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Investigative Analysis of the Entrance Marble Façade of Lahore Museum

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Abstract

Architecture of any place represents its culture, tradition, and topographical situations. The current study aimed to focus on an architectural edifice that displays the merging of local elements with foreign influences. The structure selected was the marble façade and entrance to the Lahore Museum. The methodology used in the study was based on formal analysis of the architectural features of the façade. For this, primary data was collected and analyzed for comparative analysis with past and present architectural trends. Historical references were used for the structural elements and their symbolism in various cultures of this land. The study concluded that although, the entire structure is an amalgamation of varied elements of Indo-Saracenic style¹, yet it has retained its identity and presented a new architectural trend with its uniqueness and elegance.

Keywords: arches, Bhai Ram Singh, Gothic, lotus, marble façade

Introduction

Museums are the knowledge holders; they carry the keys to unlocking the past, present, and future of a nation. Moreover, museums are the repositories of knowledge since they hold the collections which depict the history and civilization of a nation. Museums preserve more than knowledge, they preserve a personal, spiritual, and tangible connection with the past. So, the presence of a central Museum in a city has always been quite essential.

Punjab was occupied by the British in 1849, the last major province to fall to the alien hierarchy. Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab, was irreversibly affected by the colonial intervention. The colonial intervention in the Punjab and All India was not merely a question of rule by distant masters but was the cultural transformation of people. The colonial period clearly brought forth a new configuration of the political, social, and

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¹A style of architecture developed in 19th century India during the Colonial period amalgamating Indo-Islamic Mughal, Local Indian and European Gothic and Neo-Classical styles.

economic forces that resulted in change in the built environment (Vandal & Vandal, 2006). Although the city already possessed a rich architectural heritage in the form of the walled city and Mughal structures, a whole new style started to develop which was an amalgamation of Hindu local, Mughal, and European trends. Among these structures, one of the eminent edifices was Lahore Museum, constructed with red bricks. Its main entrance was later renovated and built in white marble. The current study focused on the architectural features of this white marble entrance façade, which has not been independently documented or particularly mentioned before in historical books and archives. It was an effort to fill the gap between the historical facts related to this façade, as it stands out in color and temperament than the rest of the building. The questions arising from this unique structural change have been researched upon. Additionally, it has also been analyzed whether this change adds beauty to the front elevation of the Museum or is this an unsuccessful exercise.

Theoretical Framework

The authors adopted a comprehensive theoretical framework to conduct this study. The research for the history and structural information of marble façade of the Lahore Museum was an extensive and tough task since not much data was available either in books, archives or on internet. The authors did an extensive search and gained first-hand knowledge of the architectural features of the façade, which were then analyzed through comparison and contrast with various existing architectural trends in Lahore.

The research design used here was descriptive and correlational. This design focused on the formal elements of the marble façade as a case study describing its relationship with different variables found in architectural trends in Lahore, witnessed before and after the intervention of colonial style of architecture. The uniqueness of the topic and non-availability of sufficient information made the research quite difficult. However, through various visits to the sight, exploration of libraries, archives, and government offices, the documentation and analysis was finally done.

Mostly the authors relied on the primary data collected from the sight in the form of extensive photography of every part of the façade, writing notes on the spot of architectural features, and decorative motifs and patterns. With the help of all this data collected, the authors tried their best to document the historical, physical, and architectural character of this

structure that was evaluated both formally and contextually. Each element was compared with the previous and current trends of that era with the help of secondary data collected from books on architecture, decorative patterns, and history.

The theoretical framework adopted in the study was based on a concept of hybridization, blending the local cultural forms with foreign trends. The perception of Syncretism was used to analyze this façade in order to understand its unique style reflecting the merging of cultural, historical, and foreign features. Authors adopted this framework following the historical background, design elements, and cultural significance, and relating them according to the sociocultural inspirations prevailed during that time influencing the architectural trends in Lahore.

Literature Review

Through the literature available, the authors journeyed into the past to understand the architectural features used in this façade. There are a few books that helped in documenting the historical facts of the marble façade.

The emergence of local and colonial architectural elements seen in marbled facade of Lahore Museum has been validated in Parvaiz Vandal and Sajida Vandal's book, *The Raj Lahore and Bhai Ram Singh* (2006). It is a good source to study the transformation of architectural styles in Lahore. This book also describes the life and architectural projects of Bhai Ram Singh who integrated the colonial and local trends in various buildings constructed by him, including the Lahore Museum.

Different architectural trends prevailed in the region which were researched to analyze this façade. Furthermore, *Lahore Recollected: An Album* by Ijazuddin (2008) has been a good source to trace the history of Mughal architectural trends for a good comparative analysis of this façade. (Ijazuddin, 2008).

