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Significance of Mughal Architectural Embellishment and its Influences on Contemporary Architecture of Lahore

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Abstract: Throughout the ages, civilizations have been known for their cultural heritage, and every region has its own values due to sociocultural traditions. Similarly, South Asian heritage presents its uniqueness in the form of historical monuments with a variety of decorative elements in built form and on surface, which makes it distinctive and unique among other styles of world architecture. In South Asian region Mughal Architecture has its own identity with the construction of remarkable monuments having unique features and decorative techniques. Implementation of decorative elements and techniques were continued for contemporary architecture with maintenance of the legacy by using stylized cuts, and simplified forms.

The research presents a study of the architectural elements and techniques used in Mughal monuments and adopted for the contemporary architecture of Lahore, Pakistan. A comparative analysis between historical architectural elements and their impact on later construction of the region is highlighted. The research objective is to identify the various traditional and regional influences on the forms, features, and surface decoration of Pakistan's modern architecture. A step towards the development of techniques and style with a strong bond and touch of cultural heritage is demonstrated by the use of historic elements and techniques combined with innovative ideas. The study provides an analysis of the ornamental elements and structural structures.

The scholars and writers have written about the historical monuments of Pakistan in general. However, the impact of the traditional architectural features and decorative elements on later built buildings of the region especially which were built after the independence of Pakistan 1947 need comprehensive study. In the present research, an effort has been made to explore and analyze the contemporary architecture of Lahore, and the impact of Mughal architectural elements on them.

A step forward towards the development of techniques and styles with strong bonding and a hint of cultural history is demonstrated by the utilization of historic elements and techniques combined with creative designs. The study provides an analysis of the Mughal impacts on the decorative features and structural shapes of Lahore's modern structures.

Keywords: Architectural Elements, Traditionalism, Revival, Mughal, Surfaces, Decorative Techniques.

Introduction

Architecture is a language that presents the expression of thought and lifestyle of the people of a region. It speaks loudly about culture. The decorative elements of the monuments present versatility in design by reflecting indigenous and foreign influences. Similarly,



decorative elements of the contemporary architecture of Lahore, Pakistan have gained deep perspective since the arrival of Arabian troops in the South Asian region. Gradually, the decorative elements in built form and on the surface come in zest, and several Mughal monuments became a cause of attraction for foreigners and stood out among other architectural regional styles of the world. It gave an individual identity due to its exceptional style and unusual design, among others. Mughal architecture is a true expression of regional style with an amalgamation of Persian influences. Its architectural features and decorative techniques present strong compositions of elements and principles of art and enhance the quality, which became a role model for later built constructions of the region.

Similar to other areas of the Subcontinent, new ideas and concepts were introduced with the goal of preserving cultural legacy through the integration of contemporary architectural elements in built form, particularly for the facade, exterior, and interior of Lahore's structures. With the combination of traditional building style, decorative techniques and local materials, a new simplified conventional style was developed. The Mughal buildings were presented as a model for continuity of the traditional decorative elements with innovative design ideas and their implementation in new way. The architects were inspired by the cultural heritage of the South Asian region and maintained the regional identity. Amalgamation of indigenous decorative techniques and designs, motives with contemporary modern architectural elements played essential role to the development of new trends in design compositions.

The rich history and cultural heritage of South Asia has been observed in the form of historical buildings built by Mughals. These buildings present uniqueness with a variety of decorative elements in built form and on the surface, which makes it distinctive and unique among other architectural styles of the world. After 1947 when Pakistan came into being architects of the region introduced latest designs by using experience of historical elements and eliminating extra details in elements and traditional techniques of surface decoration. The architectural features and decorative techniques developed after the independence of Pakistan have their own importance which were developed with new building materials and simplified designs by eliminating unnecessary details. But continuity of Mughal architectural designs and elements in-built form and on surface of the contemporary buildings of Lahore is another interest of the architects which is still in practice for contemporary buildings. The aim of the research is to analyse historical aesthetics of the contemporary architectural elements and explore how the construction of contemporary buildings meet the standards of modern construction by using experience from the past.

Historical monuments are a direct source of contemporary architectural elements and decorative techniques used for surface embellishment. Afterward, the elements, techniques, and designs became a source of learning for contemporary architectural design elements. Traditional elements show a reflection of learning to maintain the legacy of tradition with stylized and innovative designs with new materials according to the demand of the client and the need for time. After comprehensive research, a comparative analysis has been made between the elements of historical and modern buildings. To know about the influences of Mughal buildings on the elements and features of contemporary buildings of Lahore.

