

Heritage at Risk Haveli avtar Singh: An Architectural Splendour

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Abstract:

The study examines the evolutions and transitions in the Peshawar cantonment, spanning from the colonial to the post-colonial epoch. The focus is engaged towards the architectural facets of the bungalow, the primary residential unit within the cantonment, with a specific emphasis on the modifications introduced by Sikh occupants. In contrast to the conventional courtyard dwelling, the Avtar Singh bungalow, by virtue of its design, would not have seamlessly accommodated the requisites of the extended Indian family structure. Nevertheless, various elements intrinsic to the bungalow have been assimilated into the architectural landscape of both private and public housing. The persistent presence of colonial imagery in the post-colonial era indicates the internalization of colonial values among planners and residents associated with the Peshawar cantonment.

Keywords: Haveli, Sikh, Colonial, Bungalow, Peshawar Cantonment, Residential Architecture

Introduction

The bungalow, as an architectural characteristic, stands as a contested and intricate facet of heritage within the Indian environment. In scholarly discourses, it is often considered as a building type with a pronounced imperial lineage. It served as a counter concept to the prevailing socially-oriented collective lifestyle inherent in both urban and rural dwellings across numerous indigenous settlements in India. Although traditional house types reminiscent of the bungalow are present in Peshawar, their contextual nuances markedly differ from those associated with British residents. Consequently, asserting the bungalow as an inherent element of Indian heritage initially presents challenges. Nevertheless, a nuanced perspective emerges when considering the phenomenon within the broader historical framework. In the late nineteenth century, the British bungalow lifestyle became a source of emulation for Indian elites and professionals. Through the 1930s, the bungalow had evolved into a model that underwent augmentation and personalization, particularly by the expanding middle classes. Serving as a social and political catalyst, the concept of a house centrally positioned within a plot underwent transformation in diverse regions of India. Subsequently, an imperial socio-political housing concept underwent a metamorphosis during the colonial and postcolonial periods, evolving into a widely embraced and aesthetically enriched cultural icon. It became ingrained in the collective mindset, acquiring diverse socio-cultural meanings alongside spatial, stylistic, and technological variations, culminating in the manifestation of the modernist house. However, starting in the 1970s, escalating land pressures prompted the proliferation of alternative housing types, remarkably apartments, indicating a shift in prevalent residential trends.

In the contemporary era, these bungalows have acquired heightened significance as emblematic representations of a socio-cultural past rapidly fading due to burgeoning population growth and accelerated urbanization. Despite their pronounced regional variation and distinct expressions, colonial bungalows have yet to receive adequate acknowledgment as valuable heritage. In India, endeavors in architectural conservation and awareness predominantly adhere to the legacy of

colonial archaeology, limiting governmental efforts primarily to classical Hindu, Indo-Islamic, and Buddhist monuments (Desai, 2011). Consequently, the domestic genre remains marginalized, resulting in a considerable gap in related knowledge, coupled with a deficiency in general awareness and sensitivity. Especially, colonial public buildings have only recently been begrudgingly accepted as heritage (Qadeer, 2006). This article seeks to elucidate the meaning and significance inherent in colonial-period bungalows.

The bungalow, characterized by its Doric columns and later adoption of Tuscan columns supporting the facade and roof, symbolizes not only the evolution of the Indian prototype into a European architectural form but also signifies the commercial and military prowess of Britain. The construction of these bungalows relied on the labor of Indian craftsmen and contractors, thereby grounding the physical fabric of the bungalow in Indian architectural traditions despite shifts in construction materials, technology, and practices (Glover, 2004). Although, initially designed for an alien population, the bungalow reflected the cultural foundations of the Indian populace among whom it was situated. Remarkably, this architectural type underwent minimal modification in the twentieth century, and only a limited number of these bungalows have endured into independent India, primarily within military-controlled cantonments (Goodman, 2015).

