

Moti Masjid: Pearl of Lahore Fort Complex, Lahore

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Abstract

Mughal architecture is distinguished by domes, arches, vaulted roofs and various other features and has no parallel in adornment. Gigantic structural and exceptionally detailed decorative artwork identifies the Mughals as the greatest contributors to the glory of Lahore. Moti Masjid in Lahore Fort, with a subtle touch of grace, delicacy and simplicity, expresses the story of a splendid period of building construction during Mughal era. This Mosque is constructed with white marble and embellished carefully. Delicate coloured frieze and carvings in marble and red sand stone expresses the excellent taste and careful selection of skill applied by the Mughal rulers to enhance its grace and beauty. Some sections of this epic architecture have been ragged or distorted by succeeding rulers and others are fading away due to the fierceness of the environment but still stand as a witness of Mughal splendour. This essay describes the documentation of existing structure of mosque and crash of various parts due to harshness of the weather and the gradual damage of this Mughal architectural treasure. The main emphasis of this essay is on documentation of every section of the structure highlighting its existence in the Fort complex, its embellishment, motifs, architectural features, utility and structural damages. Negligence of concerned authorities in the renovation is infuriating. Despite of the destruction by environmental issues and misuse, this building is still struggling with the destiny keeping a hope of re-examination of its past in the form of refurbishment. If a desired care will not be given and negligence continued, the mosque will suffer unrecoverable loss.

Keywords: Moti Masjid, Pearl of Lahore Fort, Adornment, Frescos, Mosaic, jinnāt

Introduction

As a substance of course mosques were built by Mughal Emperors in the forts at Delhi and Agra and other places. Thus, a mosque was constructed in Lahore Fort as well. Mosque is a distinctive building type in orientation to its plan and form, amongst the religious monuments, belonging to people of Islamic belief. The foundation, maturity and continuity of its construction are spread over fourteen centuries of time period. Before the arrival of Islam, there was an existing tradition of religious buildings of Christians and Jews. Under these customary circumstances, to establish a new, identifiable building form, fulfilling the functional requirements at adequate level, was a matter of resourcefulness, demanding the maximum potential of originality. Mughals built some of the most impressive mosques, independent structures as well as part of tombs and fortresses. The Lahore Fort manifests the rich traditions of Mughal architecture and seems straight out of a storybook of the Mysterious East. Some of the famous sites inside the fort include Shish Maḥal, 'Alamgiri Gate, Naulakkhā pavilion, and Moti Masjid (Mosque).

The historians and archaeological experts assert that the Forts of Delhi and Lahore have passed through several parallel phases in both cases the buildings of Shāhjahān are more in evidence than those of any other monarch. During the Mughal rule, tradition developed and continued by constructing many other mosques like Masjid Maryam Zamāni, Masjid Wazir Khan, Moti Masjid, Masjid Dāi Angā, Bādshāhi Masjid etc. Lahore Fort and the city from 1799–1849 remained under the control of Maharaja Ranjīt Singh, Shir-i Panjab, and his sons, grandsons and wives, until the fall of the last Sikh empire or the Lahore Darbār in 1849. During the Sikh and British governments, these mosques were under organizational control of non-Muslims and were mostly used as horse stable, ammunition depot and sometimes also served as residence for the officers of British Government.

In Lahore Fort, Moti Masjid exists in Moti Masjid Quadrangle and Prior to Moti Masjid, there was a *muṣallā* built by Emperor Akbar. It is however not easy to establish as to who really built the mosque that exists in the Fort. It seems possibly it was built as a part of Daulat Khāna-i Jahāngīri in 1617 A.D. The evidence that this mosque was initially built in the reign of emperor Jahāngīr comes from the Persian inscription recorded over the

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arched entrance of Makātīb *Khāna* leading to the outer court. The plan of the building shows that it was built in two phases. The second phase was built in *Shāhjahān's* time in 1645 A.D., when it was additionally stretched out by extending the length of the *Qibla* wall. This fact is authenticated by the existence of different types of pillars in the *aiwān* of the mosque.

