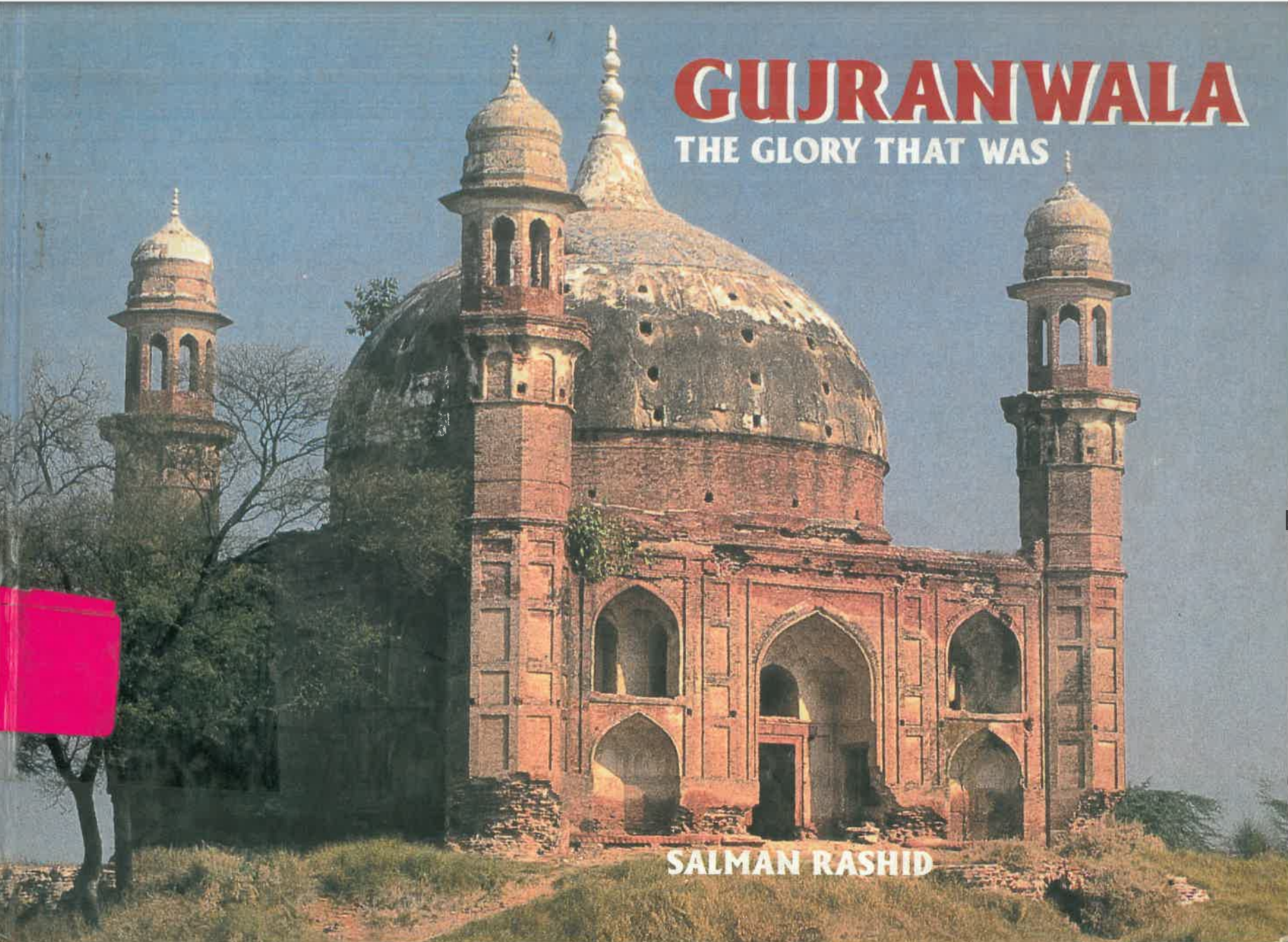




GUJRANWALA

THE GLORY THAT WAS

SALMAN RASHID

Gujranwala

The glory that was

Salman Rashid



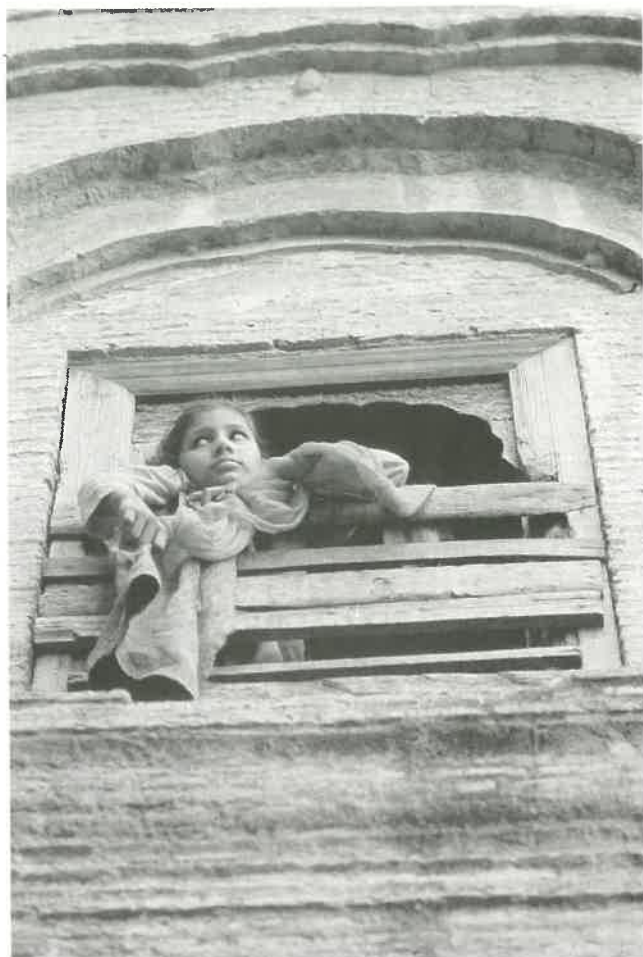
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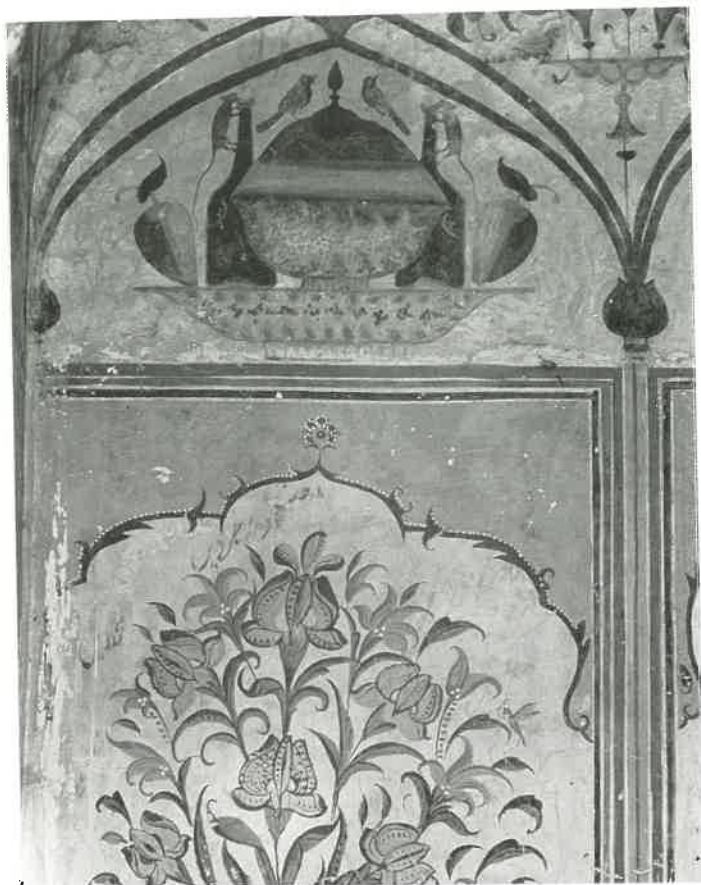
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For

Khushnood Lashari
who blazed the trail





Frescoes from the outer wall of the mosque. The rats are a startling departure from the prevalent parakeets and bulbuls.

Preface

Gujranwala has been one of the most important landmarks on the crossroads of history. It has not only witnessed vast armies traversing it on their way to conquering northern India but has also been a fermenting ground to the establishment of the first Punjabi kingdom of modern times - the Sikh kingdom of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. History has left its mark on Gujranwala in the shape of important archaeological and historical sites which are spread all over the district.

In the past there have been few scholarly works that have focussed on the cultural heritage of Gujranwala. The result is that Gujranwala is associated in public mind with culinary delights only. It is hoped that this book would make people pause and think about Gujranwala's heritage and thereby initiate the process of redressing the imbalance in public perception.

This undertaking, though modest in itself, would hopefully stimulate the interest of both the expert and the common citizen in the archaeology and architecture of the historical sites of Gujranwala and also lead to the maintenance and preservation of these important sites. In the end I must congratulate Mr. Khushnood Lashari, Deputy Commissioner, Gujranwala and Mr. Salman Rashid for their commendable initiative in producing this book.

Anwar Zahid

Foreword

This book would not have been possible were it not for Khushnood Lashari who is much more than a bureaucrat and who, as a Deputy Commissioner, took far greater interest in his district than another man would have ever done. Therefore, although this book should have been dedicated to the people of Gujranwala, it is to him that I dedicate it.

Kushnood must have had this idea for some time but he did not talk of it when he invited me in August 1991 to visit Rasalnagar and the *baradari* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. From the resultant newspaper articles and our lengthy discussions about what else could be written he suggested a book. And so it was that in November '91 my wife and I started work on this book. It is certainly not a very scholarly work but is merely an attempt to quell the impression that Gujranwala has nothing to offer either by way of historical monuments or an interesting and checkered history. It has a good measure of both as is amply proved in these pages.

It is also an attempt to put on record whatever little has been spared the ruthless destructiveness of "progress", which in our country unfortunately means the pulling down of historical buildings and replacing them with ugly monstrosities. From the photographers point of view this book may not have anything to offer for I have no great claims to being a photographer. And if, in the end, architects, archeologists, scholars and photographers add to this work and take it farther Khushnood's endeavours and mine will not have been in vain.

I am grateful to all the people we met in the course of our excursions and who took such keen interest in our work leading us from one site to another -- some of which we would have missed without their assistance, and to the people who proved to be such spontaneous and generous hosts when they invited us home. I am particularly grateful to my father in law, Mian Mohammad Munir and to Mohammed Aslam aka Achhoo Peeli Patti for their help. The assistance given us at Wazirabad by Jahanzeb Khan, Assistant Commissioner, and Raja Ejazullah was also invaluable. Last but the least, thanks is due to Ayaz Ali who understood our sense of urgency and designed this book in record time.

Date : 1-6-92



Gujranwala

"Lying as it does on the highway by which the successive hordes of invaders from the north marched down to the struggle for the empire of Hindustan, and by which they returned victorious or defeated; closely identified also with the stirring events which led to the rise of the Sikh monarchy on the ruins of the old Mughal empire, few tracts in the Central Punjab have had a more unsettled history than Gujranwala District. One result of the chaos and confusion that prevailed is the absence of any authentic information as to the history of the district prior to Mughal rule to the early days of which most of the present tribes date their settlement in the district."
Gazetteer of the Gujranwala District 1935.

Dust, fumes and the blare of horns, the nerve jarring rattle of auto rickshaws, tangles of Tonga and donkey carts vying for space



with the most modern and expensive cars, an incoherent babble of voices from the innumerable vendors and shoppers, the clatter of pots and pans at the many roadside eating houses with their accompanying hunks of meat hung out as if on exhibition, and the mouth watering aromas that waft forth from them, the clink of tall glasses of *lassi* and the sight of the ageless earthen *kunalis* brimming with thick, creamy yogurt and the rataplan of *tak-a-tak* being prepared. The sherbet sellers with their colourful dispensations, the man with his pushcart piled with second hand shoes from some East European country, and the crowds of dealers of used clothing. So frenzied is the kaleidoscopic situation of the Grand Trunk Road as it passes through the town of Gujranwala that it never fails to make me breathless.

Just over twenty years ago it had an altogether different aspect: there were no crowds and the few horse drawn carriages and the even fewer cars were perpetually unhurried; and the pedestrians all seemed to have emerged from some sort of a time warp. But all that has

changed. Then, as it sliced its way through town, the G.T Road was lined by very few shops and eateries. There were, instead, some beautiful old houses, graceful trees, and open spaces. All that has now been lost for such is the price of progress.

This is the Grand Trunk Road that was first built by Raja Vikramaditya in the first century BC and subsequently renovated by Sher Shah Suri after he had deposed Humayun, the second Mughal king. Along his Grand Trunk Road that stretched from Calcutta to Peshawar, Sher Shah ordered the building of *serais* and *baolis* (the stepped wells that are typical of that time) at suitable distances to facilitate travel along his road. While the *serais* are all gone, several *baolis* remain -- silent, crumbling reminders of a bygone king.

The Grand Trunk Road entered present day Gujranwala District near - Wazirabad, passed through the village of Dhaunkal and following the same alignment as Chaman Shah Road today reached Eminabad. Hence it went on to





The Suri Mosque at Chaman Shah.

the village of Wahndo and Kali Suba on its way to Amritsar and eventually Delhi.

Not far from Satellite Town, outside the graveyard of Chaman Shah, is a battered reminder of Sher Shah's time: a small three domed mosque whose squat domes and plain arches typify the building style of the Suris. Originally a small structure to suit the needs of the few travellers who were forced to overnight in the attached *serai* the mosque has been unthinkingly enlarged by some well meaning but not so perspicacious maulvi: where there was once a *mehrab* an opening leads into a large, square chamber that now serves as the main prayer hall. The original interior has been dutifully white washed so that all the erstwhile frescoes are obliterated.

This was Serai Kachi, so called because the construction was of sun dried bricks. There is no trace of the *serai* now except the name of the locality, but Dr Saifur Rahman Dar, the well known archeologist, (who, incidentally, was born and raised in Gujranwala!) says that the

mud wall of the *serai* was still extant in the late 1950s. Nearby there was a *baoli*, but it was only a Muslim house of worship that was worthy of preservation, no matter how thoughtlessly, while the other two buildings were allowed to waste away. Surely material from these buildings must have, at one time or the other, been cannibalised to build surrounding dwellings. And surely with the modernisation of the city that same material must have been used in the construction of roads; forever burying history under the thoroughfares of Gujranwala.

Only a few hundred meters to the south of the mosque of Sher Shah Suri there is yet another relic from the later Moghul era. Deep in the dirty lanes of Mohalla Chamrangan is another small three domed mosque. Here again the unthinking enthusiasm of the semi literate maulvi has resulted in a garish coat of pink and green paint over the original frescoes in the interior and an ugly verandah outside. This little mosque bears witness that Gujranwala, or the small collection of Gujjar villages which then existed at this site, was still on the highroad



Jamia Masjid Ghousia in Mohalla Chamrangan



Brandreth or Sialkoti Gate; the only gate that survives out of eleven.

from the frontier city of Peshawar to the capital at Delhi during the reign of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb.

Modern Gujranwala lies to the east of the G.T. Road but if you were to walk through Brandreth Gate (also known as Sialkoti Darwaza, for it faces in the direction of that city), the only surviving gate of the eleven that once afforded entrance to the walled city west of the Road you could follow any one of the several lanes leading into the older quarter of Gujranwala that still reveals the true character of the town which outwardly seems to have succumbed to the inevitable march of time. Here is a warren of narrow lanes crowded with cubbyhole shops that deal in anything from Japanese sewing machines, English tweed, Chinese crockery to locally produced stainless steel table ware, cotton *lungis*, kiln-fired pottery and leather goods. The twentieth century, it seems, has not grown out of but onto the nineteenth century creating a delightful amalgam of the two.

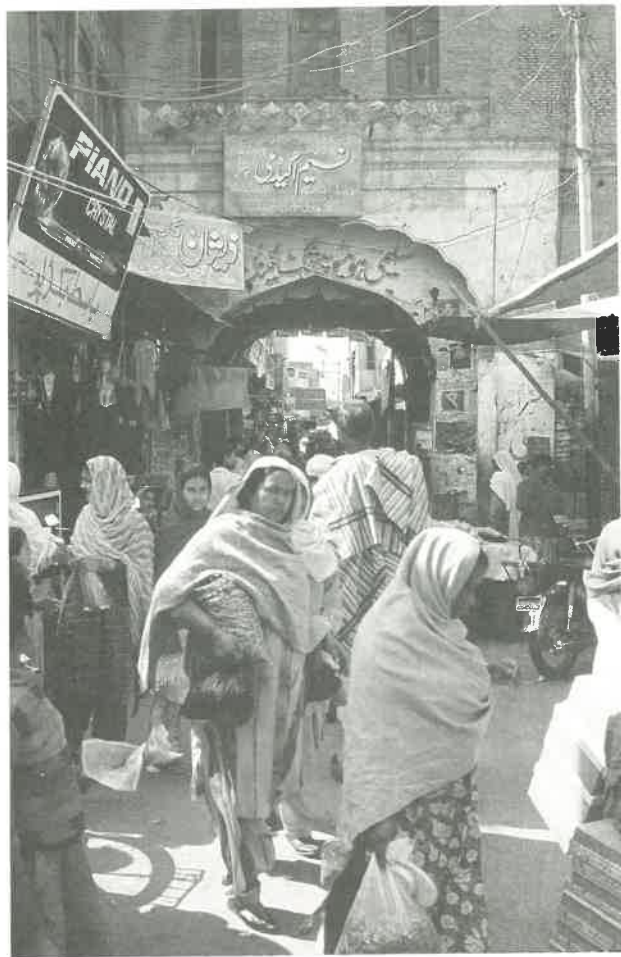
Bordering these narrow streets are now mostly

ugly concrete blocks that rise two or three storeys but occasionally one cannot help being captivated by an odd piece of exquisite woodwork or architecture laden with the dust of part of the 19th and most of the 20th century standing uncertainly on the verge of the 21st. Here one can still see beautiful bay windows with intricately carved *jharokas*, fretwork windows and floral doors jambs the sheer beauty of which boggles the mind as much as it pleases the finer senses. But changing times do not bode well for these masterpieces of earlier times as different values and requirements warrant the destruction of these older buildings and the raising of new edifices. Such a state of affairs would surely have rent the bold heart of Charrat Singh, the Sansi Jat, who took possession of this collection of Gujjar villages some sixty five kilometers to the north of Lahore, raised a fortification around it in the year 1756 and called it Gujraoli.

Although the Sikh religion was born about two hundred years before his time it was the rabid hatred of Aurangzeb Alamgir, the mogul



Carved door jamb from Gujranwala.



Bustle of the bazaar at Pindi Bhatian.

king, against the Sikhs that turned these shaggy adherents of Baba Guru Nanak into a militant force. Persecuted for their religious beliefs the Sikhs had to abandon their homes and take refuge in the wild and intractable forests of Punjab, their homeland. Thus removed from the mainstream of life and from their means of livelihood many a good man was obligated to resort to brigandage in order to provide for the family he had left behind. Brigandage, however, was a short term evil; in the long term this persecution gave birth to a savage hatred in the Sikh mind for their Muslim compatriots.

