

Modern Indian Architecture
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Lecture: 3

Pre-independence - Part 1: Indo-Saracenic Architecture

Hello students, like I said last time, when I was covering with you the overall structure of what we will be studying in this semester. Let us begin with the architecture pre-independence in India. This is the part 1.

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Introduction

- South asian region composed of varied worlds – cultures, belief systems
- Each civilization that flourished here **continues to exert its influence**
- **Collective memory** of so many communities and multi-layered cultures

Let me take you back further, South Asian region to which India belongs is composed of varied cultures, belief systems and each civilization that has flourished in India continues to exert its influence, even in modern times and particularly so, pre independence. This is a collective memory of many communities and multi layered cultures that we see in our country even today.

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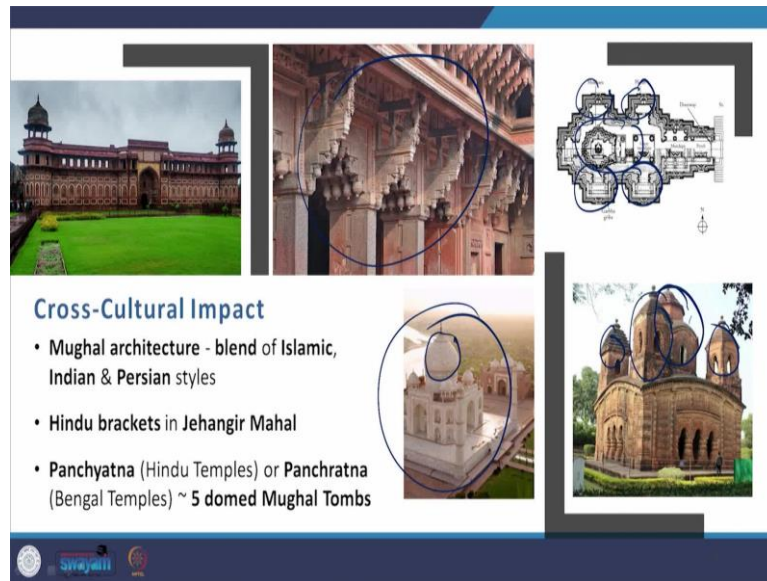


Now, if we look at the cross cultural impact of foreign cultures on India, let us give or take an example of cuisine. How foreign cuisines have impacted Indian cuisine, let us take the biryani, many of you must be fond of it.

So, the Persian Cuisine was brought in or other the biryani was brought in from the Persian culture into India by the Mughals and it was called there as Persian Birian which came to be known as the biryani in India, Birian basically means fried before cooking the other rather what the North Indian. So, many of you would be more familiar with this, the samosa so that was called as the Sanbosag which came from the empires in the Iranian plateau. And it was traditionally filled with meat, spices and dried fruits, but its Indian counterpart originated in India and came to be called as the samosa.

So, what do we see here is that these cultures came into India and then they took on an Indian flavor, we see a very similar impact on Indian architecture. We of course, we see the impact all across the culture, we see the impact in our clothing, we see the impact in our languages, we see the impact, like I said, in our food habits or in our cuisine and of course, in our building. So, the cross cultural impact was like Mughal architecture which is a blend of Islamic Indian and Persian styles of architecture.

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Like for example, we see Hindu brackets in the Jehangir Mahal, which is a part of the Agra fort, we also see the concept of the Panchyatna that is the four subsidiaries shrines, the main shrine in the Hindu temple, we see this is the main shrine and then there are the four shrines.

And this concept was also included is a part of Mughal architecture or the Panchratna that we see in the Bengal temples, where we see the main dome in the middle, so to speak and then there are the four subsidiaries on the four corners. And we see a similar thing, for example, in the Taj Mahal, where we have the central dome and these are the four Chaatris on the four corners of the Taj Mahal.

So, this five dome, the Mughal tombs, the Taj Mahal also has the impact of the Panchyatna and the Panchratna in it. So, we see this cross cultural impact, an idea coming from the west or other from the Middle East, so to speak and then coming into India and merging with Indian architecture.

