

The Impact of Educational, Religious and Socio-Cultural Reforms of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III on the Architecture of the Baroda Central Library in India.

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Abstract

Education and literacy are hallmarks of progressive societies. Public libraries play an important role in education and literacy while simultaneously reflecting and shaping society. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, ruler of the Indian state of Baroda from 1875 – 1939, and a firm believer in education and literacy, established a public library system in the late 1800s. Two important consequences of his efforts were the introduction of free primary education for girls and boys, and the establishment of the architecturally significant Baroda Central Library in 1931. This paper explores the impact of Maharaja's educational, religious, and socio-cultural reforms on the architecture of Baroda Central Library in India.

The paper examines the reforms initiated by Maharaja and their influence on the establishment of the Baroda Central Library, through an architectural case study. It documents and presents the physical context of the library and innovative architectural features using narratives, photographs, and drawings - methods that align with traditional and modern documentation techniques for cultural heritage. The study validates its findings through historical records and literature. It also provides a historical overview of education and library development in India during pre-independence and post-independence periods.

The study links Maharaja's reforms to the physical nature of the library and the symbolism embodied in its design. It shows how the library reflects Maharaja's vision of inclusivity, adaptability and progress, serving as a cultural anchor for the community. The paper concludes that the library is a testament to architecture anchoring the cultural identity of the community in a geographical space shaped by colonial influences and princely vision.

Keywords: Architectural Characteristics, Cultural Heritage, Colonial Influence, Princely Vision, Reforms, Public Library, Symbolism

Background

The research focuses on the historical development of education and libraries in India from pre-1200 AD to 1960 AD, examining the educational systems, transformative processes, and the evolution of libraries. It explores the progression from traditional documentation methods to organized public libraries, highlighting the significant role of educational institutions in societal development, with a specific emphasis on the reforms initiated by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III in the princely state of Baroda.

The aim of the research is to examine the historical context of education and library development in India, with a specific focus on understanding the educational reforms and architectural and cultural significance of the Baroda Central Library.

Its objectives are:

- To analyse Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III's educational and socio-cultural reforms.
- To record the architectural and symbolic representation of Baroda Central Library.
- To identify the role of the library as a cultural anchor in the context of colonial and princely influences.

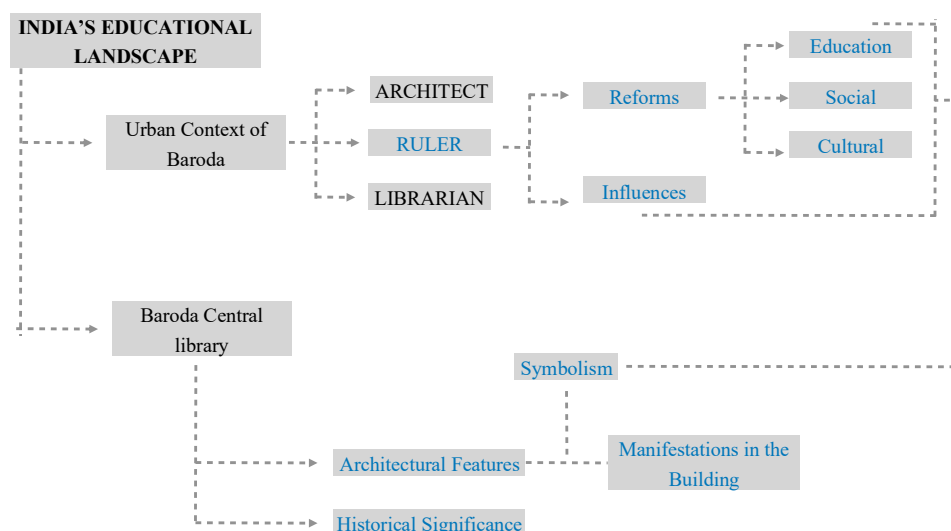
The paper is divided into four parts:

Introduction: An overview of the history of education in India, and the history of the library movement in India during the Pre-Independence Period (Before 1200 AD) till Post-Independence (1947 – 1960 AD).

Context: Background of the ruler Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III and his reforms – Educational, religious, social, cultural, political and health, during his reign (1875 – 1939).

Case study: To explore, document and study the history, context, and architectural features and spatial organization of interior spaces of the public library through narratives, photographs and drawings.

Discussion & Conclusion: To link the reforms to the physical nature of the library and describe the symbolism embodied in the Baroda Central Library's design.



Introduction

History of Education in India

Education for the liberal, spiritual and religious upliftment of individuals and the society at large has been prevalent in India since ancient times. For the purpose of study, it has been divided into two parts as follows.

- A. Pre-Independence Period
 - The Ancient Period (Before 1200 AD)
 - The Medieval period (1200 AD – 1757 AD)
 - The British Period (1757 – 1947 AD)
- B. Post-Independence Period (1947 – 1960) (Bhatt, 2020).

