

Diwan-i-Aam

As soon as Akbar was thrown in 1556 A.D he had to encounter his brother Mirza Hakeem. A decade after Akbar had to move to Lahore to control the situation in 1564. According to in *Ain e Akbari*, he stayed in his own palace in the Lahore Fort. In 1584, Akbar shifted his capital seat temporarily from Agra and Delhi to Lahore in order to strengthen his grip over the different regional power contenders. People of Lahore gathered in the Southern Medan to express their joy in a reception, Akbar appeared in the gate, which opened towards the south to reciprocate their fervor. Akbar ordered to construct a stylish and befitting *darshan Jharoka* (seating place for the king). There was a small but elegant staircase leading to *Darshan Jharoka* and *Dolat Khana Khas o Aam* of Akbar palace. He also managed a big tentage for the public. Later, Shah Jahan converted the area into an attractive edifice for the audience, consisting of 48 red sandstone pillars with dancing peacock carved base, named it *Dewan e, Aam* (hall of general audience).

“Before the construction of the Diwan e Aam, during the reign of Emperors Akbar and Jahangir, a triple canopy of velvet was used to provide the assembled company protection from sun or rain, while the floor was covered with carpets. However, after ShahJahan acceded to the throne on 14 February 1628 CE he commissioned the construction of forty pillared hall in Agra to replace the awnings attached to the Jharoka (king’s balcony) in Jahangir’s time”. (Rehmani 2016)

The seating arrangement was in the rectangular hall, which was supported with red sandstone pillars. There is small basement chamber approached through a downstairs covered with some pieces of red sandstone, which might be meant to those the state prisoners. Beautiful series of stairs have been provided at every level to lower courtyard. According to the *“Amale Saleh”, of Muhammad Saleh Lahori*, when the construction of this edifice was completed, His Majesty, after consulting the astrologers, entered it in a propitious hour and took his royal seat in it. The poet Abu Talib Kalim read to His Majesty the following ode, for which he was rewarded with gown of honor:

“This new edifice in loftiness equals the highest heaven Compared with its dignity, eminence itself is but insignificant. It is a garden, every pillar of which is like a green cypress tree in the shade of which noble and plebeian obtain repose”.(Latif 1892)

Many of the official banquets and ceremonies held in this worthy chamber. Almost all the coronation ceremonies including Shah Jahan were held thereafter completion of this royal’s grandeur edifice, Welcome reception to Ali Mardan Khan was also organized here; funeral ceremonies of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh were happened in the same place. The building was smashed down during the bombardment of Sher Singh in 1841 and was reconstructed by the British, for the purpose of a hospital in the forthcoming First World War in 1914-18. Irregular and rough re-arrangements of the pillar position, iron rod to stronghold the pillars and brackets for fans or curtains still could be seen in the building. Vaulted roof has been replaced with that of made of a wooden batten and planks. British army used this building as a cantonment and garrison. Some graffiti could still be found in the different parts of this building.

Bibliography

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