

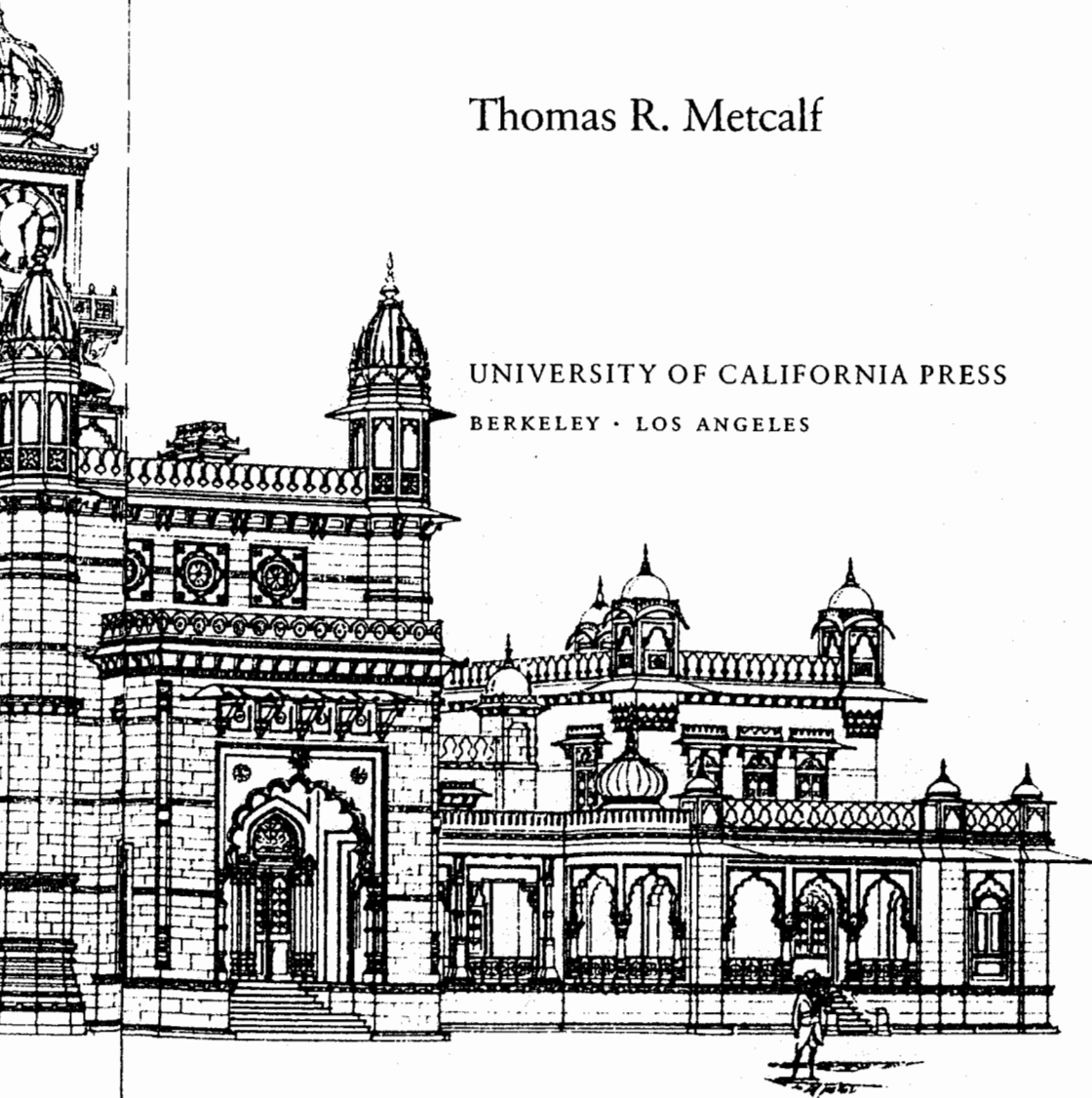
An Imperial Vision

Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj

Thomas R. Metcalf

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sented for the British the notion of India as an enduring “traditional” society that lay at the heart of the late-Victorian conception of empire, it was all the more essential that these men define their rulership in terms derived from India’s past and mark out visibly in architecture their position as the leaders of such a “traditional” order. Though the princes on their part might wish to enhance their own self-esteem by surrounding themselves with the architectural styles of their colonial masters, insofar as they defined themselves as “traditional” rulers—and they had of course no other claim upon legitimacy—the clothing of structures meant for their use in a “traditional” Indian idiom could only enhance their kingly role. They were in the end confined by the assumptions which alone gave validity to their rule.⁴⁰ It was unthinkable for the “Indian Eton,” set down in the middle of the Rajasthan desert, despite its playing fields and its boarding houses, to take the shape of a Grecian temple.

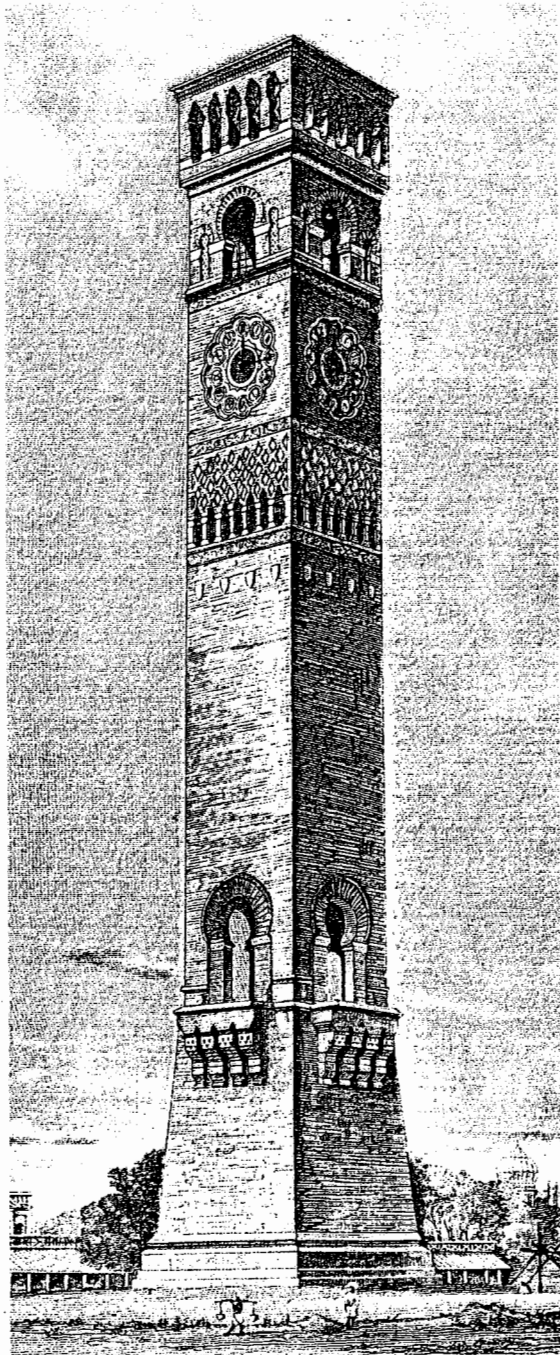
A “Modern” Architecture: Indo-Saracenic Building, 1875–1905

Illustrating the design for the Mayo College, still under construction, the *Building News* announced that, unlike his predecessors who adopted classical or Gothic styles, Mant had “boldly taken the indigenous ancient style” and yet had produced a building both “suitable and essentially modern.” Sir Richard Temple, in his eulogy of Mant at the Royal Institute of British Architects, put the same point more forcefully. You may ask, he said, why, “if the native architecture is so extremely good we should not follow it absolutely—follow it pure and simple—in our Anglo-Indian structures.” There was, he continued, “this particular reason: If you are to construct buildings which are perfect in respect of utility and convenience, then you must call in the aid of European science.” The distinguishing merit of Major Mant’s architectural designs was that, whereas “some of his architectural and artistic predecessors transplanted European styles bodily into India . . . he tried instead to hit on some style which should unite the usefulness of the scientific European designs together with the beauty, taste, grandeur and sublimity of the native style; and this style he called the Hindu-Saracenic.”⁴¹ At no time was Indo-Saracenic design ever conceived of as an exercise in antiquarianism. Central to its conception was always a combination of “European science” and “native art,” of “traditional” forms and “modern” functions.

