

The pictured wall or the glazed tiled wall of Lahore Fort, which is nearly 500 yards in length and 16 yards of height, decorated with panels of tile mosaics of different subjects and scenes, is the most representative relic of Mughal age of architectural colour and design for its uniqueness in respect of its scale and scheme and magnificent, nowhere found in palaces in the world.

The pictured wall covering an area of about some 8000 square yards is generally known as 'Ornamentation of Kashi Panels'. Historians generally tend to agree that this art had trickled to the subcontinent especially in the Punjab and its evidence is found in abundance in the capital city of Punjab. To some, this method of decoration may look to be a bit cheap and gaudy but historically there appeared to be no other alternative, which could be devised true to the climate and materials used for buildings keeping in view the scorching heat of sun.

What leads this work an uncommon and interesting factor is that here are not only the geometrical designs followed, but a number of panels exhibiting figures and scenes of sports and amusements explicitly depicting the cultural life.

This work is indicative of the fact that Mughal rulers of India patronized arts, and, at their court, painting flourished and the painters did not

confine themselves to lifeless objects.

There are numerous instances when princes and emperors ordered for the beautiful sculptured panels of red sandstone on which living beings were depicted. The carving on marble included birds and butterflies. The travellers visited the Jehangir's court in Lahore Fort and clearly mentioned of the portraits of the emperor, his ancestors, sons and grand children in the palace. They have also reported of seeing the pictures of Christ and Virgin Mary. It is now established beyond doubt that Akbar's religious policy and his liberal attitude had

The pictured wall of Lahore Fort is one of its type — not only throughout the subcontinent but is unique also in terms of its magnificent architectural and colour scheme, found no where else in any palace of the world.
By Leena Maqsood.

encouraged the Christian preasts to come and preach their religion. They (Mughal emperors) were liberal to all of their subjects and were not religious bigots.

The size of the pictured wall indicates the engagement

of large number of workmen and artisans on various aspects of this decoration including the geometrical borders, designing lay out and execution of figurative work.

There have been some scenes along the stately fairies

and magnificent dragons, clumsy camels and horses, sometimes which appear to be the first attempt of the artist but it could be safely assumed that among the workmen with out-put varied the quality.

The elephant fights, camel

and horse dances appear to be most favourite recreation of the Mughals and their nobility. The pictured wall of Lahore Fort is illustrating monument of the great Mughals, remarkable alike for vastness and variety of its decoration

and more than any of other monuments. It affords striking illustration of their peculiar and typical culture in which ruggedness and refinement are so strongly and strangely blended.

The miniature continues



One of its kind

along the whole length of the palace wall, but have suffered great during the change overs of various warring lords. In certain cases, they appear to have been mended on damages with bits of blue and white Multani tiles, probably during the Sikh regime. The floral patterns of the walls badly disfigured due to the bullet marks.

The tile work is exquisite in design and colour. Dark blue elephants are the most prominent ones and the action of these beasts is expressed with singular vigour. An excellent example is the elephant rushing after a fleeing horseman, its

'mahvaut' leaning back and trying in vain to restrain its fury. Several panels show scenes of the elephant fight which is one of the main recreations of the Mughals.

Akinly, the third panel with the well drawn white horses is not less decorative though the exact meaning of the scene depicted is by no means clear. The camel-fight is also to be classed among the entertainments of the Mughal Court.

In brief, the entire subject covered on the panels of the pictured wall has been precisely categorized by Mr Ram Nath into, Stylized Floral, Geometrical, Arabesques, and figurative work.

However, after Independence, the Archaeology Department has not been successful enough to preserve this entire peculiar work, which is only one of its kind. For an instance, the wall surface between the first and second octagonal tower, the Kala burj and Lal Burj is almost devoid of colour decoration, and whatever traces of it may have remained, are now concealed under modern plaster.

Despite all these havoc, the wall is one of its own type throughout the subcontinent. The firmness of line, colours, shade and designing is so perfect that still every year, the booklet brought out on the occasion of National Horse and Cattle Show carries on its tile page the horse figure from this tile mosaic work.

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