To find out the answers regarding this question, it is important to know that what kind of representation of modern techniques are presented in contemporary architecture of Lahore? How old methods are still used to preserve creative representation and carry on traditions for the area's artistic impact? What are the modern mediums involved and used to alive this



tradition? To give answers of all these above-mentioned questions is the main discussion of the research.

After reviewing the literature, it is observed that the writers and critics have commented on historical architecture of the region in general, but the detail study of architectural elements, aesthetics of the buildings and their impact on later built contemporary architecture of Lahore, need to be studied. The present research is all about to fill this gap and highlight the continuity of traditions in modern architecture of Lahore and influences of architectural heritage on the contemporary buildings.

Research Methodology

It is qualitative research with Chicago manual style of citations by following descriptive and observational study. Exploratory research is followed for the discussion of architectural styles and their significance. Data is collected from the site visits. Several interviews are conducted with architects and artisans. The documented architectural elements with traditional and contemporary techniques are analyzed. The styles are critically analyzed with the aesthetics of design layouts and colour preferences.

Rational of the Research

On the base of experiential learning traditional architectural heritage became the main source for the contemporary architecture of Pakistan. In a comparison of Mughal monuments, contemporary buildings of Lahore reflect modernity through stylized cuts while sustaining the conventional elements in a modified manner, through innovative ideas with continuity of traditional Mughal trends. The designs focus on the needs and demands of the clients with classical inspirations as a part of architectural decoration.

Discussion

Due to the rich history, Lahore has maintained its significance over the years. so, historical structures showcase the splendour of a variety of cultural traditions and convey historical narratives. The historical structures constructed by the Mughals are part of the area's rich legacy. Modern architectural features and surface ornamentation methods are directly derived from these monuments. Afterwards, by removing superfluous aspects with a stylized appearance and utilizing new materials in accordance with customer demands and temporal constraints, these elements, processes and designs became a source of learning for contemporary architectural design elements.

Lahore's modern architecture is mostly derived from its traditional architectural legacy. Arches *chatri*¹, brackets, projecting balconies *jhoraka*², lattice work, and surface decoration using traditional methods like stucco, wood carving, marble carving, mosaic work, floral and geometric design patterns, and ceiling ornamentation with geometrical designs were all essential to the monumental presentation of traditional values. Inspiration source and regional Indian Sultanate and Mughal influences along with Persian inspiration on these decorative elements are interesting addition. Above all, continuity of these elements is considered as

¹ Architectural element has small dome or domlet with projecting vertical support of four sides, usually built on entrance gates or façade of the south Asian buildings.

² *Jharoka* is traditional architectural element built as projecting balcony.



inspiration of heritage and modern stylized cuts and designs as break from tradition of these techniques are presenting concern for better understanding of the study.

In historical monuments round arches, tudor, tri-foiled, multi-foiled and cusped arches were preferred. But in modern construction abstract form and triangular stylized arches are preferred with continuity of the traditional historical arches. Mughal architecture has abundant variation of arches. In comparison of the Mughal monuments contemporary buildings of Lahore reflect modernity through stylized cuts and simplified designs. While sustaining the conventional elements in a modified manner, through innovative ideas in rectilinear and curvilinear geometrical shapes. The designs focus on the needs and demands of the clients with classical



Figure 1. Traditional Brackets built in Mughal period.

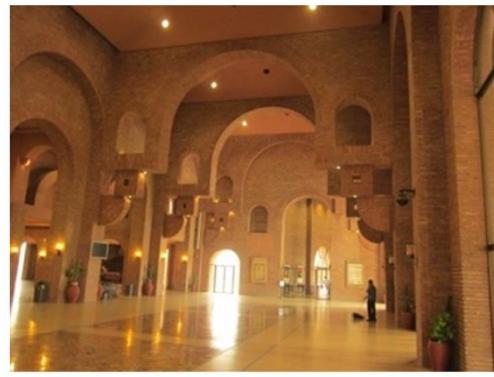


Figure 2. Expo Center Lahore 2007-10.

inspirations as a part of architectural decoration. Contemporary building of Punjab Institute of Language, Art & Culture 2004, is the examples of modernity having round arches in different way.

