

Metamorphosis of Distinct Architectural Styles in Begum's Era of Bhopal

A Case of Ahmedabad Palace, Bhopal

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Abstract:-Technology advancements, middle-class growth, and cultural dominance around the turn of the 20th century gave India its first taste of modernity.¹ Between roughly the 1900s and 1930s, when colonial displays in the Indies were in full swing, hybrid architecture was created that combined European and indigenous architectural styles to demonstrate how two very different civilizations could coexist together. Modern thought views globalization as the blending of various world cultures, which is the concept of hybridization. Bhopal has a unique place in India's sociocultural and political history being the only princely state with four generations of successive female monarchs (Begums). The aim of this paper is to understand and identify the Hybrid Architectural styles that are blended in Heritage structures built during early 1900's by Begums of Bhopal creating a historically significant style in that era. The paper discusses the relationship between the indigenous architecture style introduced by Qudsia Begum (Bhopal's first female monarch) and the transition of styles adopted by begums over time, leaving a significant impact in the living heritage city of Bhopal. Ahmedabad Palace also known as Qasr-e-Sultani (built as a Residential Garden palace) was chosen for its unique stylistic combination of British Colonial, Italian Renaissance, and Classical Greek architecture, built for the last begum Sultan Jahan following the tradition of the Nawabs of Bhopal which signifies its importance. The objective of this paper is to identify the composite styles of architecture and influences that have evolved as well as the culture and beliefs that have impacted in the city of Bhopal. And also, to assess the interlinkage and interdependency of the various influences blended in elements of building components of the Ahmedabad Complex.

I. INTRODUCTION

Madhya Pradesh, located in the heart of India, has historically been of great importance to many kingdoms. Madhya Pradesh has four cultural zones, each having its own cultural and historic identity. These are- Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, Malwa, and Nimar. As a result, architectural styles range from Islamic to European, embracing Indo-Islamic and Rajput traditions. "The city spreads itself in the shape of an Amphitheatre on the declivity of a hill, the foot of which is bathed by a beautiful lake and surrounded by a ring of large trees." Looking down on the red-roofed houses and groups of Palace terraces, two enormous minarets shoot proudly upwards, like two arms raised to heaven, and here and there bulb-shaped domes rise, surrounded by the golden crescent that characterizes the mosques, one of the last bulwarks of Islam in Hindostan." This is a lovely description of Bhopal as seen by international traveler Louis Rousselet in his book 'India and her Native Princes' in 1878. The princely state of Bhopal, founded in 1707 by the Pashtun soldier Dost Muhammad Khan, has always been ruled by male Muslim rulers known as 'the Nawabs of Bhopal,' However, women have long been at the forefront of its politics and public life. In nineteenth-century colonial India, women were much more entrenched in male-dominated society's preconceptions, chauvinism, and customs. Despite fierce opposition from powerful rivals and male claims, four Muslim women rulers reigned over Bhopal, India's second largest Muslim kingdom, between 1819 and 1926. Even the British East India Company resisted female authority in Bhopal until the Begums cited Queen Victoria as their model and inspiration in 'The Begums of Bhopal,' as written in 'The Begums of Bhopal: A history of princely state Bhopal'.

Ptichnikova, Galina. (2020). Hybridization in Architecture. 10.2991/assehr.k.200923.044.



Fig 1 Map of Bhopal city (Source – 4umaps)

During the Begum's reign in Bhopal, the architecture and urban design displayed a strong appreciation for nature and sustainable planning practices.

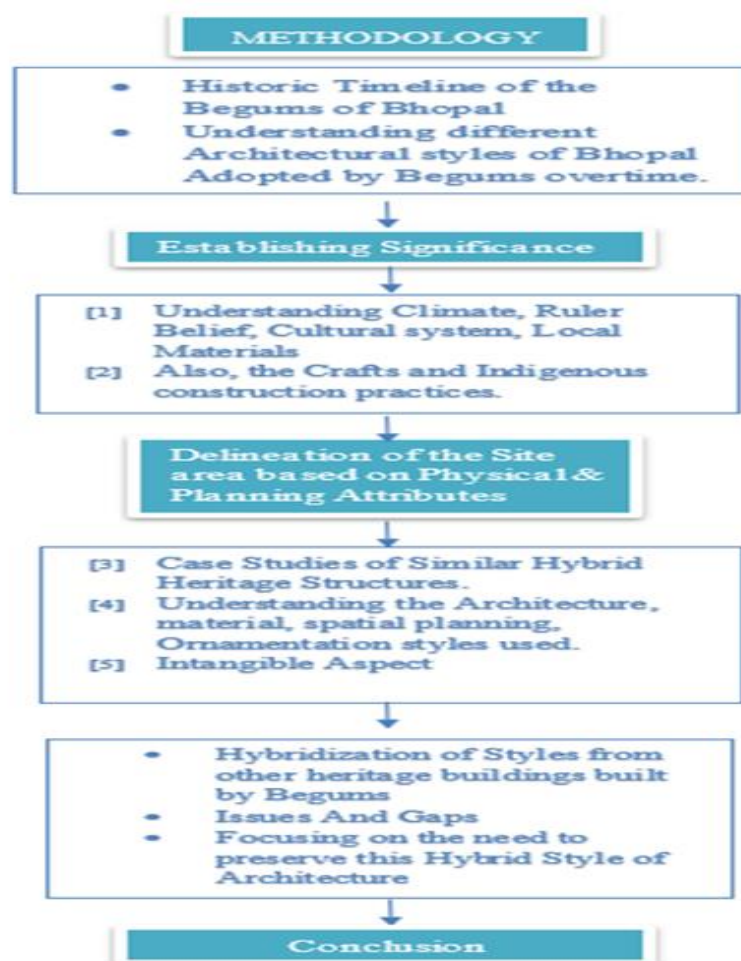


Fig 1.1 Methodology

➤ *Composition Of Multiple Architectural Styles In Heritage Building Of Bhopal*

Hybrid architecture occur as a result of the effects of cultural globalization on architectural style, urban infrastructure, and natural components. Exaggerated polymorphism is produced by the interbreeding of "local" and "global" in many patterns (functions, shapes, elements or components, combination methods) that form the architectural space of a modern city.