The Fort suffered from the occupation of the British after the mutiny, and it was only in early twenties that anything had been done towards the up-keep of these historical buildings. Some of the Mughal Architectural buildings have almost vanished or damaged badly due to harsh weather and poor maintenance. Moti Masjid is also facing course of decay and damages have occurred into various parts of building. Facing phases of negligence, poor maintenance building is badly suffering decay and damages and this is the prime need of the time to document, preserve and restore these monumental structures as they provide us the opportunity of living heritage.

Salient Features of the Lahore Fort

Lahore Fort is the leading Mughal monument of Pakistan. Lahore Fort as seen now was founded by Malik Ayyāz on a mound where existed a '*Kachchā Qil'ā*,' since the time Lahore happened to be under Rajputs. Emperor Akbar replaced it with a '*Pukkā*' fort with proper Lāhaurī bricks (Burnt bricks). This construction with burnt bricks by Mughal builders, especially Emperor Akbar was continued by Jahāngīr and completed by *Shāhjahān*. Aurangzib added the Haḍuri Bāgh gateway commonly called '*Ālamgīri Gate*'.^[i]

There are various constructions in Lahore Fort that are fundamental style of Mughal Architecture. Gates, walls and other constructed structures in various parts of Lahore Fort belong to different phases of construction under different Mughal Emperors and later Sikhs and British included frequent use of arches, is not only as an important element of construction but also used as designs for aesthetical appeal. 'Abd-al Karīm Māmūr was the 'Master Builder' who supervised and executed the major portions of construction works in the fort. Evidence to his being architect is inscribed on marble slabs in Makātīb *Khāna* and the Hāthi Pol or *Shāh Burj Gate* of the Fort.

Under the benefaction of the Mughal emperors, Persian, Indian, and a range of provincial styles were combined to fabricate works of unusual excellence and sophistication. As mentioned before the fort as it stands today is not what it was when it was originally constructed in 1566. Every succeeding Mughal emperor moreover the Sikhs, and the British added a pavilion, palace or wall to the Fort. Jahāngīr, *Shāhjahān* and later Aurangzib added modifications of massively fortified walls. Akbar got the *Dīwān-i 'Ām* (Hall for Commoners) built in the traditional Iranian style, all constructed in red sand stone imported from Rajasthan. *Shāhjahān* also

constructed the *Dīwān-i Khās* that overlooked Ravi, in 1631, the same year he started the Tāj Maḥal. *Shāhjahān* also constructed Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) and his own sleeping chambers. Emperor Jahangir extended the gardens and constructed the palaces in the Jahangir's Quadrangle and the whole complex of Lahore Fort appears with extensive use of domes, vaults and arches.

The Mughal period marked a striking revival of Islamic architecture in northern India, where Persian, Indian, and various provincial styles were fused to produce works of great refinement. White marble and red sandstone were favoured materials. Most of the early Mughal buildings used arches only sparingly, relying on post-and-beam construction. The use of the double dome, a recessed archway inside a rectangular fronton (arena), and park like surroundings are typical of the *Shāhjahān's* period (1628–58), when Mughal design reached its zenith. Symmetry and balance between the parts of a building were stressed, as was delicate ornamental detail.

Mughals have extensively used arches in constructions of their period. Arches are built for aesthetic reasons, as well as to place *Mashrābiya*^[ii] windows and to lessen the quantity of sunlight to pour into the building. Arches in Persia curve without any bumps, but in Mughal architecture features grooves in the arches, signifying influence directly taken from older structures in India. Enclosed space, defined by walls, arcades and vaults, is the most important element of Islamic architecture which was also followed in Mughal Architecture.

The scientific skill engaged in surface decoration and the Mughal builders' structural abilities were no doubt unparalleled, but these by themselves do not fabricate architecture. It is somewhat a complete incorporation of every feature of decoration, structure, mass, and space in the service of a single principal idea which produces the best examples of Mughal architecture.^[iii]

The Fort is clearly divided into two sections, the administrative section, which is well connected with main entrances, and comprises larger garden areas and *Dīwān-i Khās* for royal audiences. The other a private and concealed residential section divided into courts in the northern part, accessible through 'Elephant Gate'. It also contains *Shīsh Maḥal* (Hall of Mirrors or Mirror Palace), and spacious bedrooms and smaller gardens. The original entrance faces the Maryam Zamāni Mosque, whereas the larger '*Ālamgīri Gate*' opens to the Haḍuri Bāgh through to the majestic *Bādshāhi Mosque*. In most of the important buildings of Lahore Fort, pointed arches, multi-cusped, trabeated and four cantered arches are frequently used standing independently, in form of gateways or sometimes in recessed form as a design to break the monotony of the surface.

