

Significance Of Architectural Elements Of Central Library, Bahawalpur

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Abstract

The research probes the architectural characteristics and aesthetic components of the Central Library of Bahawalpur, historically referred as the Sadiq Reading Library, established during the tenure of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V in 1924. The primary objective of this study is to examine the various influences like colonial and indo- sarcenic features that contributed to the construction of significant monument. A review of existing literature reveals that while scholars and local authors have addressed the library in general terms, there has been a lack of detailed discussion regarding its architectural features and the aesthetic aspects of its surface decorations. This paper seeks to illuminate the development of British architectural styles in Bahawalpur, particularly in relation to the Central Library and to conduct an architectural analysis that underscores its importance in the context of current preservation and conservation efforts.

The research entails a comprehensive examination of the various architectural elements inspirations analyzing both earlier and later architectural monuments in the region. A meticulous analysis of construction features such as brackets with chajja and lattice work signifying Mughal architecture, equilateral pointed arches ,solid goblets on coupled columns with fluted pilasters representing Greco-Roman, and domical structures is included, alongside an exploration of building materials and surface decorations, comprising stucco, European retro tile flooring and wrought iron railings, along with their design patterns represent colonial features. The study also investigates the integration of regional materials with Greco-Roman and regional influences as observed in both historical and contemporary structures in Bahawalpur. All discussed features are accompanied by visuals and original photographs to enhance the understanding of the research findings.

Keywords: Colonial, gothic, Indo-sarcenic, stucco, lattice work, preservation, conservation.

Introduction

The former princely state of Bahawalpur is located in South Punjab, Pakistan. Renowned for its palatial architecture, the region features a flat alluvial plain that transitions into desert terrain in South Punjab. It is positioned between the historically

significant cities of Multan and Uch Sharif. The geographical location of the state is latitude 7 to 30-22 North 69-47 to 74-1 East longitude.¹ According to Moon Penederal described Bahawalpur is the size of Denmark lying between Punjab and Sindh.²

The British colonials were inducted in Bahawalpur State in the era of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV in 1866, it was an era of progression. Later, the reign of Nawab Bahawal Khan V 1903-1907 was likewise era of growth but the epoch of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad V (1907) was the longest time period of development and modernism as he strengthened construction of architecture as welfare projects for his state and people, following the life he spent at his time of Aitchison college in Lahore. It provided him with framework through which he could embrace the contemporary facets of life, thereby leading to the evolution of his perception, thoughts and intellect. Therefore he maintained his Islamic ideology as core belief.

The structure under discussion is Central Library (figure1) which is situated on Cantt Road leading to CMH hospital, residing in front of BVH hospital adjacent to Bahawalpur Museum. The coronation of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V on March 18, 1924, His excellency the honorable Sir Rufus Daniel Isaac, Earl of Reading, Viceroy and Governor General of India, came to Bahawalpur and visited the ground for the grand building of the proposed library. Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V laid the foundation stone of this building.³ (figure2) The nomenclature of Sadiq Reading Library was decided by the combination of the names of the Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V and the Viceroy Earl of Reading⁴.

In 1927, the Bahawalpur Municipality was entrusted with the construction of the library, and ten years later, in 1934, the building was completed, but instead of launching a magnificent library for the public, municipal offices were established along with a small library. Finally, by the sincere efforts of scholars, especially Chaudhary Nazir Ahmed⁵ paid off and after six years in 1940, this building was vacated by the municipality and a library was established exclusively.

Ground plan

The library is symmetrical in construction plan, measuring eighty six feet width by One Hundred forty feet length and originally covering the land of sixty five kanals and fifteen marlas, total area of 22 thousand nine hundred square feet⁶ (figure 3). The further structures added into central library by erecting children and women section to the right side of the edifice in 1998⁷. The section is located seventy feet apart from main library.

Exterior of Sadiq Library

The Library is white, double storey, Indo-Saracenic structure,⁸ designed with pleasing aesthetics. A combination of symmetry with exterior decorative elements are focus of research. The front façade of library pertains portico supported by coupled columns,

¹ Malik Muhammad Din, *Gazetteer of Bahawalpur statements*, 1904 p.