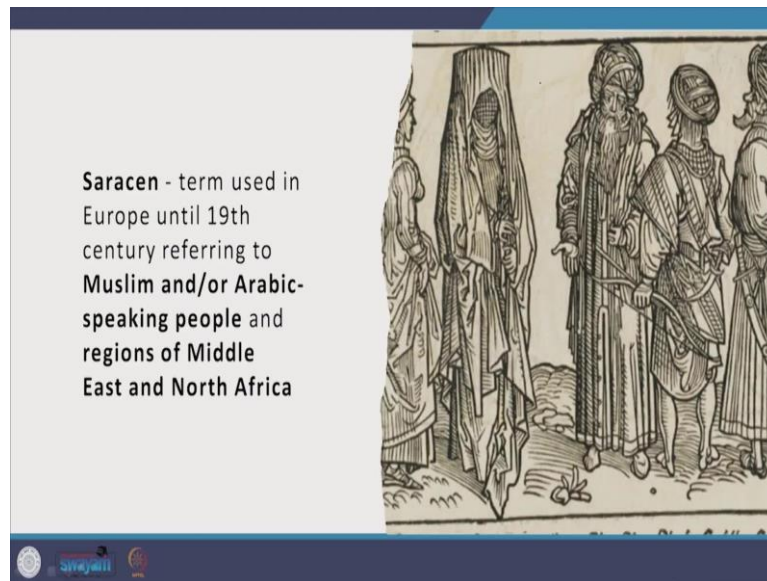
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And so we come to Indo-saracenic architecture, in Indo-saracenic architecture, as I mentioned last time, is an amalgamation of Indo Islamic and Indian architecture with Neo-Gothic and Neo-classical styles of 19th century Britain, broadly 19th century Europe with typical western building layout of Western plants.

So, Neo- Gothic basically means the revival or the new form of Gothic architecture, a new classical means new form of classical architecture and we will look at that again. So, for example, when we look at the chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai, it is a typical example of Indo-saracenic architecture and so is the Umaid bhavan palace in Rajasthan. So, both these buildings have taken from Neo-classical architecture and blended it or fused it with indo Islamic or traditional Indian elements, but the overall plan layout is rested.

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Now the word Saracen is term used in Europe until 19 century referring to Muslim and or Arab speaking people and regions of Middle East and North Africa. Now, to give you an idea of how this amalgamation works, let us take the example of the Capitol Building of United States in Washington. Now, this Capitol building is designed in the neoclassical style that is the new form of classical architecture, in western in Europe and even in the United States in the 18th century.

Now, this is merged with Rajasthani architectural elements and we see that merger in this particular building the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur. So, we find that these Chaatris we find them here, we find this Chaatri we find it here and these arches that you see, we find them here.

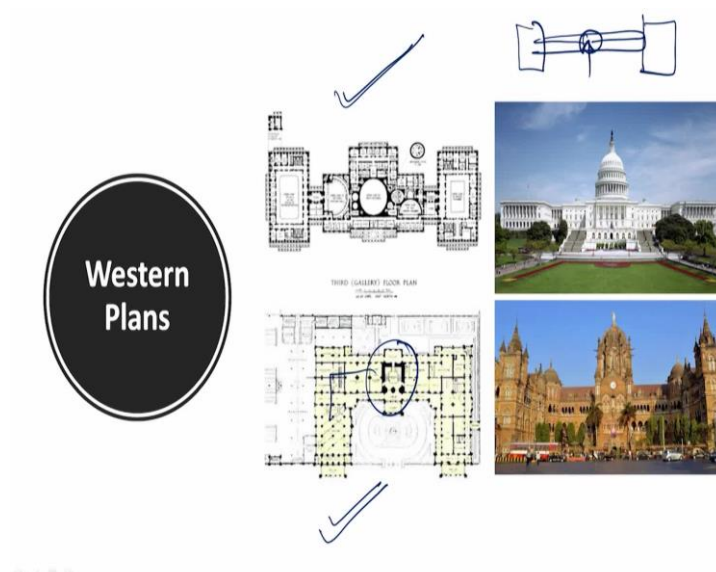
So, these elements of traditional Indian architecture, borrowed from in this case from Rajasthani architectural elements are merged with Western planning, as in the capital building and therefore, we get the Albert Hall Museum in the Indo saracenic style.

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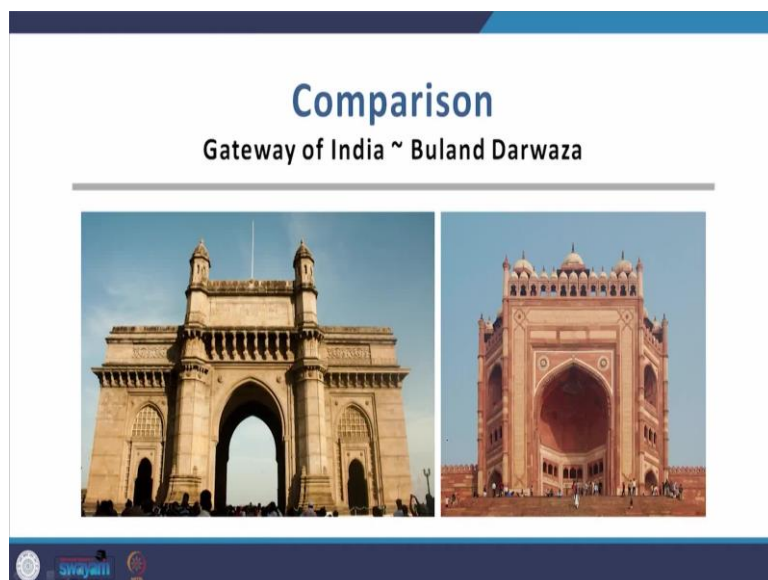
So, this is a revival architectural style, which was mostly used by British architects in India in the late 19th century, which are buildings in public buildings and government buildings designed in British Raj and palaces made by the rulers of the princely states. Examples are spread all over there is the Raza library in Rampur in UP, there is the Lakshmi Niwas palace in Bikaner, there is the B.B.D. Bagh in Kolkata and then there is the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur.

