The Islamia College Peshawar: History and Architecture

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Abstract: Islamia College Peshawar an institute with a century old glorious past was constructed by Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan and Sir George Roos Keppel in 1913 at the western end of the Peshawar Valley in foothills of the Khyber Hills. The building presents a classical combination of the Mughal and Curzonian architecture. The architectural plan of the Islamia College is symmetrical with front façade facing south. The building is decorated with cut and dressed brick work. Style of pointed arches, domes, copulas, columns, doors, windows, ventilators, floors and ceilings add beauty and elegance to the whole structure. The clock tower in the centre, being topped by a dome, is the supplementary refinement added to the building.

Keywords: Islamia College, Peshawar, Roos Keppel, Pakhtun

Introduction

Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is situated at the eastern end of the historic Khyber Pass. Since early historic times Peshawar has formed imperative way for trade and interaction between South and Central Asia. The modern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was separated from Punjab in 1901 (Lal Baha 1978). However at that time there was only one college the Edward College in the province established by the Church Missionary Society in 1900 which was based on modern education system. Edwards College, however, could not attract the Muslim Youth of the Province (Lal Baha 2013). Resultantly, this dearth of quality education in a Muslim institution enforced local youth to other regions of the country in quest of higher education such as Aligarh and Deoband. Lack of educational opportunities in the province motivated eminent leaders Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan and Sir George Roos Keppel to establish a quality institute that would not only cater the academic needs of the province at their home land but also produce prominent leaders. Working independently, they thrived in the latter half of the 19th century in bringing English education to young Muslims in their own areas.

The idea of college in the province was taking shape in the minds of both the leaders that was further strengthened by their visit to the Aligarh Muslim University in 1909. Consequently a meeting with like minded people in Peshawar was held to move the motion for collection of contribution and donations. The College was primarily for Pakhtun tribesman coming from the far-off areas of the region to give them civilization and education. The most famous Pakhtun leader Haji Sahib of Turangzai was requested to lay the foundation stone of the Islamia College building (Lal Baha 2013). The construction work of Islamia College was initiated in the second half of 1912 with a notable progress. The building was completed and inaugurated in October 1913 (Lal Baha 1913).

The Islamia College Peshawar is currently located at the extreme western edge of the Peshawar Plain at the mouth of Khyber Pass, 3 km to the West of Peshawar Cantonment on the Jamrud Road. A building stands with its magnificent structure facing southward. It has a marvelous two tired central facade with clock

tower in the middle, domes, kiosks and pinnacles rising above the green trees and lush green grounds which sharply contrast with the red brick color of the building (Plate 1).

Plate 1: Islamia College Peshawar A view of the facade and architectural symmetry of the building from South)

Structural Plan of the College Building:

The college buildings are properly planned in symmetrical order. The main building which contains classrooms, offices and hall are situated to the south whereas the residential units for the staff are located to the north separated by pathways, roads and green belts.

The main building of the college is constructed on two terraces, the higher being on the south and the lower on north. The northern terrace has a series of class rooms arranged in three lines eastern, western and central. The central line of the building has two storyes running from east to west whereas the western and eastern line of the building are single storey and lying north to south in symmetrical order, surrounded by verandahs constructed in arcuate order of naked bricks with beams and lintels.

The higher terrace on the south has main building of the college. Like the building of the lower terrace, the structure on this terrace can also be divided into three similar parts/lines. The central line of structures is running from east to west with a hall in the center and single storey class rooms flanked on either side. Two more lines of building on either side of the central one are running from north to south surrounded also by verandahs.

In the center of the central line of the buildings of Islamia College is a symmetrically balanced hall named after Sir George Roos-Keppel (Chief Commissioner of Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa and founder of Islamia College) which can be approached from main porch on the south enclosed by gigantic pointed arches. The interior of the hall is ornamented with pointed blind arches and built-in columns. The wooden stage and floor add contrasting natural beauty to the overall white interior. A small gallery supported with floral designed brackets and geometrical designed railing divide the height of the white plastered ceiling. Pointed Gothic style doors are provided at four sides of the hall for easy approach. Wooden windows and ventilators with glass pans are added for ventilation and light admission (Plate No 3).

In addition to the residential area and main college building further to the east is a white plastered three-domed mosque with a splendid interior and exterior painted in floral and

geometrical motifs (Durrani 2005) and the Islamia Collegiate School. Towards the west of Islamia College building lies the residential area for the principal.

