

The last of the Mugh

Fatehgarh Bagh, from the period of Emperor Jehangir or Shah Jehan, has been replaced by houses in only



Fatehgarh Bagh was the only garden after Shalamar with its original layout of Mughal period preserved in Lahore.

It took both 'legal' or 'illegal' occupants just one year to level a centuries-old invaluable historical treasure in Fatehgarh (Mughalpur) area to the ground. Actually, there were two gardens of Mughal architecture. One was

turned into a residential colony over a decade ago while the second met the same fate only months before.

It was learnt that senior bureaucrats at the Punjab Civil Secretariat discussed the possible preservation of Fatehgarh Garden only two weeks ago, ignorant of the fact that it

was no more. The idea of preservation was to seek foreign funding of Rs 100 million offered by Japan.

Since I belong to that area, I can still recall the days of childhood when we used to play cricket in a ground near the gardens, which were well-kept then and one could have

a glimpse of the beautiful garden right from the canal bank. I still wonder why the so-called watchdogs could not 'watch' its ruin.

"We removed the main entrance on southern side, which had a huge wooden gate with two small towers on both sides, to sell the land in pieces

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ehar, has been replaced by houses in only one year, **Ahmad Waleed** reports

Lahore
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News



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as people were reluctant to
purchase plots with the gate
still there. They feared that
some day the Archeology or
Auqaf Department would
throw them out to preserve
the garden," one of the three
real estate agents working in
the area replied to TNS, while
explaining why the main gate

had to be removed.

He said the garden was
sold to one of the residents of
Fatehgarh area in 1974 and it
the matter soon went into liti-
gation. "Now only, when the
dispute has been settled ami-
cably, we are selling plots," he
said.

A dilapidated 200-metre-
long wall on the western side
of the garden, is the only
reminder of the garden. Many
houses have been built in the
past six months and people
have started living in the area.

Only two or three years ago
the Fategarh Bagh was intact
with minor cracks in the sur-
rounding wall, but it had, of
course, started crumbling.
Someone had taken it on lease
for growing crops of all kinds.

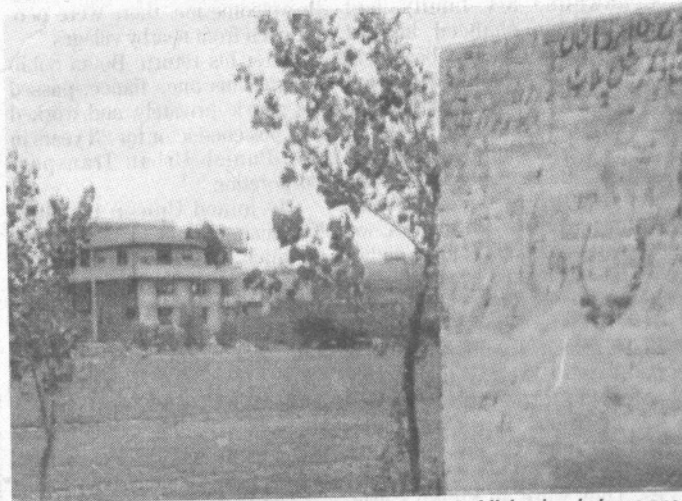
A local resident Mehar Ali
said the government is exca-
vating grounds in many areas

ture in Lahore, have not
been mentioned even in the
most acclaimed books on
Mughal architecture. These
gardens remained under the
control of Punjab Evacuee
Trust, Lahore.

Since the historians and
archaeologists were unable to
refer to their original names,
these gardens were commonly
known as Fatehgarh Gardens
or Wadda and Chota Bagh (big
and small garden).

In 1996, Dr Saifur Rehman
Dar, former Director of Lahore
Museum, pointed out that in a
19th-century map, one of these
gardens appeared to have been
named as Bagh Jagu Singh,
but, according to him, that was
the property name in the 19th
century.

Originally, the garden was
laid out in oblong shape —
805 feet (242 metres) east-



Many houses have been built and people have started living in what was once

to discover hidden relics, but
paid no heed to preserve the
visible ones that were vanish-
ing.

It is believed that there
were more than 16 Mughal
gardens in the city, of which
only these two had survived.
These two largely undiscovered
gardens of Mughal archi-

west and 670 feet (201 metres)
north-south with octagonal
towers at four corners; main
gate in the centre of southern
wall and probably a similar
eastern wall and a high wall,
supported by bastions.

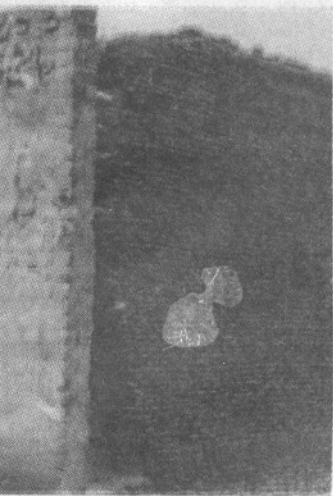
Among the four *burjis*
(towers) only one in the south-
east still exists, with the grave

of a saint named Chiragh Ali Shah along with 200 metre-long wall on the western side. The wall could be demolished any moment.

In the middle of the garden was the main *baradari* or pavilion, 65 feet east-west and 56 feet north-south, surrounded by a water tank. There was a terra-cotta pipe embedded in its western wall indicating that this tank was fed by fresh water from western side, coming from the western enclosure wall. The only examples of such architecture are Kamran Baradari enclosure and Hiran Minar Baradari water tank which was related to the earlier form of Mughal architecture.

The residents said that in 1952 Fatehgarh Bagh was allotted to the then Lahore SSP Syed Manzoor Hussain, who planted mango trees there. "His German wife looked after the trees great care but they failed to bear fruit," they said.

There were a number of *hammams* (baths) outside the garden on the eastern side, but 20 years ago, there were no signs of it. The Fatehgarh Bagh, said to be from the period of Mughal Emperor Jehangir or Shah Jehan, was the only garden after Shalamar with its original layout of



ce a garden. Photos: Akmal Bhatti

Mughal period preserved in Lahore.

Unfortunately, the garden now ceases to exist. "It's too late now. Had the government taken any interest only a year ago the rare historical treasure could have been saved," Tariq Mehmood, a local resident lamented. ♦