Brackets

Traditionally brackets were constructed for the exterior of the building to support eave or *chaja* of the building having variety of designs representing usual appearance of traditional brackets built for the buildings of the old Lahore (figure 1). Variety of shapes and forms were developed for its construction for Mughal buildings. Elephant shaped brackets of the Jahangir's Quadrangle built in 1618 are the one of such kind of examples.³ In contemporary buildings stylized form with strong composition of geometrical shapes of the interior and stylized simplified brackets of the Expo Center Lahore dated 2007-10, eco Mughal inspiration but in different way (figure 2). In the fusion of modernism and traditionalism, a number of decorative effects in the design have great aesthetic value. a strong composition is created with different geometrical shapes and simplified brackets in stylized form.

Projecting Balcony / *Jhoraka*

Projecting Balcony / *Jhoraka* was built for the monumental construction of Mughal era and continued till date with innovative designs. However, contemporary balconies are not exact replicas of historical forms. These are remodeled in the present era utilizing some creative lines while following the traditional pattern; the addition of new forms and shapes gives them a

³ <https://pakheritage.org/jahangir-quadrangle-lahore-fort-2/>



unique and intriguing appearance. The interplay of stylization and simplification is evident in the constructed shapes and surface decoration.

Lattice work

Contemporary latticework with verity of design patterns and diverse materials echo Mughals' terracotta and marble *jalli* works, enhance aesthetics of the buildings. The use of geometrical shapes with circular, square, triangular and rectangular structures in one composition depicts leaning towards innovation.



Figure 3. representation of projecting balcony With lattice work in marble in a contemporary house at Lahore.



Figure 4. Modern contemporary house at Defenc Phase V, Lahore. Fountain and *Aabshar* in white marble influenced by Mughals.

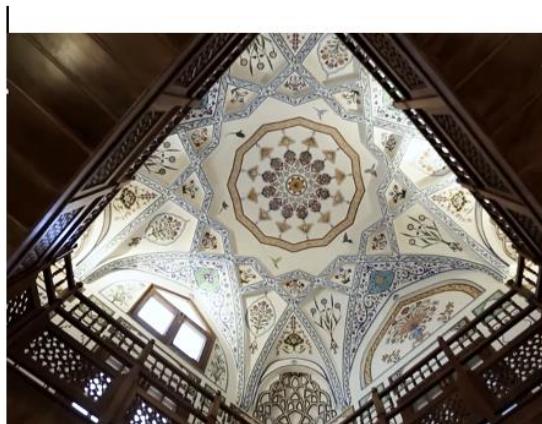


Figure 5. Frescos on the ribbed dome ceiling and wooden lattice work in contemporary house at Lahore.



Figure 6. Stylized motifs in fresco on the ceiling and walls of the lobby of the contemporary house at Lahore.



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Chatri is inbuilt decorative element abruptly used in Mughal buildings can be traced back to Hindu temples. *Chatri* means umbrella, it works like an umbrella. This traditional element shows reflection of learning to maintain the legacy of tradition with stylized and innovative designs. Mughals adopted it and represented in different forms and shapes. After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 construction of *chatri* was continued for mosques and government building. There are several examples of the construction of *chatri* in contemporary buildings of Punjab and even can see in the religious buildings of the town. Construction of *chatri* near the entrance gate of the contemporary house of Dr. Arshad at Riwind Road Lahore, designed by architect Kamil Khan Mumtaz is one of them. Art and culture are key to link past with present. Similarly, this architectural element defines the reconnection with Mughal period's art and design. Especially with Mughal architectural decoration trends of the palaces, tombs, mosques, and forts. On architectural point of view *chatri* is useful element to protect the wall from the rain and also from the sunlight and use as a watch tower purpose. However, *chatri* can expand the life of the pillar and minarets of any building due to the dome on it otherwise the roof gets weaker day by day due to rain.

Another example of contemporary residential representing revival of Mughal techniques and architectural forms following traditional designs in built form and on surface decorative techniques is Seyd Sardar Ali's House in DHA Phase V, Lahore built in 2015. Its facade is designed with pointed arch and conventional round arches with *Jharoka* on the top of the main entrance of the house. lattice work on external fence of the building in small circular design in terracotta is showing revival of Mughal trends. Fountain with *aabshar* which was built to enhance the environment and beauty of nature in Mughal gardens are also a part of the construction of this house (figure 4). There are much weather effects on the walls because of the use of concor lime enhance its traditionalism. Red stone, white marble lime (white lime and concor lime) and the use of bricks with lime mortar instead of cement *saria*, steel and concrete shows intention to prefer traditional designs and materials.

