

OLD CULTURES IN NEW WORLD  
Monuments In Their Built Environment And Historical Context  
Preservation And Interpretation Of Colonial Gothic Architecture  
At Allahabad in India.

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The theme 'Old Cultures in New Worlds' is said to be a 'metaphor for everything that is happening in the field of preservation and conservation and for everything that is happening to monuments and sites'. As an elaboration, it is explained, it means 'British colonial architecture in India' which is my subject to be discussed. After giving a background and the trend of the colonial buildings in India, I propose to draw your attention to a less-known group of buildings erected in the capital of the erstwhile North West Provinces, Allahabad where recently restoration works have been carried out to one of the Gothic-Saracenic buildings.

I may, however, be allowed to mention that colonial architecture was ushered in to India by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, followed by the British and French after a century. Among the colonialists, the British had the largest territory and the two others had comparatively smaller holdings, perhaps that is why colonial architecture became synonymous with that introduced by the British though it had no single character to be so called. The reason for its diversification will be discussed in due course.

To begin with the architecture brought by the Portuguese. They had entrenched themselves in 1570 at Goa and their sphere of activities was first confined to western India along the coast, mainly to trade in spices and to spread the Christian religion. They had monopolized trade from the Cape of Good Hope to the China Seas and made Goa the capital of the Portuguese Empire in the East in 1530. Their prosperity was projected through their churches embellished with paintings and carvings gilt in gold and Goa came to be known as 'Golden Goa' and 'Rome of the East'. The Roman Catholic Portuguese had followed Gothic style for religious architecture at home, though later they turned to Renaissance for inspiration. Their Manueline style, taking its name from the king Dom Manuel I (1495-1521), however was a Portuguese phenomenon. It was a highly eclectic idiom with Gothic and Renaissance styles of Europe, superimposed by elements and motifs picked up in their voyages and colonies. In India it was a mixture of various elements that led to the development of a Portuguese Baroque style in the 16th-17th century.

The church of St. Francis of Assisi (16th century) has its facade in Manueline style, the exterior in Tuscan order and the altar in Baroque with Corinthian order. The most celebrated church in Goa, Basilica of

Bom Jesus (1593-1603) has the facade with the lower portion lending a Classical impression and Baroque in the upper region. Such combinations recall the buildings of North Italy of the same period. The facade of St. Cajetan church (1661), on the other hand, is a poor imitation of St. Peter's in Rome, designed by the Italian who came to preach Christianity to Goa. Again St. Cathedral (1562-1662) reminds one of Vingola's Gesu church in Rome. These religious buildings were profusely decorated with Italian sculptures and paintings imported from Italy or Portugal, but some were done by local artists emulating European models.

The buildings of Goa were constructed with local laterite stones set in lime mortar, walls plastered with the same mortar and the tiled roof made to rest on wooden trusses. But on the western coast, annual heavy showers along with dampness and marine salt took toll. Lack of proper maintenance allowed seepage of rain-water through the roof or joints in the masonry and moisture caused decay in wood, damaged plaster and paintings on the walls. Water also found passage through crevices of big windows provided in the high walls for access of light to lit the deep dark interior. In the recent past large-scale restorations have remedied many of these faults, but continuous vigilance and maintenance can only afford these monuments the due protection against further damages.

The traders of the British East India Company had a very modest beginning. The Portuguese had established themselves at Goa and Bombay for a century and Dutch, French, Swedish and Danish merchants were active when they had appeared in the scene. In 1639 the Company had acquired governmental rights in Madras and thirty years later it came into possession of Bombay through Charles II as part of his dowry from the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza. Control over Bengal was obtained in June 1757 by defeating the Nawab. In 1773 the British Parliament made the Governor of Calcutta as Governor-General Supreme of the British Colony. Calcutta remained capital of India till 1912 when the seat of power was shifted to New Delhi.

Colonial architecture in India became diversified for various reasons. Mainly it was the delayed arrivals of the architectural styles in vogue in England when the British was stabilizing its hold on India. Then the British rule spanned several architectural periods of England: classical Greek, Roman, Palladian and the Baroque styles which were prevalent when the British became a Power in India. The Georgian neo-classicism came into fashion when the Presidency towns were being built and subsequently as they had full control over the land the Gothic Revival ruled with concessions to eclectic High Victorian. The buildings in Calcutta were designed by military engineers who had never studied or thought of the subject. When called upon to design a building of a particular style, they consulted the available published materials on the subject and produced one as best as they could. In

