

## **Shrine of Hazrat Mauj Darya**

The Shrine of Mauj Darya is located at the rear side of tall buildings and is approached through a narrow street, west of Edward Road. Some books had referred this area as Kuri Bagh, formerly the residence of French General Ventura, of Ranjit Singh. The shrine stands on high a mound and its plinth is visible on the north in the Custom Collection House. A small graveyard surrounds the shrine. A mosque stands on its south-east. The exact date of the construction of the shrine is not known but is generally held that it was built during Akbar's reign. As such it represents a transitional phase of architecture between the Sultanate and the Mughal Schools of Architecture.

The original name of the saint was Sayyid Muhammad Shah who belonged to the ancient city of Uch of Bahawalpur region. According to Syed Latif (historian) "The protracted siege of Chittor had caused much anxiety to Emperor Akbar, who was advised by the royal astrologers to implore the spiritual aid of that saint. Akbar went barefoot to the saint, whose prayers on behalf of His Majesty were believed to have had the effect of reducing till now impregnable fortress". Mauj Darya's advice on how to conquer the Chittorgarh Forts from the Rajputs inspired the Emperor Akbar.

On Akbar's request the saint took his residence in Lahore. It is related that Akbar granted him a fief (jagir) at Batala worth one Lakh rupees. Thus the saint was able to maintain alms houses and kitchen (Langar Khana) at Lahore and Batala, the two cities of the undivided Punjab.

His shrine was built at Lahore in his own lifetime during the reign of Emperor Akbar in 1591 AD. After his death in 1606 AD, he was buried in there. Kanhaya Lal mentions ten more graves within the premises of the mausoleum, two of his sons, Sayyid Safiuddin and Bahauddin and the other graves belonging to his close relatives.

The shrine of Mauj Darya was equally held in great esteem and reverence not only by the Muslims as well by the non-Muslims. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as a mark of his respect bestowed a regular grant of Rupees 40/- per month for its maintenance, besides making other presents and offers.

The devotees have themselves carried out the repairs which had obliterated original decorative designs of exterior and interior of the tomb. It may, however, be observed that at certain portions of the exterior and interior traces of the original decorative features could still be seen as reminiscences of the original elaborate decorative devices employed for embellishing it. The modification, brought about during such repairs, has badly affected

the interior as well as exterior decoration. In its present condition, it is very difficult to find the original decorations of the interior and exterior.

Though the shrine of Hazrat Mauj Darya, was constructed during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.), yet its plan and principal architectural features were typical of the tomb architecture developed in South Asia before the advent of the Mughal rule. This was perhaps due to the reason that, even after the establishment of political suzerainty in 1526 A.D., the Mughals took some time in evolving and developing their architectural traditions in consonance with the local environment and traditions. Till such time, the style of architecture, already in vogue before the Mughals had continued. The octagonal plan and low dome of the tomb under discussion are the usual pre-Mughal architectural features and can be seen in the earlier tomb structures constructed in South Asia and Central Asia, and suggest that it was one of the earliest mausoleums constructed on octagonal plan in Lahore.

The main shrine structure stands on three feet raised platform, constructed in the usual mode by using small Lahori bricks, lay in lime mortar. The size of the bricks used in the construction of the tomb is 6" x 1 1/2 ", 7 1/4 " x 5 1/4 " x 1 1/4 ". The shrine comprises three stories. Its chamber is octagonal, both from inside and outside, the thickness of its walls is 6-6" with engaged polygonal pilasters on the corners. The division of the entire structure into three, well-proportioned flour has lent an impact of balance and harmony to the shrine. Each octagonal side measures externally and internally fourteen feet six inches and ten feet respectively. The height of the ground storey is twenty five feet and six inches including height of the parapet. Each corner of the octagon is supported by a turret sharply opening towards the top of the story. The eastern and south walls have entrances, but opening in the northern wall has been by the modern iron grill in recent years. In the western wall has been closed by the modern iron grill in recent years. In the western wall we find Mehrab which is a usual feature.

The surface of each facade is divided into two arched panels, placed one upon the other with recessed borders on three sides. The upper portion of the facade has an opening at a side, which was originally blocked with terracotta screen that is still visible from the interior but it is externally blocked by the plastered solid brick masonry. The exterior of the tomb was covered with cement plaster during its in later repairs, up to 8 feet in (height the floor level). Originally, the exterior was embellished with glazed lime plaster and lining, but unfortunately, it has been covered with successive layers of whitewash. However, traces of the original decorative features can still be seen on northern facade at the height of eight feet from the floor level. During the recent repairs, the facade has been blocked with white and brown marble tiles, in an un-professional manner; without taking into consideration the original pattern of decoration on the southern side. As a token of respect and reverence for

the saint, the devotees, have recently made certain modifications by way of fixing marble inscriptions. A shed for the convenience of zaireen has been constructed by providing Gal. Pipe frames and M.S. sheet roofing all around the shrine, except its southern side. All these recent modifications by the over-zealous devotees have not only changed original panorama of the monument, but have also marred the view of what otherwise was a splendid last resting abode of the saint.

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