

The obscured tomb of Malik Ayaz

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LAHORE, whose origin is lost in the haze of antiquity, has evolved a distinct character of its own. Located on the path-way of invaders from the north, it has also served as a meeting place for different civilizations to mingle with each other, creating its cosmopolitan

ambience.

Apart from the beauty of its architectural monuments, the cityscape is dotted with numerous mausoleums of Sufi saints, kings and emperors. The tombs of Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak and Emperor Jehangir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of a

short-lived Sikh dynasty and a number of provincial governors, who ruled over large parts of South Asia, are all to be found here. However, the mausoleums of Sufi saints heavily outnumber the graves of the princes, princesses, queens and kings.

Several localities of Lahore have maintained their traditional links with history, especially the Ghazanvid and Mughal periods of Muslim India. These include the mausoleum of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, the tomb of Syed Ishaq located in the quadrangle of the famous Wazir Khan's mosque and the tomb of Malik Ayaz, the first Muslim governor of Lahore, who was appointed by Sultan Mahmud Ghazanvi after he had defeated Raja Jaipal in AD 1042, and whose mortal remains were interred in a place now known as Chowk Rang Mahal near the Golden Mosque.

Malik Ayaz, a slave, won the heart of Sultan Mahmud, who entrusted him with several posts of great and onerous responsibilities in his government. A dependable confidant of the Sultan and a brave soldier, Malik Ayaz served his benefactor with great devotion and loyalty. He retained the governorship during the tenure of Sultan Masud, heir to Sultan Mahmud Ghazanvi.

Malik Ayaz, whose full name was Abdul Najam Malik Ahmad Ayaz, was one of the favourite slaves of Sultan Mahmud Ghazanvi. His name is mentioned in several history books related to the Ghazanvid dynasty, especially that of its founder. Some historians have



about his extraordinary good looks which helped him establish a quick rapport with the Sultan. Malik Ayaz served his master well. He was an unusually brave person, gifted by nature with matchless administrative ability. That was why he rose to the status of a general in Sultan Mahmud's army and accompanied the king on several foreign expeditions.

Another account of the ancestry of Malik Ayaz makes the readers believe that he belonged to Kashmir, where he was born to a family of slaves, who were taken to Ghazana. Bewitched by his extremely attractive looks, the Sultan paid more for him than demanded by his masters.

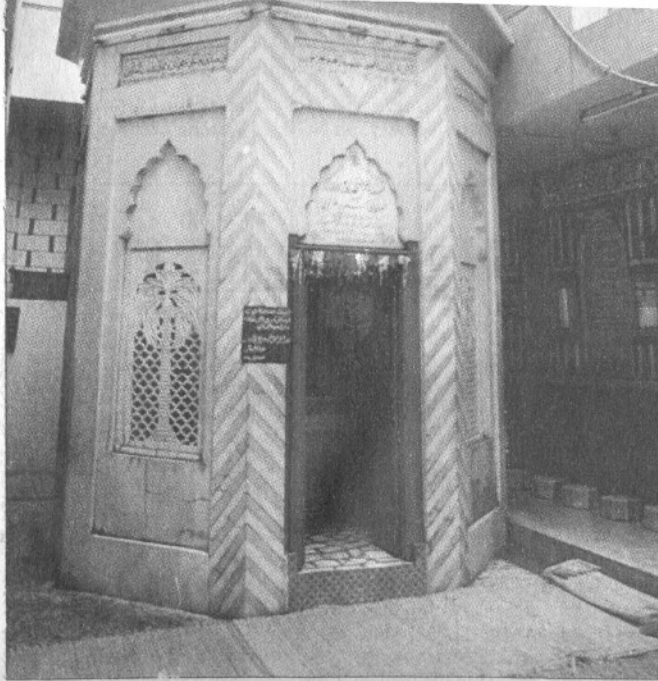
ed governor of Lahore, the city lay in ruins after the defeat of Raja Jaipal. He laid the foundations on which a new city was raised under his supervision. He also put up walls around the city and constructed a fortress for its defence. During his 34-year tenure in Lahore Malik Ayaz proved his credentials as an able administrator who, in addition to defending the city, also added much to its beauty.

Ayaz died in Lahore, where his tomb was built close to the then Taxal (mint) in the heart of the city. Attached to his tomb was a spacious garden, which, with the passage of time, was encroached upon and ultimately vanished from the

public view. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of Lahore, a mint was located in the garden attached to his tomb. It was because of that mint that the street adjacent to it was called Taxal Bazaar. The Taxali Gate is located quite some distance away from the tomb and the garden.

Many residents of the Walled City still visit the mazar of Malik Ayaz, especially on Thursday evenings, to pay their homage to the first Muslim governor of Lahore, whom they consider a Sufi saint. The tomb stands in urgent need of repairs and a permanent provision for its maintenance.





Rang Mahal near the Golden Mosque.

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Malik Ayaz, whose full name was Abdul Najam Malik Ahmad Ayaz, was one of the favourite slaves of Sultan Mahmud Ghazanvi. His name is mentioned in several history books related to the Ghazanvid dynasty, especially that of its founder. Some historians have created an aura of romance around the relationship between the king, and his slave friend. Others have written

about his extraordinary good looks which helped him establish a quick rapport with the Sultan. Malik Ayaz served his master well. He was an unusually brave person, gifted by nature with matchless administrative ability. That was why he rose to the status of a general in Sultan Mahmud's army and accompanied the king on several foreign expeditions.

Another account of the ancestry of Malik Ayaz makes the readers believe that he belonged to Kashmir, where he was born to a family of slaves, who were taken to Ghazana. Bewitched by his extremely attractive looks, the Sultan paid more for him than demanded by his masters. But this account of his ancestry is not substantiated by historical record.

When Malik Ayaz was appoint-

ed governor of Lahore, the city lay in ruins after the defeat of Raja Jaipal. He laid the foundations on which a new city was raised under his supervision. He also put up walls around the city and constructed a fortress for its defence. During his 34-year tenure in Lahore Malik Ayaz proved his credentials as an able administrator who, in addition to defending the city, also added much to its beauty.

Ayaz died in Lahore, where his tomb was built close to the then Taxal (mint) in the heart of the city. Attached to his tomb was a spacious garden, which, with the passage of time, was encroached upon and ultimately vanished from the scene. His *mazar* (in Rang Mahal chowk) is now surrounded by a cluster of small shops, which obscure it almost from

public view. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of Lahore, a mint was located in the garden attached to his tomb. It was because of that mint that the street adjacent to it was called Taxal Bazaar. The Taxali Gate is located quite some distance away from the tomb and the garden.

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Perhaps, somebody in the Archaeology Department will visit the tomb to assess the amount of damage.