A. Pre-Independence Period

The pre-independence period encompassed three distinct eras:

Ancient Period (Before 1200 AD): This period consisted of two dominant education systems: Vedic system (1000 BC to 600 BC) that was based on religious and holistic development and Buddhist system (700 BC to 500 BC) was secular and open to all (Chandramani, 2017).

Medieval Period (1200-1757 AD): Was a result of the Muslim invasion in India, transforming the Vedic and Buddhist education system. The Islamic education system incorporated the Quran and focused on “development of practical skills for cultural, economic and social cohesion” (Srivastava, 2017).

British Period (1757-1947 AD): Began after the arrival of the British East India Company that expanded its domain to administration and politics, becoming key decision makers for India. It marked the introduction of Western education, changing the dynamics of the ancient and medieval education system that was already prevalent in India (Sindhuja & Honnedevehthana, 2021).

Each era brought unique philosophies and structures, shaping the foundation of the history of Indian education.

B. Post-Independence Period

As discussed by Hossain (2018), the post-Independence period (1947-1960) is when India acquired political and administrative freedom from British rule. It was a crucial time for India and was focused on nation building. Education was an important vehicle for bringing social, political, and economic changes in this transitional period in Indian history. According to Wani (2008), the national goals of the Indian Constitution were democracy, secularism, elimination of poverty and national integration.

History of Library and Library Movement in India

Libraries play a vital role in education as sources of archived knowledge for scholars and future generations. The library movement in India started in the 3rd Century AD and can be broadly categorized into pre-independence and post-independence period (Nagar, 1969).

The Context

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III

This is a brief background of the ruler Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III and the reforms during his reign from 1875 - 1939. This section is structured as follows:

- A brief overview on the background Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (Birth, Education).
- Society during the reign of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III.
- Reforms made by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (Educational, Religious, Social, Cultural, Political, Health) and its impact on the society at that time.
- Foundation of the libraries in Baroda.

Background of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III

Sayajirao Gaekwad III, was born Gopalrao Gaekwad in 1863 in the Indian state of Maharashtra to a farmer, distantly related to Maharaja Khanderao Gaekwad II, the ruler of Baroda state, who died without leaving behind a male heir. Maharani Jamnabai, widow of Maharaja Khanderao adopted Gopalrao and crowned him as Sayajirao Gaekwad III, at the age of 12. Through private schooling under the directorship of F.A.Elliot with British teachers Sayajirao Gaekwad acquired education with a blend of western-style education and traditional knowledge (Nagar, 1992) & (Gaekwad, 1989).

Society During the Reign of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III faced significant challenges to his desire for reforms. Widespread illiteracy, reinforced with religious and superstitious beliefs, reinforced with societal norms such as the caste system, patriarchy, purdah system, child marriages, and public health issues. The caste system in India divided society into four classes: the Brahmins (priests and gurus), the Kshatriyas (warriors and administrators), the Vaishyas (merchants and agriculturists), and the Shudras (labourers). People's access to education and other social services was dictated by their class. Patriarchy permeated all classes, with men holding superior positions. The purdah system dictated where women could be seen in public, and how they had to cover their head and face with veils. Child marriages were common in all classes. Widowed women were ill-treated and were not allowed to remarry.

These societal structures posed significant obstacles to Sayajirao's reforms, underscoring the complex interplay between traditional customs and modernization efforts in late 19th and early 20th century princely India (Upadhyay, 2016).

Influence of Western Travel

From 1887 to 1937, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III travelled extensively to Europe, America, Asia and Africa. He regarded travel as the highest form of education. The tours encouraged him to think broadly and helped modernize his own state, by abolishing some societal ills prevalent in all classes (Upadhyay, 2016).

Reforms made by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (Educational, Religious, Social, Cultural, Political, Health) and its impact on the society at that time.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III believed that religious beliefs, superstition, and limited access to education contributed to backward thinking and narrow mindsets among all classes of the society. He understood that religious, social, cultural and political changes would be needed to modernize Baroda. But he also realized that a rational approach, starting with education, rather than sudden reforms would be a better way to achieve that goal (Upadhyay, 2016).

Education for All

One of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad's first reforms was to make education mandatory for all classes of society for boys and girls. In 1875 the Gujarati and Marathi schools were established in Baroda to encourage girls' education and to improve the position of women in society (Upadhyay, 2016).

Religious Reforms

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III challenged the orthodoxy, superstitious beliefs, customs, and rituals followed in the society. He abolished “Sati Pratha”, an Indian custom where a wife immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, a practice that was prevalent in the Brahmin and Kshatriya community (Doniger, 2023).