² Penederal, Moon, Divide and Quite, London; Chatto and Windus, 1964, p.97

³ Jhandir, M Tanveer, *Bahawalpur the land of Golden Sand, Forts and Palaces*, Sang e Meel Publication, 2018. p.136

⁴ Wasti, Zahid Ali, *Bahawalpur ki Sar Zameen*, p.143.

⁵ former librarian Sadiq reading library

⁶ <https://alw.punjab.gov.pk/govt-central-library-bahawalpur>

⁷ Interviewd govt contractor muhammad zaffar bhutta in 2019

⁸ Indo-Saracenic architecture known as Mughal gothic, indo- gothic architecture, representing absorption of Indo Islamic and Indian features into gothic and neoclassical style creating a Hybrid combination of Indo Muslim and British architectural features.

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Arcadian collonades adorned with equaliteral⁹ pointed arches of varying sizes, arranged alternately with terabeated roof, showcasing Greco-Roman architectural influences developed in the period of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV.

The portico pertains three centred arch with equaliteral arch on left side and pair of equaliteral arches on right side supported by distant coupled columns, the base of columns is two feet high and lacks additional ornamentation. The corners of the portico are supported by fluted pilasters with decorative capitals representing inverted acanthus leaf signifying Greco-Roman features.¹⁰ However, the entablature of the portico showcases a frieze adorned with dentils, augmented by fret patterns of swan neck motifs (figure 4) in the rectangular panel, segregated by vertical pilasters with Solid bud shaped goblets enhancing the design, (figure5).

The ceiling of the portico is adorned with a stucco ornamentation, (figure 6), a durable and versatile material, which has been utilized to embellish ceilings, walls, and architectural details with ability to be molded into intricate designs creating captivating decorations and it has been a significant material as decorative element of colonial architecture. The design pertains an eight petal flower surrounded by a stylized ornamental pattern representing flower pots of two different types. One motif represent flower pot and the alternate pattern represent flower within *kylix*¹¹ signifying alternative forms together in one frame giving a touch of elegance to the design representing Greco roman influence and elevating the visual appeal of the space (figure 7). The flower pots symbolize growth, beauty and the essence of nature, while the *kylix* embody diverse cultural element of Greek pottery creating a captivating composition of western and eastern elements. This interplay of motifs within a confined space demonstrates the ingenuity of the craftsmen who meticulously designed and executed intricate decorations and colonial design aesthetics focusing Indo Saracenic architecture.¹²(figure 8)

The building of the library resides on the podium of three steps with a collonades of twelve feet width covering all three sides of the structure festooned with arcade of equaliteral arches¹³ and coupled columns alternatively arranged in two different sizes with a dado of 2.5 feet. The arches are arranged in an alternating pattern, creating a harmonious visual effect. Each column is positioned on a square base and rests on two feet high podium. The capital of each column is adorned with band of acanthus leaves.(figure 9) another significant feature of Greco-roman decorative element signifying colonial supremacy in the architectural ornamentation.

The floor is bedecked with victorian hall way floor encaustic tiles¹⁴ in the entrance area of the library and retro tiles in the veranda.The design of entrance area is specifically embeded in the era of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V. The scheme of the design and its module is illustrated in (figure 10). It is the repeat of the design enclosed in a pattern , which is observed in previous built

⁹Equilateral arch is the most common form of the pointed arch, with the centers of two circles forming the intrados coinciding with the springing points of the opposite segment. Together with the apex point, they form a equilateral triangle

¹⁰ Shahid, Rizvi, *Bimsal Bahawalpur*, p.132

¹¹ A form of ancient Greek pottery that became a decorative motif. During the new classical period in late 18th and early 19th century the shape was reviewed as a decorative element.

¹² Indo Saracenic architecture is a distinctive style that emerged in the 19th century, embodying the synthesis of Indian, Islamic, and Western architectural elements like the Neo-Classical , the Gothic, and the Victorian. It was predominantly employed by British architects in India throughout the 19th century, particularly for the construction of public edifices, governmental offices, schools, and memorials.

¹³ Gothic arch or A pointed arch is an arch with a pointed crown, whose two curving sides meet at a relatively sharp angle at the top of the arch

¹⁴ Acouatic tiles are globally renowned as Italian cramic product with exceptional quality and unparalleled design. Italy is te epitome of quality , versatility and sustainable elegance in tile design.

