Session – II

Indo Saracenic Architecture in Channai

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INTRODUCTION

This study is made to pictorially analyse and understand the application of the Architectural Features of the **ISLAMIC, HINDU, BYZANTINE** styles into the **INDO-SARACENIC** Buildings designed and built during the British Colonial period in Chennai (Madas) City.

Indo-Saracenic architecture represents a synthesis of Islamic designs and Indian materials developed by British architects in India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The hybrid, combined diverse architectural elements of Hindu and Mughal with cusped arches, domes, spires, tracery, minarets and stained glass, in a wonderful, almost playful manner.

Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1840-1915), **Henry Irwin and Gilbert Scott** were among the leading practitioners, of architecture of that time. Chisholm, one of the most gifted English architects who worked in India and a vehement supporter of Indian craftsmen said about them as, “the men who will actually leave the impress of their hands on the material”. These men have an art language of their own, a language which you can recognize but cannot thoroughly understand. For this reason an architect practicing in India should unhesitatingly select to practice in the native styles of art - indeed the natural art-expression of the men is the only art to be obtained in the country.” Chisholm was the Principal of the School of Industrial Art at Madras, and won the commission for designing the Presidency College and the University Senate House.

lndo-saracenic architecture found its way into public buildings of all sorts such as railway stations, banks and insurance buildings, educational institutions, clubs and museums. **Chepauk Palace** (C.1768) in Chennai designed by Paul Benfield is said to be the first Indo-Saracenic building in India, referred to as licentious ‘eclectic” incorporating elements and motifs of Hindu and Islamic precedents. The other outstanding examples are spread across the country - Muir college at Allahabad, Napier Museum at Thiruvananthapuram, the Post Office, Prince of Wales Museum, University Hall and Library, Gateway of India in Mumbai, M.S. University, Lakshmi Vilas Palace at Baroda, the General Post Office, Law Courts, Museum and University Senate House in Chennai, th Palaces at Mysore and Bangalore.

Influences of the Indo-Saracenic wave can also be seen in Lutyens' design for the viceroy's residence (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) in New Delhi where also a combination of Mogul and European styles was employed. lndoSaracenic architecture is often called a "stylistic hybrid" (Michell) architecture. It combines traditional Indian architectural elements, like scalloped arches and onion domes, with traditional British architecture. The mixture of Indian elements with the neo-classical and gothic styles typifies an Indo-saracenic building. These buildings are also called 'consistently picturesque," (Michell) which you can see is true from the picture of the Victoria Memorial Hall in Madras.

The following are the principal Characteristics of Indo-Saracenic Buildings

- Onion (Bulbous) Domes
- Overhanging Eaves
- Pointed Arches, Cusped Arches, or Scalloped Arches
- Vaulted Roofs
- Domed Kiosks
- Many Miniature Domes, or Domed Chatris
- Towers or Minarets
- Harem Windows
- Open Pavillions
- Pierced Open Arcading

The leading Architects of 1ndo-Saracenic Buildings in India were

- Robert Fellowes Chisholm
- Charles Mant
- Henry Irwin
- William Emerson
- George Wittet
- Frederick W. Stevens

The prominent Buildings in the lndo-Saracenic Style types include

- Courts and other Civic Buildings
- Clock Towers
- Government Colleges and High School Buildings
- Railway Stations
- Art Galleries
- Palaces of the INDIAN Maharajas

When the British came to India, the European classical style (incorporating Greek and Roman Features such as columns, triangular pediments) was followed for the public and other buildings during their earlier period of colonial rule to reflect their self image as the holders of power and status. However they changed their mind after the Great Revolt of 1857 and went for the INDO-Saracenic types of buildings. However their colonial mind setting did not change. It can be known from Thomas Metcalf, an expert on the subject, who said, "in the public buildings put up by the Raj it was essential always to make visible Britain's imperial position as ruler, for these structures were charged with the explicit purpose of representing empire itself. Since they wanted to legitimatize their rule, they decided to justify their presence by relating themselves to the previous rulers, the Mughals.. The British deliberately kept Mughal princes in power so as to not to provoke Indian contempt and to further establish their connection to the Mughals. These princes were a vision of the future, but the British also needed them to be a representation of the past. And it worked.