With the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 his sons fell into discord over the question of the crown and the country saw a series of rapid governmental changes that steered it into the depths of anarchy while beyond the northwest frontier the rapacious Afghans watched these developments, their eyes set on the riches of India. And so in 1738 emboldened by the uncertainty Nadir Shah Durrani, the Afghan, descended on this hapless land at the head of

a savage army. They looted and sacked the great cities of the Indo-Gangetic plains and returned home laden with immense booty; neither Muslim, nor Hindu nor Sikh was spared their ruthlessness and greed. So great was the Afghan's lust for plunder and so great India's wealth that these pillagers, the scourge of God, returned to India year after year.

After each visitation as the Afghans, encumbered by the weight of plunder, would make their way back across the Punjabi plains, lightly armed and wide ranging squads of Sikh daredevils would fall upon them, relieving them of their ill earned possessions and keeping up a running fight merely for the fun of it. This was a time when the Sikhs were still divided into the twelve *misls* or confederacies, each headed by an independent chieftain and confined to its own tract of land. Thus, the chief of each *misl* ensured that the returning Afghans did not pass through his domain in safety and without paying dearly for their misadventures. One such man was Charrat Singh, the founder of modern Gujranwala.



Smelting to produce toilet fittings.



The finished product.



Motor winding for fans.



Textile printing.



Durri (rug) making at one of the many centres at Gakkhar Mandi.



Colours in cotton.



Embroidery work.

Even after the death of Nadir Shah these depredations did not cease and his descendant, Ahmad Shah Abdali, took them up with undiminished vigour and ruthlessness, while the Sikhs on their part kept up their marauding raids on the departing Afghans. Impressed by the efficacy of Sikh tactics Mohammed Yar, the chief of Khiali (a village on the outskirts of present day Gujranwala after which one of the gates of the old city was named) joined Charrat Singh's band of marauders along with twenty mounted warriors increasing the Sikh sardar's strength to more than one hundred and fifty. Soon other chiefs were paying *rakhi* 'protection money' to Charrat Singh for defence against the savagery of the Afghans. It was from these proceeds that Charrat Singh fortified the collection of Gujjar villages into a mud fortress and soon rose from anonymity to eminence as a daring sardar.

Charrat Singh died in 1774 and was succeeded by his son, Mahan Singh, who in turn fathered the most brilliant leader in the history of the Punjab: Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

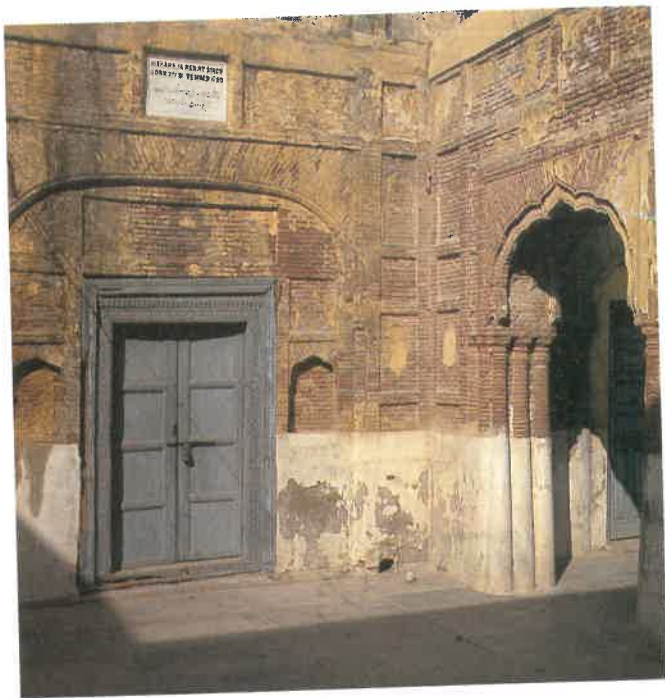
It was this short statured man, addicted to strong drink, unlettered, blind in one eye and with a face deeply pitted with a childhood attack of small pox who united the Punjab under one flag. His rule stretched from the banks of the Jamuna to the Khyber and from Kashmir to Multan. In the words of Khushwant Singh, the historian: "The legacy which Ranjit Singh inherited from his ancestors consisted of a large district in the heart of the Punjab and an ambition that knew no bounds."

And this legacy Ranjit Singh had to take up when he was yet only twelve years old; in the year 1792 on the death of his father, Mahan Singh. It was Sada Kaur, the head of the Kanhaya *misl* who materialised the childhood betrothal of Ranjit Singh with her daughter Mehtab Kaur and guided the unbounded energy and genius of the young Ranjit towards the unifying of a divided Punjab.

Deep inside the old city of Gujranwala, in the midst of a wholesale market for food grain and vegetables known as Purani Mandi, is a



Exterior of the *haveli* where
Ranjit Singh was born.



Courtyard on the first floor. This haveli is built on a plan that has been in common use for almost two thousand years in the Punjab

large *haveli*. Its yellow washed facade is unpretentious and all but hidden from the casual view by the surrounding houses and makeshift sunshades. The rooms on the ground floor serve as a doctor's clinic from one side of which a narrow masonry stairway leads up to the first floor which is actually a large, open courtyard surrounded by spacious rooms. Just above the door of one of these rooms is a small marble plaque announcing it as the place where Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born on November 13, 1780. For some years after Partition this house served as a police station but since being vacated has remained derelict. Soon it will catch the eye of another one of our rapacious 'developers', will be torn down and in its place will rise an ugly block of concrete and steel. That will be yet another attempt to tear down the already badly battered history of the Punjab.

It was this man of whom Jacquemont, the French naturalist said, "His conversation is like a nightmare. He is the most inquisitive Indian I have seen, and his curiosity balances the apathy of the whole of his nation. He asked

me a hundred thousand questions about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of the same kind."

After being crowned Maharaja of the Punjab Ranjit Singh shifted his headquarter to Lahore but that was not the end of Gujranwala's claim to fame. It was here that one of the most illustrious generals of that time was born: Hari Singh Nalwa, the only Punjabi in history who was to ever subdue the wild and intractable Pathans and with whose name Pathan mothers would frighten naughty children for more than a century and a half. As little as sixty years ago the use of the phrase *Chup sha! Hari Singh raghle!* (Be quiet! Hari Singh comes!) was still in use among Pathan mothers as reported by English travellers.

The house that Hari Singh lived in now serves as a mosque. And because the good Maulvi Yasin who runs it, once had hordes of blind students learning theology under his



Plaque outside the room where the Maharaja was born.



Maulvi Yasin "holding court" in the *haveli* of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. The garden that impressed Baron von Hugel was in the back and could once be seen from the roof of this building.

tutelage is called "Anyan di Masjid" -- Mosque of the Blind. Nearby was the famous garden that the valiant Hari Singh must have tended in his spare time. Of this the Gazetteer of 1935 says: "The garden was at one time famous in the Punjab for its variety of rare trees and plants, and the first Malta oranges introduced in the Punjab were grown here."

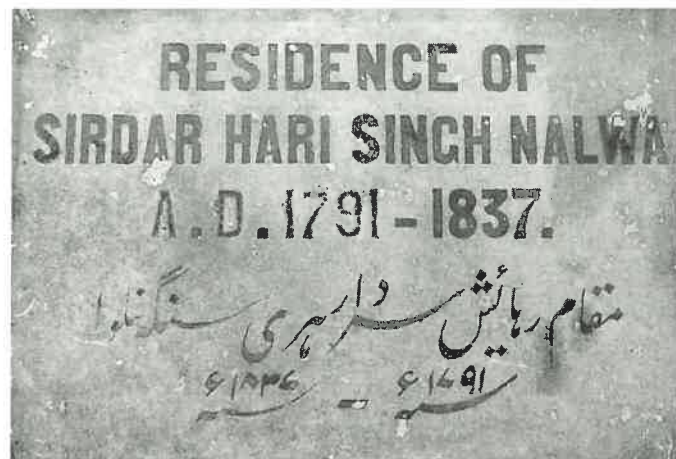
It was this same garden that caught the attention of Baron Carl von Hugel, an Austrian traveller, when he was a guest of Hari Singh Nalwa at "Gusraoli" in January 1836. This garden, he wrote, "was the most beautiful and best kept I had seen in India." where the "almost overwhelming" fragrance of jonquils filled the air. Now only the memory persists; for where stately cypresses and plane trees imported from Kashmir once provided respite from the harsh Punjabi summers there is now a horde of ugly concrete blocks -- the open space has entirely been used up.

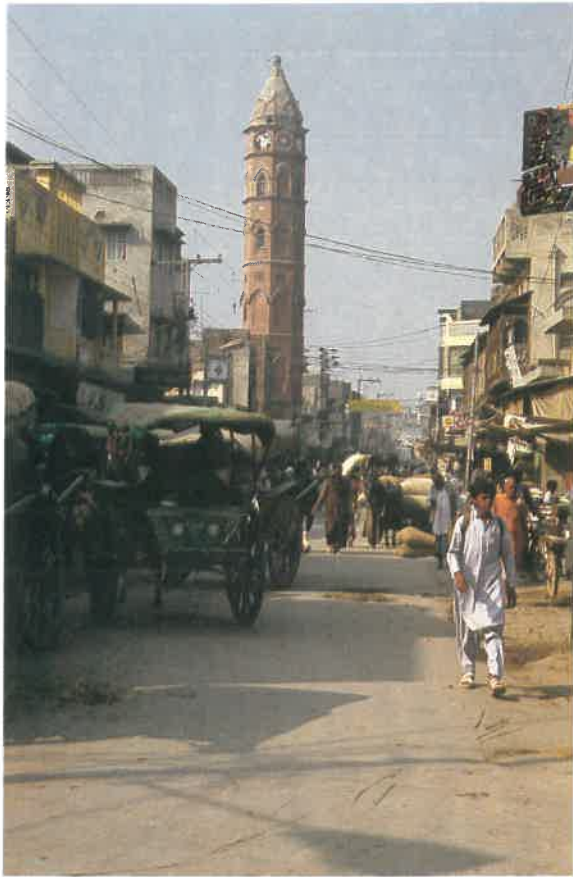
In or about the year 1842 the Sikh armies of the ruler of Gilgit attacked and destroyed

the town of Yasin (northwest of Gilgit) and returned with immense plunder and innumerable slaves. The army was led by a general called Nathu Shah, who was born to a syed family of Gujranwala and had been recruited by the Dogras for his outstanding prowess as a soldier and administrator. This little fragment from history is now forgotten and in the Gujranwala of today it is not even possible to trace any descendents of this Muslim general who had so proudly led Sikh armies through the treacherous defiles of the Ghizer River.

But mortal that he was, Ranjit Singh was also destined to die one day and when his funeral pyre was set alight on June 27, 1839 the empire which the Maharaja had so painstakingly carved out of a troubled land went into the throes of its own death. In the next two years and a half the country saw intrigue, perfidy and three governmental changes, while the British waited in the wings for their cue.

The heartless murders of the agents





Ghanta Ghar -- literally, House of the Bell, that once formed the hub of the Gujranwala that the British built.

Vans-Agnew and Anderson at Multan by Mool Raj, the Sikh governor, was the awaited cue and the British descended on the Punjab with a fury that the disintegrating Sikh empire had not anticipated. The Battle of Ramnagar was lost in November 1848 and the Sikhs were expelled to the west of the Chenab. Less than two months later they received the last and irrevocably crushing blow at Chillianwala: Punjab became subject to the British crown and the empire of which Ranjit Singh had boasted, "My kingdom is a great kingdom: it was small, it is now large; it was scattered, broken, and divided; it is now consolidated: it must increase in prosperity, and descend undivided to my posterity." was no more.

The British set about rebuilding Gujranwala according to their own standards. New bazaars were laid out outside the confines of the walled city and a red brick clock tower named after Mr Estcourt, a Deputy Commissioner, was erected to mark the centre of the new city. To the north were the Civil Lines with their posh European style bungalows, the District Courts





The Deputy Commissioner's house. Built in the first decade of the 20th century it has extensive lawns and its own cricket pitch.



Gujranwala Railway Station -- the one that has been consigned to oblivion.

and even a couple of clubs: the Gujranwala and the Rai Bahadur Labhu Ram Club. It was in this quarter of the town that the sahibs, white and local, resided.

Not far from here, right on the Grand Trunk Road was the railway station that was built as a subsidiary to the main station which was a mile or so to the west. But destiny consigned the more important of the two to ignominy and with the growth of the commercial centres of the city nearer to the Civil Lines and the bazaars, the lesser of the two stations ended up being the more important -- and so it continues to be today.

South of the station, along the G.T Road, in what was once a beautiful garden adorned with statues of lions and accordingly called Sheranwala Bagh, is the crumbling *samadh* of Mahan Singh which, together with the neighbouring *baradari* was built on the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After British take over the *baradari* was converted into a library with a museum attached to it, but in the years

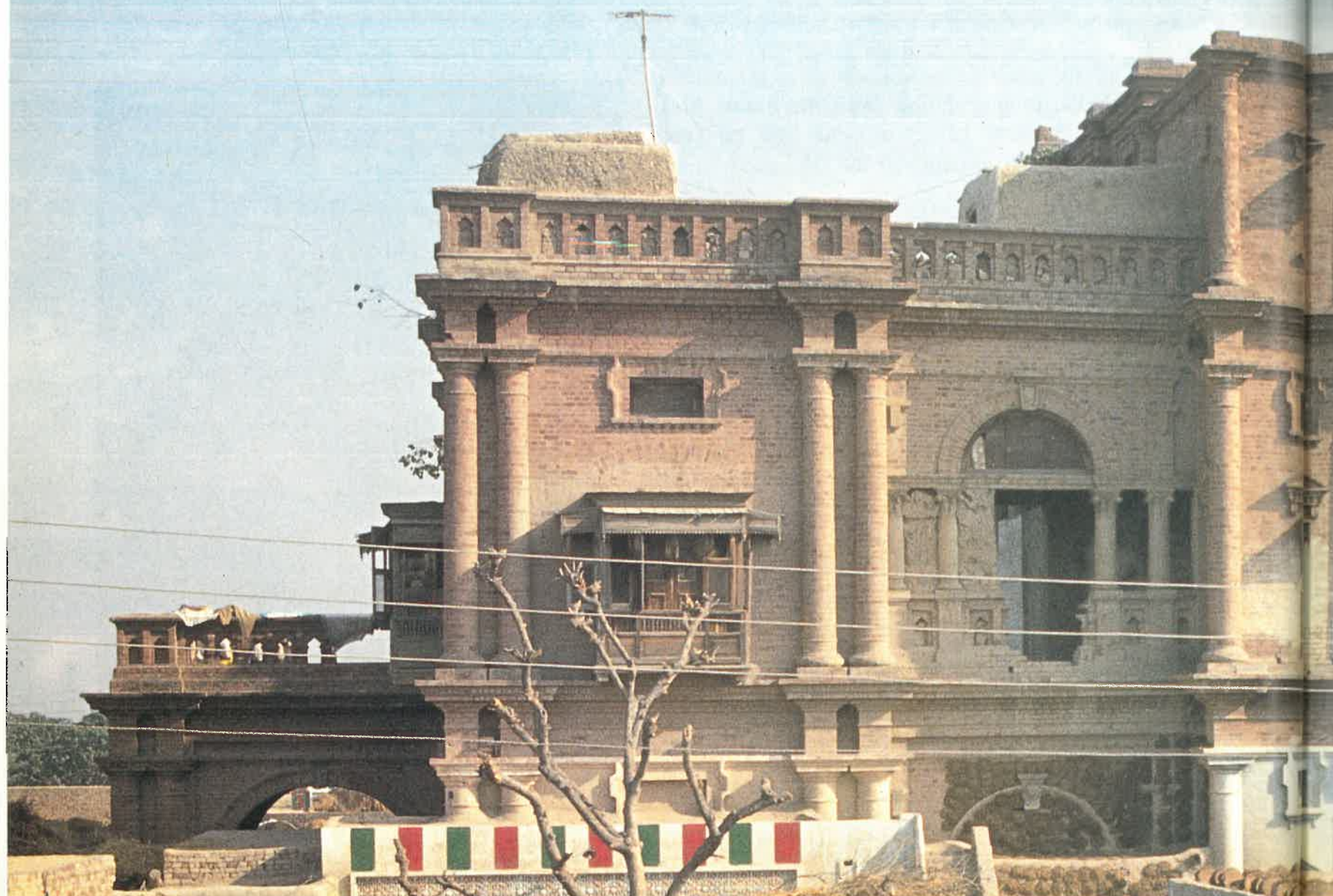
between Partition and now both the library and the museum have been lost, only the building remains; a forlorn reminder of the good times this city has known.

The interior of the *baradari* reeks with the stench of stale urine and the floors are littered with human excrement but the walls are resplendent with the most exquisite frescoes. Here, in a profusion of flowing vines that voluptuously intertwine are brilliantly coloured flowers and in the midst of this fulness are platters laden with fruits of every kind. Feeding on the fruit are not princesses and their consorts but bulbuls and parakeets, peacocks and ravens, faithfully painted to the minutest detail. Though they have not been retouched in the last over one hundred years they still retain the radiance of the day they had been rendered.

With the partition of India, Gujranwala was stripped of its affluent Sikh and Hindu inhabitants, who were exchanged for Muslim refugees from India in the midst of a great massacre and plunder. In one fell stroke history



The *samadh* of Mahan Singh which is now a part of a girls school.







Frescoes in the interior that are still holding their own -- despite the odds.

changed the very character of the city that had been founded by the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

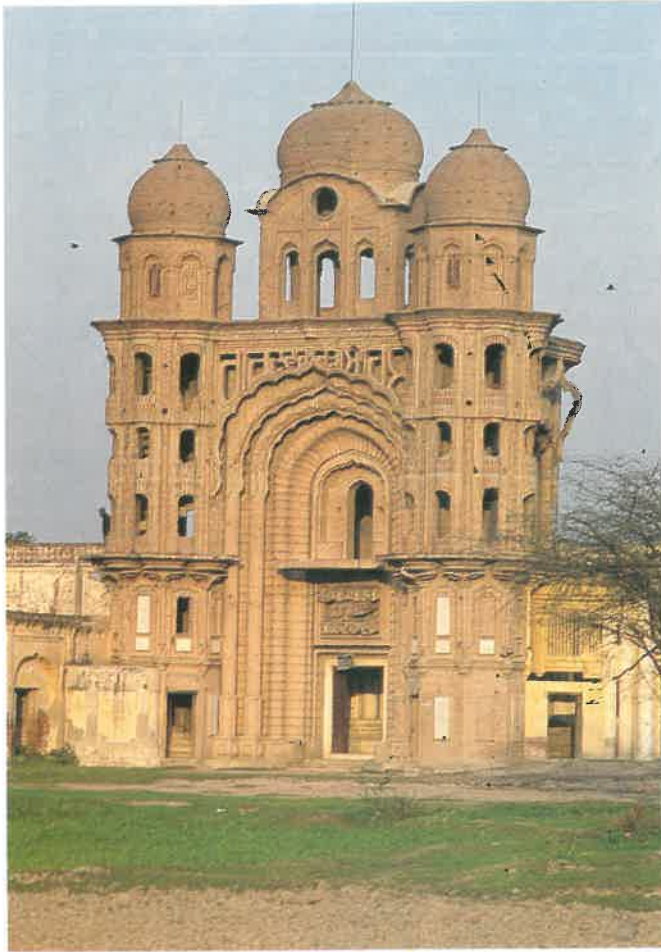
The village of Botala Jhanda Singh was founded by Jhanda Singh, the Bhangi sardar, who was once an ally of Mahan Singh Sukerchakia and later, over the matter of Kashmir, his sworn enemy. Both men died in 1774. Until Partition the biggest landowners in the village were the descendants of Jhanda Singh. One of them was Sardar Baksheesh Singh, the man who built this opulent mansion. The building is now owned by a retired, and reputedly, mad subedar who is slowly taking it apart and selling its iron and steel fixtures.

