

THE TANK AND CORNER PAVILIO

Facing the grand and majestic Minar on its east is a big tank with a causeway leading to the octagonal Daulat Khana, built in its centre. There is a square pavilion at each corner and gateway to the Daulat Khana on the north-west. The tank is rectangular in shape, measuring 895 feet 6 inches long and 752 feet wide. Each side of the tank has a ramp, 65 feet 4 inches wide, flanked by four staircases of 8 steps (7 feet 6 inches wide) leading to the water. The purpose of these ramps, constructed in brick on edge masonry, seems to have been to allow wild animals an easy access to water in order to quench their thirst. The tank has been provided with a parapet all around it.



The four corner pavilions are square in plan and measure 18 feet by 18 feet and have low pyramidal roofs. The pavilions have full length arched openings on their four sides and a cave (chajja) supported by broad brackets made of bricks. A number of small flat arched-niches have been created in the interior. The surface was finished with lime plaster and decorated with fresco paintings. The inside dado is painted and polished in red with a broad yellow and black border. The apex of the soffit possesses intricate floral pattern in red, yellow and green, the squinches have likewise decorative roundels with floral patterns. Two staircases consisting of 8 steps each lead to the water from the two sides of the pavilions.

At present, the tank receives supplies of water through a small channel taking off from the Sheikhpura Rajbah and connected with the tank from its eastern ramp. However, during Mughal days the 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 catchments area was devised by means of feeding channels and small flirtation tanks constructed in the south-west, south-east and north-east corners of the tank. These channels have now disappeared, except the remains of one on the south-west which gives a fairly good idea of the system.

Saving the Past For the Future

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PUNJAB HERITAGE

HIRAN MINAR

A UNIQUE HUNTING RESORT



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HISTORICAL BACKGROU

About 38 K.M. Northwest of Lahore, the cultural metropolis of Pakistan, is situated an old town called Sheikhpura. It is said to have been named after the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir's who was affectionately called "Sheikhu Baba" by his illustrious father, the Emperor Akbar. However, Jahangir's himself named it Jahangirpura and Jahangirabad in his Tuzuk. About 4 km, away from this historic town of Sheikhpura, is situated a tall and majestic tower called Hiran Minar and a Baradari in the centre of a big Tank, both erected

ARCHITECTUR

The complex of buildings erected at Sheikhpura under the order of Jahangir's and modified afterwards by the architects of Shahjahan, presents unique features of Mughal architecture. Here, in this Royal hunting resort, we find an expression of the Emperor's personality who created this ensemble of buildings for his recreation. The high minaret served very well the purpose of providing a clear view of the surrounding area for locating game, while the fabulous



Daulat

THE MAIN GATEW AND CAUSEWAY

The main gateway to the Daulat Khana is a rectangular vestibule, measuring 34 feet by 22 feet 6 inches, with a pointed arched gateway flanked by four other similar openings, built one upon the other. Inside the vestibule are two platforms, 3 feet 2 inches high, covering the area on either side of the main entrance. The inner walls have been decorated with recessed niches, while the soffit of the dome shaped ceiling has a honeycomb decoration. The two heights 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, particularly at the front of the entrance.

A causeway, standing on 21 pointed arched-pillars, connects the main Daulat Khana with the gateway. It is 308 feet 8 inches long and 10 feet 6 inches broad with a parapet, 1 foot 8 inches high, running along both the side. A square shaped projected platform measuring 23'-7" by 23'-7" has been provided in the centre of the causeway.