The fortress now holds over thirty dissimilar buildings and structures of varying degree of significance and usefulness, and of course representing different eras of history.^[iv] (Plate.1) The Fort can generally be alienated into six blocks quadrangles in addition to *Shāh Burj* complex, south western section and the moat on the

northern side. More or less all the worth mentioning buildings are located within these divisions. These areas and their important buildings are as follows:

A. Akbar's Quadrangle

1. Masti Gate

B. Dīwān-i 'Āam

2. Dīwān-i 'Āam (Hall of Common audience)
3. Daulat Khāna-i Khās-u 'Āam

C. Jahāngīr's Quadrangle

4. Bari Khāwabgāh
5. Sihdara
6. Shāhi Hammam

D. Moti Masjid Quadrangle

7. Dālān-i Sang-i Surkh
8. Makātīb Khāna
9. Moti Masjid

E. Shāhjahān's Quadrangle

10. Khāwabgāh-i Shāhjahāni
11. Dīwān-i Khās
12. 'Arḍgah
13. Lālburi

F. Pā'in Bāgh Quadrangle

14. Hammam-i Shāhi
15. Pā'in Bāgh
16. Khilwat Khāna
17. Kālā Burj
18. Ladies Mosque
19. Hindu Temple

G. Shish Maḥal Complex

20. Forecourt of Shish Maḥal
21. Athdara
22. Samman Burj or Shāh Burj
23. Shish Maḥal
24. Naulakhhā Pavilion
25. Hāthi Pol
26. Hāthi Pol Gate
27. Pictured Wall
28. Sikh Period Defence Wall
29. Postern Gate
30. 'Ālamgīri Gate.^[v]

The Lahore Fort hardly represents any structural accord of composition due to its construction and architectural additions by different emperors during different times.

Though, it contains remarkable and diverse features of individual nature stretching on a period of over three centuries. In the whole complex changes and additions can easily be read and relate to specific era of construction.

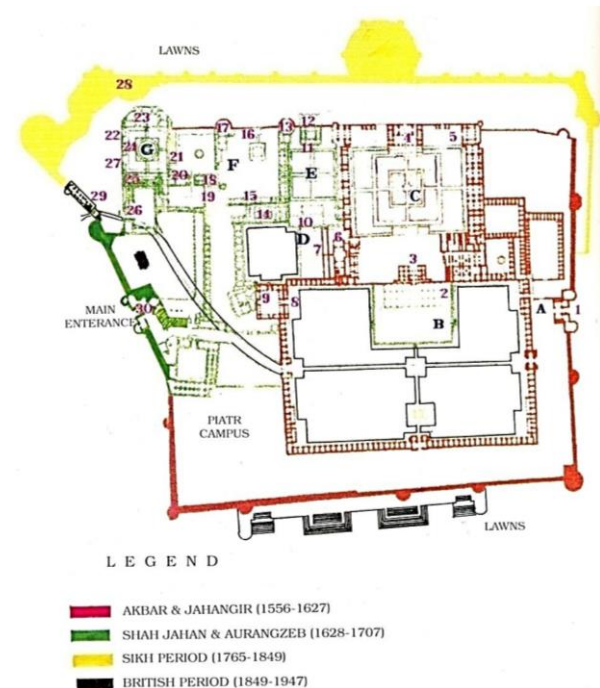


Plate.1 Thirty structures and six blocks of Lahore Fort

Moti Masjid: Pearl of Lahore Fort Complex

A magnificent religious structure, Moti Masjid is a well known historical mosque of Mughal era, located near the 'Ālamgīri Gate, the main entrance to the Lahore Fort on the western side. It is very close to other splendid structures of Lahore Fort, 'the Shish Maḥal' and 'Naulakhhā' Pavilion.

