

Gulabi Bagh Gate Way (1655)

Baghbanpura, G. T. Road, Lahore, Pakistan.

Shahabuddin Mohammad Shahjahan's Period (1628-58)

Throughout the history of mankind, human beings have contributed to nature in general and landscape in particular. This is how, many landscape sites were created in various parts of the world including the 'Hanging Gardens' of Babylon, the Japanese gardens and Mughal gardens in the Sub-continent.

With the coming of the Mughals in the Sub-continent, an attractive synthesis of Persian and indigenous elements was gradually transformed into an original Indo-Muslim style popularly known as the Mughal School of art and architecture. Timurid and Safavid ideas of culture were strongly projected by them through refinements in painting and architectural features during 16th and 17th centuries.¹

Before Mughals, the concept of a garden in India was that of a grove of trees, free flowering rivulets of water and clusters of flowers. The Mughals instead organized each of the natural elements within a defined man-made framework of geometrical patterns, thus the trees planted at strategic points, the rivulets became rigid channels of water laid along the cardinal axis of the building punctuated by fountains at regular intervals and beds of flowers along flagged paths became decorative borders for the grass contained within square quadrangles.

This idea of Persian 'Chahar Bagh' tradition, planting the garden around the structure was homage by the later Mughals to the nature loving vision of their founding father **Babur**² (he constructed his first garden '*Bagh-e-Safa*' in the sub-continent at *Kallar Kahar* in 1519 and after it many others that have not survived today).³ Jahangir and Shahjahan both inherited from Babur a love of gardens and they embellished Lahore and the valley of Kashmir with formal gardens in the Persian, Chahar-bagh Paradise tradition, which their ancestor had introduced into India.⁴

Lahore was the nucleus around which gradual development occurred during the time of Ghoris, Slaves, Khiljis, Tughlaqs, Lodhis, Mughals and under British rule; this city remained capital for 192 years.⁵ With the appearance of the Mughals in the political arena especially in the field of garden history, the Mughal gardens of Lahore represent a prominent chapter of what is often called the Islamic garden tradition. With that the city of Lahore entered the front rank of Asian cities.⁶ The Lahore Fort and its garden palaces, *Jahangir's* mausoleum and *Nur-jahan's* tomb in garden surroundings and Shalimar Gardens constitute three monument examples of garden design, which recall the great patronage of Mughal emperors that transformed the spatial and cultural development of Lahore and thus the masterly hands of these versatile builders created places where nature and man appear to have linked themselves so beautifully together.⁷

Although other Mughal capitals at Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were also graced by gardens, but only Lahore came to be known as a '**City of Gardens**'. These Mughal gardens of Lahore were influenced by gardens of Central Asia (Timur built nearly nine gardens in Samarqand in the late 14th and 15th century, as the references are made in '*Zafar Nama*')⁸ Kashmir, Western Punjab, Persia and Delhi Sultanate for their pre-eminent expressions of

Islamic art, culture and values that also had a powerful impact on architectural history and design in many parts of the world. They represent an extraordinary synthesis of human concerns and integrate the finest features of natural and built environments with the beautiful traditions of local and regional landscape design. In the public garden, private garden for the emperor and *Zenana* garden commonly known as *Purdah* garden, they draw together human aspirations for worldly and spiritual order, merging the paradise-like potential of the world we live in with symbolic representations of the paradise that awaits the faithful in the world to come.⁹ This concept is based on a Quranic idea: it repeatedly asserts that heaven, the reward of the faithful is a garden and among the garden's specific details it mentions watercourses, fountains, greenery and flowers.¹⁰

The first of Mughal gardens in Lahore on the bank of river Ravi, was 'Baradari of Kamran Mirza', son of Babur, within the vicinity of this garden, there existed a number of other gardens, used as halting places before entering or leaving Lahore for north-west journeys to Kashmir.

Although gardens were constructed before and after the Mughal period, it was the gardens of the 17th century that had the most lasting imprint on the form and identity of Lahore.¹¹ Complexes of gardens towards the east of Lahore were used as halting places for journeys to and from Delhi. This great imperial route, the '**Great Trunk Road**' follows the old 'Royal Route' of the Mauryan Empire in 14th century B.C. It was restored and used by Mughals, again restored and completed by the British.¹² These eastward garden complexes include Shalamar gardens (1642), Anguri bagh, Inayat bagh and Mehtabi bagh (last three have disappeared), Gulabi Bagh, tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, Saruwala Maqbara and Buddhu Awa. It was one of the richest quarters of Lahore during the Mughal period and was called '**Mughalpura**'. It was here that the nobles and dignitaries of the court constructed their gardens with residential quarters and carried on their large business transactions.

The route from Shalamar garden to the Lahore Fort was a primary corridor of royal patronage and power in the Mughal period. The road passing through Sultanpura, Ghorey Shah, Begumpura and Baghbanpura was all lined with gardens built either by Mughal emperors or other regional rulers and nobility under them. It was also called a '**road of gardens**' in the Mughal days.¹³

Gardens synthesized the aesthetic and functional needs of society and provided a context for poetic, artistic and personal beauty and for social functions, spatial protocol and norms of social interaction. They influenced subsequent patterns of garden pattern design, as evidenced in gardens constructed by **Dara-Shikoh** (Mushki Mahal garden, Angoori bagh, Mehtabi bagh, Inayat bagh and Fatehgarh bagh) the **Sikh Hazuri Bagh**, the **Colonial Baghs** (Minto Park in 1850's, a Bagh behind Data darbar in 1856, Lawrence Garden in 1862, five miles long Circular Garden in 1885 and Ram Bagh was constructed in 1890) and **modern parks** (Race Course Park, Model Town Park, Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park and Jallo Park), of the past decades once again confirmed Lahore the 'City of Gardens'.¹⁴

This Indo-Iranian Muslim style of Architecture saw its perfection in 17th century during the reign of **Shahjahan**, the greatest builder the Sub-continent has ever seen, who was also

exceedingly fond of laying gardens. Under him Mughal architecture took on new aesthetic and entered its '**Classical Phase**' in which white marble was extensively used.

The architectural ideals were based on symmetry and uniformity of shapes. Compositions of bilateral symmetry on both sides of a central axis were now given preference over centralized schemes.¹⁵

Shahjahan's authors provide us with an architectural term for mould-type work 'Qalib Kari', this indicates that the original plaster version of this type of vault was produced by means of moulds.

Three dimensionally modeled and decorated with naturalistic plant motifs, destined to become archetypical for future architecture. Curved-up roof or vault and ornamental parapet were other characteristic elements of the new Shahjahan vocabulary.

The use of plant motifs marked a reversion of architectural decoration from the figurative extravaganza of the previous reign to artistic modes sanctioned by Islamic law, which became a matter of greater concern for Shahjahan. He even wanted to build a paradise on earth, surpassing the natural models. The flowery motifs were executed in painting, in sensuously carved relief-work in marble or stucco (Munabbat Kari) or in Pietradura (Parchin Kari) technique. This technique was made a craft peculiar to the stonecutters of India, while comparing it to 'Khatam bandi', the Iranian technique of inlays in wood. The painterly effects that could be obtained in Pietradura made it possible to replace the earlier conventional stone intarsia patterns with the now favored naturalistic motifs. Another invention in the interior decoration was the mosaic-pieces set in 'chuna' called "Ayina Kari". Use of Pentafoil and mulifoil arches was also an important element of Shahjahan's period.¹⁶

Shahjahan's new curvilinear and floral vocabulary, lent itself well to realization in cheaper, more easily workable materials such as brick rendered with plaster or stucco.¹⁷ Besides white marble, the architecture built by nobility also includes sandstone and brick structures. In this period the flat roofed set off by ornamental parapet was also popular. Great example of Shahjahan's architectural landscape is 'Shalamar Gardens' in this area of the city. Where the emperor led the way, the court was bound to follow; the members of imperial family and the great nobles of the court were in turn expected and encouraged in imperial projects.¹⁸ Asaf Khan, Ali Mardan Khan, Wazir Khan, Zebunnisa (Dai Anga), Sultan Baig and many other members of nobility and royal family not only sponsored but also designed the buildings, which appeared to have become a regular fashion at court.