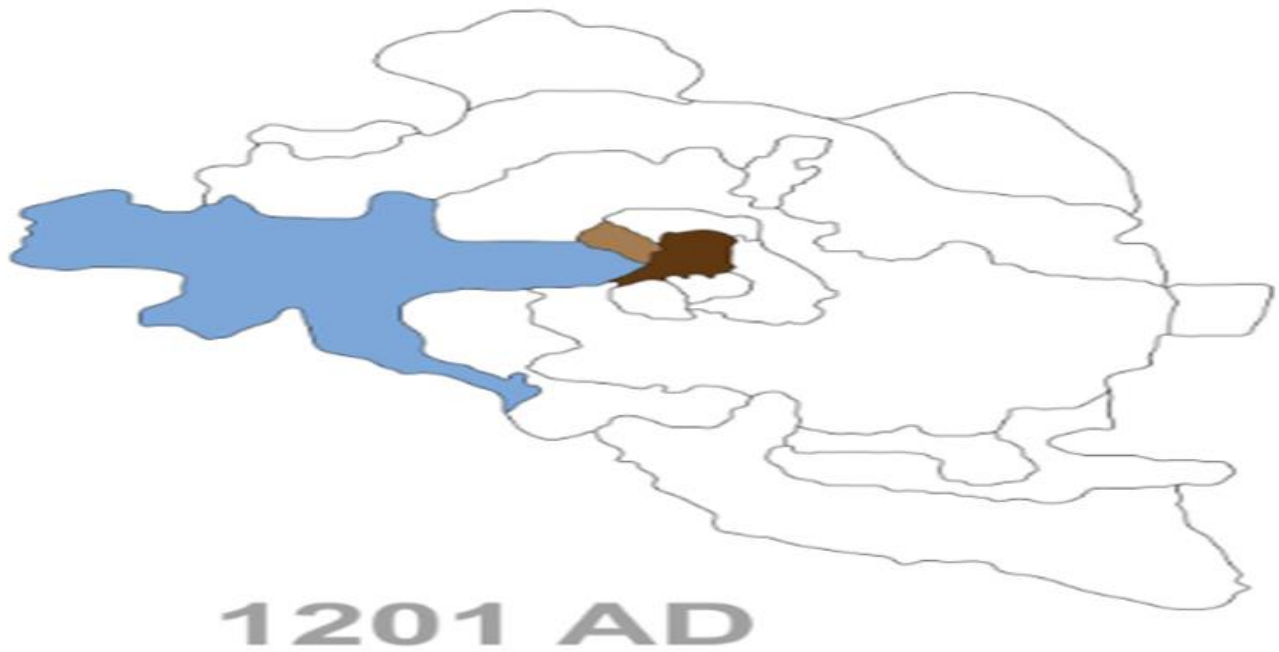


Fig 2 1201-1800 > Fortified City Constructed & Islamic Influence On Culture

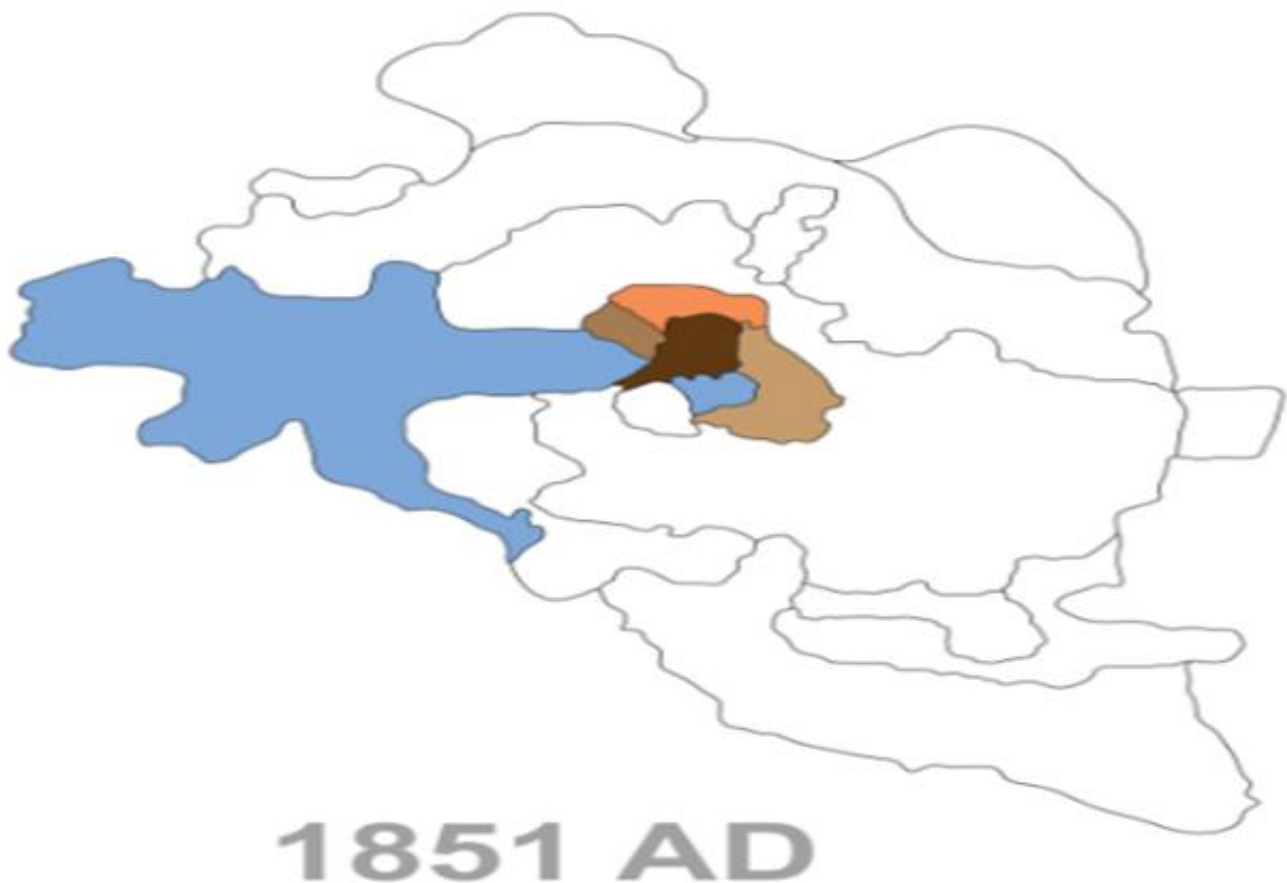


Fig 3 1851-1880 > Jama Masjid Built By Qudsia Begum (Palaces Built With Rajput & Islamic Influence)

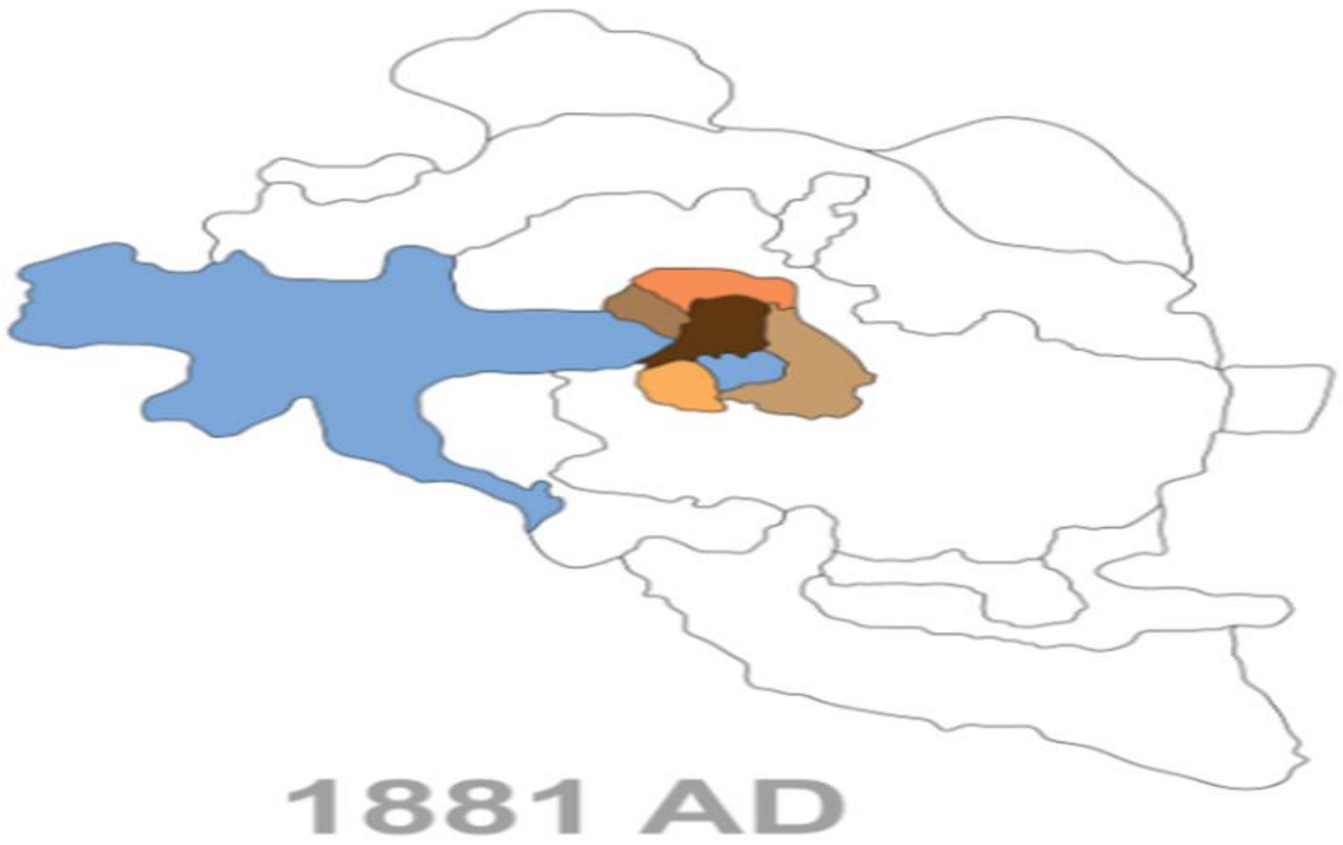


Fig 4 1881-1930 > Tajul Masjid & Taj Mahal By Shahjahan Begum (Palaces Built In Indo- Colonial & European Influence).