Avtar Singh Bungalow / Haveli

The Avtar Singh Haveli constructed in 1920, (interview residents), a distinctive single-story dwelling (Pl. 1 & 9), occupies a central position within an expansive landscaped expanse measuring 1.029 acres, embodying a picturesque tradition. This architectural marvel represents a fusion of the cantonment bungalow style with distinctive Indian architectural features. Adjacent to the Haveli rear aspect are ancillary structures, including servants' quarters, horse stables, and cowsheds. In comparison, a front lawn adorned with flowering shrubs and trees alludes to potential historical garden gatherings. The Haveli aesthetic appeal is heightened by semi-ogee shaped domes, cupolas, and petite kiosks that grace its summit. Structurally, the Haveli exudes spaciousness and symmetry, characterized by a colonnaded veranda at the forefront. The porch, a prominent architectural feature, is generously proportioned and supported by captivating arches on all sides, enhancing both the building's structural integrity and its overall facade with an air of dignity. The Avtar Singh Haveli, constructed from robust masonry and adorned with adobe plaster, seamlessly incorporates European architectural elements, including pediments and balustrades. While the garden houses trace their colonial lineage, their intrinsic value is deeply rooted in local and regional significance as integral components of Indian heritage. The Haveli, characterized by austerity, features unembellished volumes and a stark whitewashed finish. Symmetrical both in form and spatial organization, it comprises a central hall flanked by rooms on either side or a veranda facing the garden. Initially, the kitchen and servants' quarters were discretely situated.

1. Architectural Features:

1.1. Poonchi

An ornamental element, a horizontal border called Poonchi (Pl. 2) was a regular feature in buildings constructed under Sikh patronage however the Poonchi designed in Mughal architecture is more stylized, adorned, and composed with a string of petals. They are used to ornament different architectural features such as ceilings borders, door frames, and fire fences, below the windows, arches, and at the base of the sill of the oriel window in limestone. During the Sikh-Anglo era architecture of Peshawar thick walls were

constructed with locally available material that would provide the advantage of sound insulation and also were responsive to the local climate. In summer the building because of its thermal capacity would captivate maximum heat and would prevent the interior of the house to gain temperature. Overhangs further kept the walls from the glaring sun. On the nights when the temperature would drop the walls quickly lose their heat to their environments. Lime and brick were the chief building material for the walls and roof pavements. The natural materials are porous and they have the ability to gradually release moisture back into the air and create an evaporative freshening influence.

1.2. Porch

The porch is bounded by arches which are supported by triple attached columns with urn shape bases and capitals (Pl. 3). The pointed arches 15x22 create an enormous entrance from the south side whereas the northern side of another main arch of the same height and width. On the east side towards the garden three arches are built with cusped/scalloped design, there is a motif on the spandrel of arches. The width of these arches is 2.5 on both sides and the central arch is 3 wide while the height is 17. The portion above these arches is designed with lattice work made of limestone. The actual purpose of these arches is to endure the load, moderate the massiveness of the building, and enrich the magnificence. Large-width arches are designed as entrances facing each other to make movement easy. All the arches are simple-pointed arches. The first level is a rectangular frame, whereas decorative scalloped arches are designed in one huge arch under it following which are the arches the last level is a pointed arches style. The main architectural benefit of these arches is decorative representing power. They provide an opportunity for greater visual pattern and rhythm. The veranda in front of the building is decorated with similar arches and creates harmony and rhythmic movement. Primarily these arches are used in proportion devising the same height apart from the one which is used as the entrance to the veranda. Arches vary in breadth to bring the movement of design.

2. Architectural elements

2.1. Walls

The residence doesn't have a front boundary wall the main building is separated by shops and a front garden from the roadside. The bricked walls of the residence provide a strong impression of sturdiness and forte. But simultaneously the use of arches reduces the blankness and fortification of the structure. On the south side of the residence is a small building which was their trade offices while at the back are their stables, kitchens, etc. Brick and mud adobe mortar was the basic construction material used for walls with a thickness of 18 inches. The friezes of the wall at levels of the residence are adorned with brickwork. The parapet wall, merlons, and brackets in cut brickwork enrich the magnificence and enhance the texture of the walls. The exterior wall at the back is decorated with blind arches. Rectangular windows and brackets are devoid of any decoration. In the veranda and inside the residence the wall is simply plastered and coated with white distemper they are also 18 inches thick; they are quite simple without any extra decorations. In each room a fireplace highly ornamented with carved wood is placed centre of a wall.

2.2 Floors

Floors in the veranda and a gallery separating the public space from private spaces in the residence are enhanced with black and white checkerboard design marble (Pl. 4). While in the remaining rooms cemented floors where pigments were added to form geometric shapes.