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structures like Nur Mahal 1886 and Bahawal victoria Hospital 1906 (figure 11,12). A British colonial design inspired by Greek patterns reflecting European aesthetics of late eighteenth century.¹⁵

The Central Library comprised three towers, a unique but significant feature in the library architecture is the octagonal tower (figure 13) augmented on the front facade and two squared double tier towers at the back. The octagonal tower is supported by huge segmental pediment¹⁶ with double tier pedestals enhanced with solid goblets on either side and the lattice railing behind it ends up to the swan neck pediments¹⁷ on a two feet pedestals placed on either side. The railing is festooned with double lob inverted dentils and swan neck motifs, the pilaster is adorned with acanthus leaf motif on the capital. There are gothic windows on either side creating a symmetrically aligned composition of the external structure representing gothic church inspiration. The old construction process of the library is visible in the picture donated by Gulzar Ahmad Ghouri¹⁸ representing under process tower and pediment construction (figure 14).

The octagonal tower comprised base of three feet with eight arches on it base with fret panel arranged alternatively. The central arch is festooned with lattice fret in stucco signifying Mughal inspiration and the alternative arch is adorned with rare huge size stylized acanthus leaf (figure 15) and supported by pedestals. The contoured quatrefoil and huge acanthus leaf is significant gothic ornamentation element observed on Central Library. Quatrefoil is a geometrical shape consisting of four small circles, inside a large circle. The small circles are 'erased' where they merge on the diagonals and are formed into pointed 'cusps'. The triangular gaps between the small circles. There are five quatrefoils on the tower representing the light of knowledge spreading in all four directions of the region (figure 16). Quatrefoils are observed on central bastion of Noor Mahal 1886 (figure 17) but it has not been noticed in the later built architecture of Bahawalpur.

The octagonal dome is supported by a balcony featuring a Chajja, with brackets beneath that reflect Mughal architectural influence. The Chajja's railing is upheld by a balustrade consisting of five columns on each side. The dome itself is reinforced by double pilasters and adorned with jar-like goblets, topped with wrought iron railings that embody Islamic decorative motifs. The crescent and star- symbols of Allah's supremacy and the state are prominently displayed on the railing of the Daulat Khana, constructed in 1881, as well as on the Sadiq Garh Palace from 1884 and Noor Mahal from 1886 (figures 18,19,20). The goblets interpret a Baroque, Italian architectural feature that is notably incorporated into the library's decorative scheme which associated to Indosarcenic architectural style, which represents a fusion of Islamic and colonial design elements employed by British architects in the creation of indosarcenic structures. The nawabs, influenced by Italian architecture, embraced Baroque decorative features such as goblets to enhance the grandeur of their monuments. These goblets can be seen in various structures, including Carlo Maderno's Santa Susanna in Rome (1507-1603) (figure 21) and Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire (1705-1722) (figure 22). The nawabs' preference for elaborate decorations is evident in the exaggerated round forms of the goblets, which symbolize the cycle of life, a distinctive decorative characteristic of the Nawabi era. Thus, the tower exemplifies a harmonious blend of Indo-Sarcenic, colonial, Mughal, and Baroque Italian architectural decorative elements.

At the back of the library, there are two square bastions, (figure 23). Each bastion features two entrances, one from the inside and the other from the outside. These structural components play a vital role in supporting the roof and transferring the weight of the

¹⁵ Jone, Owens, *The Grammar of Ornaments*, 1856, 85.

¹⁶ segmental pediments have a round cornice replacing two sides of the traditional triangular pediment. A segmental pediment might complement or even be called a curvilinear tympanum

¹⁷ Swan neck pediment A type of broken pediment with S-shaped curves, like two swans' necks facing each other.

¹⁸ Afzal Ghouri is the famous self-taught photographer of Bahawalpur to comprise personal collection of photograph and books regarding Nawab Dynasty. Died in 2022.

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ceiling to the columns. The beams are reinforced with a railing fret that is divided by a newel post. The newel post anchors the balustrade and is topped with goblets. The bastion is further supported by fluted double pilasters, which are primarily serving ornamental purposes. Although they visually appear as supporting columns, their main function is decorative. The pilasters are adorned by acanthus leaves motifs on the capital and a band of dentils on them. The first storey window is bedecked with projected chajja representing Mughal influences and festooned with band of rectangular panel representing sawan neck design and quatrefoil placed in front of the window below it representing colonial feature. The second storey is bedecked with recessed gothic arch window attached with semi circular columns standing on pedestals and bell shape motif constructed below it (figure 24) and an inverted double tier of lobes in the frieze. The bastion is augmented with octagonal dome and floral goblets representing baroque architectural feature. Moreover the dome is crowned with wrought iron railing representing colonial feature.