Ornamentation and Decoration in Islamic Architecture by Degeorge (2000) provided details of Islamic motifs that are an important influence in the decoration of marble façade. Various floral and geometrical motifs used in this façade have been studied in the light of this information. These motifs explain how traditional and cultural aspects play their role in impacting the art and architecture of the region despite of strong foreign influences. (Degeorge, 2000).

Marble façade is the only marble structure in Lahore Museum, and tracing this building material was an essential requirement to understand its necessity and purpose. The use of marble was traced in the series of buildings constructed in the Mughal era. The book, *Sacred Lotus, Description, Edible, Uses, Symbolism and Facts* traced this use of marble in the Mughal era edifices, since this façade was also made in marble along with its decorative elements. It also provides information about the structural details of architectural elements, such as pillars and lotus flower both used in this facade (Britannica, [2026a](#)).

The book, *Lotus in the Buddhist Art of India* by Soon ([2002](#)) also explains the significance of lotus in Hinduism and Buddhism. The book provides with pervasive and detailed description of symbols and motifs used in the religious manuscripts. For instance, lotus is one of the most frequently used motifs in the art and architecture of India. Likewise, In *Lahore Museum Bulletin's Century Issue* (1994), Percy Brown's article on History of Lahore Museum confirms the year when earliest foundations were laid down for this museum (Brown, [1994](#)).

Similarly, Roy C. Craven in his book, *Indian Art: A concise History* ([1996](#)) has mentioned the significance of lotus flower in different religions and cultures. This is helpful in tracing the usage and evolution of this motif in indigenous art and how frequently it has been used in diverse cultures. This book provides a good example from Buddhist and Hindu art from where it originated and then was used by various societies (Craven, [1996](#)).

The archives also provided information of the construction and expenditure of the museum. Administrative Reports of the Buildings and Roads Branch, Lahore ([1891](#), [1906](#)) provided by the P W Department, Civil Secretariat has been a good source to document the constructional details of this façade.

History of Lahore Museum

After conquering Punjab, British Government in India felt the need to develop the local arts and industry. They began to set up local museums on district levels, subordinated to the central Museum at the Headquarters of the local Government (Chaudhry, [1998](#)). The beginning of the construction of Lahore Museum can be traced back to March 1855, when F.D. Mecleod, the Finance Commissioner of the Punjab proposed the establishment of the museum at district level. This was aimed at housing specimens of natural

products of the Province of Punjab that showed the development of the country and improvement in agricultural machinery and arts.

Lahore Central Museum was established in the *Baradari* of Wazir Khan, now standing in the complex of Punjab Public Library. The place where the Museum stands now, that is, Punjab Public Library, National College of Arts (NCA), Government Offices of Irrigation and Works Department; was then a garden known as *Nakhl-i-Wazir Khan*, (Date palm garden of Wazir Khan). This *Baradari* stood in it and T. H. Thornton was the first curator of this Museum. After sometime, it was realized that the space of Wazir Khan *Baradari* was inadequate for the ever-increasing exhibits in the Museum. So in 1863, the exhibits collected were transferred to Lawrence Hall. In the meantime, Punjab Exhibition of 1864 was held and the exhibits were transferred to the new Exhibition Hall (Bhatti, [2016](#)) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Wazir Khan's Baradari



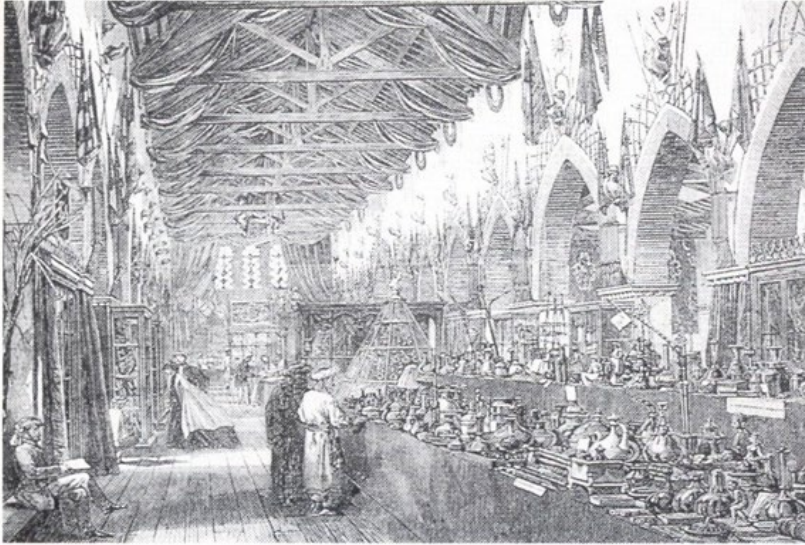
Note. Source: www.ualberta.ca/~rnoor/baradari_wazir_khan.html

A temporary building was erected on Mall Road in the vicinity of Anarkali at the cost of Rs. 69,415. B.H. Powell became the in charge and regular curator of the exhibition. Under his control, this small building expanded to such an extent that it shortly assumed sufficient importance to entitle it to be called the Lahore Museum. The museum remained in the

exhibition building for about twenty-six years, which was later known as Tollinton Market. It was designated by the people as *Ajaib Ghar* (House of Wonders). (Chaudhry, [1998](#)). (Figure 2, 3).