Keeping some traditional elements of British architecture of homeland, they added elements of Indian architecture to continue with the Indian traditions. "They tried to encapsulate India's past within their own building". Indo-Saracenic architecture, although based mostly on political motives, kept both the British citizens living in India, as well as native Indians, content. Thomas Metcalf stated that in the architecture, "the British sought to incorporate their view of India's past into their own building, and so represent Britain's Raj as legitimately Indian, while at the same time constructing a modern India of railways, colleges, and law courts". It was a progressive move forward without the controversy that usually follows modernism.

INDO SARACENIC ARCHITECTURE

This study has been done mainly to find out and highlight the different Architectural features, motifs and elements, taken from the Hindu, Islamic, Byzantine styles and used in the INDO SARACENIC style Buildings designed by the British Architects and built during the colonial period in Chennai (Madras) India

A study into the architectural features of the Indo-Saracenic style buildings of chennai city (madras) in India built during the british colonial period

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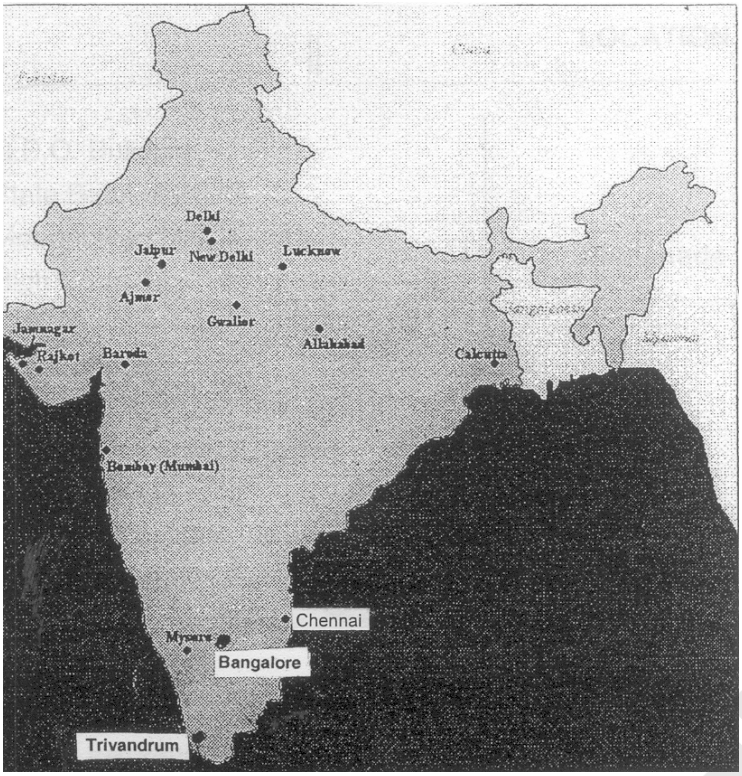

Map showing the locations of cities having Indo Saracenic style buildings in India

List of prominent Indo Saracenic style buildings in Chennai City			
	Location		Location
1. G.P.O. Building		16. College of Engineering	
2. State Bank of INDIA		17. Boat Club – Old Mowbrays Club	Guindy
3. Metropolitan Mag. Courts			
4. High Court	Esplanade	18. Metropolitan Mag. Court	
5. YMCA		19. Museum & Connemara Library	
6. LAW College		20. Egmore Railway Station	
7. Madras University (library)		21. Veterinary College	Egmore
8. Senate House		22. State Archives Building	
9. Chepauk Palace & Tower		23. National Art Gallery	
10. PWD Buildings	Chepauk	24. College Of Arts & Crafts	
11. Oriental Research Institute			
12. Victoria Hostel		25. St. George's (School) Chapel	
		26. Southem Railway Offices	Amaindakarai
13. Bharat Insurance Building			
14. Agurchand Mansion	Anna Salai	27. MMC – Anatomy Block	Park Town
15. Poomphukar Showroom			