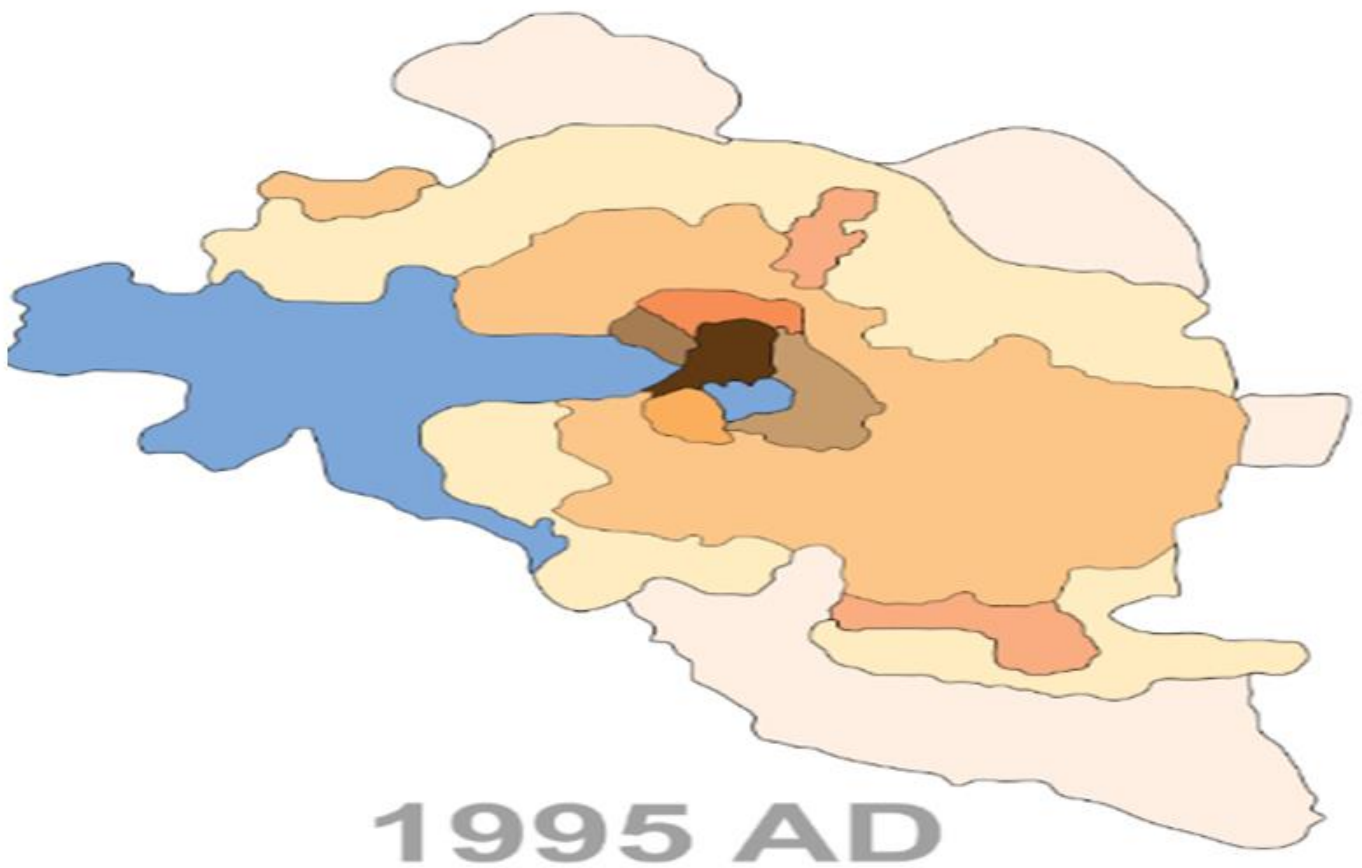


Fig 5 1973-1996 > Establishment Of Bhopal As A State Capital

Bhopal has a unique place in India's socio-cultural and political history being the only princely state with four generations of female monarchs (Begums). While Qudsiya Begum (reign 1819-44) took the first steps in the city towards women's independence when she escaped from purdah at the age of 18 after her husband's assassination, her daughter Sikander Jahan Begum (1844-68) showed a capable successor and waged many battles. Third in line was Shah Jahan Begum (1868-1901), who oversaw the construction of several exquisite buildings in Bhopal, the most well-known of which being the Taj Mahal Palace. Kaikhusrav Jahan Begum, the last of the Begums, governed from 1901 but abdicated in 1926 in favour of her son. The Begums put in a lot of effort to modernize their country, and they enthusiastically documented their accomplishments.

The waterworks infrastructure for Bhopal city was inaugurated by Qudsiya Begum with British support before to the revolt (Ali, 1969). Her successors-built palaces and gardens for their own use in addition to expanding the state's road system, bringing in the railways, and raising public structures like hospitals, schools, and other public facilities. A new cultural landscape, including banks, women's organizations, schools, public libraries, museums, and courts, among others, evolved in Bhopal under Sultan Jahan Begum's broad funding of reform projects in line with the ideal of the metropolis.² The emergence of Indo-Saracenic architecture occurred during colonization. This style combines aspects from several civilizations, including Islamic, Hindu, and Western, to create colonial architecture. The colonial state considered and advocated the Indo Saracenic architectural style as the most suitable for structures in princely India after 1857. It was the preferred architectural style during that time.³ The Begums pursued a parallel Islamic agenda while actively implementing the colonial state's modernizing strategy. Their Islamic religion was expressed architecturally with the construction of three Begumi mosques in Bhopal: Qudsiya Begum's Jami Masjid (1833), Sikandar Begum's Moti Masjid (1847), and Shahjahan Begum's Taj-ul Masjid (Post-1871).⁴

² Some prominent buildings included Minto Hall, Civil Club, Hamidia Khutubkhana (library), Imperial Bank and Edward Museum. The built heritage of the city, including its princely heritage, is regarded as a valuable cultural asset with Bhopal being a member city of the Indian Heritage Cities Network supported by, among others, UNESCO to preserve, manage and use heritage sustainably. For details, see, <http://www.ihcn.in/bhopal/194-bhopal.html> <Accessed November 2, 2013>

³ For a discussion on the choice of an appropriate architectural style, see, T.R. Metcalf (1989)

An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj London: Faber and Faber.

⁴ Sharma, J. P. (2018). Sacralizing the City: The Begum of Bhopal and their Mosques.

https://www.academia.edu/37544163/Sacralizing_the_City_The_Begums_of_Bhopal_and_their_Mosques

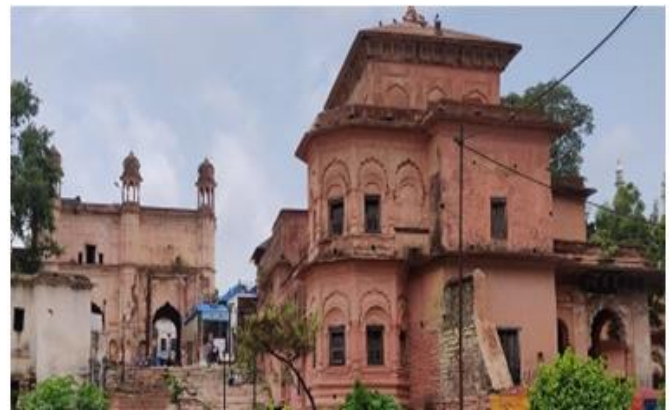


Fig 6 Gohar Mahal Architectural Style Mughal And Rajput Style Built – 1820



Fig 7 Shaukat Mahal Architectural Style: Indo-Saracenic And Rococo Style built - 1830's



Fig 8 Moti Masjid Architectural Style: Islamic Style Built – 1860



Fig 9 Moti Mahal Architectural Style: Islamic Style Built - 1874

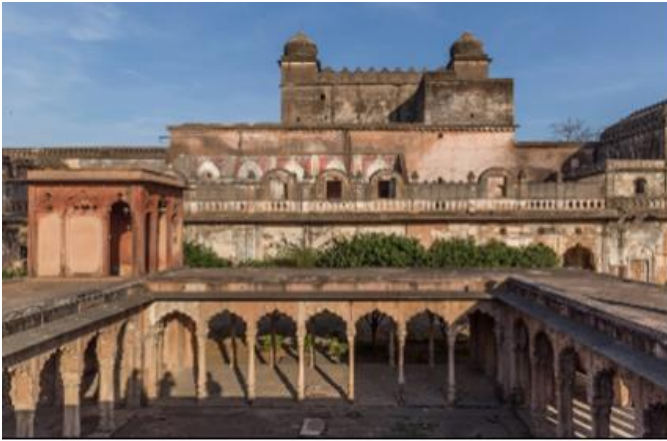


Fig 10. Taj Mahal Palace Architectural Style: Indo-Saracenic Style



Fig 13 Edward Museum Architectural Style: Islamic Style
Built -1908 Built – 1898



Fig 11 Shaukat Mahal Architectural Style: European And Rajput Style Built - 1884



Fig 14 Minto Hall Architectural Style: Indo Colonial Style And Nawabi Style Built -1909