In the Mayo College design by far the "most prominent feature" was its clock tower. Ornately decorated, this tower had, as Mant described it, a "richly moulded and slightly spreading base, and is taken up as a square to the height of 22 feet from the ground. From this point it is chamfered off to an octagonal shaft, which is taken up to a height of 58 feet, corbelling out again at this height to the square . . . ; above the corbelling bold stone brackets support a narrow projecting balcony with perforated stone railings, above which rises the square clock chamber (with marble angle-shafts), terminating in a richly corbelled cornice, above which a gilded iron dome of ornamental design, and pierced open arcading, crowns the tower, and provides a shelter for the bell (or gongs) of the clock below." Mant further placed the tower "at an angle and off the center of the building to obtain a picturesque effect" and to take the place of a massive central feature such as a dome.⁴² (See plate 8.)

The tower was, however, by no means purely ornamental. The Public Works secretary, unimpressed with the design, told Mant that the tower "is not only not quite consistent with the rest of the building but also gives it a lopsided effect," and so should be eliminated. Mant vigorously protested that to omit the tower would "make the design somewhat tame and commonplace in its grouping, and wanting in spirit and picturesqueness of character." In the end the government gave way. The tower, one official noted, "certainly is inconsistent, but as the rest of the design is by no means a pure style, and is a resultant of the combination of two or more styles, I do not think the addition of another style in the tower is objectionable, rather it is advantageous, as marking a further transition and the commencement of a new era."⁴³

In what way does the Mayo College tower mark the "commencement of a new era"? Mant does not tell us, but the political symbolism of such a tower is clear enough. The clock tower, tolling the hours, frequently attached to the town hall, was a common feature of the urban landscape of Victorian Britain. Nor were towers unknown in precolonial India. For the most part, however, like the Qutb Minar, set up by the first Muslim conquerors of Delhi in about 1200, they told of conquest, not the hour. From the 1860s onward the British erected clock towers, very often free standing, in the major cities of India. Delhi obtained one some 110 feet high opposite the town hall in Chandni Chowk, at the expense of the municipality, as one of the first "improvements" in the city following the devastation of the 1857 rising.⁴⁴ In Lucknow the British induced the



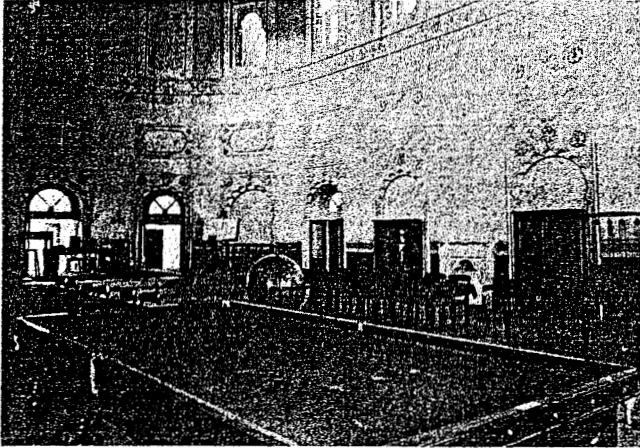
15. Huseinabad Clock Tower,
Lucknow. From *The Builder*,
1 August 1885.

trustees of the Huseinabad Endowment, a Shia charitable body established by the former rulers of Oudh, to meet the cost of a soaring tower some 221 feet in height adjacent to the burial ground of the nawab Mohammed Ali Shah (fig. 15).⁴⁵ Set down in the two principal centers of the revolt, these structures can hardly be regarded as other than latter-day Qutb Minars, to mark out the presence of a new conqueror in the land.

Colleges were always especially favored with towers. At the Muir College, Allahabad, the architect William Emerson determined a "large bell tower was wanted" to complete his "Saracenic" design, and secured some ten thousand pounds from the munificent maharaja of Vizianagram to construct the 200-foot tower that looms over the college's halls and domes.⁴⁶ Whatever their origin, these towers were never simply decorative. It takes, for instance, little imagination to see in the open iron dome which caps the Mayo College tower a symbolic representation of the British Crown: the Raj triumphant! The clock too, of course, had a powerful symbolic significance as an element of the "new era." The British had always railed against the laziness and lethargy of their Indian subjects. With its hourly gongs chiming far above their heads, the clock helped to remind students and passersby not only of the supremacy of the Raj but of the virtues of punctuality. The modern world in India, as it had been for the peasant-become-factory-worker in Britain a century before, was to be marked by discipline and orderliness.⁴⁷

The crown surmounting the Mayo College was distinctive of the "new era" in yet another way: it was made of iron, forged in a British foundry. So too did the interior structure incorporate the latest technology. In the roofs, Mant wrote, "full advantage has been taken of the capabilities of cement concrete, which is to be used in flat slabs not exceeding twelve feet in span; spans of this size being obtained by throwing arches across the rooms, where possible, without interfering with their practical usefulness, and elsewhere (as in the main entrance porch and lecture hall) by provision of iron girders."⁴⁸ However much its "skin" might be an ornate Indic design in marble, the Indo-Saracenic building never eschewed the latest advances in European structural engineering.

The interior layout of the college, with its lecture halls and teaching rooms, represented of course the modern world the British sought to bring to the princes (fig. 16). Yet here too Indian symbolic forms were prominently displayed. The main lecture hall, for instance, decorated throughout with richly carved paneling, had placed in its ceiling two



16. Mayo College lecture hall, c. 1910. Photograph courtesy of the Mayo College, Ajmer.

large flat lights of colored glass, one “a conventional representation of the sun, and the other one of the moon, the mystical sources from which the chief Rajput Dynasties claim to have sprung.”⁴⁹ (See plate 9.) Beneath these “lights” the boys studied their geography lessons, or even, as the photograph indicates, played billiards! On the playing field as well, “modern” and “traditional” forms were joined, as the college cricketers played before an elegant Indo-Saracenic-styled spectators’ pavilion.

