

Lahore is the proud owner of the score of historical buildings. The grandeur of 528x528-feet Badshahi Mosque forces **Romana Bukhari** to take a deeper look into its history

Architectural delight

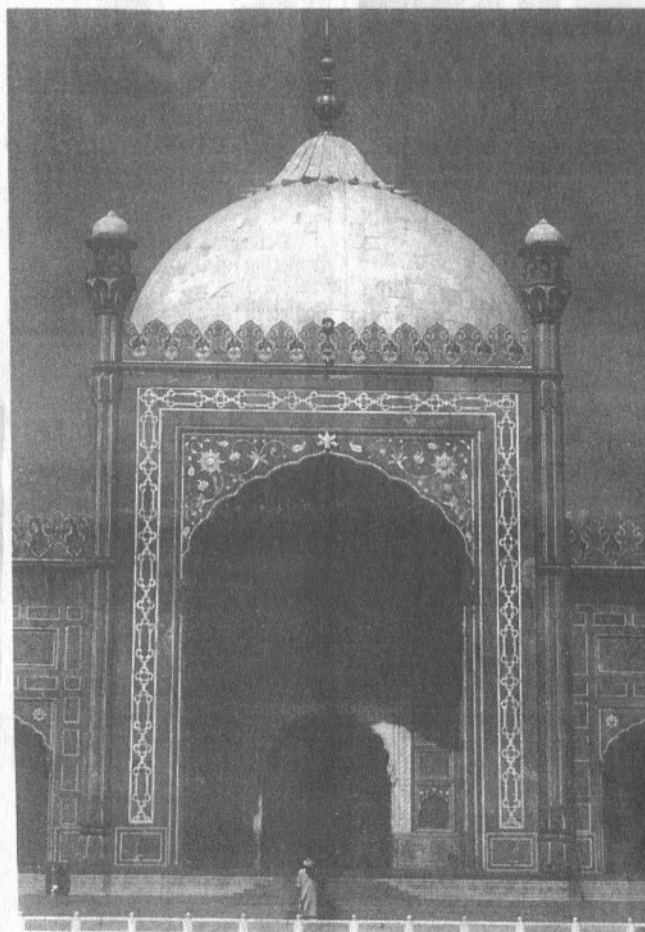
magnificent structure the considerable revenue from the rich agricultural areas surrounding Multan was assigned to its up keep.

The faithful called to prayer from any one of the Mosque's tapering minarets, entered the Mosque through its majestic gateway by climbing the grand staircase comprising 22-graduated steps. The length of the lowest being 90 feet and the top most a little over 79 feet.

This gateway is a fine example of architecture. It is very imposing building, more beautiful and elegant than the other gateways of the other Mughal buildings in Lahore like gateway of Chaburji Garden, gateway of Zaib-un-Nisa mausoleum, gateway of Gulabi Bagh, gateway Ali Mardan Khan tomb and so many other gates like gateway of Masjid Wazir Khan.

Above the arch entrance are many small turrets of red sand-stone and marble. On the outer face of the entrance is some inscription in large letters below the **Kalimah**.

The gateway opens onto a vast courtyard. It is enclosed with hujras or cells all around except the portion in the west where the Aiwan (main prayer chamber) is located. The courtyard is divided into upper and lower parts. The eastern portion accommodates the ablution tank which no more serves its original purpose. After renovation it has been beautified with white marble screen and a fountain. It provides a soothing treat to the eyes. For the purpose of ablution, the eastern cells pulled down by the British in 1865, have been reconstructed as to serve as long ablution falls with tap water. The courtyard was originally built



Front view of the Badshahi Mosque showing central arch and dome.

The interior is decorated with floral patterns on lime plastered surface and tasteful fresco paintings in bright colours.

History comes home to us from where it was created. With the arrival of Mughals, Lahore got a form and finish of the native land of Mughals. Akbar built the fort with bricks and the city was embellished with gardens and palaces of nobility. The successor Mughal rulers contributed in their own way to the development of the

jewel of Lahore but an earthquake in 1840 jolted the building to such an extent that the exceptionally massive stone minarets of having not less than 68 feet of circumference, at the base, lost their upper most storey and were reduced to three-storeyed minarets. So the model at Lahore Museum justifies the efforts of its builders.

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community Hakims, Syed Wali Shah and Syed Buzurg Shah. After a century of misuse the grand Mosque was restored to its original purpose by the British.

F S Ijazuddin relates that, between 1846, the year of the treaty of Lahore which effectively curtailed the political independence of the Sikh Darbar as a governing body and in 1849, when the Punjab was formally annexed with the British government, various attempts were made to induce change in the attitude of the more bigoted Sikh Sardars. Henry Lawrance, the Resident at Lahore, in August 1847 requested the Darbar to issue a proclamation permitting Muslims to announce through the 'azan', a call to prayer. His suggestion was quickly rebuffed by one of the leading Sikhs, Sardar Tej Singh. John Lawrance, acting as Resident during his brother's absence, maintained the pressure but met with dogged resistance. Reporting was made to the Secretary of the Government of India on 25th September 1847 about the timid and bigoted conduct of the Darbar. Consequently, permission was granted in due course despite embers of complaints by fanatics to the Lawrence.