Social Reforms

The Maharaja believed in equality. He opposed the taboo that the Shudra caste were untouchables and introduced laws that gave them access to public spaces. He abolished the Purdah system and encouraged his wife Maharani Chimnabai II to educate herself. He supported her initiatives of improving the position of women in the society by allowing widows to remarry, allowing inter-caste marriages, and banning child marriages (Anon., 2005)

Cultural Reforms

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III was a noted patron of arts. During his reign Baroda state became a centre for artists and scholars. A great deal of focus was given to art, architecture and performing arts to educate people and construct a progressive society. He created a platform for native and foreign artists to share their art forms. He used art and architecture as a modernization tool marking Baroda State as a Cultural Capital known as “*Sanskarnagari*” (Upadhyay, 2016).

Political Reforms

As discussed by Fatesinhrao Gaekwad in (Gaekwad, 1989), Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III believed that good governance was the core of good administration. He established policies and laws to eliminate the administrative corruption and malpractice he observed. Some of these actions included:

- Implementing justice-oriented policies and laws in agriculture, industry and finance.
- Imposing land acts to eliminate exploitation of farmers.
- Reducing taxes.

Health Reforms

Health and hygiene were of prime importance to Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. He established the Baroda Medical Department in 1876 to make health facilities and programs available to all classes of society. The Baroda Civil Hospital was established soon after. Public health initiatives, such as vaccines and general well-being programs were promoted.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III also embarked on a campaign of civic and community projects that included parks, museums, roads, dams and reservoirs to supply a water source for the city, and the Bank of Baroda (Gaekwad, 1989).

Foundation of the Libraries in Baroda

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, believed that the best way to enlighten people about world events was by establishing public libraries. Inspired by his 1906 visit to the United States, he established public library system in Baroda State. Under the guidance of William Borden, director of Young Men’s Institute Library at Yale University, they planned a comprehensive network of libraries, that included the Baroda Central Library, district libraries, town libraries, and village libraries. The system offered unique features such as a ladies' library and children's facilities. Despite initial challenges, including public resistance to usage fees, Borden proposed reforms to revitalize the system. These included unifying collections, constructing purpose-built

facilities, and offering free access. The Maharaja's support for these initiatives, coupled with Borden's expertise, laid the foundation for a modern library system in Baroda, demonstrating the state's commitment to public education and knowledge dissemination in early 20th century India (Nagar, 1969).

Research Methods

This research employs case study as a research method.

Case study

Baroda Central Library

The purpose of the case study is to explore, document and study the history, context, and architectural features of this public library through narratives, photographs and drawings.



Fig. 1: The Baroda Central Library
Source: Photograph by the Author, 2024

History

“There is no more ennobling thing than reading of good books; It leads men along flowery pathways, towards earnest and pure lives. I am doing what I can to educate my people to the stage where they can read and appreciate great thoughts of the present and of the past, and the result so far has been very gratifying; But I would do more; I would bring to the poor man or woman, the ordinary man of the bazaar, to the common people everywhere, this wealth of literature now only known to the educated”.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad, April 1912 (Nagar, 1992).

Ballaney (1992) describes Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, as an avid collector and reader of books who transformed his personal collection into the foundation for Baroda's public library system. The Maharaja's vision extended beyond mere book collection to encompass broader educational goals for all citizens. His appreciation for architecture led him to commission Edwin Lutyens, an English architect, renowned for his Indo-Saracenic designs, to create the Baroda Central Library in 1910 as shown in figure 1. This decision reflected Maharaja's commitment to blending cultural heritage with modern functionality, illustrating his holistic approach to public institutions and education in early 20th century princely India (Nagar, 1992).

The Site



Fig. 2: Fortified old city of Baroda.
Source: Author, 2023

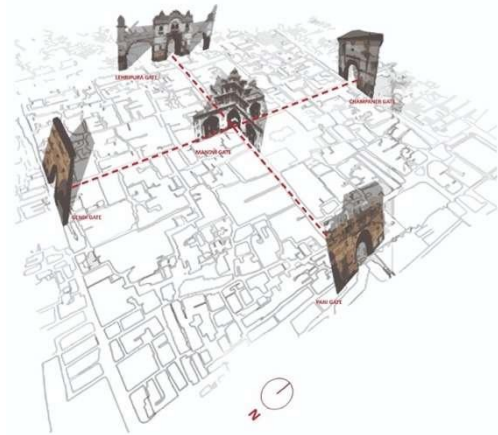


Fig. 3: Fortified old city of Baroda and its four gates.
Source: Author, 2024.