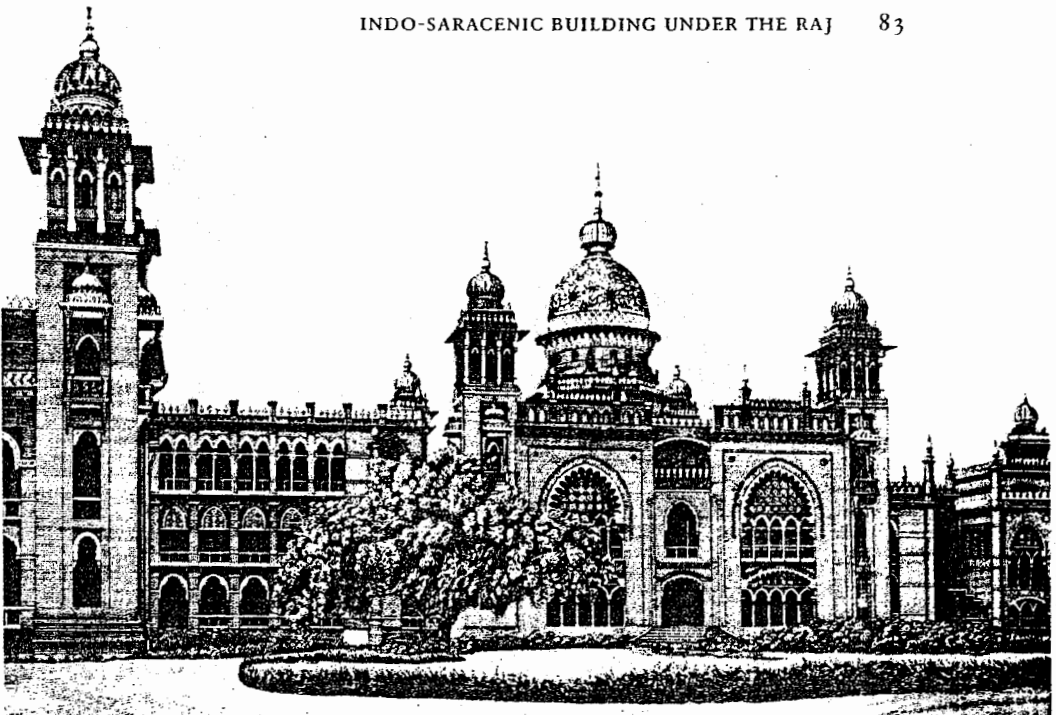
Clearly, a college of Indo-Saracenic design visibly embodied the assumptions of the colonial order. The building’s facade defined for the Indians their past, while the curriculum—based on European learning—laid out for them their future. All was in place, and all was decided by the colonial ruler according to British definitions of appropriate behavior. In similar fashion, museums almost invariably were housed in Indo-Saracenic-styled structures. One of the earliest and most spectacular was the Albert Hall in Jaipur; at the beginning of the new century the spacious Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay, which incorporated detailing from the fifteenth-century kingdom of Gujerat, and the Victoria Memorial Hall in Madras, carefully modeled on Akbar’s Fatehpur Sikri, provided the principal exhibition halls for those presidency capitals.⁵⁰ In each case, as a museum by its very nature was a showcase of India’s past

as organized and classified by its colonial rulers for the benefit of its peoples, an Indo-Saracenic-styled structure—whose architectural forms reflected precisely the same enterprise—was altogether appropriate. (See plate 10.)

Buildings erected under the British Raj, wrote Emerson in 1884, “for any purpose connected with the natives, whether for administration, education or charity, should show a distinct British character, at the same time adopting the details and feeling of the native architecture, and suiting it to the particular requirements of the case.” The Public Works member of the Viceroy’s Council was more specific. “There can be little doubt,” he wrote in 1877, “that buildings for native purposes, such as the following, should be built in some style of native architecture: temples, mosques, palaces, colleges, schools, markets, hospitals, asylums: whilst those specially for the comfort and wants of Europeans, such as residences, churches, offices, railway buildings, etc, are more appropriate for some European style adapted to the various climates of India.”⁵¹ But the matter was not so simple as that. As a colonial regime, the British had obviously no intention of constructing mosques or temples; nor, for reasons we shall examine presently, were Europeans comfortable when confronted with the prospect of Indic-styled churches. Still, increasingly, from the 1880s onward, British builders in India came to terms with Indo-Saracenic design for a wide array of public buildings.

Madras provides, once again, perhaps the best example of an innovative use of Indo-Saracenic styles for modern building. Chisholm’s Revenue Board and Post Office were but the first of a host of imposing structures that dominate the Madras skyline to the present day. His successors as consulting architect to government, J. W. Brassington and, after his death, H. C. Irwin (1841–1922), continued without hesitation down the path Chisholm had blazed. The setting for much of this work was the sea-front marina, a broad boulevard constructed in the early 1880s, which at once linked and displayed the various public buildings erected along it: from the University and Chepauk in the south to the Law Courts, State Bank, and Post Office to the north.

By far the most impressive of these structures were the Law Courts (1889–92). Begun by Brassington and completed by Irwin, the Courts, though inspired perhaps in their layout by the vast Gothic Law Courts erected twenty years before in London, developed, with an exuberant enthusiasm, the architectural forms of Chisholm’s earlier work (fig. 17). Like its predecessors, but on a much grander scale, the Courts



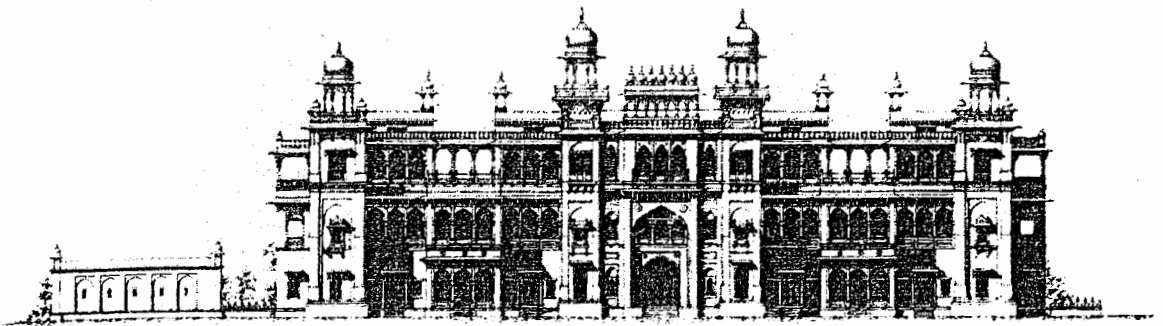
17. Madras Law Courts. From
Indian Engineering, 7
September 1895.

were faced with large arches extending from floor to ceiling; these were "borrowed from the designs of the Pathan buildings of the 15th century, where they were used in domed mosques, and were intended to throw light into the highest recesses of the domes, and to shew their beautiful ornaments, as well to light the other parts of the main hall." These arches, wrote *Indian Engineering*, "give grace and grandeur to the design, as well as allow of a thorough and complete ventilation." Complementing the arches were a number of towers with domes and canopied balconies, and in the recesses a series of small colonnades running up three stories; behind were arcaded verandahs and open stairways that gave access to the various courts and offices within. Over the whole structure soared a bulbous domed minaret, 175 feet high, its upper stage forming a lighthouse equipped with a dioptic light to guide ships toward the nearby harbor. The building cost the exceptionally large sum of thirteen lakhs of rupees. Two years later (1894), on an adjacent site, in the same architectural style, Irwin erected buildings for the Law College.⁵²

Irwin subsequently designed a new building for the Bank of Madras (1896–99), described by *Indian Engineering* as “an adaptation of Hindu-Saracenic freely treated, the details of the various ornaments being after approved specimens of existing buildings in the north” (fig. 18). The most prominent feature of the design was its twin towers, each consisting of a “dome surmounted by a lantern carried by eight stone pillars and surmounted by a smaller dome terminating in a stone finial.”⁵³ Irwin’s Egmore Railway Station (designed 1902, built 1905–8) boasted “a Mogul style of architecture,” with “intricate stone carvings, fantastic-shaped brackets, drip stones, and rich friezes” that “at once attract the attention of any observer to the excellence of the structure from the architectural point of view.”⁵⁴ His final work in Madras, designed in 1906 after his retirement, was the Victoria Memorial Hall (fig. 19). The hall, constructed in red sandstone, was unusual for its coherent use of features derived wholly from one model, the “buildings erected by the Mogul Emperors at Fatehpur Sikri.”⁵⁵