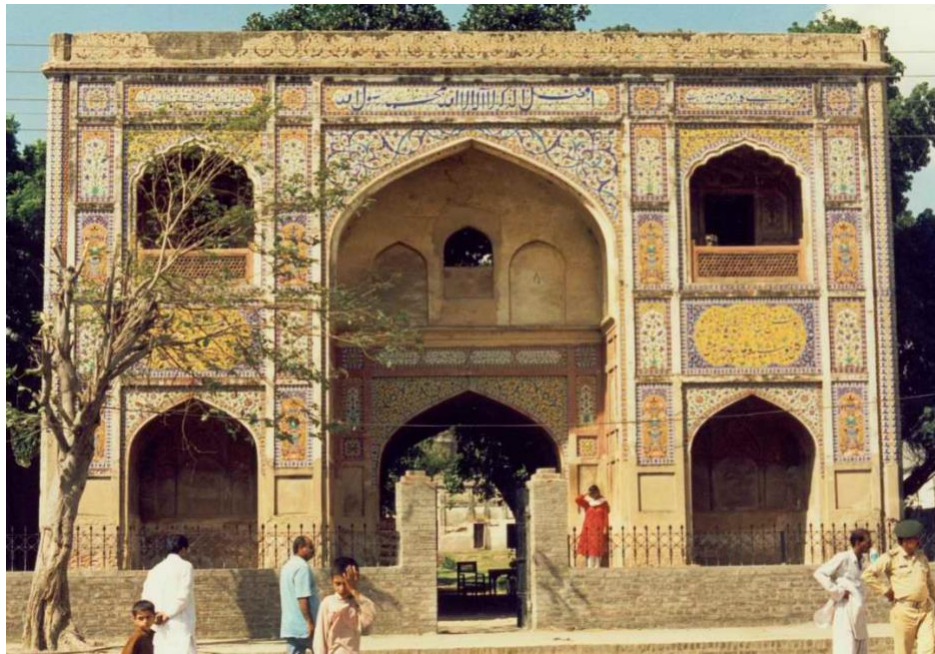
From no other Mughal period do we possess such detailed comments on architecture than in Shahjahan's reign that is not explained in literature.¹⁹

The similarities of the climate and materials of Pakistan and its western neighbors as well as their ethnological and frequent political associations, give the dry steppe and desert region of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan a common cultural identity. Thus the synthesis of Persian and environment of this region of Punjab has also shaped the particular architectural culture of Lahore. For all diversity and variety of its regional traditions, there is an affinity between the cultures.

The Muslim architecture in Sakkur, **Thatta** (Jami Mosque built by Shahjahan in 1647) in Sind and mausoleums in Multan can be ascribed to Persian influence. The glazed tile was a handiwork of the potters of *Hala*, a town still known for the art of ornamented pottery, near Hyderabad. Although the use of brick was not new to this region, the manner of its

employment in these buildings is certainly not indigenous. The pointed arches, the geometric and calligraphic motifs of surface decoration in glazed tiles or carved stone are all clearly an extension of contemporary Persian practice.²⁰ This use of glazed faience tiles, rare in Mughal buildings, was restricted to the Punjab and Sind.

Outside the mainstream of Mughal court architecture, 17th century Lahore present a distinctly independent local tradition, which derived its inspiration from Safavid Persia and Delhi. It is significant that only those buildings commissioned by lesser nobility or local lords and ladies have the provincial characteristic brick structures with glazed tile mosaics on the outer walls, known as ‘Kashi Kari’, a form of mosaic work: each piece of tile is small, of a single color, cut to a shape determined by the design and the pieces are stuck to the wall surface with cement. This reflects the proximity of the Punjab to the rival empire and incidentally reflects how much designs depended on local craftsmanship rather than on Emperor’s taste.²¹ There are numerous buildings in and around the Lahore city, all designed and built in the same manner, for instance, outer wall of Lahore Fort (represent a subject-matter of Hindu influence in the form of figural motifs) Wazir Khan and Dai Anga’s Mosques, Gulabi Bagh’s Gateway, Ali Mardan Khan and Dai Anga’s tombs, Chauburgi, Nawankot Gateway and a few areas of Shalamar Gardens come under this category. Those responsible for the designs of these structures were for the most part anonymous but it also reflects the fact that designs were generally not the product of individuals but of group working cooperatively. Contemporary accounts usually record the names only of the local officials appointed to manage the work force, who sometimes imported with ideas, architects from Persia.²²



Here we are concerned with the details of **Gulabi Bagh Gateway** in particular and its comparison with the buildings constructed in the reign of Shahjahan in general.

The Gulabi Bagh Gateway, one of the ornaments of Lahore city, an architectural monument of beauty and grace in true Persian style, showing the renaissance of the Muslim

architecture in this country at its very best, belongs to late Shahjahan period.²³ It is remarkable for the richness and freshness of its faience mosaics and for the beautiful calligraphy on the plaster support²⁴ that reminds us the greatest quantity and variety of tile design used in the Jami Mosque Thatta (1647) in particular and the whole school of tile work as developed in Sind in general. Unlike the Multan work where the tiles were sunk and raised alternately the Sind tile-work is throughout flat and the plain surfaces of brick-walls provide a field for the glazed tile-work.²⁵

According to the inscription on the gateway it was completed in 1066 A.H. or 1655 A.D. It is situated in Begumpura area on the G.T. road between Shalamar Gardens and University of Engineering and Technology Lahore. Present Begumpura and Baghbanpura area became a large necropolis in Mughal period and was called '**Mughalpura**' at that time. Gulabi Bagh complex also became an integral part of this necropolis when Dai Anga was buried in this garden. On the premises we have Tomb of Dai Anga towards the north, further-north Saruwala Maqbara, towards north-west Hadrat Eishai's tomb, in the west U.E.T., in the south and south-western sides include many tombs including that of Budho's Awa, Ali Mardan Khan and Bahadur Khan and farther towards the East is the Shalimar Garden, along the G.T. road or the previous 'Grand Trunk Road'.

The building along with whole complex comes under the offices of the Archeological department, however, these days it seems that the F.W.O. department has taken over the complex.

Brief History:

Gulabi Bagh Gateway was an entrance to a 'Rose Garden' that was based on typical 'Chahar bagh' Mughal concept of gardens, although on a lower scale as compared to Shalamar Gardens. Historians believe that this garden was a large one and at four corners there were beautiful gateways. Besides, there were pavilions, arches, paved floors, a 'Baradari' in the middle with a couple of wells for irrigation purposes and for fountains. These structures and the wells existed until 1900²⁶ but none of these exist except this gateway on the G.T. road.²⁷ A little way inside the gateway is the tomb of Dai Anga (wife of Murad Khan, a Mughal Magistrate of Bikaner), who appears to have died in 1082 A.H. / 1671 A.D.

