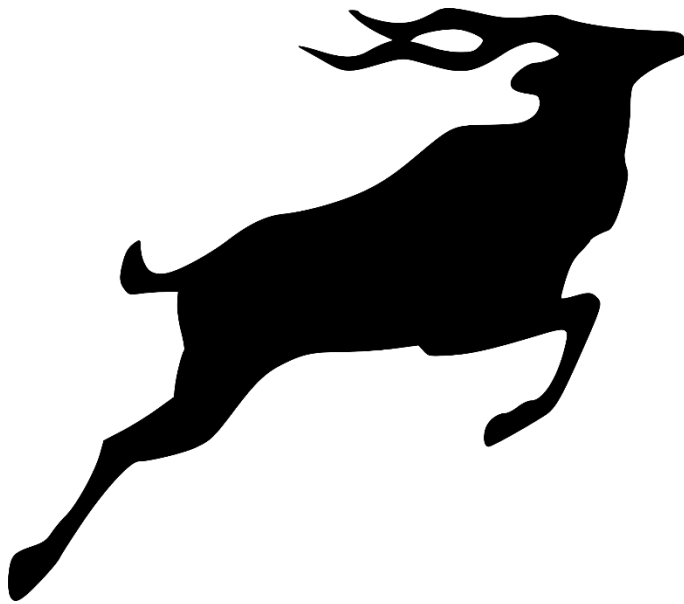


Hiran Minar

(Architecture)



By

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Sheikhupura

Jahangir Abad turned Sheikhupura is situated in Ravi-Chenab corridor and fast turning from a market agricultural town to an industrial city. Adjacent to Lahore, the town is surrounded by old places like Sangla Hill (old Sakala), Nankana Sahib (birth place of Baba Guru Nanak) and Jandiala Sher Khan (last resting place of Waris Shah).

In eighteenth century, Nadir shah and Ahmed shah Abdali passed through Jahangir Abad once they came to attack India. Punjabi poet Syed Waris Shah had composed some pointing details of the attacks and conditions of the society of the time in his classic folk romance Heer Ranjha. Sikhs came to the power in the later half of eighteenth century when Mughal authority weakened after the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir. It is during Sikh rule that the name of the town was changed from Jahangir Abad to Sheikhupura.

Sheikhupura was separated from Gujranwala and declared district in 1920 with Sharq Pur and Khankah Dogran as two of its tehsiels. Electricity came into the town in 1931. During independence movement, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah addressed a huge crowd in Sheikhupura while going to Faisalabad (then Lyallpur) in 1942. Later, the geographical boundaries of the district were again changed in 1962.