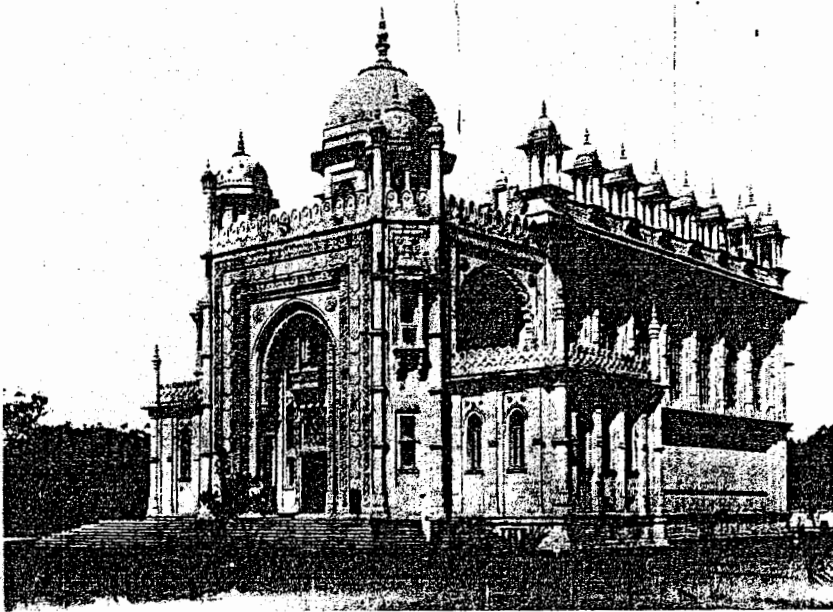
These buildings all, as *Indian Engineering* wrote of the Egmore Station, stand out as “Indo-Saracenic structure[s] erected on modern lines.”⁵⁶ They were, after all, as their builders fully recognized, intended for the novel purposes of the Raj—for education, railway communications, finance, and the like—and they embodied in their construction the latest technological advances. But they were modern as well in a way the British rarely appreciated: in their use of Indic design elements. For the most part the British conceived of themselves as participants in the ongoing traditions of Indian design. James Ransome, consulting architect to the Government of India, in 1905 discussed, for instance, without any sense of incongruity, the Mughal tomb of Salim Chishti at Fatehpur Sikri (c. 1580) and the Albert Hall Museum at Jaipur (1880) as being representative samples of “Saracenic work.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the very use of the term “Indo (or Hindu)-Saracenic” by the British to describe their own building, as well as that which had gone before, carried with it the implication that their structures were but the latest in a long line of buildings constructed in a similar style.

The British nevertheless manipulated Indian design elements in new ways—never conceived of by the Mughals or the rajas of Dig—as they set out to represent their own empire as Indian. With such rare exceptions as the Victoria Memorial in Madras, British builders made no attempt to be faithful to the style of any particular period of India’s past.



18. Bank of Madras, now State Bank of India. 1895
Competition prize design by Swinton Jacob. The major

elements of the facade were incorporated into Irwin's final design as built. From *Indian Engineering*, 4 April 1896.



19. Victoria Memorial Hall, now National Art Gallery, designed by H. Irwin in the style of Fatehpur Sikri.

Photograph from *Annual Report on Architectural Work in India for the Year 1909-1910*.

Chisholm himself indeed disparaged such an enterprise. The British architect in India, he said, "may choose the comparatively easy archeological road, copying piecemeal and wholesale structures of the past, or he may endeavour to master the spirit which produced such works, and select, reject, and modify the forms to suit the altered conditions."⁵⁸ As the profusion of design elements in such structures as the Mayo College makes clear, one of the greatest attractions of the Indo-Saracenic style for the British was the freedom it offered to "mix and match" elements of design. This sense of "mastery" was at once informed by and helped shape a distinct European perspective on India's past. According to this conception, a product of nineteenth-century Orientalism, India's society was unchanging, traditional, in a word "Oriental"; hence the elements of its architecture were, at the deepest level, similar and interchangeable.⁵⁹ Once mastered, they were available for any purpose the colonial builder considered appropriate. None needed to be taken seriously within its own historical context. His eye trained by the Orientalist discourse in Europe, the colonial builder could never approach India's past as other than an outsider; for him its forms represented, not the elements of an ongoing tradition of building within which he worked, but colors on a palette from which he could pick and choose to create the image he desired: of an efficient order imposed on a backward and divided society.

James Fergusson, as we have seen, had begun the extended process of ordering, labeling, and classifying India's historic architecture. As the British grew more familiar with Indian forms, and sought to use them in practical ways, they required more immediately useful reference guides than Fergusson's wordy text. In 1890 this need was fulfilled with the publication of the *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, six massive volumes containing no less than 375 plates of architectural drawings. The author was Swinton Jacob (1841-1917), executive engineer for the Jaipur state. A graduate of the East India Company's college at Addiscombe and member of the Bombay Artillery, Jacob served for five years as a field engineer in Aden (1861-66) before taking up his position in Jaipur, where he remained for some forty-five years, until his final retirement to England in 1912 at the age of seventy-one. While in the service of the maharaja as engineer and architect (work which will be examined later), Jacob began, initially in his leisure time, to employ students from the Jaipur Art School to copy the ornamentation on the palaces, tombs, and other ancient structures in the neighborhood. "It next occurred to him,"

wrote J. Burgess of the Archeological Survey in reviewing the *Portfolio*, "that from the beautiful buildings at Delhi, Amber, and other cities not very distant from Jaipur, a much larger and most useful collection of these details might readily be copied and arranged for reference." Many of these "details," which comprised measured drawings and impressions or casts transferred to paper, were subsequently reproduced, together with many others, in the volumes of the *Portfolio*.⁶⁰