Figure 2

Punjab Exhibition 1864



Note. Source: Nazir Ahmad Chaudhry, *Lahore :Glimpses of a Glorious Heritage*, 265.

Figure 3

Tollinton Market in Late 18th Century



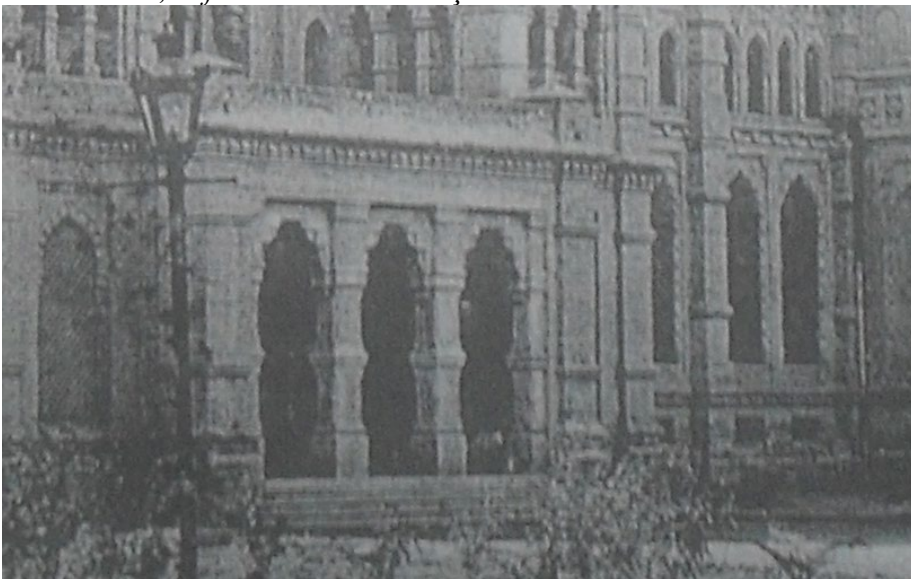
Note. Source: www.pakline.com

In 1887, as a result of a public subscription to commemorate the Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria, the present building was commenced; the foundation stone was laid in 1890 by the Late Prince Albert Victor (Brown, [1994](#)).

The new Jubilee Museum and Technical Institute were started to be built for the development of art and industry, and the existing museum was then built. The design of the building was made by Sardar Sahib Ram Singh. Mr. Lockwood Kipling was the then curator of the museum. The building was completed in 1893 at a cost of Rs. 1, 21,415/- with concrete and brick work (Government of the Punjab, [1891](#)). The new building included a technical lecture hall and classrooms, as well as a museum with an area of 2687.35 sq. meters. The building was completed in 1893, and all the collections were immediately transferred to it. It was open to public in 1894. Lockwood Kipling was the principal of Mayo School of Arts. Due to his association with art and art school, the museum was mainly taken advantage of by the students of the Mayo School of Arts and other institutes to study from the geology, natural history, and sculptures' section (Figure 4). (Mumtaz, [1989](#)).

Figure 4

Museum 1894, before the Marble Façade



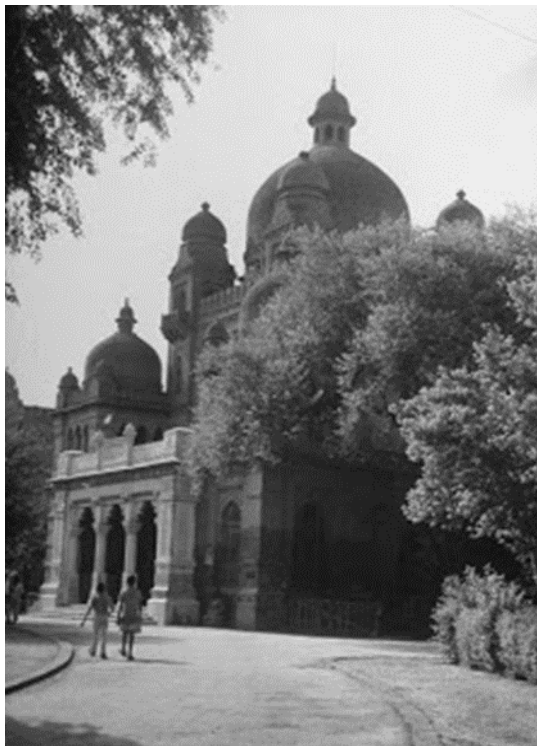
Note. Source: Tollinton Art Gallery, the Mall

