Tracing the Gothic Revival in Bombay through the Architecture of the University Buildings
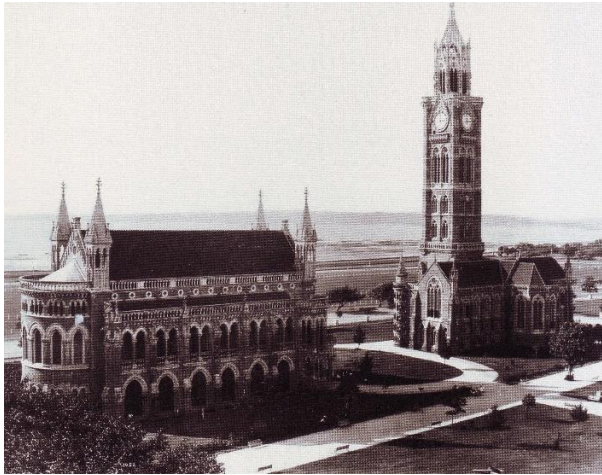
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ABSTRACT

This essay is an attempt to trace the rise of Gothic Revival architecture in Bombay through a deep reading of its university buildings. The Gothic Revival in India can be seen as a moral imperative to supplant the proclivity for the Classical style. For the ruling elite, the Gothic was seen as true, nationalistic and a Christian alternative. Bombay's native citizens played a prominent role its business and financial affairs. The munificence of Cowasjee Jehangir and Premchand Roychand financed the construction of the University Buildings. Gilbert Scott, the greatest exponent of neo-Gothic architecture of the time, was approached to design the Senate Hall, Library and Clock Tower. His designs were an eclectic mix of Gothic Styles across Europe adapted to Bombay's tropical climate and the ornament was secularized. These attempts an adapted Gothic clearly foreground an imperial agenda. These buildings stand as testimony to the establishment of the British Empire in India and its complete dominance on the subject populations through the twin hegemonies of education and architecture.

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An archival image of Bombay University Buildings. Source: unesco.org

Introduction

This essay is an attempt to trace the rise of Gothic Revival architecture in Bombay through a deep reading of its university buildings. The British believed that the greatness of a civilization is expressed through the grandeur of their structures. In the late 19th century Britain, prevailing discourses about an appropriate architecture for their times directly influenced their early architecture in India. In this essay, we trace the rising influence of the Neo-Gothic in Bombay's architecture of the period. The influence of this style was over-arching enough to move the rulers to call the city *Urbs Prima Indis* – the first city of India. George Gilbert Scott's designs for the University of Bombay's senate hall, library and clock tower marked the high point of the Gothic Revival in India, brought in as a moral imperative to supplant the existing proclivity for the Classical style. Such imperatives extended beyond the debates on stylistic choice making, for architecture represented control in the foremost of colonies. This seminal design provides us with several critical readings of the architectural choice making of the British Raj. This mannered architecture may be described as an adapted Gothic, changed to accommodate the peculiarities of Bombay's weather as well as bringing into its ornamentation and iconography several motifs that were clearly local.

The Architecture of the Bombay Presidency

In the latter half of the 18th and the early 19th centuries, the East India Company developed the Presidency towns of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. Company settlements reflected their exclusiveness from the native populations, with fortifications and later cantonments

and civil lines, insulated from local inhabitants. The architecture of the time was based more on the creation of an image of mother country domesticity in the form of the bungalow with its wrap-around verandahs, spacious lawns and separate outhouses for the kitchen and servants. This building type came up in all parts of the country, irrespective of climatic necessities.

Bombay differed in several essential ways from the other two Presidency towns, cosmopolitan as a result of local immigration, a great international port and manufacturing center. Bombay's citizens played a prominent role in its financial and business affairs, were always on easy terms with the British, giving the place a more relaxed, less colonial feeling (Morris 1983:171). "Indian merchants along with the members of a small group of European agency houses, with whom they were often intimately connected as brokers and business partners, formed a remarkably close-knit oligarchy which governed both the island and its overseas trade" (Siddiqui 1982, cited in Markowitz 2000: 27) This was a unique time, where several examples of what is today called 'public-private partnership' played a significant role in the development of education in the city. Philanthropy by several wealthy Indian entrepreneurs and a benign and supportive British administration allowed for schools and colleges to get established all over the city, institutions sometimes specific for communities, languages and women, yet significant in allowing access to the masses to get educated.