2. Barely eight kilometres outside the town of Gujranwala in the village of Haveli Mehan Singh this beautiful mansion recalls the affluence and fine taste of the builder, Sardar Mangal Singh, a local landowner. With its pediments, arches, columns and balustrades it makes a fine study in architecture. Unfortunately, however, it is now home to several families of refugees who have not only added to this magnificent structure but have subtracted from it as and when they deemed it fit.

Eminabad

Legend has it that Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was passing this way when he was benighted near a heap of shattered bricks and pottery (rori, in Punjabi) on the outskirts of the town of Saidpur, as Eminabad was then know. Making himself as comfortable as possible on this heap he spent a night here. This was in the early years of the 16th century. And when the Sikh religion was founded this spot naturally became sacred to them and came to be known as Rori Sahib.

Sometime during the reign of Shah Jehan or afterwards, a *baoli* was built near this site. The dating of the construction in this case being facilitated by the multi cusped arch leading to the level of the water. This perhaps was the show of piety of some king or governor moved by the plight of the pilgrims at the annual



Rori Sahib: the architectural fantasy of some local Gaudi.

festival of Bisakhi in the heat of April in Punjab. Only the *baoli* remains; if there was a *serai* or a mosque it has long since disappeared.

With the rise of Sikh power in the area a small Gurdwara was built to mark the exact spot of Guru Nanak's night of penance. Soon afterwards the annual Bisakhi festival began to be held here, which, within a few years, came to be regarded as the largest Bisakhi congregation in all of India. In the second decade of the 20th century the rich and powerful Sikh families of Gujranwala decided to enlarge and embellish the Gurdwara. And what they did certainly was embellishment if nothing else.

Although the basic Gurdwara remained the same, an ostentatious gateway along with several attached rooms was built in a flamboyant amalgam of various building styles. There are the multi cusped arches that were borrowed from the nearby *baoli*, there are high and bulbous domes and there are free standing arches foliated with the chunky characters of Grumukhi script, while the voluted minarets on either side

of the entrance spring from bases supported by voluptuous curves.

The building can best be described in the words of eminent architect Kamil Khan Mumtaz: "It is an architectural fantasy showing an amazing dexterity with which brickwork has been used to produce a plastic and almost sensuous quality. The production of these daring forms which are based on traditional precedent has



The building in the centre is the original Gurdwara. Notice the free standing arch on extreme right of picture.

੫੦੦) ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਾਈ

ਸ੍ਰ: ਨਿਹਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਮਲਾਪ ਬਸ ਸਰਦਸ ਵਾਹ

ਗੁਜਰਾਂਵਾਲਾ

੧੫੦੦ ਰੁਪਏ ਦਿੱਤਾ

ਸਰਦਾਰ ਨਿਹਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ

ਮਲਾਪ ਬਸ ਸਰਦਸ ਵਾਹ

ਗੁਜਰਾਂਵਾਲਾ

extended the possibility of the use of bricks to a hitherto unknown limit. Whoever designed this building, were he a trained architect, most certainly was impressed by Gaudi, the famous Spanish architect of the early 20th century; if not, then he had an admirably original and innovative mind, which was coupled with a boldness that came from a mastery of traditional architecture."

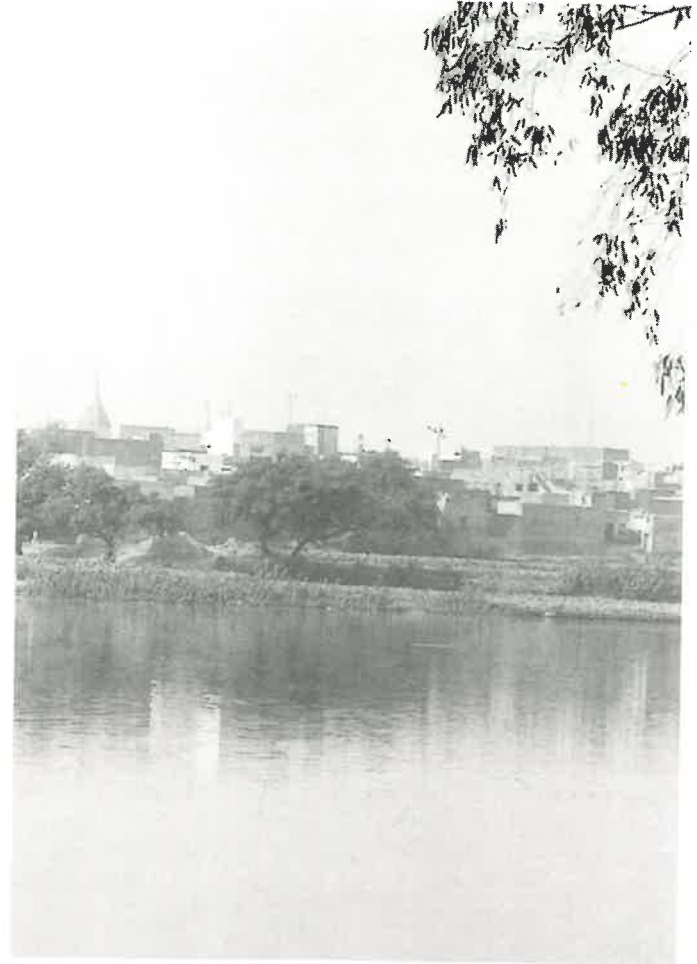
But the building was funded by donations and the construction progressed slowly. Perhaps too slowly for at the time of Partition it was yet unfinished and so it has remained to this day.

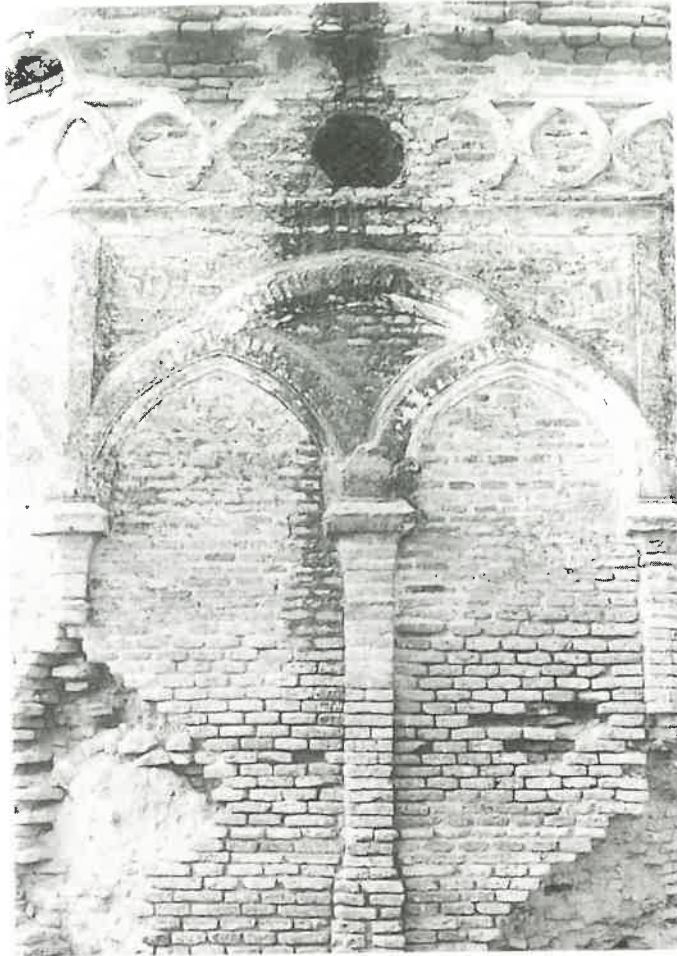
After the great transmigration of 1947 the Gurdwara fell into disuse and it was not several years after Partition that Sikhs from abroad started resorting here once again for the annual Bisakhi festival. But the hallowed pond where the pilgrims once did their ablutions is now dry and filled with rank vegetation. But the aged and slightly hard of hearing *chowkidar* faithfully washes the floor of the Gurdwara

every day and resolutely disallows photography if one does not have a "letter from the Deputy Commissioner."

But long before either the Gurdwara or the *baoli* was built it was Raja Salvahan, the Rajput ruler of Sialkot who is said to have founded this town in the first century BC. The original name is lost in the misty corridors of time but according to the Imperial Gazetteer of India it was at one time known as Saidpur and when Babur arrived in this part of the Punjab in the winter of 1525 on the invitation of Daulat Khan Lodhi he was resisted by the people of this town. But unable to stem the tide of Mughal arms the town was subjugated and the male population was ruthlessly put to the sword, while the women and children were taken prisoner.

One of the older male prisoners was condemned to work a corn grinding mill, and soon it became common knowledge that the mill was turning by itself while the old man simply added the corn. When he heard of this





miracle Babur came to see it for himself and was deeply impressed by the personality of the holy man. He was set free and upon his request the rest of the prisoners taken from Saidpur got their freedom. This man of God was none other than Baba Guru Nanak and Chaki Sahib, the mill of his imprisonment, situated in one of those many nondescript alleyways of Eminabad, is venerated to this day by his adherents.

When Sher Shah Suri defeated and ousted Humayun, the second Mughal emperor, he destroyed the town of Saidpur -- an action that was perhaps triggered by the residents' show of loyalty for the Mughals. In its place he ordered the building of a new settlement to the south east of the older site, this town he called Shergarh after himself. But Sher Shah Suri was arrested in his career by an explosion outside the battlements of the fort of Kalanjar and within twelve years of his death his empire had weakened sufficiently to allow Humayun to return to reclaim his father's kingdom.

The Afghan garrison of Shergarh resisted the Mughals and a long siege ensued under the command of Emin Beg one of Humayun's foremost generals. Driven to hunger by the cutting off of supplies the Afghans eventually submitted and the town that Sher Shah Suri had built to immortalise his name was put to the torch. Today only a windswept mound answers to the name of that town where particularly heavy rainstorms still sometimes turn up coins and other artefacts of the Suri reign.

Within six months of regaining his father's empire Humayun died as he was coming down the stairs of his library (where, incidentally, he was not reading but flying his pigeons! Interestingly enough this building, the Sher Mandal, had been built by his old adversary, Sher Shah Suri), and the empire fell to the young Akbar. It was during his reign that the general Emin Beg was ordered to restore the old town of Saidpur, and true to form the new settlement was named Eminabad. A few years later -- in 1610 -- William Finch, a peripatetic English trader, mentioned Eminabade (sic) as



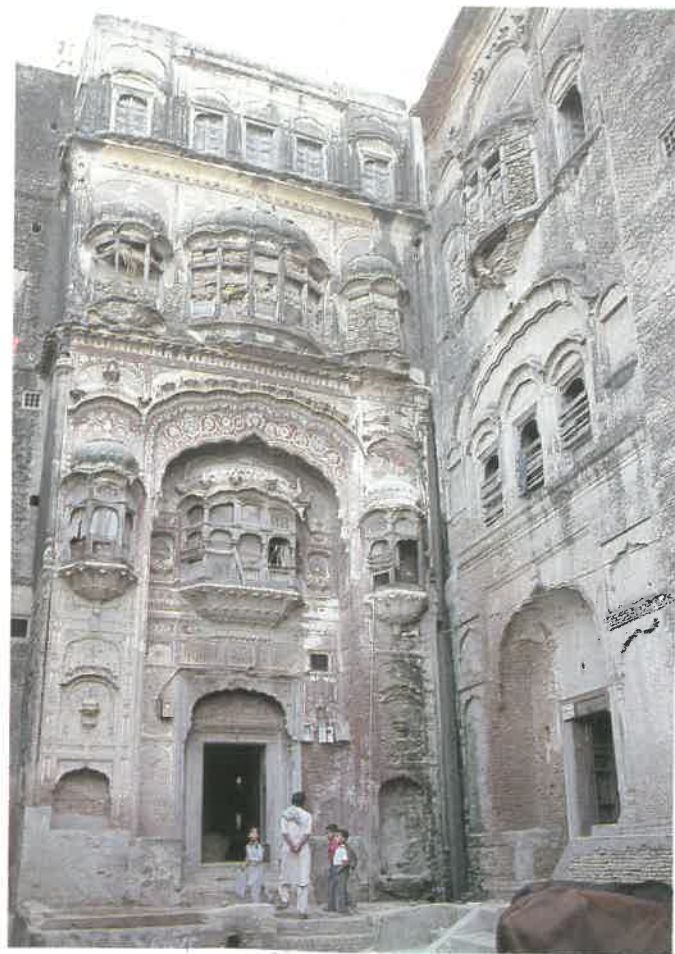
being 18 cos from Lahore and that it was a "faire city"

That is history, or whatever one can piece together from the few fragmentary references available. Legend, however, attributes the name of Eminabad to Amina, the wet nurse of Feroz Shah (c 14th century AD) or basis it on the word *Amn* (peace).

The Grand Trunk Road passed by Eminabad on its way to Wahndo, Kali Suba and onwards to Amritsar and as it was a major town in this area, the Moghuls made it a *pargannah* in the province of Lahore. Surrounded by rich and fertile farmlands it seems to have thrived well and paid a handsome amount in yearly taxes (Rs 900,000/-) to the Mughal court. Anarchy followed the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir and in the year 1760 the Mughal governor of Eminabad was dispossessed by Sardar Charrat Singh, the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. From then on it remained with the Sukerchakia misl ruling from Gujranwala. Maharaja Ranjit Singh on assuming power gave the town as

jagir to 'Raja Dhyani Singh of Jammu and for several decades after that the prime ministers for the state of Kashmir came from the rich Hindu families of Eminabad.

The rich and magnificent *havelis* that the families of the diwans built are symbolic of their artistic refinement and aesthetic sense and also testify their deep seated desire to live in a surrounding of elegance and beauty: for them functionability and beauty were inseparable. In Mohallah Havelian one can see three or four storeyed buildings with facades that simply dazzle the eye. There are large bay windows with intricately carved *jharokas*, multi cusped and plain arches decorated with cut bricks and stucco work, doors profusely carved to show the gods and goddesses of the Vedic pantheon and best of all are the facades themselves, painted to the point of saturation with flowing vines, multi coloured flowers of every description possible and platters full of the fruits of Kashmir and Kandhar.



Facade of the *haveli* at Eminabad.



The interiors were faithfully built in the traditional style of *haveli* architecture with the main doorway leading into the *deori* (foyer) which led into the central atrium that was open to the sky. This was surrounded on one side by rooms that were utilitarian in nature, ie, kitchen, store, toilets etc while the other two sides were occupied by the sitting room and a couple of bedrooms. On one side was the stairway that led to the rooms on the upper floors.

All this is still there to be seen in Eminabad but the sight will doubtlessly break the hearts of her erstwhile sons or, for that matter, of anyone else who cares, for these crumbling reminders of their cultivated taste are now inhabited by the town's surrogate children who arrived here to take over what was Evacuee Property after the holocaust of 1947. To them these were possessions easily acquired in exchange for some untruths of the 'immense wealth' they had been forced to abandon in India. They were devoid of any love for the land and the culture that belonged to it, and therefore without



Detail of bay window.



Detail of wood carving showing the Vedic pantheon.

any feeling for what was now theirs.

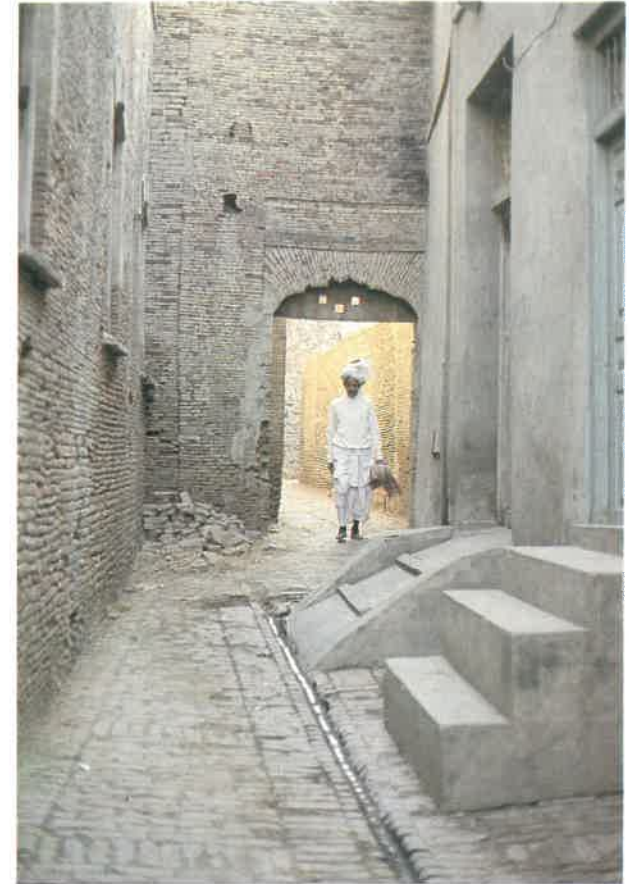
Sadly, in the last forty four years these magnificent mansions have been heartlessly allowed to waste away -- never has a hand moved to preserve them. No sleep was lost if a priceless fresco was ruined by the elements or if a portion of an intricate *jharoka* fell off. To the surrogate sons of Eminabad this does not matter in the least for when the whole building is finally declared dangerous by the authorities they will simply claim properties elsewhere and move on. They only stand to gain from the destruction of the culture of Eminabad. Mohallah Havelian that must have been an enviable address in the 19th century is sadly decrepit.

Interestingly, I remarked to one such "refugee", as he still called himself, (not, however, in Eminabad but in Alipur Chattha) if it would do him any good to care for the house that had provided him and his family shelter for the last almost half century. In response he patted his fat paunch and said if

he only had time enough to fill that he was thankful to Allah, and could not be bothered about looking after the house. Surely it is not only a matter of simple existence it is much more than that: it is an insatiable greed to have more, for such are the dictates of an acquisitive society.

Most of Eminabad is even today constructed from the thin, narrow tiles that were used in mediaeval India and have been cannibalised from older buildings. It is not unusual to see a modern brick wall growing onto one built perhaps almost two hundred years ago. Amid the course cemented structures of today it is not impossible to come upon a profusely carved door here or a multi cusped arch there -- the town is an intriguing admixture of the ancient and the modern.

