

**RESEARCH PAPER****An Icon of Faith and Imperial Hegemony: Cathedral Church of Resurrection, Lahore****Engr. Mohammad Ali**

PhD Scholar, Research Centre, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: ma5208982@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

To study the diverse and rich religious cultural heritage of Lahore, Cathedral Church of Resurrection is a good example. A good example of colonial agenda of imposing and legitimizing power through architecture. "The Cathedral Church of Resurrection, Lahore, also known as Lahore Cathedral, is an Anglican cathedral in the heart of Lahore, Pakistan. It was built on The Mall in 1887, opposite the Lahore High Court...The cathedral is in the Neo-Gothic style of architecture." The method used is qualitative. Social Constructivism is used through interview and site visit. The Cathedral Church of Resurrection is a treasure trove of history of British India. It clears many misunderstandings regarding the Christians of Lahore. We come to know about the influential religious figures of colonial era. It gives us a peek into the lifestyle and religious practices of the Christian community. Lahore is fortunate to have Gothic architecture in the city. Lahore Cathedral imparts grandeur to The Mall and old city. Christian minority contribution in education is immense and it needs to be revived.

KEYWORDS English Decorative Style, Rayonnant, British Churches in India, Lantern, Cathedra, Stairwell, Sanctuary of a Church, Tracery, Tri-Lobed, Trefoil, Chapel**Introduction**

Gothic architecture was a major step forward in technique of building churches. It gave the worshippers a transcendental and highly spiritual experience. After their daily mundane affairs the colorful brightly lit interior was elevating to the spirit. It was just like the towers, windows, arches, vaults reaching vertically upwards.

Gothic was basically a technical revolution started in France. Cistercian monks spread the technique to the rest of Europe. The Gothic architecture reinforced the authority and influence of the church among the common people. It served the Pope and the rest of the clergy very well. The church was not yet divided into Catholic and Protestant. The Division was to come later with its own effects on architecture of the two schools of thought.

"The Gothic Revival is the name given to a fashion involving the reintroduction of Gothic forms in architecture and associated arts. It began in the mid-18th century, in a fairly light-hearted way, medieval forms being used for their picturesque qualities,...However, the movement became much more serious in tone and developed into a major strand in 19th century art."

A look into colonial era Gothic church gives us an idea how religion effects architecture and how architecture effects religion. Architecture has served the priest and king for centuries. A look at Gothic church of Late English Gothic Decorative style will help us realize how important the Gothic architecture for the colonial mind of the rulers was.

This paper looks at a church in Lahore and does a case study of Gothic style by observing it. This is the Cathedral Church of Resurrection. It is one of a series of Cathedrals in Lahore, Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in United India. All images are by the author.

Literature Review

“ In search for an architecture for the Raj there was the desire to stamp, to imprint, to contain and to inscribe. While the question of an appropriate style of architecture for the Raj, naturally came into focus during the British period, the roots of the debate on architecture go back much before the Raj took shape, to the imperialist incursions in India, as displayed in the early colonial buildings in Goa, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta; it acquired an acuteness when the British, having acquired large provinces of India, needed to proclaim and display their suzerainty....transforming the historiography and the building patterns of an entire subcontinent.” (Vandal, 2006, p. 13)

“ St. James’s church was known in later years as the Pro-Cathedral, when the Lahore diocese was created and Dr. French was appointed its first Bishop; and it continued in use as “the Mother church” of the diocese until the present Cathedral was completed. Anarkali’s tomb lay vacant for some years after it was given up by the ecclesiastical authorities...” (Goulding, 2006, p. 16)

“Understandably, Bishop French found the converted tomb of a former royal concubine not the most suitable setting for his church but it took him another ten years of effort to have plans for a cathedral brought to the stage of execution. On 27 March 1880, an illustration of the proposed Lahore Cathedral was published in the weekly issue of *The Graphic* magazine which reported to its readers: “The new Anglican Cathedral at Lahore was commenced a few years back, but proceeded only as far as the foundations...Since that time Lahore has become so much more important. ..With this view Mr. John O. Scott,..., was consulted and appointed architect, and that gentleman, while designing a large important church, ingeniously contrived to utilize, for a portion of his building, the foundations previously constructed....” (Aijazuddin, 1991, p. 127)

Material and Methods

This is essentially a descriptive paper, and hence qualitative. The data is textual and narrative as far as form of data is considered. By nature the data is nominal. The data has been collected through interviews, observation and documents. Both primary and secondary data is used.

Site visits and interviews of the church staff was done. The main source of information was the retired organ player of the church. I also relied on internet and literature available in libraries.