Reconstruction of the Museum Façade in Marble

According to the report of Public Work Department for 1905-1906, the entrance porch of the Lahore Museum was reconstructed in marble, the old inferior window frames were removed, and teak frames were fixed in their place. This improved the quality of lighting in the entrance. The total expenditure was around Rs. 18,825, and the work was carried out under the supervision of the curator of the museum (Government of the Punjab, [1906](#)). The visitors' access was through this white marbled entranceway leading to a verandah which had a deodar wooden ceiling laid in a geometric pattern and a marbled floor (Ijazuddin, [2008](#)). The choice of a white marble set against the brick-faced building drew attention to the imposing structure, focusing viewer's interest on the main entrance (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5

View of the Exterior of Jubilee Museum and Technical Institute, Prince Albert Memorial Museum Lahore, India 1946 Photographer: Margaret Bourke-White



Note. Source: Lahore: old pictures-page 3 www.defence.pk

Figure 6

View of the Front Entrance to the Jubilee Museum and Technical Institute, Prince Albert Memorial Museum, Lahore 1946 Photographer: Margaret Bourke-White



Note. Source: Old Lahore –in the view of precious pictures-featured articlehamariweb.com

Various Architectural Trends in Lahore

To trace the development of this marble structure and to study its various architectural elements, it is important to understand various architectural trends prevailing in Lahore at that time and different influences that played their role in the formation of a new style.

Lahore has been invaded by a series of invaders, such as Ghuris, Tughlaqs, Lodhis, and Mughals. All came and went, and left behind their marks in the form of bricks, stones, and mortar. Thus, from Ghaznavids

down to the Mughals and the Sikhs, there had been an uneven yet related cultural evolution. Therefore, the built environment had a continuity in its evolution, and its style of architecture had coherence or consistency. The coming of the British, however, was a break with the past, introducing novel gridiron- based street patterns as well as Bungalows as a new form of dwelling. In the making of the Raj style of architecture, the local grand masters, that is, the bearers of grand Mughal traditions were ignored. Moreover, architecture as a full-fledged discipline was not introduced until 20th century, and that too was Eurocentric. Colonial control on all kinds of creative thinking, particularly on architecture was thorough and deep. British architects came to India and interpreted designs from their standard handbooks or work of architects in Britain (Vandal & Vandal, [2006](#)).

The British rule has left an ineradicable mark on the city of Lahore. They deliberated to acquire a suitable architecture for the Raj, resulting in two parallel streams, one advocated the use of European styles, the other, adaptation of the local motifs for decoration. There was a group of locals who held onto their valued traditions, on the other hand, they were willing to learn from the British. (Chaudhry, [1998](#)).

In the field of architecture, Bhai Ram Singh's work was an example of the fusion of the east and west. This was the development of the living tradition of the architecture of the region. John Lockwood Kipling, who was the founding principal of Mayo School of Industrial Arts, was also a teacher and willing to learn and know about Indian art and architecture. Bhai Ram Singh was his student who was already a traditionally-trained craftsman. He brought to his teachers' notice and learned the finer points of Indian design as practiced through centuries. In a dialectical relationship lasting over a decade, they integrated the colonial with the native (Vandal & Vandal, [2006](#)).

Bhai Ram Singh soon surpassed his tutors and left behind an architecture that truly embodies the beauties of cultural assimilations. He blended the colonial experience with his own and his family's knowledge of the tradition of designs, to create buildings of exceptional merit. Furthermore, he also managed to break through the colonial control on art and architecture (Vandal & Vandal, [2006](#)).

In 1888-89, the design for the new museum and Technical Institute Lahore was entrusted to Bhai Ram Singh, Kipling was the supervisor of the

project and Ganga Ram, the Executive Engineer, was in charge of the construction. It was an imposing Gothic Mughal style structure with a 70 feet high dome and a 106.68 meter frontage along the Mall (Vandal & Vandal, [2006](#)).

The main structure, the focus of this study, is the addition of the white marble façade in place of the red brick structure at the entrance of the museum. This addition of white marble not only adds a beautiful contrast but also breaks the monotony of the otherwise red brick building.

