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## **Shahjahani Hammam: Bathing establishment built during Shah-Jahan at the Lahore fort**

### **Abstract**

*Hammam, an Arabic word taken into Persian and Urdu, means a bathing place or a bath consisting of cold and hot rooms. In general terms, it is used to describe both private and public bath houses.*

*In the west, we observe that hammams as historical entity evolved and developed during the Roman period (27 BC–AD 476/1453). The magnitude of the Baths of Caracalla at Rome even today bear witness to the importance of bathing in the everyday life of the Roman people. Coming down through history and with the advent of Islam, the Arabs faced the religious necessity of performing ablutions regularly. They liked the concept of a public bath and in a short span of time baths known as hammams became an important part of the Islamic Architecture. In the beginning, hammams started out as structural rudiments serving as a part of the compound of mosques or madrassas and with the passage of time, these small rooms developed into massive structural complexes.*

*Mughals (1526-1858), one of the most astounding patrons of Art and Architecture brought the bathing customs to Asia. The Royal bath structures were mainly for the usage of the Royal family, hence they were matchlessly built in the context of utility, mechanism, elegance and beauty. The two adjacent baths known as Shahjahani Hammam and ladies hammam discussed in this article were made in the vicinity of Lahore Fort during Shahjahan (1633 A.D).*

*These buildings were visualized as a place like heaven for their patrons, where all human senses were meant to be content in their own regime on earth. The Shahjahani Hammam is very 'Private' in character with all the necessary luxurious elements that a celebrated emperor can aspire for. This article aims to document the importance of the Shahjahani hammam structurally plus the role it played in the life of its patrons socially.*

### **Introduction**

Lahore, my homeland stays close to my heart and in my writing. This historical city has been a center of many different dynasties mainly because of its location and secondly because of its fertility in terms of land and people.

Lahore the center of Punjab gained the esteem patronage of all Mughal emperors who made the city as the nucleus of Fine Art and Architecture, Literature and

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learning in the east. The city became a place for royal residence, erudite men and painters, poets, scholars and sufi saints assembled, gardens, tomb, mosque, *baradaris* spring up in every course, the population enlarged, suburbs grew until the city became enlarged. Fazal (as cited in Rehman, 1997) states “The grand resort of all countries whose manufactures present an astonishing display and it is beyond measure remarkable in populousness and extent”.

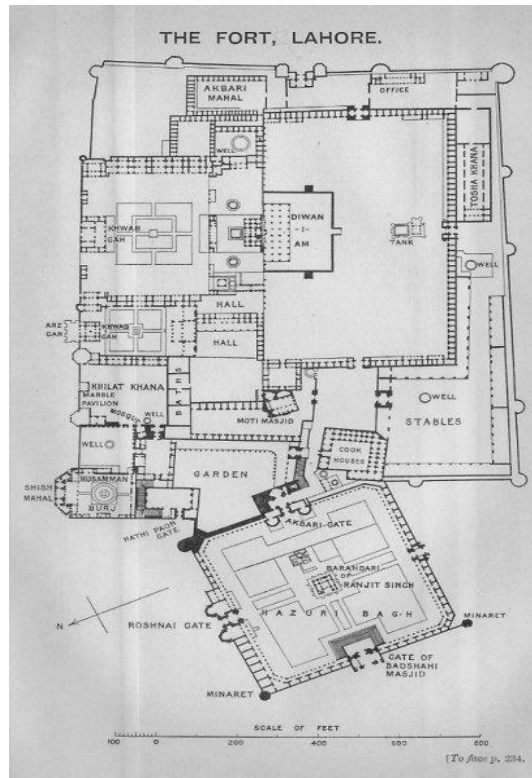
Lahore Fort, the center of the city is a dominant landmark of Lahore. Build during different period of times, Mughals patronized the present structures of the construction. Hammam, the bathing establishments is one of the important structures of Lahore Fort and a Mughal contribution in the architecture of the sub-continent.

Covering the Royal Hammams built in the vicinity of Lahore Fort erected during Shah Jahan, this writing will involve the identifying, recording and analyzing of these royal buildings with the immense historical value known as Hammams.

## Lahore Fort

Lahore Fort holds the maximum number of Mughal structures built in one large area which is the north-western angle of the (formerly) walled city of Lahore.

