

Redefining Tradition: Neo Classical Architecture in Contemporary India Focusing on Its Exterior Facade

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Abstract— Neo-Classical architecture, which is the rebirth of Greco-Roman classical elements, is now taking a new form. This study delves into the subject of how Neo-Classical design principles are adopted and changed over time in the Indian contemporary architecture to give facade of a building. It investigates how the motifs, which include elements like columns, pediments, and symmetry have been modified to work with new building techniques, materials, and cultural backgrounds.

Index Terms— Neo-classical, order, design elements, Contemporary architecture, Historical origin, scale, Symbolism

I. INTRODUCTION

Neo-classical style rose during the middle part of the 18th century as a reaction to Baroque and Rococo designs that were excessively ornamental. Neo-classicism which is based on the laws of symmetries, balance, and proportionality descending from ancient Greek and Roman architecture, aimed at the revival of classical ideals of simplicity and grandeur. This architectural trend was motivated by the discovery of ancient ruins, namely in Herculaneum and Pompeii, which opened up new interests in the aesthetics and the rationality of antiqueness.

Columns (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian), pediments, domes, and symmetrical facades are the specifics of the style. The craftsmen of the mid-18th century gave priority to the materials and processes of harmony and restraining with the most innovative ways during the construction times.

In contemporary times, neo-classical becomes. It is successfully represented as the embodiment of the past in modern architecture. Government offices are still fans of this style preferring it over the others with such structures symbolizing authority, steadfastness, and collective identity as perceived by the public. (S A Pisarenko, 2020)



Figure 1 The Jefferson Memorial

Source- Neoclassical Architecture: Everything You Need to Know

II. LITERATURE STUDY

Neo-Classical architecture came into existence in the countries of Europe in the middle of the 18th century as a counteraction against the artistic ornamentation and emotional extremes of Baroque and Rococo styles. The classical principles of architecture of Ancient Greece and Rome formed the basis of the movement, namely, the harmony of parts, the careful distribution of masses, and the right proportions. Enlightenment was in the background of this substantial movement that laid the stress on reason, the logic of what is done, and the users' knowledge.

Key Influences and Development

Archaeological Discoveries: The exploration of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the 1730s brought a deeper insight into classical aesthetics and construction techniques. This new understanding was the groundwork from which architects were able to incorporate these elements.

Philosophical Groundwork: A scholar of art history called Johann Joachim Winckelmann was a staunch supporter of the Greek clean outlines and Roman solemnity that were the main ideas he presented and which became the basis of the intellectual movement.

Regional Expressions: France: Soufflot's work on the Panthéon in Paris is a great example of simplicity and

elegance borrowed from Greek temples by taking the design as inspiration. England: Robert Adam and Sir John Soane were architects who converted classical compositions into practical buildings such as the Bank of England.

Introduction to India during the colonial era

Neo-Classical architecture came to India in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the period of British colonization. Architecture with characteristics of the classical was first brought to India by the British who tried to coerce a sense of their complete authority and unyielding presence. Although it was primarily a superficial cultural construct, it allowed women to lead their lives in many ways on a par with men in the cities because they hardly differ in terms of government involvement, their mobility profiles within the towns, the infrastructure, and (especially) the era of feminist movements.

Key Features in the Indian Context

Blend of Classical Elements with Local Materials The neoclassical architecture of India still included basic features like columns, pediments, symmetrical facades, and domes but also used locally available materials which include sandstone and marble.

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Prominent Examples in Colonial India

Writers' Building, Kolkata (1777) This Writers' Building, initially constructed for the purpose of being the information center, is a good example of classical proportions, columns, and a façade similar to that of a Roman civic structure.

St. Andrew's Church, Chennai (1821) The Kirk is a religious structure designed by a Scottish architect Graham Ferrier engages people with Greek Revival building style in a combination of Indian handcrafts embellished with a circular nave and Ionic columns.



Figure 2 Writers' Building in Kolkata

Source-Writer's Building, Kolkata: Origin and interesting facts

Core Architecture Features

1. Symmetry and Proportion

Design Logic: Neo-Classical architecture, particularly layouts and façades, demonstrate a strong commitment to symmetry using the principles of balanced proportions. Historical Basis: Proportions are calculated according to the classical treatises (e.g., Vitruvius's De Architectura) as well as Renaissance approaches to classical geometry.

2. Columns and Classical Orders

Columns: Columns primarily represent classical Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian orders. They could be free-standing or connected to the walls (engaged). Porticos: A grand temple-like portico supported by columns is a Neo-classical design. Entablatures: The horizontal bands of columned structures (– architrave, frieze, and cornice) are the major components of the classical style.

3. Pediments

Description: Triangle gables supported by columns are mostly found above the doorways and sides of buildings. Decoration: The sculpture of mythological or historical figures is embellished on the building.

4. Domes and Vaults

Domes: A giant dome, reminiscent of the Roman Pantheon and hence derived from Roman architecture, is mostly found on civic buildings. Vaults: Coffered ceilings and barrel-formed constructions are the tools to achieve the feeling of grandeur and breadth as well as a spatial framework that is novel.

5. Façade Emphasis

Key Features: Façades in symmetrical styles tend to be dominated by their central parts, usually highlighted by columns or a portico. Purpose: While serving as a tool of aspiration and durability, it is the exterior that determines the visual prominence.