Formal Analysis of the Façade

The general plan of the building resembles a letter E with an entrance porch in the center of the back face. The entrance façade comprises four marble pillars, two central pillars are independent and two are attached to the side square pillars that are grand and imposing (Figure 15). The façade has been constructed of finely white opaque marble of an excellent quality, which was imported from Gawaliar, India (Crossley, [2025](#)). The façade is in the shape of an elaborate rectangular vestibule measuring 10.16 meters wide. The architect gave an exclusively new vision and a dynamic impetus to the art of building of the museum by adding the white marble façade attached to a building erected in red sand stone.

Figure 7

Front View of the Marble Façade



General View of the Façade

The marble façade consists of a single story from the exterior side, divided into some distinct major portions, such as plinth, columns, arches, series of plain and designed friezes, and the parapet. There are three main arched entrances on the façade and on each corner of the structure; grandeur square-based elongated rectangular pillars have been introduced. Above three arched openings, there is a frieze of dentils and then the upper band is plain with the inscription *Ajaib Ghar*, written in black paint. Above this band, again a frieze of dentil, a little different in shape as compared to the lower frieze, has been composed. Then, the uppermost part of the façade is there separated by a collar from the frieze below (Figure 7).

Plinth

The façade has been provided with a plinth which is 0.61 meters high. There are three stairs which give access to the interior of the museum. The length of each riser is 11.4 cm and width of each tread is 38cm, while the entire width of these steps is 863.6 cm.

Columns

The Mughal artistic tradition is characterized as an eclectic style borrowing from the European Renaissance, Persian, and Indian sources. It was during the reign of Akbar when architecture began to really pick up. Akbar, being fond of constructing fine buildings, took great interest in this field. He thoroughly studied the different types of art, and with an open mind, accepted many other new ideas from a variety of sources. He would then put together plans which would be implemented by the expert craftsmen that he had employed (Bloom, [1996](#)). Akbar did not restrict his brilliance only to building fine monuments; he also built forts, schools, tanks, and wells. Akbar was an extremely enthusiastic and liberal-minded person who allowed his craftsmen to apply Hindu styles into his structures. One of the finest examples of this is the Jahangiri Mahal in the Agra Fort, which has a number of Hindu architectural styles, such as square pillars and rows of small arches. Humayun's Tomb in old Delhi is another example of the synthesis of styles. Akbar was a great builder, second only to Shah Jahan, and built some of the finest work of the Mughal period. Shah Jahan was a keen patron of architecture and hence, an exemplary and outstanding architecture was practised in his period (Ijazuddin, [2008](#)).

Columns of the Facade

In the Museum of Lahore, the columns have their own style. Although this building was constructed in the colonial period but its columns are a fusion of Mughal and Indian style. These columns have been designed in quite an intricate manner. Moreover, these have also been witnessed in various Mughal buildings, such as different edifices at Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore Fort, constructed during Akbar's period. On the other hand, similar columns have also been witnessed in Shish Mahal and Shalamar Garden, built by Shah Jahan.

Base of the Column

The base of the column has been divided into three different parts using collars. The lowest part of the base is 0.178 meters high and 0.584 meter wide. The central portion has 14" height with tapering shape measuring 20" width from lower side 0.457 meter from and upper side. The uppermost part of the base is rectangular in shape, measuring 0.635 meters high and 0.406 meters wide. The total measurement of the base of the columns is 50" including collars used for division (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Base of the Column



Shaft

The central main elongated part of a column is called a 'shaft', and the shafts of this marble façade are twelve-sided or dodecagon with 1.27 meters height (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Shaft of the Column



Figure 10

Capital of the Column



Capital

The uppermost part of the columns is known as a ‘capital’, which exhibits the typical arrangement of *muqarnas* (Figure 10).

Arches

The columns have been supported by corbelled arches, which provide an exclusive touch to this façade because of an awesome inlaid design carved on extradoses, intradoses, and soffit (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Corbelled Arch of the Façade



Square-based Elongated Pillars on the Corner

The pillars on both corners of the façade have some particular divisions for supporting purposes. The base of the pillar has been brought into three parts using collars. The lowest portion is 0.762 meters high, whereas the central, including the upper part is 0.483 meters high and 1.194 meters wide from lower side and 44” wide from the upper side. Furthermore, the central part or the shaft of this broad column has also been divided according to the application of design. The lower part consists of square compartment measuring 0.457 meters from each side, which is beautifully carved with interlaced design. These squared compartments have been supported by two attached miniature columns or engaged miniature columns on each side, 0.432 meters high. The central part of the shaft consists of a rectangular

panel with interlaced design, and attached miniature columns have been erected on each corner (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Square-based Pillar on Corner



Parapet

Above the arches, the parapet of the façade is comprised of various parts. The lowest part consists of plain frieze, and the upper part has been

decorated with cross motifs and lotus flower, repeated harmoniously. Above in the center, there is a rectangular area with interlaced design with the word 'museum' inscribed in the center. On each side of this area, miniature columns have been erected with miniature domes (Figure 13).

