

## MULTAN CLOCK TOWER: ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION INSIGHTS ON BRITISH COLONIAL HERITAGE

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### Article Info



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### Abstract

Multan has a tremendous heritage which is blend of its unique culture and tradition. It is notably rich in its architecture and the history. This city stretches deep into its antiquities. For almost a century, Pakistan has remained under the rule of British Empire. So, British Culture influenced the life and living of the people of Pakistan. During this period, a new form of architecture was developed which emerged the Islamic and Western Architecture in beautiful manners. This British Colonial Architecture in the form of residential bungalows, educational institutes, railway stations, civic buildings, churches, and clock towers is still the part of our tangible heritage. This paper focuses on the Indo-Saracenic style of British architecture in clock tower buildings, more specifically clock tower Multan. This architectural style is a blend of elements from Indo-Islamic, Mughal, and Indian architecture combined with the Gothic revival and Neo-Classical style. The richness and diversity of this heritage of Pakistan depicts its glorious past, Islamic, Post Islamic, or pre-Islamic period as far back as pre-historic times.

### Keywords:

*Historic, British Period, Heritage, Restoration, Clock Tower, Architecture.*

## 1. Introduction

South Asian countries are known for their cultural diversity and fascinating history. Pakistan is one of these countries. It has a long history of rich and notable architecture. Due to its rich historical heritage, Pakistan has a unique cultural identity. It is regarded as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. The city of Multan, Pakistan's seventh most populous district, has changed hands several times over the past few thousand years. It is believed that the city started out as a Hindu occupation site before it was invaded by the Greeks. During the 11th and 12th centuries, it was also heavily influenced by the teachings of Islam. Based on an ancient tradition, it is believed that the city was the site where Alexander the Great died. It also has several prominent religious figures from the Islamic world. These individuals show how the city of Multan has been able to bridge the Western and Islamic worlds. It also serves as a bridge between Asia and Europe. Over the years, the city of Multan has been given various evocative names. Some of these include the City of Gold, the City of Peace, and the City of Sufis. Due to its numerous religious sites, it has also been referred to as the City of Saints and Mausoleums. One of the most prominent religious sites in the city of Multan is the tomb of a prominent Sufi and saint. This area has been regarded as one of the most fertile lands in the world. It has also been known to be the site of caravans and trading routes. Due to the presence of these religious sites, the city has gained a reputation as a place of worship. It has also been regarded as an Indo-Muslim cultural hub. The mausoleums and tombs of prominent saints, such as those of the Ismaili Saints, Sha Shams Sabzwari, and Musa Pak Shaheed, have contributed to the city's religious prestige [1].

The city of Multan has a rich history and religious and architectural heritage. It is regarded as one of the oldest living cities in the world, and it has traces of pre-historic settlements that are still visible today [2]. The original city, which was known as Qila Qasim Bagh, was a Walled City. It's a book of history about the multiple wars that have occurred in the subcontinent. From the Mughals to Alexander, every ruler has fought for their own control. The city of Multan has always been regarded as a spiritual place. Thousands of pilgrims would visit its various religious sites, such as the Sun Temple and the Praladpuri Temple, to get a glimpse of the spiritual life of the city's many saints. It also established its reputation as the home of many religious saints. At one point, it was regarded as one of the most prominent multi-faith cities in the subcontinent [3]. The city of saints pioneered the concept of a unique architectural style that has since been adopted by other cities across the region. This style was created through the amalgamation of various Central Asian influences. Two distinct funerary buildings were developed in this area, the flat roofed and the octagonal dome [4]. According to a study conducted by the World Bank, over 130 sites of heritage value should be protected. However, only 24 of them have this status. A list released by the Punjab's Department of Archaeology for the district of Multan shows 46 sites that are protected under the Special Premises and Antiquities Act of 1975. Most of these are religious establishments belonging to the Muslim community. Only two temples have been listed [5]. The various forms of craft traditions that are commonly practiced in India include kashikari, naqashi, Pinjrakari, tarseem bandi, ainakari, and monnabatkari. These artisans are highly regarded for their knowledge and skill. The system still continues to function today with the lineages of these artisans[6].