the early stage of British rule both Calcutta and Madras received similar treatment, from trading posts they were transformed to elegant imperial cities. It was felt then that the superior civilization or greatness of power was best expressed through architecture: the classical language of architecture of Greece and Rome was considered suitable for the purpose and used to impress upon the colonial people. In Madras one such building is Pachaiyappa's College (1846-1850) fashioned after the Athenian temple of Theseus. Similarly in Calcutta there are a number of such buildings of Greek revival. Part of the Metcalfe Hall was based on the Tower of Winds in Athens. Other examples of Greek Revival are the Silver Mint and the Mint Master's house. The mint has the central portico like the Temple of Minerva in Athens. Gradually amateurs were replaced by architects. The Government House was designed by an architect in Palladian style, influenced by the Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire. Later when Gothic Revival was accepted in India, Classical Calcutta and Madras also had received their shares. In Calcutta the outstanding buildings of this new wave are St. Peter's church (1822) in the Fort William and St. Paul's cathedral (1839-47). Indian Christians identified in the pointed Gothic arch the sign of jointed hands, as in prayer, and felt the sentimental appeal in it. So they settled for Gothic but tempered to suit the taste. Thus the High Court building was erected with the details obtained from Scott's drawings of Hamburg Rathaus which was based on the model of the medieval Cloth Hall at Ypres and the Victoria Memorial Hall is supposedly Britain's answer to the Taj Mahal - with Saracenic details on European body. Even in European Gothic in India there are variations. If Gilbert Scott favoured Italian Gothic for the Bombay University buildings, William Emerson's preference was for French Gothic for the Allahabad University buildings and the Cathedral of All Saints; so was the case with Roskell Bayne's memorial for Thornhill and Mayne also at Allahabad.

Madras also remained Classical and neo-Classical with the earlier works of engineers who had made good use of James Gibb's Book of Architecture. The architect Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1840-1915) gave Madras a new dimension with Gothic and hybridized form of Italianate and Saracenic buildings. The principal waterfront of Madras, the Marina, starting from the old harbour to the south was lined with new vocabulary of Chisholm's hybridized architecture. He was soon followed by others and Indianised European buildings were put up at Jaipur, Agra, Peshawar etc.

Bombay, unlike Calcutta and Madras, had the services of professionals when in mid-nineteenth century development works of the city were in full swing. They had also interest in Gothic Revival and came into contact with works of such famous architects as Sir Gilbert Scott (who never visited India), Sir William Emerson etc. Sir, Gilbert Scott's Bombay University's buildings remain outstanding. So is the Crawford Market designed by Sir William Emerson who had designed buildings with the admixture of Hindu

and Saracenic elements at Bhavnagar, Calcutta, and Allahabad.

Outside the metropolitan cities, perhaps Allahabad can boast of having some beautiful Gothic buildings, both religious and secular. The confluence of three major rivers and its association with the epics made Allahabad a pilgrimage centre. It was also a seat of the Mughals with a massive Fort in medieval times. During the British rule it attained importance as a cantonment and capital of a province; from its Alfred Park in 1858 Queen Victoria's proclamation was announced on the transfer of the Government of India to the Crown, from the East India Company. A memorial in marble was erected to mark the spot.

Allahabad's four prominent Gothic buildings were erected between 1875 and 1885 in French style; two of them were designed by William Emerson, a pupil of William Burges who was a votary of 13th century French Gothic. In Emerson's Crawford market in Bombay and All Saints Cathedral at Allahabad, critics see influences of Burges's stable block of Cardiff Castle and Cork Cathedral respectively. Located at a very prominent intersection of roads in the city, the Cathedral of All Saints was intended to be one of the main places of worship of the European and Indian Christian community of the provincial capital. A sumptuous contribution from an American, in the memory of his wife, made it possible to complete the construction in its present form without the western towers. In this French Gothic building Emerson made few concessions to the Indian context though in his other buildings here and at Bhavnagar Hindu and Saracenic elements were freely used on European body. Perhaps he wanted to put up an edifice to contrast with the church dedicated to the Holy Cross of the Roman Catholics of Bologna, under construction then by engineers from Tuscany and Turin. Unlike any contemporary traditional styles it is eclectic in design.

The memorial for Cathbert Bansey Thornhill and Francis Otway Mayne erected in 1878, close to the Alfred Park, was designed by Roskell Bayne also in a distinctive French Gothic style. The arcaded cloisters, polychrome arches, the tower with the details gave it the distinction. The foliated capitals of the squat columns at the base of the tower depict sculptures of groups of people engaged in different vocations. Bayne's other structure, a memorial to Lord Mayo erected in 1879, is not exactly an accomplishment in architecture and had 'certain incongruous peculiarities'.

Emerson had professed to establish through his work 'a distinctive British character, at the same time adopting the details and feelings of the native architecture'. To achieve the desired result in his Muir College convocation hall, he had mixed 'Egyptian phase of Moslem architecture..... with the Saracenic style of Beejapore..... combining the whole in a Western Gothic design'. In respect of the dome, he was influenced by the beautiful lines of the Taj Mahal.