Frescos on walls and ceiling of ribbed domical structure muqarnas at the place of squinch arches all are the part of its interior and these decorative arts are revival of Mughal trends (figure 5, 6). Use of flat domes and ceiling designs of frescos are influenced by the ceiling design of Badshahi Mosque Lahore. Bricked ribbed dome without shuttering. Ribbed dome is used because it shifts the load by physics methods. Use of traditional building material bricks and lime concor. Contemporary houses designed by Kamil Khan Mumtaz are presenting traditional trends in construction design and decorative techniques constructed.

Contemporary residence of Dr. Arshad's house at Riwind Road Lahore designed by Ar. Kamil Khan Mumtaz is another example of the contemporary building trends inspiration from past (Mughals). Use of local stone, local wood, white marble and burnt backed bricks are used for its building material. Construction with concor lime without using modern material like cement concrete and steel is the specialty of the house. Wood carving for entrance door and lattice work of balconies in white marble, terracotta niches on external walls and led lights are set for exterior. *Jharoka* and *raonce*⁴ on top of the *jharoka* is the signature style of the architect found in the most of contemporary building designed by Kamil Khan Mumtaz. Plaster relief work also called *thoba* is preferred for surface decoration of the *jharoka*. Its façade has special decorative frame providing monumental appearance to the main entrance of the house by using *Kashikari* tiles influenced by the tile work of Masjid Wazir Khan Lahore built during Mughal's

⁴ A projecting architectural element constructed in old houses on the top of the front elevation



period (figure 7). It was prepared by the same artisan who made *Kashkari* tiles for renovation of the picture wall of the Lahore fort. Entirely this house has Mughal inspiration and revival of traditional designs.



Figure 7. Façade of the contemporary house of Dr. Arshad at Lahore with *Kashkari* work, Jharoka and projecting balconies.



Figure 8. Marble *jalli* work of the contemporary residence of Dr. Arshad at Lahore with direct Mughal influences.

For interior of the building wooden lattice work has Mughal design inspiration. Use of frescos with minimal use of industrial process, construction of ribbed dome with massive pillars, octagonal geometry and muqarnas built at the ending point of the vertical supports of the domical structure are part of the construction Muqarnas in residential interior is creating levels. The design is also providing extensive natural light to the interior of the lounge. It presents the reality of the universe such as principal of arts like rhythm, balance symmetry. Brass molded grill is used for its interior. Lattice work, marble *jalli* on the exterior terrace and balusters are giving Mughal building impact. Wooden pergolas on bricked pillars built on terrace are giving innovative design of contemporary period. It is heat and cold prof structure built with traditional method and material without using industrial materials. Cut bricked work and recessed panels with marble *jalli* work are creating interest to the veranda (figure 8).

Harsukh Mention is five identical houses of a family one for parents and four for children completed in 2015 at badian Road Lahore. *Sadar darwaza* of the main entrance is double height *surahidat* arch with muqarnas is combination of red bricks and white marble. On hot & cold drainage pipes terracotta *jalli* is designed to cover them.

Conclusion

Architecture conveys the nation's strengths, characteristics, and historical regulations. In order to create an excellent representation of Lahore's architecture, modern architects were essential in preserving coherence and coordination among local materials, traditional techniques, and historical influences. It is concluded that the architectural features of Lahore's historical buildings serve as a strong basis for the city's modern architecture and assist contemporary architects in preserving the region's legacy by incorporating cutting-edge concepts into design exhaustion. The residential houses designed by Kamil Khan Mumtaz in



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Lahore are real-life examples of modern architecture that preserve the legacy of tradition through stylized and creative designs with traditional architectural elements and decorative techniques such as *Kashikari*, tile work, stucco work, marble and wood carving, lattice work, while clearly incorporating traditional aspects. After conducting thorough research, it has been noted that the structural elements and simplified and floral decorative patterns hold significant importance. These aspects not only highlight the considerable contributions to modern architecture in Lahore but also offer new opportunities for young architects while preserving the legacy of traditions.

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