

All Souls Cathedral – An Assuage to the Soul

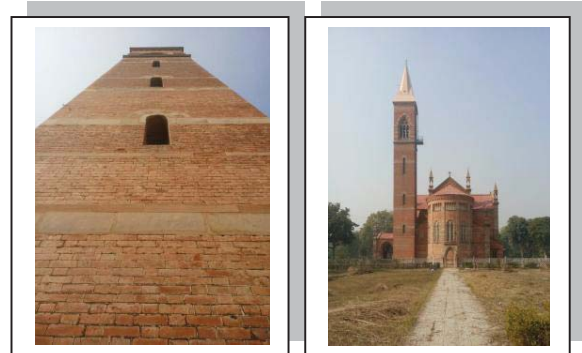
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"Mankind was never so happily inspired



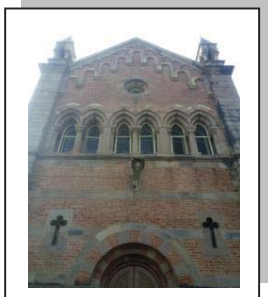
as when it made a cathedral" - RL Stevenson In the suburb of the city Kanpur, amid the military cantonment area where all the roads and structures are meticulously planned, the eye catches the attention of a massive estate preserving this red-bricked Romanesque-Gothic cathedral. One could see the beauty from the road itself, but once you enter the estate and move closer you'd only be more astonished. The entrance gate says "no entry" but the gate guard lets us enter after persuasion. We meet the Revered of the Cathedral, who had also been the caretaker of that Church

"twice my age". The wise old man engages us in small talk and even though the church could be visited only 4 days a month i.e., on Sundays for service for two hours. As per the Revered, it's for preservation and I agree. Louis Kahn said, "The sun never knew how beautiful it was until it hit the side of building "It was evening and the west setting sun hit the wheel-rose window perfectly allowing the stained glass to glow. The Red-bricked and stonewall complement the soothing sunlight. The steeple or the Church Tower stand out as if making a point.



The entire night we could only imagine how dazzling the interiors would be. The lush green gardens, shady tress, informal-natural pathway around the

campus and the central dominating structure. The serenity of the premises had overwhelmed us as it is. Next morning, we enter the church and boy, were we awestruck. As we walk down the aisle, we were amazed to notice every detail. The groin-vaulted ceiling, the semicircular arches, the club-shaped windows and much more. While we attend the service, our eyes were set on the apex of the building where the reverend was reading the prayers.

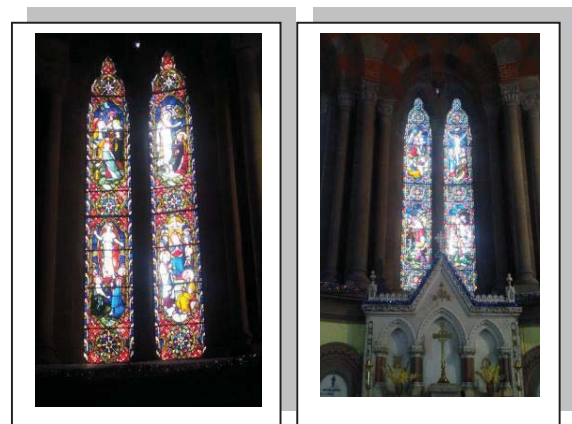


The ceiling of the apex had blue paint and silver shiny stars depicting the constellations. Well, it was the Big Dipper and the Orion. It was probably painted since this is a memorial chunk

for the English "sepoys" who died in the battle of 1857. The Siege of Kanpur. The Cathedral also has a series of memorial tablets around the altar, on the floor of the aisles, on the periphery walls, etc. Many generals and soldiers had been paid homage by engraving their names.



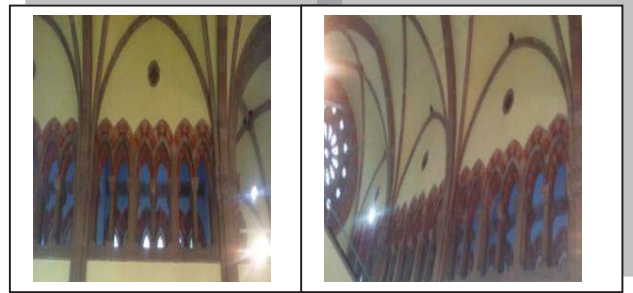
Below that was series from them perfectly. These paintings depicted times and special moments of Lord Jesus Christ's life.



The altar had wooden benches or pews for the choir and a dais for the speaker. The floor was white marbled except for the central path of the apse (from the aisle to the cross), which had a geometric design in coloured tiles.



Between every rectangular pier were two cylindrical columns. To be specific, Corinthian order-columns, which a smooth shaft and ornate capitals. These form an arcade dividing the aisles from the central nave. This showed the Romanesque influence. On the peripheral wall, between every column and pier was a club-shaped with a high sill level. This let in just about enough daylight to illuminate the room.

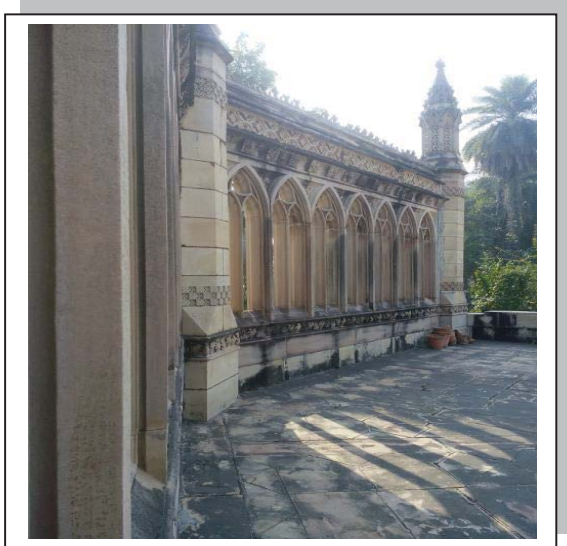


Above the arcade on the first floor, a series of 6 pointed arches are formed between every two piers overlooking the nave and the apse of the church showing us the Gothic influence.



Even through this Cathedral was built in 1875 by the Britishers, it strongly shows the influence of Gothic, Romanesque and English architecture. It was built by Walter Granville who also built the East Bengal railway and Indian museum, Kolkata. To the east of the church is gothic style memorial with an attractive garden around. Carved screens with floral motifs designed by Colonel Henry Yule surround a beautiful Angelic

female figure with crossed arms as a symbol of peace. This was designed by Marochetti. The screen and the statue stood originally at the Municipal gardens of the city but were restored and moved to the church state post independence. The entry to this memorial is through another intricately carved archway and a gate.



There are some spectacular structures in this country either built by Indians or by the stations that ruled us. Irrespective of this fact, people should have the sensitivity and sensibility to conserve them. If we really pay heed; the nature, the buildings, the context speak to us constantly. We just have to know how to

listen to them. Every built and un-built element of the world has a story to offer. A story that might tell us tales about our ancestors, culture, traditions, customs and also building materials and methods. Kanpur has many such structures of historic importance but the ignorance is killing them. Some are dilapidation, some are being torn down to cater to new services and some are abandoned. I hope the excerpt on one such precinct helps in enlightening the people of this city towards our rich patrimony and begin to respect and treasure many such edifices.