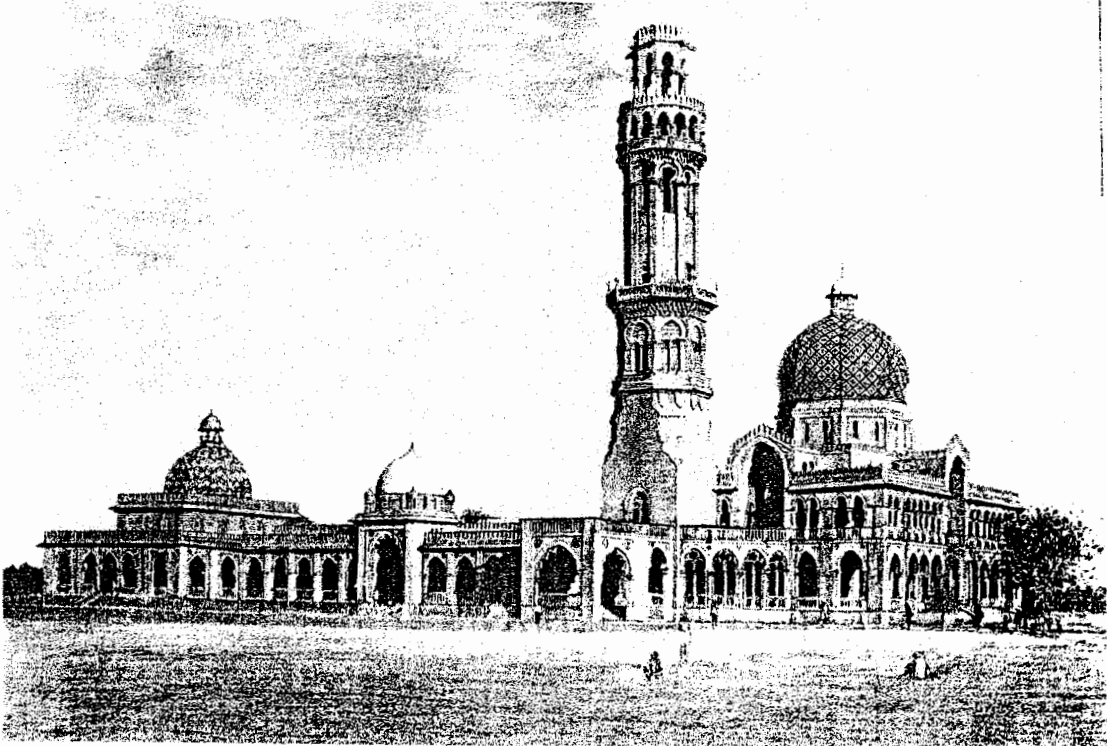
The organization of these six volumes provides a revealing insight into the way the British made use of India's historic architecture for their own building. As Jacob explained in the preface, his objective was to produce a "collection of architectural details in such a shape as would be of *practical* use to the architect and artizan." Hence the volumes were not put together either chronologically or by region of origin, nor were the "details" illustrated presented so as to illuminate the structures of which they were a part. Instead they were arranged topically: one volume contained copings and plinths; the second, capitals; the third, brackets; the next, arches; and so on. Each sheet loose, the different varieties of each detail could thus "be compared and selections readily made." The intending designer, that is, could choose as he wished from among these "working drawings"—a plinth from this historic building, an arch from another—and so take full advantage of features "so full of vigour, so graceful and so true in outline." As an example Jacob cited his own use of raised patterns from the tomb of Shaikh Jamali (d. 1535) near Delhi, reproduced in the *Portfolio* volume on arches, to decorate the recesses of the walls in the Albert Hall, changing only the coloring from the red and blue of the tomb to white on a light-green ground. The effect, he said proudly, "is exceedingly good, and is an instance of the way in which these beautiful designs can be utilised for decoration in modern buildings."⁶¹

Which ancient structures, one might ask, did Jacob regard as most suitable for modern reproduction? His selection in the *Portfolio* was obviously limited by his location in Jaipur, but he nevertheless reached out to include a range of structures from the twelfth to the eighteenth century, and from Delhi to Ahmedabad. Although most of the prominent buildings of northern India are included, Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri between them supplied nearly half the total number of illustrations, and the old Jaipur capital of Amber, with the eighteenth-century city of Jaipur, about one-third. (Of the volume on doors, for instance, sixty of

sixty-six plates were drawn from Amber alone.) The remaining illustrations were taken largely from other Rajput sites, primarily Alwar, Kota, and Chitor. Surprisingly, only four plates illustrate the Taj Mahal, and Dig appears on only three. In an assessment of the work, most striking perhaps is its focus upon the great monuments of Delhi and Agra, and yet the calculated avoidance of the greatest and most famous of them all. Clearly, the British, though eager to claim kinship with India's Islamic rulers, remained always reluctant to measure their own buildings by the opulent standards of the Taj. Similarly, for all the praise lavished upon it, Dig, outside the major centers of power and influence, provided little to inspire British designers. Delhi and Agra, visited annually by thousands and representing as no other cities could the majesty of empire in India, inevitably supplied the British builder with the richest source of stylistic elements.

The indiscriminate mixing of elements from a variety of sources that informed Jacob's *Portfolio* was not confined solely to British building in India. Indeed, the Indo-Saracenic enterprise drew upon, and gained sustenance from, similar, though not identical, currents of architectural eclecticism at home. Jacob's *Portfolio* was by no means the only Victorian "pattern book" of design elements. Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1868, illustrated designs from cultures around the world, while other volumes, more limited in scope, made available patterns from Gothic, Renaissance, and classical architecture for the Victorian builder. This eclecticism of design was part of, and itself nourished, the nineteenth-century search for the "picturesque." Intimately connected to the Romantic movement, which cherished individual expressiveness and sought to free design from the rigidities of Enlightenment neoclassicism, the notion of the "picturesque" shaped much Victorian taste.⁶² In India, where the British lived surrounded by the "exotic" and unfamiliar, the cult of the "picturesque," as we have seen, powerfully reinforced the British appropriation of India's landscape and its historic architecture. Much of the attraction, indeed, of remote and ruined cities, such as Mandu, was to be found in their "picturesque" situation. In the space of a few pages in his *History*, for example, Fergusson praised the "fairy-like" setting, amid hills and lakes, of medieval palaces from Udaipur and Bundi to Orcha and Amber. They were, he wrote, "seldom designed with much reference to architectural symmetry, but they are nevertheless always picturesque and generally the most ornamental objects in the landscape where they are found."⁶³

Victorian builders at home, as they sought to create a sense of the “picturesque,” almost never incorporated Indian design elements in their work. The sole exception was where they sought to evoke an image of the exotic and the sensual. Their eclecticism remained otherwise confined within the traditions of Western architecture, which alone they found aesthetically appealing and within which they could work comfortably. In India, however, architects were open to a wide range of influences. Emerson described how, in designing the Muir College, Allahabad, he “determined not to follow too closely Indian art, but to avail myself of an Egyptian phase of Moslem architecture, and work it up with the Indian Saracenic style of Beejapore and the north-west, confining the whole in a western Gothic design” (fig. 20). The “beautiful lines” of the Taj Mahal,



20. Muir College, Allahabad,
designed by W. Emerson.
Reproduced by courtesy of the

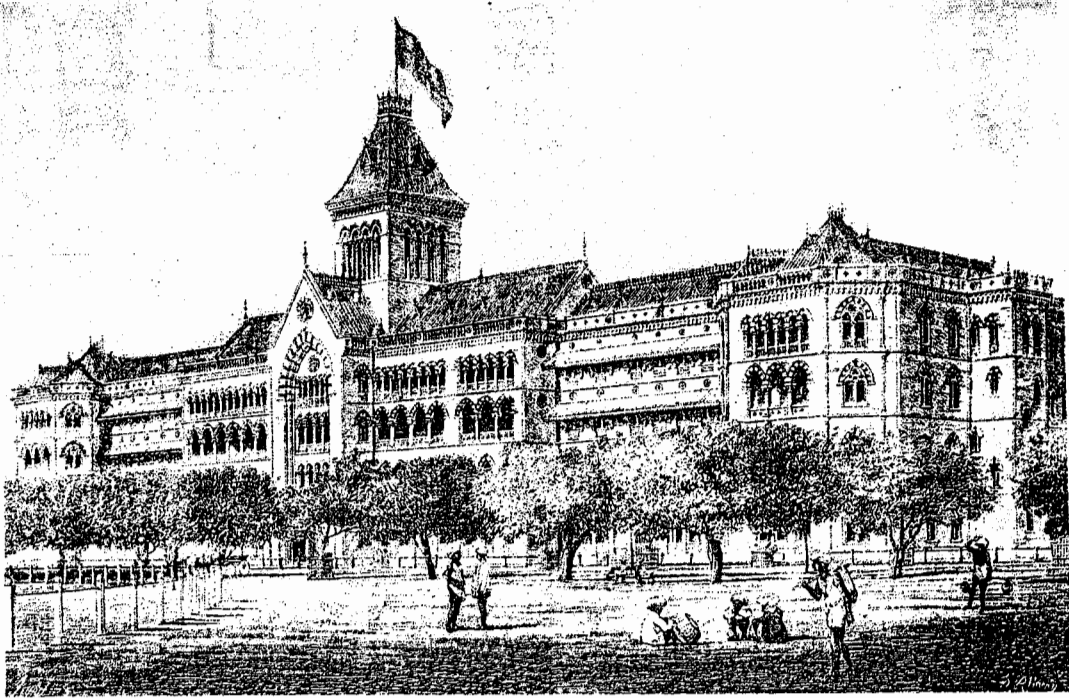
British Architectural Library,
RIBA, London.