Use of Architectural and Decorative Elements in Islamia College Building:

Walls

Wall is a vertical, supporting, solid surface that separates building space into different areas according to the need. The College has no boundary at all whereas the main building's walls are constructed from kiln bricks giving strong impression of solidness and strength. However, in all over the lslamia College building the use of arches reduces the blankness and the need of fortification around the structure. Wall of the building serve both function of exterior and boundary wall.

The exterior/building wall of the Islamia College is made up of bricks. The addition of varying sizes arches in the walls give the verandah a glorious look. Both inside and outside of the verandah, the walls are of made of brick having thickness 18 incheson average. At the ground floor there is no continuous wall where the columns and arches divide the whole area into different sections. However, the wall on inside are simply plastered with white distemper.

Floor

A floor is the urface in any place for comfortable movement, which also divides a building into various levels or storeys. In Islamia College principally brick flooring was used but with the passage of time most of the old floors are replaced with different type of marble floors now.

Floor in front of Roos Keppel hall is in original with white and black tiles (Plat 4) while at both ends, chessboard pattern floor verandahs is now replaced by red and white marble (Plate 5). In the eastern wing the verandah is renovated (Plate 6) with geometrical design, which is quite different from the original design. Wooden floors are constructed in Roos Keppel Hall. Floors in class rooms are not in their original material but are rather made of marble.

Doors

A door is a solid pan item which can be opened and closed to enable movement from one place to another. It is placed in all types of buildings. In Islamia College Gothic style double paneled doors are prevalent m varying sizes depending on the use where they are placed. They can be divided into three major types:

- Wooden Panel Door
- Wooden Panel Door with Glass Pans
- Wooden Panel Door with Wire Gaze

Wooden panel doors are made of full wood panes which makes vision impos 1ble when closed. In the college building these types of doors are used in smaller spaces (Plate 4). Doors with glass panes are the most frequently used type in the Islamia College buildmg. They are used in Roos Keppel hall (Plate 3), class rooms and offices. Some of the doors in lslamia College are added with another wire gauze door. Purpose of these doors is to protect the interior from insects and flies as well a for view. light and ventilation.

Windows

Windows are actually a building's eyes; often most important element and one of the most significant components in shaping the character and façade of the building. Traditionally, windows serve two kinds of purpose: illumination and ventilation (Matus 1988) but along with that they serve many other types of functions that add a lot to the atmosphere of a building and the comfort of its residents. These functions include the view, outside sounds,

communication and simply being aware of the outside surroundings.

Windows play a very important role in setting of Islamia College architecture. Three different styles of windows are used in the College. The windows were symmetrical on the exterior and interior. Three types of windows are used in the building. :

- Arched windows
- Decorative Arched windows with fret work
- Rectangular windows

In the College arched windows arc casement type of windows having hinges on side panes. All the windows have double panes. They open in inward direction, inserted with small glass panes through which light admission and view can be obtained and when open provide full vcnt1lat1on. Upper portion of these windows are in arched shape (Plate 7). Window with decorative edging (small projecting eaves) at the top is another style used in the building to add beauty in the exterior. The lower part of the windows' frame is made with cut brick work to enhance also the look and appearance of widows. Such pattern gives frame and depth to the window in addition to help protectmg the interior spaces from direct sunrays and rain (Plate 8).

Rectangular windows are larger than arched windows used in the building. These are having wooden rectangular frames. These windows have three parts: upper part consists of three ventilators, the middle part has four panel sash casement style window and lower part has fixed glass section giving the central part an elongated look (Plate 9). These windows are used in class rooms which keep them well ventilated.

Ventilators

Ventilators are comparatively small spaces other than windows as the architecture design permits. In buildings with high ceilings they were placed near the ceiling as the hot staled air move upward but with the changing architectural styles they are also designed as the upper part of windows. In Islamia College building three types of ventilators are used for air draft.

- Arch Shaped Ventilators
- Rectangular Ventilators
- Fixed Jali/ Fret Work Ventilators

Arched shaped ventilator is part of the window and doors. They are used in Roos Keppel hall. In lower part of the hall they are fixed giving arch shape to doors and windows. They are inserted with glass panes both in doors and windows to add more light into the interior space and creating balance in the exterior (Plate 10).

Rectangular ventilators are used in class rooms (Plate 9) at the top of the rectangular windows. These are simple and most common type of ventilators. In each ventilator two glass pieces are inserted.

Fixed style ventilators made up of jail or fret work. These ventilators are used in places where there is no other source of ventilation (Plate 11). They are placed in an oblong brick structure.

Ceilings

The inside surface at the top of any building which rest on the side walls is called as ceiling. They are placed inside the room at the apex to complete any architectural structure. Ceilings can play a significant role in defining space and bringing exclusivity to any area.