The concept of ‘Social Constructivism’ as developed by a Russian social scientist-Lev Vygotsky- was mostly used. This requires social interaction and cultural context. Knowledge is created at social level before it becomes useful at individual level. Language plays an important role in the whole processes.

Results and Discussion

There is a gem of Gothic architectural style in Lahore. It is on the Mall. It is the Cathedral Church of Resurrection (Fig.1)

“Until about 1250, Gothic architects concentrated on the harmonious distribution of masses of masonry and, particularly in France, on the technical problems of achieving great height; after that date, they became more concerned with the creation of rich visual effects through decoration. This decoration took such forms as pinnacles (upright members, often spired, that capped piers, buttresses, or other exterior elements), moldings, and, especially, window tracery.” (Brittanica, n.d)



Fig.1 Western towers



Fig.2. Church surroundings

The name cathedral is derived from the Latin word “Cathedra” (Fig.3), which means “chair” or “seat”. The Romans derived this Chair from “Klismos”-a lighter chair used in ancient Greece. The Bishop’s throne placed in the chancellery is called Cathedra. Therefore the church in which there is a bishop’s throne is known as Cathedral.

“The cathedra was used in the early Christian basilica as a raised bishop’s throne placed near the wall of the apse, behind the altar. Later, a bishop’s principal church, or seat, within his diocese was designated a cathedral. The term ex cathedra (“from the seat, or throne”) was used in Roman Catholicism to distinguish solemn pronouncements by the pope on matters of faith or morals and therefore binding on the laity.” (Brittanica.com, n.d.)



Fig.3 Bishop’s throne



Fig.4 Bishop’s throne

The Cathedral Church in Lahore on the Mall is an example of English Decorated Gothic. It was constructed from 1877 to 1887. Initially it was supposed to be a much bigger structure. The Western porch was to be adjacent to Fane Road. The apse was to touch Hall Road. The North transept was till McLeod Road and South one touching Mall. But as usual due to paucity of funds its construction could not start. It was to be constructed much earlier. There is a plaque of Bishop Millman inside the church. He was the Metropolitan Bishop or Arch Bishop of Southeast Asia based in Calcutta. He took upon himself the construction. Bricks in the foundations were removed to construct this much smaller version (Fig. 2).

The two western towers were topped with spires. There was also a weather cock on the roof-hence the name “Kukkar Girja” popular among locals. At the end almost of World War 1 a bi-plane struck one of the spires which fell and destroyed the weather cock. It was decided to remove the other spire as well. There were supposed to be eight bells in the church. But due to a shortage of 100 lbs. two bells are short and now there are only six bells with ropes and weights attached. The weights are winded up and when released they ring the bells. The bells are tuned to ring in F Major. The bells are in tune and working even after more than hundred years-thanks to the favorable climate of sub-continent. There is a passage to move from one western tower to the other. The architect of the church was Sir Aldrid Scott. The record of the construction of the church got burned when there was a fire in the place they were stored. They were stored in the Diocesan office and could be accessed a few years back.

“Commencing from the basic Presidency towns comprising Bengal, Bombay and Madras, British cathedrals in India started branching out gradually to other villages and cities, not leaving out the mofussil (a town smaller than a city, with its own municipality). Architects were shipped in huge numbers from England to erect masterpieces, who then replaced the amateur men being trained for building.” (IndiaNetzone, IndiaNetzone.com, n.d)

There was a chain of Cathedrals all over the subcontinent. They were known by different names taken from the religious history of Christians. These were; Cathedral Church of Resurrection in Lahore, Cathedral Church of Nativity, Bangalore, Cathedral Church of Redemption in Delhi, Cathedral Church of Annunciation Bombay now Mumbai, Cathedral Church of Ascension in Madras now Chennai etc.

The roof of the church is made up of wooden rafters (Fig. 5) and the roof of the vault is of brick and stone. Hence the roof the vault acts as the floor of the wooden rafter ceiling.



Fig. 5 Wooden roof beams and rafters

The church has three porches-one on the west and two at the north and south transept. As you enter from the western door, on the left you encounter the baptismal font (Fig. 6). Here the new-born are baptized. The child is baptized using a jug of water. The water gets drained through a hole in the center of the Baptismal font.