he continued, "influenced me in my dome over the hall, and the Indian four centered arch suggested itself as convenient for my purpose," while the details "show how the Gothic tracery is blended with the Indian geometrical perforated stonework in the windows, and the Caireen Moucharabyeh wood-work; Gothic shafts and caps are united with Indian arches; and the domes stand on Gothicized Mohammedan pendentives and semi-circular arches." Though European elements were excluded, Mant too, as we have seen, sought in his design for the Mayo College, above all by the placement of the tower, to insure that the structure would possess a "varied outline" and thus present a "picturesque appearance." Interestingly, Saracenic forms were *not* used in India to create an idea of the sensual, for here important issues were at stake. In the "East," the "East" could not be exotic.⁶⁴

Contemporary British taste, with its penchant for the "picturesque" in architecture, thus reinforced the appeal of the eclectic Indo-Saracenic design. Indian builders in the Indo-Saracenic style, though they secured but little support in England for such "exotic" designs, did not have to defy British aesthetic ideals outright. Nor did they have to confront boldly the uncomfortable fact that this architecture had its origin in, and in turn made manifest in stone, the late-nineteenth-century imperial enterprise. An architecture of colonialism, the Indo-Saracenic was also a "modern," even a Victorian, architecture that incorporated in its design much of the "taste" of the times.

"Stubbornly Gothic": India's Metropolis and the Indian Church

In 1888 the burgeoning city of Bombay held an open competition for the design of new municipal offices. Elaborating upon the ideas he had developed during his years in Madras, Chisholm submitted a design in what he called "Hindu of a very pure type," adding only "such Mahomedan forms as expediency demanded in positions duly sanctioned by usage" (fig. 21). An ornate structure in a trabeate style, with four levels of arcaded verandah, free-standing *chattris* adorning the roof line, and a massive dome standing apart to one side, Chisholm's design won the first prize in the competition.⁶⁵ But it was never to take shape in stone. The Bombay Corporation gave the commission instead to F. W. Stevens



22. Bombay Secretariat,
designed by H. St. Clair
Wilkins. From *The Builder*, 20
November 1875.

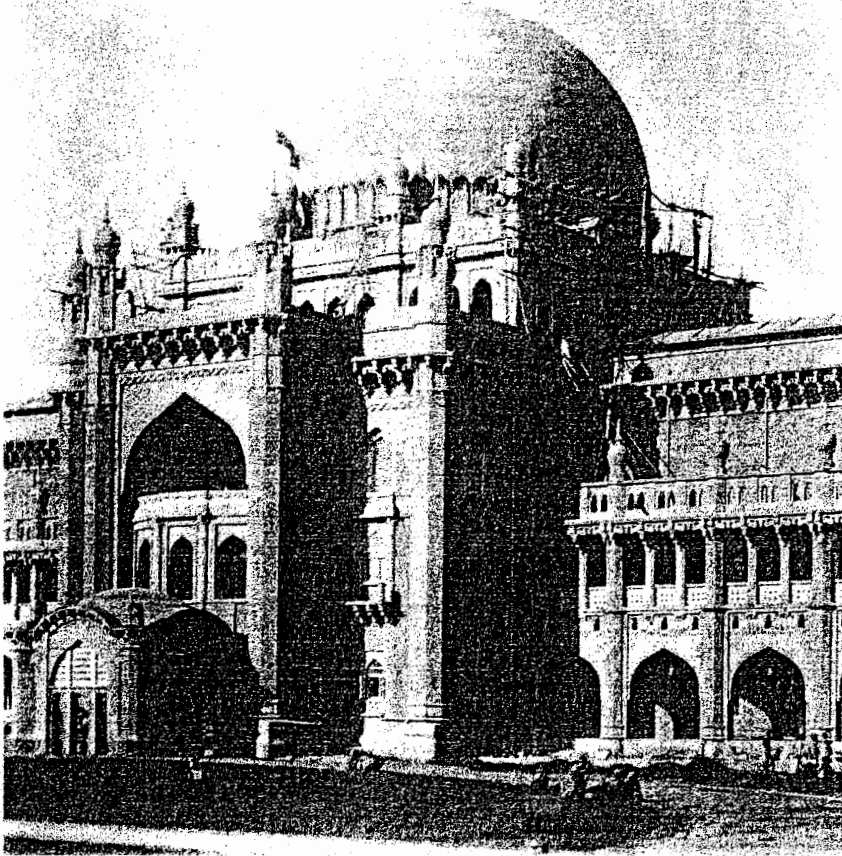
by Scott after Giotto's campanile at Florence. Most spectacular, however, was Stevens's Victoria Terminus (1878–87). The largest building constructed by the British in India up to that time, this station found inspiration in Scott's St. Pancras Station, London; yet its massive masonry dome and exuberant Italian Gothic detailing, in polychromatic stone, decorated tile, marble, and stained glass, gave it a distinctive character of its own. The Victoria Terminus at once made Stevens's reputation and forever stamped Bombay as preeminently a Gothic city.

Though these structures, in their architectural style, all turn their back on India, they do make some concessions to the city's Indian setting. Almost all incorporate open staircases and galleries, balconies, and verandahs to secure shade with a maximum circulation of air. Several

Bijapur, where, he said, "the best of the old work is to be found." The decision was applauded by the *Building News*, which called the Bijapur style, to which the British had long been drawn, "the most remarkable to be found in India for virility, boldness of conception, and adaptability to modern uses."⁷³ The Prince of Wales Museum (1908-14), however, with the ceremonial Gateway of India, both designed by George Wittet (1880-1926), Begg's successor as government architect, marked out the high point of Indo-Saracenic building in Bombay (fig. 24). As we have seen, museums were commonly regarded as exceptionally suited to an Indo-Saracenic architectural style. So it is not surprising that Bombay's was constructed along similar lines. The building was nevertheless distinctive in bringing together, under a monumental tiled concrete dome, elements at once of Begg's Bijapur design for the post office and the architecture of fifteenth-century Ahmedabad. In this way Wittet endeavored to represent the joining together under the Raj of Gujerat and Maharashtra, the two linguistic regions that made up the Bombay presidency. His subsequent design for the Gateway of India, to mark the spot where the king-emperor, George V, with Queen Mary, had first stepped ashore in India in 1911, sought also to incorporate in its design elements of the architecture of Ahmedabad.⁷⁴