Ceilings in Islamia College are made up of simple bricks and steel beams. These beams give support to the ceiling and break the vertical lines of the ceilings in long verandahs. In Roos Keppel hall the ceiling design is different (Plate 12). Which is covered with white plastered surface.

Columns/ Pillars

The word column applies particularly to a bulky round support with a capital and base made of stone, or wood, plaster and other materials. Columns are commonly used to bear the load of beams and arches on which the upper parts of walls or ceilings rest.

In Islamia College the whole façade is enhanced by columns. In building different types of columns, pillars and turrets are used not only to bear the load of ceiling but also to embellish the building. Two major styles of supportive pillars are used in the building.

1. The square shaped columns are the major supportive architectural structure throughout the building. They hold the ceiling of verandah as well as help in the formation of arches (Plate No 13).
2. Second type of columns is also used in the outer side of the building. They are erected as corner buttresses/turrets. These turrets support and extent up to the upper potions of the building at the front and back façade. The four corners end up with a cupola (Plate 14).

Domes

Dome is a classic form in architecture that graces the buildings throughout the architectural history all over the world. A dome is the exterior architectural element that bears resemblance to the hollow upper half of a sphere. Domes and chuttris are the focal point in the Islamia College building. Number of domes and chuttris are built in varying sizes to complete symmetrically balanced on roof structure. These domes and copulas are decorated with inverted lotus flower and finished with finals (Plate 1).

Arches

The arch is an important component of the architecture. It is an architectural element that extent a space and bears load. In Islamia College different types of arches are used with a purpose to reduce the load and massiveness of the building as well as to add enrichment to the façade. In the whole building two styles are created one with plain pointed Gothic arch (Plate 15) and the scalloped design/cusped arch (Plate 16). Small and large span arches supported with square shaped columns give elegance to the buildings. The main gigantic arch is three layered the third one provide entrance to the corridor.

Conclusion:

Islamia College building represents the best of Mughal architecture with the combination of Western touch. The entire building of Islamia College gives a noble effect with variegated plans having light and shade effects and small kiosks crowning the different corner and with central clock tower terminating in a dome. The building is a jewel in the architectural history of Peshawar.

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(Plate 2: Back Façade of College)

(Plate 3: Interior of Roos Keppel Hall)

(Plate 4: Floor in Front of Roos Keppel Hall)

(Plate 5: Floor at side of Roos Keppel Hall)

(Plate 6: Floor in Black and white)

(Plate 7: Arched Window)

(Plate 8: Fret Work Window)

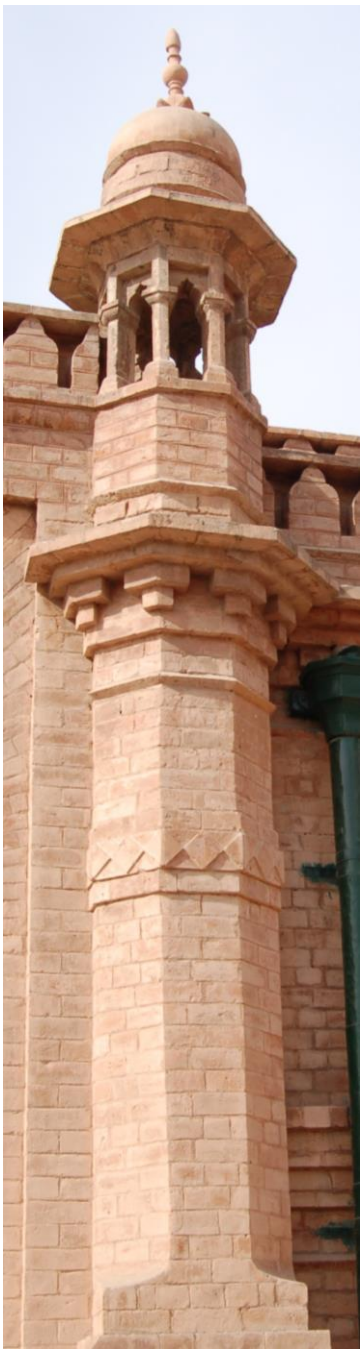
(Plate 9: Rectangular Window)

(Plate 10 Arched Window)

(Plate 11 Fret Work Ventilator)

(Plate 12 Ceiling of Roos Kepple Hall)

(Plate 13 Square Shaped Column)



(Plate 14 Octagonal Shaped Columns)

(Plate 15 Pointed Arches)

(Plate 16 Scalloped Arches)