Fig 12 Taj-Ul-Masjid Architectural Style: Islamic Style Built -1985

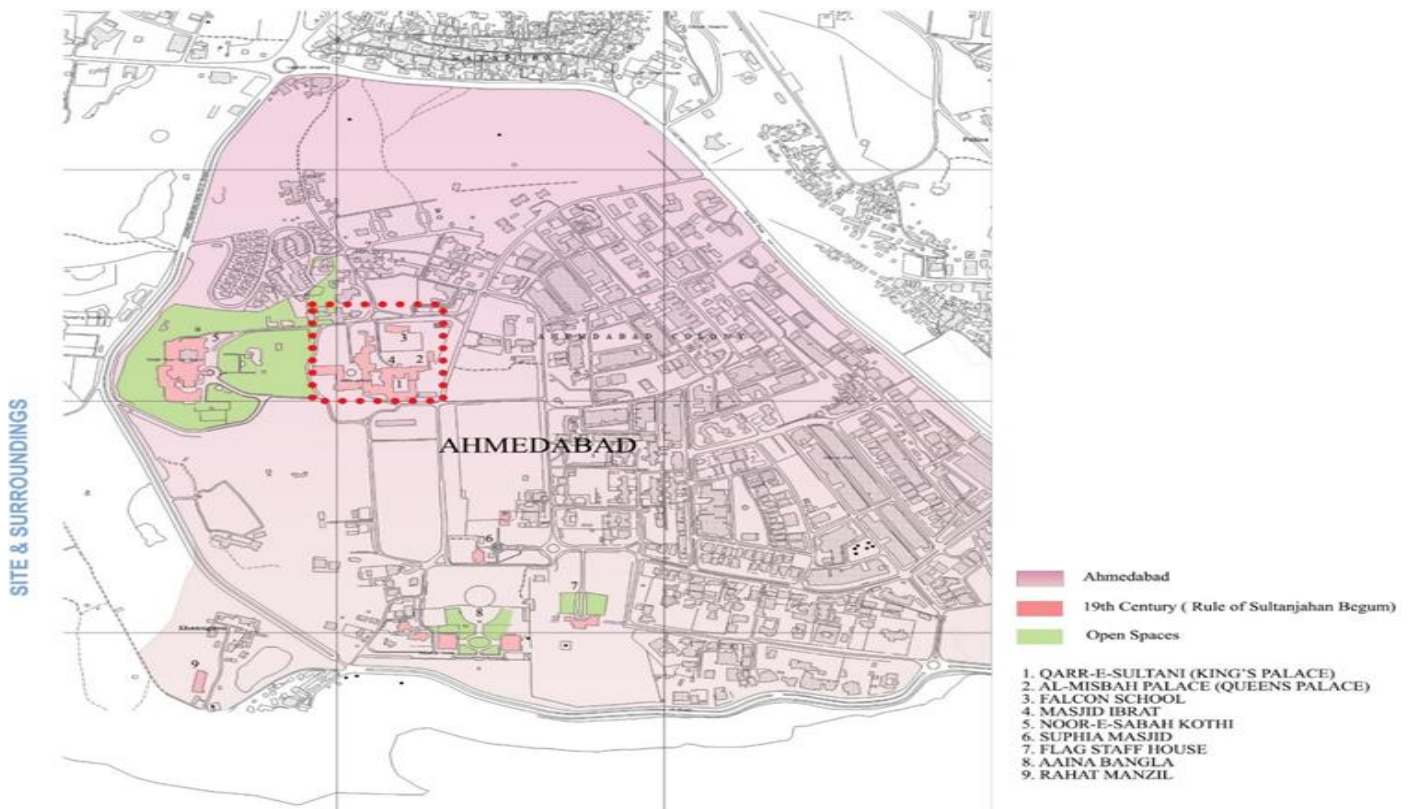


Fig 15 Sultan Jahan Mini Walled City Name Ahmedabad

The buildings created under begum Sultan Jehan begum reign were envisioned as a symbolic tribute to the British monarchy, incorporating features of both British architecture and mediaeval Nawabi architecture of Bhopal. Sultan Kaikhusrau, Shah Jahan Begum's lone surviving daughter. On July 9, 1858, Jahan Begum was born in Moti Mahal. On July 4th, 1901, she was crowned Nawab. She established a cutting-edge municipal system. Like her mother, she also created her own walled miniature city, which she named Ahmedabad in honor of her late husband. The location of this city was Tekri Maulvee Zai-ud-din (now Kohefiza), a mile away from the fort. She constructed the Qaser-e-Sultani Palace, popularly known as the Ahmedabad Palace.⁵ The elite and monarchy migrated into this neighborhood, making it a luxurious place to live. The first structure in Bhopal to use Italian marble and well-lit by electricity. Another institution founded in 1908 was the King Edward Museum. 'The handsome building of red sand-stone set apart for this purpose was originally intended for the Alexandra High School; but for various reasons this idea had been abandoned and the school was located in Benazir. I called the institution the King Edward Museum in memory of His late Majesty King Edward VII, for whom the people of Bhopal had always entertained the deepest respect and affection'.⁶ Begum believed that the museum is

a necessary adjunct to an up-to-date educational system. It provides both instruction and intelligent amusement as it enables not only to study the arts and industries of our own country but also to compare them with those of other countries that affords many opportunities for self-education. This shows the Begum's keen interest to establish a Museum in Bhopal state.

II. CASE STUDY- MINTO HALL

Minto Hall combined the common Nawabi architecture of Bhopal with the grand ballroom architecture of the West to create an Indo-colonial style with a singular architectural expression. The new Durbar Hall was intended to be one of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum's greatest undertakings in terms of both architecture and materials, leaving her mark not just on Bhopal but also on India's political landscape. The Minto Hall's rectilinear construction plan was kept straightforward and consisted of a two-story Colonial Durbar Hall in the middle, bordered on either side by arcade aisles and ancillary rooms.

There were eight staircase towers, a continuous colonnade verandah (corridor) surrounded by paired Doric columns, and it connected the entrances from the cardinal directions. White facades with pediments, ornamental brackets, cornices, decorative moldings, and urns contrast sharply with the brick-red painted towers. While the interiors' floriated arches and ornamental embellishments are typical of Bhopal's Nawabi architecture, the semi-open

⁵ An Account Of My Life Vol-ii : Begam Nawab Sultan Jahan : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive. (1922). Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.208859/page/n285/mode/2up?q=ahmedabad+palace>

⁶ An Account Of My Life Vol-i : Begam Nawab Sultan Jahan : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive. (1922). Internet Archive.

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.208859/page/n285/mode/2up?q=ahmedabad+palace>

colonnade verandahs and staircase towers speak with a particular colonial architectural vocabulary.⁷

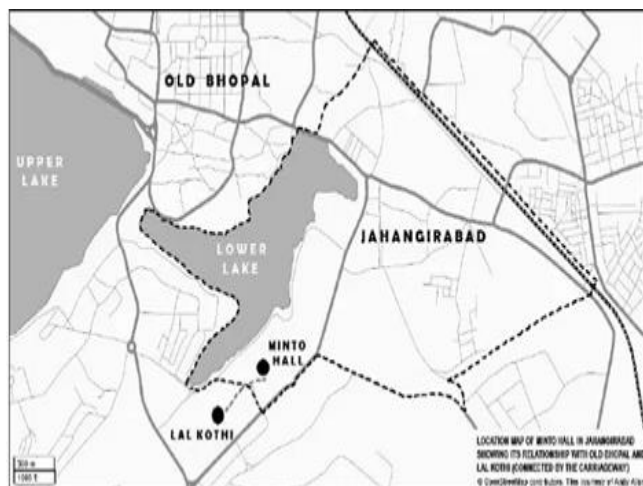


Fig 16. Location Map Of Minto Hall Beside Lal Kothi In Jahangirabad. (Source - Anchoring Heritage With History)

The colonnade verandah connects the eight towers of Minto Hall, suggesting the eight half- arches and the circlet of the imperial crown of India and emphasizing the building's historical and architectural significance.⁸ The beautiful designs on the walls and ceilings are similar in style to those found in carpets and embroidery of Bhopal. This is particularly noticeable in the stone-carved walls of the magnificent central Durbar Hall and the stucco work on the ball room and main staircase's ceilings. Decorative stucco work with colonial ornaments like bells, flowers, and bows displays The Nawab's a taste for delicate patterns and her fascination with the West.⁹



Fig 17 Minto Hall (Currently Convention Centre)

⁷Patnaik, M. (2014). Anchoring Heritage with History- Minto Hall. www.academia.edu.
https://www.academia.edu/7314864/Anchoring_Heritage_wit_h_History_Minto_Hall

⁸ Khan, S. M. (2001). The begums of Bhopal: a dynasty of women rulers in Raj India. *Choice Reviews Online*, 38(06), 38–3466. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.38-3466>

⁹ Patnaik, M. (2014). Anchoring Heritage with History- Minto Hall. www.academia.edu.
https://www.academia.edu/7314864/Anchoring_Heritage_wit_h_History_Minto_Hall

Fig 18 Minto Hall (Earlier Vidhan Sabha)

