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# Visualizing Lahore: The Evolving Trends in the Architectural Culture and Identity of Lahore from Walled City to Date

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## Abstract

In this research paper, it has been discussed how the architecture of Lahore emerged with the passage of time under various socio-political influences. The influences of cultural, political and social factors on the architecture of Lahore during various historical eras have been discussed. One can see that these influences are still alive in the city of Lahore contributing towards its uniqueness. The changes in the social trends of the population have been discussed also. They are an important factor in shaping the urban form of any society. It has been further discussed in the paper how the architects and clients are blindly copying the western style of architecture and the picture of Lahore that will emerge in the upcoming years

**Keywords:** architecture, culture, visualization, Lahore, walled city

## Introduction

Cities are like living creatures that grow and change with the passage of time. With the growth of cities, their identities and cultures also evolve. Culture is expressed in language and more markedly in arts such as poetry, drama, music, painting, sculpture and architecture. Hence architecture is the carrier of culture. Architectural identity of a city is a physical phenomenon and it can be seen in its buildings. Styles of architecture reveal the harmonious unanimity and strong bonding of human beings with nature. We can conclude that architectural culture means the traditions and styles inherent in architecture (Abate, 1996).

The following aspects of the architecture of Lahore will be discussed in this paper,

- The individuality of the architectural style of Lahore
- The factors which are responsible for its rich and deep architectural style and beauty
- The contemporary built form of Lahore and its impact on the present and future

A clear picture of the built form of Lahore at present is represented by the architectural language, the details, adornment, various styles and planning ideas produced under the influence of different political and social issues.

### 1.1. Brief History of Lahore

Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan, is a historic city with its exclusive geographical location because it is situated on the main trade and invasion routes of South Asia. The Hindu prince Loh, son of Rama Chandra laid its foundation in 1000 BC.

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Lahore has prospered, underwent attacks and damage, and yet lived through the Sultanate (1206-1524), after the invasion of Mahmood of Ghazni in 1000AD, the Mughals (1524-1712) and the Sikhs (1764-1849). The infrastructure of Lahore and the unsurpassed architectural monuments were fabricated by Mughals. However, minor architectural influences were seen during Sikh period. The British succeeded to transform the city and brought forth the modern face of Lahore. Hence, by introducing new building types, the British presented a new style in art and architecture which gave Lahore a new identity (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).

Lahore is identified as the cultural center of Pakistan. It has been an important city during Mahmood Ghaznavi's rule (11<sup>th</sup> century), the Mughal rule, the Sikh rule and the colonial rule. These different rulers have left their mark on the city, leaving richness in the arts, culture and the architecture of the city. Many Mughal, Sikh and colonial monuments are still present within the city.

## 1.2. The Walled City Lahore

The **Walled City of Lahore**, also known as "The Old City" is the section of Lahore which was surrounded by a defensive wall during the Mughal era. The origin of the walled city is directly linked with the origins of Lahore. The city originated along the ancient route from Kabul to Delhi, via Khyber Pass, on the western bank of the river Ravi. At present, it forms the northeastern extension of the city centre. A circular road defines the locality of walled city. Within the circular road, at the northern peripheries are located Badshahi mosque and Lahore fort (Wikipedia).

The height of the splendor of Lahore is revealed in the walled city while the new city presents a clear picture of its flourishing future. The city is built in the shape of a parallelogram with an area of about 461 acres (1.87 km<sup>2</sup>). Akbar, during his stay in Lahore, built a brick wall around the old city for defensive purposes against outside invasions. As the walls decayed strenuously, Ranjit Singh, during his reign, rebuilt these walls and also added a deep and wide trench around them. These walls were badly ruined in 1849 when the British occupied Punjab and were replaced with gardens which still exist today. The Circular Road connects the old city to the rest of the city. The thirteen ancient gates provide access to the walled city (Gill, 2004).

## 2. Research Methodology

The current research is purely qualitative in nature and the data has been collected from relevant books, websites, already published research papers and by conducting a literature survey with the general public. The views of some famous architects and writers have also been taken into consideration. The research is based on ethnographical studies and narrative analysis to get a better understanding of the topic.

A literature survey was conducted with the general public living in the walled city and with the families which have moved out of the walled city to get a first-hand knowledge about the subject.

