

# Walking Past The Vanishing Memoirs

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At one point in time the Mall road was ridden with the symbols of British supremacy, statues of notables during the British Raj were adorned in different nooks and corners of the Mall. Of these symbolic works of art, only two remain to narrate the history and the grandeur of the British Raj. One is the statue of Alfred Woolner which is found outside the old campus of the Punjab University. It is a bronze statue which adorns the sidewalk of a bustling road of the lower Mall. On it is an inscription which reads, "Alfred Woolner (1878-1936), a great and beloved leader." Alfred was the vice chancellor of the Punjab University from 1928 to 1936. The other is a bronze statue of Queen Victoria that was once placed in the pavilion of the assembly chambers. "Her majesty would stand there cradling the scepter and holding an orb, dressed in a long imperial gown, with a veil of hornito lace covering her face." The statue was removed from the pavilion and displayed in the Lahore museum in 1951. This information was provided to me by Sajjid Abbas who knows the historical events of Lahore as the back of his hand. He is a prolific journalist for the newspaper The Nation. He writes on the historical monuments of Lahore and other cultural events that take place in the city. He maintains that The queens statue was caste in 1900 in London by B MacKenna.

At the Lahore Museum one can see the statue of Queen Victoria placed besides the busts of her sons George V and George VI. But the statue of the queen itself is incomparable to these two busts in its grandeur, craftsmanship and majesty. Then Mister Abbas narrates that there was at one point also a full figure statue of King Edward the VII, riding a horse which used to be displayed near King Edward Medical College. He adds there were in total ten statues displayed on the Mall road of which the above mentioned two are the only displayed publically. The statue of Sir John Lawrence has an interesting and a controversial history behind it... The statue which was placed in a small garden near the Punjab High Court displayed a description which read "By which will ye be governed, by pen or by sword?" But the agitations in 1920s led to nationalists felling offended by the caption.

Sajjid Abbas narrates "The statues were removed because of political reasons as the all India National Congress and Islamic fundamentalists believed these statues to be emblem of the British power and were removed in 1951 after the independence." They were not regarded for the aesthetic value as today when the colonial rule is nothing but mere history. Lord John Lawrence's statue was stored in the Lahore Fort and later sent to India in exchange for a model of the Taj Mahal which is now displayed in the museum in the Lahore Fort.

Mister Abbas maintains that a statue of a seated Sir Ganga Ram, a prominent philanthropist and known as the engineer of Lahore used to be displayed outside the Lahore Museum. Mr Abbas adds "it was an exquisite and a rare piece of craftsmanship as it was not caste out of bronze, in fact it was carved out of bronze." It is said that the statue was dumped into the parking lot of National College of Arts, from there where it is

gone? Nobody knows. Mr Abbas recalls another statue of a prominent politician Lala Lajpat Rai, placed in front of what is now Nasir Bagh. Nobody knows where the statue went from there.

Another bust of Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia was placed in the Dyal Singh Library; he was the founder of the Dyal Singh College and Library and the one time owner of the Dyal Singh mansion.

All these statues were an emblem of the British supremacy but were removed during the political unrest of the bygone days. In my opinion they should have been preserved as they decorated the busy roads of the Mall with their superior craftsmanship and aesthetic appeal irrespective of their political connotations.