Moti in Urdu language means pearl, which assigns an apparent value to the religious structure. Lahore Fort's Moti Masjid was not the only 'Pearl Mosque' built in the Mughal period. Mosques with the same name also constructed in Agra and Delhi, as it was common Mughal practice to name mosques after precious stones. The word 'Pearl' also directs to the radiant surface of the marble, resembling pearl which has been used in the construction of this building.

According to archaeological survey report 1903-4, the forts of Lahore and Delhi passed through several parallel phases. In both cases the buildings of Shāhjahān are more in evidence than those of any other monarch. Both have suffered from the occupation of the British after the mutiny, and in both it was only in early twenties that anything had been done towards the up-keep of these historical buildings. At Lahore, indeed, conservation in the Fort may be said to have begun in the year 1902-3 with the restoration of the Moti Masjid and Choti Khāwabgāh.^[vi]

Moti Masjid exists in Moti Masjid Quadrangle in Lahore Fort. Prior to Moti Masjid, there was a *muṣallā*

built by Emperor Akbar. It is however not easy to establish as to who essentially built the mosque that exists in the fort. It seems possibly it was built as a part of Daulat Khānā-i Jahāngīr in 1617 A.D. The plan of the building shows that it was built in two phases. The second phase was built in Shāhjahān's time in 1645 A.D., when it was additionally stretched out by extending the length of the *Qibla*^[vii] wall. This fact is authenticated by the existence of different types of pillars in the '*aiwān*' of the mosque. The mosque is built completely in chaste white marble. It contains triple domes and the central dome is bigger than the side ones. The arched openings in the prayer chamber are multi-cusped. The floor, also constructed with white marble, is divided into *muṣallā* marked by lines in black marble. The mosque was also used as *maktab*^[viii] as it is divided with another seating arrangement that exist for this purpose in its eastern part. During the employment of the fort by the Sikhs, it was used as treasury in addition; and its name was changed to Moti Mandir (Moti Temple).^[ix]

The evidence that this mosque was initially built in the reign of emperor Jahangir comes from the following Persian inscription recorded over the arched entrance of Makātīb Khāna leading to the outer court.

In the twelfth year of the fortunate reign of His Imperial Majesty the shadow of God, like Solomon in dignity, Kyamurs in pomp, victorious in arms like Alexander, the Defender of the Faith, Shāh Nūr-al Din Jahāngīr, son of Jalal-al Dīn Akbar, the King, the Conqueror of the infidels, this noble edifice was completed in 1007 A.H (1598 A.D.) by the efforts of the humblest of disciples and the least of slaves, his devoted servant, Ma'amur Khan.^[x] Moti Masjid quadrangle includes Dālān-i Sung-e-Surkh, Makātīb Khāna and Moti Masjid. Dālān-i Sung-i Surkh is a closed *dālān* of considerable dimension. This *dālān* has three arched openings blended with red sand stone screens. The main entrance at present is from the north through a relatively small door-opening. The entire surface has been treated with intensely recessed panels of diverse shapes and sizes.^[xi] Recessed panels are in square and rectangular divisions where rectangular panels having recessed cusped arches.

Another section in Moti Masjid quadrangle is Makātīb Khāna, a building with high gates situated on the southern side of Jahāngīr's quadrangle. (Plate.2-3) Makātīb Khāna follows faithfully the Persian models of cloistered court, with simple pointed arches forming an arcade on the four sides.^[xii] Built on a raised platform each side of the arcade is divided by sets of five arches in which central arch is bigger than side arches.

Construction of Makātīb Khāna follows symmetrical plan. It was used for the '*muharrirs*' (clerks) who regulated entries into the palace. According to a Persian inscription on the gate, it was built during the reign of Emperor Jahangir under the supervision of 'Abd-al Karim Māmūr Khan in 1617 A.D.



Plate.2 Eastern entrance view of Makātīb Khāna.