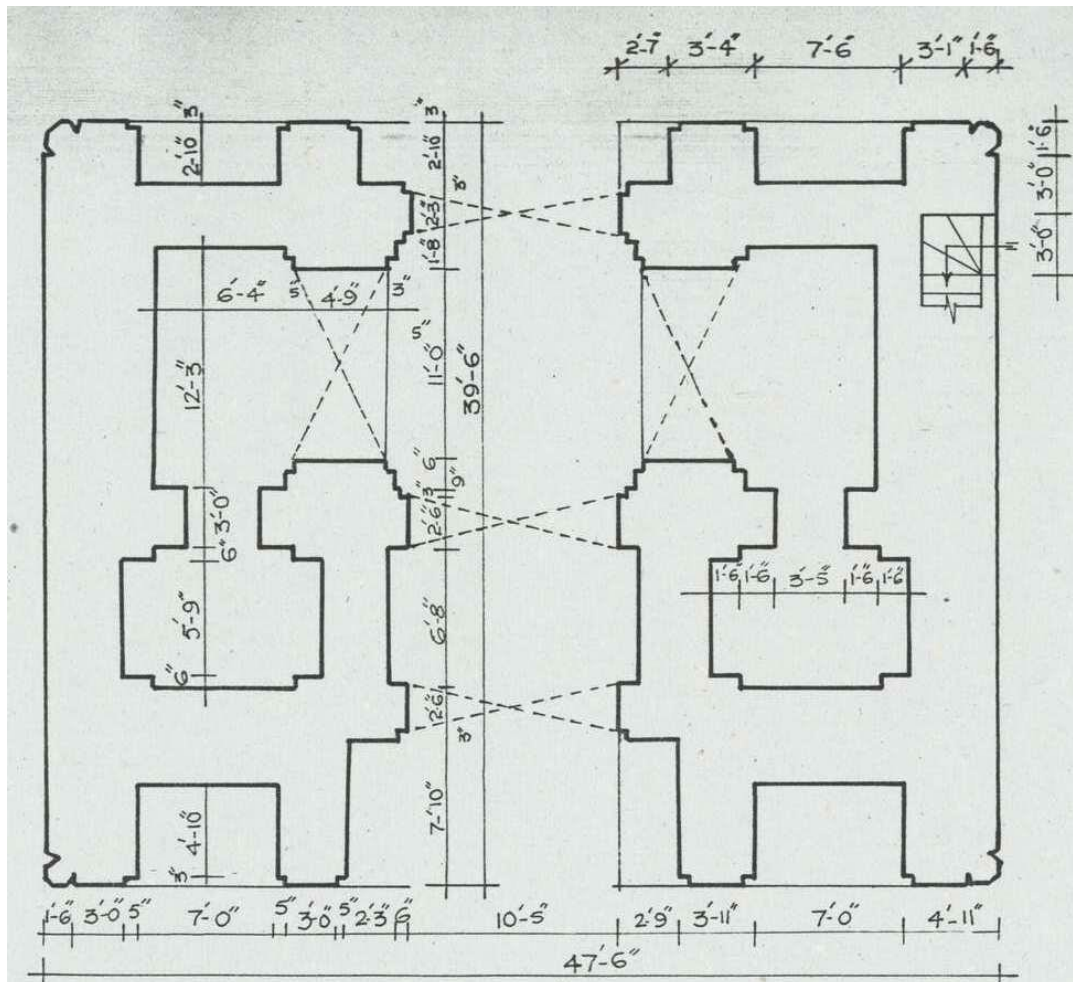
The garden belonged to **Mirza Sultan Baig**, who according to Syed Mohammad Latif, was the cousin of Mirza Ghiasuddin, a nobleman of Persia and husband of Sultan Begum, the daughter of Shahjahan.²⁸ Prof. Masudul Hassan claims that Shahjahan had no daughter by the name of Sultan Begum; in fact, Sultan Begum was the daughter of Dai Anga, the wet nurse of Shahjahan, so Ghiasuddin was the son-in-law of Dai Anga and not that of Shahjahan.²⁹ It can be established, however, that Mirza Sultan Baig was an important courtier and came to India from Persia in 1059 A.H. / 1649 A.D. Shahjahan had appointed him as a commandant of Artillery, Admiral of the Fleet 'Amir-ul-Bahar'. He constructed this garden in 1066 A.H. / 1655 A.D. During a hunting excursion to Hiran Minar, he died from the accidental busting of an English rifle, a royal gift, Shahjahan presented to him, two months before his death. Maulvi Nur Ahmed, author of 'Tahqiqat-I-Chishti', gives

1068 A.H. / 1657 A.D. as the date of his death, ³⁰two years after the construction of this garden.

Architectural Scheme:

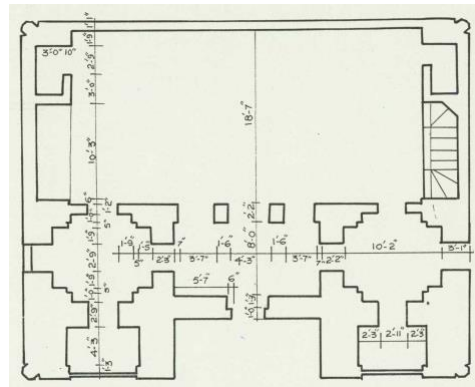
The gateway is exquisitely refined example of the form of garden gateway typical of the Lahore city.

The plan of the building is neither square nor the proportionate rectangle. The ground floor has a central ‘foyer’ that runs through it on its N-S axis. The approach to this passage is through a smaller archway, which is housed in a larger arch in the usual Mughal style. The smaller arched opening rises up to the first storey level. The archway acts as a transition space; actually, the space between the first two arches is spaced so the doors could be opened within it and the doors when ajar, spanned between the two arches.



Ground Floor Plan of the Building

Inside the gateway on both sides of the passage are four chambers on elevated platforms of 2'.6'' high that have no steps. Two bigger chambers give access to two smaller ones; their interior is very dark because of the lack of windows. The bigger bay is almost a square with a concave roof, however there is no dome.



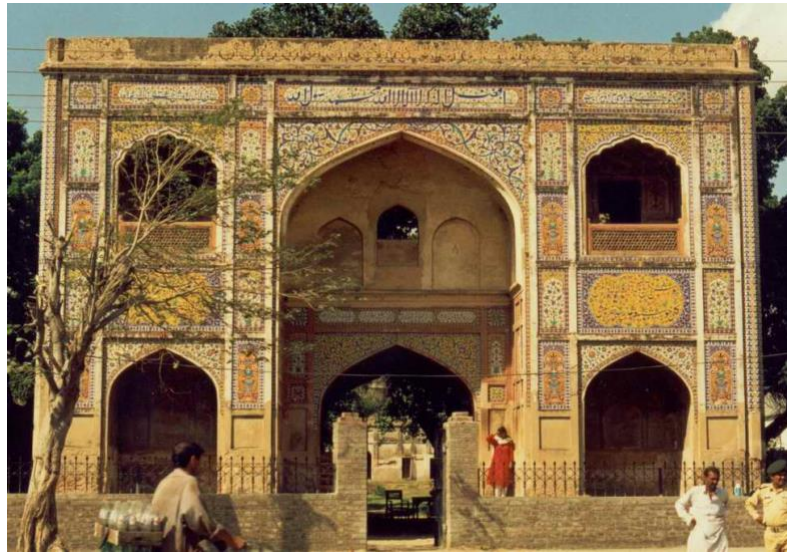
Terrace of the First Floor.

First Floor Plan of the Building.

The first floor is reached from the outside by a staircase on the Eastern side of the building; there was a staircase on the Western side as well, which is no more accessible from the ground floor but its traces are visible, however, from the first floor. This floor is completely different from the ground floor in plan. It is divided in two main parts, one is the open terrace that is flanked by a small room on both East and West sides, and other is the covered constructed portion consisted of three rooms. The central room is bigger than the two side ones. There are three arched openings to the central room, central one being bigger than the two side ones and the southern wall of this room has a recessed 'Jharoka' overlooking the G.T. road. The two side rooms have simple Lintel openings; have a 'Jhakora' each in their external walls towards East and West and their Southern walls open into a balcony. The Octagonal Pilasters terminate abruptly at the Parapet level.