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Now, when I said about the Western planning part of it, let us again compare the CST, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus with the Capital building, this is the plan of the Capital building. Now, if you compare it with the plan of CST, this is very closely similar, it is got a something like an Edge plan or a Bi-nuclear plan, where there are these components on either side, there is a central the porch from where we enter into the building and then we move to identical parts of the building on either side, we see that happening in the capital building, we see that happening in the CST.

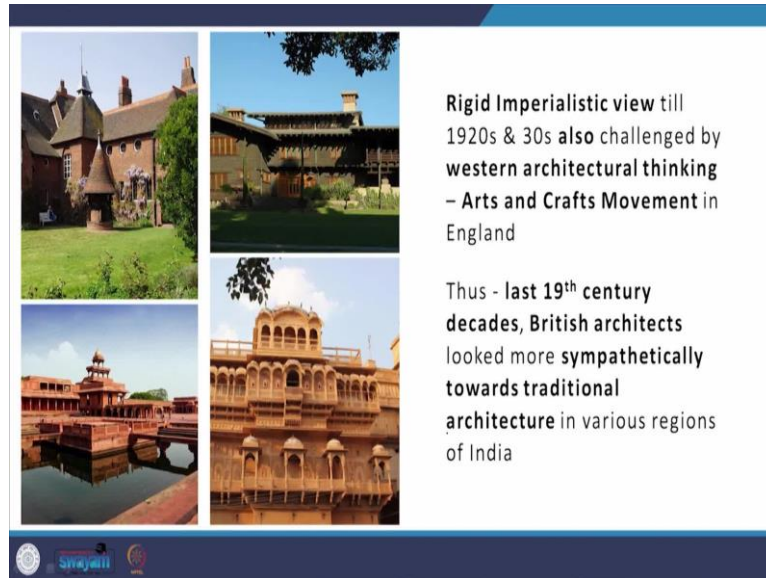
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This was commonly followed. Now the Indian part of it is imitated from Rajasthani, Mughal and Maratha architecture from India. For example, another comparison, comparing the Gateway of India which was made in the British Raj with the Buland darwaza of Fatehpur

Sikri and you find that the Gateway of India is a fusion of traditional Indian elements from Mughal architecture, there are the brackets, there are the minarets and they are all merging together in the Gateway of India. And we find that correlation with Mughal architecture.

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Now, just to go a little ahead. And that is in the 1920s and 30s. This rigid, imperialistic view that classical architecture or neoclassical architecture was the dominant architecture of the British Raj was challenged by Western architectural thinking, even in India. And that happened parallelly to the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. The Arts and Crafts movement is one of the many strands of Art Nouveau or let us not put it that way, let us just say that there is the arts and crafts in Britain. And then there is the Art Nouveau in mainland Europe, which is under various names in different countries of Europe.

Thus, in the last part of the 19th century, British architects looked more sympathetically towards traditional architecture in the various regions of India, because a similar reaction was happening in the West, under the Arts and Crafts movement.

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Arts and Crafts Movement

- Attempt to reform design and decoration in mid-19th century Britain
- Reaction against decline in craftsmanship due to industrialisation
- Return to handcrafted, artisan-made goods, incl. wood furniture, tapestries, wallpaper, & stained glass

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Now, what is the Arts and Crafts movement just take you back, you might have already studied it. It is an attempt to reform design and decoration in mid-19th century Britain and why? Because, it was a reaction against the decline of craftsmanship due to industrialization.

Now, that is in itself is a vast topic, but just to put it in a nutshell, post industrial revolution because of sudden mass production of goods in factories. Previously, goods that were to be manufactured for a very small number of people. The elite class could now be manufactured in large quantities and be available at much cheaper prices for the common masses and the masses were not like for example, because of the influx of population from rural to urban areas, the entire demographic was changing, middle class was rising.

These are people who are working in the factories who are working in the coal mines, working in the warehouses or working in the shopping malls. So, the vast employment opportunity in the cities.

So, the demographic shift from rural to urban areas in Europe, in the post Industrial Revolution 18th century, 19th century. As a result of that, industrialization because mass production of goods happened, the craftsmen was sidelined and the industrialist had neither the time nor the patience to make goods that were of fine craftsmanship origin. As a result of that a lot of goods were manufactured that was a poor craftsman quality or what do you call it craft quality. And the glimpse of that happened in 1853 - In the great exhibition that was held in London, where a vast number of machine made goods were displayed.