As shown in the figure 2, the city of Baroda, is located on the Vishwamitri River in the state of Gujarat in the Centre-West of India. The historic walled city sits within fortified walls that form a square with 800 meters on each side divided into four quadrants. Four gates facing the cardinal directions: Lehripura gate to the west, Champaner gate to the south, Pani gate to the east, and Gendi gate to the north, connected by two 12-meter-wide roads: Mahatma Gandhi Road (east-west) and Mandvi Fatehpura Road (north-south). The historically significant Mandvi Pavilion that commemorates the establishment of the Gaekwad rule, sits at the intersection as shown in figure 3. Important administrative buildings including the Baroda Central Library, Sarkarwada, and the former Nazarbaug Palace, line these main roads. Inspired by the St. Louis Central Library's impact during his 1910 visit to Missouri, U.S.A., Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III positioned the Baroda Central Library centrally on Mandvi Fatehpura Road, marking it a defining feature of the city (Nagar, 1969).

Massing

The library building is divided into two rectangular blocks. One for the Lending Section and other for the Reference Section. These blocks form a T-shaped building, with a central axis dividing it symmetrically from the centre.

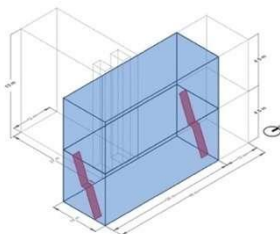


Fig 4.1: Two storied lending section.

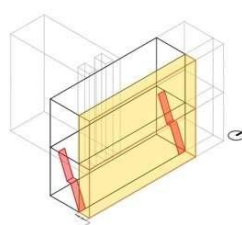


Fig 4.2: Semi-enclosed Verandah.

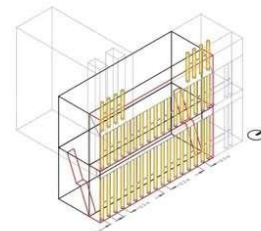
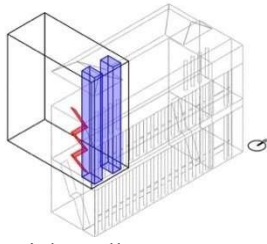
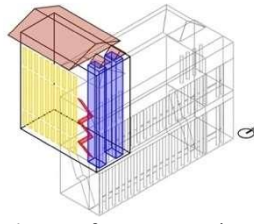
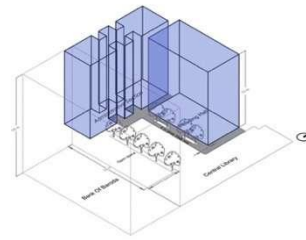


Fig 4.3: Vertical Columns.

**Fig 4.4:** Light wells.**Fig 4.5:** Reference Section.**Fig. 4.6:** Later additions
Reading Hall

Source: Axonometric views drawn by the Author, 2024.

The Baroda Central Library's architecture comprises three main sections:

- Lending Section: Measures 48.0 x 14.0 meters runs parallel to Mandvi Fatehpura Road, with two floors connected by 1.5-meter-wide staircases, a semi-enclosed verandah, and series of decorative wooden columns resonating the façade of 'Sarkarwada'.
- Reference Section: A double-height block running perpendicular to the Lending Section measuring 27.0 x 12.0 meter with a staircase and two light wells, covered by a gable roof. Raised glass walls of the light wells allows ample natural light.
- Additions Post 1930s: A two-story Reading Hall to the north and Administrative Section to the west, partially altering the original design's emphasis on natural light.

Architectural Style

Jain (2022) describes that during the British Colonial Period (*The British rule under the Crown from 1857 till 1947*), how the British rulers wanted to create architectural styles that represented the rich cultural heritage of India while incorporating their own European influences. Towards the end of 1880s, Charles Mant, Robert Chisholm, Edwin Lutyens and some other British architects in India tried to create a new skyline. The architectural style adapted for public buildings of importance like libraries, museums, schools, courthouses and hospitals was the Indo-Saracenic style. The introduction of the Indo-Saracenic design style was driven by a combination of cultural representation, power dynamics, aesthetic preference and practical considerations related to climate and local resources. The style remains an important part of India's architectural heritage (Ballaney, 1992).

Influence of Indo-Saracenic style in Baroda Central Library

**Fig. 5:** Facade of the Baroda Central Library.

Source: Drawn by the Author, 2024.

The Baroda Central Library exemplifies key elements of the Indo-Saracenic style, blending Indian and European architectural features. Its 48-meter-long symmetrical façade, divided into three parts, echoes the linearity found in other significant Baroda buildings as shown in the figure 5.

Indo-Saracenic influences:

- Wooden columns with sculptural capitals
- Cast-iron jaalis (perforated screens) for light filtration and ventilation
- Deep-set verandas and shaded balconies for climate adaptation
- Overhanging eaves and recessed windows (Grover, 2004;Burhani, 2023).

Ground Floor

The Baroda Central Library's ground floor exemplifies thoughtful spatial organization and circulation design:

- **Structure:** The structure of the library is composite with R.C.C (Reinforced Concrete Cement) framework with load-bearing walls.
- **Entry:** The entry to the library is through a 3.0-meter wide semi-covered verandah with three entrances.
- **Layout:** The central lending section is flanked by reading areas on either side. A 2.2 meters wide passageway divides the lending section and the storage room and connects the verandah straight to the open space behind as shown in figure 6.
- **Circulation:** The centrally placed primary entry to the verandah is meant for visitors. The linear movement through the length of the verandah allows freedom to access spaces. Staircases placed at the end on either side of the lending section facilitate vertical movement.