Figure 13

Parapet of the Façade



Under the collar which has been used for the division of the parapet, a frieze of dentils under the trefoil pattern enhances the decoration of the structure (Figure 14).

Figure 14

Detail of the Top Portion of the Pillar Frieze of Dentils Under the Trefoil Pattern



Formal Analysis

While going through the details of marble façade of the Lahore Museum, the researchers came across some facts, reflecting similarities and influences which were analyzed.

Marble Façade

White marble façade in front of a building constructed in red sand stone provides an attractive and innovative touch to the entire glimpse. Studying

history reveals that the Taj Mahal and the tomb of I'tamad al-Daula were entirely constructed in white marble. Whereas, at Akbar's tomb at Sikandara, the central part of the façade has been constructed in white marble so, marble was extensively used by earlier dynasties (Britannica, [2026b](#)).

Base of the Columns

The pedestal or base of the columns erected in marble façade (Figure 15) seems to be inspired by the columns used in Aitcheson College, Lahore (Figure 16) and at Red Fort, Agra (Figure 17).

Figure 15

Columns of Marble Façade



Figure 16

Columns of Aitchison College, in the Raj, Lahore and Bhai Ram Singh



Figure 17

Columns used in Red Fort, Agra, Islamic Architecture in South Asia



The base of the side columns of the marble façade (Figure 18) and the base of the column used in the other structures of the museum (Figure 19) have the same shape and design.

Figures 18

Base of the Rectangular Elongated Pillar of the Side Corner Facade



Figures 19

Side Structure of the Museum



Shafts and Capital

The shape of the shaft of the marble façade was not entirely a unique plan but was influenced by the columns constructed in Lahore Fort (Figures 20, 21), Shalimar Garden (Figure 22), and the buildings of Fatehpur Sikri (Figure 23), which were completed during Akbar's reign. The columns erected in these structures keep the same twelve-sided or dodecagon shape (Britannica, [2026b](#)).

Figure. 20

Columns of Shish Mahal, Lahore Fort



Figure 21

Columns of Diwan-i Khas, Lahore



Corbelled Arches

The arches have remained a significant and prominent feature of architecture in almost every phase. Moreover, with the passage of time, arches have been developed according to the requirement also indicating the interest of the patronage. The corbelled arches used in the marble façade are the pure features of Hindu architecture, and they have been erecting corbelled arches in almost every kind of their structures. During Akbar's

period, arches were also erected in many constructions, especially at Fatehpur Sikri (Dalal, [2010](#)).

The arches constructed in the rest of the building of the Lahore Museum have corbelled form observed at different portions where required. The corbelled arches (Figure. 24) used at marble façade have resemblance with those of arches but the only difference is that there is inlaid work on the spandrels, whereas the other corbelled arches are plain (Figure. 25, 26).

Figure 22

Columns at Birbals Palace Fatehpur Sikri



Figure 23

Columns of Baradari Shalamar Garden



Figure 24

Corbelled Arch of the Museum



Figure 25

Marble Façade of the Museum



Figures 26

Other Areas of the Museum



In some other buildings, corbelled arches have also been used with another prominent feature, inverted miniature domes, also present on the marble façade. For instance, in the grand buildings of Aitchison College, Lahore (Figure. 27), Diwan-i Khas (Figure 28), Treasury (Figure 29), Akbar's Palace (Figure. 30), and Jodha Bhai's Palace (Figure 31) at Fatehpur Sikri, corbelled arches have been constructed.

Figure 27

Corbelled Arches of Aitchison College



TEAMS MAYO COLLEGE AJMER & ATCHISON COLLEGE LAHORE (A.D.1920)