Plate.3 Inside view of Makātīb Khāna

Artistic approach of Mughals is incomparable when applying aesthetical notions in the adornment of buildings. Radiant colours and expressive movement of flora is overriding in Mughal frescos. Beautiful floral frescos adorning various sections of this arcade completely incorporate in structure, prominently on the plastered ceilings of central alcove. Though damage over a period of time has occurred but remaining fragments of frescos still show the brilliance and perfection of designs and colour. Grapevine motif, along with various floral patterns shows remarkable aesthetics that has been applied to add beauty to such simple structure. Rhythmic expression of different patterns in harmonious colours and delicate compositions stir up an urge for appreciation. Frescos that have been an important decorative feature of Mughal buildings have almost vanished or damaged badly due to harsh weather and poor maintenance. (Plate.4, 5)



Plate.4 Central alcove



Plate.5 Grapevine and floral motifs in recessed arched

Structure of Makātīb Khāna is also facing course of decay and damages have occurred into various parts of building. Mortar is seen falling down from the brick courses, forming deeper empty spaces within the structures. (Plate.6) Its courtyard is partly preserved and restored and paved with bricks in traditional herringbone pattern that gives a strong sense of symmetry and balance. The new bricks used in restoration work are not of the original type and the differences in natural distinctiveness can be seen clearly. (Plate.7)



Plate.6 Damages occurring with the course of time



Plate.7 Partly preserved and restored brick soling of floor

Moti Masjid is situated on west of Makātīb Khāna. North side arched opening adorned with fresco plastered ceiling of Makātīb Khāna leads to Moti Masjid. (Plate.8) The structure of the mosque is relatively smaller but pure, simple and magnificent and the lastly beautiful domes, of lined up pure white marble are like lustre of a pearl. A stairway made of red sand stones leads to a raised platform that gives access to the entrance vestibule of the mosque and further leads to main court of the mosque. Edge of the platform is adorned with continuous band of red sand stone carving following bell shaped floral pattern. One step up there is another band of carving that looks almost same from a distance but a closer look reveals that details have been badly neglected in the band that is placed on the edge of platform. Carvings of stairway platform with fewer details may have been placed later as a replica of other during restoration as the quality of the stone is also compromised and it is carved in pieces rather a long continuous relief. The difference in colour and grains is also evident. (Plate.9, 10)



Plate.8 Northern arched opening from Makātīb Khāna that leads towards Moti Masjid



Plate.9 Stairway of Moti Masjid



Plate.10 Dissimilar stone carvings on stairway

Mosque can only be accessed through a small door from entrance vestibule and it is in rare corner rather cantered. Walls of central vestibule on right and left are divided by recessed arched niches from ground level. Spaces that are developed in these niches make semi octagonal areas slightly above than ground level where worshipers frequently sit. Edges of these rest areas are corniced with same band of bell shape floral carvings in white marble as previously seen on stairway. A thoughtful delicate flora band applied repeatedly for embellishment in the mosque creates an effect of delicacy. It also reveals skill and knowledge of Mughal artisans. Delicacy and texture

of petals and fineness of lyrical curves in this band is eye catching. Plastered walls of entrance vestibule or antechamber are badly destroyed with various writings done by worshipers. Writings are based on a false belief that the mosque is residue of *jinnāt* who listen to their prayers. (Plate.11) The mosque's antechamber is dimly lit, creating a sense of enclosed space. As one crosses the threshold of antechamber bright sun light proclaims courtyard of mosque with a glittering structure of the mosque that shines like gleaming pearl. At present facade of this valued structure is brutally nailed with iron hooks that have left stains on white marble and were fixed to hang curtains. Damage to this marble facade is unrecoverable and shows the negligence of care taking authorities.



Plate.11 Central Vestibule filled with the writings that are by faith of locals, messages to *jinnāt*

From the centre of the courtyard of mosque one sees the facade of the Moti Masjid which is divided into five inlets with the central inlet projecting somewhat forward into the courtyard. The five inlet facade was a favoured Mughal architectural feature that is also seen at the Maryam Zamāni Mosque and consequently employed at majority of Mughal mosques. (Plate. 12) The frontal cusped arches are supported by baluster columns swelling form of the half-open flower with their smooth and fine contours. (Plate.13) Some columns in prayer chamber are cracked and secured by fixing with iron claps. Facade displays a set of five arches in combination of both pointed and multi-cusped. Central arch is pointed and higher than other arches and leads towards *Qibla* wall. This variation in the size of arches gives a distinguished look to the facade of the mosque. All the arches in the prayer chamber or court of worshipers are multi-cusped. The court for worshippers measures 50 feet from north to south, and 33ft from east to west. The structure is simple, sober, and spotless with a touch of magnificence.