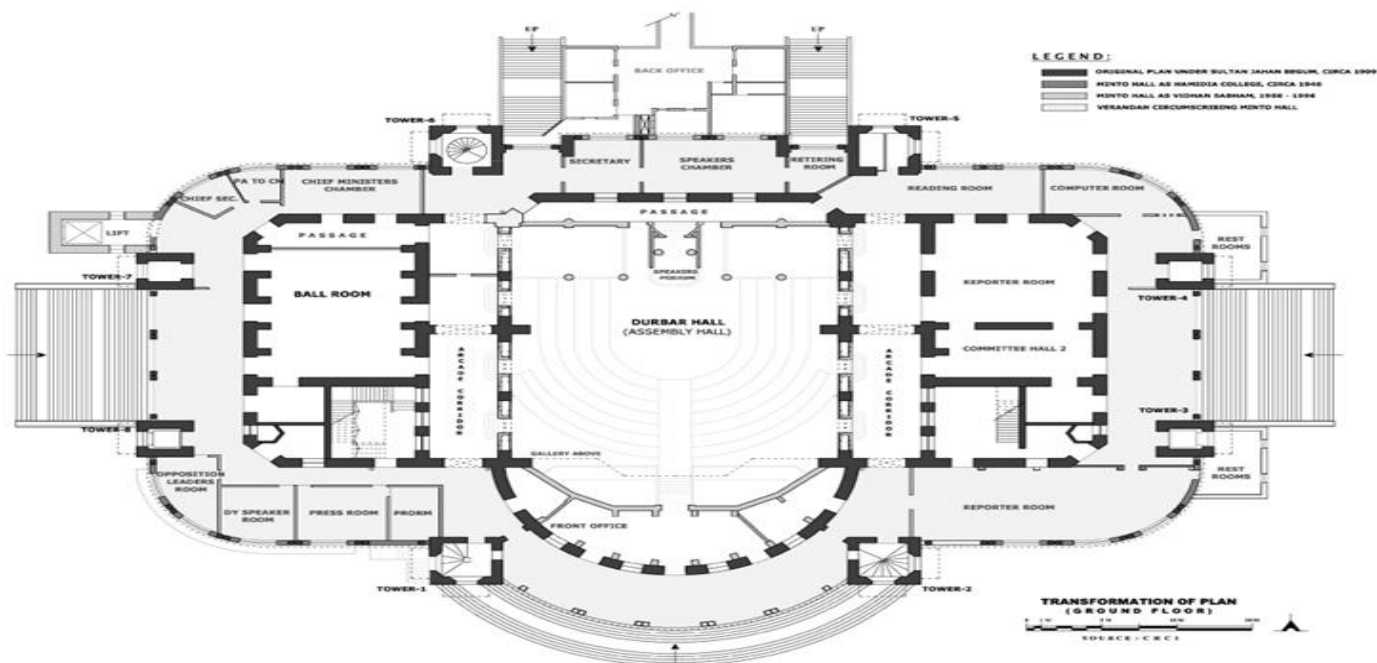


Fig 20. Transformation Plan Of Minto Hall (Source – Anchoring Heritage With History)

Due to the amalgamation of numerous influences and architectural styles used into Minto Hall, the city skyline today exhibits a distinctive hybrid architectural expression. Similar to this, Ahmedabad Palace, which was also constructed at the same time and with the same vision by Sultan Jehan Begum. It exhibits a leisure summer residential palace with the similar composite architectural characteristics.



(Source – Anchoring Heritage With History)



Fig 21. Intricate Stone Carving On The Columns Of The Ball Room Similar In Design With The Traditional Embroidery And Carpet Weaving Of Bhopal



III. QASR-E-SULTANI

The last Begum Sultan Jehan (1901–1921) constructed her own palace complex in the Ahmedabad region (in Bhopal), following the tradition of the Nawabs of Bhopal. Begum, on the other hand, loved the peace and tranquility of the city's outskirts. She built her own walled city, which she named Ahmedabad after her late husband. This city was situated at Tekri Maulvee Zai-ud-din (now Kohefiza), which was located a distance of one and half kilometer from the fort. She built a palace for herself called Qasr-e-Sultani (now Saifia College). As royalty and the rich moved in, this region became a luxurious residence. The Begum built the first water pump here and created the 'Zie-up-Abser' garden. She also constructed a new palace called 'Noor-us-Sabah' for her eldest daughter Abida Sultan in Ahmedabad Region of Bhopal. Qasr-e-Sultani is a comely white structure that blends British Colonial, Italian Renaissance and Classical Greek architecture. Multiple Architectural styles employed both in Qasr-e- Sultani (King's Palace) and Al- Misbah (Queens Palace) shows the amalgamation of Architectural styles used by the last Begum of Bhopal. The palace walls told stories of the fiery begums who ruled from behind the purdah. The Ahmedabad Palace was the first building in Bhopal made with Italian marble and first in the state to be lit by electricity which also signifies its importance during that time.







Fig 22. Ahmedabad Palace Bhopal Built By Sultan Jehan Begum Between 1900-1930's

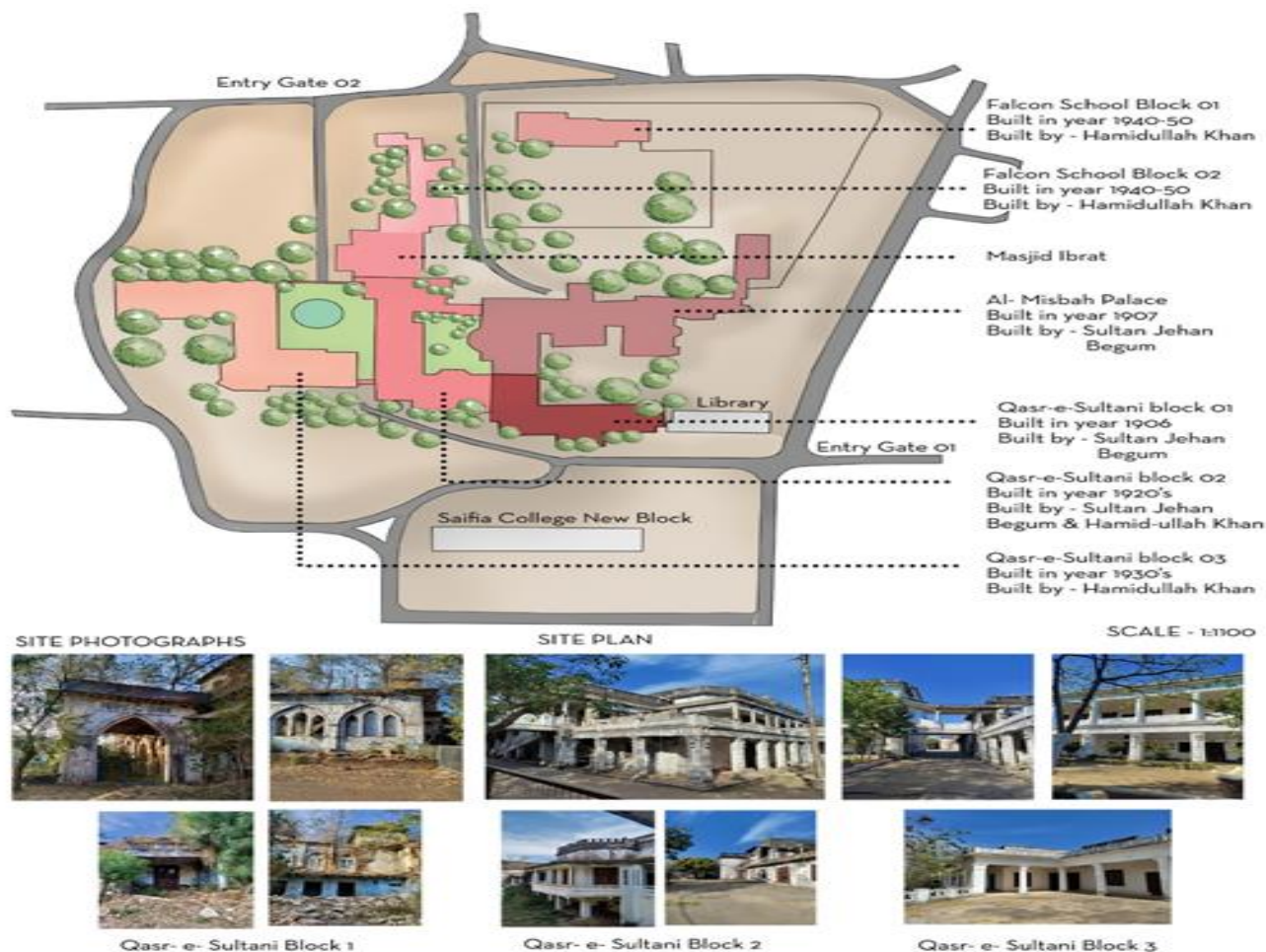
Table 1 Qasr-E-Sultani Built In 3 Phases