Standing 2nd Row, 3rd from Left M.Mehtab Singh Bambolia

Figure 28

Diwan i Khas

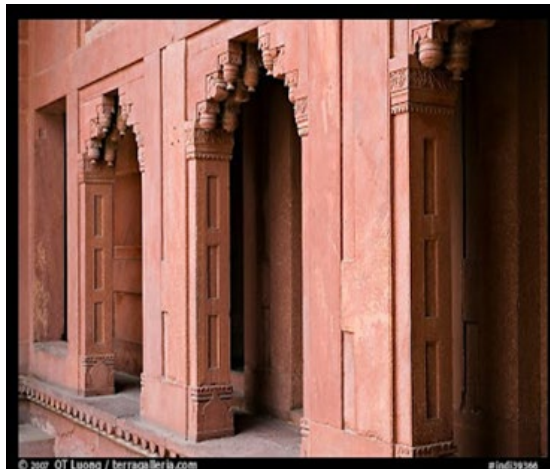


Figure 29

Treasury at Fatehpur Sikri

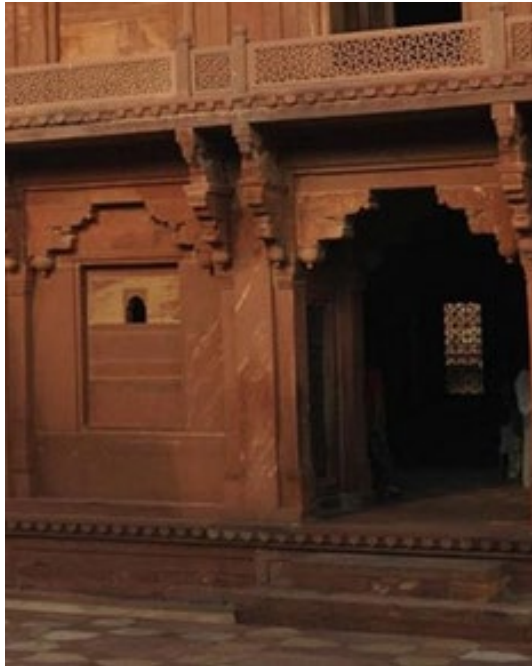


Figure 30

Historians' Palace



Figure 31

Jodha Bai's Palace



Note. Source flickriver, www.flickriver.com

Figure 32

Single Inverted Miniature Dome



Figure 33

Inverted Miniature Domes



Muqarnas

Muqarnas are also an important feature of the marble façade constructed on the capital of the structure, which have been influenced by some pieces of architecture. The same type and shape of the *muqarnas* as in marble façade (Figure 34) is visible on the capital of Diwan-i Khas (Figure. 35), Lahore Fort, Tansen Baradari (Figure. 36), and Shish Mahal, Lahore Fort (Figure. 20).

Figure 34

Muqarnas in Museum's Marble Façade



Figure 35

Diwan i Khas



Figure 36*Tansen's Baradari in Fatehpur Sikri**Note.*Source: flickriver, www.flickriver.com

The interlaced design can be traced out on numerous portions of structures (Figure 37, 38). For instance, on a panel decorated with interlaced design in a mosque at (name the mosque) Damascus (Figure. 39), in the Palace of Birbal at Fatehpur Sikri (Figure 40), and some other surfaces decorated during Mughal period.

Figures 37*Interlacing Pattern in Marble Façade*

Figures 38

Interlacing Pattern in Marble Façade



Figure 39

Interlacing Pattern at Mosque of Damascus Umayyad Period



Figure 40*Birbal's Palace Fatehpur Sikri****Representation of Flower***

Lotus flower has a considerable significance in art and architecture with a deep-rooted history. This peculiar flower grows in abundance in lakes and slow-flowing rivers in warm weather. It is a parasol-shaped flower with emerald leaves, and the beautiful pink or white lotus is the largest cultivated flower. It has been cultivated for over more than 2500 years in China and in India. The lotus is used for numerous purposes, such as decorative, fragrant, edible, nutritious, and medicinal (Gardetti & Muthu, [2015](#)).

Figure 41*Different Flowers and Lotus in Marble Façade*

The lotus flower possesses a considerable significance historically. This is because the lotus motif has been represented earlier than Mughal buildings, especially in the Buddhist art. In South Asia, many types of lotus designs have been utilized for the purpose of embellishing architecture. The

idea of adoring architecture with three-dimensional flowers existed before Islam many centuries ago. Afterwards, this influence was transformed into Islamic architecture (Britannica, [2026a](#)).

Not only in China and India but in other nations within their cultural influence, symbolism of lotus is quite ancient. Initially, the lotus was an idiom for water which was considered a source of life, productivity, many children, profusion, continuity, and the rights of kings. It played a vital and major role in wish-fulfillment and was used in religious and festive ornamentations.

In India, the importance and popularity of the lotus cannot be negated because it is the national flower of India. The contemporary lotus is presented in almost all forms of arts, ranging from poetry, literature, dance to painting, ceramics, handicrafts, temple designs and decoration, as well as religious sculpture. Lotus is used as a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism and is related to purity and sanctity. It is seen in the form of carvings, paintings, and sculpture as seen in Sanchi, Bharut, and many other Stupas. (Craven, [1996](#)). Similarly, it is related to Hindu gods and goddesses (Zimmer, [2017](#)).

Attached Miniature Column

On the corner pillars of the façade, attached miniature pillars (Figures 42) have been used as well as traced out not only on the other parts of the Museum but some other buildings also (Figures 43, 44, 45).