Figure 3 Columns

Source- Architectural Column Orders

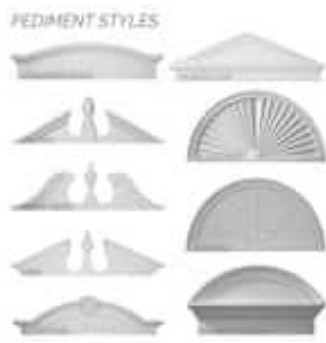


Figure 4 Pediments

Source-The Home Depot

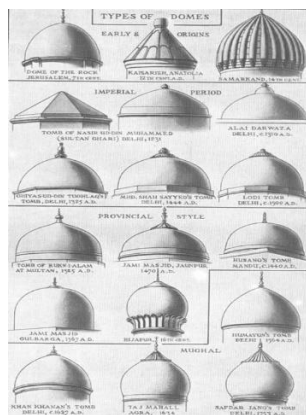


Figure 5 Domes

Source- <https://saint-rupert.tumblr.com/post/103330485111/azizaesque-types-of-domes-in>

Analysis of Classical Orders and Proportions in the Facades

The analysis of classical orders and proportions in Neo-Classical architecture shows the intention surrounding the traditional architectural elements for balance, harmony, and grandness to unfold. This style comes up with the old Greek and Roman designing themes for a modern-day scenario where the front plays the biggest role both symbolically and visually.

Classical Orders in Neo-Classical Facades

Classical Orders are architecturally the column and entablature styles Doric: Plain and robust, the only adornment of the Doric are the fluted, unadorned vertical shafts. Ionic: It is a capital adorned with the ornaments, the chief of which are the volutes which resemble the scrolls of Ionic courthouses and the look of the statue is graceful. Corinthian: Composed of diverse foliage and fanciful decorations.

Proportions in Neo-Classical Facades

Principles of Proportion

Grounded in the Vitruvian concept, architects in the Neo-Classical movement were rigorous in maintaining strict proportions in façades construction, as they were along with such references as Vitruvius' De Architectura. Although the concept of symmetry had the greatest influence on the design of symmetrical components in three-dimensional constructions, the architects also stressed the symmetry of proportionality among the components' height, width, and depth.

Golden Ratio

The classic age when the buildings are designed with the golden ratio (1:1.618 in this case) as a main means of harmony between all elements of the architecture.

Due to the use of the Golden Ratio, all the proportions of facades, floor plans, and elevations were determined to provide visual harmony. For instance, this ratio was often followed exactly when the columns, pediments, and windows were placed and sized. (Youvan, 2024)



Figure 6 Golden Ratio

Source-The golden ratio

Adaptation of Classical Principles to Indian Climatic and Cultural Needs

Neo-Classical architecture in India was neither a directly imitated western style nor just a sop to the creative synthesis approach that was customarily taken to the country's specific weather conditions and cultural environment.

Deep Verandas and Colonnades: This is a trend borrowed from ancient Greeks where the outer parts of the roof were elongated to keep the central parts from being assaulted by the scorching sun and also wind currents can pass through. Example: The colonnades in front of the Rashtrapati Bhavan provide the much-needed shade to the open spaces.

Pitched Roofs: Although classical western buildings usually had flat roofs, Indian structures modelled after the classical style were designed in a way to have pitched or domed roofs to effectively drain away the excess rainfall caused by monsoon wind currents.

Cultural and Aesthetic Adaptations

Ornamentation: Classical pediments, friezes, and cornices were typically decorated with architecture local to India, including floral patterns, mythological figures, and religious symbols. Example of such a historical landmark is The Victoria Memorial in Kolkata that shows the classical symmetry along with Mughal-style domes and other decorative features.

Courtyards: Even though classical Western structures were usually closed, Neo-Classical Indian structures added internal courtyards, resulting in a better design of living spaces and the connection to traditional Indian architecture. Example: Among the many colonial houses in India, the rear open courtyard is very often complemented by classical facades at the front.

Functional and Aesthetic Critiques of Neo-Classical Architecture

Neo-Classical architecture, a style that rose to be the most dominant in India during the colonial period, was a mixture of European classical principles and Indian cultural and climatic accretions posited that this style has been criticized for both utility and aesthetic.

Balancing Critiques with Legacy

Although these criticisms have been pointed out, one can still say that Neo-Classical architecture in India retains its status of being soaked in history and symbolism. Many of those roads and squares are iconic landmarks that boldly display this magnificent marriage of the aspirations of the West and the adaptations adopted in India.

Balancing Heritage with Contemporary Urban Needs

The Neo-Classical architectural movement, with its deep-rooted history and magnificence, remains a legacy in Indian culture. However, the modern urban environment needs functional, economically sound, and environmentally friendly structures. Merging the protection of Neo-Classical architecture with the needs of modern cities is a problem of architectural design that is a concern of planners and architects to the highest degree.



Figure 7 Rashtrapati bhavan

Source- the Rashtrapati Bhavan looks like from the inside

Preserving Historical Significance

Cultural Heritage: Neo-Classical buildings such as the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata and Rashtrapati Bhavan being the relics of the colonial era are the two monuments that are associated with the country's architecture and have to be protected. **Adaptive Use:** Reviving the past of a particular space by converting historic Neo-Classical architecture into museums, galleries, or cultural hubs can indirectly assure its use and save its heritage at the same time. Example: Formerly, the Town Hall in Mumbai was a place of governmental and public administration, and it now serves a cultural purpose. Example: The Town Hall in Mumbai, originally a civic space, now serves as a cultural venue.

III.CONCLUSION

The study shows how Neo-classical architecture, which is based on the Greek and Roman styles, has been changed to modern Indian architecture, especially in exterior facades. It shows how classical elements like symmetry, columns, and pediments have been changed to suit modern materials, techniques, and cultural backgrounds. These changes are made to keep the historical greatness and modern functionality in balance; thus, India is still identifying its architectural identity amidst global influences. The conclusion of this topic refers to the role of Neoclassical architecture in the creation of a link between Indian tradition and the future urbanization of the country. Though the style is a symbol of power and tradition, the problems of sustainability, climate change, and modern city needs make it necessary to invent new things.

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