### 1. Plan Lahore Fort



### Origin

The origin of the Fort is uncertain, but we find it mentioned in connection with Muhammad Sam's invasion of Lahore in 1180 A.D., 1184 and 1186. It was demolished by the Mongols in 1241, but was rebuilt by Balban in 1267. It was again ruined by Amir Timur's army in 1398 and again erected with mud by Sultan Mubarak Shah in 1421. Nearly five months afterward the mud fort was assailed and damaged by Shaikha Gakkhar. In 1432, it was refurbished by Shekiah Ali. Mention is made of its gates in correlation with the influx of Humayun's reign. Humayun's son, the emperor Akbar, flattened the aged mud Fort and rebuilt it in brick and solid masonry. The work is mentioned in the *Ain-e-Akbari*, although the date is not given. But a Fort is cited in connection with Mirza Muhammed Hakim's revolt in 1566 A.D. assuming it to be the same as that built by Akbar, we

assume that the present Fort was built before the twelfth year of the reign of the emperor Akbar. Bakir (1952,P.362-363)

### **Architectural Description**

The fort has been divided into two main sections. One being the administrative one meant to allow the admittance of public of different levels. The second being the private one, include the residential and more personal spaces for the royalty.

### **Royal Hammams At Lahore Fort**

#### **Historical Significance.**

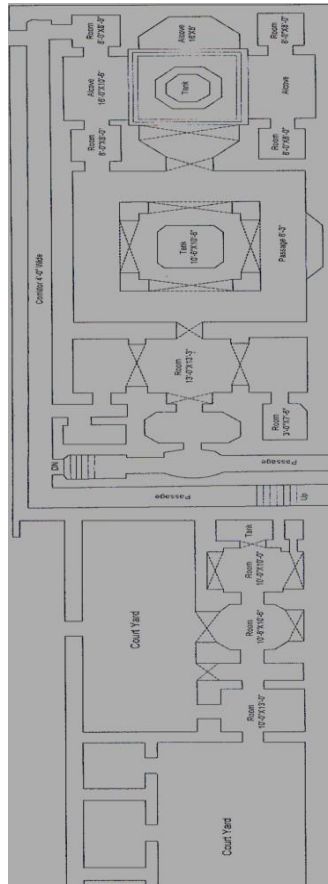
At present, there are three baths in the vicinity of the Lahore Fort. The larger one commonly known as the Shahjahani Hammam was built by Shahjahan in 1633 A.D under the supervision of Wazir Khan (Mumtaz, 1989, pp. 52). Situated in the private area of the fort, opposite the *Paienbagh*, the bath was meant to be used by the royalty. This hammam has a special feature which is not very common in these types of buildings; two hammams have been built together adjacent to each other and sharing the same outer wall. The reason of building two structures of the same usage together was firstly the location as it being a part of the *Paienbagh* which was meant for the royal ladies hence a separate bath for the ladies makes it a valid one. The other one which is grandeur on scale and facilities was for the king's personal use.

#### **Shahjahani Hammam**

The bath complex lies on the west of Shahjahan's *khawabgah* (bedroom). An account of Shahjahan's buildings and repairs conducted in Lahore Fort. Kamboh (as cited in Baqir, 1952) mentioned that "Having performed these things, the emperor turned his whole attention to repairing buildings of the palace of the capital of Lahore, which had long remained uncared for. As the buildings of the Ghusalkhana (bath room) and the Khawabgah were not in reality pleasing to the imperial mind in their plan and style, architects versed in geometry, according to the exalted orders sketched new, wonderful and charming plans and laid them before the fastidious eye of their master. The emperor put it under the superintendence of Wazir Khan and other overseers of Lahore to lay the foundation and execute the plan which was selected from these, (ordering) that they should finish it before his return from his successful journey to Kashmir."

#### **Architectural description**

The Shahjahani Hammam has been built adjacent to the Shahjahan's *khawabgah* from the western side, *Pienbagh* on the north and *Moti Masjid* Quadrangle on the south. The structure is a single storied building towards the longitudinal axis. The entrance lies in the north-eastern corner of the building (slide no 2)



2. Plan Shahjahani Hammam

The complex has three main chambers.

1. The first room adjacent to the Shahjahani *Khawabgah* used to serve the dressing and undressing purpose of the bather (plate no 3). The chamber has four square rooms measuring 8.1/2' x 8.1/2' in each corner, built mainly to keep royal clothing, refreshments or for storage purpose (Lundkhur, 1986, pp. 256). The room has an octagonal tank in the centre outlined in a square base (plate no 4). The traces of the marble applied on the floor can still be seen (plate no 5). The terracotta pipes for the maximum flow of water can are also visible though the octagonal tank. There are alcoves on all the three blocked sides of the room (plate no 6) amongst two have survived and the third opening leads us to the second room of the complex.