2. Background

Located in Pakistan's Punjab Province, the capital of the city of Multan is situated just east of the Chenab River. It is known for its numerous religious and cultural attractions, such as mosques, churches, bazaars, and temples. The city is also known for its superb tombs. The city of Multan is regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the Asian subcontinent. Multan is a historic city with roots going back to ancient times, even mentioned in the Rig Veda, when it flourished near the seven rivers of the Indus Valley. [7]

It dates back to 2000 years, and it may have been founded around 5000 BC, during the Indus Valley Civilization. Throughout history, the area has been visited by various notable individuals, such as Alexander the Great, the Turks, the Sikhs, and the British. The rise of Islam in the region greatly influenced the city of Multan, which became the first Muslim cultural centre in the subcontinent. Even after the Hindu majority ruled the Punjab, the city still remained a centre for the performing arts and the religious sect known as the Sufis. Various notable individuals, such as Alexander the Great, the Turks, the Sikhs, and the British, have visited the area. The rise of Islam in the region greatly influenced the city of Multan, which became the first Muslim cultural centre in the subcontinent. Even after the Hindu majority ruled the Punjab, the city still remained a centre for the performing arts and the religious sect known as the Sufis. As a commercial centre and major town in South Punjab, the city of Multan has a significant 19th century-built heritage. It is divided into two groups: Indian architecture and Anglo-Indian architecture. During the British Raj, this particular building was regarded as "Modern Indian Architecture".

Multan’s 19th-century buildings blended Indian and Western styles, but colonial critics downplayed their value, ignoring the skill of local architects. [8] Some of British Era Architecture has been shown in Fig.1.

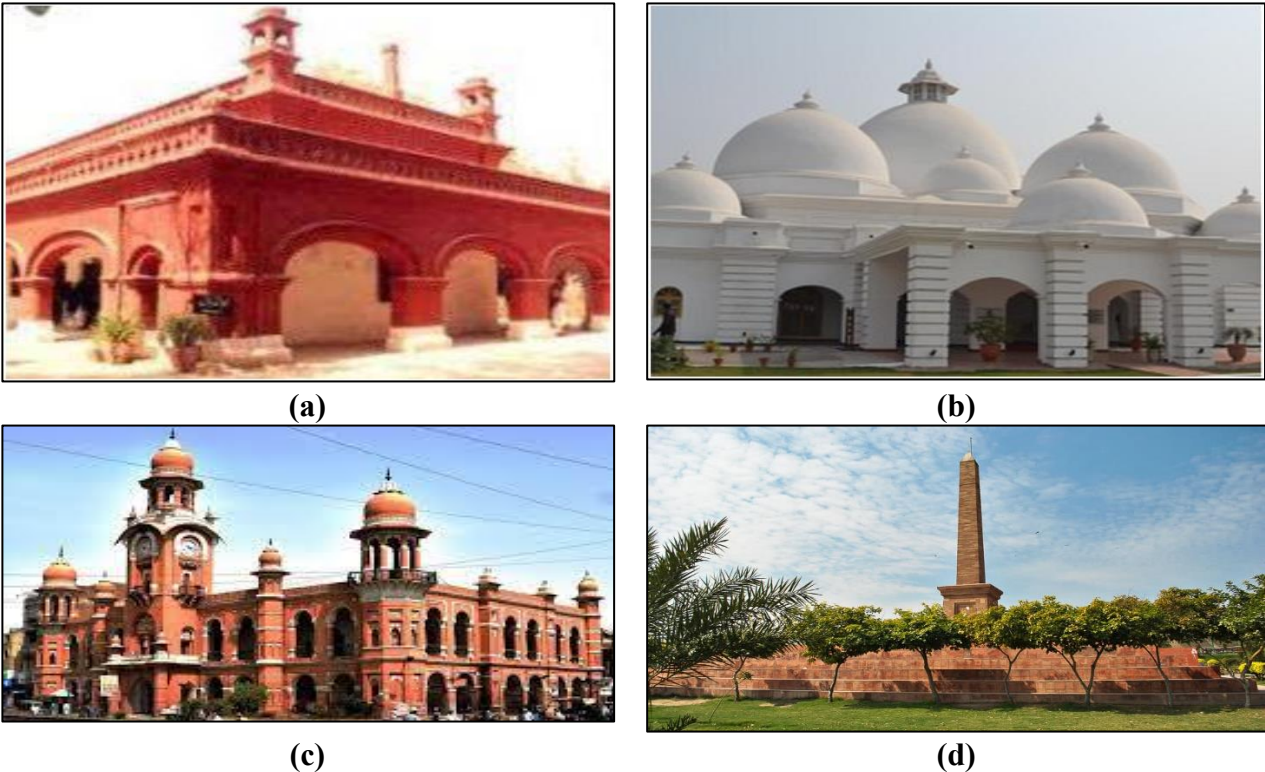


Figure 1. (a) GC Women University (b) Garrison Mess (c) Clock Tower (d) Vans Agnew Monument