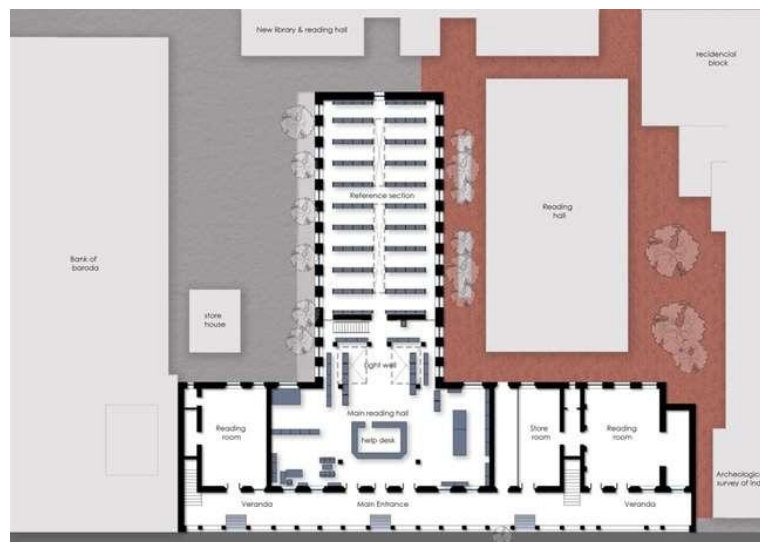


Fig. 6: Ground Floor Plan showing the spatial organization of spaces.
Source: Drawn by the Author, 2023.

First Floor

The first floor of Baroda Central Library has a thoughtful design that focusses on social needs and promotes inclusivity:

- **Spatial Organization:** The floor has spaces designated for children and women. In a patriarchal set-up, these gender specific spaces created safe havens for women and mothers. In contrast to the ground floor, this floor contains spatial distinctions built of partition walls. These walls help in creating three separate spaces - the children and women section, the reading room and the screening room as shown in figure 7.
- **Circulation:** The floor is accessed through two staircases from the ground floor verandah. The movement is linear with easy transition from one space to the other. The semi-open corridors serve as the central mechanism by which visitors may go from one room to another. This floor is connected to the Reference Section by a 2.0-meter-wide passage flanked by two light wells.



Fig. 7: First Floor Plan showing the spatial organization of spaces.
Source: Drawn by the Author, 2023.

Reference Section and Stacking System

Arya (2022) describes the Reference Section of the Baroda Central Library as a warehouse with advanced library technology for its time:

- **Structure:** The reference Section measures 10.0 m x 20.0 m is a fireproof warehouse-like self-supported masonry wall structure devoid of projections and ornamentations, that houses the 4 tier stacking system as shown in figure 8.1.
- **Lighting:** Natural light from strategically placed windows and light wells.
- **Stacking System:** As shown in figure 8.2, the stacking system is a prefabricated steel structure imported from the USA and assembled on site. The building block and the stacking system stand independent of each other. The stacking system in the reference section was designed and manufactured by J. Snead & Co. in the USA. The company were pioneers in library equipment. The stacking system is fireproof, compact, durable and capable of expansion vertically and horizontally (Nagar, 1992). The kit of parts of the system are prefabricated and finished with a primary coating of gray paint to avoid rusting. The standard height of a single tier stack is 7 feet. Linseed oil trays for termite prevention. Belgium glass flooring for light transmission and temperature control. Wood dumbwaiter for book transfer between floors.
- **Flooring:** The floors of the 4 tier Stacking System is covered in Belgian glass tiles that are 2 inches thick as shown in figure 8.3.

This design demonstrates library's technology with thoughtful architectural solutions. The independent stacking system, specialized flooring, and natural lighting exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to preservation of books of knowledge (Ballaney, 1992).



Fig. 8.1: Section of the Reference Section showing the 4-tier stacking system.
Source: Drawn by the Author, 2024.



Fig. 8.2: Photograph showing the 1.2-meter-wide passage and 2-inch-thick Belgium glass measuring 90 cm x 75 cm.

Source: Photograph by the Author, 2024.

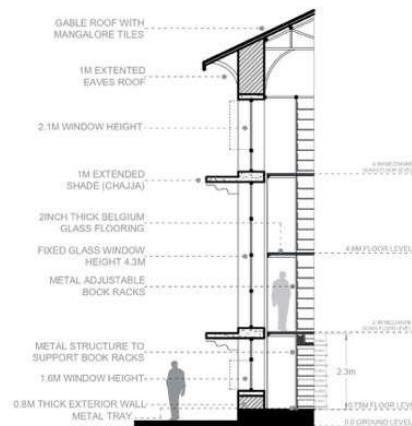


Fig. 8.3: Section of the 4-tier Multi-tier Stacking System of Reference Section.