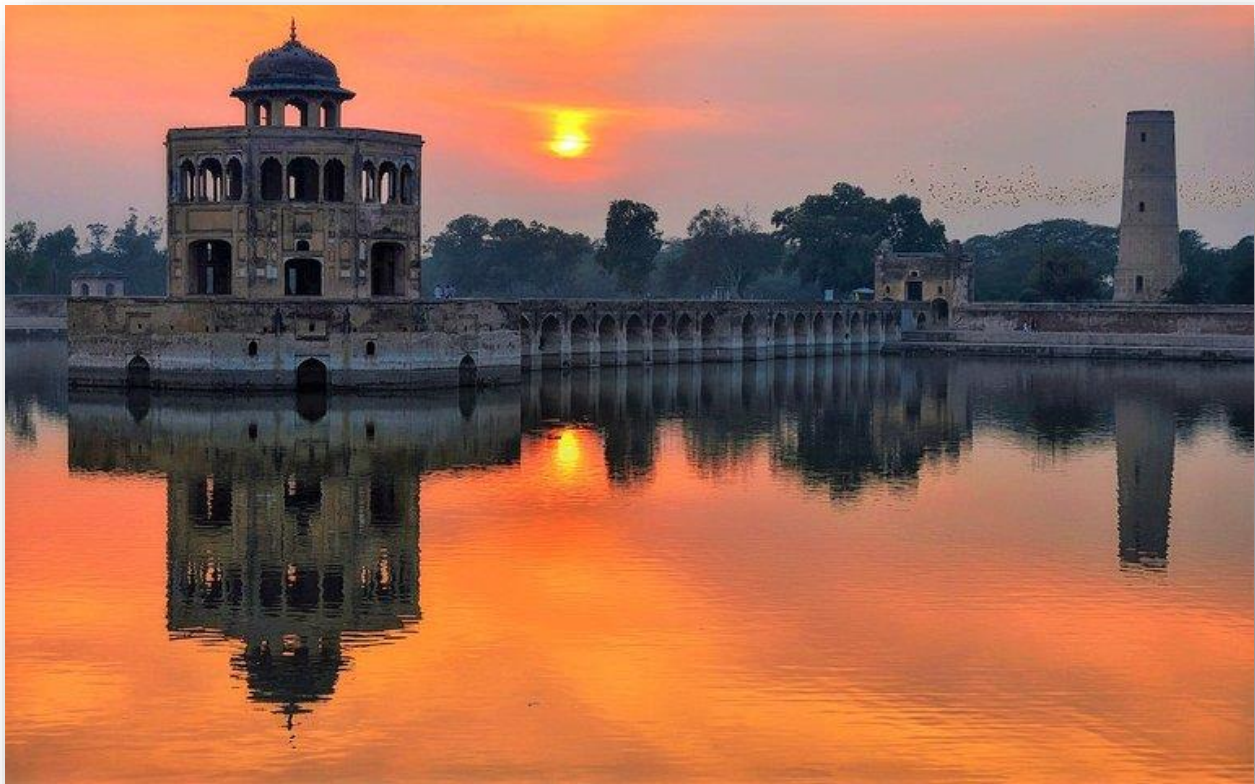
The Sheikhupura Fort



The remains of once majestic Sheikhupura Fort, constructed by King Jahangir, reminds of the times gone by. Five storied building of the Fort speak of the expertise of its architects. The Mughal Fort was built in 1619 for use as a hunting lodge. The Fort is built of bricks rather than stone, a common feature of Mughal forts. The Fort was later used by Sikh Princess Rani Nakayan and her private quarters are decorated with superbly preserved frescoes depicting dancing girls, hunt and court scenes and images of Guru Nanak. History has it that Arbeel Singh fired one hundred rounds on the Sheikhupura Fort to break in. During Ranjeet Singh's time, the Fort was renovated. Some of the murals are still there on the walls of the Fort. Around the Fort, some wood carving on doors, windows and balconies of old havelies can be seen being eaten by termite.

Hiran Minar

Hiran Minar is yet another masterpiece of mughal architecture. Unique in design, pattern and setting, the monument adds a glorious chapter to the mughals, their love for building edifices of great strength and grandeur of noble simplicity and elegance. Hiran Minar is a hunting retreat built by Emperor Jahangir to the northwest of Lahore. It was constructed in memory of an antelope named Mansraj that was beloved by the emperor. The memorial tower stands 30 meters high and



is 10 meters wide at its base. Around the perimeter are 214 holes that are believed to have been used as supports for the severed heads of animal trophies taken by the emperor.

History

Jahangir was a Mughal emperor who, like all good Mughal emperors, loved to hunt antelope. He also loved his cherished pet Mansraj (meaning “Light of the Mind”) who was an antelope. Something was bound to go wrong.

And wrong something did indeed go, when Jahangir was hunting with friends on his game preserve near Sheikhpura when he espied an antelope that proved to be a tempting quarry. The whys and wherefores errant shot? mistaken identity? logistical difficulties of cervine pet ownership? have been lost to the mists of time, but what is certain is that poor Mansraj was cut down that day in 1606.

Stricken by the loss, Jahangir paid tribute to the memory of his pet by constructing the 100-foot-tall Hiran Minar (meaning “Deer Tower”). The top of the tower includes a place to inter Mansraj’s remains, while the perimeter of the tower features holes that were most likely used to mount the heads of animal trophies taken by the emperor. An odd way to honor an animal friend killed in a hunting mishap? Sure, but grief does strange things to a man.

In 1634, Jahangir’s successor Shah Jahan visited his father’s favorite hunting preserve and decided to add to the complex by constructing a large water tank and octagonal pavilion to the east of the memorial tower (for context, this was two years after Shah Jahan started building the Taj Mahal – guy liked to build).