The Town Clock is an object that can be easily identified by the strong impression it makes on the eye and the mind of the viewer. It can be sited and designed in a way that creates a tranquil and attractive atmosphere.[9]

Throughout history, people have used different tools to track time. As technology improved, mechanical clocks were invented and placed in tall structures named clock towers. [10]

The word "clock" comes from the Latin word cloca, which means "bell." It's also connected to similar words in French (cloche) and German (Glocke), both meaning "bell." The clocks we know today first appeared in European clock towers during the late medieval period. Back in the 12th century, bells were widely used across Europe. By the 14th century, as large mechanical clocks were invented, they were placed in church towers. These towers became the main hub for communication in many towns. The bells weren't just for telling time, they played a key role in sharing religious and community messages, making them a vital part of daily life in medieval and early modern Europe. [11]

The same idea was brought here by British Colonials. The Ghanta-Ghar (Clock Tower) was a key feature of British architecture. It stood as a powerful symbol of their rule, showing how they wanted to control and organize their administrative centers. The design wasn't just about looks—it reflected their political, cultural, and religious influence in town planning. Essentially, it was their way of marking authority at the heart of a city. [12]

Our homeland Pakistan has a number of clock towers, which are located in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sialkot, Peshawar, Multan, Sukkur and Faisalabad.