Source: Drawn by the Author, 2024.

Adaptations

Through studies and observations, one can conclude that there have been changes over the years. The railings on the facade of the library had to be strengthened due to wear and tear of the passage of time. The impact of noise from the road has increased due to the traffic congestion and many temporary retail activities on the pavement, illegal parking on the roadside, making the road narrower and chaotic. The noise pollution and probably the dust led to corrugation on the railings and fluted columns and weakening them. As shown in figure 9, in 2015 - 2016 the railings were strengthened by adding wood columns between two fluted columns in the veranda that were supported by a horizontal wood member below the original beam. Further to avoid the railings from falling off, jalis were added on the ground floor veranda, to hold the balustrade of the railing and anchor it well with the beam above. The railings were further anchored by bolting them to the columns.

The funding for the maintenance of the Baroda Central Library comes from the state government of Gujarat, with nominal membership fees ensuring that access to the library is open for all classes of people irrespective of their economic status.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III donated books from his private collection that he had bought or had been gifted to him from his trips abroad to the library and made sure they were accessible for the people to read and have a worldview.



Fig. 9: Sketch showing the view of the library ‘then’ and ‘now’.

Source: Author, 2024.

Discussion

This discussion aims to analyze the Baroda Central Library as a physical manifestation of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III's reform agenda.

- Explore the connection between the Maharaja's educational, religious, social, and cultural reforms and the library's design and functionality.
- Interpret the symbolism embedded in the building's design.

Reforms

In the time before the reforms of the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, education in Baroda State, and most of India, was limited to men of a certain class. His fundamental reform that led to widespread cultural and societal changes was his platform of “education for all”, including women and men from all classes of society. And while much of this reform was accomplished through the establishments of public schools for boys and girls, the establishment of the library system was also a key instrument of reform.

The Baroda Central Library supported the “education for all” reform in several important ways. First, its location in the center of town marked it as a public service space, as opposed to a concealed academic or segregated religious space. Second, the use of a multi-story colonnade on the facade with its impressive jalis signaled more openness and historical authenticity than a solid facade in the European style, making the building more welcoming and less formidable to ordinary Indian citizens. Third, the library offered a variety of spaces, resources and services that were open to all citizens, regardless of their class, literacy, or language ability. Educational resources included reference books, newspapers and magazines, lectures, movies, maps, and even picture postcards for those not able to read. Fourth, the library promoted education for children, with spaces and resources set aside for them. And fifth, the Baroda Central Library marked a shift towards gender equality by offering accommodations for women, including a dedicated entrance for women with a separate staircase leading to the women’s section of the library. The layout of the library fulfilled the concept of the *Purdah* or keeping women out of sight from men. While accommodating women was viewed as progress toward gender equality and the Gaekwad's vision of "education for all", the physical separation of men and women in the library reinforced the subordinate status of women in Indian society at that time. From a modern, 21st-century perspective informed by mid-20th century global civil rights movements, such segregation perpetuated the marginalization of women. Nevertheless, the design of the Baroda Central Library, in its day, was an important manifestation of the Gaekwad’s reform of “education for all”.

Symbolism

Terry Webb, the author of the book “Building libraries for the 21st Century” states:

“Symbolic Librarianship is the little portion of library practice that acknowledges the library as a system of symbols and calls for proper management of those symbols as an important part of a library’s resources. It is the ability to interpret, be sensitive to, and build upon public perception of a library as a societal asset that is as much symbolic as functional.”

Southwell, 2015 & Kaser, 2001

Symbolism is as important as functionality. The Baroda Central Library’s strategic location, composite structure, linear facade, high plinth, flushed entry doorways, repetitive columns in the verandah, cast iron railings and jaalis and the interior spaces have high symbolic value.

Location

The strategic location of the Baroda Central library in the historic walled city is within the fortified walls that form a square that is divided into four quadrants with two principal roads. The library sits on the Mandvi - Fatehpura Road that runs on the north-south axis, showing prominence and accessibility to all. The perspectival linear form of the building running parallel to the main road shows the importance of the building to the people. The absence of a ceremonial foreground to access the library, unlike many important buildings like the Parliament building in New Delhi designed by the Luytens and other government buildings, expresses humility and humbleness and shows acceptance for all.

Façade

As mentioned earlier, when India became part of the British empire, the architecture was an amalgamation of power and prominence. Hence, the British architects consciously started incorporating Indian elements into their buildings to evolve an expression that would suit the Indian context by adapting features like verandahs, screens (Jaalis) and weather sheds. The expression was neither Indian nor European but an interesting mixture of the two, called the Indo-Saracenic architecture.