3. Dressing Room Shahjahani Hammam,



4. Tank, dressing Room Shahjahani Hammam Lahore Fort.



5. Floor, dressing room Shahjahani Hammam,Lhr Fort



6. Wall, dressing room Shahjahani Hammam,Lahore Fort



7. Tepidarium, Shahjahani Hammam, Lahore Fort



8. Tank,

**Tepidarium, Shahjahani Hammam, Lahore Fort**

2. An arched entrance (plate no 3) leads us to the next main chamber (plate no 7). The room is larger in scale than any other structure in the complex.



This room known as tepidarium in roman baths is square in plan with a square tank in the centre measuring 10`x10` (plate no 8), crowned with a dome. Around the tank, there is a passage on all four sides with flat roof which has partly collapsed. Ali Lundkhur in his article in *Pakistan Archaeology* describes about the chamber and mentioned that this hammam was transformed into a hospital in the British period. There are spaces left on all the four sides of the room. As the hammam is in a devastating state at the present nothing accurate could be described about the once functioning state of this structure but if we keep in mind the current layout of the Royal Hammam at Delhi Fort which was made by the same patron, many puzzles seems to get solved. If we match the recess in the southern wall of this room with the central room at Delhi, we could suggest that the space must have been used for the placement of a couch with all its velvety soft accessories for the emperor to recline for a while may be for oiling or massaging purposes after or before the dip in the central tank.

The scale of this room also suggests the purpose of meeting room being fulfilled. It was also used as the Cabinet Council Chamber (Lundkhur, 1986, pp. 257). There are many reports of the royalty meeting important people in the hammam where the element of privacy being maintained to a maximum degree.

The third and the last room of this complex is the ‘warm room’ of the bath. There are two rooms on the sides of the main room (plate no 9) having metallic pipes which used to transport hot water from the furnace to these rooms. The two rooms are not symmetrical. The

one in the southern corner is more towards the rectangular side whereas the one towards the north western side is interconnected firstly with the warm room through a sleek passage and



9. Alcove, Warm Room, Shahjahani Hammam, Lhr Fort



10. Hypocaust, Warm Room, Shahjahani Hammam, Lhr Fort

secondly with the main corridor running through the main entrance. Mohammed Waliullah Khan has described these north western rooms as the *Baitul Khala* (latrines) (Waliullah, 1986, pp. 28-30). There are provision of such rooms in almost every hammam built by Mughals especially the hammam at the Agra fort clearly demonstrate the space used as Latrines. The central space between these rooms located in the northern direction is being devoted to the furnace used in the hypocaust (plate no 10). The main three bay spacious hall is 37'-6" x 13'-4" in dimensions facing the north south side of the complex (Lundkhur, 1986, pp. 257). The present floor level of this room strongly suggests that it has been raised at a later stage.

3. On the northern side of the building, runs a vaulted passage measuring 4' x 4' wide, (Lundkhur, 1986, pp. 256) which is connected to the main area by two means one is on the first room and the other on the last room. The middle room has been left isolated and being approached by only one entrance.
4. This passage is meant for the servant to carry needed things to the royalty. This same passage leads us to the starting point of the hypocaust. There are round holes in the roof of this passage made at an equal interval for the abundant supply of light and air.
5. The western part of the Shahjahani Hammam is constructed for the use of ladies of the haram.

The location of this structure strengthens this hypothesis as it has *Paienbagh* on its one side which was only meant for ladies. If we look at the history on the usage of hammam for the opposite genders, it was separated by means of two modes, either by entertaining them separately in different timings of the day (which is still in practice in some hammams at Istanbul, Turkey) or by erecting a separate structure

for them. The later means was not much in practice even in the Mughal times and this separate hammam for the ladies is one of the rare examples. This separate hammam also comprised of three rooms as per tradition. The first room served as undressing room and is 10' x 13' in dimensions

### **Water system and Hypocaust.**

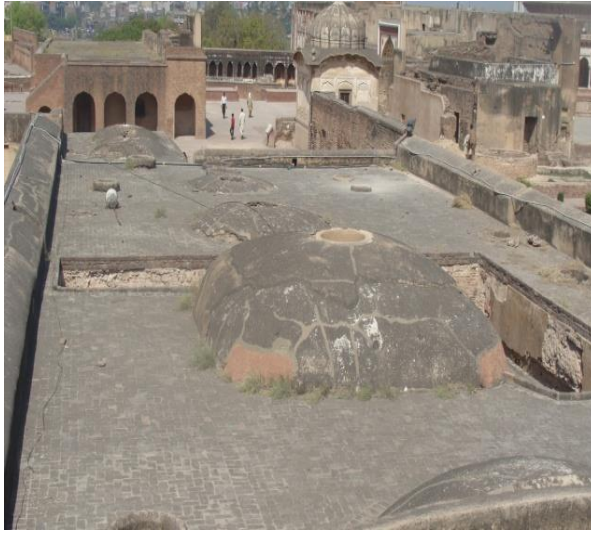
There is a presence of a circular masonry well on the southern side of the *Makatab-Khana*. The water of this well was raised to the level of the roof of the *Makatab-Khana* with the aid of Persian wheel and from here the water was sent to the hammam by means of water channels, traces of which can still be seen on the top of the façade wall of the rooms between *Moti Masjid* and Shahjahani Hammam (Lundkhur, 1986, pp. 259).