The hybridised convocation hall and the library attached to the complex are unique in having mural paintings on the vaulted ceilings of the roof and intrados of the domes. The large dome on the convocation hall, now called Vizianagram Hall, was originally decorated with glazed tiles of six colours arranged in squares of red-brown colour with yellow, white, cobalt blue, turquoise and black inside, to lend a pleasing sight. From Jaipur in Rajasthan artists were brought to do the paintings. The colours they used were: red ochre, vermilion, blue, black, yellow ochre and green in light or dark shades. The medium was geletin. On the vaulted ceilings of the library and the convocation hall the painted subjects are stylised floral and arabesque with creepers bearing flowers and leaves. The intrado of the octagonal dome is divided into eight horizontal bands to be decorated with paintings of floral designs and creepers. The inner surface of the dome on the convocation hall, however, was painted with figures symbolizing the continuity of life - a truly oriental theme. On the floor the sky is represented in a circle with the sun and other planets in it. Unfortunately the stainted glass-work in the oriel windows are mostly damaged; poor restoration of the past cause distractions.

Like the church of Holy Cross and Cathedral of All Saints, the buildings in the Allahabad University campus also had experienced the earthquake shock that had caused devastations in the adjoining state of Bihar in mid-thirties and developed cracks in different parts of the structures, including the tower. At the base of the tower the walls of the adjoining classroom got seperated through which space rain-water flows down during the rains. A portion of the jack-arched roof over the inner corridor had collapsed, but at what point of time could not be ascertained. The dome got disturbed, especially at the portion where it bulges and the circumferential tension is the most. As a result of the disturbances, the tiles there got dislodged; the portion was restored with a darker shade of tiles prepared afresh. The earlier colour photograph shows the restored portion in a darker shade compared to the portions below and above it. Later, lack of maintenance brought in its trail several maladies. Drains of the roof got choked up causing pooling of rain-water which decayed the lime concrete of the roof and allowed growth of vegetation. The decayed roof absorbed moisture and damaged the mural paintings inside. Trees and plants growing on the dome had penetrated their roots in the masonry of the shell and damaged the paintings. To uproot the vegetation, the tiles had to be dismantled. crazing, discolouration, scaling etc. had made most of the tiles useless for refixing. During the repairs the dome was made watertight with a layer of cement concrete and plastered to finish. The repairs entrusted to a local architect, inexperienced in dealing with historical buildings, could not do better. Obviously there was adverse criticism from all quarters with a demand for restoration of tiles and the mural paintings.

After making necessary arrangements, the work of restorations was

started in August, 1986. Normally before restoration of the paintings the roof was to be made waterproof to prevent further damage due to seepage of rain-water. In this case only the specialized works of restorations were to be got done by the experts and modern repairs were to be done by the University's maintenance engineers. To begin with, the paintings were got cleaned by an experienced chemist-conservator. The deposits of dust, dirt, cob-webs, insect-nests etc. were removed; the flaky films were fixed to the ground and the loose plaster was reset to the carrier by providing the cementing material for adequate adhesion. The damaged portions of plaster were repaired with lime mortar.

For restoration of paintings, as was done originally, an expert artist from Jaipur proficient in this particular style of painting was engaged. One saving feature was that the figures were repeatative and there was no difficulty in the restoration work. Care had been taken to match the colours, but a fine line has been left to distinguish, from very close quarters, the restored portion from the old.

For restoration of the tiles it was difficult to get the material similar to those imported from England by the British architects. They had to import the tiles as manufacture of tiles of quality had long been discontinued in India. For Allahabad vitreous tiles of clay and rock-powder were obtained from Minton & Hollins, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. As per available information, it appears that biscuits of tiles were imported and those were glazed by artisans from Jaipur. Glazing was done at Allahabad probably because the shades of colours required had to be especially made to order. For two other buildings in Bombay, the Prince of Wales Museum (1867) and the Law Courts (1871-79) also tiles were imported from the same firm, while for the Victoria Terminus (1878-87) Maw's glazed tiles were used for decorations. Minton tiles were generally used for flooring, of the size of 15 cm x 15 cm x 1 cm. Currently such large sized tiles of the required fabric are not manufactured in India. For Allahabad tiles had to be specially manufactured to meet the requirements and those were got tested before use, at the Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute for crazing, water absorption and impact. The tiles were set in lime-cement mortar reproducing the original design following the available photograph.

For the first time a century old building of colonial architecture has been restored scientifically. Hopefully other such buildings will be taken care of as they are more than one hundred years old and now qualify to be declared as protected monuments.

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Monuments In Their Built Environment And Historical Context  
Preservation And Interpretation Of Colonial Gothic Architecture  
At Allahabad in India - A Summary.