If we observe street and place names today, all over the city of Mumbai, one repeatedly finds names like Frere, Elphinstone, Wilson, Forbes, Jeejeebhoy, Naoroji, Shankershett, Jehangir, Roychund, Petit and Sassoon among others, Indian and British alike, all of whom were directly responsible for major educational institutions or developing policy for education in the Bombay Presidency. Add to these familiar names memorialized all over the city, like Mehta, Bhandarkar, Karve, Lad, and Gokhale, the University's early teachers or alumni, who went on to become city fathers in their own right. It is almost as if the commercial rise of the city paralleled its educational trajectory. Even before the university was set up, three educational institutions already imparted higher education – the Elphinstone College (in the Arts and Sciences), the Grant Medical College and the Bombay School (or, Sir JJ School) of Art and Industry (Fine Arts and Architecture).

All three had new buildings erected thanks to the largesse of these Indian 'brokers and business partners', and the style that was used for these buildings was predominantly the new Gothic. Buildings in this style would fore ground Bombay's urban image as a cosmopolitan city of education and industry. Halls of learning would inevitably be associated by images of pointed arches and vaults, polychromatic stone masonry, steep roofs and spires and inspirational sculptures and ornament. As shall be seen, the conception of the University Senate Hall and the Library were the outcome of one such collaboration, reflecting an 'oligarchy' of colonizer and colonized quite different from anywhere else in India at that time. The University of Bombay would begin with four faculties — Arts (with science), Law, Medicine and Engineering (with agriculture). It functioned like an affiliating University until 1904. The first convocation took place in 1862.

Neo-Classical Architecture Town Hall Bombay

The Neo-Classical Revival

New buildings in Britain during the Regency were built 'in the manner of' the Classical Greeks and Romans. For the Europeans, the Greek and Roman civilizations were an ideal state of being. The Classical period in language and art was seriously studied and sought to be imitated in all walks of life. Classical architecture was suffused with moral purity, which reflected on its builders and users. In India too, "the choice of architectural style, the arrangement of space within a building, and the decision to erect a particular structure, all testified to a vision of empire" (Metcalfe 2002: xii). Carried out mostly in a Neo-Classical Renaissance Style, buildings from the early 1800s in India recreated architectural thinking back in Britain. From the very beginning, these important public buildings displayed imperial rather than the mercantile ambitions of the Company. Viscount Valentia in 1803 wished that "India be ruled from a palace, not from a counting house; with the ideas of a Prince, not with those of a retail dealer in muslins and indigo" (cited in Evanson 1989: 58).

The largest neo-classical buildings of the early 19th century- the town halls and the government houses of the Presidency towns were predominantly built in the Greek or Italianate fashions. The architecture of Andrea Palladio was the role model for the building's aspect and proportions and the scales of such buildings were uniformly large and sumptuous. Calcutta (1803) built by Lord Wellesley was modeled on the country house Kedleston Hall in Debyshire, a palatial residence built in the 1760s by Robert Adam. The design was, in the words of Lord Curzon, "remarkably adapted to a climate where every breath of air from whatever quarter must be seized" (cited in Evanson 1989: 58). The Governors' Banqueting Hall in Madras (1798-1803) by James Goldingham was based on a Tuscan Doric temple accessed by a grand stairway. The Town Hall in Bombay (1833) by Colonel Thomas Cowper and the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta (1921) by William Emerson are other significant examples of the Classical used in the design of public buildings in India.

The Roots of the Gothic Revival

Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the highs and lows of the Industrial Revolution, with immense changes in its landscape and demographics. New towns suited the needs of an industrialized society twisted social structures and attitudes transforming the agrarian culture of pre-industrialized societies into a predominantly urban one. The industrial town was looked upon as depressing, gray and soulless, entirely functional and without beauty that might uplift. Charles Dickens in his book *Hard Times* (1854) described one such town as 'a triumph of fact'. William Blake called the machines of industry 'Satanic Mills'. Artists like Piranesi in the mid-18th century had already mythologized prison-like worlds depicting Roman ruins converted into fantastic, visionary dungeons filled with mysterious scaffolding and instruments of torture. In a sense this response was a resistance to change happening all around, faster and more inexorably than could either be comprehended or assimilated.