### 3. Results and Discussions

In this paper, the Architecture of Lahore has been discussed from 1524 AD till date dividing it in four eras which are explained in the following table

Table 1

<i>Reign of Lahore Rulers</i>			
<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Rules</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>No. of Years</b>
1	Mughals	1524-1712 AD	188
2	Sikhs	1764-1849 AD	85
3	The British	1849-1947 AD	98
4	Pakistanis	1947 till date	65+

#### 3.1. The Mughal Period (1524 -1712 AD)

The Mughals left an ineradicable impact on the architecture of Lahore. They ruled Lahore for about 185 years. Babur, the first Mughal emperor, took over the control of Lahore in 1524. Later during the rule of the third Mughal Emperor Akbar, Lahore served as the capital of India for about fourteen years i.e., from 1556-1570. The fort was reconstructed by him and twelve esteemed gates were added to the city surrounded by brick wall. The very well-known Masjidi Gate was constructed opposite to the eastern gate of Lahore Fort in 1566 AD.



Figure 1. Masjidi Gate Lahore Fort

His heir Jahangir built a hunting resort, Hiran Minar in the suburbs of Lahore. His successor was Shah Jahan who built the Shalimar gardens in 1642.

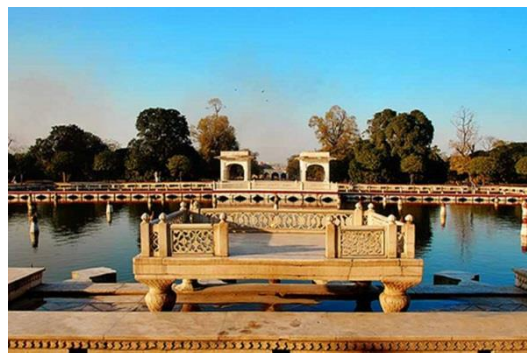


Figure 2. Shalamar garden

Construction of many mosques, tombs, royal baths, royal residences, gardens and tombs took place during the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The most prominent monument Badshahi Mosque (1673) and the Alamgiri Gateway was built on the western zone of the fort by the last Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.



Figure 3. Badshahi Mosque



Figure 4. Alamgiri Gate

Lahore city had gained the ultimate height of its splendor during the Mughal period (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).

### 3.1.1. Mughal Architectural Style.

The Mughal architectural style is marked by harmony, proportion, balance and symmetry. They ornamented the structures with attractive geometrical designs. The gardens were built on the Chahar Bagh concept. Mughal architectural components are:

- Bulging domes (single and double);
- Slender towers and cupolas at the four corners;
- Huge main halls;
- Gigantic vaulted entrances;
- Arched crenellation
- Kiosks with umbrella like structures (cupolas). Inlay work, Pietra Dura, calligraphy, kashi kari, jali work and wood carvings were the main elements of décor in the Mughal buildings. Bricks resting with lime-mortar, red sandstone and variety of marble are the main building materials used in the Mughal Era (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).

### 3.2. The Sikh Era (1764 1849)

With the recurrent attacks by the Afghans and the decline of Mughal power, Lahore waned in both population and wealth. Lahore recuperated under the patronage of Ranjit Singh and his heirs, for almost fifty years (1799 to 1846).

The construction of religious buildings in the city began under the influence of the Sikh rulers which included the Gurdawaras, Hindu temples, and mosques. The Samadhi (mausoleum) of Ranjit Singh is the most noteworthy monument of Sikh period. The architectural style of Samadhi is an amalgamation of Hindu and Muslim style. Another monument of the Sikhs that can be seen today at Chuna Mandi Lahore, is Guru Ram ka Gurdawara.



Figure 5. Smadhi of Ranjit Singh



Figure 6. Guru Ram ka Gurdwara

The Sikhs caused a lot of damage to the already existing Mughal structures. Marble and semi-precious stones were taken off from the existing Mughal buildings and were incorporated in the new Sikh structures.

### 3.2.1. Features of Sikh Architectural Style.

Sikh architecture is mostly a combination of Hindu and Muslim styles. The grooved or at times plain hemispherical dome (three-quarters of a sphere) is the most attractive feature of Gurdwaras. Other decorative elements are the cupolas at the four corners of the temple, the parapet is generally ornamented with turrets, crenellation and small domes. Sheathing of brass or copper was used to make the external walls appealing and attractive. Sikh architecture was inspired by Mughal architecture and incorporated the Pietra Dura, mirror work, motifs of birds, anima, cornices, frescos etc.

Like Mughals, Sikhs also used bricks, lime-mortar with lime or gypsum plaster, lime-concrete and stone (red stone and white marble) (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).

### 3.3. The Colonial Era (1849-1947)

The Punjab province came under British rule in 1849 after the death of Ranjit Singh. The main constructions in the British period included the railway station, law courts, town hall, museum, telegraph and post offices, banks, health and educational buildings. Towards the south and south east of the old city, a new town came into existence which is known today as Civil Lines. The offices, homes, clubs, and shops were located in this new area for the British officers.

#### 3.3.1. Architectural Style in British Period.

A new language of design was observed in the British buildings. An Indian town was transformed into a colonial land. Lahore faced two extremes of architectural styles by the end of the British rule; one extreme was the old city and the other was the colonial style Cantonment and the Civil Lines. The contrast was obvious in commercial as well as residential architecture and social attitude.