Plate.12 Facade of Moti Masjid with five inlets



Plate.13 Exterior close-up view of base of pier

Symmetry in Mughal architectural building is remarkably opted but the case is little different in the planning of this mosque. Plan of the building is not symmetrical like other mosques neither the main entrance to the mosque is from centre. Standing in the courtyard facing *Qibla* direction, on right side are prayer chambers whereas left side walls of Moti Masjid's courtyard show recessed cusped arches. (Plate.14-15)



Plate.14 Recessed cusped arches on left side wall facing *Qibla* direction



Plate.15 Prayer chambers, Exterior general view of courtyard from south

Variation in styles and designs of arches used in Moti masjid does not only satisfy aesthetic appeal but equally functional because numerous of the available building materials such as stone, cast iron and concrete can strongly defy solidity but are very weak when tension or stress is applied to them. By using the arch pattern, important spans can be achieved. This is because all the compressive forces hold it together in a state of stability which is essential for the construction of a fortress.

This mosque may have served as a praying area for the majestic harem. No ablution area or central fountain exist which is an important element of all mosques. Mosque went through many phases of critical ignorance and misuse; ablution area may have been there as part of mosque and later removed but no such evidence is found. Interior of the mosque has two aisles of five bays, and to some extent raised portal with a rectangular frame. The interior of the mosque is simple and sober with the exception of ceiling that is decorated and rest in four different orders, two curved and two trabeated. (Plate.16)

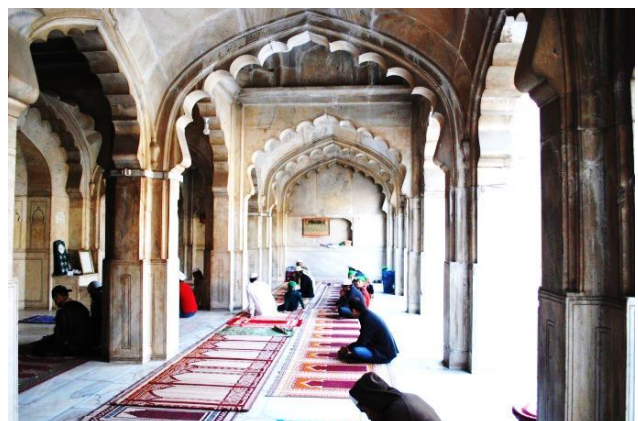


Plate.16 Curved and trabeated designs below ceilings

Under all three domes ceiling follow dissimilarity in design and are constructed with lined marble following geometrical patterns in a symmetrical manner.(Plate.17-18) The mosque is one of the few buildings inside the fort that turn aside from the overall north-south direction of the complex, satisfying the related requirement that the mosque's *mihrāb* face straight toward Mecca. The floor of the mosque is of pure marble with stone inlaid *muṣallā* marks. These marks are drawn in multi cusped arch pattern. (Plate.19)

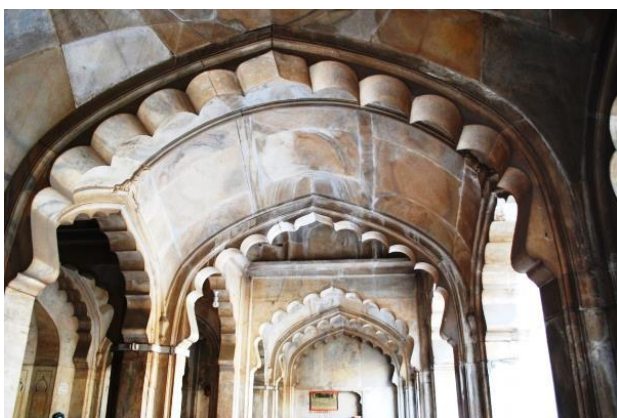


Plate.17 Skilfully lined stones in ceiling of the prayer chamber.