Interior

The entrance door of the Central Library is composed in equilateral gothic arch, double door festooned with enamel paint (figure 24). The rise of the arch is bedecked with transparent mirror and wrought iron design composed in square and hexagonal formation. There are two six feet wide arches on either sides of the door at the border of the floor pattern. The best part in the entrance door is that one can see the main recessed arch of the main central hall from the entrance door (figure 25).

The entrance foyer comprised width of 35.5 by 24 feet. It has counters for visitors. There are no decorative tiles only cemented floors with a dado of three feet. The gallery is decorated with old pictures of nawab sadiq Muhammad khan V.

The main hall is an oblong huge hall with a dramatic arrangement of double tier equilateral arches placed one above another and segmented with double tier huge columns representing Greco Roman architecture feature. There is no supporting elements in the central hall (figure 26). The width of the hall is 35.5 feet with a length of 92 feet supported by oblong galleries on the either sides. The width of the gallery is 13 feet (figure 27) installed with huge wooden bookracks. There are eighteen double arches on either side on the ground floor.

The front wall of the hall comprises double tier equilateral arches (figure 28). The central arch is recessed and supported by double tier pilasters and decorated with a portrait of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Overall the hall has forty eight arches and the height of the roof is thirty two feet. The ceiling is festooned with twelve eight petals flowers which may be used as the base for chandeliers which exist no more. There is a dentil frieze on the ceiling of hall. Each arch on the upper floor is bedecked with wrought iron railing with nine segments representing stylized designing and supported by brackets on either side, to support the upper portion (figure 29). The floor of the hall is cemented and well maintained, decorated with a band of two feet laid on the all four sides of the hall.

There are nine rooms on the either side of the hall equilateral arch window and doors. The width of the door is 4.7 feet with a height of 13 feet. Each room is 36 feet wide, the two bastions on the either side placed at the back are entirely augmented with staircases on either sides which leads to upper floor. Currently the upper floor is segmented in different portion of newspaper, *Seerat ul Nabi* and Quran manuscript gallery.

Decorative Elements

A standout aspect of the Central Library is the clever incorporation of several decorative elements thoughtfully scattered across the building to depict the aesthetic value of the structure by amalgamating them on one space. The octagonal tower, and square bastions with equilateral arches, gothic arches, coupled columns, decorative railings, pediments, quadri-lobes, acanthus leaf design in

different sizes and significantly solid goblet representing phases of a flowering plant (figure 30). This creative approach was achieved by integrating a range of ornamental elements, with the goblets taking center stage. Within the Central Library, these goblets represent the symbolic influence of colonial architectural styles on the local architecture of Bahawalpur. The progression of a flower's growth stages symbolizes the deepening relationship between the Nawab and the British was the reason of the evolution of indosarcentic features in the architecture of the library.

Conservation and Preservation of Sadiq Reading Library

A variety of utilitarian structures in Bahawalpur, showcasing the principles of colonialism, have undergone transformations through alterations, repairs, renovations, and expansions over the past hundred years. These modifications encompass conservation and preservation efforts aimed at maintaining their value and uniqueness. Essentially, conservation and preservation focus on safeguarding and restoring monuments to preserve their original state as much as possible. Therefore, the main goal of conservation and preservation is to safeguard the heritage against loss and degradation, ensuring its availability for future generations. These are some following considerations which must be considered while repairing any monument: Originality/authenticity of the building must be maintained, Symmetry and harmony of the plan must be retained, Architectural style must not be damaged. Artistic elements must not be deteriorated, Individuality of features must not be suffered and technical faults must be avoided. The front façade specifically portico is painted several time due to which the originality of the motifs in railing is deteriorated (figure 32). But fortunately the backyard of the library is much preserved and the motifs can be seen clearly, representing the difference of preservation.