The two main styles of architectural expression were seen in 1876. The first one reflected the British imperialism which was completely western style and influenced by Greeks and Romans, e.g. Montgomery Hall, Lawrence Hall and Railway Station.



Figure 7. Railway Station (1861)



Figure 8. Lawrence Halls (1864)

The other style was Indo European, which was a fusion of the traditional elements used by Mughals like domes, minarets, columns, cupolas, brackets, Moorish and multi foiled arches, piers, pilasters, crenellated parapet, pavilions, chatris with western elements like pediments, dentils, cornices eaves, turrets, spires, Venetian and Florentine windows, truss roofs, stained glass, tracery etc. used to develop a harmony with the architecture of the area. Lahore Museum, High Court and Town Hall are the particular examples of this particular architectural style (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).



Figure 9. Town Hall (1890) Figure 10. High Court (1879) Figure 11. Lahore Museum (1890)

Industrial revolution brought a new approach towards use of new materials and techniques of construction which was also reflected in the architecture of Lahore by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Concrete, glass and steel were the new materials introduced in the construction industry.

In the beginning, bricks with lime mortar, wood and iron were used for construction purposes while English bricks with lime mortar, cement mortar, reinforced concrete and steel were used in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hence in colonial period, European and local forms were merged to attain the unique structures which added to the beauty of the city. This significant style is seen almost everywhere in Lahore except the walled city (Kabir, Abbas, & Hayat, 2017).

The main focus of the colonial rulers was on the construction of administrative buildings and improving the infrastructure in Lahore. The colonial style has a character of its own and still has a significant place in the heritage of Lahore (Ovais, 2016).

### 3.4. Zoning of Lahore

Lahore once called “the Paris of the East” has attraction for everyone because of its geographical location and other public, health and educational facilities. At present, Lahore can be divided into three zones:

1. The Walled City
2. Cantonment and Civil Lines built in Colonial period

3. The extended zone including “EME Colony, Bahria Town, Defense Housing Authority, Valancia Town” etc. and many other new housing societies being planned in the private sector.

#### **3.4.1. Social Influences on Architectural Shift from Traditional to Modern Styles.**

The change in social setup has a great influence on the culture, traditions, moral and ethical values, educational and political system. This change ultimately affects the customs and beliefs of the people. A cultural gap is developed between the views of old and new generations. The old ones want to live in their old settlements where they have relatives and friends but the youth wants to move out of the congested areas with old buildings and shift to the newly built societies with modern facilities.

#### **3.4.2. A Brief Picture of Lahore in the Present Times.**

The contemporary built form of Lahore is different from the past not only because of the new concepts of planning and modern technology of construction, but the overall change in trends and views of the community is also an important factor in bringing about this change.

The shopping malls and Carrefour have replaced the muhalla markets or local bazaars. The locals lack the sense of ownership and do not bother about the surveillance of the area. The activities in the commercial and office areas start at a particular time in morning and end at night. These areas remain abandoned for quite a long time and they encourage the criminals to find their ways there. Hence, the crime rate is peaking in these commercial areas.



*Figure 12. and Figure 13. Market in Walled City and Liberty Market*

As the social system is changing, so are the building materials and techniques. The high-rise plazas and office buildings and residences have the linear decor elements, simple fronts and very fine finishing and materials such as concrete, wood and glass are used. Facades with huge windows and glass curtain-walls are also very well appreciated by the clients (Dawn advertisement, 2012).

Contemporary towns and built urban area forms are also influenced by the west. Mohalla system has been replaced by the sectors and blocks in modern residential schemes, e.g. Model town, DHA, EME society and now Bahria town has (re)introduced the new concept of the large gated society with all modern services. Mixed land use is no more common and residential activities have been isolated from the commercial zones, e.g. The Mall road and Liberty market.