Fig. 6 Baptismal Font

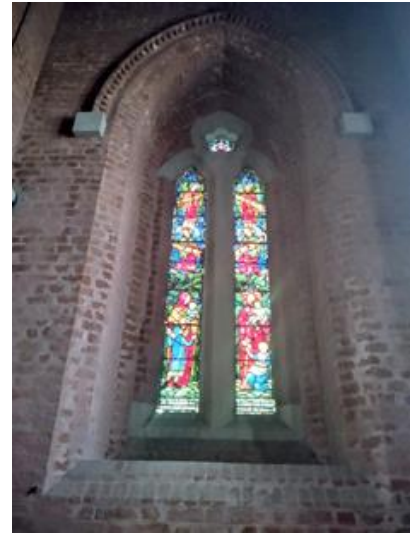


Fig.7 Stained glass window on West

There is a stained glass window on the adjacent wall of the Baptismal Font. It is so placed on the western wall of the cathedral that at sunset the area would be lit by colorful light (Fig. 7). Such beautiful display during baptism must be a very spirituality filled experience. The window shows Mary carrying the child Jesus in her lap. It is done very colorfully and in the minutest of details. Even the folds of the dresses are very clear.

All the entrance doors of the church are of English Oak, still in their original condition. All the doors in the church are of English Oak wood. There is a red carpet aisle and two naves. There are plaques commemorating old bishops. There is a plaque for Bishop Dansfort Band the fifth bishop who was bishop for forty years. Particularly as principal of Lawrence Royal Military College, Sanawar-a hill station in India. He was the Principal from 1912 to 1932 and then the Bishop of Lahore from 1932 to 1949.

Moving on the red carpet aisle (Fig. 8) we approach the square center or center of the crossing of the north and south transepts and the chancellery and aisle. This square upon whose top of the roof was the weather cock fixed is known as lantern.



Fig. 8 Aisle



Fig.9 Internal buttresses

In Renaissance and Baroque architecture, lantern came to mean the small cupola-like structure, usually with decorative arcades, mounted on top of a dome. Although at times its function is to admit light to the interior, it is essentially a proportional element in the

visual design. Typical are the lanterns capping the domes of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore (the Duomo) in Florence (1436–71), St. Peter’s in Rome (1506), St. Paul’s Cathedral in London (1689), and the Capitol in Washington, D.C. (Brittanica, n.d.)

On the wall of the south transept we see a plaque of Robert Millman DD (doctor of divinity). He was the Primate of India or the Archbishop of united India. Under him was all of Southeast Asia. He undertook upon himself to construct the Cathedral of Resurrection, Lahore. A plaque next to this gives the name of first bishop of Lahore Bishop Thomas Wellby French DD (Doctor of Divinity) from 1877 to 1887. One plaque mentions Henry James Mathew 2nd bishop of Lahore 1888 to 1893.

There is a relief in white marble on the southern wall of transept. It is erected in memory of Sir General Samuel James Brown. It is erected by his friends and comrades. It says on the plaque that it is by friends who loved him and comrades who trusted him. That name is also given by which he was known among the locals i.e. General Sir Sham Sahib Bahadur.

Incidentally all the doors of the church are original. They are made of English Oak wood imported from England. On the western end of the hall to the left of entrance door is another imposing white marble relief. It is in memory of the martyrs of Punjab Rifles who embraced martyrdom in WWI. Another plaque worth mentioning is a replica of a cross. The cross was

excavated in Canterbury in England. A few replicas were made and distributed among various cathedrals all over the world. It is a shining brass cross in the south transept.

Adjacent to the south transept is the Lady Chapel (Fig.10). There is a beautiful stained glass rose window showing Mary and the child Jesus (Fig.11). In this Chapel morning prayers are performed daily other than Sundays. Its roof is in Romanesque style round arches or Norman arches. It is unlike the rest of the chancellery which is in rib vault style.



Fig.10 Lady Chapel barrel vault Chapel

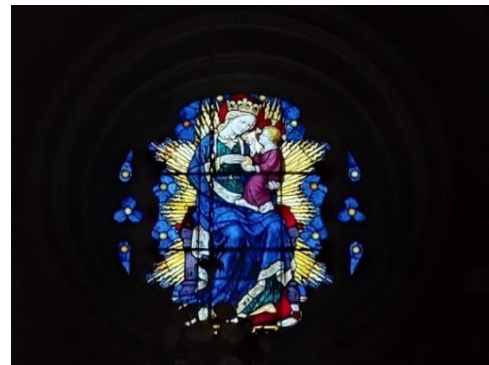


Fig.11 Stained glass window in Lady

“The Company rule which was brought to an end after the Sepoy Mutiny (1857) in 1858, holds supreme importance here, which later witnessed massive masonry work for constructing cathedrals. Borrowing from several erstwhile European architects and their fashion of architecture, British cathedrals in India started to shoot their spires up, touching the sky. The kinds of architectural fashion that prevailed primarily were: Gothic, Palladian, Ionic, Indo-Saracenic, or the various other colonnaded halls, predominating every nook of a city or town.” (IndiaNetzone, n.d.)