Conclusion

The Central Library serves as a notable example of the architectural amalgamation that flourished during the tenure of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V. It is concluded that design reflects a blend of colonial and Indo-Saracenic styles, alongside Mughal, Gothic, Greco-Roman, and Baroque Italian architectural features, all meticulously adapted to endure the demanding climate of Bahawalpur. This adaptation is evident in the use of equilateral arches paired with Gothic windows on either side, which promote cross ventilation to fulfill practical requirements. The deliberate configuration of equilateral arches with distant double columns in the colonnades, along with the inclusion of swan motif railings and Greek pediments, further enriches the structure. Additionally, the presence of engaged decorative fluted pilasters in the portico and rear sections exemplifies Greco-Roman architecture, while solid goblets embody Baroque elements, harmonizing with the Indo-Saracenic style. The combination of these varied decorative features not only meets structural demands but also significantly enhances the aesthetic value of the building. Moreover, ongoing preservation and conservation efforts have been implemented to maintain the library's authenticity, beauty, and coherence, thereby protecting this extraordinary heritage for future generations.



Figure 1. Front Facade of the Sadiq Library 1924.
Source: Picture by Author.

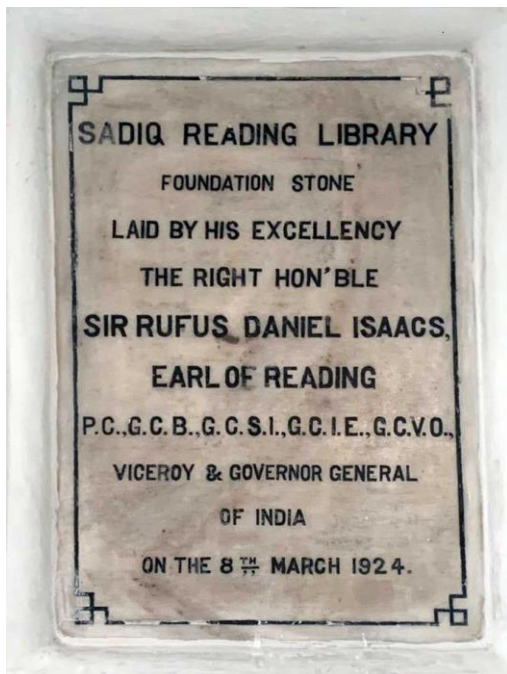


Figure 2. Foundation stone
Source: Picture by Author.