It was supposed to be a grand representation of the British industry. But the anti-reaction to that was that many of the people with fine sensibilities of craftsmanship, could see that these goods were really poor in craft quality.

And one of them was William Morris. And as a result of this, there was a return to handcrafted, artisan made goods, including wooden furniture, tapestry, wallpaper, stained glass. William Morris himself and he was to establish his own office, he could not find the right furniture that he really needed.

And so, he manufactured his own. And these two are examples of William Morris his own furniture design. So, there was returned to fine craftsmanship, which was, which had steadily declined because of industrial revolution.

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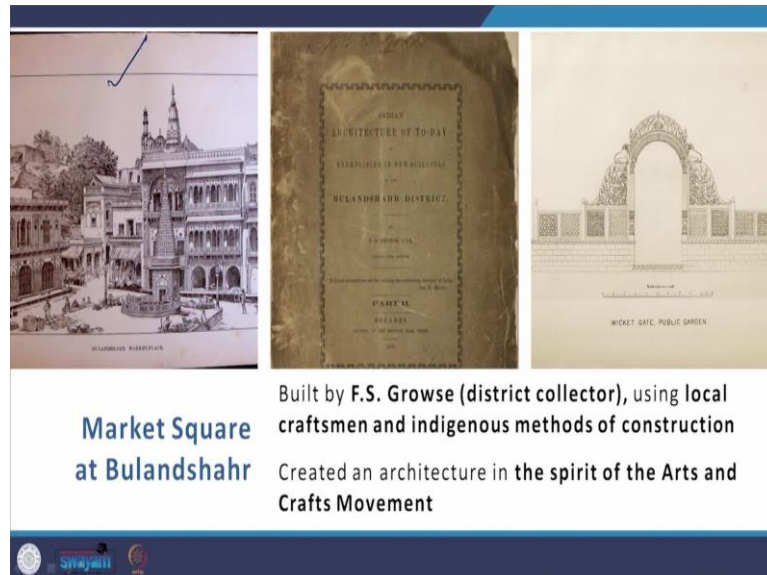


Now, this was also seen in architecture, that rather than making the eclectic build forms that came up in the post industrial revolution, which were a mix of Neo-classical, Neo Gothic, Renaissance and all merged together, though the structural formwork was coming was becoming new, because steel was being used in construction, we do not have time to go into that, as a result of that these eclectic buildings that were also manufactured in parallel to the industrial production of goods, there was an anti-reaction against that also. And return to traditional European or Western architecture.

And so we find it here, for example, this is a traditional building in England. And this is an example of arts and crafts building. So, you can see the similarity in the way the building looks. Similarly, this is the traditional part of England and compare it with this building made

in the arts and crafts times. So, you see, there is the return back to the traditional roots of architecture in England.

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And so in India, these British architects started looking at traditional Indian architecture most sympathetically. For example, F. S. Growse was the district collector of Bulandshahr, he designed the Market Square of Bulandshahr even published a book or rather an article on this called the architecture of today, exemplified in new buildings Bulandshahr district and these are the pictures of the district that he had designed.

And he had used local craftsmen and indigenous methods of construction. And he created an architecture which was in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement and what was the spirit? Going back to traditional roots in Europe to their roots or rather in England to their routes and in India, to traditional Indian roots and this is the foundation of indo saracenic architecture.

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Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob (1841 –1917)

British Army officer
...architect .. best known
- Indian public buildings
he designed in Indo-Saracenic style

Noted for his respect for local building traditions and skills

For contemporary architects – **Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details (1890-1913)** – numerous drawings – 12 vols.