Artistic representations during this time reacted to these transformations with nostalgia in an age of lost innocence. The rise of the Gothic Romance was initially popularized in literature, then in art and architecture, where decay and ruin were both aestheticized and fetishized. Industry was the great destroyer of traditional arts and crafts, and remnants of the Gothic (and buildings built in this manner) were valued. The Gothic, in comparison with the Classical was out of proportion and irregular, and it was precisely this taste for the irregular and formless that led to a new appreciation of its ruins (Eco 2004: 285) It sublimated the desire for a bygone age, through its asymmetry, craft, aspiring heights and incompleteness – one that recreated the 'natural' in the form of the 'picturesque'.

To an extent, this attitude justified the rejection of the extant Neo-Classical style that had been practiced in varying versions since its rediscovery during the Renaissance. Now derided as standardized and repetitive, almost as mechanistic as the products of industry, alternatives were sought and chosen from within the milieu of English history, "… for (the) Gothicists it seemed as if the structure of history itself would offer a way out of the copyists' dead end." (Crinson 1996: 86).

For the British, the medieval past had great resonance. It reflected the glories of being English (as opposed to Classical/European). The Medieval became the role model for the time, one that displayed all the virtues of the fast-disappearing crafts, as well as an intuitive aesthetic of design. The craft of hand was once more looked at as worthy of emulation. The Gothic style of the medieval cathedrals epitomized these qualities of hardiness and a quintessential British attitude.

For the writer and theorist John Ruskin, great architecture was an expression of the character of the nation. Beauty emerged from the attitude of the craftsmen producing a work of art. Great art was a moral truth. Ruskin developed these theories in his very influential *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Amongst them was the lamp of 'Sacrifice'—"Domestic luxury is to be sacrificed to national magnificence"; the lamp of 'Truth'— the rejection of "Aesthetic deceits, to the eye and mind", of hidden supports or facades; the

New Houses of parliament, London, the signature buildings in Britain of the new Gothic
Image Source: Wikimedia commons

lamp of 'Memory'— the value of historical association and the lamp of 'Obedience'— faithfulness to past forms. Ruskin's writings on the virtues of Gothic architecture with beautifully rendered plates on stone detailing acted as a pattern book to be used by the architects of the time, and powered the Gothic revival in Britain in the late 19th century (Ruskin 1849, 1925). The signature buildings in Britain of the new Gothic were the New Houses of Parliament at Westminster (1840-80) with its distinct clock tower ('Big Ben'). The old Palace of Westminster had been destroyed by fire in 1834 and after a competition Charles Barry was appointed architect. He called in Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin to design its Gothic Styling. Pugin was both an early practitioner and didact, who had an excellent understanding of medieval architecture both in construction and in spirit. In his architectural manifesto *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, illustrated with superbly drafted plates, he extolled the virtues of pointed styling and medieval techniques of construction. According to Pugin, the neglect of two essentials was responsible for "all the bad architecture of the present time", namely, that buildings should not carry any features unnecessary for "convenience, construction or propriety" and that "all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building". Only in the pointed style were these principles carried out, in his view, and hence worthy of emulation over the classical façades (plaster was "a mere modern deception") prevalent at the time. Classical architecture was extremely valuable as an illustration of history, "but as for their being held up as a standard of excellence…it is a monstrous absurdity, which has originated in the blind admiration of modern times for everything Pagan, to the prejudice and overthrow of Christian art and propriety." (Pugin 1853: 1-3).

Once again, the promotion of the medieval as an ideal was foregrounded to the current 'modern' culture of his times. Pugin's theories influenced the buildings of new churches in Britain, especially the memorial churches built to commemorate the dead in several European conflicts. Britain thus found nationally acceptable alternatives to their important public buildings perhaps for the first time since the tremendous influence of Christopher Wren and Inigo Jones.