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When the British came to India as traders and started their activities as East India Company in 1639, the Portuguese had already made Goa the capital of the Portuguese Empire in the East in 1530 and introduced colonial architecture in India. Theirs was a Portuguese Baroque confined to their territory. So colonial architecture in India had become synonymous with that introduced by the British.

In England they had passed through several architectural styles : classical, neo-classical, Palladian, Gothic Revival etc. when the British ruled in India. The successive styles of architecture, prevalent in England, naturally were adapted in India too though belatedly. Gothic Revival was introduced in the second-half of the nineteenth century when prominent buildings in Bombay were built, notable of which was Sir Gilbert Scott's University buildings with Italian overtones. In fact in Bombay one finds concentration of some of the finest Gothic Revival buildings, outside Europe. It is here again, as in Madras, Calcutta and elsewhere the architects attempted to blend European Gothic with Indian elements.

Allahabad, an ancient pilgrimage centre, once a Mughal seat, a cantonment and capital of the then North West Provinces can boast of some beautiful Gothic buildings. Besides the small buildings, of the four prominent buildings erected between 1875 and 1885 in French style, two of them were designed by Sir William Emerson who also had worked for Indianisation of Gothic and gave Calcutta the Victoria Memorial. His Cathedral of All Saints (1877-1887) is compatible in style with Roskell Bayene's memorial (1878) for Cathbert Bansey Thornhill and Francis Otway Mayne as both the structures show William Burges's influence of French Gothic. But Bayene's other memorial to Lord Mayo had 'certain incongruous peculiarities'.

Emerson's Muir College convocation hall is a mixture of Gothic and Saracenic elements in which he tried to blend Egyptian phase of Muslim architecture, Saracenic style of Bijapur and the outline of the dome of the Taj Mahal. It is indeed unique in conception: a Gothic body with Indian motifs and elements on it, floral and arabesque paintings on the vaulted ceiling and the dome embellished with Minton tiles glazed in six colours to produce square designs. Lack of maintenance had caused damages to the paintings which had to be treated and restored. Similarly the damaged tiled dome had to be restored with specially manufactured tiles as per original.

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Quand les premiers commerçants britanniques arrivèrent en Inde pour former leur compagnie des Indes Orientales en 1639, les portugais avaient déjà fait de Goa, en 1530, la capitale de l'empire portugais oriental et introduit l'architecture coloniale en Inde. Il s'agissait d'un baroque portugais propre à leur territoire. C'est pour cela que l'architecture coloniale en Inde a été confondue avec celle introduite par les britanniques.

En Angleterre, pendant que les britanniques exerçaient leur autorité en Inde, l'architecture passa par plusieurs styles : classique, neo-classique, palladien, "Gothic Revival" etc.. Les styles d'architecture successifs, dominant en Angleterre, furent naturellement adaptés aussi en Inde bien que tardivement. Le "Gothic Revival" a été introduit dans la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle lors de la construction des monuments importants dont un exemple notoire fût les bâtiments de l'université de Sir Gilbert Scott qui ont une nuance italienne. En fait, en dehors de l'Europe, on trouve à Bombay une concentration des constructions les plus belles du "Gothic Revival". C'est ici encore, à Madras, Calcutta et ailleurs, que les architectes tentèrent de mélanger le gothique européen avec des éléments indiens.

Allahabad, un ancien centre de pèlerinage, autrefois un fief moghol, un canton et une capitale de celles qui étaient les provinces du nord-ouest, peut se vanter de posséder de belles constructions gothiques. Hormis les petits bâtiments, parmi les quatre édifices remarquables de style français construits entre 1875 et 1885, deux d'entre eux ont été conçus par Sir William Emerson qui avait aussi travaillé à l'indianisation du gothique et offert à Calcutta la Victoria Memoria. Sa cathédrale de Tous Les Saints (1877-1887) est comparable en style avec le mémorial de Roskell Bayene (1878) pour Cathbert Bansey Thornhill et Francis Otway Mayne, en cela que les deux bâtiments montrent l'influence du gothique français de William Burge. En revanche le monument de Bayene, à la mémoire de Lord Mayo, avait "certaines particularités incongrues".

Le grand hall du Muir College d'Emerson est un mélange d'éléments gothiques et musulmans, dans lequel il essaya de mêler la phase égyptienne de l'architecture musulmane, le style musulman de Bijapur et le profil de la coupole du Taj Mahal. Il est en effet unique dans sa conception : un corps gothique avec des éléments et des motifs indiens, des peintures florales et d'arabesques sur le plafond voûté et la coupole décorée de carreaux émaillés de Minton de six couleurs, organisés en motifs carrés. Un manque d'entretien a causé des dommages aux peintures qui ont été traitées et restaurées. De même, le dôme endommagé a été restauré avec des carreaux spécialement fabriqués d'après les originaux.