Elevation:

Gulabi bagh Gateway is a double storeyed structure with lower storey double in height than the upper one. The main façade, **The South Elevation** of this structure is its most remarkable feature. It is divided into three bays, delineated by a grid of rectangular lines. In the two side bays, the double storey is expressed by the two pairs of arched windows, arranged one above the other;



on the upper stage, two beautiful balconies are made with 'Multifoiled' arches and 'Jali' and on the lower, another two deeply recessed niches are placed that have the 'Qalib Kari'.³¹ Whereas the central bay in which high half domed central arch rising two storeys; behind which the arched entrance is placed in a deep recess. Above this small arched entrance, two bigger niches flank the arched 'Jharoka'. The angles of the building are marked by slender 'Octagonal Pilasters', which are believed to have terminated in solid cupolas like the ones in the Wazir Khan Mosque.

The North Elevation is marked by a central arch, flanked by similar multifoiled recessed niches; all are not as deeply recessed as the Southern ones. The Eastern and Western Elevations are severely built void of any opening on the ground floor; however, at first floor height there is a 'Jharoka' in each wall.



Ceiling:



Ceiling with sides curving.

Concave form of the foyer.

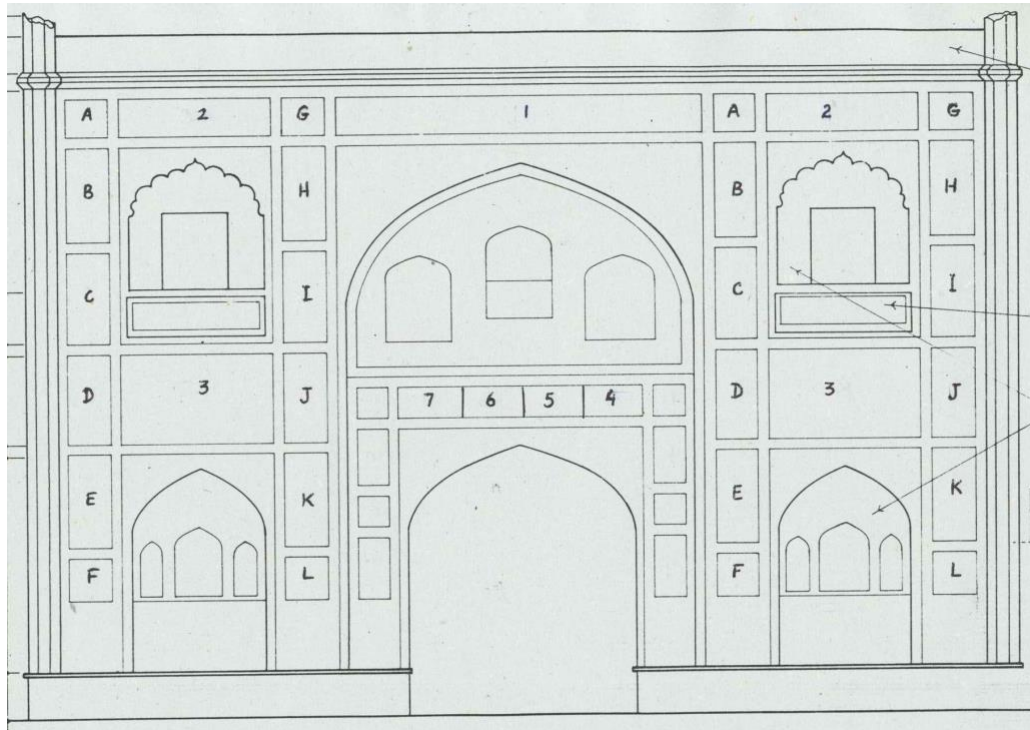
The ceiling of the central bay of the entrance foyer is concave from inside but in fact the roof is flat and not domical. The rest of the structure has flat ceiling with sides curving in so as to avoid sharp edges, typical of Mughal buildings. This has been achieved by laying the bricks in specific manner and finally mud mortar and lime plaster was used to give the fine finish.

Material:

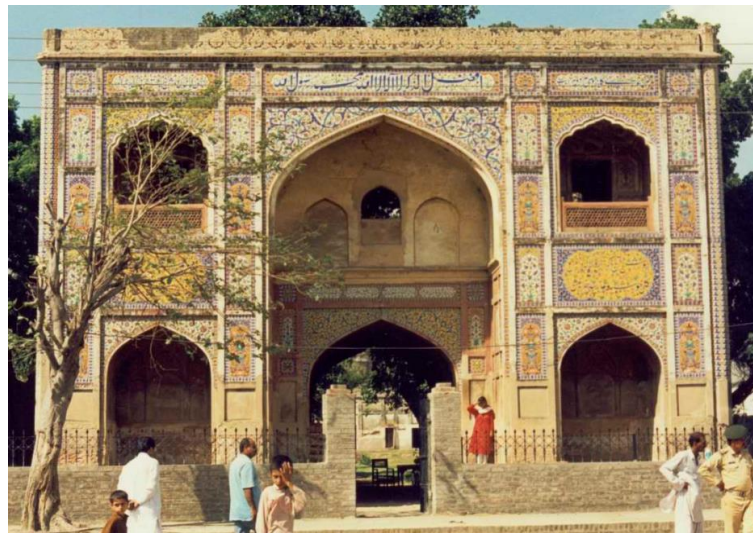
The durability of a building is more important than any other aspect. The material used in this building is no doubt less expensive, but in excellence of quality it does not fall short of other royal construction. Here, alluvial soil brick with concrete lime cement has been used. The composition of the concrete lime cement is of concrete, lime, 'Daal Mash' and jute reinforcement. In some instances timber has also been used for example in staircases.

The exterior of the building is decorated with mosaics, having the capacity to endure external atmospheric changes, which still looks fresh even though more than three centuries have elapsed. These earthen tiles of an artificial base body are made of siliceous sand and lime held together with rice-water. Then they are cut into pieces following the lines of the design and embedded in lime mortar.³²

Aesthetic Appreciation of Embellishment:



Division of panels in the façade.



The Gateway is picturesque and remarkable for the profusion and excellence of its rich enameled fresco on interior walls, vivid mosaic tile work and superb calligraphy on plaster base of the outer walls; a good example of the achievement of the Lahori tile-workers of the mid 17th century.³³ Despite the passage of three centuries, the color pattern in mosaic tile and the inscriptions on the entrance gate still appear to be fresh. The patterns, very characteristic of the Mughal period, are predominantly floral. The most prominent flower painted for the interiors is the red rose, which justifies the name ‘Gulabi bagh’.

This building presents a fine composition from every angle as far as harmony, contrast, balance and focal point are concerned. The intricate ornamentation of the façade is subordinated to its structure by being tactfully controlled. The entire wall surface is divided up into panels of floral decorations and geometric patterned bands, accommodating variety of decorations in vivid mosaic work. Brilliantly colored floral spandrels of the arches, invite everyone to enter the building.

Color (sharp contrasts, harmonizing scheme and its symbolic representation) and **subject matter** (calligraphy, geometric patterns and floral forms) that cover greater spaces of the building, giving the allusion of Paradise garden, executed in ‘Fresco’ in the interiors and in mosaic-tile work in the exterior), **material** and **technique** are the major factors in revealing the beauty of the place.

Color:

In this building, the vital element for the execution of a design is color that creates a striking change in the atmosphere, pleasing eye and mind simultaneously. Properties of color like hue, intensity and value play a greater role in retaining the dignity of the place.