The Doge's Palace, Venice, Italy. Image Source: Wikimedia commons

A True, Nationalistic and Christian Alternative

By midcentury, the Gothic style was taken beyond the boundaries of Britain to the countries she colonized. Matters came to a head in the efforts to create a design for a Church commemorating the dead of the Crimean War, to be put up in Istanbul, Turkey in 1857. Medieval Gothic cathedrals of England and northern France were not exactly suited to the architecture of the 'orient'. The Gothic had to be adapted to the country in which it was practiced and a happy blend needed to integrate the essence and purity of the style with the exigencies of the region. John Ruskin found the Gothic ideal in the architecture of 13th and 14th century Venice. In his series *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3) Ruskin proposed that Italian Gothic buildings excelled above all other architecture because of the "sacrifice" of the stone-carvers in intricately decorating every stone. He considered the Doge's Palace to be "the central building of the world"; Ruskin argued the case for public buildings in the Italianate Gothic manner.

The argument in favor of this way of building was further justified to represent a broader inclusion of Christian civilization, much beyond narrow national associations. Beresford Hope saw in the Gothic style a true, nationalistic and Christian alternative. In 1856, he espoused that "Gothic was the universal emanation of the mind of Christian Europe". The adoption of the Italian styling in the Crimean Memorial Church was justified as an "expression of the co-nationality of Gothic architecture which arose not on national basis, but… out of a certain family of nations: Gothic equaled Europe, which equaled Christianity" (cited in Crinson 1996: 140-41). Italian Gothic just proved adaptable to climates other than that of Northern Europe and with its intricate interweaving arches and shade giving facades and was soon used in the design of buildings all over the Empire.

Munificence that Financed the University Buildings

In 1853, a Select Committee of the House of Commons conducted an enquiry into the development of education in India. On this basis, the *Dispatch of 1854*, believed to have been drafted by John Stuart Mill was accepted and confirmed by Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control. Based on this, the department of Public Instruction was set up in 1855. At the time there were ten government educational institutes in Bombay island- the Elphinstone Institution, two branch schools six vernacular schools and the Grant Medical College. Apart from this there were several private institutions. On the directions of the Committee appointed by the Government of India, the establishment of the three universities was formulated: Acts II, XXII and XXVII of 1857 incorporated the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras respectively.

The University of Bombay in its initial years functioned out of the Town Hall in Bombay, a neoclassical structure designed by Colonel Thomas Cowper in 1833. By the 1860s, the Governor of Bombay, Sir Bartle Frere had ordered the old fortifications of Bombay Castle to be taken down, freeing up space for urban development. This gave impetus to a building programme that eventually led to the current image of Bombay City. The creation of the Esplanade on the sea allowed for first consolidated display of the architecture of the Raj. The important civic buildings (high courts, university, and secretariat) on the Esplanade gave Bombay its urban image, and made it *Urbs Prima* for the British.

In April 1863, Cowasjee Jehangir, a Bombay businessman and philanthropist, offered to donate One Lakh Rupees for a university building. The Chancellor Sir Bartle Frere immediately and gratefully accepted this offer, although subtly turning down a precondition set by Jehangir that no other benefaction for the purpose be accepted, for which he gracefully relented. This paved the way for another generous gesture of munificence in August 1864 by Premchand Roychand, one of Bombay's foremost stockbrokers, of an offer of Two Lakh Rupees to erect a university library. Roychund immediately followed up this offer not two months later in October 1864 of a further sum of Two Lakh Rupees, for the university, in the name of his mother, to erect "a Tower to contain a large clock and a set of joy-bells. If there be no architectural objections, I should like the tower to be set in connection with the University Library" (in a letter to H.L. Anderson, chief secretary, cited in Tikekar 1984: 32). The secretary proposed to arrange a site at the earliest for the construction of the University buildings. In December of the same year, the University Senate resolved to name the proposed tower 'The Rajabai Tower' after Roychand's mother. This set the stage for the creation of a permanent setting for the University of Bombay.

