

Post Mutiny Institutional Buildings of India: A Visual Language of Reconciliation

Authors : Aruna Ramani Grover

Abstract : In 1857, the British army in Bengal rose in mutiny. The outcome of a yearlong stifle was the abolition of the East India Company and the establishment of Crown rule in 1958. Despite being a political democracy back home, with the declaration of Queen Victoria as Empress of India, the British established themselves as imperialistic successors to the Mughals in India. With the institution of the Crown's role in the sub-continent, there was a serious endeavor for systematic governance. This led to infrastructure development and the creation of institutions as well. The outcome was many public buildings like courts, railway- stations and headquarters, senates, post offices, banks, libraries, memorial halls, museums, memorials, theatres, government colleges, residential schools and clock towers. These were built in the old and emerging urban settlements of the sub-continent. In the realm of architecture, like all political masters of the past, the British architects, too, encountered the living tradition of the sub-continent. A bewildering plethora of buildings in various climatic zones, using local materials and crafted with tools and techniques of the region by local craftsmen, had to be understood and assimilated. The 19th-century British architects who built in India designed institutional buildings that were functional and responded to the needs of the user. In visual terms, however, it was a completely different story. Using the manifest elements of the complex and layered indigenous tradition, they fashioned buildings to create an architecture of reconciliation. Treating the traditional architecture as a pattern book, finished buildings were served up to the local population colored by their understanding of tradition. This paper will discuss a series of building some of which are the Senate House and Law Courts at Madras, the Municipal Building and Gateway of India in Bombay, the Muir College in Allahabad, Mayo College Ajmer, the Mubarak Mahal in Jaipur, demonstrate how a visual language of reconciliation was created.

Keywords : infrastructure, British architects, tradition, pattern book, reconciliation

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