Patronage – **Maharaja of Jeypore**

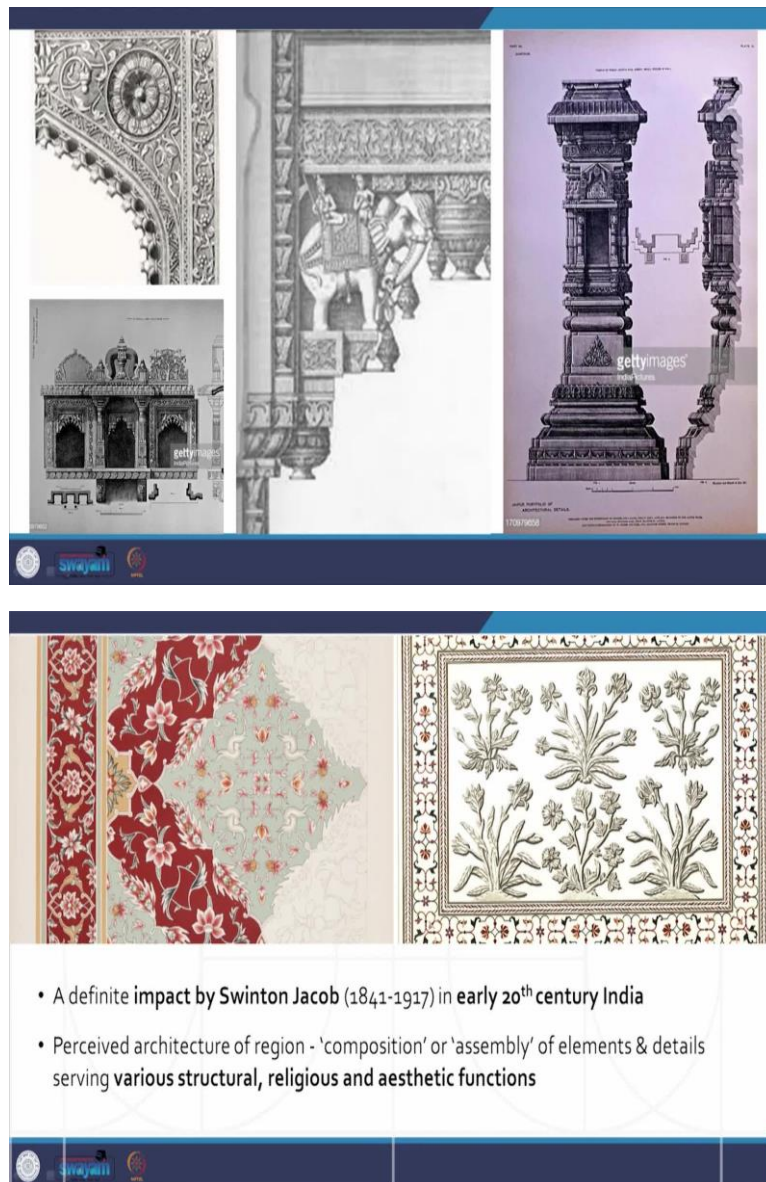
Intended to serve as a **record of architectural heritage** of Jeypore State and north-west region of Rajasthan

Would "**rescue (such) designs from oblivion and give them new life.**" - *Colonel S.S. Jacob*

One of the very important people behind Indo-saracenic the growth of the Indo-saracenic movement is Samuel Swinton Jacob from he was from 1841 to 1917, a British Army officer and an architect. He was best known for Indian public buildings done in the Indo-saracenic style and he had great respect for the local building traditions and skills of India.

And he was commissioned by the Maharaja of Jeypore actually put together a portfolio of architectural details which came to be called as the Jeypore portfolio of architectural details, numerous drawings 12 volumes, which were intended to serve as a record of the architectural heritage of Jeypore State in the Northwest region of Rajasthan. And his desire was, as he himself said, to rescue such design from oblivion and give them a new life and how by incorporating them into new buildings.

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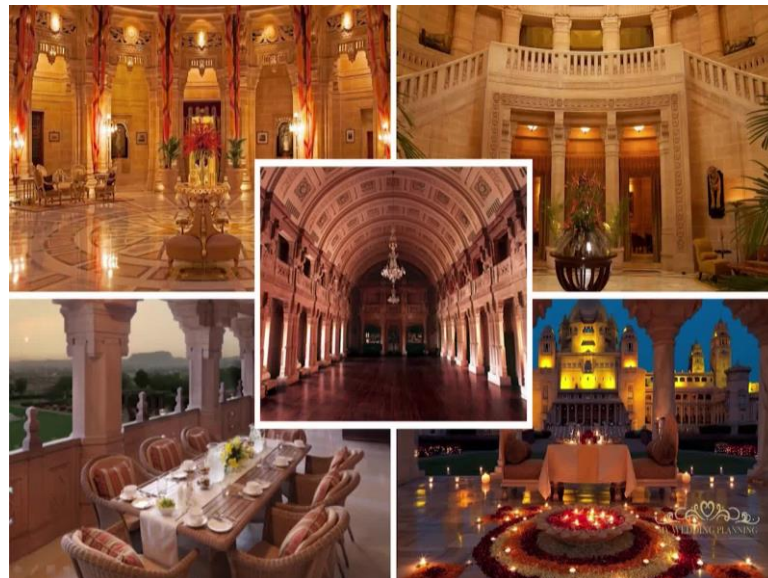
This is an example of the Jeypore portfolio and the many details that were put together in this or for example here. So, this had a definite impact in early 20th century Indian architecture. And it perceived the architecture of the region as a composition or assembly of elements in details serving various structural, religious and aesthetic functions. So, many Indian architectural features were incorporated into his building designs and he along with F. S. Growse became the pioneer of Indo-saracenic architecture in India. These are four buildings designed by him.

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And, the other people also were a part of this buildings under Indo-saracenic style. There was HV like Lanchester, whose work we see here the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur. And it has the influence of Rajasthani architecture. There are the Chaatris and the jarokhas and of course the evidence of 19th century European planning.

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These are some of the glimpses of this interior of Umaid Bhawan Palace. As you can see, it is a beautiful building. It is very different from the run of the mill, public works department buildings being made by the British in India. PWD was established in India by the British in 1854. And there was a standard format that they evolved. These buildings had a very standard

design structure or format and they were very, very similar to each other and more of an engineering endeavor rather than a design and architectural endeavor.