Mr. Gilbert Scott of London

"In March 1866, the Syndicate requested Mr. Gilbert Scott of London to design a University Library capable of ultimately containing say about 1,00,000 volumes, a depository for manuscripts and suitable reading rooms and a Tower with Clock and peal of bells" (Letter form the office of the University Registrar to the Secretary to Government Public Works Department 1867-68, University archives). Scott's reputation preceded him. George Gilbert Scott was perhaps the greatest exponent of Gothic architecture of the time. He had studied the Venetian Gothic with its Byzantine influences, which he used in the designs of churches, particularly Camden Chapel (1854). He was particularly inspired by the writings of Pugin. Scott was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 1859. A knighthood followed in 1872. Scott had several acclaimed buildings in England, chief amongst them the chapel of St John's College, Cambridge, the Albert Memorial and the 'Midland Grand Hotel' at London's St Pancras Station. He was the first British architect of this caliber to be represented in India (Morris 1983: 77). Scott never visited India. All his designs and details were approved over a series of correspondences.

Scott submitted his completed designs for the University buildings in February 1866. Despite this, the building activity did not start immediately for a variety of reasons. There was considerable debate over the exact location of the site. Although the foundation stone for the University was laid on 29th December 1868 by the Chancellor Sir Seymour Fitzgerald, amidst much pomp and circumstance, on a site on the Esplanade, this was not the one chosen for the final building. Scott's designs also were deemed too expensive for available funds at hand and the assistant architects to the Government of Bombay at the time, W. Paris and H. Molecey, were called in to adjust the design to local conditions 'with minimum alterations' to be accommodated more reasonably within budget. General John Augustus Fuller, architectural engineer to the Government of Bombay (who built the adjacent High Court Building) was given charge of the construction. The superintendent of the project was assistant engineer (Rao Bahadur) Muckoond Ramchunder. The senate hall was completed in November 1874, and the library building in November 1878.

University Senate Hall – exterior, interior and the rose window

An Eclectic Gothic Style

Gilbert Scott's design for the Senate Hall of the University of Bombay offers a variation on English Gothic that emerged in the wake of the Crimean Church debate. Although the hall has been often referred to as Decorated French Gothic, the design is in effect eclectic. Several features such as the covered verandah, the open arcading and octagonal tower stairs on either side of the porch display climatic adaptations, elements more in keeping with the adjacent Library building that borrows heavily from the Italianate. The building further localizes itself in the materials used, all procured from different parts of the Bombay Presidency: from Kurla yellow stone, Porbander white limestone, Ratnagiri, gray granite and Bombay blue-trap. Nevertheless, the Hall was planned in a distinctly 13th century churchlike manner, with an apsidal southern end 38 feet in diameter and a large nave more than 100 feet long, suitable for congregation, but here, for secular purposes. The 63 feet high ceiling was vaulted. Continuous pointed arch windows on the eastern and western sides enhanced the illusion of height. The focus of the interior was the large 20-foot circular window in the northern façade that lets in colored light through its stained glass.

University Library Building and Rajabai Tower

For the decorated façade of the University's library building, Scott had "adopted a style which is a free variety of the architecture of the 13th century adapted so far as I was able to judge to the exigencies of a hot climate". The exuberant, almost lacy network of arcades and open stonework supporting polychromatic masonry was a straight transfer of the arcade on the 14th century Doge's Palace from Venice. The oriental delicacy of the ornament of the Doge's Palace displayed Byzantine leanings on the architecture of Venice, a city midway between the orient and the occident. Beresford Hope's 'co-nationality of the Gothic', where the Italianate meets Bombay's climate was demonstrated in Scott's sea-facing, western, open arcade of the University Library.

The ground floor of the library building housed the entrance portico and two large rooms. The grand reading room on the upper floor was a single space having a length of more than 140 feet. "Beside the usual precautions against heat such as the guarding of the windows and doorways by means of cloisters and verandahs" Scott said, "I have added the further defense afforded by a double roof; the inner one being vaulted in brick or other material and the outer one of timber covered with the usual material. The space between these roofs would be thoroughly ventilated…" Upon completion the roof of the reading room had a coffered, cross-vaulted ceiling extending over its entirety, thematically much in keeping with its Gothic interiors, except that this was in wood, not stone. The large windows of the library had stained-glass imported from England.