Once there must have been a protective wall around the town now only one gate remains that leads into a crowded, narrow bazaar. Like the town this bazaar, too, is a victim of changing times: in the 1880s the new railway line between



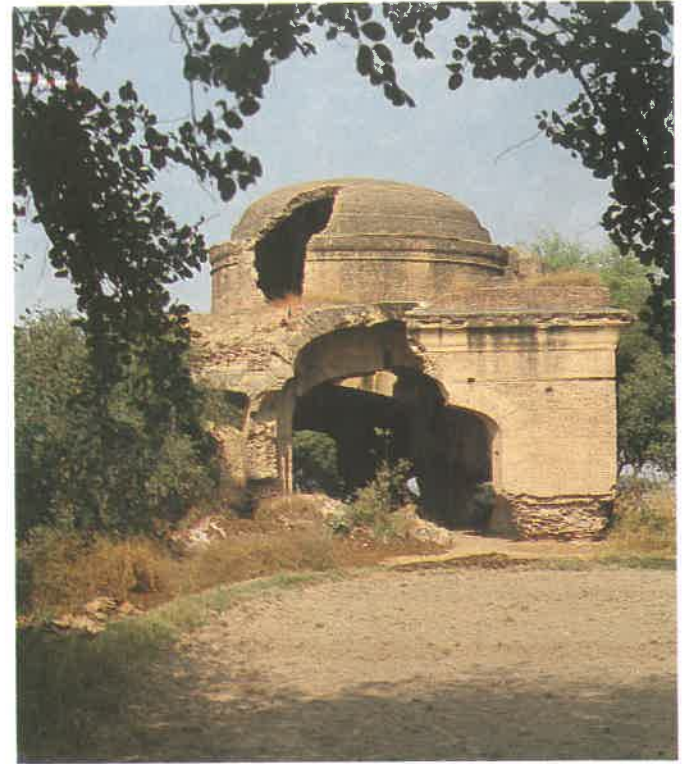
Eminabad; an amalgam of the old and the new: cement concrete building facing one constructed of narrow tiles. In the background is a multi cusped arch.

Lahore and Rawalpindi was laid some three miles to the west of Eminabad. The Grand Trunk Road naturally aligned itself with the new railway and from then onward history bypassed the once important town.

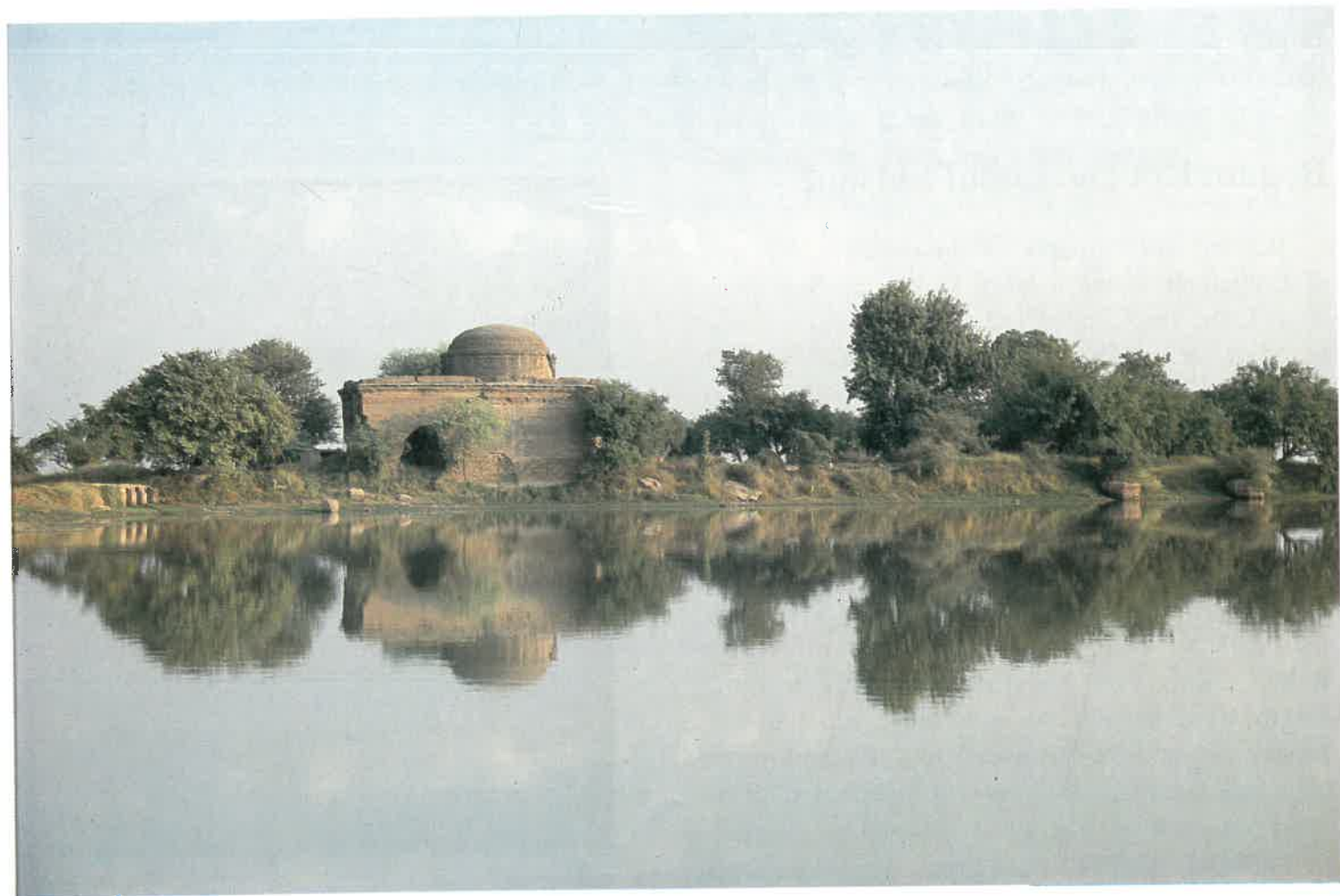
3. Detail of *jharoka* and bay windows.

Begum Kot and Lodhi Mosque

Beyond the straggle of houses, to the east of Eminabad in the locality known as Begumkot is a large brick lined water tank that is said to have been built in Jehangir's reign. I suspect it was, at some time prior to the Mughals, a Hindu water tank attached to a temple and was merely enlarged and renovated by Jehangir. To the east of this tank is a crumbling three domed mosque which, according to Kamil Khan Mumtaz, the noted architect, dates from the Lodhi period (1451-1525). Since the last twenty five years of this period were too eventful with Babur getting too close for the Lodhis' comfort for them to be able to undertake such building projects, it can be surmised that the mosque is from the second half of 15th century. This makes it one of the oldest surviving mosques in Pakistan.



View from the south.



The central dome has a wide cleft in it and the spandrel panels on both sides of this bay are deeply cracked. Nowhere except on a small portion of the facade is there any trace of plaster. Perdition is its lot now, for it has not known worshipper for several decades.

The interior of the dome has interesting corbelling achieved by the use of cut bricks rather than stucco, while the transition from the square prayer chamber to the circular dome is with the help of squinches as well as pendentives. Pendentives which were originally a Byzantine feature were brought to the sub continent by the Central Asians. The use in this building of both squinches and pendentives, according to Rizwan Azeem, the architect, is a unique feature seen in no other mosque in Pakistan.

Close by is a square walled in compound with miniature pavilions at each corner. Inside are two or three ruinous graves one of which is assigned to some unknown Moghul noblewoman. It is said that a certain Mir Ahmad



Interior of the dome showing cut brick corbelling.



The corner pavilions and the boundary wall of *Begum ka Maqbara*



Khan, a Moghul chief, was passing by this place on his way to Kashmir when his wife was taken seriously ill. Before any help could get to her she died and was buried at this spot. The wall was later added to mark her aristocracy. But if there were, in the past, any signs of the grandeur of Begumkot they have all mellowed into the surrounding dust; the Begum who died in the middle of the 17th century is all but forgotten.

4. The tank and the Lodhi Mosque.

The Mound at Wahndo

The Grand Trunk Road first received royal patronage from Raja Vikramaditya in the 1st century BC. This great raja, the King Arthur of Indian legends, organised a system of *serais* and some semblance of security against raiders on his highroad, while Sher Shah Suri in his time merely followed suit.

The highway on its way to Amritsar and Delhi passed through Eminabad, Wahndo and Kali Suba and even today there are signs of its antiquity. Outside the village of Wahndo is high mound that is now used as an open air toilet by the people of the village. Strewn all about this eminence is an abundance of pottery shards and bits of the large tile (43x28x6cms) that was in use in the 1st century BC and remained in vogue until well into the Mughal period. To one side of this mound can be seen



The mound at Wahndo.



a portion of a wall of the smaller tiles grafted on an older wall constructed from the large tiles. According to the well known archeologist Dr Saifur Rahman Dar the top layer is definitely Moghul, but what an excavation could reveal from the lower levels is anybody's guess.

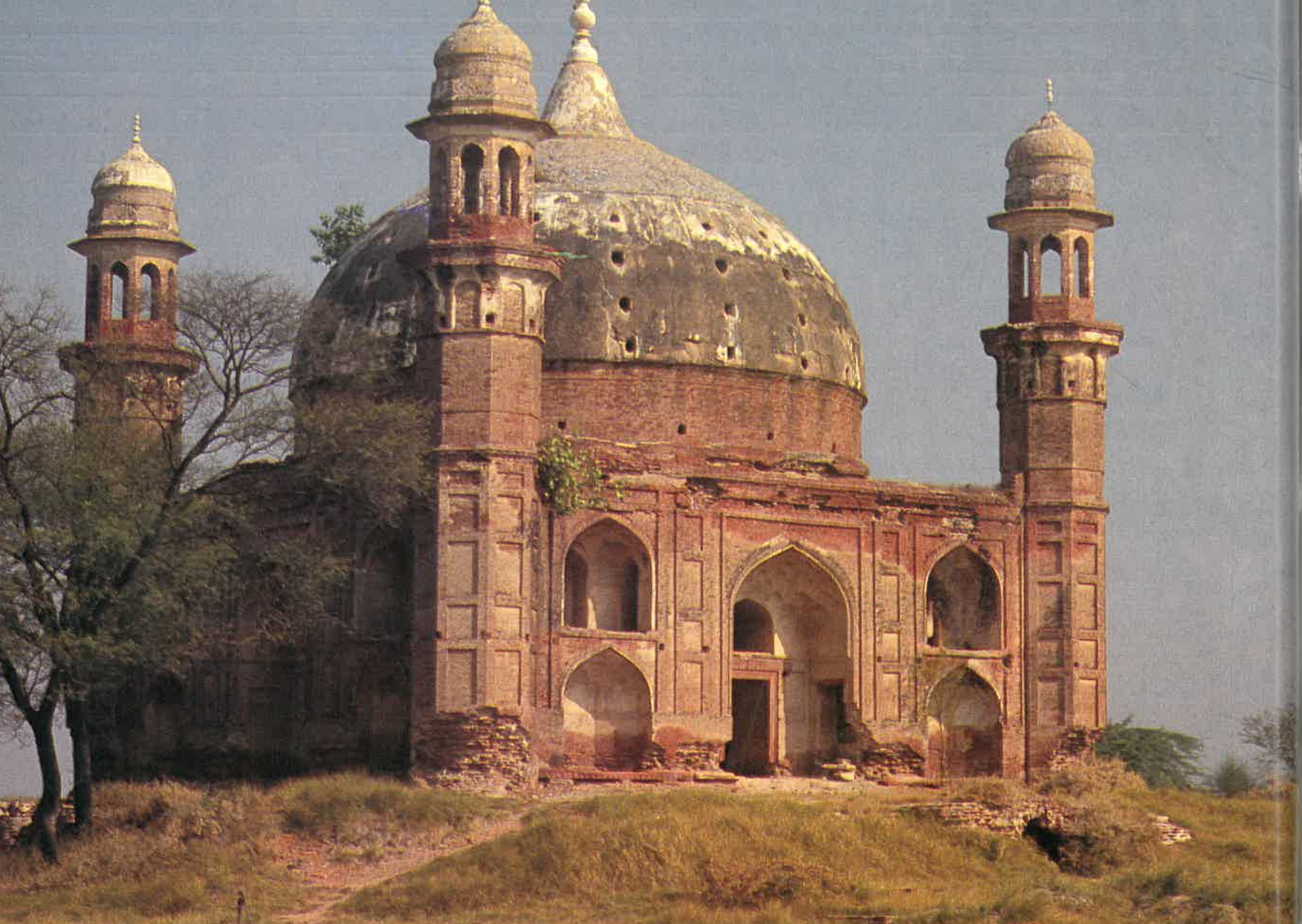
Surely deeper inside this mound history has another story to tell; a story perhaps of the monumental defeat that Raja Vikramaditya inflicted upon the Scythians in the year 58 BC, or perhaps of the exploits of Salvahan, the Rajput raja of Sialkot or his illustrious son, Raja Rasalu, or even perhaps of the savagery of Mehr Gul (Mihirakula), the Attila of Indian Huns. Be what it may, there is, without any doubt, a fabulous epic buried beneath the dust of time that forms the mound of Wahndo.

The Mausoleum at Kotli Maqbra

Carrying on along the black top road in an easterly direction on the alignment of the old road that headed for Amritsar, one reaches the vicinity of the villages of Shadimatta and Saboki Dandian. Here, right outside the village of Kotli Maqbara, a singularly eye catching sight rises out of the absolutely flat farmlands: a large domed building with four stubby minarets at each corner.

Constructed on a high plinth from deep red sandstone, it was at one time an opulent building meant to please the eye of beholder, but is now in an advance state of decrepitude. Most of the plaster from the dome that was at one time decorated with the chevron pattern so popular with the Moghuls is gone, and the multi coloured mosaic inlay on the domes of the minarets is also mostly lost. The facades





of the building are plain in a deep red with a few cracks running through them here and there. The minarets are equipped just below their domes with multi cupsed arches. These, according to Rizwan Azeem, the architect, are the most interesting and definitive dating feature for they were introduced in the period of Shah Jehan. The square chamber which is accessible from any one of four doors on the cardinal points of the compass is empty. From the south an arched tunnel leads into the subterranean burial chamber with three graves. Of these the one in the centre is now draped with the green silk sheet reserved for saints and holy men.

Built as it is in the middle of a great nowhere and in the absence of any accessible historical reference to it, it has quite naturally acquired a metaphysical complexion and the locals attribute it to the jinns. A holy man, they relate, died and the jinns, who were his disciples, were constructing this building in the dark of night when a woman from a neighbouring village began to churn the milk from her she camel. Fearing that day was about





to break and that they would be discovered the jinns made off posthaste.

Presently they realised that they had been obligated to abandon their work because of a very early rising woman. 'May your milk never yield butter.' They cursed her for fooling them into believing that day was about to break, and so it has been from that day that camel's milk has never yielded any butter. And so too, has this tomb since been referred to as Deo Minara -- the Jinns' Minaret.

It is interesting to note that there are at least two more mausoleums where similar stories are related. The one of Khaliq Walid near Kabirwala (Khanewal District) and the other of Saddam Shaheed near the village of Sarwarwala (Muzaffargarh District).

History, however, has another story to tell: this is the tomb of Diwan Abdul Nabi Khan who was the governor of Wazirabad under Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, who, according to Dr Saifur Rahman Dar, the archeologist, was also the tutor of the grandchildren of the illustrious

Nawab Saadullah Khan, the prime minister under Shah Jehan. What is not related is why such an important personality should have been buried in this great wilderness, as it surely must have been towards the end of the 17th century when he died. However, it can be conjectured that this nobleman either died travelling down the direct road from Wazirabad to Amritsar and Delhi which passed through this country or was out hunting when he met his end and was buried here.

Interestingly this beautiful Moghul monument has not received any mention from British archeologist because, Dr Dar believes, they were overwhelmed by their discoveries of Moenjo Daro, Harappa and Taxila and had no interest in later Muslim monuments. This disinterest, sadly was passed on to our archeologists of the post Partition era. And although this is a protected monument a lack of care and preservation has led to its delapidation.



Close up showing interesting multi coloured mosaic inlay known as the *zanjiri* pattern.

5. Minarets that, without the domes, would duplicate those of Chauburji, Lahore.



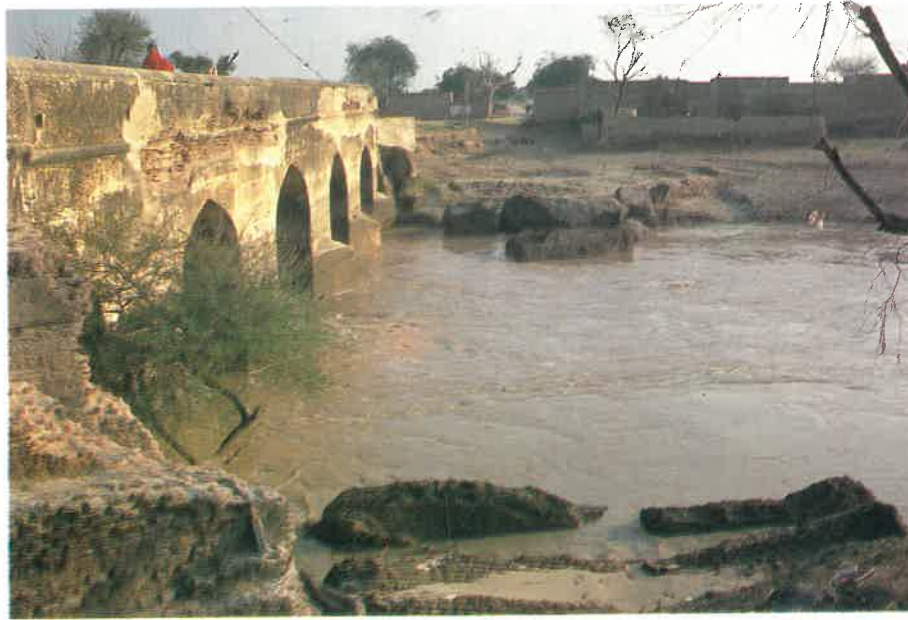
Pottery from the mound
at Kali Suba.

The Mound at Kali Suba

About five kilometers to the east of the tomb of Diwan Abdul Nabi Khan lies the sleepy little hamlet of Kali Suba, said to have been founded about one hundred and fifty years ago by a man named Suba Khan. The village is as unremarkable as any other comparable village in the area but what catches the attention is the dusty mound that it nestles under.

Rising almost eight meters above the houses the mound is strewn with pottery shards and bits of burnt bricks where rain sometimes reveals terra cotta pottery and coloured beads. As is wont to happen, this mound also is used as a graveyard and more than the rains it is the digging of graves that unearths old pottery.

We were told of this mound by Umar Hayat Basrah, a youngish school master who teaches at the village of Kotli Maqbara, but belongs



In mediaeval times the Punjab was criss crossed by a web of highways," says Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar. The Shah Daula Bridge on the River Degh near the village of Gunaoor (approached via Sadhoke) is not only a fine example of moghul bridge architecture but also corroborates Dr Dar's theory. The damaged masonry in the river bed is the debris of an earlier bridge. Although it is, now just another forgotten monument of bygone kings, Tariq Masud of the Lahore Museum relates an interesting anecdote connected with it: Shah Alam, the third son of Aurangzeb, having heard of the death of his father was hurrying from Jamrud to Lahore when he heard of his brother, Azam Shah, crowning himself the emperor in the Deccan. Not to be outdone Shah Alam also underwent the coronation ceremony so as to be able to enter Lahore as the emperor. This ceremony took place at Shah Daula Bridge and although its exact date is not known it must have been shortly before May 3, 1707 on which date he arrived at Lahore.

to Kali Suba. He had come around to investigate us as we were looking around the tomb of Diwan Abdul Nabi Khan and the conversation naturally turned to other ancient buildings and ruined sites which led to visiting the mound.