The Baroda Central Library is a combination of Indo-Saracenic architecture together with a nineteenth century Neo-classical façade (Ballaney, 1992). The linearity of the facade accentuated with the repetition of columns signifies that knowledge is seamless. The facade is divided with a central flushed jaali door with six circular wood columns on each side spaced at around 2.0 m distance signifies balance, symmetry and stability as shown in figure 15. The idea of stretching the building along the main axis was for a common man to feel the building merging with the landscape.

Plinth

The steps leading to the plinth of the library as shown in figure 15, symbolizes the sacredness of the building as a ‘temple of knowledge’. Just as temples and many other sacred structures are elevated from the ground, the high plinth of the library suggests that knowledge is important and needs to be respected.

Doorway

The three entry points from the main road axis to the verandah promotes inclusivity, shows accommodation of diverse gender identities, ensuring all are comfortable and respected. The design of all the three doors is the same, that also suggests equality. This expresses the prestige and importance of the library building. The central door was mainly used by men, probably reflecting on the social hierarchy and power of men being superior to women. The

side doors, however, were used by women and children marking their limited visibility but giving them freedom to access the library without any interruption.

Verandah & Columns

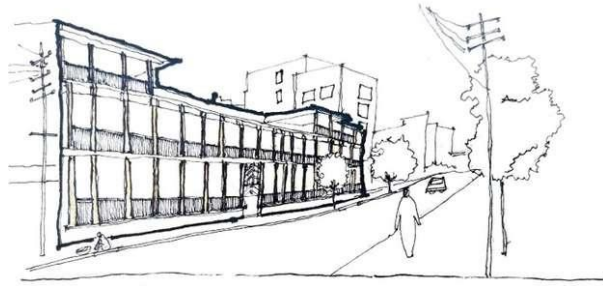


Fig. 10: Sketch showing the linearity of the building.
Source: Sketch by the Author, 2024.

As shown in the figure 10, the veranda on the eastern facade of the Baroda Central library has repetitive fluted wood circular columns signifying that knowledge is infinite and learning is perennial. Wood symbolizes strength and stability, the circular fluted columns evoke a sense of timelessness and tradition, and the repetitive nature represents wisdom, a sense of order and harmony. The continuity of the columns symbolizes that the building is a repository of knowledge, hence the columns support the heavy weight of knowledge that is contained.

Banana flowers as shown in the figure 11.1, are associated with fertility, auspiciousness and prosperity. In Hindu customs, banana flowers are used in weddings, housewarming rituals and religious festivals either offered as offerings to deities or used for decorations. The symbolic value of the banana flower motif used on both sides of the capital of the columns signifies symmetry, harmony, balance with the built, demonstrates a sense of sacredness to the space and serves as a reminder to keep the old Hindu customs and cultural traditions alive as shown in the figure 11.2. This is an important aspect for the people who feel they can call the building their own.



Fig 11.1: Sketch of the banana flower.



Fig 11.2: Capital of Column.

Source: Author, 2024.

The capital of the column is decorative with the motif of a banana flower and is seen on the ground floor level columns, the first-floor level columns are now simple with no embellishments showing simplicity and humbleness, making it accessible for all classes of people. This is probably because of the direct entry to the ground floor level from the main road, a reminder that this is the fountain of knowledge, inviting the public to enter and access the building (Southwell, 2015; Kaser, 2001). The first floor meant for women and children is more subdued in its presence now, access to which is from a straight wood flight staircase sandwiched between two parallel walls, safeguarding the privacy of women and children. The bases of the columns on ground floor level and the first-floor level do not have ornamentation

but a simple pedestal. This probably signifies that each one who steps inside the library comes with the aim to learn something from the beginning. The building does not exuberate pomp or grandeur through architecture or any elements, but it simply expresses infinity of knowledge contained.

Railings & Jaalis

The railings and jaalis express the idea of connectivity with the outside world and the world of knowledge within. Their transparency suggests access and inclusivity, apart from serving as a functional component, they add aesthetic value to the library with their decorative pattern and placement as shown in figure

The railings line the verandah of the ground floor level and balcony on the first-floor level giving a sense of safety to the people walking along the corridor. The pattern of the railing on both the levels are decorative but not the same. The decorative pattern on the ground floor and first floor shows a pattern of fluidity and interconnectedness of different branches of knowledge. One of the reasons the library had metal jaalis above the railings was for one - security and two - safety from birds (specially pigeons) entering the verandah and creating a menace. Another reason was to enhance the linear facade of the library with its horizontal bands, symbolizing infinity.