Contrast of the colors and closely resembling colors bring about balance and unity in the building. Closely related colors are green, greenish-blue and blue, other group is blue, reddish-blue and red. Whereas red, orange and yellow is another group of closely related colors.

Insertion of calligraphic bands mostly in blue and white colors, relating to the subject matter, clearly differentiates them from that of other decorations. Here Qalib Kari pattern is transformed into elongated panels in dull rust, dull maroon and ochre colors, creating rhythmic harmony.

Façade of the building, covered with analogous color scheme, i.e. green, bright blue and yellow, create lively and fresh surrounding and its background in dull rust; resembling earth color, creates a wonderful harmony with brilliantly colored mosaic patterns. Opposite colors have a direct appeal and become stronger when applied against a background used in combination; repetition of these colors at proper intervals and continuous pattern in the whole structure creates harmony in such a contrast. The spandrels of the arches are depicted in blue, bright yellow and multicolored motifs upon yellow and white surfaces, creating sharp contrast but repetition of such patterns again help to retain the harmony in contrast. Two panels, no.3, in the right and left bay of the facade in bright yellow depicting Persian inscriptions in bright blue create prominent variation in color and subject matter, making the panels more attractive and center of focus.

Neutral colors like white, black, gray and their mixtures in smaller quantities of other hues serve to harmonize and balance the color schemes. In bright surroundings their application pour a feeling of relaxation and somewhere their presence is essential to project the importance of subject matter i.e., in spandrels of the arches, magnificent carpet-like pattern in bright colors has been harmonizes with a white background to produce a pleasant effect and to project the beauty of the design. Floral bouquets in vases and floral plants in bright colors are also depicted mostly upon white.

Application of small amount of brighter and greater amount of neutral or dull colors makes the composition more acceptable. Bright Yellow is applied in lesser amount, whereas white and dull colors occupy the greatest areas to bring the design in focus. Here the mud-colored walls occupy the greatest portions; the bands and panels in white and yellow cover

comparatively less space, whereas the colorful designs upon it are protruding with great force, though applied in small quantity.

White is a symbol of purity, simplicity and cleanliness; so the calligraphy is depicted mostly upon white to create sacred atmosphere. **Yellow** is the symbol of light, radiance and cheerfulness, which has been applied mostly as background of calligraphic and vegetal panels and in the spandrels of arches. With yellow ground and blue letters, panels intensify the words with their meanings and pride of the important part of the building. **Red** has a power to excite and it evokes less spirituality; it has been used in flowers and geometric patterns in small quantities. **Green** is a symbol of life and growth and has the qualities of both blue and yellow; applied in various portions in countless shades and in leaves of various shapes. **Blue** symbolizes peace and relaxation; its presence in greater quantity is very sensible. Blue has a pleasant impression, balancing the other colors and when applied with yellow and white, affects the senses differently.

Subject-matter:

Subject matter displayed in this beautiful building is of much interest for the students of decorative art. The rectangular façade of the building has been divided into the simplest forms of geometry i. e. squares, triangles and semi-circles.

Abstract shapes emerge when realistic forms are exaggerated; devoid of geometric exactness and their broken rhythms create endless qualities of decoration. This kind of decoration appears in the form of Qalib Kari, Tazak Kari, chevron pattern, mosaic pattern, amulet pattern and latticework.

During the reign of Shahjahan; Mughal ruler's love for floral and vegetal motifs was utilized for decorating the buildings. As he wished to project the image of Jahangir's miniatures through his buildings in any possible way that also encouraged the elites and nobility to embellish their buildings like-wise.³⁴

Nature in this building, is a primary source of inspiration and the study of natural forms with their colors and designs: abstract and symbolic representation widens the range of floral decoration; climbers and creepers, flowering shrubs, separate flowers, bouquet of flowers, flowers in abstract, geometric and conventionalized forms and structural flora. The flowers depicted are; roses, lilies, zinnia, poppies, irises and carnations. All leaves and flowers are shown emerging from a central point and spreading out in various directions. The arrangement of plants is usually in a row, without overlapping. Some flowers are in one color; some combine contrasting hues whereas others show a wide range.



Flask-like container.



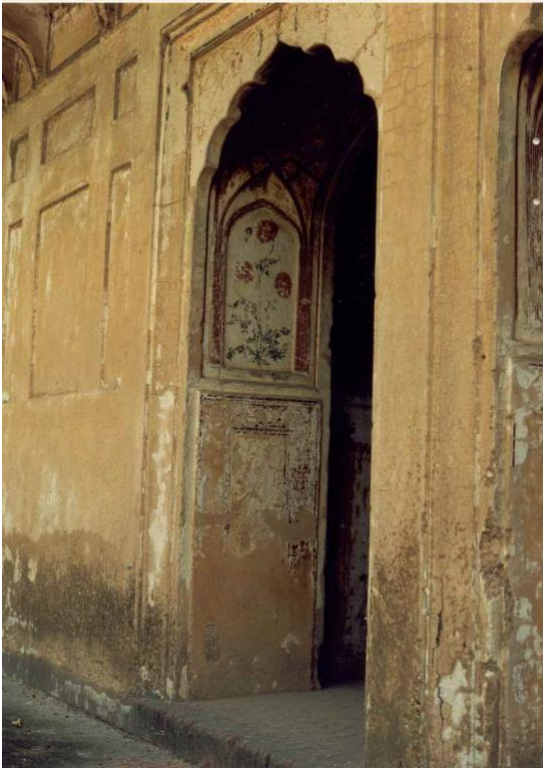
Rib-patterned saucer and a jar.

Flowers are also placed in **flask-like container**, balanced by a growth of identical plants on its both halves. It is a Chinese motif in Persian style. We can see these arrangements in panels C, E, I and K in the right and left bays, on a bright yellow background. These magnificent containers, all identical, in blue and white-striped design are placed on a flat brown saucer that has a stand underneath. They are arranged in variety of flowers that create a heavenly setting in the whole surrounding. In each case, the vase or plant has been balanced with the addition of two smaller plants, grasses and flowers on both sides. Another type of **rib-patterned saucer** that also has a stand underneath is supporting a different kind of flask-like vase; painted in fresco, inside of a ground floor chamber.

Stylization of flora is according to the availability of space. Usually spandrels of arches bear floral scrolls spreading upon light ground in sharp contrast with a variety of colorful flowers on it that unfold in various directions as the continuous stem of plant splits up regularly, giving rise to secondary shoots and leaves. Some flowers and leaves are conventionalized to create balance in the panel as one can see in the spandrels of the main arch.

Different kinds of flowers are sometimes beautifully arranged in a single vase. Either one plant bears various flowers in different colors or petals of the same flower are in various opposite colors. Although the plants are botanically not correct as far as their color and arrangement is concerned but still are recognizable because of their characteristics. Geometric patterns of the flowers usually form the borders of various panels and spandrels.

Room at the first floor:



Pentafoil Arch with miniature Qalibkari and Fresco painting, Northern opening of the central room, 1st Floor.



Fresco painting in Rose them, central room, First floor



Fresco painting in the corner, Recessed panels, Muqarnas and Qalibkari.

The cream-colored, plastered eastern arched wall of this room has been completely covered with ‘fresco’ of red rose flowering plant, painted in free-hand style in which flowers are shown from all angles. Small foliage and buds at the top of the branches display more natural growth that makes this part of the room livelier and quite different from the rest. With the lapse of time the decorations unfortunately have lost their original freshness as compared to the façade decorations. In this room ‘Qalib kari’ pattern exhibit interesting stylized floral patterns of roses.