The Rajabai Tower rose 280 feet above the ground. The clock face was lit by gaslight, later electricity, at night making it conspicuous to a large part of the city. The Tower was, in several publications, described as inspired from Giotto's Campanile in Florence (1334). Scott is not so specific about: "I have endeavored to give a tower a look differing, so far as may be from that of a church tower. We have may instances of great towers being used for mainly secular purposes in the old cities of Belgium and, without adopting any tower as a type, I have endeavored to give this the same feeling and sentiment which prevails amongst the ancient towers of this class. I have made it very lofty that it may be conspicuous throughout the city." (Scott, cited in Tikekar 1984: 40-41).

Secularised Portal Entrance to the University Library

The Neo-Gothic, 'Secularized'

The Gothic style of pointed arches, crafted ornament and stone iconography reflected an imperial superiority that was used freely to develop an urban identity, best expressed in an emerging center like Bombay. No other city in India has the profusion of the neo-Gothic than Bombay. It was serendipitous that the development of Gothic in Britain coincided with its extensive use in Bombay. Here, it was particularly suited for adaptation, for despite describing a nationalist, Christian identity back home, in Bombay it would be stripped down of all religious iconography and 'secularized' without losing its essential soaring spirit. In Scott's designs this can be seen, although both buildings were designed for secular purposes. The senate hall retains its associations with ecclesiastical architecture in its footprint, its spires and gargoyles and its pointed and circular windows. The 'rose' or 'sun' window in a Gothic cathedral is usually a reference to the grace of Mary or Jesus and inset with several stained-glass depictions of Biblical events, and of the Christian pantheon. In the case of the Senate Hall however, the entrance portico on the northern end has rising above it a large circular 'rose window' 20 feet in diameter, with an outer ring of stained-glass windows depicting the signs of the zodiac, and an inner ring of stained-glass windows depicting the planets.

This 'secularization' is even more evident in the great arch at the foot of the Rajabai tower that encloses the porte-cochere entrance to the library. This large pointed arch is not unlike a portal in the narthex of a Gothic church, complete with carved tympanum and trumeau but sans Christian iconography. Yet where one would expect an image of Christ as Judge in the tympanum of the arch, the depiction of heavenly figures in concentric embrasures and a saint carved into the dividing trumeau, here the sculpture has been de-iconized to geometric florets and a carved capital. The Campanile or Bell Tower would carry copious sculptures of saints, kings and patrons, with flying spires and fierce gargoyles. Instead, the Rajabai memorial tower now shows several sculptures representing the different 'races' of India. In retrospect, this can also be seen as being in keeping with nativist sensibilities, and a desire not to cause offence.
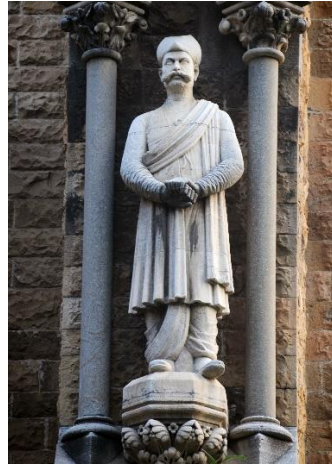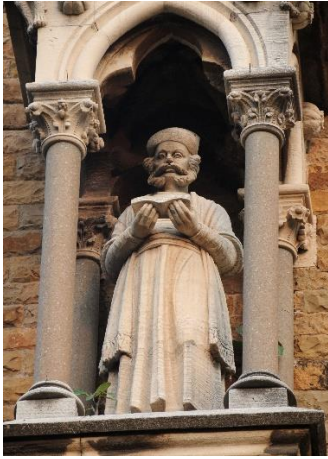
'Races of India', sculptural representations on Rajabai Tower

Representations on the Rajabai Tower

The 'Revolution/Uprising' of 1857 caused many changes in the role of Empire building. The East India Company was dissolved, the last Mughal Emperor exiled, the Queen declared Empress- 'Kaiser-I-Hind', and a viceroy appointed to oversee the functioning of empire. The British, who now claimed a mandate for rule, sought to assert the might of Empire though their architecture. The Gothic Style was particularly suited to achieve this; its proper, British association was amenable to a great variety of building types that fulfilled the requirements of the imperial administration. The movement away from the Classical, a universal style all over Europe and the colonies, to a resurrected Gothic, with its various

justifications, reflect the assumptions, prejudices and mindsets that both structured and limited imperial thinking in the relation to the colonies. Bombay was fertile ground for experiment and the expression of the Raj episteme.