The gateway contains a number of chambers primarily for the use of the Imam, responsible for the administration of the Mosque. After the restoration of the Mosque to the Muslims in 1856, the upper chambers have become the repository of a number of sacred relics associated with the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) and members of his family.

The length of this essay does not permit to outline the continuous struggle up to now in restoring the flash-back of the original Mosque. There is a magnificent tablet of white marble fixed at a corner of the

Let us play quiz quiz. Ready? OK. It is a building. Its courtyard measures 528x528 feet. To reach its gateway one has to walk 22 steps. It has four minarets, three domes and is in Lahore. Is it Railway station? Telegraph office? Shalimar Garden? No. Then what is it? If it is in Lahore, it is of the measurement as mentioned before, then of course the description is that of one of the largest mosques in the world, Badshahi Mosque. It is a jewel of Lahore and a gift of an emperor to the citizens of Lahore.

Now something academic. As everybody knows, Lahore Museum houses a large collection of treasures beyond imagination and a wealth of knowledge. Among its preserved relics there is a wooden model of this mosque. It is truly a duplication and indeed a true copy. But is it so? Either something is wrong with the mosque or with this model. What is it? No need of magic to understand the difference between the two. But of course the minarets of the model are of four storeys with a copula whereas the actual minarets of the mosque are of three storeys with a copula. It cannot be so that the model is wrongly formed rather something has happened with the minarets and what is that?, is a long story and will be told at its proper place.

This mosque is built with red sand-stone in major. It has another story. Once there was a princely prince. His name was Dara Shikoh. He was son of the fifth great Mughal. It is related that the material of this mosque was originally

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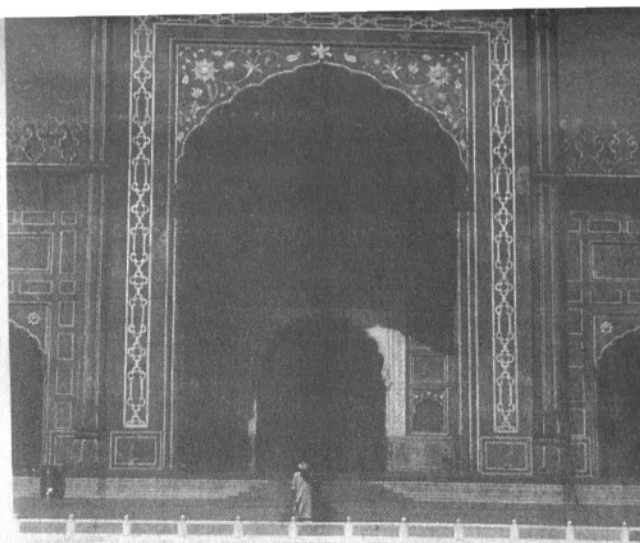
This Mosque, one of the finest expressions of the Mughal, was based on a design of the Al-Walid mosque at Makkah and was completed at cost in excess of Rs 100,000, 326 seasons ago. For he maintenance of this

example of architecture. It is very imposing building, more beautiful and elegant than the other gateways of the other Mughal buildings in Lahore like gateway of Chaburji Garden, gateway of Zaib-un-Nisa mausoleum, gateway of Gulabi Bagh, gateway Ali Mardan Khan tomb and so many other gates like gateway of Masjid Wazir Khan.

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The upper portion of the courtyard is just a step higher. The gigantic building of the prayer chamber lies in its western portion. The building is set on a raised platform reached by a flight of steps in sung-e-abri, a stone. The eastern facade has three-centered central vault flanked by five smaller arches on either sides. The red sand-stone facing is provided with well proportioned panelling decorated with marble in lay.



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The Fort and the city changed hands together and have really a long and interwoven history. So is the case with the Badshahi Mosque being part of the city.

Like human history the picture of the Badshahi Mosque, in historic perspective, is sometimes very glorious, sometimes sad and sometimes sober. It was a

jewel of Lahore but an earthquake in 1840 jolted the building to such an extent that the exceptionally massive stone minarets of having not less than 68 feet of circumference, at the base, lost their upper most storey and were reduced to three-storeyed minarets. So the model at Lahore Museum justifies the efforts of its builders.

It was built by an emperor and ruler with a religious demand but another ruler put it to use to his own demands when he besieged Lahore Fort. Upon these minarets Sher Singh during his celebrated siege of the citadel, in January 1841, posted his matchlock men who with their weapons spread destruction in the Fort. Prior to him another ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, used it to his own demands as being a magazine and stable.

At 5:30am of the morning of 11th June 1856 has the significant importance in the history of this Mosque. It was the time when the custody of the Mosque was formally handed over to the two representatives of the Muslim

issue a proclamation permitting Muslims to announce through the 'azan', a call to prayer. His suggestion was quickly rebuffed by one of the leading Sikhs, Sardar Tej Singh. John Lawerance, acting as Resident during his brother's absence, maintained the pressure but met with dogged resistance. Reporting was made to the Secretary of the Government of India on 25th September 1847 about the timid and bigoted conduct of the Darbar. Consequently, permission was granted in due course despite embers of complaints by fanatics to the Lawrence.

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"The Mosque of the victorious and valiant king Mohy-ud-Din Mohammad Aalamgir. Constructed and completed under the supretendence of the humblest servant of the royal household, Fidai Khan, Koka in 1084 AH".

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