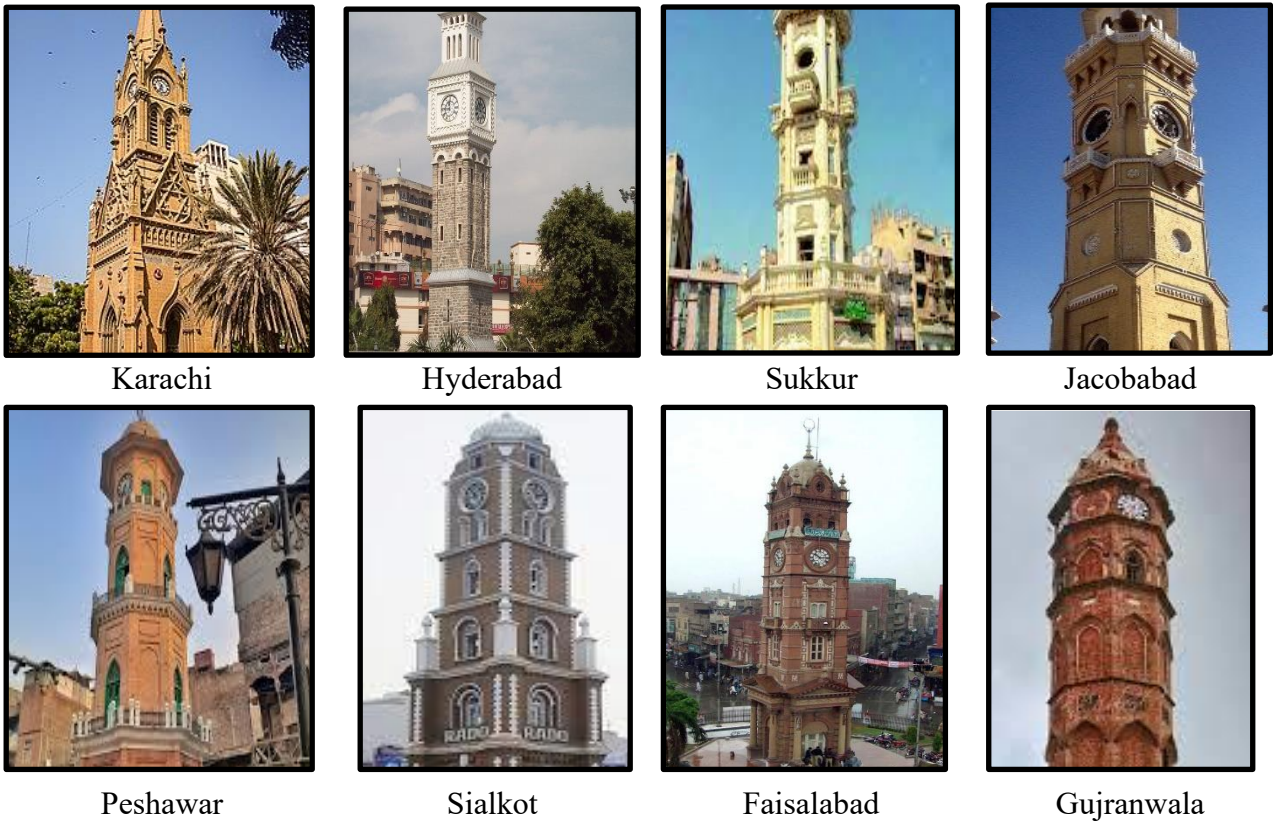


Figure 2. Clock Tower Heritage of Pakistan

3. Methodology

In this study research methodology adopted covers the analysis of conservation work required to maintain the rich architectural heritage and already exists in published research [13-15] as shown in Figure 3.

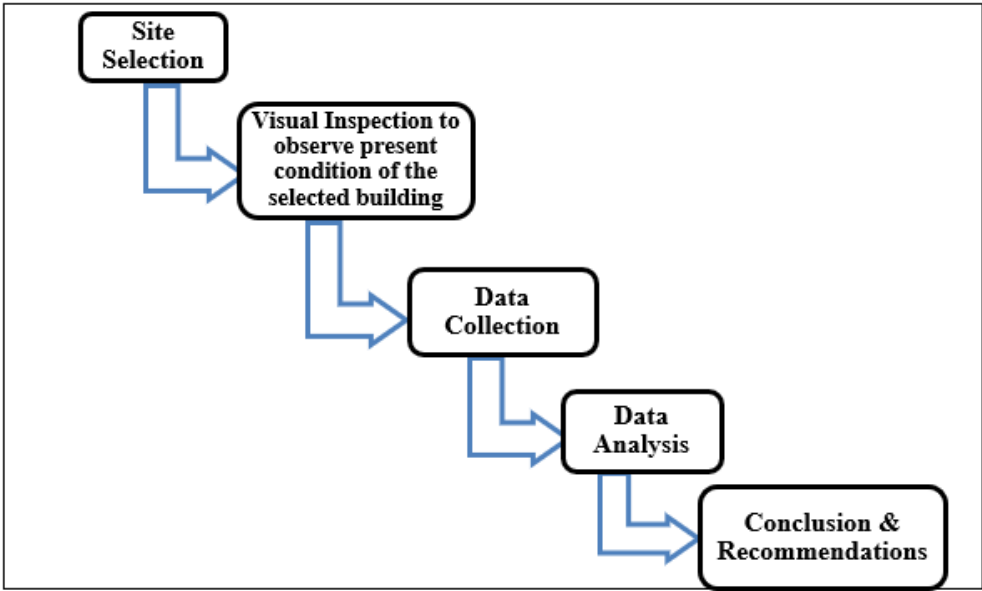


Figure 3. Research Methodology

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Study Area

The Town Hall colloquially referred to as the ‘Ghanta Ghar’ was built in 1884. The entrance portico has a clock tower rising above the second floor of the building giving it a distinctive form after which the structure has become to be known Clock Tower House. The building was designed to function as a city hall. Ghanta Ghar is located outside the walled city of Multan approximately 200 meters from Dehli Gate entrance to Qilla Qasim Bagh as shown in Fig.4.

4.2 Configuration of the Building

The Clock Tower Building is a U-shaped, double storied structure with verandahs on all the interior and exterior walls with a well-defined entry portico. The front and the two wings of the U-shaped building flank a central courtyard. The verandah run all around the wings, the front and along the internal courtyard. The configuration of Building has been shown in Fig 5-7.