As part of the Imperial project, the British sought to establish control over their subjects by extensive record keeping and documentation. The native population was an object of scientific study. Every year, through gazetteers, ethnographic and anthropological surveys, the Crown was informed of the progress of empire (*Moral and Material Progress of India — Yearbook*). This allowed for "the creation of theories of society and culture which set out to locate colonial subjects in relation to the society of the rulers through the construction of such categories as primitive, archaic, savage, backward, or traditional. By the use of these categories social groups were defined and bounded, hierarchized as inferiors in relation to Europeans and in turn assigned roles in the native society as peasants, artisans, "traditional" elites, "martial races", "criminal tribes", "Hindus" and the like". (Metcalfe 2002: 7-8). These Surveys actualized the image of India in the minds of her rulers leading to a larger sociology of knowledge.

The large sculptures inset in the corners of the 'Rajabai Tower' concretize these 'created' hierarchies. J. Maclean in *A Guide to Bombay* (1896) describes the figures thus: "Fifteen feet above the gallery, in niches cut in the pillars which form the corners of the octagon, are large figures, each eight feet high, representing the different races and costumes of western India, and higher still some thirty odd feet above the gallery, where the octagon seizes and the cupola commences, are another series of figures of the same description, standing out boldly at the top of the pillars supporting the angle ribs of the cupola. These figures, which have been modeled by Rao Bahadur Muckoond Ramchunder, the assistant engineer in charge of the work and carved on the spot out of Porbunder stone, are very accurate representations of the peculiar types of face and dress, which are noticeable amongst many of the numerous castes included in the native communities of the Bombay Presidency. There are the *mild* Hindu; the *shrewd* Kutchi; the traditionally *fierce* Rajput, with his hand on the hilt of a huge tulwar; a *praying* Parsee appropriately facing towards the Backbay, in which position so many Parsees are seen every day at their devotions; a sleek *high-caste* Brahman; a Memon; a Gujarati Bunia; a Ghogari Bunia; a Maratha; and a Kathiawadi." (1896: 214) The italics are mine.

The discourses that led to such depictions are based on the value of visual study, an episteme based on the tangible and the real — the 'scientific'. Categorization, compartmentalization and hierarchy created models for understanding the subject population. Knowledge thus used exerted control, and while ostensibly this led to including some, the 'traditional elites' into controlled 'oligarchies' of day-to-day functioning, nevertheless the ultimate aim was the consolidation of imperial power. Back home too, the discourse created by the accumulation of these practices, concepts, statements and beliefs produced by the episteme of compartmentalization would be carved into stone. Gilbert

Archival image of Victoria Terminus (presently, CSMT), Bombay, 1888. Source: Wikimedia.org

Scott designed the Colonial and India Office buildings in Whitehall (1859) that, though classical in design, had a unique sculptural scheme: "a series of sculpted figures emblematic of different countries, such as France and Italy. Similar figures set on the India Office, however, represented not nations but 'Indian Tribes, an Afghan, a Goorka, a Malay, a Mahratta, and so on,' social categories identified by the British as significant for their rule of the sub-continent." (Metcalfe 2002: 3).

Every building represented the Empire, and imperial values were inherent in every structure for all to see among the native populace. Such control was exerted in administration and policy, but in the architecture, this was seen to be exerted. "The height of the ('Rajabai') tower is sufficient to make the largest and tallest buildings around look very pigmy structures…" (Maclean 1896: 213) Its chiming clock and tolling bells reminded the locals of the authority, disciple and clockwork precision of empire. We conclude that the architecture of the Raj was panoptic in purpose. "Taken together these …may be called a distinctive colonial culture. Most central was a concern with political effect." (Metcalfe 2002: 2).