The garden was known for its superb kind of roses; thus the wall paintings of this room justify the name ‘Gulabi Bagh’.

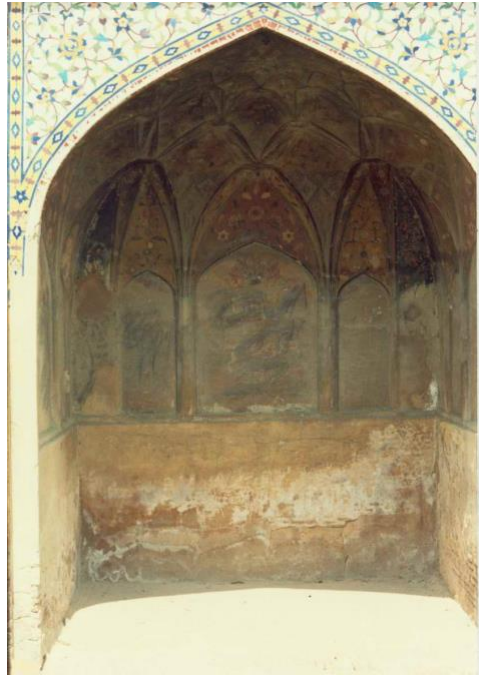
Symmetrical Balance:

In the Façade, rectangular and square panels and elongated bands reveal their decoration individually without being mixed with surroundings because of their definite outlines. Panels have been arranged in three vertical rows, in left and right bays, for the sake of balance. Of these the middle row is wider, to accommodate two arched balconies and a wide horizontal panel in between them. This central larger panel depicts a Persian inscription, in order to achieve symmetrical balance and definite position. Decorative panels have been balanced by equally distributing grasses, floral plants on the sides to create symmetry. The colorful spandrels of the arches make the panels more stable, projecting the design forcefully. The uniformity has also been achieved by placing calligraphic panels (in blue and white) and floral panels (in warm colors) alternatively. Panels in the lower part of the building is devoid of any decoration as the middle part has widest and broadest panels and by reaching to the top, panels become very narrow in height thus the field of force has been successfully applied to retain the interest of the visitors during their visual journey.

The effect has been emphasized in the center of the façade by means of interesting group of panels and bands, framing the central archway and it leads one gradually and unconsciously to the center of gravity.

Qalib-kari, a geometric pattern of the ceiling of lower recesses merges into three arches. At the level where the arches and Qalib Kari pattern starts spreading beautifully upon the plastered surface of the rounded corners, in the ceilings of the lower niches of right and left bays and the ceiling of the central room on first floor. Every section is filled with different colors and variation of miniature floral motifs, making a beautiful network of color and design in rounded wall ceilings.

The upper half of the rounded walls near ceiling, bear Qalib Kari decorations diverges downwards to join elongated arched panels.

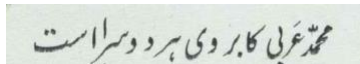


Calligraphy:

Two types of inscriptions used are **Arabic** and **Persian** and the whole calligraphy is done in ‘Nasta’liq’ style. Two large panels, no. 3 in the right bay of the building and no. 3 in the left bay are inscribed in blue on a yellow background as the rest of the inscribed panels are done in blue writing on a white background. The empty spaces in all these inscribed panels have miniature floral decorations, separate twigs or shoots of a plant.

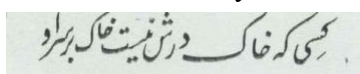
1) Above the main arch and below the cornice in panel 1, following an undulating and rehearsing floral frieze is inscribed with ‘*Kalima Tayyaba*’. This one is the only Arabic panel of the building, rest of the inscribed panels are all in Persian. This panel of unusual size and shape is also the **focal point** of the whole building. It seems that all lines strive to emphasize this part where a common message for mankind, makes it very important in the whole façade.

2) In panel 2 of the right bay, nearly half the length of the one bearing the Kalima, has the following first hemistich:



Muhammad (PBUH), of Arabia is the honor of both worlds.

Exactly opposite, the panel 2 of the left bay bears the second hemistich of the couplet.



He who is not the dust of his threshold, let dust be upon his head.

3) The panel 3 of the right bay has the following couplet:



What a pleasant garden, a garden so beautiful that the Poppy is marked with the spot of envy, the flowers of the Sun and the Moon are fitted to adorn it as lamps.³⁵

4) In the opposite side, in panel 3 of the left bay, is inscribed the following couplet:



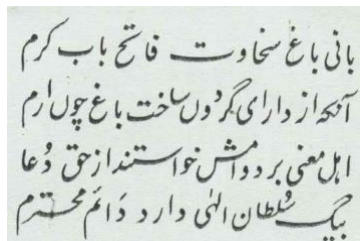
Ghazi asked of wisdom of the chronogram of the garden. The date given was Gulabi Bagh. This stanza has confirmed the name of the place, serves as to giving the chronogram. The numerical values of the letters expressing the date when the building was constructed and the garden was laid out:

$$=20, \quad =30, \quad =1, \quad =2, \quad =10, \quad =2, \quad =1, \quad =1000.$$

$$20+30+1+2+10+2+1+1000 = 1066 \text{ A.H. (year of construction)}$$

This is an excellent example where the name of the building deciphers the year of its construction and describes the kind of the garden.³⁶ The answer is not direct but in code. So every inscription and other decoration hide some meanings behind it.

5) Inside the main arch and above the smaller arch, there is another inscription comprising a 'Rubai'. Each of its hemistich is written in panels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Starting from the right panel, the four hemistiches are:

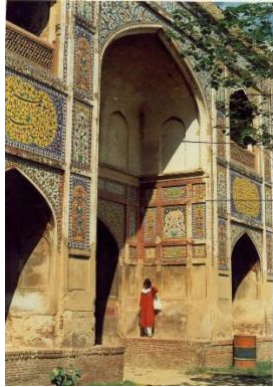


The founder of this generous garden and the opener of the gate of liberty, Is he who Lord O the firmament built a garden similar to the garden of paradise, the pious thus prayed to God as they had the right to pray; May Sultan Baig live an honorable life forever and ever. Thus this 'Rubai' confirms the builder of the building.

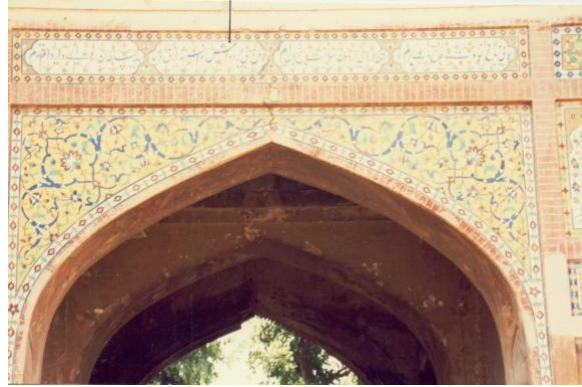
Architectural Features:

Three-dimensional decorations in a variety of forms add to the beauty of each and every architectural unit reflecting the spirit of the period.

Arches & Niches:



Variety of Arches in the main façade.



Three Arches in the entrance façade.

Arches and arched panels are the major elements of the architectural decorations of the building. Arches on the ground floor are four centered, however, on the first floor there is a variety of arches. The arches of the balconies, facing the G.T. road are 'Heptafoil' in the Shahjahani style and the openings of the central room are 'Pentafoil'. Half domed arches with 'Qalib Kari' flank the lower part of the big entrance arch. The walls of the building bear many niches; the bigger ones are on the front façade and flank the central Jharoka at first storey height. These niches break the monotony of plain wall or employed for surface decoration too. Squinch arches have also been constructed inside the entrance in ground floor.