Umar Hayat said that the digging of a grave recently had turned up two terra cotta pots which were being used as flower vases on a nearby tomb. That is, if they had not already been smashed which was the usual fate for whatever pottery was ever unearthed from the mound, for people neither have any utility for it nor any understanding of its importance.

The pots, fortunately, were intact and the man at the tomb graciously gave them to us. These look like the earthen pots used in Persian wheels until very recently and since they were recovered from the uppermost layer of the mound may not be more than a couple of hundred years old. Lower down in the mound, without doubt, is a great archeological find -- another untold chapter in the history of the Punjab.

Wazirabad

Situated on the banks of the once fresh and clear Palkhu Nala (now a stinking sewer), Wazirabad has no claim to hoary antiquity like neighbouring Sodhra where a ferry afforded crossing from the north bank of the Chenab to the south. And that was the way history passed on into the plains of central Punjab.

Sher Shah Suri established a mail station on the south bank of the Palkhu Nala about a kilometer west of his Grand Trunk Road as it passed through the hamlet of Nizamabad which is today a suburb of Wazirabad. No *serai* appears to have been built here for none of the later travellers mentions anything of the sort but the chunky ruin of Sher Shah's mail station still stands by the side of the G.T Road opposite Wazirabad railway station. Over the years I have seen this historic building decaying and



Sher Shah Suri's mail station at Wazirabad.



Wazirabad Junction. Here you could once change for Sialkot and Jammu. But now the buffer stops at Sialkot are the end of north bound trains on this line.

even remember the existence of a small connected cubicle which is now gone. Local elders point to a grove of trees about two hundred meters away and remember seeing the remains of a building that stabled the horses of the mail riders. Happily, the mail station has been declared a protected monument and the Department of Archeology is planning its restoration.

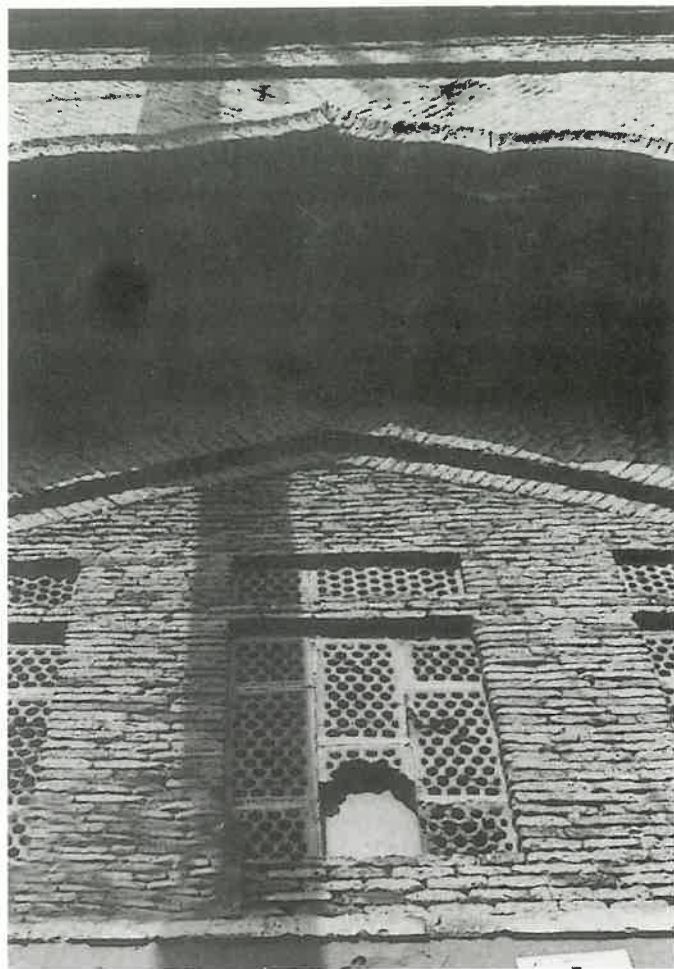
But even the building of Sher Shah's mail station could not boost the area into any semblance of a town for the highroad continued southwards through Nizamabad to Dhaunkal. It was during the reign of Shah Jehan (1627-1666) that his much favoured governor of Lahore, Hakim Ilmuddin, better known as Wazir Khan, ordered the building of a town nine kilometers to the west of Sodhra and called it Wazirabad after himself.

Doubtlessly there must have been a few royal buildings and a rambling oriental bazaar along with its rabble of traders and travellers, adventurers and free freebooters. But all that

has been forgotten, for no traveller of the 17th and 18th century makes any mention of Wazirabad. In those uncertain years of anarchy following the death of Aurangzeb Alamagir the marauding Afghans must have sacked and looted Wazirabad but it must have been an insignificant little village for when around 1760 Sardar Charrat Singh captured it during his tussle with the Afghans he made no effort to maintain his hold over it. It was his illustrious grandson Maharaja Ranjit Singh who won it permanently for the Sikhs in 1809.

Twenty years later Ranjit Singh appointed Paolo de Avitabile governor of Wazirabad. This ruthless Neapolitan adventurer ruled this fair town with the proverbial iron hand. It is related that the Maharaja sent six Sikh convicts to Wazirabad with instructions for Avitabile to ensure they did not escape. The governor immediately had them hanged much to the anger of his Maharaja who, quite naturally, had a soft spot for his co religionists. Avitabile was summoned to the court and the Maharaja demanded an explanation for this rash and





thoughtless act.

“Your Highness,” replied the Italian, “this was the only way I could prevent their escape in accordance with your wish and desire.”

The spontaneity of the reply pleased the Maharaja who laughed and let the matter remain, giving Avitabile the license to continue with his iron rule. And continue he did, for soon Wazirabad was cleansed of all crime. Another thing he did for the town was its rebuilding. He razed Wazir Khan’s Wazirabad and laid out in its stead a new town in the shape of a rectangle with a wide bazaar running in a north-south direction. The north end of this bazaar was adorned with a beautiful palace in the midst of a garden and surrounded by a high wall. Raised on the site of Wazir Khan’s palace it was called Musaman Burj, or The Octagonal Tower. Today they simply call it Saman Burj.

Ranjit Singh on his way to Kashmir or to the troubled frontier in the northwest passed through Wazirabad and stayed at this palace.

It was to please him that the rooms were adorned with paintings of the time. Baron Carl von Hugel, an Austrian traveller, arrived in Wazirabad in January 1836 as a guest of Avitabile and was a trifle unimpressed by Sikh artistry. He wrote: "There the Maharaja has built a palace in the midst of a lovely garden, which is a singular edifice, both in its external form and its internal decorations. It has two stories, and in the centre is a sort of tower which divides the wings, while the outside walls, as well as the apartments within, are adorned with fresco paintings illustrative of the religion of the Sikhs. Among them are the portraits of the ten Gurus from Nanak the first to Govind the last, the size of life; the chief painter of Ranjit's court is certainly not a Rapheal".

Saman Burj is now the residence of the Raja family of Wazirabad, and when we were introduced to the young and articulate Raja Ejazullah he graciously allowed us to see the palace.

"My ancestors were the rajas of Rajori who



Frescoes that survive in the tower at Musamman Burj, thanks to the younger generation of the Raja family.



purchased this building in 1855 when they immigrated from their ancestral Kashmir." explained Raja Ejazullah, "About twenty years ago that they started to obliterate the frescoes for they considered the drawing of animal and human figures repugnant to Islam. Many rooms were washed over with paint and all would have been lost had we, the younger generation, not prevailed and got one of the rooms to retain its heathen imagery."

We were taken up an old staircase into a room that could well have been the "tower" that von Hugel had alluded to for here all around us were the paintings "illustrative of the religion of the Sikhs" interspersed with panels showing platters of various fruits and the delicate inter twining of foliated vines amid many coloured flowers. We could not help feeling deeply grateful to the younger Rajas of Wazirabad! All around outside this room runs an octagonal terrace with a lotus shaped brick and stucco seat at each corner and outside the walls meanders the languid Palkhu -- still fresh and clean for the sewers of the town have not

yet added to it. Beyond the river stretches an unbroken expanse of farmland which now dissolves into a formless mist in the distance. European travellers of the 17th and 18th century wrote of seeing the snowy range of Pir Panjal in Kashmir with the twin pyramids of Mer and Ser rising above it. -- I remember seeing this impressive sight as late as the mid seventies from the Palkhu bridge. But now our ruthless treatment of the environment has put paid to this wonderful vista.

It was the wide and beautiful bazaar of Avitabile that enthralled the people of the town for von Hugel found them "enraptured with the present beauty of the bazaar of Wazirabad, and its charms were boastingly represented to me long before I saw it". To a people used to life in the narrow, crowded confines of an oriental bazaar this certainly must have been a novelty. Even today it retains a semblance, but a mere semblance only, of past grandeur with its few surviving *havelis* and endless shops dealing in all the plastic merchandise of a twentieth century provincial Punjabi town.





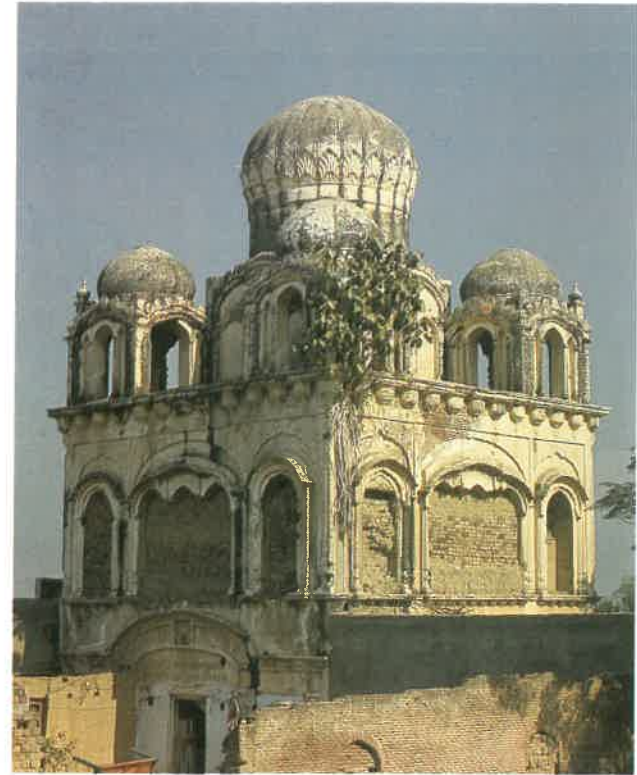
Once they made cannons, armour, swords and daggers. Now it is mostly kitchen knives and scissors.

Wazirabad's one claim to fame is the facility of her sons at metal work and it is not unusual to see hovel after dark hovel with man bent over motor driven grinding wheel giving the final touches to one kind of knife or the other in a blazing shower of sparks. Time has only changed the nature of the metal work. Now they confine themselves to the making of cutlery and dangerous looking jack knives; fifty years ago their speciality was swords and daggers and in Ranjit Singh's time it was cannons and armour. When King Louis Philippe of France sent a gift of a few sets of cuirasses they were very faithfully reproduced by the metal and leather workers of Wazirabad much to the pleasure of the Maharaja.

With the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 the Punjabi empire fell to pieces and was supplanted by the British who made Wazirabad a district headquarter with Sialkot and Gujranwala as a part of it. In April 1860 Wazirabad forfeited this status to Gujranwala in exchange for another restitution: it was going to be the great railway junction where trains

from Peshawar and Multan were to divert for Jammu in the Himalayan heartland. And so it was for some years, but Partition in 1947 changed all that, and the train that once reached Jammu now terminates at Sialkot.

Har Gobind, the sixth guru of Sikhism (1595-1640), a remarkable traveller whose preaching took him over a great part of the Punjab and Kashmir once sojourned at Wazirabad. The house where he stayed later became a hallowed site for the followers of Guru Nanak and Ranjit Singh ordered the building of an unusual Gurdwara called Guru da Kotha (House of the Guru). Its bulbous, segmented dome on a high drum, surrounded by four corner domes, rises impressively above the town's skyline, but at closer quarters it is no more than a decaying, uncared for building that belongs to a "faithless people". At one time it was the centre of an annual congregation but like every other evacuee building now serves as a private residence and is defaced by the cancerous growth of additional rooms put up by the residents.



Guru Kotha: a unique piece of Sikh architecture that may not grace the skyline of Wazirabad for many years more.



Shish Mahal, once the most opulent structure in town; now a crumbling ruin apportioned amongst several *muhajir* families.

Not very far is the once resplendent Shish Mahal -- Palace of Mirrors, built as a humble copy of the real thing in Lahore Fort. This was a sprawling estate with several stately buildings, terraces, gardens and fountains enclosed by a high wall and was owned by Diwan Hikmat Rai, a rich and powerful nobleman in the government of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His private apartments were richly decorated with stucco, mirror work and frescoes of which only a few panels remain in bits and pieces; for once again this building is the property of refugees. It is divided into several portions, sometimes with ugly brick and clay walls dividing a single room. The once beautiful frontage is untidily bifurcated into a number of narrow courtyard, and the outer wall has been demolished. The grandeur and beauty of Shish Mahal has succumbed to our callousness for evacuee property.

Qazi Munawar who works in the office of the Assistant Commissioner remembers seeing these additions to Shish Mahal and Guru da Kotha coming up like ugly warts during the



The tomb of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan in the lawns of the ancestral house. It was after the death of his father, Maulvi Sirajuddin Ahmad, the founder of the weekly newspaper *Zamindar* of Wazirabad, that Maulana Zafar Ali Khan took over its editorship. He shifted the paper's office to Lahore and made it a daily. The maulana was a rather unusual man with a brashly forthright manner, both in speech and in writing and his vocal opposition of the Raj won him many a Muslim admirer. The house is now abandoned save for the weekly visits of the Maulana's sons and this simple tomb is looked after by a retainer.



One of the two surviving panels of mirror work that gave the building its name.



Peeling plaster and paint on the facade of Shish Mahal.



All but hidden by a clump of *sheesham* trees: the mosque of Sher Shah outside Wazirabad on the road to Dhaunkal.

last twenty years. He also recalls seeing the garden and its fountains and the beauty they lent to the town. He laments their disappearance but the people who live in Shish Mahal care naught for what Wazirabad has lost because of their disregard for the town's heritage.

Were you to follow Sher Shah's Grand Trunk Road to the south, it would take you through the suburb of Nizamabad to Dhaunkal -- a narrow, uncrowded country road that meanders through open farmlands, a pleasing change from the maddening recklessness of the modern G.T Road. This is the road of history; of unholy invasion and rapine and of pious pilgrimage and the wanderings of ascetics and men of God in the service of religions. Today it is a rural connection between Wazirabad and Dhaunkal.

Just outside Nizamabad as one heads southwards the rotund grass covered domes of a building hidden behind a row of *sheesham* trees to the right of the road, all but evade the eye. Investigation reveals it to be a mosque that has not known worshippers for many, many

years. They call it the mosque of Sher Shah Suri -- and rightly so. Since the nearby Palkhu and the Aik nalas seasonally flooded this countryside the mosque is built on a raised plinth with rooms at the lower level that serve as home to an elderly couple

The interior is decorated with simple frescoes and colourful mosaics but the most interesting feature is the graffiti. The oldest, from the years 1007 Hijri (1596 AD) and 1104 Hijri (1694 AD), are in a beautiful *nastaliq* script giving the names of the writers as Mirza Sultan Mohammed Khan and Qadir Baksh Khan. But our illiteracy in Persian, the language of the graffiti, left us thirsting for what messages lay concealed in those monographs. And there are later ones: the school boy who came on June 8, 1921 for it was Eid-ul-Fitr; and Ghalib Shah who visited the mosque in 1940. Qazi Munawar, our escort, said he was acquainted with this man and that he had died about ten years ago at the ripe old age of eighty.

About a couple of kilometers further down



The *mehrab* adorned with faded frescoes.



The *baoli*. If Sher Shah were to return from the dead, he would be a sorry man to see what has become of his monuments.

another Suri relic stands by the roadside on a base that is fast eroding due to the action of sub soil salts. This *baoli* once stood next to a *serai* of which no trace now exists. It is a silent reminder of the fact that Sher Shah's Grand Trunk Road did indeed pass this way. The water is rank with the refuse of neighbouring villages and the steps leading down to it are overgrown with mimosa. Soon the well will be filled up and the bricks will turn to dust; then a wayfarer on this road will go unaware that he is travelling down the highway of history.

Dhaunkal

This nondescript village between Gujranwala and Wazirabad is said to have been built by a Raja Dharekal in the days of Mahmud Ghaznavi, but it appears to have never been of any consequence during its long history until Ahmad Sultan, popularly known as Sakhi Sarwar, sojourned here briefly.

This man of God is believed to have been born in the early years of the 13th century to an Arab immigrant family of Multan. Soon after his father's death he was forced to leave home because of the inimical behaviour of his cousins. During these years of wandering he was married to the daughter of Raja Ghanno of Multan, and the plentiful dowry that came with this wedding was distributed among the poor by this man of God thereby earning the title of Sakhi Sarwar -- the Bountiful Lord.



The cupola over the spring supposed to have been miraculously started by Sakhi Sarwar.



6



His wanderings brought him to Dhaunkal where he is believed to have miraculously procured a fresh water spring that is even today the site of an annual fair during the Punjabi months of Chet and Harr. On the exact spot where he engaged in prayers a mosque was built in the reign of Shah Jehan and the miraculous spring was turned into a well. This well later recieved a dome from Ranjit Singh showing the secular nature of people's devotion for Sakhi Sarwar.

The exterior of the mosque and the cupola on the well, are replete with excellent frescoes that typify Sikh artistry of the early 19th century. Among the many depictions on the cupola are those of the lovers Sassi-Punnu and Laila-Majnu, besides some showing the various Gurus of Sikhism. Those on the wall of the mosque are remarkable for showing a pair of rats stealing fruit from a loaded platter. It is remarkable for not only is it extremely unlikely for a living form to be depicted on a mosque but for the artist's preoccupation with rats which is a startling departure from the usual peacocks, bulbuls and parakeets.

Sodhra

Long before Sher Shah Suri could rebuild Vikramaditya's highway and call it the Grand Trunk Road; long before Wazir Khan built his Wazirabad, Malik Ayaz, the favourite slave who rose to eminence under Mahmud Ghaznavi, laid out a rich and opulent city some three kilometers south of the ferry on the Chenab. It was a spacious city with many beautiful palaces and gardens, and a high fortification wall running around it.