Clearly, apart from these designs by Begg and Wittet, both at the very end of the era of its predominance in British Indian building, Indo-Saracenic design had almost no impact on the architecture of Bombay. At best, as the *Times of India* wrote of Stevens, the city's architects sought a "blending of Venetian Gothic with Indian Saracenic."⁷⁵ The causes of this indifference are not at once obvious. Bombay's situation itself surely played a major role. Facing toward Europe on the west coast of India and, especially after the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal, the chief port for India's trade with Europe, Bombay sought to define itself as to some degree a European city, a trading and commercial city, not as a city that marked out Britain's rule over India's alien peoples. Hence it clothed itself appropriately in European architectural forms. Bombay may have been, as the city's motto proudly proclaimed from the facade of Stevens's municipal buildings, *Urbs Prima in Indis*; but it looked outward and, as one foreign visitor wrote, conceived of itself as "the connecting link between Europe and Asia, the point where two civilizations meet and mingle."⁷⁶

Bombay was exceptional too, for later-nineteenth-century India, in possessing a wealthy and civic-minded Indian mercantile elite. Many



24. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, designed by G. Wittet. Photograph taken during the First World War while the museum, still under

construction, was used as a hospital. Courtesy British Architectural Library, RIBA, London.

of the city's major structures were financed either wholly or in part by the contributions of Indian philanthropists. The University Hall, for instance, was funded by Sir Cowasjee Jahangir, while the Library and Clock Tower owed their existence to the banker Premchand Roychand, who named the tower in memory of his mother, Rajabhai. Significantly, a substantial number of these wealthy benefactors were Parsis, or even,

with David Sassoon, Baghdadi Jews. As members of tiny minorities, they conceived of themselves to some extent as outsiders in India and so, while they took advantage of Bombay's commercial opportunities, allied themselves closely with the country's rulers. As they adopted an anglicized style of life, so too did they, not surprisingly, patronize European styles of architecture. In some degree like India's princes, whom we will examine later, these urban merchants sought to appear "modern," not only by gaining fluency in the English language and manners, but by surrounding themselves with the architectural styles of contemporary Europe. Not just the British, but the city's Indian residents as well, made of Bombay a Gothic city.

If Bombay's builders were indifferent to Indo-Saracenic design, India's church architects were actively hostile. Like other public buildings of the same era, Indian churches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as we have seen, followed contemporary English Georgian styles and took as their model St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. By the 1840s, under the influence of A. W. Pugin and the "ecclesiologists" (as they called themselves), Gothic had become accepted as the only appropriate style for church architecture. Not only did it express the ideals of the Romantic movement and of Britain's own past, but, more important, for the ecclesiologists Gothic alone authentically represented a Christian society. Even in Calcutta, with its deeply set traditions of classical design, the cathedral (1847) was constructed in a Gothic mode, while Bombay, at the same time, well before the ebullient building of the boom years, saw the erection of the Afghan Memorial Church (1847-58), an ecclesiologically "correct" structure in Early English named in honor of those who fell in the First Afghan War (1840).

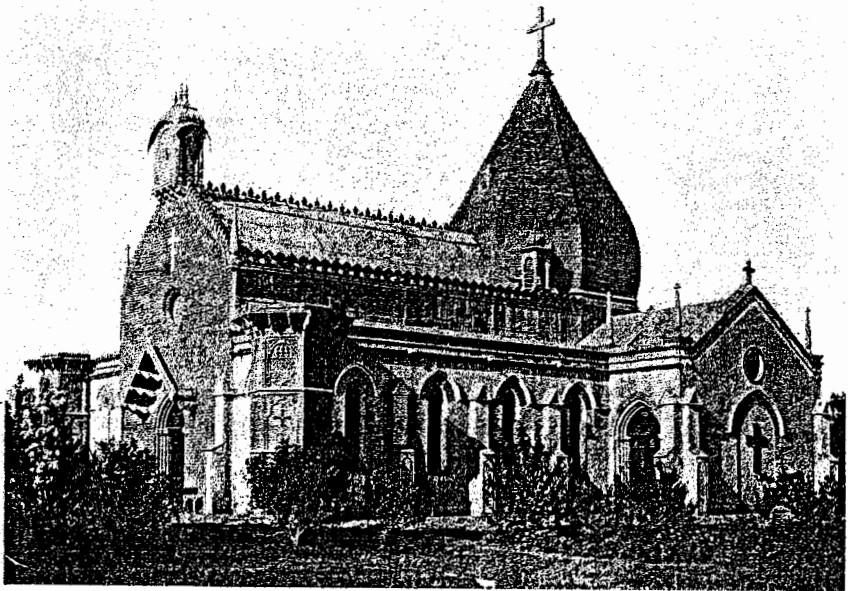
The ecclesiologists were, in principle, willing to accept the use of Italian styles for hot climates, and some Indian churches in mid-century took up such forms in a manner similar to Bombay's adoption of Venetian Gothic for secular building. After all, even such enthusiasts for European design as T. Roger Smith had urged the employment in India of those European styles which had "grown up in sunshiny regions," including among them "the Renaissance and Gothic of Southern Italy or Spain, or the early Gothic of Southern France."⁷⁷ In time, nevertheless, the conventions that governed church architecture became so rigid that it was inconceivable to build an ecclesiastical structure in other than a properly English Gothic style. Emerson's cathedral in Allahabad (1871-87), though barely half a mile distant from his "Saracenic" Muir College, was strictly

Gothic, based on the thirteenth-century choir of Canterbury Cathedral. Indeed, far from modeling the cathedral on the college, Emerson found in the proximity of the cathedral reason for refraining from "a rigorous adherence to the Saracenic style" in the college design.⁷⁸

Similar considerations shaped the design of churches throughout India, even those of Indo-Saracenic architects. Chisholm, for instance, designed a cathedral for Rangoon (1886) in an Early English style, while Swinton Jacob erected Jaipur's Anglican church (1875) in a variation of the same English style. Despite his own study of Indo-Saracenic design, Jacob wrote, the church must be "in keeping with a style, with which all our feelings of devotion are associated." The only modifications he would allow were those dictated by a concern for comfort in a hot climate: a high nave with windows protected by projecting sunshades; placement of the apse windows well above the ground to avoid "inconvenience" from the sun at early morning services; and a flat ceiling with hooks to which a row of punkahs (fans) could be attached. Similarly, in his Rangoon design Chisholm incorporated deep buttressing, with the buttresses arched together and roofed in "to form the shade so essential in a tropical climate."⁷⁹ Indian design elements were rare and confined to decorative detail. The Allahabad cathedral, for instance, filled the apse openings with perforated stone in geometrical patterns from Fatehpur Sikri, while the Jaipur church used polished local marble of varied colors in the font and for the shafts of the pillars supporting the nave arches. The Lahore cathedral, designed by Gilbert Scott's son Oldrid in an English Decorated style, rather exceptionally avoided the use of human figures in the apse windows for fear of offending Muslim inquirers.⁸⁰