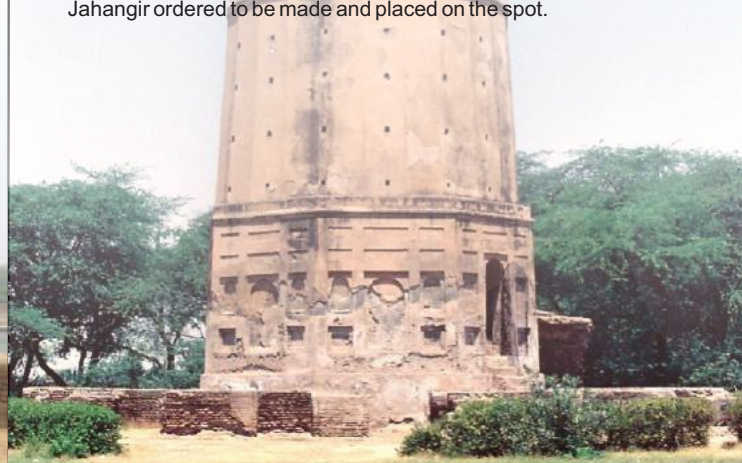


THE HIRAN MINAR

The Minaret is circular in shape and tapers towards the top. Its diameter at the base is 33 feet and at the top 23 feet; while the overall height is 102 feet 9 inches. The top is flat, having a parapet wall, 2 feet and 9 inches high. There is no indication that there was originally a pavilion over it. There are 210 square holes on the outer surface of the minaret, arranged regularly in 14 rows. The purpose of these holes cannot be determined precisely. Several theories have been advanced by archaeologists and art historians, some of which assert that these were used for hanging the heads of hunted animals, a curious hunting tradition among the early Mughal sovereigns of the Sub-Continent. The other suggestion is that these were only meant to be used as nests by wild birds. A spiral staircase consisting of 108 steps has been provided inside the minaret. Alongside the staircase, there are 11 ascending rectangular arched openings provided for air and light. From these ventilations there is a good view of the Tank, the Daulat Khana and the surrounding area.

The minaret has been constructed with country bricks laid in kankar lime mortar. It is divided into six tiers of different heights. The lowest tier is octagonal in plan and decorated with panels, while the others are circular. The third tier has a small octagonal room. The base of each tier has projected moulding and the lowest tier has an arched opening for entrance. The entire exterior as well as interior of the minaret has lime plaster, apparently with some floral or lineal fresco painting. The thick lime plaster applied over the surface of the lowest tier has been divided into decorative panels of arched niches and horizontal bands in high relief.

Around the base of the minaret, the remains of some structures are present and it is difficult now to determine their exact nature. Here is said to have been the grave of the famous antelope of Jahangir's, Mansraj with its unusual inscription which was, according to the Emperor, composed and transcribed by one of his court's master artists and calligraphists, Mulla Muhammad Hussain Kashmiri. Nothing of this inscribed sculpture of antelope and the grave is now preserved. But in 1966, when some diggings were carried out at the base of the minaret to expose the structural remains for the purpose of conservation, a broken and slightly damaged head of an antelope made of red sand stone was discovered from the debris. The head may be taken as that of the effigy of the antelope which Emperor Jahangir ordered to be made and placed on the spot.



THE ROYAL PAVILION (DAULAT KHANA)

In the centre of the tank has been erected on octagonal platform with a low parapet wall on all sides. Over the platform stands the beautiful Daulat Khana in the same plan. The Daulat Khana was also constructed under the orders of the Emperor Jahangir in 1030 A.H./1620 A.D. for use as a Royal residence. Later on, during the reign of Shahjahan the Daulat Khana was renovated and some modifications to its structure and structural decoration were carried out. With these renovations, the Daulat Khana received a new and more impressive look. It has been recorded that Shahjahan visited the place as many as four times during his reign.



The Daulat Khana, measuring 58'-3", is a two storied building with an open octagonal pavilion on the top resting on arched pillars and crowned with a cupola. The main octagonal room on the ground floor measure 19'-3" by 19'-2" and is surrounded by eight intercommunicated square and oblong rooms with flat vaulted roofs and flat topped openings.

The interior surface is finished with highly polished lime plaster and paneled with recessed niches. The surface has fresco decoration in green and crimson and the floor is paved with slabs of red sand stone. A flight of 14 steps leads to the second storey which has the same plan as the first, but an open verandah with 24 flat arched opening runs all round it. Over the top of the second storey is an octagonal pavilion measuring 22" by 22" with a domed roof and a corbelled cave. As usual, it has eight openings with multifold cusps which have been added later, probably during the reign of Shahjahan.

The surface of the Baradari, both exterior and interior has finely finished and polished with lime plaster, tastefully decorated with fresco paintings. The dado has a floral band running on its border while the flat roofs of the corridor are decorated with a beautifully executed and intricate medallion. Likewise, a scroll of floral pattern runs along the parapet. The main colours used in these decorations are yellow, crimson, red, black, green and blue. The decoration was also probably executed by the order of Shahjahan. Some of the fresco paintings in the Daulat Khana and the corner pavilions are of later period when it was under the occupation of Sikh rulers.

The monument was declared protected by the Department of Archaeology under the Ancient Monuments Reservation Act, 1904 (now Antiquities Act, 1975) in 1916. The Hiran Minar and Tank, Sheikhpura is also inscribed on tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage.