Interior spaces

The inside spaces of the library, the volumetric spaces, the flooring, the furniture layout, the ambience of the reading room, the skylights, the transparent Belgium glass floors, the books shelves etc. all convey a sense of timelessness, a feeling of being lost in the world of knowledge. The Baroda Central Library is the only library to have used Belgium glass floors in the Reference Section, a time when glass was considered a piece of crockery. This indicates the advancement of technology being introduced in a state where its people were not aware of the technology. Glass floors symbolize blurring of class and gender.

The decorative wood cupboards lined against the wall in the reading area of the main hall of the lending section allows readers the space and variety to select books of their interests. The arrangement expresses fluidity, encouraging readers to spend more time. The reading tables with a seating capacity of 14 - 16 readers encourage readers to interact and hold discourses that would blur the gender biases and create room for holistic learnings. The light wells in the reference section give a sense of space that is illuminating knowledge and wisdom when one enters. It also symbolizes the idea of enlightenment and an everlasting ray of hope.

Conclusion

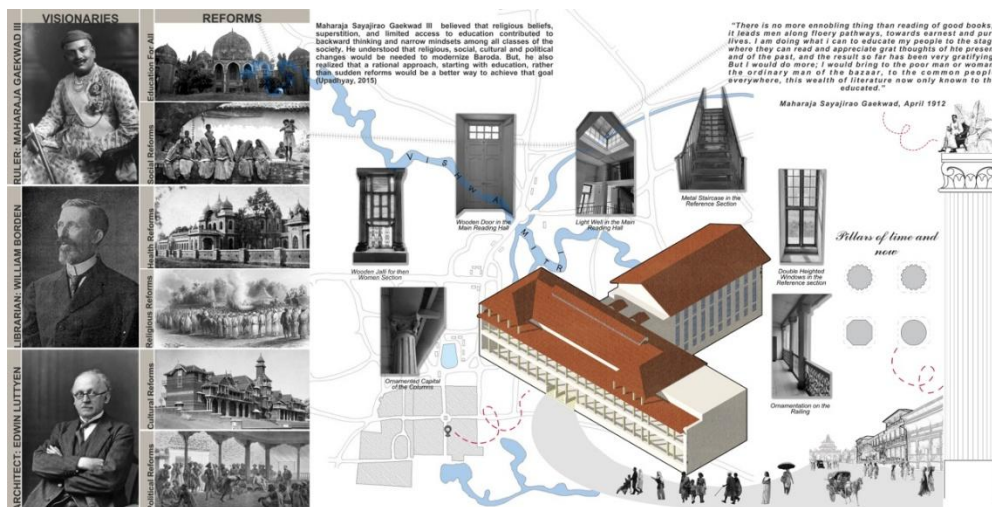


Fig. 11.3: Collage work
Source: Author, 2024.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad's educational, religious and social and cultural reforms are a testament to his vision for the Baroda Central library. His intellect and good knowledge of library architecture brought a successful conclusion along with an aesthetic architectural achievement (Southwell, 2015).

The library's architectural style not only reflects the combination of Indo-Saracenic and Neo-Classical styles but also symbolizes inclusivity and adaptability. Maharaja's frequent visits abroad were not merely meant for leisure, but his agenda was to inculcate some of the social and cultural ways of living to his state. For example: The effects of his visits and the influence of western world can be seen in every part of the Indian state, from buildings, water works, educational institutions to a tea pot. Probably many of these would have come due to the influence of the European architects but at least a few were certainly from Maharaja's personal choice.

If one thinks about the architecture of the library building, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, wanted the architecture of the library to merge with the immediate surroundings rather than trying to make the building look imperial. The idea was to make the architecture of the building look less imposing, thus making it accessible to all age groups and all genders. Hence, architects worked within the social and cultural framework that respected the context at that time. Interestingly, as (Ballaney, 1992) describes, one of the most symbolic intentions of the British Architects was to satisfy the Indian rulers by designing buildings that displayed power and might and the notion of superiority. Hence, the architects may have not been able to reflect their personal choices and beliefs but rather worked under the larger framework of social and cultural beliefs prevalent at the time.

It is also important to understand the fact that the British government had a strong hold over the Indian states, that made a lot of the rulers at their mercy, but Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, was very vocal about the wrongdoings of the British government and challenged their authority and advocated for the well-being of his people. Though he believed in a lot of good learnings and attributes of the west, which he tried to imbibe in his people, Maharaja still believed that some of the ways of their governing were not to the benefit of his people. In many of his lectures at various places, Maharaja has clearly expressed displeasure and discontent with the same, and he overrode their decisions and did exactly what he thought was best for his people.

It can be thus concluded that Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III's vision is a lens to understand his unwavering commitment to his educational, religious and social, and cultural reforms and high resistance against colonial oppression. Through his approach to architecture and governance, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad has indeed left behind a legacy of progress for future generations.

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Availability of Data: Data presented in this research are available for scrutiny if so required. In any case, they were used in this paper with the consent of the owners of that data.

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