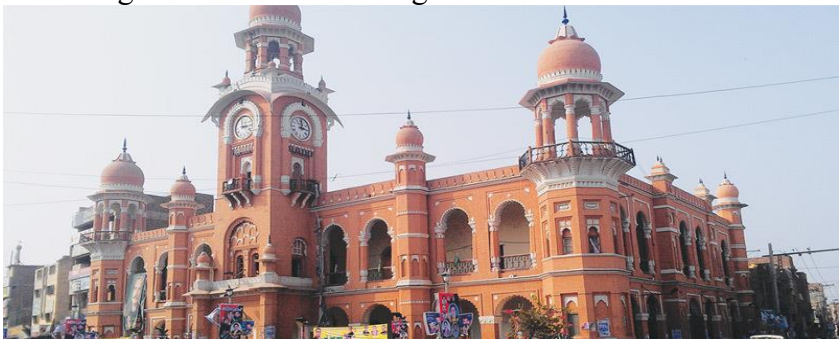


Figure 4. Study Area-Clock Tower Multan

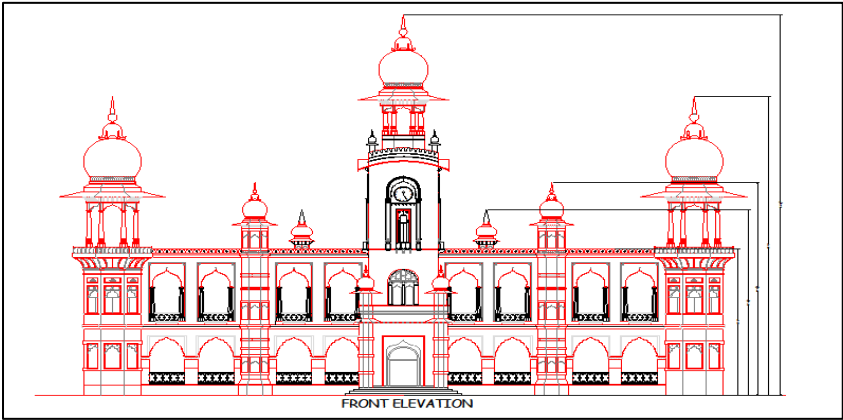


Figure 5. Elevation

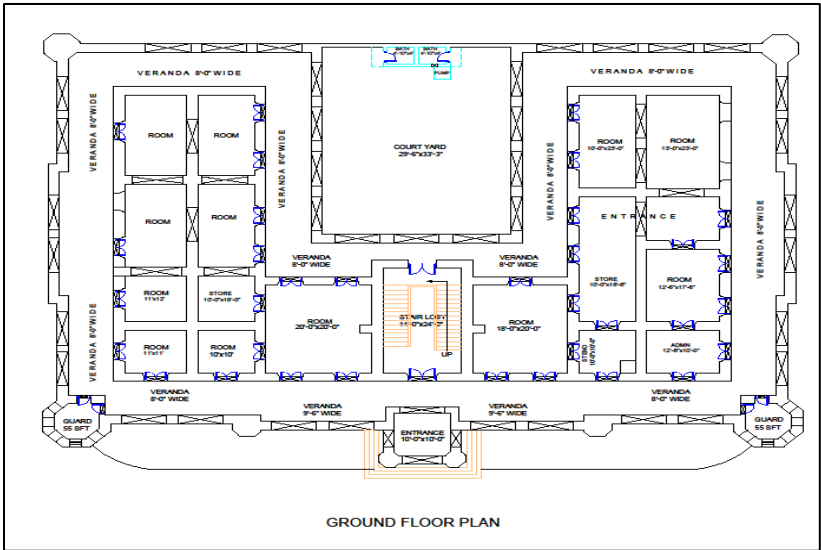


Figure 6. Ground Floor Plan

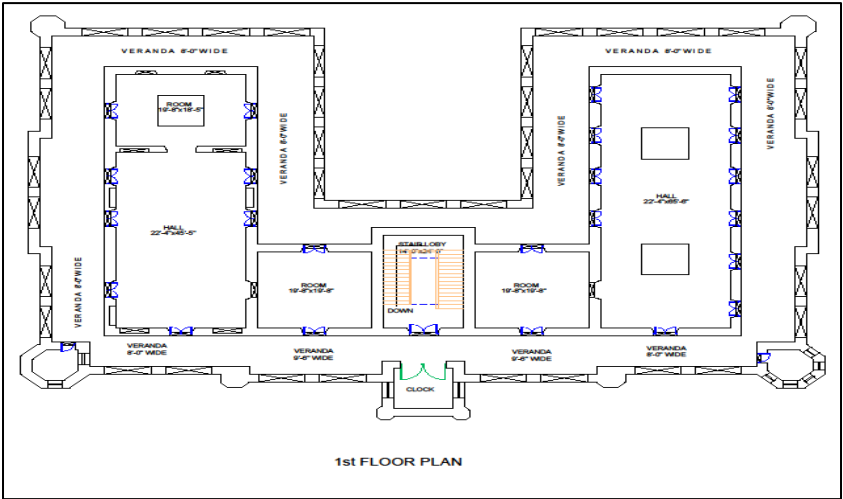








Figure 7. First Floor Plan

4.3 Sectional Details of Features

Sectional detail of clock tower building has been shown in the Table.1

Table 1. Sectional Features of Clock Tower Building

Arches	Turrets	Staircase
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The verandah comprises of semicircular arches and piers.</li><li>• The arches are fluted on the edges and are defined by plastering as compared to the fair face masonry piers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are two main turrets on the sides of the front façade complimenting the central clock tower.</li><li>• Smaller turrets rise in the rear of the building.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A U-shaped staircase is located at the main entrance which leads up to the first floor.</li><li>• Stairs and staircase is made up of wood.</li></ul>
Kiosks	Clock	Domelets
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The two side turrets have cupolas at the top.</li><li>• The top of the clock tower has a similar cupola as the two side turrets.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On 27 October 2011, three clocks of Ghanta Ghar were repaired and started again.</li><li>• The machinery and needles of the clocks were changed while the clock's main dial was unchanged</li><li>• . It runs on solar energy. The clock had stopped working in 1985.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two domelets are erected on front.</li><li>• One domelet on each wing of U- shaped structure.</li></ul>

#### 4.4 Conservation Work

Different type of conservation activities has been done to preserve British time heritage of Multan and has been listed as in Table.2

**Table 2. Conservation Work detail of Clock Tower building of Multan.**

Sr. No	Year	Conservation Work