As we look around the south transept we see a small stone cross on the wall. This cross was excavated from Taxila in 1935, hence, it is known as “Taxila Cross” (Fig.12). It is dated from 1st to third century. There is an unusual feature of a hole in one of its sides. It was meant to be worn around the neck. It was excavated from Sirkep village near Taxila. It was donated by Mrs. Cuthbert King who was the archaeologist.



Fig. 12. The Taxila Cross

The description of Taxila Cross on the plaque is given below:

“The Taxila Cross Found on the Borders of Sarkap at Taxila in 1935.

It is Believed to date from 1st to 3rd Cent.

The Cross has a Hole Bored in it-a Most Unusual Feature.

Presented by Ms Cuthbert King”

This completes the south transept details to a satisfactory amount. Now we move the north transept.

We come across a Lectern built in brass in the shape of an eagle with wings spread out to place the bible (Fig. 12). The Bible is recited here. The central square formed by the crossing of the two arms of the church is known as Lantern. The weather cock was placed on the top of its roof. It got damaged when a spire fell on it. The Glass windows of the north and south transept are of plain glass as the stained glass was too expensive for the church. An interesting fact about the stained glass windows is that the original glass windows were rejected as they were designed to the light conditions of England. They were replaced by new windows designed for the glare of the subcontinent sun. There are stained glass windows along the curve of the apse (Fig.14). This area is of Gothic ribbed vaults. They are supported by external flying buttresses. The naves contain internal flying buttresses to support the roof of colonnaded hall of the church.



Fig. 13. The lectern



Fig. 14. The apse clearstory

The Maharaja of Kashmir donated wooden logs for the roof structure. Unfortunately the size of the logs was not suitable for the roof beams or rafters. The wood was then used to make the benches or the “pews” as they are called in Greek language. The architecture is called “English Decorated Gothic” as there are carvings and floral patterns on the bases of columns and elsewhere. The motif of three is to be found all over the church. This represents “Trinity”. This includes trilobed arches in windows, trilobed flowers in rose windows and three wooden petals on pews.

We move onto the north transept. A wooden door removed from Anarkali Tomb leads us to a stairwell. This stairwell leads to the Organ Loft and further up to the roof. On the roof we can observe wooden structure supporting the roof of the church. The Organ Loft which is used to play church music is so heavy that double pointed arch is provided for its support. There are heavy lead pipes around the loft and on the ground floor. The Organ (Fig.15) is no longer in working order. Its leather and wood was damaged by water leaking from the roof. The Organ was provided air pressure by a person for that purpose. There is a plaque indicating an air pressure provider who suffered a heart attack while pumping air and died (Fig.16).



Fig. 15 Organ keyboard



Fig.16 Plaque in organ stall

Beyond the stairwell is the Vestry. It is the room where the vestments are kept. The priests change into church clothing here. There are also some cupboards to store paraphernalia. Like the Chapel on the south is known as Lady Chapel, The area on the north side is known as Bishop French Chapel.

In the Apse we can see the High Altar (Fig.18) while the Alter is underneath the Lantern (Fig. 17). On the two sides of the Apse are wooden Choir Stalls where the Choir performs (Fig.17). During Colonial times the choir strength was considerable. A cross on a pole was carried by the leader of the choir known as the Crucifer. After walking through the ambulatory, the choir assembled in two rows in front of the altar. After that they took their places on the choir stalls. The Choir Stalls are built exactly on the model of Westminster Abbey Choir stalls in London. In those days there were craftsmen who could build whatever design they were given. The metallic pattern at the back of the high altar is covered with gold leaf. Special attention has been paid to the floor in the sanctuary, the lantern and the transepts. All the marble required for the floor was imported from Italy. This includes white, grey and pink marble for the checkered design elsewhere and white for the sanctuary floor. The white marble is quite worn out now and has lost its whiteness and shine.



Fig.18 High Altar



Fig.17 North transept and pulpit

In the corner of north transept is the Pulpit (Fig.17). Here the priest stands and gives the sermon. A sound board on top of the priest makes sure that the sound is reflected and reaches the furthest end. Nowadays the Organ and the sound board are no longer required. They have been replaced by electronic musical instruments and speakers. This is just like the Badshahi Mosque, where before electronics the sound was carried to the farthest end by means of reflection and architectural means.