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- **Official' style** of British Raj at turn of century
- **Application of Jacob's documentation** for an architecture with composite identity – British and Indian
- **Validation** of colonial boundaries
- **Sense of unity**

Now, this Indo-saracenic architecture became the official style of the British Raj at the turn of the century. Now I will just a caveat here. Please understand that the overall volume of endorse arsenic buildings, vis-a-vis the volume of overall work done by the British, particularly through the PWD Indo-saracenic work was not that voluminous, but its impact was substantial. Because some of the most iconic buildings of the time, the buildings that have remained with us and that are remembered that are visited by us, the power part of our tourism industry, that are being used by us in India today, these are in the Indo-saracenic style.

And this is the application of Jacobs documentation for an architecture which had a composite identity in Britain, but has both British and Indian identity rather, I should say, Western and traditional Indian identity fused together.

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There is also the fact of the validation of colonial boundaries and his sense of unity of the British Empire. What do I mean by that? Look at this slide. How do we validate our national boundaries? How do we call ourselves one nation, we have one flag, we have one armed forces. We have the same currency across the country. We use the same passport, we have the same Aadhaar card, and we have the same architectural heritage. We have the same railways connecting us throughout the country. And we have a same administrative structure that governs our country.

These various aspects, as I have highlighted in this slide, unite us together as one nation, India. So, when we look at our flag, like for example, a few days back, we won the Thomas cup. So yesterday night when there was an interview going on, the players who won they said how proud they felt when the national anthem was played, because only for the team that gets the goal that really wins gets to have the anthem played. And that highlights the unity of our country.

The anthem, the flag, the currency, the armed forces or the Armed Forces uniform, the administrative service the railways, the passport, the Aadhaar card or the documentation that you have unites us together as one nation.

So, wherever you go in the country, we all whether we speak different languages or dialects. We have different food habits. We have different cultural value systems, but we get united together because of these following factors. By this, we know that we are one nation, the British tried to do exactly the same. You see they were outsiders ruling us.

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Now they had to validate their presence in India over a people who were very different from them. And as a result of that the Indo-saracenic style was a counterpoint to imperialism and colonialism, or the Imperial and colonial style of architecture that was there earlier.

And the desire, then was to be one amongst the natives, to cover up the differences in our ideology and architecture through the application of local and traditional elements. Please understand, I am not saying that the intent of Swinton Jacob or F. S. Growse was to validate this presence. I do not think that is true. I think their intentions were true.


They were taking ideas from the Arts and Crafts movement and implementing it or making a part of the Indian architectural landscape. But the British looked at it as an opportunity to give us this sense of unity.



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Indo Saracenic Architecture

But only superficial attempt - though buildings made to look Indian, **not** Indian 'at heart';


Still European or Colonial at core wrt **space planning, concepts & structure**





 

But it was only a superficial attempt. Because though the buildings were made to look Indian, they were not Indian at heart. They were still European or colonial at the core with respect to space planning, concepts and structure.

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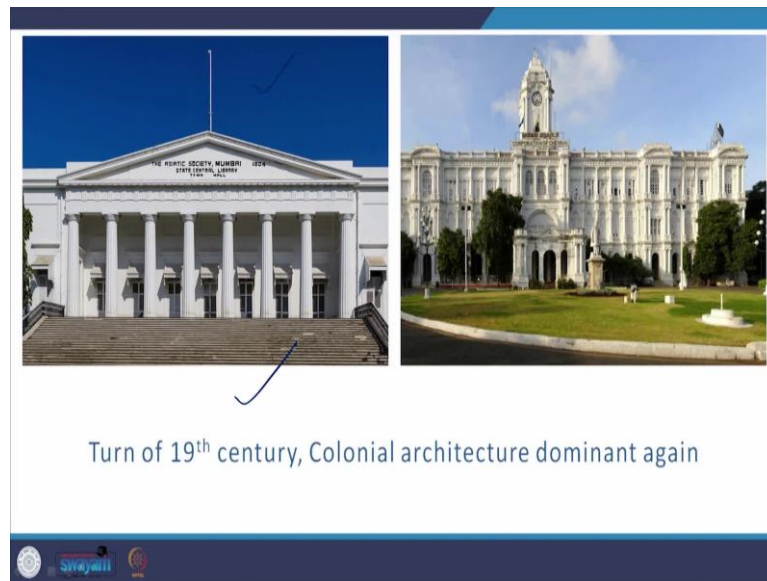


Indo-Saracenic style began to fade around 1920s; influence **restricted to specific official commissions or with local patrons** like princely states

So, Indo-saracenic architecture began to fade away in the 1920s. The influence of Indo-saracenic architecture was restricted to specific official commissions or with local patron of princely states.