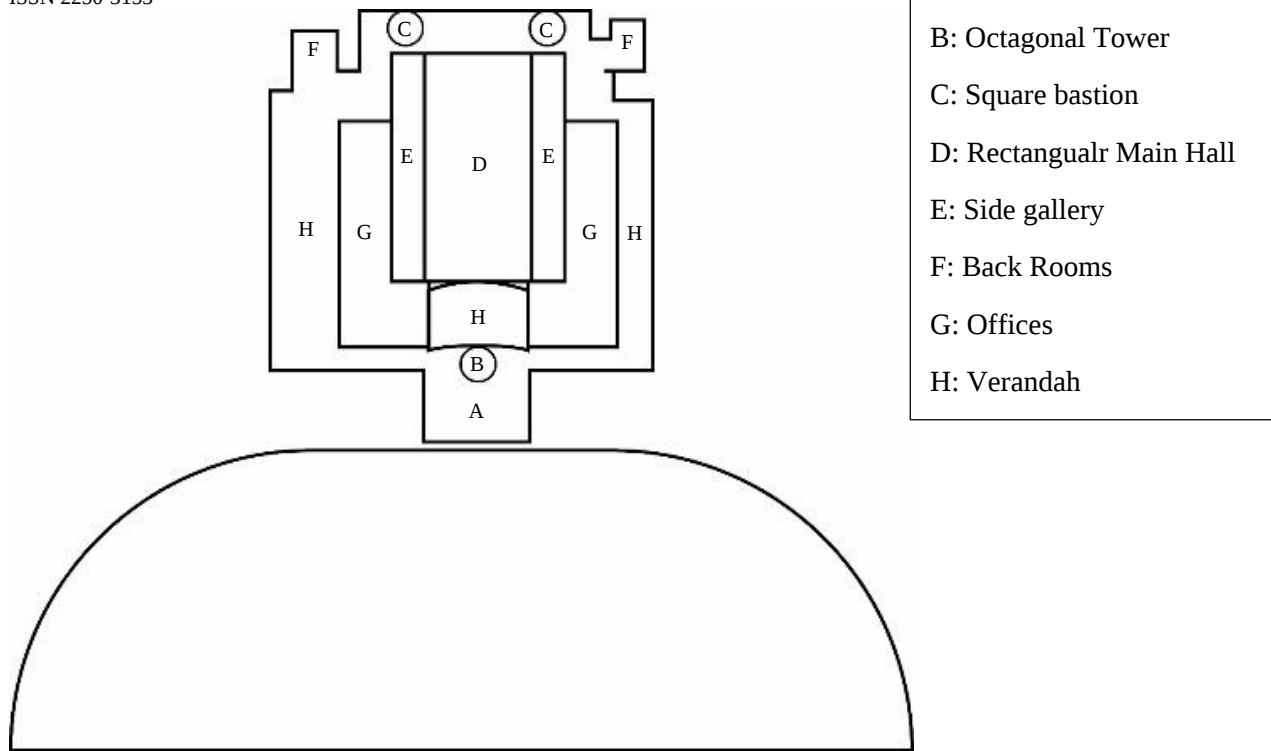


Figure 3. Ground Plan



Figure 4. Portico of the Central Library 1924.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 5 . rectangular panel on the railing of portico.
Source: Picture by Author.

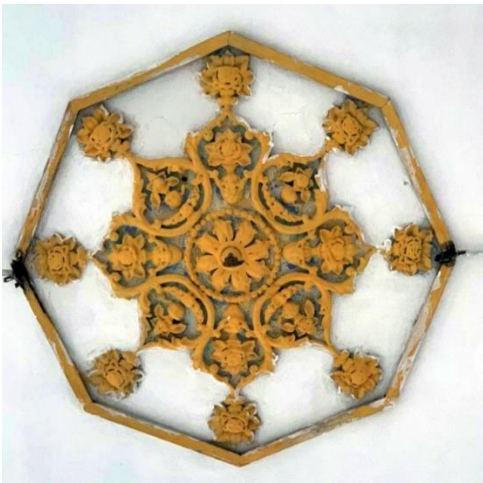


Figure 6. Stucco decoration in the ceiling of the portico
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 7. kylix
Source: <https://bcma.bowdoin.edu/antiquity/objects/1913-2/>



Figure 8. Arcade of gothic arches in veranda.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 9. double Columns with acanthus leaves on the impost.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 5. The module and border of the floor pattern.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure11. Floor pattern of Noor Mahal.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 12. Floor pattern of BVH Bahawalpur.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 13. Octagonal tower of the central library.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 14. Old construction plan of the Library.
Source. Gulzar Ahmad Ghouri personal collections