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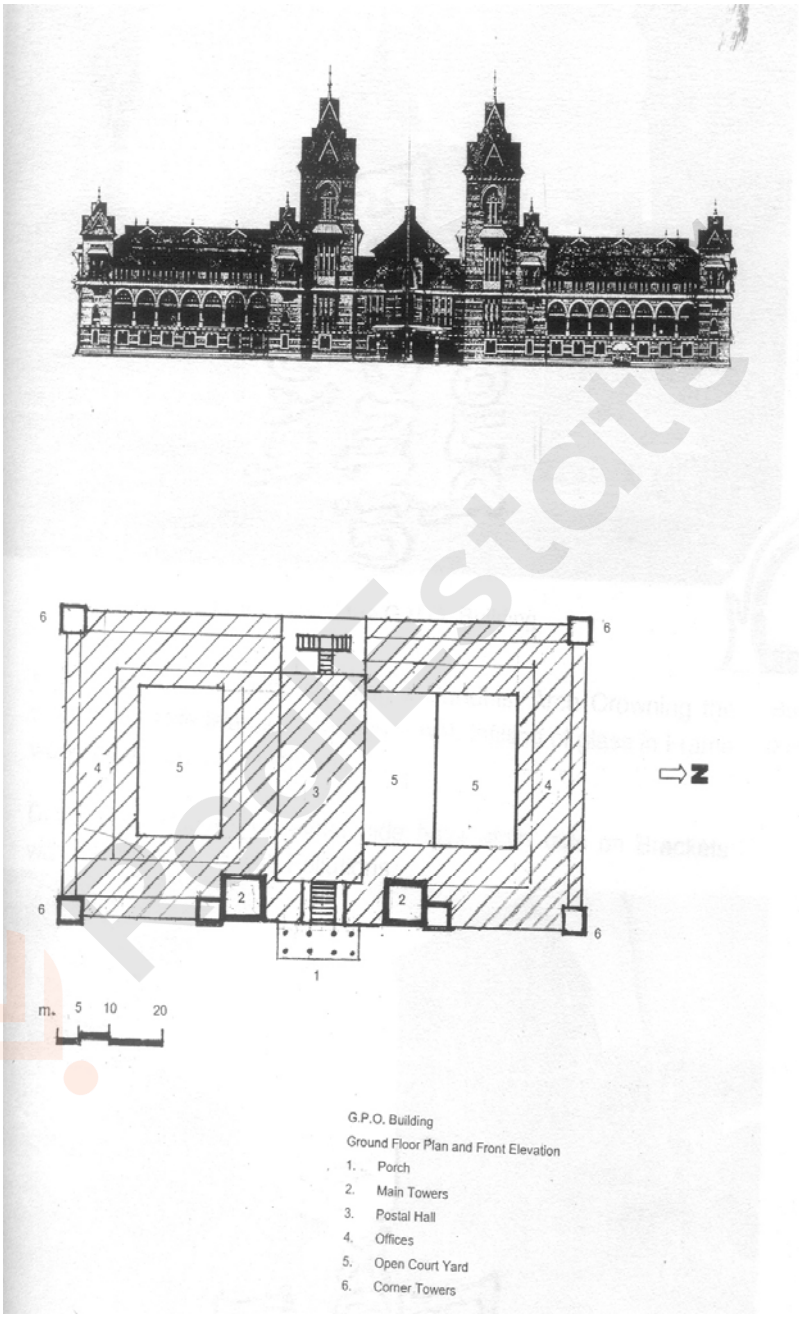
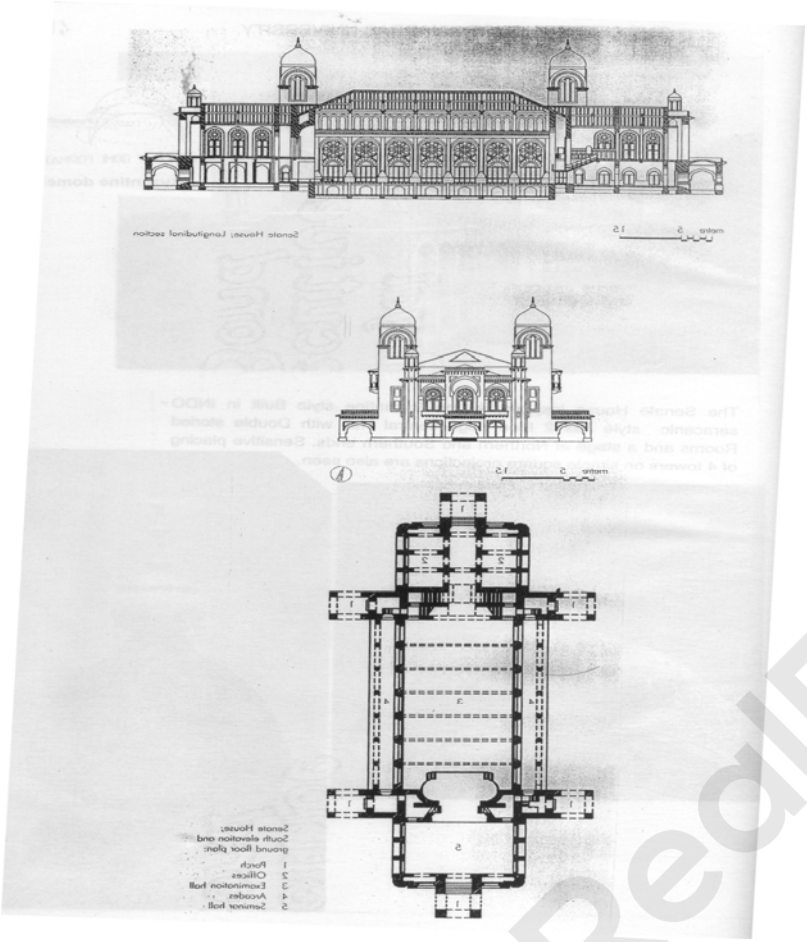
General Post Office Building