S.No.	Block	Built in Year	Built By	Usage	Styles Employed
1.	Qasr-e-Sultani Block 01	1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Residential Palace	Rajput, Islamic & British Colonial
2.	Qasr-e-Sultani Block 02	1920's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan Partly by Hamidullah Khan 	Residential Palace	Italian Renaissance, British Colonial
3.	Qasr-e-Sultani Block 03	1930's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Residential Palace for eldest son Hamidullah Khan	British Colonial & Classic Greek

Table 2 Other Heritage Structures Built By Sultan Jahan Begum At Ahmedabad, Bhopal

Other Buildings in Ahmedabad Region						
S.No.	Structures	Built in Year	Built By	Usage	Style Employed	Pictures
1.	Al-Misbah Palace	1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Residential Palace for Daughters	Rajput & Islamic	
2.	Masjid Ibrat	1906-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Praying place	Islamic	
3.	Falcon School Block 01	1940-1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Staff House	British Colonial	
4.	Falcon School Block 02	1940-1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Staff House	British Colonial	
5.	Suphiya Masjid	19 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Praying place	Islamic	
6.	Flag Staff House	20 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Guest House	British Colonial & Classic Greek	
7.	Noor-e-sabah Kothi	Early 20 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begum Sultan Jahan 	Residential Palace for Abida Sultan	Indo colonial style and Nawabi Style	
8.	Riaz Manzil	20 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Gifted to wife of Hamidullah Khan	Indo colonial style and Nawabi Style	
9.	Rahat Manzil	20 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Guest House	Indo colonial style and Nawabi Style	
10.	Imperial Sabre	20 th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamidullah Khan 	Stay of England Edward 8 th for tiger shoot	Italian Renaissance, British Colonial	

(Source – Author)



The area had an esplanade, venues, botanical gardens, and Kothies when it was designed in the Art Deco style by Austrian architect Heinz. Cottages, outhouses, palaces, yacht clubs, etc. in the classic European style that dominated at the period. The early modern Art-Deco style had a vocabulary that included circular grills, railings, terraced gardens with circular ends, porches with circular roofs and diamond windows with non-standard dimensions.¹⁰ It was famous for their unique architecture style and was also called shikar gaah or hunting castle of Ahmedabad mahal. The palace's furnishings were in the European design. There are two buildings that are used as guest houses: The Flag Staff House and Aainaa Banglaa. The Rahat Manzil and Riaz Manzil complexes, among others, were added to the Qasr-e-Sultani Rajmahal complex over time.

‘I invited him to a farewell breakfast at Ahmedabad Palace which was under construction at the time. The gardens were being newly laid, and at that stage only showed a couple of newly planted trees, and a few footpaths in grounds devoid of all vegetation. For the breakfast party a shamiana was erected and beautifully decorated with flowers which suited the color scheme that had been followed. The splendid view of the valley to the west, and the silver sheet of water stretching to the foot of the brown hills far away in a panorama of

surpassing loveliness, amply made up for the rather dismal appearance of the newly laid grounds, and seemed to cast a spell on everybody. Such gatherings are often memorable because of the surroundings in which they are held, and though the incomplete buildings of the Palace stood in a garden still in a state of infancy, yet the enchanting views of the lake appeared to lend a peculiar charm’ as discussed by Sultan Jahan Begum in her own book ‘Account of my Life (Volume ii)’ shows she elected to move to Ahmedabad Qasr-e-Sultani, which is regarded also as the Garden Palace which was mostly used as her leisure palace, despite possessing Sadar Manzil as her official residence.

Today, the Saifia College, a former Bhopal academic institution, is housed in the Ahmedabad Palace (Qasr-e-Sultani block)

¹⁰ An Account Of My Life Vol-ii : Begam Nawab Sultan Jahan : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive. (1922). Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.208859/page/n285/mode/2up?q=ahmedabad+palace>

Table 3 Elements / Component Seen In The Palace

STYLES	ELEMENT/FEATURE
<i>Victorian Cast - Iron L Brackets</i>	
<i>Stained Glass Windows</i>	
<i>Aaina Ghar (Maratha Influence)</i>	
<i>Fire Place Design (Colonial Influence)</i>	
<i>Spiral Staircase (European Influence)</i>	
<i>Arches (Islamic Influence)</i>	
	