Plate.18 Geometrically lined stones, Interior view looking at ceiling span



Plate.19 Stone inlaid *muṣallā* marks in prayer chamber

Exterior view of the east side wall of the mosque offers same symmetrical division of arches as of facade. Central pointed arch is slightly higher whereas other side ones are lower multi cusped arches and develop spaces for visitors to sit. Cusped divisions on both extreme ends are recessed with doors. One door is entrance and the other access to roof top of mosque. (Plate.20) Technical skill has been carefully applied in the construction of whole mosque structure. On Roof top above arches plinths are constructed to put weight and strengthen the arches of chambers. (Plate.21) Facing eastern wall, on its extreme right end is stairway an access to the roof of mosque. A narrow masonry stairway leading to the roof top is dark and only source of light is sun. Each step of it is applied with a red sand stone sill that adds colour to the dullness of stairs. (Plate.22)



Plate.20 Roof above arches

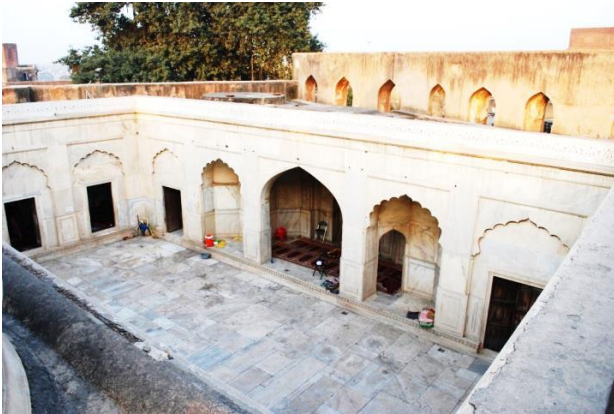


Plate.21 Exterior view of east wall of courtyard

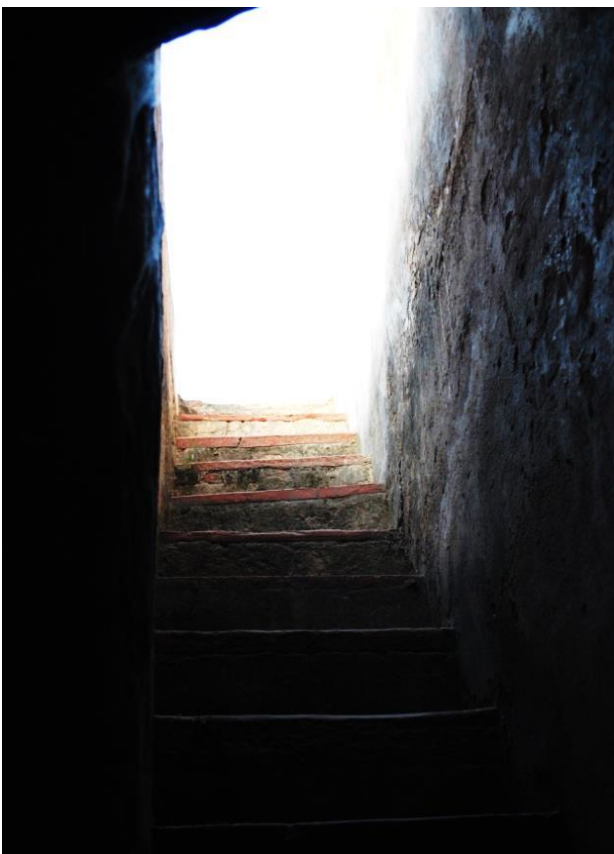


Plate.22 Stairway leading to the top of Mosque

The outward appearance of the Moti Masjid is monotonous and modest though the intellect and inventive approach of Mughals demands a meticulous investigation and appreciation. A colourful frieze on top of mosque is the only coloured feature of embellishment. Continuity of the frieze is disturbed on main portal due to the absence of small portions on both sides. Delicate flora frieze with lyrical curves of vegetal pattern provides a rhythmical and swirling movement whereas the brilliance of the colour is still superb. Colourful flower pattern of lilies composed geometrically with a remarkable delicacy and texture of petals reveals the standard of skill and botanical knowledge of artisans. Intricate flora in curves

represents an amalgamation of simplicity and delicacy and this care enriches the frieze with remarkable precision in the selection of motifs as per the requirement of structure. (Plate.23-24)



Plate.23 Exterior detailed view of frieze on top of main portal.



