

Diwan-i-Khas

Contrary to Diwan e Aam, Emperor Shah Jahan, who was eager to erect some outstanding architectural structures got finished this masterpiece with a white marble inlaid, admixed with some precious stones called 'Diwan e khas' (Hall of Lords or *Umaras*), lies in between the Jahagir's Quadrangle and Paen Bagh Quadrangle in the Northern side of Lahore Fort, where King used to held his Courts (*Darbars*) with his *umaras* (*Cabinet members*). Building has three major parts; sleeping chambers of Shah Jahan, central walkways and *baradari*.

"In 1645, by order of Shahjahan, entirely of white marble and overlooking the river Ravi. In addition to its gracefully shaped arches, it is notable for its embellishment in exquisite inlay work, tastefully carved screens, and ceiling. Being the only extant edifice built exclusively from white marble (except for the Moti Masjid), at the time of its completion, it was a novel building of the Mughal period in Lahore" (Rehmani 2016)

Southern part of Diwan e Khas is called private chambers of Shah Jahan comprising main hall flanked with each contained two rooms. The main hall is decorated with mirrors and wonderful fresco paintings on the walls. A fountain was in the center of the hall, lofty arch openings to both sides, to cool the air to wave through. Eastern Rooms opened into the Jahangir's Quadrangle, through superb white marble gateways. Both were decorated with stucco tracery with mirror comparatively bigger in size. While western rooms might have been constructed on the old foundations probably of Jahangir's time. All the decorative features have disappeared. Some fresco paintings could still be seen on the walls. A 20 feet wide open to sky veranda with a central fountain outside the chambers. It provided an ample light and air to the chambers. (Insari 1962)

The Central park was divided into four lush green grassy lawns which was crossed by an 8 feet wide walkways. It was made of brick and design. It is eroded a little bit but the Department of Archaeology is trying best to preserve it. Marvelous fountain with precious inlaid marble flooring is seen in the center on 3 feet high platform. (Latif 1892)

An open arcade stood on northern side, which was constructed in white marble on a three feet raised platform. It stood with all its royal grandeur. Two layers of white marble pillars supported the main structure of the building. The whole structure was constructed without any sort of cement or bond rather, complete pieces of different parts of marble have been erected over each other in a manner that entire building monolith. Colorful mosaic marble flooring in geometrical pattern of the *baradari* is the only evidence left from the original flooring of the ancient times. It is used as a sample of design, to furnish flooring at different places. In the center of the flooring, there is a wonderfully decorated huge one piece white marble fountain, made off with green Emerald and blue Rubies.

“During the period the fort remained under British military occupation, the Diwan eKhas was converted into a military Church. Efforts of the Archaeological Department to get its possession and vacation by the Military succeeded to recover it in 1903” (Chaudhry 1999)

The precious stones have been removed by Sikhs and the British. White marble lattice in honey comb design have been fixed in the arch openings towards the riverside which replaced the warm air of the building with the breeze of the river.

Bibliography

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