2.3 Doors /Windows

Doors with glass panes are in Gothic arched-shaped style. There are two enormous doors entering the residence in a plain rectangular shape, placed in the center of the main gigantic arches and flanked by two windows in bay style. Each door is topped by a fanlight in an arched shape with fixed glass panels in beautiful geometric designs for light admission and decoration and the lower rectangular part used for exit and entry has a double panel (see Pl. 4). Windows are ornamented with edging at the top is another style implemented in the residence to give further beauty to the external façade they are emphasized by the ornamental crown (pediment) feature and pilasters with base and capital of urn-shape around windows. These pilasters are similar to the cylindrical columns supporting the porch and veranda around windows. The base is decorated with a vast mouth pot shape edges turned downwards beneath it is a bead and real motif while the top is a typical Indian lotus half flower with double layers of petals. In this house, ventilators were designed in ellipse shape.

2.4 Buttresses /Columns/ Pilasters and Arches

Buttress was a common component of European architecture because of two reasons first it provided more height to the building and second it controlled the mass of the walls and provided a forte to the construction. In Aytar Singh Haveli the buttresses were designed and added to all corners of the residence. The porch and veranda are supported by bulky columns which have an urn-shaped capital and base (Pl. 5) (Holliss, 2015). These columns can also be found in Islamic architecture since the period of Medieval followed by the Mughal and also in colonial periods (Shah, 2005: 21, Coroneo, 2017: 473-496). The art of urn-shaped bases is also seen in the first century BC/AD, where the pillars made of wood were fixed into urns or pots in order to protect them from termites and moisture. They may be represented as the symbols of ancient rock-cut or structural buildings` depiction of purna-ghatas (vase of abundance, brimming vase) They are also known as Ghata-Pallava pillars define as brimming vase capital, the purna-ghata or ghata-pallava (sprouting vase), these are placed at the base and capital of these pillars, it can be one two or three capitals-since pillars can have several heads, or it can be at the chest (Kumar, 2017: 50-10, Huntington, 1985: 102; Shah, 2005: 20; Mehmood, 2016: 18).

In this residence, the urn-shaped base is facing upwards while the capital is upside down. The urn-shaped base and capitals are painted in maroon colours while the shaft is in white colour made of cut bricks and plastered with lime. This style is implemented in all pilasters encasing the doors and windows. Stucco work is implemented on the buttresses/columns of the veranda that encase the two main doors. The shaft is fashioned with fluted stripes in vertical lines and the base of these columns is enriched with horizontal lines breaking the solid form of these columns. These vertical lines are solid, and firm and suggest constancy with a consideration of potential energy. Whorls of lotus petals at the base inspire the columns depicting the Corinthian pillars, the pillars, and pilasters designed around the doors and windows of the residence. In columns and walls, the style of header and stretcher is implemented. The columns in this residence are designed with double urn-shaped bases and wide mouth capital, the lower pitcher is simple while the upper pitcher is designed with bricks cut in lotus petals.

Arches are an important architectural element because of their symbolic connotation they echo the significance of principles like light, unity, and beauty in religion Islam. In Islamic architecture, the rows of arches represent the partition between sacred and secular spaces. The pointed arches have a foremost architectural benefit as they centre the load-bearing potency of the structure on a perpendicular point so that more of the structure's weight could be reinforced on the exterior, commonly used with buttresses. Blind arches are also part of the architecture of this residence. It is the arch type created for the beautification of

a building wall and has been used in different spaces. On the outer wall, these blind arches are further embellished with decorative windows and brickwork. These arches are also found on the west side at the back of the residence. The blind arches are added to produce symmetry and balance and to bear the load of the building. The arches of frames are highly ornamented with floral lotus whole flowers with multi-layers, acanthus leaves, full-blown lotus flower motifs, and arabesque style floral designs on the spandrel of the arches.

3. Decorative Elements of the Haveli

3.1 Eaves and Brackets

In Avtar Singh Haveli eaves are the elaborating part of the building. The horizontal bricked eaves are further added with cut and dressed brick soffits. The residence is greatly ornamented with various styles of brackets. The designs of these brackets differ in certain areas. On the south side of the residence T-style, two-layered rectangular and smaller square bricks are designed (Pl. 6). The huge porch which is highly ornamented has two kinds, in one style shown cut bricks in spiky leaf style added while other type of pot or pitcher/ urn-shaped style design with spiky leaf design is styled to increase the exquisiteness of the eaves. The intricate architecture of the brackets looks like to be an imitation of the woodwork of ancient times. In the interior of the residence wooden brackets are provided for beautification purposes. These brackets in floral design are highly polished in wood color to enhance the structure.