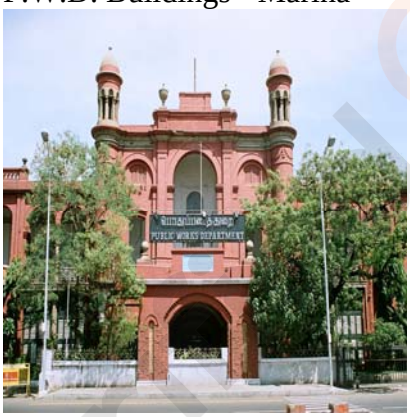


Senate House - Madras University



Chepauk Palace & Tower

P.W.D. Buildings - Marina



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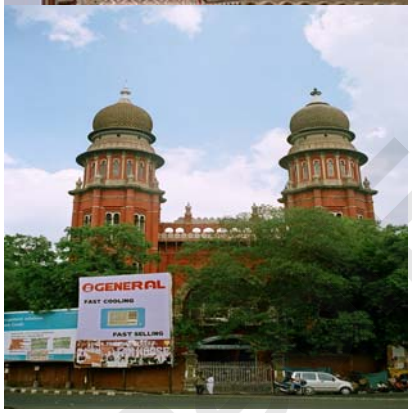
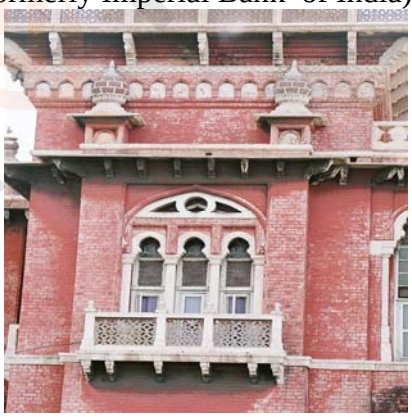
High Court buildings - Chennai



Law college buildings

Madras Veterinary College

State Bank of India buildings - (formerly Imperial Bank of India)



Metropolitan Magistrates' Court

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