Influence

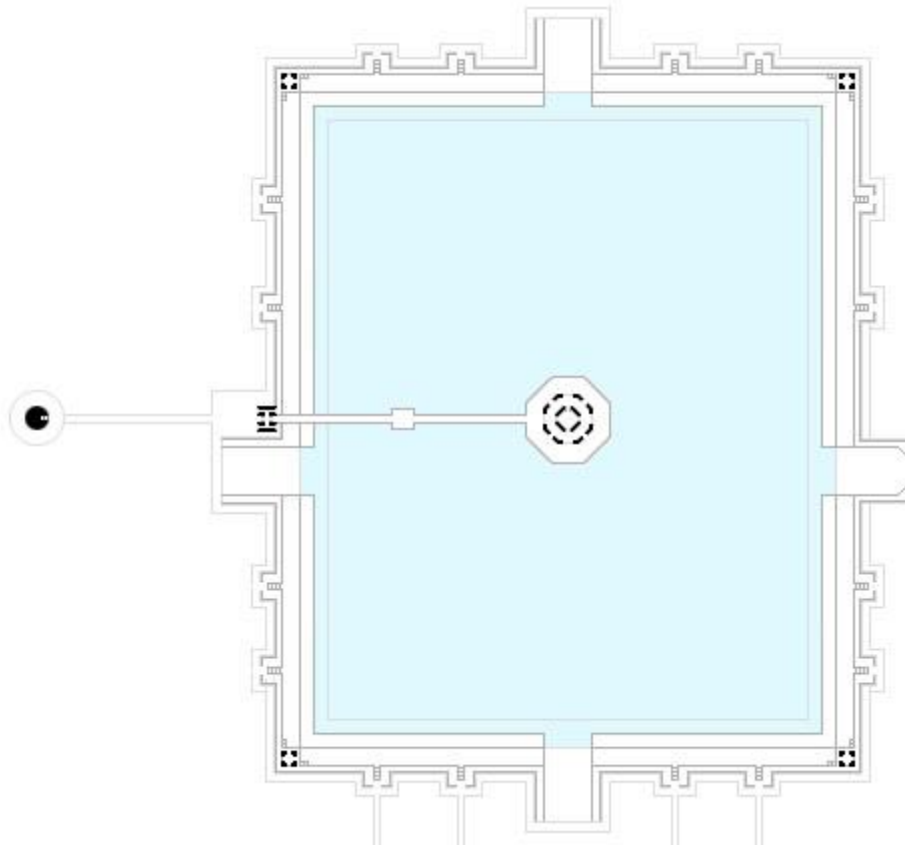
The architectural prototype of Hiran Minar has been traced to another monument also named as Hiran Minar at Fatehpur Sikri By Akbar the Great. The Hiran Minar at Fatehpur Aikri Measures twenty-one meters in height, the tower's plan is octagonal at its base, circular after the height of 3.91 meters, and topped with a chhatra. The circular part of the tower is decorated with stone spikes, and a circular balcony projects on stone corbels from the upper part of the tower.

Ground Plan:

The Mounoment consist of Minarere a rectangular Compound, a pavilion inside the Compound which is connected to the main land and the tower by a passage.



Architectural Description



The Minaret

Constructed in brick, the minar (tower) is circular and tapers towards the top, which is flat, with a parapet wall. There are 210 square holes on the outer surface of the minar, arranged at regular intervals in ~ 14 rows. A spiral staircase consisting of 108 steps has been provided inside the minar. Alongside the staircase, there are 11 ascending rectangular arched openings provided for air and light. The minar is divided into six tiers of different height. The base of each tier has projected moulding and the lowest tier has an arched opening for an entrance. The entire exterior as well as interior of the minar has lime plaster, apparently with some floral or lineal fresco paintings. The thick lime plaster applied over the surface of the lowest tier has been divided into decorative panels or arched niches and horizontal bands in high relief.

Facing the grand minar on the east side is a big tank with a causeway leading to the octagonal baradari (pavilion) built in the middle. There is a square pavilion at each corner with a gateway to the baradari. The tank is rectangular in shape, each side has a ramp and a parapet wall and is flanked by four staircases of 8 steps. During Mughal days, a channel was cut from the Aik rivulet and connected with the tank at its north-west corner; in addition, an elaborate system for filling up the tank with rain water from the catchment area was devised. The main gateway to the baradari is a rectangular vestibule with a pointed arch flanked by four other similar but smaller openings, built one upon the other. Inside the vestibule are two platforms. The inner walls have been

decorated with recessed niches, while the soffit of the domeshaped ceilings has honeycomb decoration. The two flights of 13 steps constructed at both the corners lead to the roof. The outer and inner surface has been plastered in the usual way and decorated with fresco paintings.



A causeway, standing on 21 pointed arched pillars, connects the main baradari with the gateway. A square-shaped projected platform has been provided in the middle of the causeway.

In the centre of the tank has been erected an octagonal platform with a low parapet wall on all sides. Over the platform stands the beautiful baradari in the same plan, The baradari was constructed under the orders of the Emperor Jahangir in 1620 A.D. for use as a royal residence.