Legend relates, perhaps as an index of the great expanse of the city, that this wall was interspersed with one hundred gates. And so it was that Malik Ayaz called his city Sud-Darra -- City of a Hundred Gates, a title that evolved into the modern name of the town. This is the legend that the people of Sodhra are so fond of relating to visitors; but legend it is and no

more. Being the biggest town in the area its dozen or so gates would exaggeratedly have been referred to as a hundred by her proud inhabitants in those far off times. It certainly was a good sized town for the ferry was known as being on the "river of Sodhra"

Humayun, the second Mughal emperor was deprived of his empire by Sher Shah Suri, the Afghan, in 1540 and became a fugitive in the country that his own father had made into an empire. As long as Sher Shah lived Humayun could not make a comeback, try as he may. One of the impediments all this while was his own power hungry brother, Mirza, Kamran. In 1555, ten years after Sher Shah had been killed in an explosion outside the walls of the fortress of Kalanjar, Humayun returned to India to reclaim his father's empire. It was at the ferry of Sodhra that the hapless Kamran, travelling in disguise, was discovered, put into chains and taken before Humayun who duly blinded him and packed him off to Arabia for pilgrimage.

Not many years later, in 1605, the same

ferry proved the undoing of another Mughal prince. This time it was Khusro. Having rebelled against his father, Jehangir, he was imprisoned in the fort of Agra from where he contrived to escape and set out for Kabul. But by the King's decree all routes of escape were being watched, and as the prince and his accomplices attempted to cross the Chenab under cover of darkness they were discovered and captured. Ironically, Khusro was presented in chains to his father in a *baradari* on the west bank of the Ravi. This garden and *baradari* had been laid out on the orders of Mirza Kamran.

After the Ghaznavides the town fell into decay and was rebuilt on the direction of governor Ali Mardan under Shah Jehan. When it was thus renovated it must have been a city visible from the distance for the debris of centuries had raised it above the surrounding plains. It was equipped with a wide bazaar that ran in a north-south direction and with impressive *havelis* and luxurious gardens that the Mughals simply could not live without. In view of the great revenue that Sodhra could muster



Bygone grandeur. One of the few surviving *havelis* at Sodhra -- the City of a Hundred Gates. Even those that survive are decrepit and forlorn.

it was made a *pargannah* and soon it was submitting Rs 1,200,000 to the Mughal court.

This must have been the golden age of Sodhra for outside the modern village lie extensive ruins buried beneath the fertile soil, ruins that very likely date from the Mughal era. Even the names that have survived the passage of time are delightfully evocative: Chah Hamaman Wallah (Well of the Bath House) and Chah Baghan Wallah (Well of the Gardens) are two of the several. The latter refers to the garden that Ali Mardan laid out faithfully on the pattern of Lahore's Shalimar Garden. These were the suburbs of the town where the wealthy built their pleasure houses and whiled away summer afternoons under groves of mango and mulberry trees.

This was not far from the highroad that connected Wazirabad with Sialkot and Jammu; the highroad that the Mughal kings sometimes used on their journey to the invigorating heights of Kashmir. Not far from Chah Baghan Wallah are the remains of this old road with one

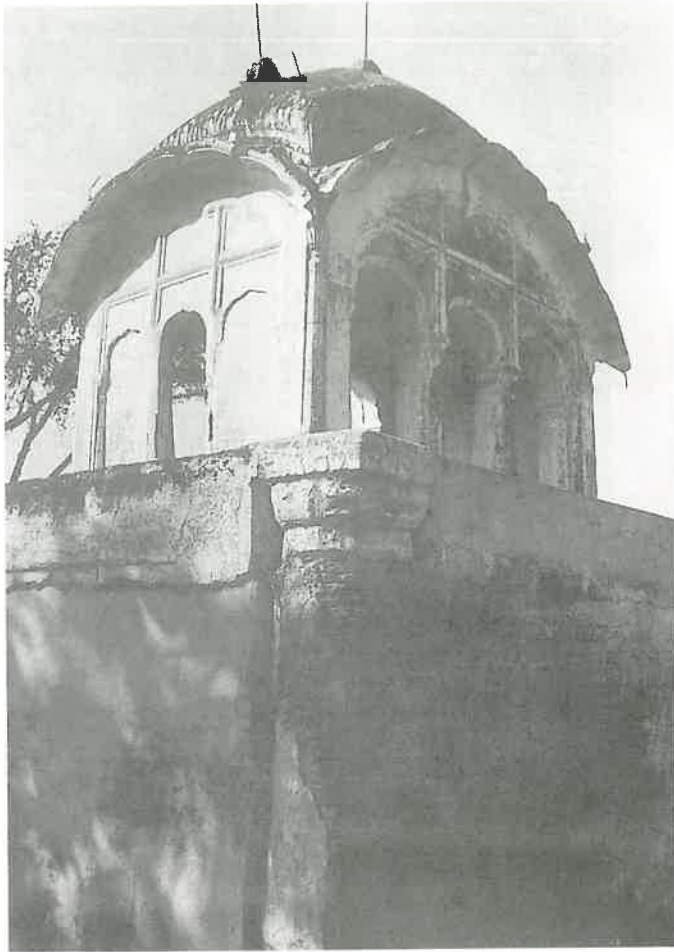
culvert over a now non-existent stream still bravely holding its own.

Under a spreading banyan tree in the north west corner of town is an oblong dome built in Sikh style under which lie the mortal remains of a *pir*. Pir Mastan Shah appears from all accounts to have been a madman who lived here around the end of the 18th century. Legend relates that Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his half brother were brought into the presence of this saint by his step mother so that the man could pray for the future maharaja's brother to be king. He looked at both children and reportedly said, "Your son may not make it to the throne but that boy, blind in one eye, certainly will."

So it was said and so it happened. Therefore, they say, when Ranjit Singh succeeded his father he ordered the building of the *pir's* tomb, who in the meantime had died. But this is clearly an embellishment that grows naturally around the person of a supposed saint; for the Maharaja had no half brother! However, it is certain that Ranjit Singh did hold the saint, living or dead,



The pavilion that houses the mortal remains of the madman turned saint. Although the legend about his foreseeing the ascension of Ranjit Singh to the throne is baseless, the architecture shows that the building was constructed in the Maharaja's reign, who must have reposed great faith in the spiritual prowess of the madman.



in some deference, for the tomb is clearly a relic of Sikh architecture. Today the tomb has an aged *mujawar* who tells the story of the prognostication with relish as if to legitimise his own presence.

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6. Punnun being kidnapped by his brothers is wrongly shown waving farewell to Sassi and her friends. According to the tale the lovers were drugged before Punnun could be carried away and it was not until the following morning that Sassi realised that her lover had been forcibly taken away.
 7. A scene from the story of Laila and Mujnun. It is interesting to note that although the well and the neighbouring mosque are hallowed by Muslims, these painting and the building they adorn were executed on the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. That was time when a Sikh or a Hindu could pay respect at a Muslim shrine and vice versa -- that was time of far greater religious tolerance than today.

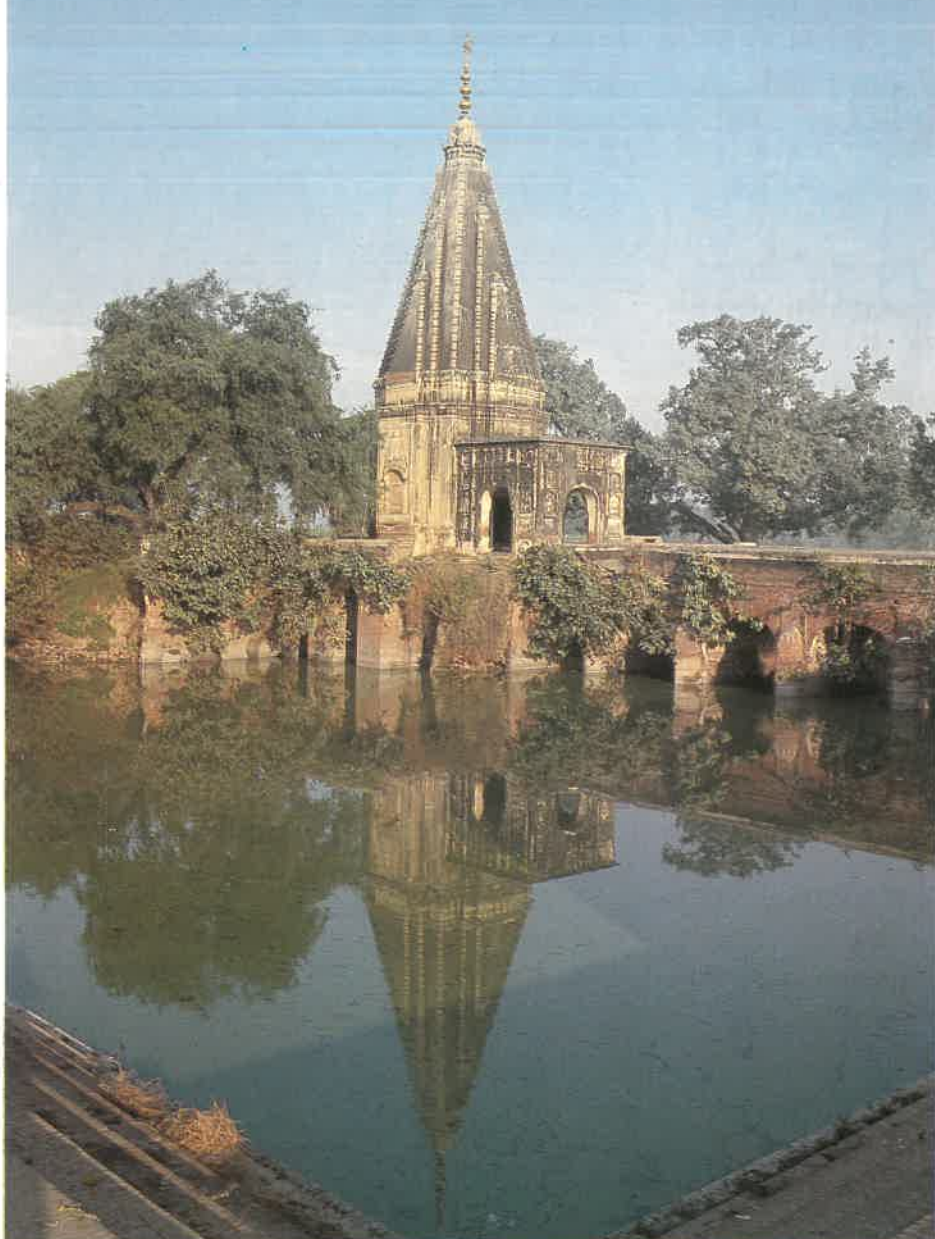
The Temple of Baddoke Gosaian

At Gakkhar Mandi a narrow road takes off from G.T Road between the grid station and Alhamra Cinema and leads westward to the village of Baddoke Gosaian three kilometers away. Even before one reaches the village, the slender spire of a Shivite temple rising above the banyan and *beri* trees and casting a narcissistic shadow on the algae green surface of the square pool catches the eye.

A slothful chowkidar, an employee of the Department of Fisheries, lives on the premises to mind the fish farm that the pond serves as. Besides relating how he never allows fishing in the pond without the express orders of the Governor of the Punjab himself, he dramatically tells of the occasion when some local thugs bound and gagged him in order to steal the gold finial on top of the spire. "But those



View from the west with the ruined hulk of the pilgrims' hostel in the background.

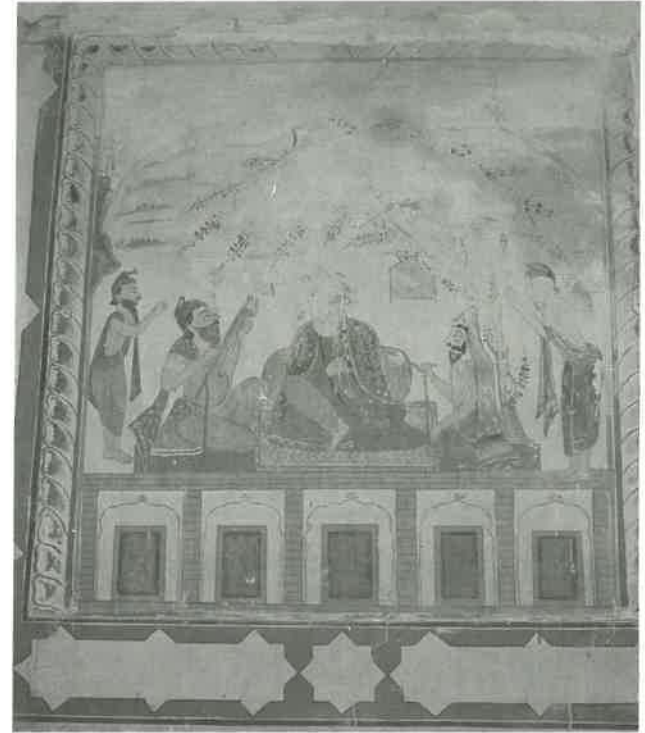


The temple as seen from the east. Notice the walkway with the arches.

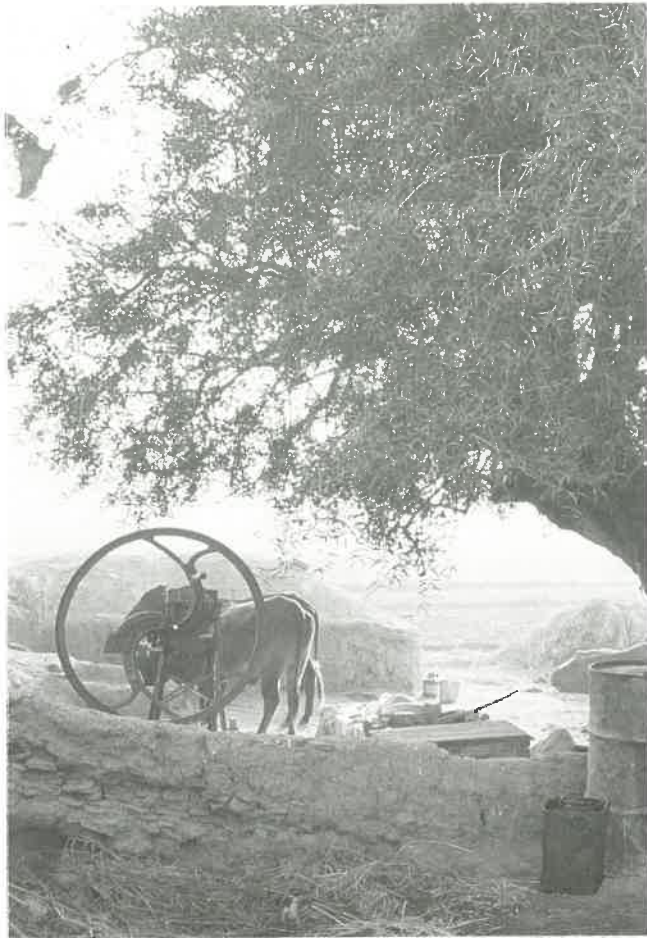
jokers could not climb any higher than the porch.” he concludes gleefully.

Baba Rama Nand, the legend goes, was born in 1504 and from his early years showed signs of great piety. He was but seven years old when he began to tend his father’s cattle and routinely allowed them to feed in the corn fields. When the owners remonstrated with his father, the boy would ask to be shown the damaged fields and, lo and behold, the fields would be more fruitful than ever before. Soon it became known that Rama Nand was no ordinary child and people looked upon him with great reverence.

When he came of age his parents found a suitable match for the young saint in order to wed him off but the boy staunchly refused but in vain. On the day of the betrothal Rama Nand went, walking stick in hand, to the village pond to bathe. There he left the staff sticking in the mud and disappeared into the pond. Try as they could, the villagers never found any trace of the man again; except his staff which



A Sikh nobleman with attendants. Despite the endeavours of the younger Rajas to save the frescoes this has been defaced rendering the face of the subject unrecognisable.



A village scene near Eminabad.

by and by turned into a *beri* tree.

With the passage of time he was forgotten -- by all except his mother, who visited the pond daily to wail and beat her breast. One day while she was at it Rama Nand appeared to her and said that she could see him every day on the condition that she kept these meetings a closely guarded secret. Fallible that she was, the mother could not keep her promise. Thereafter Rama Nand disappeared forever.

Near the pond which was thenceforth considered sacred a small temple was built and every year on the fourteenth of the month of Bisakhi Hindus congregated here in the memory of Baba Rama Nand. In 1865 Diwan Kirpa Ram of Eminabad, who was a minister in the State of Jammu and Kashmir got the sacred pond enlarged and lined with bricks in the centre of which a new and picturesque temple was erected. Under the *beri* tree that is believed to have evolved from the saint's staff was built a smaller temple.

The chowkidar says that although the Hindus

had immigrated in 1947 it is now Muslims who resorted to this small temple under the tree to burn their oil lamps and candles and to pray for deformed children to be cured. Surely, he asserts disdainfully, these Muslims are deficient in their own faith.

The interior of the temple is a plain square room where the chowkidar has taken up residence. The icon within must have been destroyed in the riots of partition but the exterior is decorated with stucco pilasters and miniature temples, under which are some faded frescoes, the most well preserved of these shows Surya, the sun god, in a horse drawn carriage. This and the fact that the temple faces east shows that it was consecrated to Shiva.

The temple is no architectural wonder but its beauty lies in the setting: brick walkway across the algae green pond, stately spire on the island in the middle casting a shadow on the water and the lush green surrounding. The chowkidar narrates how another pious man, a haji from Baddoke Gosaian, planning to pull



Surya, the Sun God. The only adornment that remains on the temple.



Carved door from Alipur Chattha.

down this "infidel" building and bring the land under the plough contrived to get it allotted to himself by showing that the temple did not exist. Had this unthinking destruction been allowed the surrounding trees where the golden oriole sings and where the koel announces the coming of the monsoon would have been cut down killing the magic of this spot. But that is happily not to be for under the orders of the Deputy Commissioner the temple has been protected and turned into a tourist resort of sorts.

And so it comes to pass that while people "of an inferior sort of faith" resort here to burn their oil lamps under the *beri* tree and pray for the cure of their children's deformities, the koel and the golden oriole sing in the banyan trees. They sing as though thanking the powers that be for the preservation of their habitat.

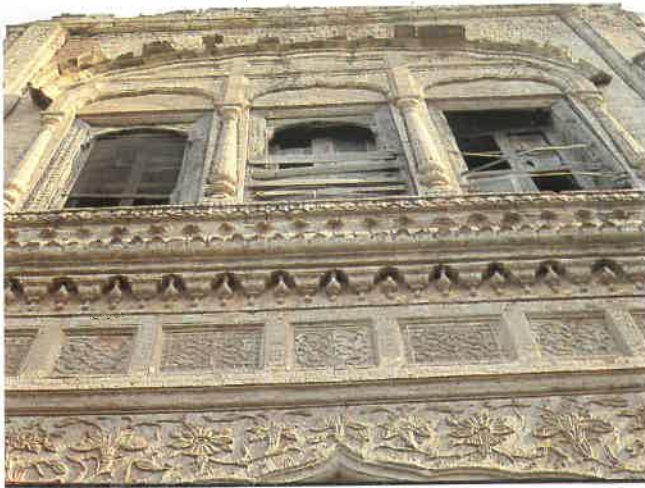
Alipur Chattha

It was founded by Pir Mohammed, a Jat chieftain of the Chattha sub caste in the early years of the 18th century and named after his grandson Ali Mohammed. In the years of anarchy after the death of Aurnagzeb the Sikhs under Mahan Singh overran this town and renamed it Akalgarh.

