that took place, by the genius that was behind it, and most importantly, that we preserve its originality.

Notes & References

-
- ¹ Carr, D. (1991). Time, narrative, and history. Indiana University Press.
- ² Wineburg, S. (2001). Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past. Temple University Press.
- ³ Caniggia, G., & Maffei, G. L. (2001). Architectural composition and building typology: interpreting basic building (Vol. 176). Alinea Editrice.
- ⁴ Day, C. (2007). Places of the Soul. Routledge
- ⁵ Aureli, P. V. (2011). The possibility of an absolute architecture. MIT press.
- ⁶ Kabir, N., Naz, N., & Qayyum, A. (2014). The Contribution Of British Engineer Architect Colonel Samuel Swinton Jacob,(1867-1902): Proponent Of European Indo Islamic Architecture In Colonial India. Pakistan Journal of Science, 66(3).
- ⁷ Sajjad, F., Naz, N., & Anjum, G. A. Spirit Of The Place: Evolution and Transformation Of Istanbul Chowk, Lahore. Department of Architecture & Planning, NED University of Engineering & Technology, City Campus Maulana Din Muhammad Wafai Road, Karachi., 33.
- ⁸ Khan, A., Arif, S., Rehman, A., Mushtaq, M., & Ahmed, S. R. (2013). Stones Of British Colonial Lahore: A Study Of Two Remarkable Buildings Of Earlier Period Of British Colonial Architecture. Pakistan Journal of Science, 65(2).
- ⁹ Tillotson, G. (2007). The Raj, Lahore, And Bhai Ram Singh. By Pervaiz Vandal and Sajida Vandal, pp. 268. Lahore, National College of Arts, 2006. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland, 17(02), 209-210.
- ¹⁰ Khan, H. A. (2009). Rationalizing The Mystical Relationship Of Art With Artist: Art Discourses In England And Formative Years Of Mayo School Of Arts, Lahore (1875-1895). Historian (20745672), 7(1).
- ¹¹ Lahore Museum.(1999). Masterpieces of Lahore Museum. A. Rehmani (Ed.). Lahore Museum.
- ¹² Lahore Museum (Pakistan), & Alam, H. (1998). Gandhara Sculptures in Lahore Museum. Lahore Museum.
- ¹³ Ata-Ullah, N. (1998). Stylistic hybridity and colonial art and design education. Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum, 2, 68.
- ¹⁴ Naz, N., & Ashraf, Z. (2016). Transformation of Urban Open Spaces of Lahore: From Charing Cross to Faisal Square. Pakistan Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences.
- ¹⁵ Vandal, P., & Vandal, S. (2006). The Raj, Lahore, and Bhai Ram Singh. NCA Publication.