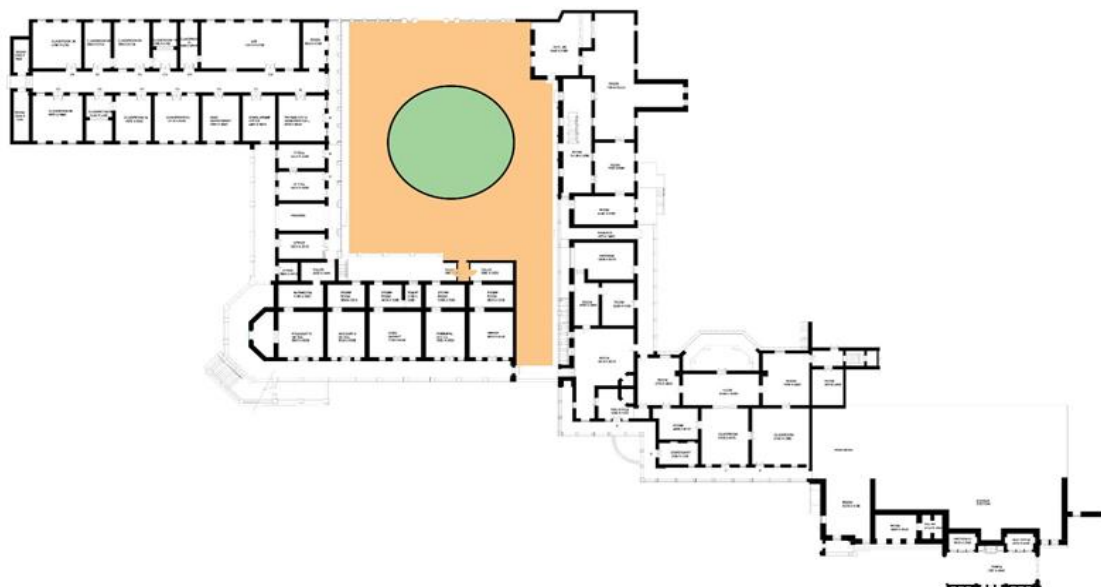


Fig 25. GROUND FLOOR PLAN

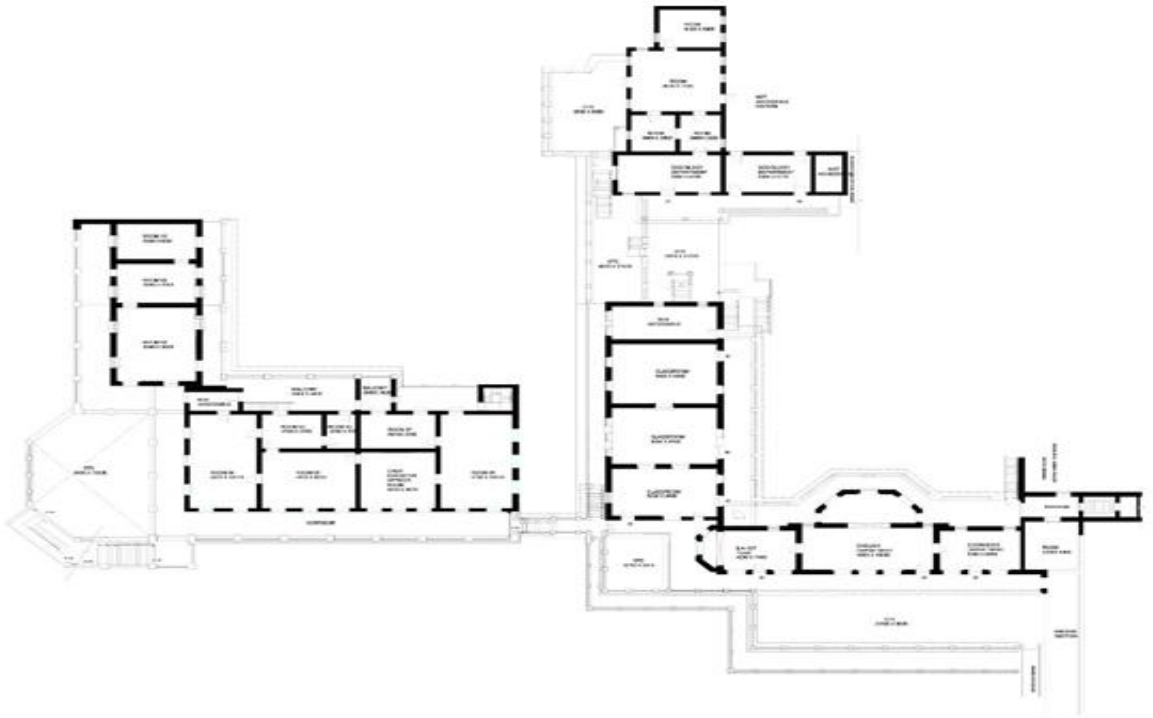


Fig 26. First Floor Plan

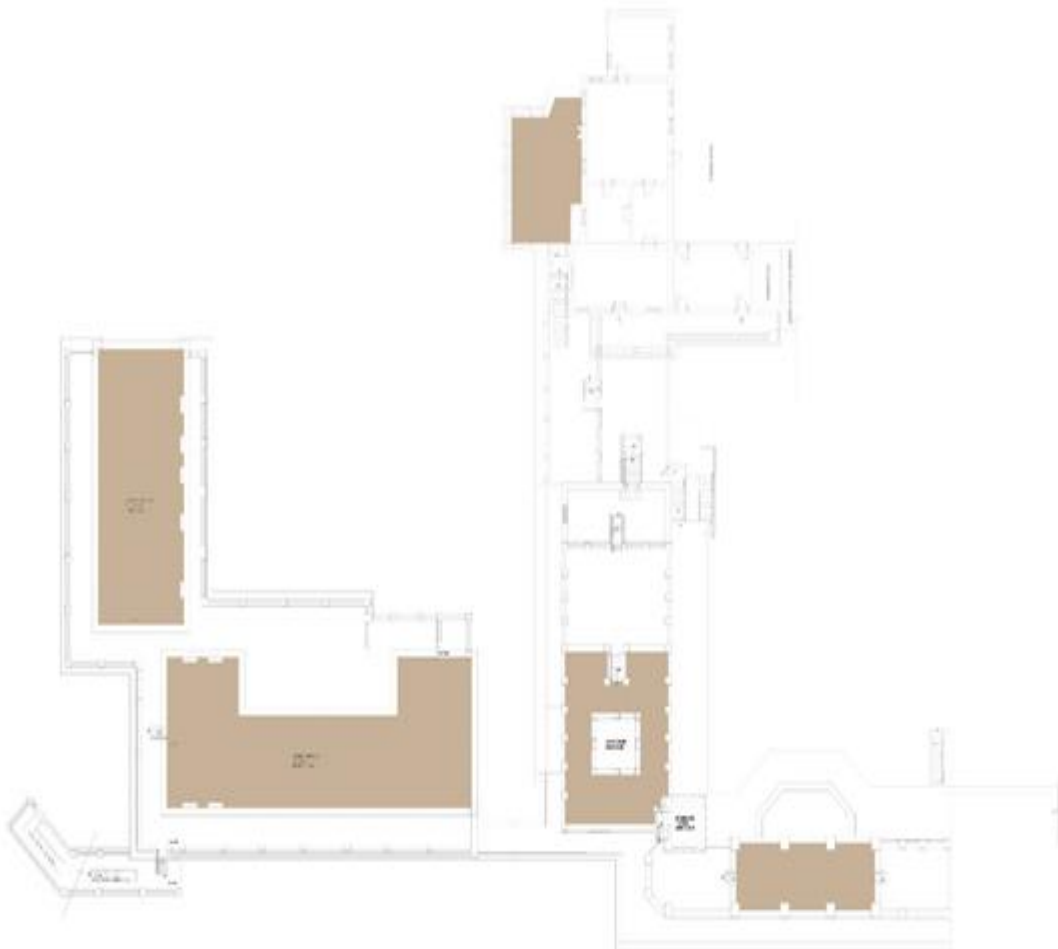


Fig 27. TERRACE FLOOR PLAN

Table 4 The Hybridization Of Multiple Styles In The Elements Used In The Ahmedabad Can Be Seen In The Table Below:

	COLUMN STYLES	FLOORING STYLES	DOOR / WINDOW STYLE
<i>Classic Greek</i>		<i>European (19th century Italian Marble)</i>	
<i>Classic Greek</i>		Wooden floorings	
<i>Mixed</i>		Roman (Floor Mosaics)	
<i>Colonial</i>		Persian (Carpet flooring)	
<i>Rajput</i>		<i>European (19th century Italian Marble)</i>	

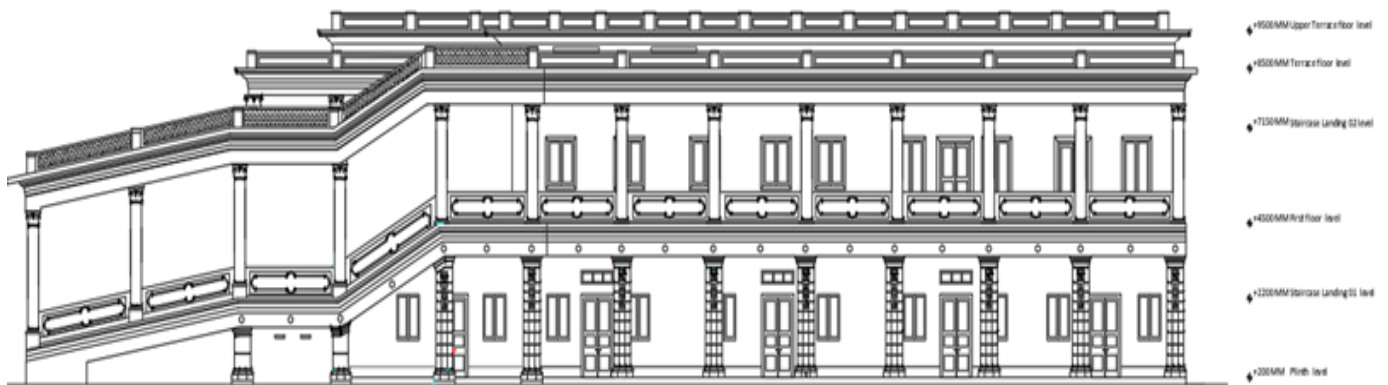


Fig 28. ELEVATION OF BLOCK 03 (FRONT VIEW)

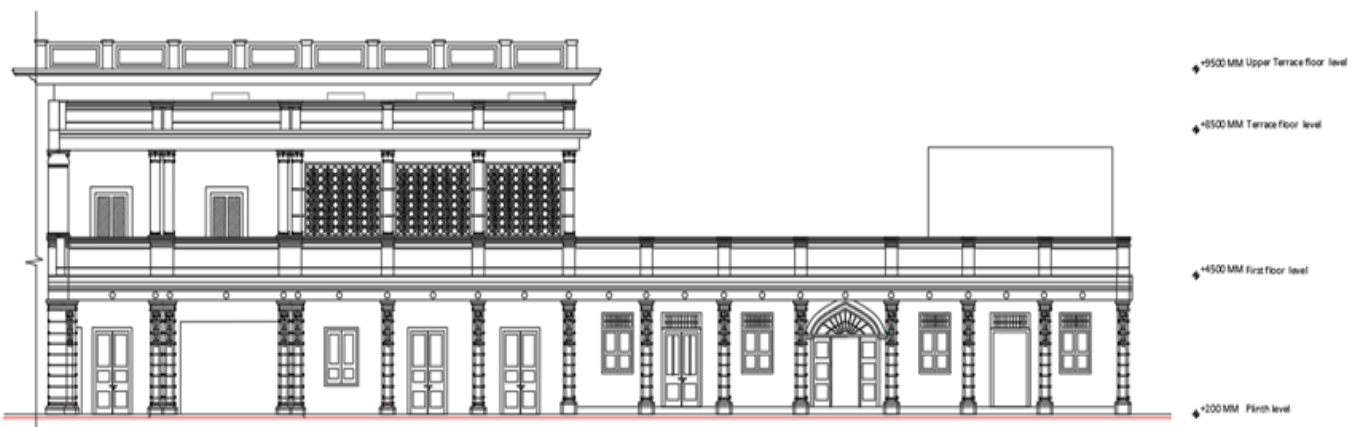


Fig 29. ELEVATION OF BLOCK 03 (BACK VIEW)