The Spread of the Gothic Revival in Bombay

Several of those associated with the University buildings were also responsible for the many other Gothic structures that came up all over the city. General J. A. Fuller would build the David Sassoon Library and the Goculdas Tejpal Hospital, apart from the High Court, all in a more pristine and less adapted Gothic style. George Molecey, a self-described Gothic revival architect (London 2002: 140) would design the Bombay Telegraph Office, the Council Hall and the Ohel David Synagogue in Pune. Muckoond Ramchunder, assistant engineer to the University would later be associated with the sculptural schemes in Elphinstone College and St. Thomas' Cathedral. Through their works and others, the Gothic flourished in the Bombay Presidency up until the late 1900s.

Indo Saracenic Architecture Price of Wales Museum (presently, CSMVS)

The aftermath of the industrial revolution and the resultant technological advances meant that the colonies needed newer building types in keeping with the needs of the times: railway stations, post offices, harbors, museums, and universities. These buildings of the new age were clothed in a stylistic garb (Classical, Gothic, faux-Oriental) that tried to evoke a nostalgic past. Scott's St Pancras could be considered one of the best examples of the adaptation of a stylized Gothic front appended in the form of a hotel to a building of contemporary usage — a railway station. Fredrick Stevens in Bombay in 1888 would create the other great synthesis in the headquarters for the Great Indian Peninsular railway — the Victoria Terminus Railway Station.

Neo-Gothic buildings in late 19th century Bombay evolved, with more and more regional inputs in its secularized iconic schemes, with local birds and animals, monkeys, mongoose, peacocks and parrots all nestling nonchalantly in gothic florets and acanthus leaves (thanks mostly to the influence of John Lockwood Kipling, Master of Architectural Ornament at the Bombay School of Art). This moved the ornament further away from the exclusive Christian. Such incremental adaptations in subsequent designs would take the Gothic style to the brink of Indianization, before tipping over completely into an 'Indian' architecture designed by the British.

After the Gothic Revival

The latter part of the nineteenth century was once again dominated by the debate on an appropriate architectural style for India. The adoption of the 'Saracenic' (which the Europeans used as an all-purpose name for Islamic culture whether in Egypt, or Persia or India) evolved out of this desire. In terms of choice, the British preferred the Islamic rather than the Hindu/Buddhist/Jain traditions to emulate. The manner of dome construction in particular won their admiration. Islamic features- domes, chattris, chajjas and arches were extensively used to evoke a dominant Mughal form and profile. The architecture of the new-Mughals can be seen in this context of dominance- the British putting their stamp of superiority on the subject people.

In the last two decades of the century and the first two of the next, the 'Indo-Saracenic' style was systematically used in the Presidency towns of Madras and Bombay. The University Senate House, Madras (early 1870s) by Robert Chisholm, the Art Gallery, Madras (1907) by Henry Irwin, the General Post Office, Bombay (1905) by John Begg, the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay (1905-14) by George Wittet and the Gateway of India, Bombay (1911) by George Wittet form the most significant examples of such architecture in the Presidency towns. It may be argued that the University buildings and the later Victoria Terminus station set the stage for the Indo Saracenic by including in their schema hybrid elements, informed by the local (read 'Oriental') that found acceptability in the predominantly 'anglicized' establishment. Examined deeply, the style is no different from the earlier Gothic in terms of adaptation- contemporary building types with the outward shell of Mughal/Sultanate features. The Indo-Saracenic style and its choice over the now established Gothic style also indicated a further shift in the notion of Empire building. The British portrayed themselves as legitimate, almost indigenous rulers, who had taken over and continued from the Mughals.

Conclusion

The architecture of the University of Bombay rode the cusp of change reflecting the efforts of the British to construct a 'Self' in the context of Empire (Dehejia 1997, p.380). In expression, Gilbert Scott's University buildings moved beyond the merely constructed, as in the classical or early neo-Gothic buildings erected by military engineers to the British government. With their design and careful ornamentation, a clear purpose beyond the functional is evident, for the Gothic structures in Bombay represent the establishment of the British Empire before it transformed into the British Raj. That the architect chosen for this purpose was the most acclaimed back in Britain only reinforces this sense of purpose. The styling has to be seen with the building to the north and south of the university that form a coherent neo-Gothic scheme, making Bombay's foremost skyline consistent and unwavering. Scott freely adapted the brief to the conditions of colony, creating a center of learning and education that has endured these one hundred and fifty years. ■

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