When Ranjit Singh succeeded to the throne Akalgarh was held by Dal Singh, an associate of the Bhangis of Gujrat, who stubbornly resisted the power of the one eyed Maharaja. Ranjit invested the fortress of Akalgarah but failed to overcome it at which point hostilities were temporarily suspended on the intercession of neighbouring Sardars. But soon afterwards Dal Singh died and Ranjit Singh feigning grief appeared outside the walls of the town and captured it by subterfuge.



The *Deori* at Alipur. No one knows how many besiegers despaired outside its massive wooden gates.



Facade of the *haveli* of Diwan Bansi Lal at Alipur.



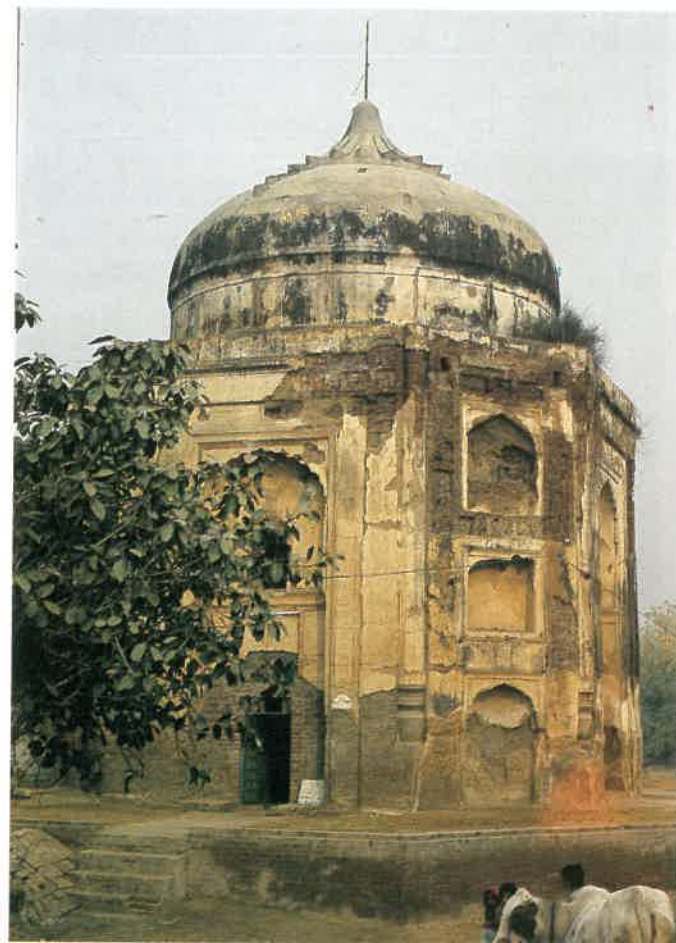
Detail of woodwork
from the same *haveli*.

Since its founding almost a century earlier it had been the home of rich Hindu families and when Ranjit Singh took control he could not help being impressed by the administrative capabilities of Diwan Sawan Mal. Soon this man was representing the Sikh crown at Multan and it was his son, Mul Raj, who engineered the cold blooded murders of Lieutenant Anderson and the civil servant Vans-Agnew that precipitated in the Second Sikh War. Akalgarh, as punishment for having borne such a son, suffered much when British troops destroyed the *havelis* of the Diwans.

Under the rich Banias Akalgarh was a very beautiful city with many fair gardens, opulent *havelis* and *baradaris* adorned with the most exquisite frescoes some of which remain to this day, though in a ruinous state. With the founding of Pakistan the Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India and Akalgarh once again reverted to its old name of Alipur Chattha. Now the *havelis* are falling to pieces in the possession of the refugees of Partition while the *baradari*, past the railway station, is a crumbling



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hulk whose beautiful frescoes stubbornly recall better times.

8. The old highway having crossed the Chenab at the ferry of Rasulnagar made its way to Delhi via Lahore. This bridge to the east of Alipur is a *zeiigeist* from that time. Although they are now gone but until a few years ago there were old milestones along this road ticking off the distance between Ramnagar (as the Sikhs called Rasulnagar) and Delhi.
9. Not far from Alipur and on the banks of the Lower Chenab Canal is the forgotten tomb of a forgotten man of God -- Sadrudin Chishti who died in the year 1080 AH (1670 AD). This saint had the patronage of the Moghul king Shah Jehan and later of his son, Aurangzeb. The mausoleum built in the reign of the latter and despite being in very bad shape is a fine example of Moghul architecture in the last years of the 17th century. The priceless monument, although protected, is falling to pieces and is being held together by the patchwork maintenance of local masons.
10. The gardens of the Diwans where until a few years before Partition students of the local school were taken for nature study are no more. All that remains is the ruinous hulk of the *baradari*. Soon this, too, will be replaced by some ugly cement concrete monster.



Detail of cut brick decoration
from another mansion at Alipur



In an era of modern spinning mills this old woman keeps alive an ageless method -- the *charkha*, perhaps only as long as she herself lives.

Rasulnagar

Another town founded by the Chatthas in the early years of the 18th century was Rasulnagar on the left bank of the Chenab. It was the site of a well frequented ferry on the direct road from Lahore to Peshawar and a staging post on that from Multan to Sialkot and Jammu, a situation that soon after its founding raised its status to a busy market town.

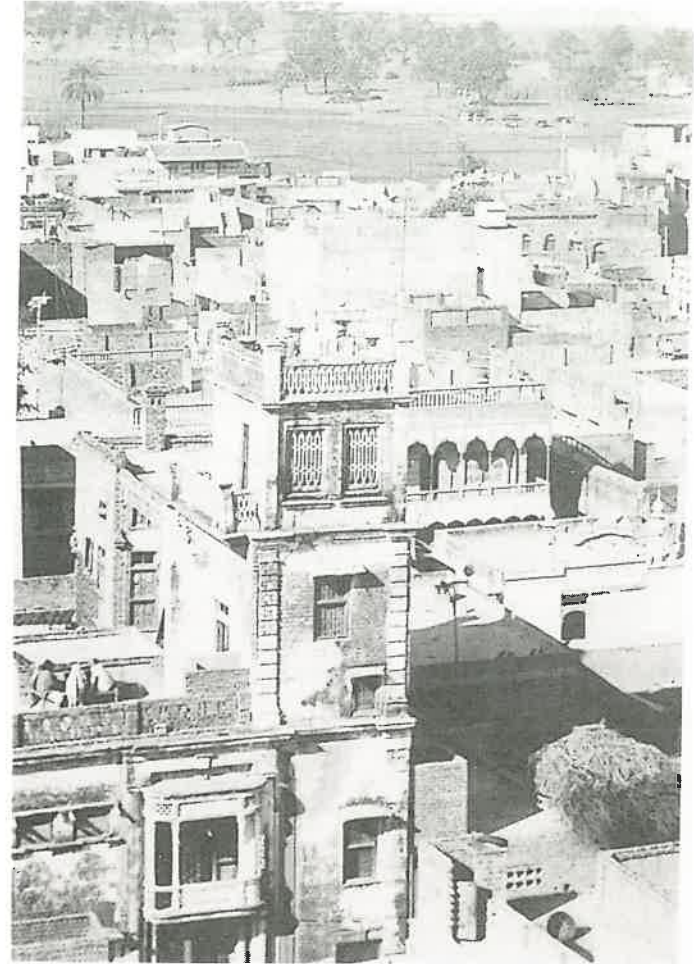
It was on this ferry that the famous Zam Zama, that now lies outside the Lahore Museum, fell into the hands of the Bhangis of Gujrat. The year was perhaps 1752 when the marauding savages of Ahmad Shah Abdali were attempting to take this monster of a cannon across the river on its way to Afghanistan. But harassed as they were by roving bands of Sikh looters they only managed to get it bogged down in

the sand. With the Afghans retreating on the other side of the Chenab the Bhangis happily took possession of the gun.

Spirited commerce naturally attracted Bania families to Rasulnagar with whose wealth the town became one of the finest in the area. Its inhabitants took to calling their town a *shehr* and even today the battered buses that connect Rasulnagar with Gujranwala proudly display the legend "Shehr Rasulnagar" behind the front windshield.

With the rise of Sikh power Mahan Singh fought a number of bloody actions against Pir Mohammed Chattha of Rasulnagar but failed to make any headway. Then, perfidiously offering the Chattha a hand of friendship, he threw the valiant man into chains and took over Rasulnagar, ruthlessly destroying whatever the town could boast of.

This is the local tradition, while the Gazetteer of Gujranwala District -- 1935 records: "It was finally stormed in 1799 by Ranjit Singh after a gallant resistance made by Ghulam





Ranjit Singh's summer house from where he watched the sun setting beyond the eddies of the Chenab but where a high embankment now obstructs the view.

Mohammed, who then represented the family, and, passing into the hands of the Sikh ruler, received its new name of Ramnagar."

After the annexation of the Punjab to the British empire and the building of the railway from Multan to Sialkot the ferry became redundant and river borne trade declined sharply. This was the death knell for Ramnagar as it was still being called. Its rich families forsook it for newer pastures and it was virtually reduced to poverty. But the inhabitants still very proudly call it Shehr Rasulnagar and the grandest monument that it can boast of is the elegant Jain temple in the middle of town. Abandoned as all other temples at the time of Partition it is now the property of the Department of Auqaf who have rented it out to a local who uses it as a lavatory and a pigeon coop.

North of the town, on the banks of the languid Chenab, surrounded by a once luxurious orchard and garden of which only a vestige now remains, is a large house, its yellow wash blackened with age and part of its roof caved

in. On the southern facade of the building is a marble plaque that reads:

Summer residence of
Maharaja Ranjit Singh
AD 1830-1837

Surely this was an appropriate place for the Maharaja to build a palace where he could while away the long days of high summer, for it was here that he had attained a singular victory over the Afghans in 1797. And here, once his empire was consolidated, he could sit back and mull over past glories.

Shah Zaman's excursion of rapine and plunder in the winter of 1796-97 was cut short by news of the revolt of his brother at home. Leaving Shahanchi Khan, his ablest officer, in charge of the affairs in the Punjab he hurried off with the Sikhs, as usual, hot on the heels of the departing looters. Shahanchi Khan underestimating the power of the Sikhs tried to cut them down near the ferry of Rasulnagar but was roundly defeated by Ranjit Singh.



The obelisk.....



.....and the plaque commemorating the death of Lieutenant Colonel William Havelock on the battlefield of Rasulnagar (Ramnagar).

It was this victory that raised the stature of Ranjit Singh from the virtually unknown son of Mahan Singh to one of the most skillful generals of the time. But the stubby white monument outside Ranjit's summer house does not commemorate the victory of January 1797. It commemorates another victory; not for the Sikhs, but for the British.

The summer of 1839 was a joyless summer for the Punjab. It was the end of the one and only time in history that the Punjabis had ruled a country stretching from the Khyber to the Jamuna and from Kashmir to Multan. All this because of one man -- Ranjit Singh. But the empire went up like the smoke from his funeral pyre for Kharrak Singh, his inept son given to the pleasure of opium, was soon supplanted by his own son Naunehal Singh who, in turn, gave way to Sher Singh, an illegitimate son of the late Maharaja.

It seemed the Sikh nation was bent upon destroying itself like some maddened beast tearing itself asunder, and save for the first few

weeks the reign of Sher Singh was dogged by intrigue and perfidy. All this while the British, then masters of a major part of India were waiting in the wings, watching their work being taken care of. Then, with the Punjabis sufficiently weakened and divided, not only from internal strife but also from five debilitating battles against the British, they were cowed into the treaty of December 16, 1846 making the British virtual masters of the country.

The final hour began when Diwan Mul Raj, the governor of Multan, contrived the murders of Lieutenant Anderson and Mr Vans-Agnew who were supervising the installation of a new governor. This triggered what was to be known as the Second Sikh War and within four months the fort of Multan was ceded to the British and the Sikhs were expelled to the west of the Chenab.

In their last and desperate attempt to dislodge the British from the country the Sikhs rallied to the call of Sher Singh Atariwala and gathered fifteen thousand strong on the banks of the

Chenab outside the village of Ramnagar. And so it was that the sun of November 22, 1848 rose to an intense artillery battle that was followed by a cavalry engagement in which many a brave man on both sides laid down his life. The British prevailed and the Sikhs withdrew to the west of the Chenab. But this battle of Ramnagar was in no way decisive. It was the Battle of Chillianwala, less than two months later, that destroyed the power of the Sikhs finally and irrevocably.

The white obelisk is in the memory of Lieutenant Colonel William Havelock who fell in action on that winter morning, while the neighbouring graves are unmarked. Nowhere is there any mention of the many Sikhs who laid down their lives fighting for the freedom of their country.

After the annexation of the Punjab the Maharaja's palace was used as a rest house for itinerant officials, a legacy that was passed on to post partition Pakistan. Now for the last twenty five years it has lain derelict -- a

forgotten relic of a forgotten king.

To this historical note there is an amusing postscript: Outside the Maharaja's house, a little distance from the obelisk and the two graves is another tree shaded grave draped with the green silk depicting the burial of a Muslim saint. This, the blind chowkidar (a remarkable paradox in himself!) said, was the last resting place of the exalted and holy Syed Sher Shah who died in the "great battle between the British and the Sikhs". What he could not reveal, however, was whose side this syed was fighting on.

Inside the crumbling residence of the Maharaja, reclining against the wall, are two memorial plaques. One sacred to the memory of Brigadier General Charles Cureton and the other commemorating the death of Ensign Henry Curry Hillier who died of small pox at Ramnagar on December 18, 1848. This latter plaque had lain for many years on the all but obliterated grave now worshipped as the last resting place of Syed Sher Shah. And there it

was found by the team of British historians and Pakistani masons who had renovated this memorial some years ago.

The mason, perhaps with a shade of mischief or because he did not want to disappoint the blind chowkidar by showing ignorance, told the man that the grave was the last resting place of the holy Syed Sher Shah. This the chowkidar in all his innocence believed unquestioningly. Now logic and sensibility dictate that the tomb where the plaque was found was that of the man commemorated thereon, but the blind chowkidar, with his eyes staring sightlessly into the distance, insists on it containing the mortal remains of a holy man because the mason had said so.

Without doubt what was harmless mischief on the part of the mason proved to be the birth of a lasting quasi religious cult for already the "pious" have started resorting to this grave every Thursday to burn the oil lamp and pray for sons and wealth. Soon a cupola will be built over the simple grave and then will come

the institution of the annual *urs* and the birth of incredible stories of the miracles that the "saint" wrought in his life time -- which, of course, would be in the early years of Islam. Thus another *pir* is born; this time from the tomb of an English soldier who was cheated out of the glory of dying in battle and had succumbed ignominiously to small pox barely a month later. Perhaps this is Providence's way of immortalising the humble Ensign Henry Curry Hillier.

But whatever the blind chowkidar and others of his ilk do to this long dead soldier they would do well, in deference to the departed soul, to let his correct name go down to posterity: Syed Henry Hillier Shah.



A view of the village of Papnakh from the mound of the ancient ruined settlement. Under the graves that are scattered over the mound perhaps the palace of Rani Luna waits to be discovered.

Papnakh

Out of the misty annals of almost forgotten early history the near legendary Raja Rasalu stares at us as large as life. There are few places in the length and breadth of the Punjab that do not have one tale or the other to narrate of his heroism.

He was the son of Salvahan, the rajput raja of Sialkot and Luna, who, according to the ballad of *Puran Bhagat* as written by Qadir Yar, was a tanner's daughter. But another tradition relates that Luna was the daughter of Raja Pulpa, the founder of the city of Papnakh.

So removed from us in time as Raja Salvahan is, it is nevertheless certain that he did rule over Sialkot in the first century BC. And, as the ballad goes, he fathered a son from his wife Ichhran and called him Puran. When this lad was but twelve years old he was cut up

and left in a well to die on the orders of his father for Luna, his step mother, had accused him of attempting to seduce her.

Puran had his amputated limbs restored by the great Guru Goraknath who found him in the well and thereafter became a *chela* of this man of God. Later it was Puran who gave his grieving father the happy news of the birth of another son to him from his wife Luna, who would be called Rasalu and who would take his father's name to greater heights of glory.

But this is merely an interesting digression in the context of Papnakh.

Tradition relates that when Luna, the daughter of Raja Pulpa of Papnakh, came of age word of her unsurpassable beauty spread in the land. Raja Salvahan hearing of this fabulous beauty asked her hand from her father, the Raja of Papnakh, but was refused. In a paroxysm of anger he came down on this fair city and a bloody battle ensued in which Raja Pulpa was killed and Raja Salvahan forcibly took away Luna to make her his second wife.

Although Raja Salvahan got his prize the fair city of Papnakh was reduced to a heap of debris.

So it must have lain for more than a millennium and a half with the legend and the name stubbornly refusing to be forgotten until in the 16th century a Jat of the Warraich sub caste refounded the village and called it after its original name. Even today the village is predominantly Warraich.

The mound still exists and as is wont to happen to such mounds is used as a graveyard that regularly turns up ancient pottery and beads. Occasionally, after particularly heavy rains, an odd coin or two can also be found.

Hafizabad

In AD 630 when Huien Tsiang, the Chinese, visited India on a pilgrimage of Buddhist sites he spent a night at She-ye-pu-lo on his way to the monastery and stupa of Sagal (Sangla Hill). Now, She-ye-pu-lo is the Chinese rendering of the name Jayapura which, according to Alexander Cunningham, the archeologist, once flourished on the site of modern Hafizabad. But somewhere between the visit of the Buddhist pilgrim and the later years of the 16th century Jayapura mellowed into the dust without leaving any signs of its grandeur save a nondescript mound.

After Akbar the Moghul had consolidated his hold on the Punjab he ordered Hafiz, a nobleman to lay out a town on or near the mound of Jayapura. The king's desire was done and the new town was named Hafizabad after



its founder, but although the town lay on an ancient highroad it did not grow in importance. Even as far back as 1883 the insignificance of Hafizabad was noted by the compiler of the Gazetteer of Gujranwala: "Hafizabad is an ancient town, being mentioned in the 'Ain Akbari'; but except officially, is now a place of no importance."

Hafizabad has one claim to fame each among the Muslims and the Sikhs. The former are proud of the open air Eidgah mosque that they say was built on the orders of Akbar the Great, while the latter congregate here for the annual Bisakhi festival at the gurdwara that marks the spot where Hargobind, the sixth guru (1595-1644), sojourned briefly on his way to Kashmir.

Dulla Bhatti: A Punjabi Hero

Southwest of Hafizabad, on the direct road from Lahore to Sargodha, lies the small town of Pindi Bhattian that was at one time famous for its fine equestrian saddles and pure *ghee*. Now it is erroneously billed as the birth place of Abdullah Bhatti better known as Dulla Bhatti, the proud Punjabi warrior who stood up against the might of Akbar's armies. In reality, however, this son of the Land of Five Rivers was born in the neighbouring village of Dulleki (which carries his name to this day).

Whereas the *Ain-e-Akbari* records the expeditions against Swat, Sindh and the Baluch tribes of western Punjab it is silent with regard to the uprising of the Bhattis. This leads to the impression that the Bhatti uprising was just another one of those minor troubles in the long list of rebellions plaguing the reign of Akbar.



Duleki -- the birth place of a forgotten Punjabi hero.