Plate.24 Detail of continuous frieze on the top of mosque

Mosques were built with monumental domes, and constructed in response to the scientific requirements for more technological term. The dome is a significant element of the Islamic style of architecture, as it is thought to be a connection between heaven and earth. Because domes are hollow from below, they can reflect sound and create echoes. A dome is a rounded vault made of either curved division, meaning an arch rotated around its central vertical axis. Mughal architecture is distinguished by domes, arches, vaulted roofs and various other features and has no parallel in adornment. Gigantic structural and exceptionally detailed decorative artwork identifies the Mughal as the greatest contributors. Moti Masjid has three superimpose finely inflated domes that crown the magnificent structure of the mosque. Domes are placed on a truncated drum to retain volume which is a regular feature of Mughal architecture. All domes are symmetrically balanced however central dome is set on a raised platform to give it a raised level. They are topped by finials finally sculpted in same marble. Further it is divided into four sections including lotus base and out of upper three, two are round and top is sharp conical. Skill of stone carving in this final is remarkable. (Plate.25-26)



Plate.25 Domes of Moti Masjid



Plate.26 Pinnacle of Dome

Moti Masjid with a subtle touch of grace, delicacy and simplicity, expresses the story of a splendid period of building construction during Mughal era. Moti Masjid constructed with white marble and embellished carefully with fine and delicate coloured frieze and carvings in marble and red sand stone. It expresses the excellent taste and careful selection of skill applied by the artisans of Mughal rulers. Every skill they applied was to enhance its grace and beauty. Some sections of this epic architecture have been ragged or distorted by succeeding rulers and others are fading away due to misuse and extreme weather effects but mosque still stand as a witness of Mughal splendour. Negligence of concerned authorities in the renovation is infuriating. Despite of the

destruction by environmental issues and misuse, this building is still struggling with the destiny keeping a hope of re-examination of its past in the form of refurbishment. If a desired care will not be given and negligence continued, the mosque will suffer unrecoverable lose.

Conclusion

The Lahore Fort is an exceptional ensemble of buildings that represent an almost unrelenting history of architecture from Emperor Akbar the Great to Emperor Aurangzib 'Ālamgīr and even later Sikh and British rulers. A fortress with clear reflecting pools, towers, mosques, minarets, baths, sleeping chambers, an enormous stone stairway, built to accommodate the royal wives' elephants, mirrored pleasure palaces and delicate white marble latticework windows, all involving fine varieties of arches, is a fine architectural contribution of Mughals in this region.

Existence of a splendid mosque with ultimate grace and simplicity within the premises of Fort adds to the perfection of such a complex that is served not only as a fortress but palace as well. Purpose of this mosque due to its size, plan and structure promotes the idea that it was used as a private mosque and was not meant for congregational purpose.

In eighteenth century when Mughal power diminished, many invaders from foreign land like Nādir Shāh and Ahmed Shāh Abdālī attacked Punjab repeatedly and destabilized the local government. That situation raised Sikh power in Punjab and during Sikh alliance Moti Masjid was converted into Moti Mandir and was used as Sikh temple. In the supremacy of Maharaja Ranjīt Singh mosque was used as the Government treasury. Later during British control like Sikhs they first used the mosque as Government Treasury, but afterwards, restored it to its original standing as the mosque.

Today we see mosque with same elegance and magnificence though it went through various upheavals and phases of construction. More significantly harsh weather of the region, misuse and poor maintenance are causing unrecoverable damage to its structures. Decorations and embellishments are facing decay. And this is important for the concerned authorities to preserve this precious heritage by documenting and restoring with every possible care and save this remarkable Mughal structure.

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[7] *Qiblā*, in Islam prayer is observed facing *Khānā Kā'ba* and it is essential for Muslims to face fix direction towards *Khānā Kā'ba* in Mecca. In mosques this direction is indicated with a repressed niche which is called *Qiblā*.

[8] *Maktab*, is an Urdu word that means 'school'.

[9] Shaikh Khurshid Hasan, "*Historical Forts in Pakistan*" (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2005), 51.

[10] Nazir Ahmed Chaudhry, "*Lahore Fort: A Witness to History*" (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1999), 194.

[11] Ihsan H. Nadiem, "*Lahore: a Glorious Heritage*" (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2006), 71.

[12] Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "*Architecture in Pakistan*" (Lahore: Concept Media, 1985), 59.

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