3.2 Domes /Chaturas

In Avtar Singh haveli dome and *Chaturas* are one of the main features of the attraction there are two carved ribbed semi-domes topped the two main doors of the halls in the haveli can be seen on the first level of the ceiling, while *Chaturas* are placed on one level and second level both.

3.3 Parapets

A parapet is a railing, low wall, or fence drawn out above the wall at the brink of a roof, balcony, pathway, terrace, or bridge. Outspreading over the roof might be a part of the exterior wall that runs above the line of the rooftop (Ching, 2014). Avtar Singh haveli is stunningly adorned with parapet walls and cupolas/gathas which enhance the grace of the residence. The parapet walls are ornamented in different patterns such as panelled, vase-style bars, X shape, and curvilinear triangles. The parapet walls of the residence are finished with running curvilinear triangles. The parapet wall is also adorned with small cupolas at the front, rear, and all sides. The parapet with intervals and terracotta balustrades at the top and base are made to enrich the roofs of the building. A parapet wall in rectangular panels with crenels or indentations at regular intervals is used.

3.4 Water Shoots

Faucets are generally vertical in character and range from the roof to the ground level. The water escapes from these pipes and is led out from the structure to protect the foundation. There are various shapes of these pipes. Sometimes they are simple while sometimes they are fixed with ornamented heads called gargoyles. The term gargouille is derived from French, meaning "throat" or "gullet". Various animal designs were styled at different periods along with different notions. Lion heads were the most frequented alien animal fashioned as a gargoyle in the medieval period. Interestingly, Avtar Singh Haveli has a well-planned water shoot system they are located close to the columns and in the corners of the residence. The pipes start

from the lower part of the eaves and finish with a curve near the ground. The gargoyles water sprouts are designed to run down the water from the roof and take outside of the residence. Averting rainwater from running over masonry walls is essential for destroying the building. Many gargoyles on residences are fixed to distribute the course of rainwater off the roof. The extent of the gargoyle decides how far water is flung from the wall. These gargoyles are found in a rectangular conical brick structure under the eave.

3.5 Lattice Work

Lattice work is Mughal art which is used in the residence with limestone. On the first tier of the building, the terrace has semi-domed chambers constructed on pillars. These pillars are joined by a 3 feet high railing. The X pattern is used with top railing in terracotta and lower railing, and the found in the front porch terrace are designed in vertical bands with top and lower railings of the same material. The upper portion of the arches in the porch facing the east is also filled with lattice work.

3.6 Railing

The metal grill with a floral pattern is placed on the veranda with a height of 3 feet. This grill is coloured white with a horizontal railing in wood polish made of wood at the top and bottom.

3.7 Brick Designs (Khisht-Kari)

Walls in Avtar Singh haveli are built with faced bricks. All around the residence header and stretcher style is applied in bricklaying. It consists of substitute courses of stretchers and headers. It provides a resilient and preferred bonding design in architecture. The eaves and soffits are ornamented with a variety of shapes such as T. style brick pattern, spiky or embossed leaf pattern, and pitcher style. A dental saw-tooth pattern is also found in this residence. Embellished windows in this residence are embellished with different shapes of bricks. Convex-shaped bricks with a conical end are used adding support to the base. The base is scalloped creating a fringe to the window. At the back of the house which can be a family space, the courtyard floor is paved with bricks laid in the style of basket weave. The plain brick can also stick out to offer more prominence to any building the windows encased by double arch windows were encased is quite simply attained by designing plain and cut and dressed bricks to balance the multi brick used in the residence. The main motive was adding ornamental features to brickwork architecture and enriching the look and artistic significance of a long, flat stretch of walling. Therefore, various designs were created. Most of the pleasing-to-the-eye features amalgamated into the architecture also play a role in offering support to a building. Shape renovation from shapes cutting is exquisitely organized in brick sizing and shapes.