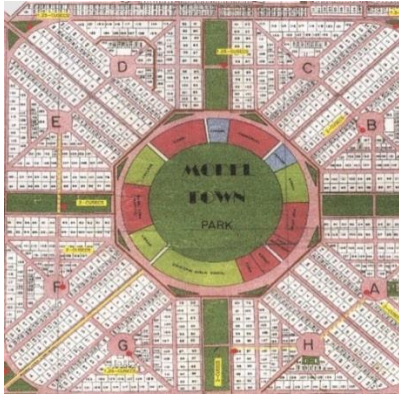


Figure 14: Division of Blocks in Model Town

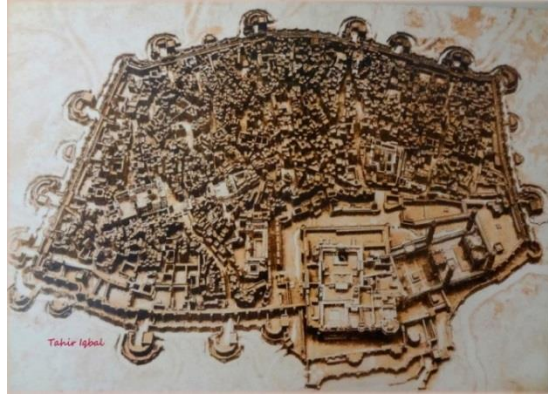


Figure 15. Layout of Walled City

The famous architect Mr. Kamil Khan Mumtaz shares his perception about the contemporary architectural practices in Pakistan that the architects here do not give preference to our local traditions and style of construction while designing. They are trying to imitate the style and forms brought from the west without understanding the real philosophy of design behind it. Not only the architects but the clients are equally responsible for this crisis in the field of architecture. The clients can spend much on the expensive materials and have exposure through travelling across the world. They ask the designers to incorporate the particular elements and style in their buildings to create an overall impact of a modern building without considering their long-term effects (Ahmed, 2016).

#### 4. Conclusion

Since this research paper discusses the “Shift of architectural culture and identity of Lahore”, it unveils the various socio political influences on the past and present built form of Lahore.

After conducting the questionnaire, it was concluded that the people moved from the walled city because most of the area has become commercialized and the prices have risen to sky. There is no privacy in the private lives of the people as houses are connected wall to wall. The area has become congested and it is difficult for car owners to survive there. The modern facilities of life are not available in the close premises of the walled city, e.g., modern dining and shopping areas. But the people did miss the frequent and day to day social gatherings with old relatives. They felt more secure living in the walled city because the residents took the ownership of the neighborhood. The people of a particular muhalla knew each other very well. The kids were safe playing outside in the streets. The daily use items were easily available in the nearby market area. But in the new societies, the markets are quite far. There is a demarcation between residential and commercial areas. It takes hours to find parking in front of the malls just to buy even small breakfast items like bread. The youth although seems happier for being moved out of the walled city because they feel free to enjoy and participate in different activities of their particular interest.

Comparing the two extremes of architectural culture of past and present after discussing the political and social factors, we can say that architecture of Lahore has a distinct identity which emerged and was refined in various periods.

Mughal architecture has a strong hold in the old walled city and it has an architectural vocabulary of its own which has no comparison. During colonial period, a number of prestigious buildings were executed in Indo-European style which was a mixture of European and Indian-Islamic features. The buildings of both of these eras are the most important heritage of Lahore. The contemporary architects are following modern elements, materials and techniques of construction and a new skyline of Lahore is emerging. Residential architecture is changing from traditional to modern not only in terms of materials but mode of construction and techniques as well. The streets, markets and nearby stores and shops are being replaced by superstores and high rise shopping plazas. Segregated land use is practiced and preferred over mixed land use. However, debates are going on about promoting the mixed land use and bringing this culture back to the communities.

Lahore is a city known for its vibrant urban life, rich culture and distinguished heritage. The old walled city of Lahore has its own unique character and urban life. The mall road boasts the colonial heritage of the city. Due to the significance of the city over centuries it has developed a rich architectural identity but the so-called modern style of architecture, which is just a blind copy of the values and style of the west, gated communities with their standardized plot divisions and house designs are in complete opposition to the urban character of the city of Lahore. The sense of community has been central to the Lahori culture where neighbours looked after each other.

It is unfortunate that a city like Lahore now has walled compounds that make up safe communities. Moreover, it is intimidating that the people of Lahore have started to find refuge in the imaginations generated by the housing communities. A life style that is not a Lahori way of life is being promoted as the new ideal lifestyle. Some housing communities have gone overboard to make theme park like environments that bring the icons of world architecture to Lahore, or take Lahori's to the icons of the world architecture. Socially responsible development is necessary where people from all economic backgrounds can co-exist to make homogeneous communities and where what is significant about the culture of Lahore is celebrated (Latif, 2016).

The rich culture of Lahore is physically preserved in the walled city, but emotionally it is preserved in the heart of every Lahori. Shifting to modern areas is no doubt the need of time but actual practice should be to incorporate modern techniques with the traditional materials and local resources and encouraging the local social setup which kept the people united in older times. High rise plazas and shopping malls with whole facades of glass, residences with large glass windows and openings are designed without considering the solar orientation of a particular site which increases the dependence on mechanical means of air conditioning. If the present practice continues, and the designers and clients keep on pursuing the trends of the western culture without prioritizing indigenous traditions, culture and resources, we may visualize a Lahore of “Glass and Concrete” physically and emotionally as well.

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