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By the turn of the 19th century, colonial architecture became dominant, again, with buildings like this, the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, which is a typical class, Neo-classical building or this building.

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Now, what is Neoclassicism, we just go back and just recapitulated in a moment, Neo means new. So, Neoclassicism means New-classical or the revival of classical by this Greek and Roman architecture in 18th century Europe.

And therefore this evolution is based on classical buildings, for example, the Greek temple. So, you see this Greek temple coming in the Pantheon in Paris, you find it in the White House

and you find it in this building in Europe. So, this is the revitalization of classical architecture came to be called as Neoclassicism in England, in Europe.

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Neoclassicism

Highly rational,
conceptually perfect
reflection of a new age
governed by reason

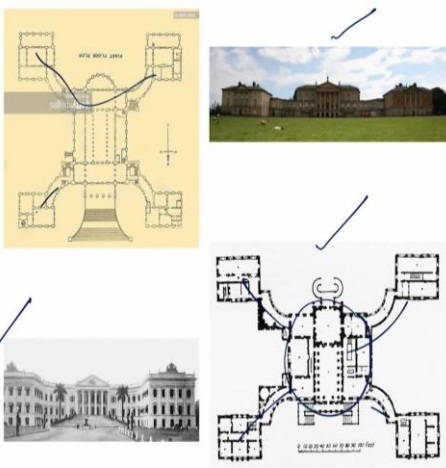
Thrived in USA & Europe +
major cities



**Colonialism
(Neoclassical
Architecture)**

Raj Bhawan,
Kolkata, Charles
Wyatt, 1803

Kedelston Hall, UK,
Robert Adam, 1765

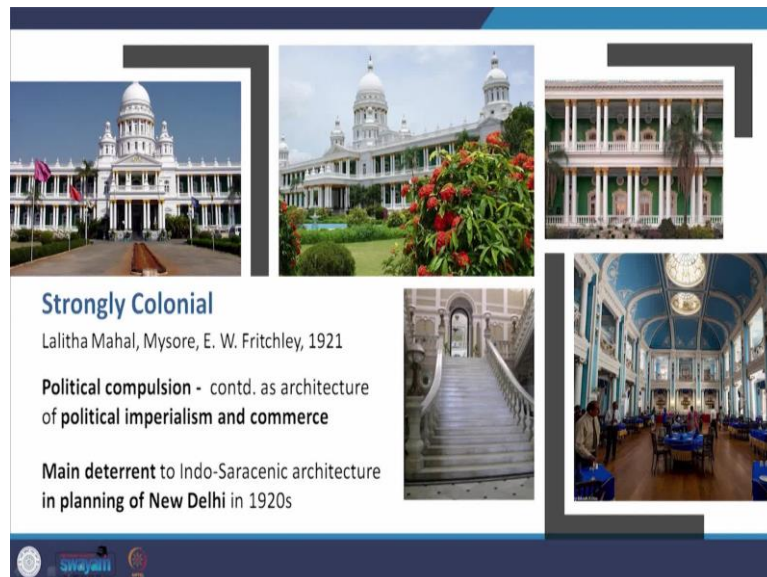


This was highly rational just as classical architecture was conceptually perfect and a reflection of a new age it was governed by reason, thrived in the US and Europe and major cities of the USA and Europe.

So, when we look at how colonial architecture appeared in India, way back in the early years of the British Raj, we find it coming as neoclassical architecture. For example, very typical example of the Raj Bhawan. This is the Raj Bhawan. And this is the Kedelston Hall designed by Robert Adam. Raj Bhawan was designed in 1803. Kedelston Hall was designed in UK, in the Neoclassicism phase in 1765.

Now, look at the plan, not only are the buildings very similar to each other, they have this classical appearance, the plan is the most important thing you need to look at. This is the plan of kedelston Hall. And this is the plan of the Raj Bhawan very, very similar to each other having one central area and there are four wings coming out from the central area.

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Then, after the Indo-saracenic revival or the appearance of the Indo-saracenic style. They went back again to a strongly colonial style, for example, the Lalitha Mahal, in Mysore by Fritchley in 1921. And why political compulsion, you see by this time, the Indian National struggle for independence really picked up the freedom struggle was really going strong, particularly with the coming in of Mahatma Gandhi into India.

And as a result of that, they found that to continue this colonial architecture was politically expedient for them, it was important for them to go back again to a colonial imprint on India, the political imperialism and commerce.

And therefore, this was the main detriment to the coming of Indo-saracenic architecture in the planning of New Delhi in the 1920s. Had this process not happened, probably New Delhi would have more a flavor of Indo-saracenic architecture than the colonial flavor that it had under Lutyens and Herbert Baker.

