INTRODUCTION

The architecture of the colonial period has not received much attention by historians of Modern India. Even historians of architecture have preferred to focus on pre-colonial buildings, and have by and large ignored the construction activity in the colonial period. This is a significant lacuna in the history of Modern India, particularly because the period did see large-scale building construction activity in India.

The architecture of a period reflects the contemporary political and social conditions. The colonial architecture was also expressive of the awe and power of British imperial rule in India. My research seeks to study the colonial architecture within its social and political milieu. In other words, it is concerned with enhancing our understanding of the social and political developments of the modern period through the study of its architecture.

My study begins with an attempt to disentangle the components that made colonial architecture. The purpose of building construction activity by the British was to strike awe and terror in the minds of Indian subjects. Equally the purpose was also to demonstrate the British might in a manner that could persuade the subject Indians to respect colonial
authority. In order to do that colonial architecture borrowed from both the European and Indian architectural traditions. Consequently, British architecture became an amalgam of European and Indian architectural styles. An effort has been made in my study to make a detailed survey of the monuments of Delhi constructed by the British and have examined their architectural inheritance and niceties. While doing so I shall also be studying the extent to which building construction activities relied on indigenous architectural techniques. Here I have examined the aesthetics of colonial architecture and the use of Indian and European concepts of beauty and grandeur in colonial architecture.

The other important problem that I have investigated is the nature of relationship between the Indian society and colonial architecture. In examining this problem, I have supplemented the fieldwork data with the evidence found in the contemporary sources. Here I have been concerned with an analysis of the symbolic and political role of colonial architecture in modern India. Building construction activity by the state invariably had three dimensions.

(A) Utilitarian Dimension

(B) Symbolic Dimension

(C) Political Dimension
While scholars of modern architecture have paid some attention to the first dimension, they have ignored the other two dimensions of building construction activities by the state. Of course, colonial building had a particular utility, but they were by no means purely utilitarian in nature. They had immense symbolic value as repositories of colonial glory.

In my study, I have studied the symbolic and political objectives of the British builders and architects in the construction activities. I have looked into the process of reception of the symbolic messages that the British conveyed through their architecture, by the different classes.