Jharokas or balconies:

All the three rooms on the first floor have Jharokas in their walls. These Jharokas also arched in the same four-centered style, not only beautify the building but are also the source of cross ventilation and sunlight in the upper floor.



The Detail of balcony, on the right bay of the main façade.

Brackets:

On the first floor there is a 'Chhajjah' with beautiful pairs of brackets on the North that runs along the length of the structure. The brackets done in brickwork, delicately treated with carvings at their ends, generally correspond with the rectangular recessed panels on the wall. The square spaces between these pairs of brackets are plain but they were once decorated with various colored designs.



Brackets on the 1st floor.

Jali or latticework:

Latticework of perforated Jali, in red sandstone decorates the building in two places, in front of the two balconies in the first floor facing the G.T. road. This Jali has geometric pattern in the form of cornered stars, octagons and diamond shapes and light filters through them beautifully.



Jali or latticework in front of a balcony, main façade of the building.

Octagonal Pilasters:

They are technically carved pilasters, four in number, marking four corners of the building. **Chevron** pattern is applied on these attached columns in yellow, blue and white mosaic tiles.

Octagonal Pilasters with chevron ornamentation.



Parapet:

The upper edge of the whole building structure is marked by a parapet, which presents the same continuous motif of the 'Madakhal Pattern' that has been used in many contemporary buildings. This motif of the parapet forms an inseparable band linking various parts, providing visual continuity.



Parapet Design.

Present Condition:

Today only fragments of the original Gulabi Bagh remains. The garden is almost gone, the gateway itself is in a deplorable condition and only the front façade is in better state with its fresco, mosaic and calligraphy, which are still fresh and intact. North and side elevations do not possess any decoration and crave attention.

Interior of the building is even worse; the plaster has come off, bricks are exposed and whatever remains of the wall paintings is coated with dirt and cobwebs. The smoke due to the fire lighted by the drug addicts blackens the corners of all rooms.

The staircase on the West does not exist anymore and the Eastern one is following the same course as the part leading to the rooftop is almost gone with only timber logs left to serve as the steps.

The four slender Octagonal pilasters marking the four corners of the building are missing their cupolas and terminate at the parapet level.

Analysis:

- The gateway is symmetrical along the N-S axis and is also an example of abstract symmetry as the North and South facades, though not identical, give the impression of being similar. In fact the arches of North elevation are less recessed than the arches of South elevation.
- The gateway does not exhibit any sound proportions in plan, as the builder was not conscious of this phenomenon. The plan is neither a perfect square nor the proportionate rectangle. A very odd proportion of 4:5 has been established between the length and breadth of the building.
- The rectangular panels in the façade are in proportion; generally the ratio of 1:2 has been adopted in the elevation.
- The height of the main big arch is twice that of the entrance arch.
- The ‘Centric System’ has been followed in the concave brick-construction of the ceiling of ‘foyer’, which was rather popular in the Hindu temples, although it was not successful as we compare it to Corbelled arch formation.³⁷
- In the field of decorative arts the influence of Iran remains dominant.
- This building is a continuation of the brick and tile tradition of Punjab, as witnessed at Thatta and Multan with certain amount of Safavid influence.
- Sultan Baig selected this location because, it was most prestigious area of the elites at that time and appropriate for constructing a garden.
- Concept of a ‘Paradise’ garden is predominant as among other various flowers; certain kinds have also been painted, which were rare in Punjab. This flower decoration, a direct Persian style is associated with Chinese character.
- All floral patterns have a sense of elaborately weaved carpets, splendid patterns on curtains, wall hangings, embroidered cushions.
- All the elements of design are distributed appropriately throughout the building having balance and proportion, revealing the fact that there is a deep relation of structure and ornamentations of the unit.

Comparison:

New styles of construction and decoration evolved, retaining the identity and originality of the basic spirit of decoration of a definite region and religion as far as their colors, techniques, material, designs and subject matter are concerned.

The buildings erected during the reign of Shahjahan exhibit a unity of plan and decoration, which was maintained past the middle of the 17th century. Similarities in the plans of gateways and in tile decoration are the two most salient features of that unity and harmony. In tile decoration, the mosque of Wazir Khan (1634), mosque of Dai Anga (1635), the façade of the Lahore Fort (1630-40), the mausoleum of Asif Jah (1657), the mausoleum of Dai Anga (1667), the mausoleum of Ali Mardan Khan (1657), entrance gateway of Chauburji (1646) and entrance Gateway of Nawan Kot built by Zaibun Nissa (1669) all exhibit a very similar style.

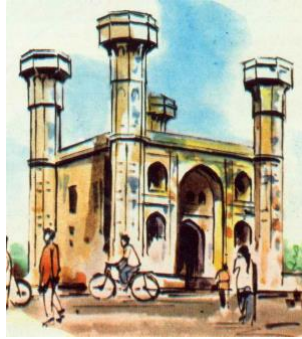
All these monuments were built in Lahore within a span of less than 40 years and their tile work represents the most popular mode of that time.

Chauburji

Nawan Kot

Chauburji:

The most important and obvious comparison can be established between Gulabi Bagh Chauburji, Mosque Wazir Khan and the Nawan Kot gateway. Like Nawan Kot gateway and Chauburji, Gulabi Bagh is also a gateway to a garden. In its general appearance it is similar to Chauburji but lacks the corner minarets. The building of Chauburji is also bigger than the Gulabi Bagh and the plans are also different in their character.



Wazir Khan mosque:



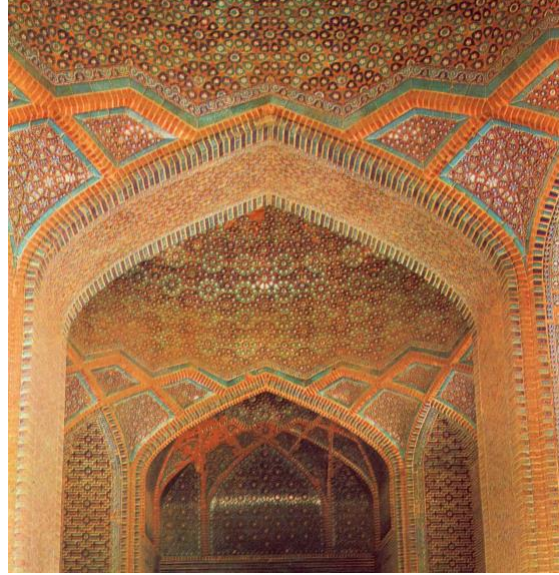
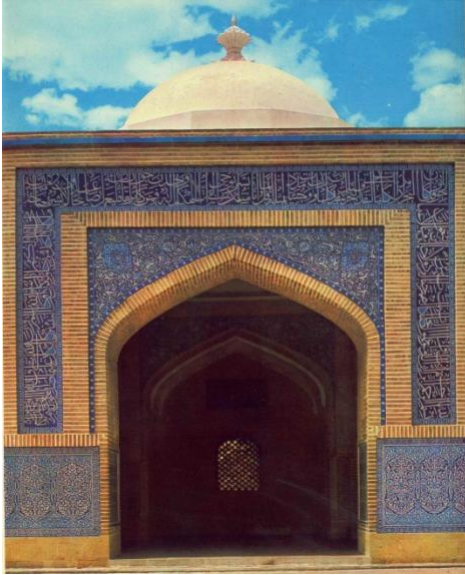
Octagonal pilasters, Gulabi Bagh.

Octagonal pilasters, Masjid Wazir Khan.