3.8 Wood Work

The interiors are decorated with exquisite wood work the ceilings are designed in transverse /diagonal bands of wooden sheets it is bordered by fresco paints with repetitive motif patterns in lively colours, these diagonal lines create more drama than either horizontal or vertical lines. (Pl. 6) in another room, the ceiling is designed with geometrical fretwork. These patterns convey action, motion, and excitement. The door placed on the left side of the veranda is flanked by windows from the inside is in an alcove shape and is covered in wood and is highly embellished from wooden fret work with glass mosaic in a David star shape. The walls at dado levels are also covered with wood panels of about 2.5` chip carved in overlapped circles in the geometric designs. The door frame is decorated with arabesque floral patterns which end with urn-shaped lotus flower patterns (Pl. 7). There are also two wooden pilasters between each window and door with the base and capital of urn-shaped lotus flowers. Then again this alcove door and windows are flanked by windows at some

distance with the same design, bordered by arabesque floral pattern and ends at two urn-shaped. This room is connected to another room whose ceiling is again ornamented with the same fretwork of inter-lapped circles. In this room is a suspended chamber made of wood highly ornamented with glass and fret work similar to the main hall alcove doorway (Pl. 8) on the second level of the roof there is a *dalan* (resting room) wood made decorated with stained glass doors and windows. Their south side has three windows while on the east and west one each. Wooden brackets are used indoors for draperies they are beautifully designed in floral motifs. Railings placed in between the arches of the veranda are ornamented with floral metal design, painted in white. The curvilinear lines create a design comprising three portions: base, bottom, and top. All of these portions are fashioned with a leaf motif as an isolated design. The entire design is enclosed at the top and bottom grill.

4. Heritage Value

Subsequently, Bungalows in India hold a distinctive and exceptional status, deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts as symbolic remnants of a bygone era. Historically, they embody the emergence of individualized private property, a novel concept within the communal lifestyle prevalent in traditional Indian societies. Despite their absorption into contemporary Indian society, the imperial origins of bungalows have largely faded from collective memory. However, in the twenty-first century, bungalows face significant challenges to their continued existence. Particularly, issues such as the maintenance and preservation of both the buildings and their associated gardens have become formidable concerns for property owners. Moreover, the complexities arising from inheritance laws and property division contribute to socio-political confusion and familial fractures. An analysis of the transition from the colonial to postcolonial periods, utilizing the bungalow as a focal point, presents a valuable opportunity to explore a multitude of questions concerning the interplay between the built environment and societal dynamics. In the Indian context, the inadequacy in comprehending the bungalow historical origins and evolution, along with its profound social and cultural implications, has led to deficient descriptions of its position in urban geography. In the current era of globalization and a market-driven economy, a deeper understanding of the bungalow origins and its integration with social and cultural dimensions is essential. Such understandings can contribute significantly to addressing contemporary challenges, not only in meeting the housing requirements of the nation but also in formulating urban design and planning strategies from a local or Asian perspective.

Conclusion

The historical and cultural significance of colonial-era bungalows in India, focusing on the Avtar Singh Haveli as a specimen. It highlights the architectural features, such as Doric and Tuscan columns, and how these bungalows evolved from British influences. The Avtar Singh Haveli, built in 1920, is described with its unique features like semi-ogee shaped domes, cupolas, and decorative arches. It emphasizes the cultural amalgamation in the Haveli, incorporating European architectural elements while maintaining local and regional significance. It also explores into the construction materials, techniques, and the role of Indian craftsmen and the architectural details, such as Poonchi designs and buttresses, are explained in the context of Sikh-Anglo era architecture. The interior of the Haveli, conversing the ornate woodwork, fresco paints, and the use of lattice work. It particulars the significance of arches, parapet walls, and decorative elements like gargoyles. The water shoot system and the role of these architectural features in managing rainwater are highlighted. The article also concludes by discussing the challenges faced by colonial-era bungalows in contemporary times, including maintenance, preservation, and socio-political issues related to inheritance and integration with social and cultural dimensions for addressing modern challenges in housing and urban planning.

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Pl. 1: Avtar Singh Haveli a true depiction of Sikh Architecture of bungalows in Peshawar



Pl. 2: Poonchi an architectural element of Sikh architecture



Pl. 3: Porch of Avtar Singh Haveli/ Bungalow



Pl. 4: Floors are adorned with chequered designs white and black marble



Pl. 5: Amalgamation of European and Sikh architecture buttresses, pilasters, and arches



Pl. 6: Ceiling highly ornamented with fresco painting



Pl. 7: An alcove-shaped door flanked by windows



Pl. 8: Suspended wooden chamber in a room



Pl. 9: Reception area on the roof of the bungalow placed on the left side of the building