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Railways – Lifeline of the Raj

- Another vital imprint of colonialism
- Vast road and rail network stretching across the country - persistent reminder of imperialism's physical spread

CST, Mumbai

Lucknow Charbagh Station

Kacheguda Station, Hyderabad

Another important aspect of the Raj or to validate this unity of India was railways which was their lifeline. This is what the rail network looked like in the Indian subcontinent in the British Raj and it was a vital imprint of colonialism in India, a vast road and rail network stretching across the country, which is a persistent reminder of imperialism physical spread in India. So, for example, these stations all over the country, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai, the Lucknow Charbagh Station, or the Kacheguda station in Hyderabad or the Howrah Bridge.

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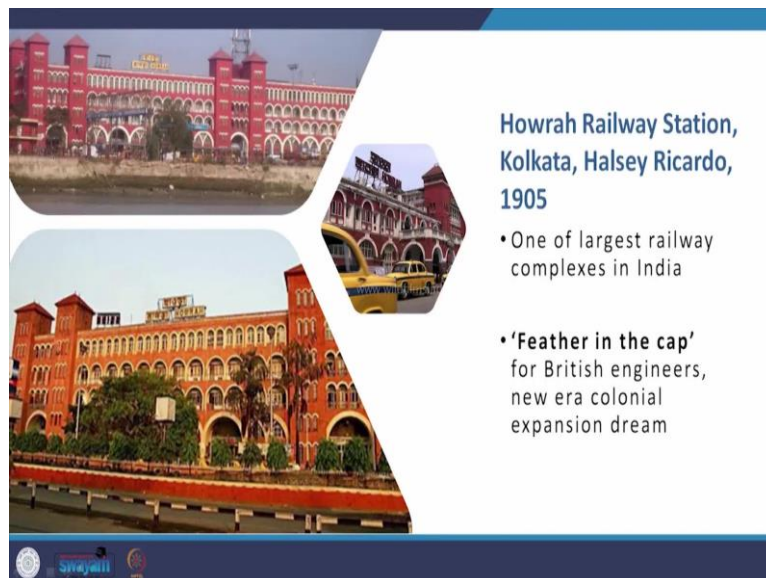
Howrah Bridge
The Steel Structure

#dry photography



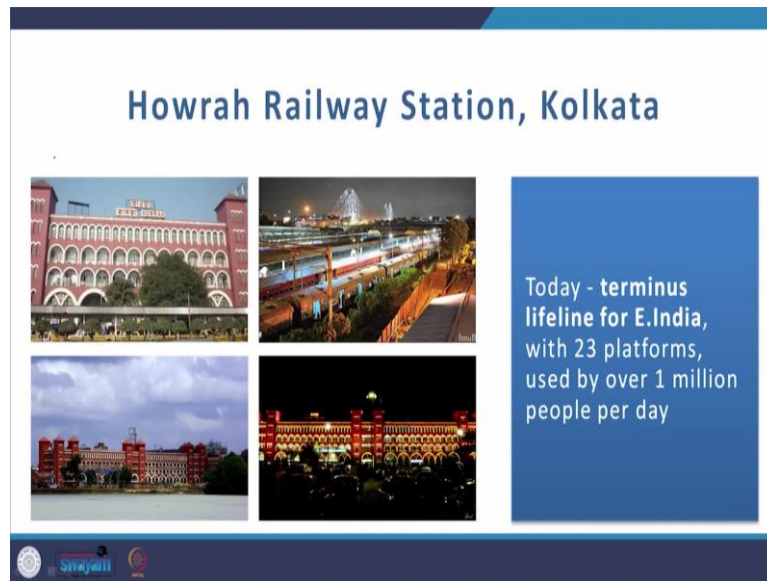
Now, I am just putting this as a note in between, because we need to talk about the Howrah station. Howrah bridge as a steel structure, why is it important, because of the coming in of steel bridges in 19th century England, because of the rise of the use of iron in construction. So, this happened in England, it happened in Europe, it happened in America. And therefore, this came with the Howrah Bridge in India parallelly.

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**Howrah Railway Station,
Kolkata, Halsey Ricardo,
1905**

- One of largest railway complexes in India
- **'Feather in the cap'** for British engineers, new era colonial expansion dream



And then, just beyond is the Howrah railway station, which is designed by Halsey Ricardo in 1905, which is one of the largest railway complexes in India, which was a feather in the cap for British engineers. And the new era colonial expansion is dream that they had.

This today is a terminus which is the lifeline of East India. And it has got 23 platforms which is used by over a million people every day. So, this is the story of Indo-saracenic architecture in India and the revival of colonial architecture, the reasons behind both of them, to put it in a nutshell. Indo-saracenic architecture, how is it different from colonial architecture. Indo-saracenic architecture was a fusion, the fusion of traditional Indian architecture and Neo-classical or Neo-Gothic architecture into a completely new entity called Indo-saracenic architecture.

Whereas colonial architecture was not a fusion, it was just putting together of predominantly Neo-classical building with certain additions of traditional Indian elements. And we will come to that with the specific study of New Delhi under Lutyens which we will look at in the next session. Thank you so much.