The decorative character of the Gulabi Bagh gateway is very similar to that of Wazir Khan Mosque as the decorative rectangular panels are executed in the same manner. In Gulabi Bagh, the octagonal pilasters elegantly decorated with Chevron ornamentation in yellow, blue and white colors are just like those of the Mosque. The decoration in the spandrels of arches appear to be exact copy of the Mosque and above the main arch the 'Kalima' is inscribed, which again recalls the gateway of the Mosque.



Similar Kalima inscription, jharoka, cornice and mosaic tile work in masjid Wazir Khan and Gulabi Bagh.



Exterior & Interior of Jami Masjid, Thatta, built by Shahjehan in 1647.



Shirdan Madrassa, Samarqand, 17th Century.

In central Asia, practice of covering building with colored tiles became more than mere decoration, to emphasize and enhance architectural elements.

These Mughal sites in Punjab were extensively damaged during the Sikh period. The situation in the Colonial era was no better but after the 'Partition' of the Indo-Pakistan in 1947, the huge influx of refugees from India encroached upon whatever open spaces were available within the urban limits of Lahore and added to the deteriorating condition of these sites. Later construction works by these encroachers blocked many desirable views of whatever little exists. Gulabi Bagh, Saruwala Maqbara, tomb of Dai Anga and tomb of Ali Mardan Khan are the best examples to show the havoc played upon this treasure by the encroachers.³⁸

Proposed Historical Hypotheses:

In order to determine the characteristics of the building, it is also important to know the actual status of *Ghias-uddin*, who was a cousin to **Sultan Baig**, the builder.

Some historians believe that Ghias-uddin was Sultan Begum's husband and Shahjahans's son-in-law. Others, however, bring 'Shajahaj-nama' as a proof that the list of Shah's daughters does not include Sultan Begum and therefore Ghias-uddin could not be Shahjahan's son-in-law.³⁹ It is likely that he was son-in-law of Dai Anga, the wet-nurse of Shahjahan, and therefore Sultan Begum was her daughter.

Sultan Baig died accidentally in 1657, two years after the completion of the garden in 1655. This man came from Persia, a few years ago on an invitation by Shahjahan and was appointed as 'Amir-ul-Behr'. In Indian Sub-continent a tradition was followed that kings and nobles were buried in monuments surrounded by open yards or gardens built by

themselves in their own life time. (Jahangir was buried in '*Dil-Kusha*', a garden built by his wife and Ali Mardan Khan was also buried in a garden, constructed by him). Then why was Sultan Baig not buried in his own garden? Another question arises that some years after his death, in 1671, what was the status of Dai Anga's and her daughter Sultan Begum's tombs, built in the premises of this garden? It points towards the fact that Ghias-uddin inherited the whole property of his cousin and because of this relationship his wife and mother-in-law were buried here. On the other hand, if Sultan Begum had been Shahjahan's daughter, why should she have been dependent for her burial on this place only?

Historians confirm the fact that this garden was consisted of four gateways, central 'Baradari' and two wells in the tradition of 'Chahar bagh'.⁴⁰ Dai Anga's tomb in this garden further provides us the proof of its extensiveness that once existed. Though Sultan Baig built this structure to the best of his resources but if was related to Shahjahan, he could have built a bricked wall around this garden to secure its original form like Shalamar gardens. The status of this man does not match even with Wazir Khan, Shahjahan's Viceroy, who enjoyed better access to resources and built a grand mosque in 1634 that still retains its grandeur. It was because of this fact that Wazir Khan owned the shops and buildings surrounding the mosque and their income was spent exclusively on the maintenance of this mosque.⁴¹

Shalimar garden constructed in 1642, known as 'Versailles of the Punjab', was created at the order of Shahjahan. It was so vast that a complete system of 'Shah-Nehr' was executed under the administration of Ali Mardan Khan to supply water to its gardens and 152 fountains that still survive today.⁴² Construction of this garden redirected circulation and settlement pattern in the entire eastern suburbs of the city, known at that time 'Mughalpura'. Why a minor garden was constructed within meager resources near an elaborate garden? Apparently it does not make sense.

In 'Chahar Chaman', Chandar Ban Brahman Lahori writes in 1070 A.H. "In spring when flowers blossom, officials and relatives of the king of the time visit this place, the Shalamar gardens".⁴³

This brings out the fact that the king used his private gardens for his personal recreation and comfort. It was certainly not meant for the public, although nobles and officials were occasionally invited here. Therefore the neighboring elites and officials also built their private gardens according to the new court trend and to get relief from extreme weather.

Muslims believed in the holiness of building gardens and plantation. When the tradition of laying gardens was already established in this area, there seems to be no reason why Sultan Baig could not follow it. This Indian trend of building gardens was not new for someone who had come from Persia recently as this tradition originated from Persia. Therefore in a short while after his arrival, he ordered a garden to be built.

The gardens were mostly used at evenings because of the hot climate. The flowers, greenery, fountains, the moonlight and especially the cool atmosphere after a day's scorching heat was favorable for creative, poetic and social activities. These evening sittings not only promoted poetry but also provided ideal atmosphere for enlightenment and meditation. Flower decorations in vases, dishes and jars in the panels of this building, tell us much about the sophistication and taste of the nobility at that time. Above all, the most obvious reason for building gardens by nobles was to confirm their status, follow the example of the court and also to indulge with their personal tastes in the privacy of their own garden.

We have not discovered as many residential quarters as the number of gardens at that period. It had been a fact that Mughal kings, princes and princesses used to stay at Shalamar garden whenever they came to Lahore.

Sultan Baig also might have used this garden as his residential quarters. The plan of the first floor consisting of three rooms is absolutely different then the ground floor and appears to be appropriate for living. This is the very place where roses are painted abundantly in fresco, on the walls of the central room, for which the whole building is named ‘Gulabi bagh’, reflects the romantic approach of the owner.

Lal (1884), has also described this garden as the one where roses were found all the year around. One can well imagine that this complex must have had all sorts of romantic associations for many people.⁴⁴

The builder of this structure exclusively opted for Persian elements in its architecture and then labeling this garden as ‘Gulabi bagh’ itself insists on his Persian taste. As the Mughal’s favorite flowers in spring were irises, narcissi, crown imperials and tulips and these gave way in summer to Jasmine, delphiniums, peonies and roses. Other gardens of this time were famous for the variety of flowers but only this garden was known for its collection of roses.

Annemarie Schimmel, a great admirer of Persian poetry, writes about the preference to rose in this context:

“Man’s most notable work is to create a garden, to transform this world into a replica of Paradise, so the roses in this garden will bring with their fragrance the ‘Nafas ar-Rehman’, the breath of the Merciful, to give us life and hope”.⁴⁵

It cannot be accidental that Sultan Baig named this structure as ‘Gulabi bagh’ as it Specialized in various kinds of roses. This man who came here on Shahjahan’s invitation and was appointed ‘Amir-ul-Behr’ must have been educated and well-versed in the poetry of Sa’adi, mystical verses of Rumi as well as Omar Khayyam and Mir Taqi Mir. Classical Persian poetry of that time was filled with allusions to the rose, its fragrance and its flightiness. With such taste this man exclusively devoted his garden to roses of the best kind. Other Mughal kings, princes and Persian dignitaries, who had settled in the sub-continent long ago, preferred gardens containing all kinds of flowers but this man who had come over only recently could not ignore his passion for roses.

On one hand, the use of less expensive material (bricks and mosaic tiles), spared the Gulabi bagh and like buildings from being stripped and spoiled in the Sikh period but on the other hand this characteristic could not save such buildings from severe climatic effects and they lost much of their beauty and form with the passage of time.

The use of marble and Pietra-dura (studded with precious stones), in the buildings of Shahjahan caused their stripping by Sikhs but the expensive lasting material used in their construction saved them from withering and they retained most of their glory till today.

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