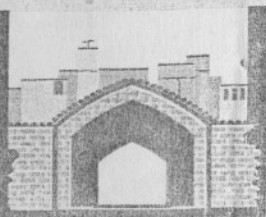
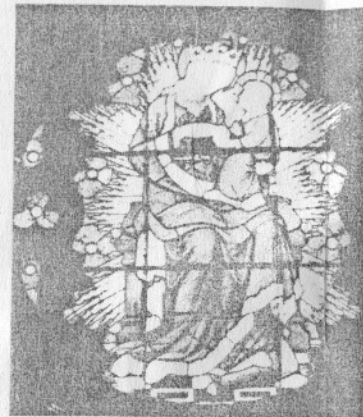


Many facets of Lahore



An edifice full of symbols

Lahore
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Madonna and the Child

In a few days during the week the Christians Community of the country will be celebrating the Ascension of the Christ like all their co-religionists in the world. Though, services will be held in all the churches of the country, the main assembly will, as usual, be held at the Cathedral Church of the Resurrection, since it happens to be the largest and central place of Christian place of worship.

The Cathedral Church of the Resurrection happens to be one of the most prominent edifices of Lahore. The year 2002 is the year of the 125th anniversary of the Lahore Diocese, too. During this period the edifice of the Lahore Cathedral was added to the skyline of Lahore. It is just over one hundred fifteen years since it was consecrated. The edifice of the Lahore Cathedral was planned and designed with a lot of symbols giving it a very impressive exterior and an equally attractive interior.

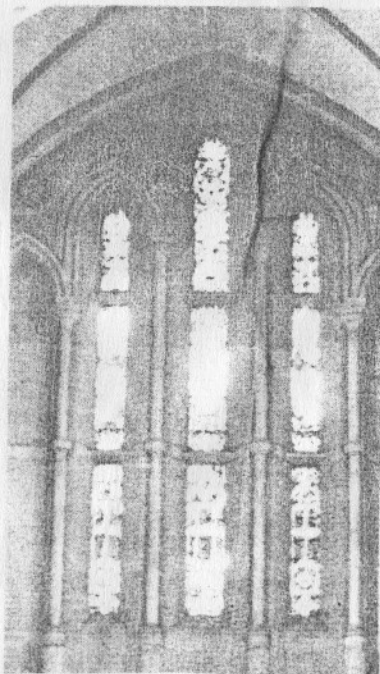
The external appearance is marked by a pair of high square towers in the west of the structure. In a way the towers give an impression that they are open at the top, symbolising Resurrection and Ascension, the spirit behind the name of the Cathedral, The Cathedral Church of the Resurrection. Then there are other

SAJID ABBAS visits the Cathedral of Lahore and talks about the symbols in its architecture and a symbolic monument found there

symbols in the interior which besides illustrating and epitomising events add to the splendour of the place, the stained glass windows for instance, especially the huge one on top of the entrance, which again explains by example the name of the Cathedral. This stained glass window, along with a number of others, though showing signs of dilapidation at certain spots, happen to be the most valuable adornment of the Cathedral.

These are matchless stained glass widows, some representing the Christ with the children. Others representing Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Elisabeth of Hungary and Saint Eloy of Noyon.

At the entrance of the Cathedral there is a structure, pleasing to the eye, which has a number of symbols conveying certain meanings to the onlooker. Done in concrete, on the occasion of the centenary of the Cathedral, by Shiuli Phailbus, a young architect of Lahore, now living in California, is so full of meaningful symbols that one can write a treatise on it. Nevertheless, this scribe would like to confine himself to the concept that the architect seems to have conceived herself and some of the views of another keen observer.



A window atop the entrance

According to Shiuli Phailbus, this edifice is built around the concepts of symbols. It represents an open altar in the midst of the busy world around. The tower, arch and motif are prominent elements of the Cathedral. The cross is highlighted in a stained glass panel which is a modernised representation of the stained glass windows of the 17th century style inside the Church. The chalice pattern signifies the celebration of the Holy Communion.

The fountain represents the fountain of life and the pool — baptismal font and the forgiveness of sins. the entrance to the pool is open, symbolising the 23rd Psalm — 'My cup floweth over'. Finally, the alter is built to appear like open arms welcoming all people to its sanctuary of peace and everlasting life.

Reverend Dr. F. S. Khairullah gives more details. In his view the designer has succeeded in catching the various leading motifs and designs in the beautiful architecture of the main Cathedral building and then reproducing them in this monument, in a formalised and crystallised form. It would be no exaggeration to say that the spirit of the Cathedral's significance has been

adequately reflected in this ten and a half metre high monument.

Reverend Khairullah adds, that on first glance at the monument, one sees a concrete structure rising out of the ground just like one of the two towers of the Church, repeating the impression of open-top tower and recalling the resurrection theme.

After the top, the eyes catch the beautiful stained glass panel underneath it. Says Rev. Khairullah, that inside the Church there are many stained glass windows. To capture the spirit of all is an impossible task. however, the young architect has reproduced in a clever way, the geometrical patterns inside and has skilfully arranged the colours to bring out four formalised shapes of Chalices — the cups in which grape juice is served during the Holy Communion. One may wonder why four Chalices?. To Rev. Khairullah they signify two things. First, the communion meal is mentioned in all the four Gospels. Secondly, it reminds of the Arthurian legend of the search for the Holy Grail.

Just beneath this translucent stained glass panel there is a quatrefoil pattern reproduced. If one goes around the

Church, many trefoil and quintafoil patterns will be found, scattered all over. The architect found a middle course and reproduced a quatrefoil, a panel-like ornament composed of four lobes divided by cusps, radiating from a common centre instead of the various other patterns. Then comes an arch, an architectural design, that is repeated in the main Cathedral over and over again.

Rev. Khairullah goes on to say that the Church believes in two sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ. Holy Communion — the communion with one another and communion with God which is reflected in the Chalice theme above. The second sacrament, namely, that of Holy Baptism is meaningfully reproduced in the lower part of the monument. the ever-gushing fountain signifies the new life in Christ after repentance.

The fountain is in a pool which is a facsimile of the baptismal font on a larger scale. when the fountain is playing and the pool is full, it gives an illusion of overflowing water — reminding the believer of the splendid 23rd Psalm, about God's blessings — 'My cup runneth over' — surely goodness and mercy shall follow.

That is not all, the edifice seems to be telling one much more. The more that one looks at it the more it seems to be revealing. One finds that the young architect has not only achieved her aim of creating an appropriate monument for the celebration of the themes of the Cathedral Church of the Resurrection in a very praiseworthy way but has proved that the newer generation is now ready to make their contribution to the adornment of the environment of the country. It looks that whatever Shiuli seems to employ in her design it is a manifestation of, essentially, providing a spot of peace in the heart of a chaotic world. 囍