“On the north side are plaques commemorating King Edwards own Probyen’s Horse Battalion. The battalions officers come here every year on their day to worship, place flowers etc. On the east wall of the transept is a high or alto relief depicting the scene of nativity. While the cathedral was being built, the army was stationed initially in Lahore Fort. Later they moved to Mian Mir Cantonment. The British surveyed the area and found the Anarkali Tomb suitable as a temporary place of worship. It was empty because Anarkali was supposed to have been put in a wall. The Governor General held a meeting with Muslim Ulema for the purpose. It was allowed to use the tomb as a Pro-cathedral till 1887 when the construction was complete. The wooden paneling in the north is the one removed from Anarkali’s tomb’s one of eight sides. As the story goes, there were four tunnels leading to Kasur, Agra, Delhi and Sheikhpura from Anarkali’s tomb. The door of the tunnel leading to Agra is now in the cathedral in the north transept. The heat of the Indian summer is dealt with ingeniously. On the crossing of the ribs on the roof of the colonnaded hall contain holes. Through these holes the hot air rises and leaves the hall. The vacuum created is filled by the cool air which enters through a rose window on the West facade. Air-conditioning is not needed even at the height of summer. The stone needed for the tracery of rose windows and arched windows was taken from quarries in Tarakki in the mountains of Jhelum. The weather worn and damaged stonework was repaired by the Punjab Walled City Authority, under the probing eyes of Kamran Lashari. Unfortunately the cement applied on stone tracery of rose windows and trefoil arches looks quite out of place. The porches provided on the three entrances of the church-in the west, south and north- are a signature architectural element of the colonial era. The colonial bungalows invariably had a porch on the main entrance. These remained in vogue even after independence to no surprise. Most of the post-independence bungalows of the elite had such porches. Even in some government buildings such as The Punjab University, GCU, and High Court etc.” (Griffin Hussain, personal communication, September 20th, 2023)

Conclusion

The Vicar is the second in hierarchy in the church behind the bishop. In Lahore cathedral of Resurrection the Vicar’s desk is placed in the ambulatory (Fig.19). He is a very humble and soft spoken person by the name of Vicar Qaiser Nadeem. He was very pleased by my visit. Over a cup of tea we discussed the issues facing the society today. Especially the double standards and hypocrisy and indifference towards the downtrodden seen in the

society today. He was of the view that he preferred meeting people from different caste, creed, gender etc. as it polished and refined ideas and gave new ideas.

After a nice chat and a brief poetry recital session we bade him farewell. Then we headed outside to take a cursory look at the exterior of the cathedral. We observed the flying buttresses and rose windows and trefoil arched wows with trilobed petals in stone. There are four round towers at the four corners of the church (Fig.20) which were the stairwells. We stood by the tower that contained the stairs that led to the organ loft. We could also see the rose window which permitted light into the organ loft.

Then my guide Mr. Griffin Hussain bid me farewell. Mr. Griffin started playing Organ in 1968 when he was promoted from assistant to organ player. This was when his senior damaged his hand in an accident and could no longer play the organ. Mr. Griffin holds a degree in church music from England. Now he is retired and electronic equipment has taken over. Then I was left alone to contemplate my school going days in Sacred Heart School and St. Anthony's High School.



Fig. 19 The Viqar

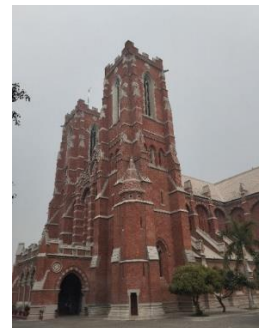


Fig.20 Western Towers

It was full break time and children in green and blue uniform were playing in the church ground waiting for pick up back homewards. While on the roof of the church, the Babu of the church, Babu Suleiman pointed towards the old city (Fig.21) and told me that the Badshahi Mosque was visible from here in the old days. In the old days when there was no haphazard construction activity. When we could drink tap water. When Lahore was a clean, green and serene city. When there was no traffic rush on roads. When the fun fairs were held. When we could take walks along The Mall.



Fig. 21 View from the roof

“Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber’s chain has bound me
Fond mem’ry brings the light

Of other days around me.” -*Old Irish Song* (Goulding, 2006)

Recommendation

Art and architecture towed the line of the church and the king for centuries. Now our cultural heritage is our identity. It projects our image worldwide. It creates a soft image if we are tolerant to our minorities and respect their religious sites. Colonial era had its shortcomings. The importance of the tangible heritage it left cannot be overstated. They give Lahore a cosmopolitan air. We need to project it according to its merit. Religious festivals like Christmas, Easter etc. should be enjoyed by everyone. All religious communities should contribute. It creates sectarian harmony. Whenever preservation of the religious sites is undertaken, it should be of international standards. There is evidence of neglect in respect to the original materials in Lahore Cathedral. It is disheartening for the Christian minority.

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