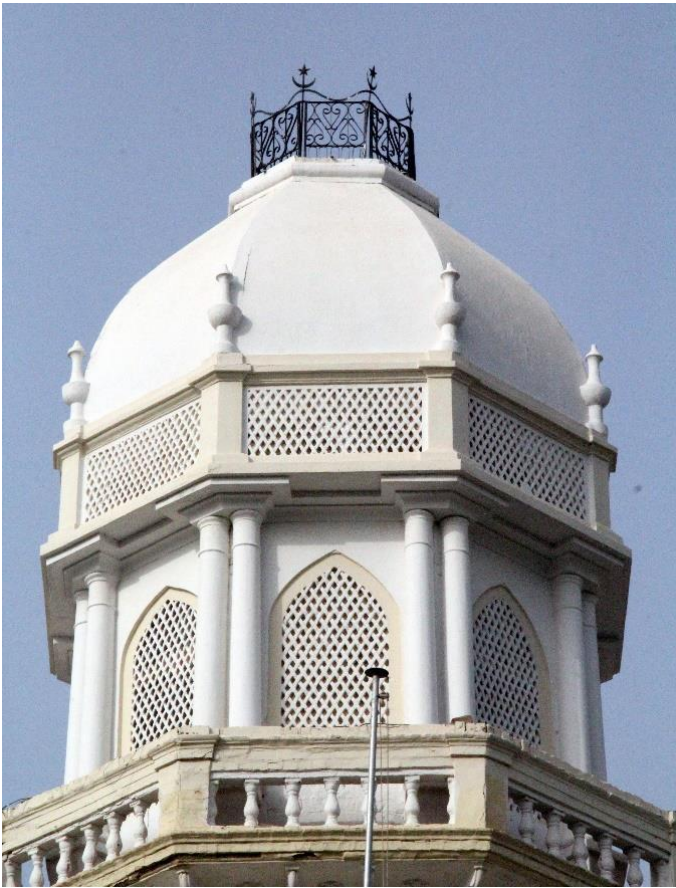


Figure 15. The dome of the central library octagonal tower.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 16. Quatrefoil of the octagonal tower.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 17. Quatrefoil on the central bastion of Noor Mahal. (1886)
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 18. Daulat Khana (1881)
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure19. Sadiq Garh Palace. (1884)
Source. <https://royalarchives.com/sadiq-garh-palace/>



Figure 20. Noor Mahal (1886).
Source. <https://accidentallywesanderson.com/places/noor-mahal/>



Figure 21. Carlo Maderno Santa Susanna , Rome (1507-1603)

Source: <https://cobaltviolet.blogspot.com/2013/02/santa-suzanna-and-santa-maria-della.html>



Figure 22. Blenheim Palace ,Oxfordshire (1705-1722)

Source: <https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/oxfordshire/houses/Blenheim.htm>



Figure 23. Square bastion of the Central Library.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure24. Gothic arch window of the square bastions.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 25. Entrance door of the Central Library.
Source: Picture by Author.

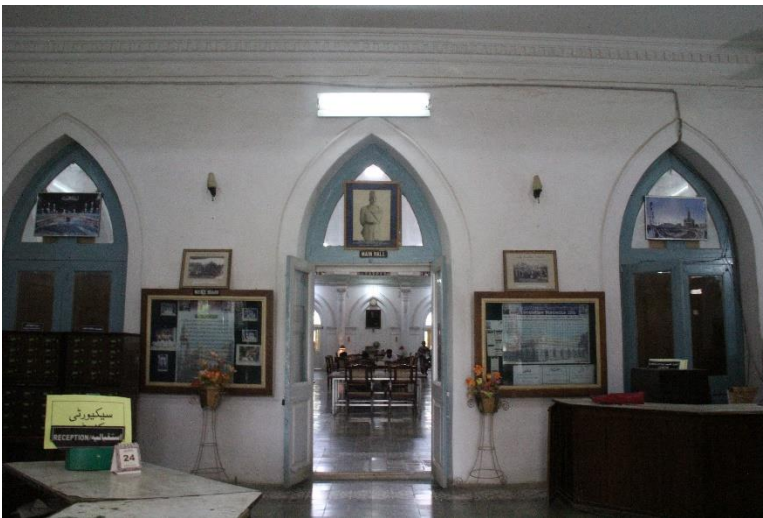


Figure 26. Entrance Into The Main Hall Of The Library.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 27. Main hall of the Central Library.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 28. Side gallery of the central hall.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 29. Double arches in the internal hall.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 30. Iron railing of the upper storey.
Source: Picture by Author.



Figure 31. Display of goblets on terabeated roof of the central library.

Source. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1392615/bahawalpur-central-library-treasure-trove-bibliophiles>

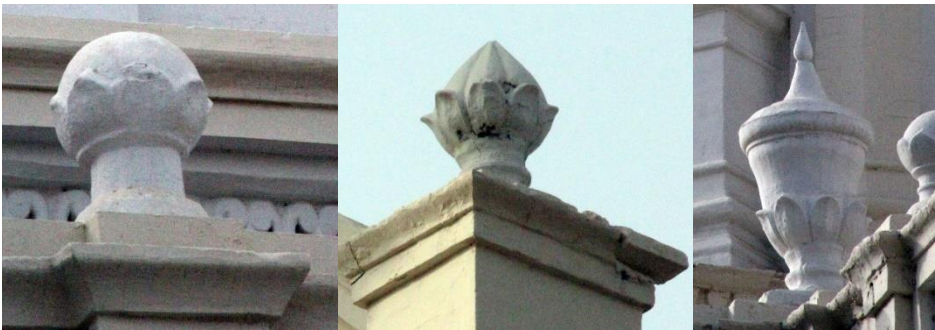


Figure 32. stages of blooming flower in central library.

Source: Picture by Author.

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