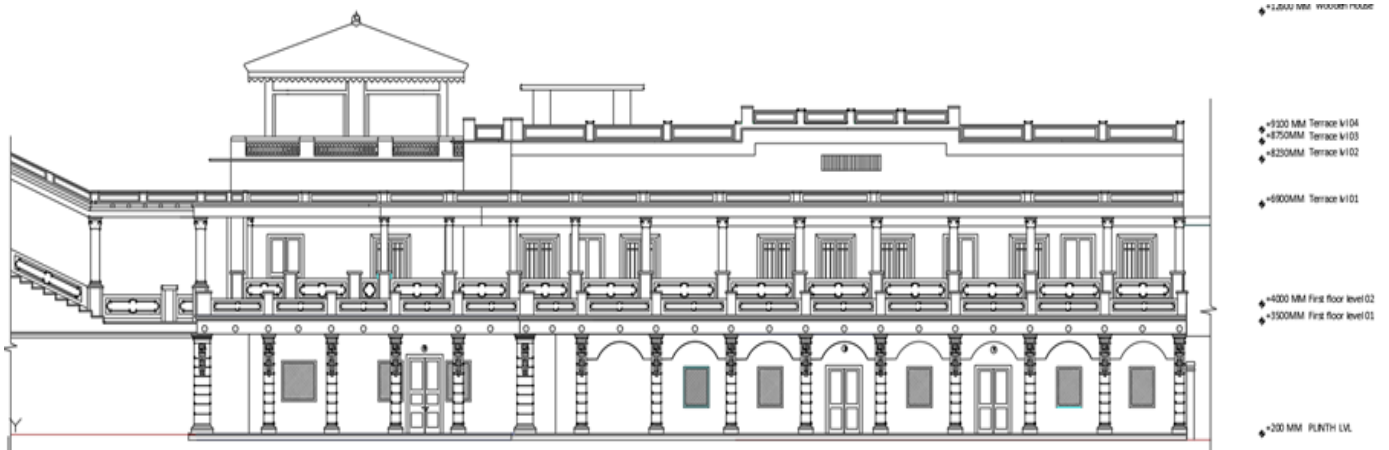


Fig 30. ELEVATION OF BLOCK 02 (FRONT VIEW)

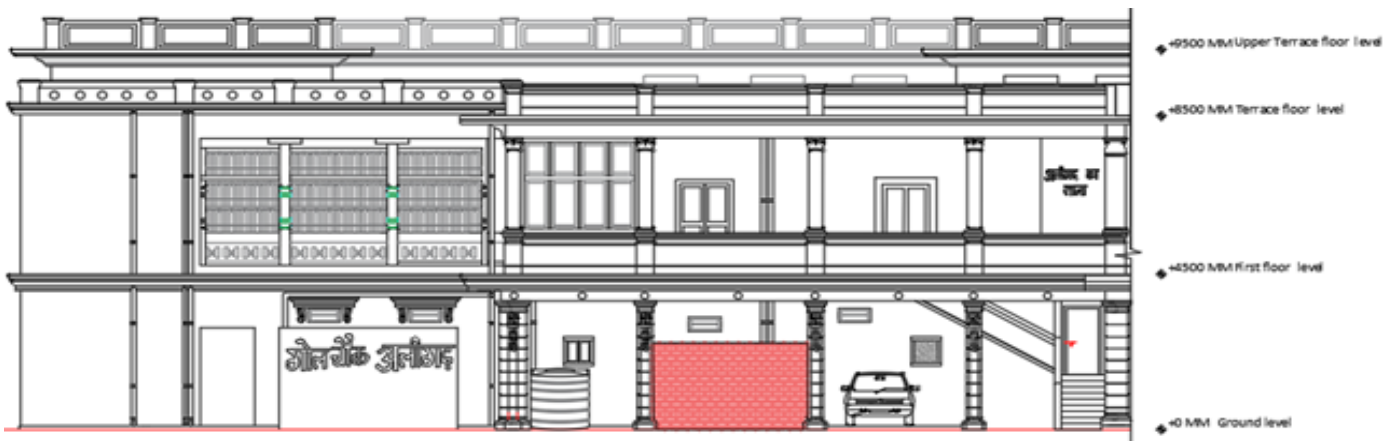


Fig 31. Elevation Of Block 03 (Back View)



Fig 32. SITE VIEW



Fig 33 Spatial Planning

- The early modern Art-Deco style can be seen in the planning as vocabulary included circular grills, railings, terraced gardens with circular ends, porches with circular roofs and diamond windows with non-standard dimensions



Fig 34 Ornamentation

- The Ornamentation mostly seen in the building shows the Indo-colonial and European influence mostly in Qasr-e-Sultani block 2 & 3. Use of Victorian Iron brackets as well as Early Cast iron gates can also be seen.

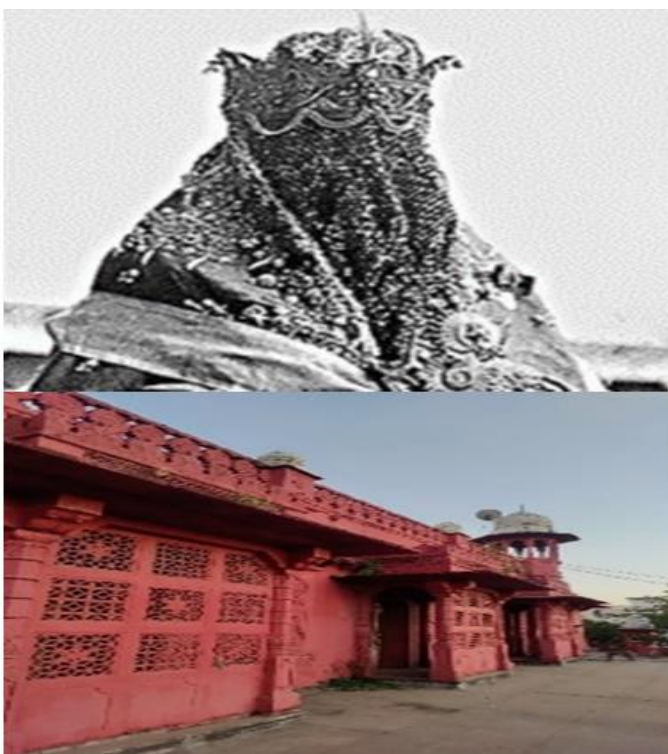


Fig 35 Culture / Beliefs

- Begums followed the Purdah system which can be seen through the Jali installation mostly used by Females. This can be seen in Edward Museum built by Sultan Jahan Begum. 'A portion was walled in and made into a pleasure-garden, or retreat, where purdah ladies could rest and take air' from her book 'An Account of My Life'.

IV. CONCLUSION

Various architectural styles and influences, combined with culture and beliefs, have influenced the evolution of the built fabric of the Ahmedabad Complex, giving it a new identity. As a result, we can refer to this unique fusion of many styles as the 'Begumi Style of Architecture' prevalent in Bhopal.

The palace's heightened historical, architectural, social, and cultural value results from its accumulated cultural relevance, defining what has to be preserved and why. Cultural construction establishes the level of significance and offers the justification for situational conservation measures, putting forth the principles for Conservation. By using the right site interpretation and landscaping, Ahmedabad Palace and Al-Misbah Palace Bhopal can revive their geographic relevance. Furthermore, Ahmedabad Palace may be improved by preserving the attributes of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum manifested in the decorative embellishments and built fabric, and/or by adapting any compatible reuse rooted in Bhopal's evolving cultural history.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Timber components are frequently where issues in older homes start. Timber should periodically be inspected to make sure no water has accumulated. Early detection of issues will prevent more costly repairs, if any

To ensure that traditional structures last a long time, roof upkeep is essential. Someone who is knowledgeable about traditional tile roofs should perform maintenance. It is quite easy to break more tiles by walking on the roof to replace broken tiles or cut back growing plants. The structure of the building can be significantly harmed by even a tiny amount of water seeping through the roof. Rainy weather is the ideal time for homeowners to check their entire roof because it makes it simple to locate any leaks.¹¹

Walls should be cleaned on a regular basis.

- Posters/graffiti should not be affixed to walls by property owners.
- When repainting, proper preparation must be followed. To improve the adhesion of fresh coats of paint, walls should be washed, scraped, and sanded.
- Verify that no damage has been done as a result of leaking gutters and pipes.
- Moisture found on the ground-level walls points to the need for better air circulation.
- Craftsmen's competence is essential for high-quality work. The necessary upkeep methods for antique buildings are unknown to many builders. For

¹¹https://www.academia.edu/41068065/Maintenance_Management_Practices_of_Restored_Historic_Buildings_in_Patan_Thesis_M_Sc_Construction_Management_TU

maintenance and repair work on traditional buildings, specialists should be hired.

- Keeping an eye on the situation and making quick fixes prevent more damage and further costs. Buildings can avoid more serious damage by performing preventative maintenance. The apparent savings of ignoring a minor issue will cost.
- Installation of Maintenance Room if required.
- The competing layers of Qasr-e-Sultani's architectural value can also be preserved through appropriate interventions based on careful research and documentation, while adhering to international standards of integrity, authenticity, and reversibility.

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