Any attempt to introduce elements of Indo-Saracenic design into a church at once provoked a fury of controversy. As early as 1846 a proposed Islamic design for the English church at Alexandria in Egypt had stirred the *Ecclesiologist*, the journal of the Gothic group, to outrage. "To build a Christian church in a land where a false religion is predominant, and Christianity trampled down," they wrote, "in the style of that false religion, for the sake of flattering the followers of that religion, is more than a solecism of taste, it is a gratuitous . . . bruise to our religious feeling."⁸¹ Feelings in India were no less passionate. Nevertheless, one British officer, F. S. Growse, an enthusiast for Indian arts, sought to stem the tide. During the 1870s Growse was posted as collector in the north Indian district of Mathura. The district town, adjacent to the sacred Hindu shrine of Brindaban, was graced, after its consecration in 1856, by

an elegant Anglican church, in an Italian Renaissance style of architecture, for the use of the garrison. There was, however, no Catholic church. As a Catholic, Growse determined not only to build a church but to construct it in what he considered an appropriate architectural style. He secured some Rs. 13,000 in subscriptions from local residents, European and Indian alike, and the use of the plot of ground adjoining the Anglicans' structure. Growse laid out the ground plan and general proportions of his church, "in accordance with ordinary Gothic precedent," but then set out to make the rest of the building "purely Oriental in design" (fig. 25). The carving in the tympanum of the doorways, the tracery in the windows, the cusped arch in front of the altar, the kiosks set along the roof, were all, he wrote, "favourable specimens of native art." He had further intended, so he said, to model the dome itself on the *shikra*, or spire, of a Hindu temple at Brindaban. Saying that he feared arousing "clerical prejudice," Growse claimed that he "eventually altered it into a



25. Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart, Mathura. From F. S. Growse, *Mathura: A District Memoir*.

dome of the Russian type, which also is distinctly of Eastern origin and therefore so far in keeping with the rest of the building." As with every compromise, he sighed, "it fails of being entirely satisfactory."⁸² Yet the dome remains *shikra*-like, not Orthodox, in its outline, so that his description may well itself have been contrived to disarm his opponents. (See plate 11.) In any case, with a dome that evokes nearby Brindaban, its mosque-like kiosks, and elaborate surface decoration imposed upon a Western-styled structure, Growse's Church of the Sacred Heart, bustling today with an active Catholic congregation, remains one of the most colorful and inventive Indo-Saracenic-styled structures to be found in India.

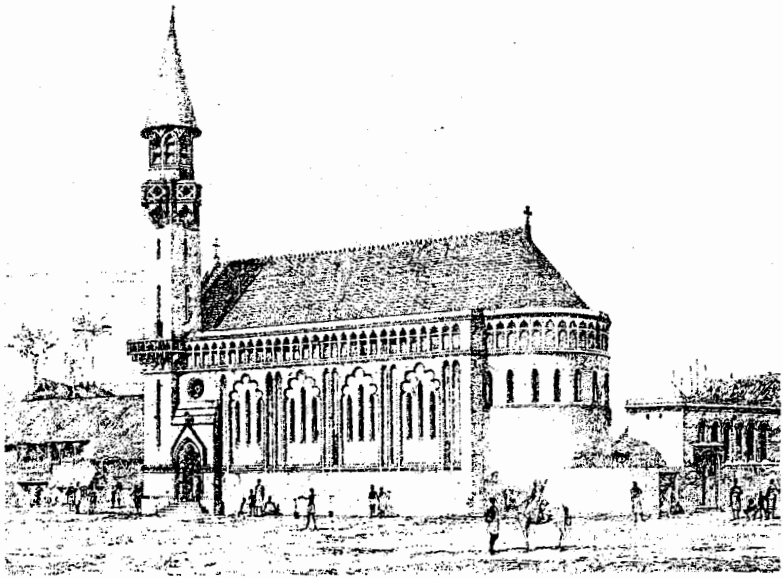
Growse took great pride in his church. Anyone who saw the building, he pointed out, would "immediately understand that it was a Catholic Church, built in an eastern country for the use of a mixed congregation of Europeans and orientals." As such it pointed the way toward an ecclesiastical architecture that blended "oriental and western ideas" in a way "both nationalities could appreciate." From its example would follow spontaneously, he insisted, the "combination of dome and spire." As testimony to his success, despite his anger at being peremptorily transferred out of the district before the project was finished, Growse reprinted, in his history of Mathura, one newspaper's comparison of his "labour of love" on the church with the work of the Abbé Dubois and Francis Xavier. Like them, it said, he "sought the empire of the mind through the empire of the heart."⁸³

The construction of the Mathura church; however, did nothing to allay popular hostility toward a style of ecclesiastical architecture that "mixed" Indian and European forms. For some critics the solution appeared to lie, as Growse himself had suggested in his revised plan for the dome, in the use of a Byzantine style of architecture. This was the theme of a protest raised against the Madras Y.M.C.A., built in 1899 in a style consistent with the Indo-Saracenic-styled Law College opposite. An outraged correspondent asked *Indian Engineering* why "the authorities of this Christian Institute have ordered their architect to design this building in Heathen Architecture? It may have been so designed on the same principle that the Teetotal Preacher has a drunken man beside him, to emphasize the hideousness of the crime." Surely, the writer went on, "there are plenty of Oriental Christian edifices, in and around Armenia, of Byzantine Oriental type, which would have carried out that great and first principle of Architecture, I mean 'Fitness', better than the absurd caricature it

carrying on Christian teaching in a building entirely surrounded with symbols, suggestions and associations which are opposed to Christianity.”⁸⁶

The Cambridge Brotherhood, a group whose members were convinced that Christianity could find an authentic expression in Indian culture, nevertheless stood firm. S. S. Allnut, the college principal, defended his decision by an appeal to the abiding principles of the Christian faith. In art as in all else, he wrote, Christianity “has always been able to claim all that is ‘lovely and of good report’ wherever she finds it, and then after refining, if need be, any elements of a grosser or more sensuous character, to make the adopted forms her own, capable of expressing in and through the borrowed and transfigured forms the characteristic ideas of her faith and life.” “I can conceive,” he continued, “no nobler task for the Christian architect in this country than after patient sympathetic and accurate study of the best periods of Indian architecture, both Hindu and Mahomedan, to endeavour to fashion out of the models he has studied, new forms, not slavishly imitative of the old, but adapted to meet the needs of Christian worship and life.”⁸⁷

The Cambridge brothers still represented only a small minority of English opinion, and St. Stephen’s College was of course, in any case, not a church but a college, for which Indo-Saracenic architecture had long been regarded as appropriate. As the architect W. N. Pogson wrote from Madras during the controversy, although government buildings ought “proudly and truthfully to mark our sojourn in the country,” if “you are called upon to design a Hindu Church or College, for the sole use of Christian Hindus, mark in brick and stone their nationality . . . but adapt it as much as lies in your power to Christian uses.”⁸⁸ Of Indo-Saracenic-styled churches, apart from Growse’s and the exceptional conversion into a church of one of the ancient monuments of Bijapur, there would appear in India to be none. In East Africa alone were to be found a few that incorporated “Moorish” elements. Of these the most prominent was Christ Church Cathedral, Zanzibar (1873–79), constructed by the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa on the site of the old slave market (fig. 27). With a tall, minaret-like spire and narrow slitted windows ending in cusped arches, the structure sought to blend Gothic and indigenous forms in order to appeal to the Arab residents of this island in terms they might understand. Together with the similarly styled and domed Mombasa church (1901–4), several hundred miles north along the same coast, the Zanzibar cathedral stood forth as representing an exceptional strategy for the evangelization of the Muslim peoples under British rule.⁸⁹



27. Christ Church Cathedral,
Zanzibar. From *The Builder*, 28
May 1881.

In practice, then, the church, despite its evangelical aims, could not conceive of Christianity as other than a European faith meant to be housed in European structures. India's burgeoning metropolis of Bombay likewise viewed itself as to some degree European in its commercial outlook, and hence appropriately to be represented in contemporary European garb. Elsewhere, however, as a new era of imperialism flourished in Britain, and India's conquerors sought to control its subject peoples more fully, they set out to assert their own legitimacy by proclaiming themselves an Indian empire. This intention an Indo-Saracenic-styled architecture at once made visible for all to see, and itself sustained.