Figures 42

Marble Façade Miniature Pillars and Similar Ones Found in



Figure 43

Sulaimaniya Mosque Istanbul



Figure 44

Hazuri Bagh, Lahore Fort



Figure 45

Quwwat al Islam Mosque, Delhi



The awesome and outstanding ornamentation can be seen on the parapet of marble utilizing lotus motifs. As seen in the given examples, marble façade is witnessed in other buildings (Figures 46, 47, 48), more enhanced by the use of miniature domes on the either side of the central panel. Moreover, a comparative analysis with other South Asian buildings has also been presented in (Figures 49, 50).

Figure 46

Parapet with Cross and Lotus in Marble Façade



Figure 47
Shahi Masjid



Figure 48
Gate at Fatehpur Sikri



Figure 49
Small Domes of Marble Façade and Miniature Ones.



Figure 50

Badshahi Mosque Facade



The use of marble façade seems to be a significant attempt at opening novel vistas of progress in style, integrating in some new techniques adopted and popularized by the architects of colonial period elsewhere. This is also a brief summation of the prevalent and all-pervading style of architecture progressed and evolved for constructing such kind of innovations. As far as this façade is concerned, it represents a beautiful amalgamation of all these architectural trends of Indo-Saracenic style in a balanced way. However, its relation to the rest of the structure and color compositions raises many questions which have also been addressed in this manuscript. This structure also marks innovation in Mughal local and colonial merging of creative design, blending the beautiful patterns into a style having its own unique identity. The rich cultural heritage of this land has been reflected in each element with an innovative syncretic style. It shows the capability and capacity of the cultural traditions of South Asia to adopt and absorb foreign influences and reinterpret them in their own unique approach.

This structure thus represents the revival of a traditional style of merging white marble and red bricks that was initiated as early as in Sultanate architecture and reached its climax in the Taj Mahal. Although in this instance, the structural elements used were all in their mature form yet their amalgamation had its own uniqueness and identity.

Discussion

The marble façade of the Lahore Museum, a unique structure, was basically designed to make the entrance more prominent and to break the monotony of the huge red bricks' edifice. The use of white marble, introduced in India through Mughals, was widely used for important structures as a symbol of purity and sanctity. There might be a thought that since museum is a place of many distinct collections belonging to diverse cultures and religions, the adding of white color would increase its sacredness and significance (Sreekumar, 2025). Each and every structural component has already been discussed above explaining the links and connections between different periods' architectural trends through this one structure. This structure has evidently marked a phase of transition with boldness and flourishing elements in use of material and conception.

The study concluded that the colonial architects, although were more interested in European trends, used the indigenous style and trends with an amalgamation of Gothic and Victorian elements. So, the style adopted in this building is a mixture of local and foreign features. This white marble addition in itself is a beautiful composition but from distance it looks more like a white patch on a red building. In isolation, this structure is perfect in its architectural and decorative elements yet otherwise, as a total entity and as part of the museum, it seems like a patchwork and has an awkward effect against the entire red bricks building. This raises a question whether it goes with the aesthetics of the museum structure as a whole or not. Although all the architectural and decorative elements of the rest of the building are repeated in marble façade in a balanced way and complement each other harmoniously, yet its patch work effect persists and would have been more balanced if there had been added some more marble interspersing in other areas of the entire front elevation of the museum building.

In the history of South Asia, under the Sultanate rule, there are a few examples that actually present the perfect combination of red sandstone and white marble, such as Alai Darwaza, Tomb of Iltutmish, and Tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. While later in Mughal period, this combination became more prominent with several phases of transition from Akbar to Shahjahan likewise from fewer use of marble to complete marble structures. Thus, the British architects must have followed his choice or the prerequisites set by the patron and added this beautiful white patch to the building. The most prominent influences include, Indian style corbelled

arch, Indian lotus, Islamic interlaced designs, Mughal style columns and *muqarnas*, trefoil dentils, miniature inverted domes, and miniature columns. All these features are also noticeable in other buildings of Lahore constructed in the colonial period, especially by Bhai Ram Singh, for instance National College of Arts (NCA), University of the Punjab (PU), Government College University (GCU), Aitchison College, and High Court. So even today, Mall Road retains a variety of all these Indo-Saracenic style buildings built with the amalgamation of local, Mughal, Gothic, and Victorian style during the British Raj. Furthermore, due to this their identity is not purely British and they have their own distinctiveness and individuality.

Author Contribution

Sadia Qutub Hashmi: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, resources, visualization, writing – original draft, writing- review & editing. **Naureen Kamran:** conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, visualization, writing – original draft. **Shaukat Mahmood:** conceptualization, supervision, validation, review.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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