1.	2008-2009	a. Clock Tower building was handed over to the Department of Archaeology for establishment of museum at Ghanta Ghar, Multan during the year 2008-2009. b. To implement the above mentioned scheme, a sum of Rs.40.472 million was approved in the financial year 2008-2009.
2.	2009-2010	a. A sum of Rs.15 million was utilized.
3.	2010-2011	a. In the year 2010-11, sum of Rs.8 million were used.
4.	2011-2012	a. In the financial yea 2011-12 no funds were utilized due to removal of boundary wall and non-decision of parking area for the museum. b. Air conditioned, CC T.V. Camera and walk through gates were purchased for fixing / installation in the Ghanta Ghar building.
5.	2012-2013	a. In the financial year 2012-13, some amount was used for the face lifting of Clock Tower building.
6.	2013-2014	a. In the financial year 2013-14 no funds were utilized due to non-decision of some disputes and the scheme was unfunded.
7.	2021-2022	a. Currently the Clock Tower building is being restored and repaired by Walled City Authority Lahore under their project of Dilkash Multan. b. Surface Cleaning by Sand Blasting c. Repair of domelets on Clock Tower Poarch d. Dismantling lime terracing on roof 3" average thick e. Dismantling salt affected Lime surkhi plaster f. Dismantling of Marble flooring with PCC(1:2:4) g. Dismantling of ceramic tiles (9"x 4")size) for dado. h. Removing paint on doors and windows i. Providing and laying cut and dressed hexagonal brick flooring lain in cement sand mortar (1:2) ¾" thick Joints treated with Cement surkhi mortar finely rubbed and polished etc. j. Provision for repair of molded or dressed brick cornices lay in (1:2) lime surkhi mortar, plastering. (2NosBricks) etc.
8.	2022-2023	a. Kankar Lime plaster on surfaces of corridors walls. b. Kankar Lime Plaster with Glazing on interior walls. c. Kankar lime plaster on decorative elements.
9.	2024-2025	a. The work is in progress on a café on the roof top of the Clock Tower. b. Public toilet facility within clock tower building is also the part of the project.



4.5 Before After Comparison of Conservation

During conservation activities of Clock tower major improvement in infrastructure can be seen in Fig. 4-6.