In the absence of historical record it is difficult to piece together the exact turn of events but it seems certain that the Bhattis' battle with the Moghuls began when Farid Khan Bhatti resenting the heavy handed taxation exacted on his tribe stood against the tax collectors, was captured and later executed at Lahore.

When Dulla, the son of Farid Bhatti, came of age he took up his father's battle and mounted several depredatory raids against the Moghuls. Akbar was incensed and he sent out an army to chastise the Bhattis, but within days heard of the killing of his general and the routing of the expedition. A second and much larger army was despatched which arrived outside the Bhatti stronghold when Dulla and several other chiefs were away at Chiniot. The fortress was razed to the ground and the Moghuls departed for Lahore with the women of the Bhatti household. But the Bhattis were quick to react and, it is said, a great battle was fought in the vicinity of Khanqah Dogran in which the Moghuls were once again routed.

With treachery in mind Mirza Nizam, the Moghul general, offered allegiance to Dulla Bhatti and subsequently arrested him through subterfuge. Thus where Moghul arms and gallantry had failed trickery and deception succeeded. Dulla Bhatti was brought to Lahore in chains and asked to submit to the emperor. In defiance he said, in the words of a poet, "*Mein dhawan Dilli dey kingray*": I raze the battlements of (the fort of) Delhi. His defiance did not please the lord and master of India and Dulla Bhatti was hanged outside Delhi Gate. His humble grave can be seen to this day in the necropolis of Miani Sahib in Lahore where an aged tamarisk tree bends over it as though in silent tribute to a hero of the Punjab.



One strand of the 'web of roads that criss crossed the Punjab' passed by the tract of forest where the village of Jalalpur Kunh was later settled. Here in those unsettled times of Sher Shah Suri's short reign some government official built a mosque. It still stands today; a simple building with three squat domes and a coating of cement plaster covering its ancient brickwork.

One Day with the Tarrars

In these changing times it is difficult to meet with people who are a cultural throwback to the past. Fewer and fewer people are interested in their own culture and history and are thereby losing their identity. Perhaps this is the price we pay for "development". So when young Mohammed Baksh Tarrar invited us to his village we did not demur -- we knew this was something too worthwhile to be missed.

We went as a party of seven and were received in a modern looking bungalow on the outskirts of Kaulo Tarrar by the entire lot of Tarrars that matter in the hierarchy of the *braadri*. It was a motley gathering where Mohammed Baksh was perhaps the youngest while the oldest was a venerable old gentleman of eighty seven who still stood more than six feet tall in his crisp and brilliantly white outfit.

With his voluminous *pagree*, as white as the rest of his attire, he was another few inches.

This soft spoken patriarch remembers well the holocaust of 1947 in which he also took part because “that was a time of madness; in madness did we try to destroy what had been built over centuries.” He remembers, too, the jaunts to Gujranwala by Tonga and that the city was “exceedingly filthy with unbelievably large mosquitoes”; and he also remembers the ruthless suppression of the unrest that erupted in protest against the massacre at Jallianwala.

And there were Tarrar politicians, present and past. One of whom told us with delightful candour how after having been a Member National Assembly and having lost in a fresh election he had new visiting cards made that said “ex MNA” under his name. The “ex”, he said laughingly, was in minute print while the “MNA” came large and bold.

Of course there was Irshadullah Tarrar who had, in fact, been the *raison d’etre* of the visit, for he is a storehouse of tradition and history.



A Tarrar patriarch. Tall, handsome and imposing; despite the years.



A Tarrar *haveli* at Rásulpur.

Below is a transcript of the history of the Tarrars as narrated by him:

“About seven hundred years ago the Tarrars came to this land from the country of Narriar which was contiguous with Bhatner, the land of the Bhattis. According to the history of the Gujranwala Tarrars compiled by Lala Gopal Das in 1868 the Tarrars, after being defeated by Amir Taimur came to this country whereas, whereas the Gujrat version of Mirza Azam Beg asserts that we settled around the village of Jhukalian after being defeat by Mahmud Ghaznavi. Myself, however, I tend to believe the latter theory for even the most ancient Tarrar village has a tradition of having been founded by the Tarrars themselves.

The Tarrars maintained their old Vedic religion until around the time of Akbar, the third Moghul. It was this king who sent a military expedition against our tribe and destroyed the Tarrar State. The head of the tribe was Kaulo Tarrar who was defeated and killed. Now, Kaulo's wife, who was pregnant

at the time, fled to the jungle where this good woman met a *fakir* who said that she was destined to bear a son and would be well advised to bring him up in the true faith. And so it was that her son was called Mohammed Mirza and brought up as a good muslim. From him through fifteen or sixteen generations do all of us present here claim descent. The village of Kaulo Tarrar, incidentally, takes its name from this man.

With the passage of time the Tarrars grew in numbers and their possession increased. Today there are seventy two Tarrar villages on the east bank of the Chenab and the same number on the west of the river in Gujrat district. The revenue of the Tarrar estates, naturally, was quite high as far back as the time of Akbar and this country is mentioned in the *Ain-e-Akbari* of Abu'l Fazal as *Tappa Tarral* (the palatal *r* ending replaced by *l* in the Persian). This fact and the industriousness of the Tarrars has also been acknowledged by Mr Lincoln, the Deputy Commissioner of Gujranwala in the 1930s.



Woodwork from Alipur Chattha.



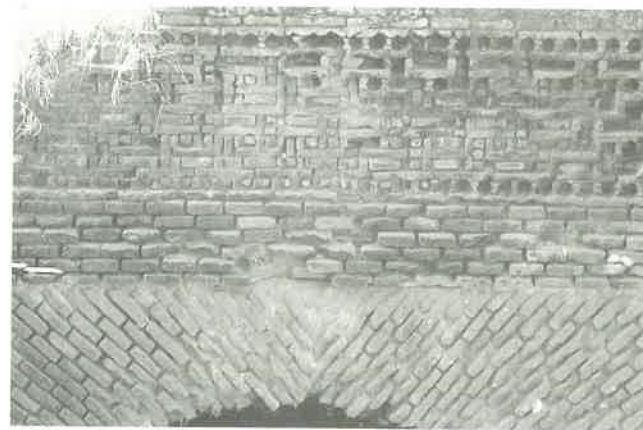
With the decay of Mughal power in the sub continent the Tarrars were subjugated by the Afghan looters. Adina Beg, the governor of Jullunder Doab, suggested an alliance of all the Muslims tribes of the Punjab, But owing to the intense rivalry between the various chiefs this alliance never materialised, entirely to the good fortune of the Afghans and the Sikhs. When, at length, Ranjit Singh ascended to power he ruthlessly came down on the Tarrars, Chatthas and the Bhattis of Gujranwala for having sided with the Afghans. Eventually the muslim tribes settled into an uneasy peace with the Sikhs until their defeat and the annexation of the Punjab to the British Empire.”

Thus spoke Irshadullah Tarrar, one of the last great exponents of the tradition of relating oral history -- a tradition that will soon be no more.

In 1863 the Church of Scotland established a mission at Wazirabad. The only reminder of that time is a small cemetery barely a couple of hundred metres to the west of Sher Shah Suri's mail station. Most of the graves have been vandalised but they all commemorate, like this one, some forgotten Scotsman who died in the service of his religion thousand of miles away from home.

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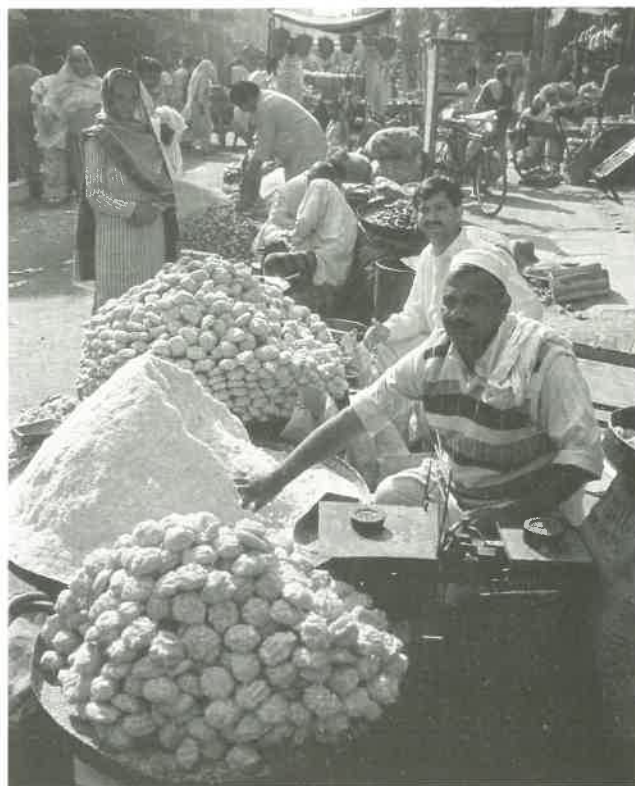
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Brickwork from an old bridge outside the town of Sodhra.



Rice being put in bags to be sent for polishing.



Gur seller in a Gujranwala bazaar.

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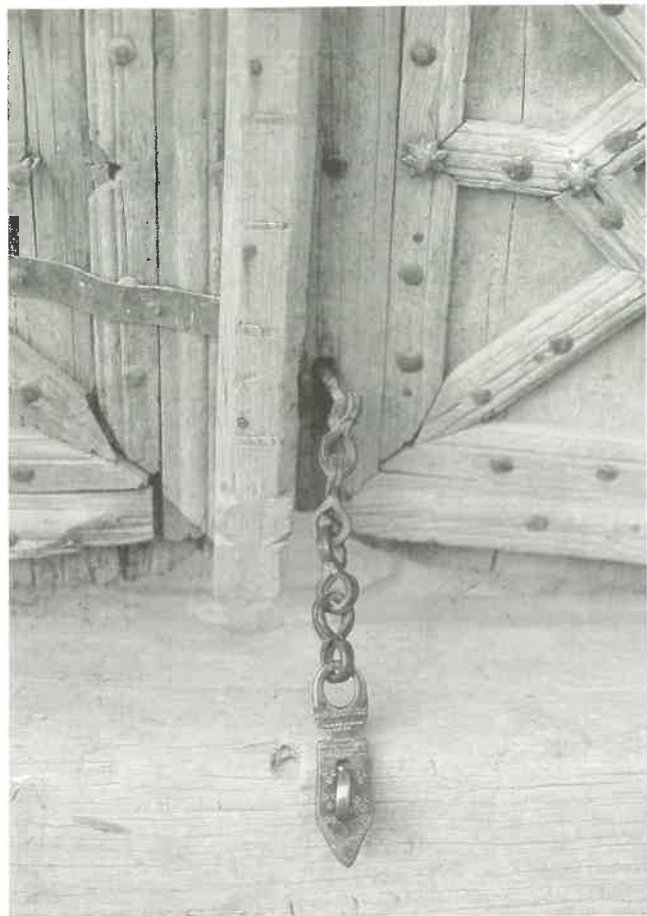
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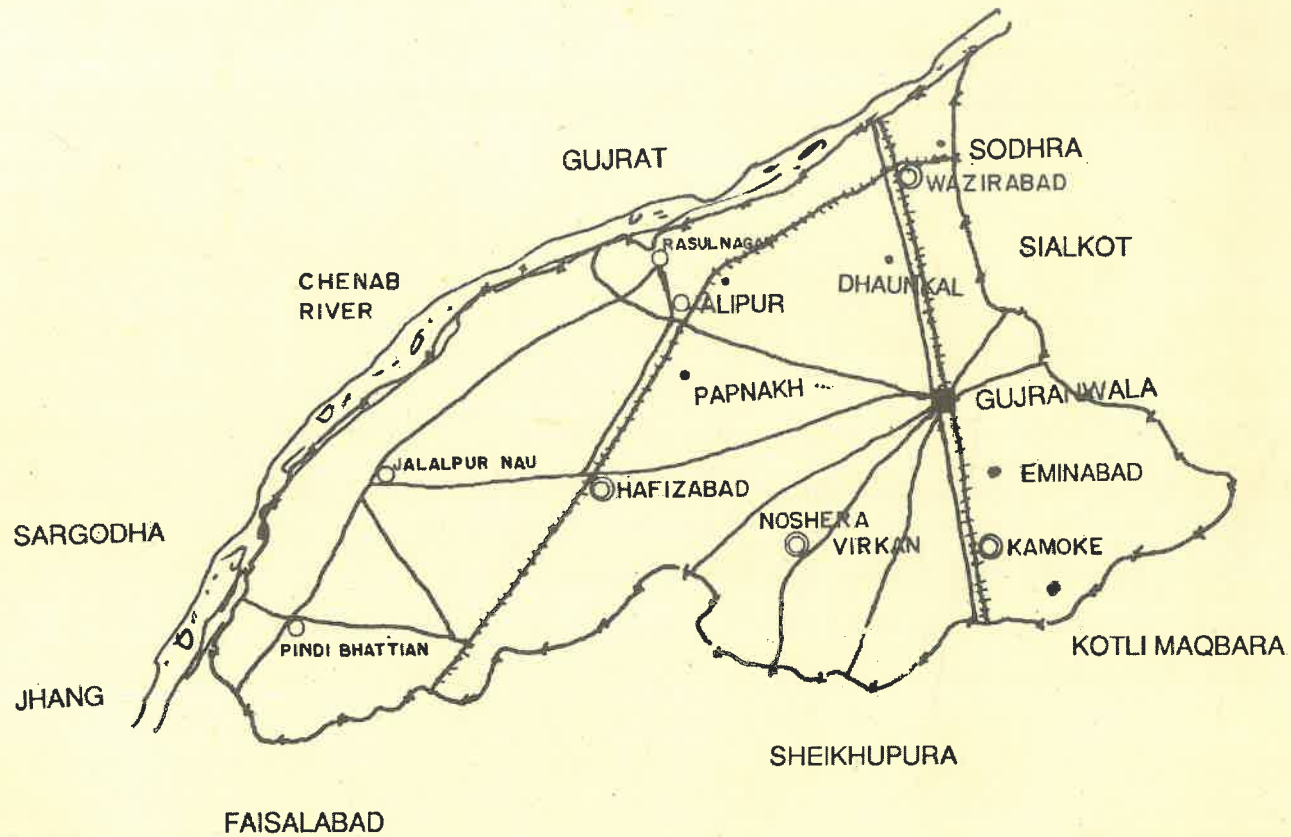
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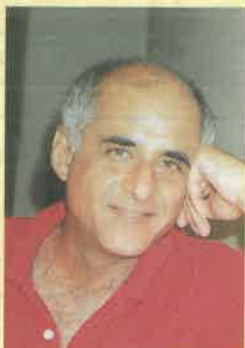
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An ornate kundi from Rasulpur.





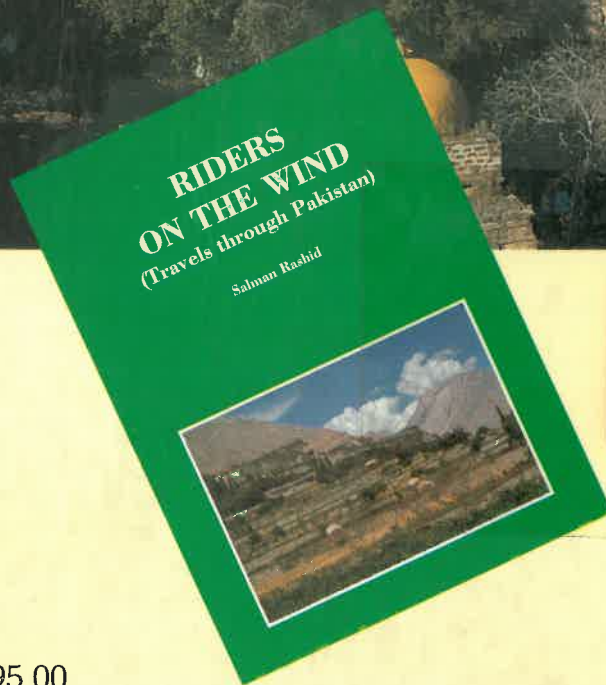
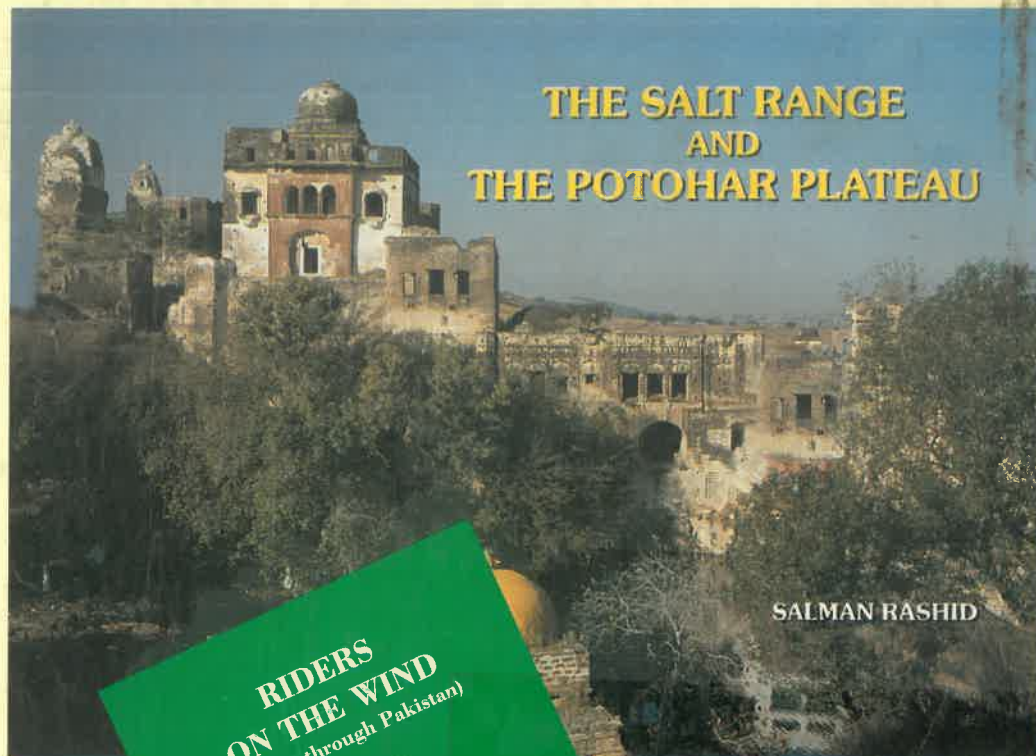
Salman Rashid was born in Lahore in February 1952 where he received his early education. Having always been driven by a consuming wanderlust he began travelling long before he was to become the country's

foremost travel writer.

By the time he was 34, he had been through one position with the Government of Pakistan and subsequently one with a multi-national commercial firm. It was during the latter stint that he discovered his ability to tell a story and his travel tales began to appear in print.

He is unarguably the only Pakistani to have roamed virtually the entire country from the frigid, wind-swept valleys of Shimshal or Chitral to the deserted beaches of Gwadar and Jiwani, from the red sandstone gullies of the Karonjhar hills outside Nagarparker to the bleak salt pans of Mashkel on the Iranian frontier. There are few places in Pakistan that remain untrodden by his feet.

Salman Rashid is not just a travel writer who tells of his exploits in places that most Pakistani do not know exist, his accounts are a coherent and scholarly mix of geography, sociology, history and high adventure. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.



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