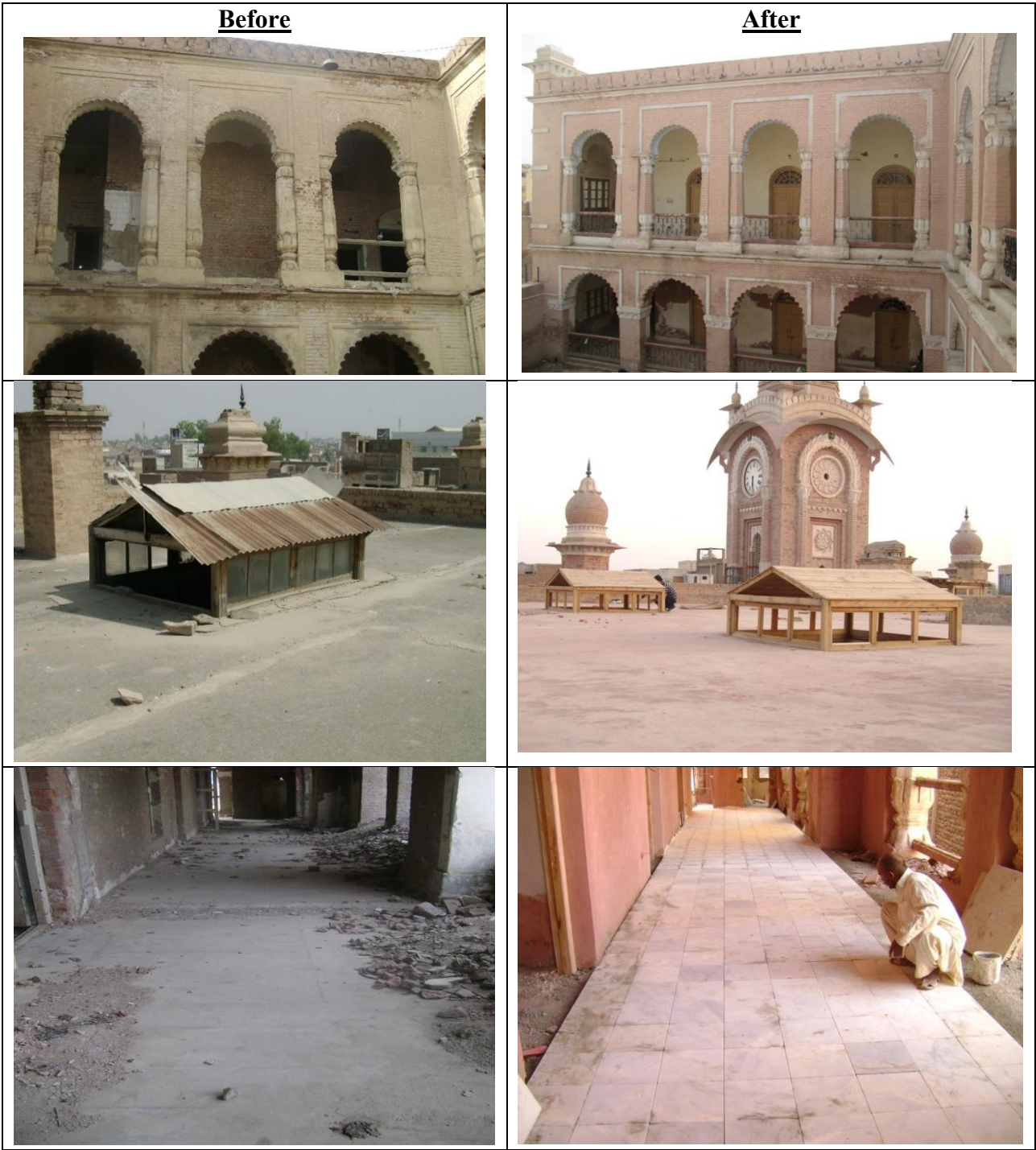


Figure 8. Before and After- Balcony-Roof-Floor



Figure 9. Before and After- Door and Ceiling





Figure 10. Before and After- Door and Ceiling

**5. Conclusion**

This study focuses on British Era Architecture in Multan. It is Part of Precious Heritage of Pakistan. Conservation of our heritage is an important factor which should be focused especially considering the value of that certain era historic buildings. Clock Tower architecture is a transitional tradition of Europe to establish centrum concept in cities. due to its historic design of central concept, it also carries history of being the center of governance. Clock Tower Architecture is also a symbol of British Rule through which they tried to transfer a legacy that time is important. The conservation of historic structures like the Multan Clock Tower is essential for protecting Pakistan’s cultural and architectural heritage. Earlier restoration efforts have been instrumental in preserving both its structural integrity and symbolic significance. However, to ensure its continued existence, sustained maintenance, active community involvement, and increased public awareness are imperative. This study emphasizes that such landmarks should not be viewed merely as relics of the past, but as active components of the urban environment that embody cultural identity and foster civic pride.

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