The hypocaust system of maintaining the temperature of the rooms dates back to the Roman times who developed this method incorporating a layer of tiles assembled in such a way as to form passages for the water or steam to run and over it a floor of marble or mosaic. These

Under-ground passages are sometimes made in such an open scale that even a man could easily move between them as is apparent in the Royal Hammam of Agra Fort.



11. Passage opening towards South, Shahjahani Hammam, Lahore Fort



12. Roof, Shahjahani Hammam, Lahore Fort

The hypocaust system of the Shahjahani Hammam inside Lahore Fort is in the western wall of the Tepidarium below the hot water reservoir. It comes between the two corner rooms as described earlier. The furnace is approached through the vaulted passage. This passage has an opening towards the south facing the *Moti Masjid* quadrangle (plate no 11). This was probably meant for the running supply to the furnace and for the workers to enter or exit from this point without disturbing the main area of the bath.

#### **Architectural Ornamentation.**

The material used for the construction of this structure is the red brick with lime as the adhesive material. The interior and exterior both have been thickly plastered with *chunam* and *kankar lime*. The façade of this hammam from the entrance is not there anymore but as seen from the same structures made by the same patrons and with the light on the little left over part of the building, we could easily conclude that the Mughals left the outer part of their hammams simple and plain. The entrance was highlighted by means of *multifoil* arches which also makes the structure in harmony with the accompanying buildings around.

There is an absence of windows for the privacy purpose. The small openings made of wood in the domes served the purpose of light and ventilation and their raised level from the base prevent the rain to come inside the rooms (plate no 12). These wooden openings are now disappeared but one can tell about their presence by looking at the empty spaces in the domes. Some carved panels can also be seen in some of the rooms. These rectangular and arched panels have pointed borders.

Amongst the few remaining original traces of the building, there lies an octagonal tank in the center of the first room after the entrance named as *Jamakhan*. The tank is finished with variegated marble (plate no 4). Holes for the supply of water are visible at the bottom of the tank.

The roof of this chamber has totally vanished but the traces on the sides walls strongly suggest that it must have been a delight to look at. There are recesses within alcoves on the walls adjacent to the Shahjahani *Khawabgah* from one side (plate no 6).

The tessellated marble flooring in the south western and south eastern corner rooms of the apartment suggests that the floor was tastefully laid (plate no 5). There are indications that the whole of this bath was originally paved with the same marble, removed during the Sikh period.

## **Murals**

Mughals did not use to leave their walls barren or plain. Their aesthetics were so refined that they want everything around them to be in accordance to the perfect standards of beauty. There is nothing much left on the walls of this particular Hammam but few traces of lines here and there strongly suggests that it was all filled with the king's favorite subject matters at one time.

## **Present condition.**

Shahjahani Hammam is one of these decaying structures of the Lahore Fort. The roof of the main entrance room has withered with time while only a few traces of the floor are intact. The middle room has nothing visible on the walls, ceiling and floor except sand and bricks. All the coating in it is gone. Same is the case with the last room. The passage connecting the middle to the 'hot room' is standing without a roof top.

Traces of the hypocaust with a proper round space for the furnace can be seen through the vaulted passage. The supply of water made possible through a complicated network of terracotta pipes which also are visible in few places.

## **LADIES HAMMAM**

### **Architectural Description**

The small hammam is adjacent to the Shahjahani Hammam on the western side and has its opening in the *Paienbagh* which was an adjacent garden for the royal harem residing in the *Shish Mahal*. *Paienbagh* was meant for the royal ladies to enjoy and walk in and was enclosed by corridors on all sides.

The ladies hammam is separated from the eastern hammam by means of a partition wall in the vaulted passage (plate 14). This passage has its opening in the garden opposite the *Moti Masjid* through a couple of steps. From outside, the complex seems to be enclosed in one outer wall but has different entrances. This ladies hammam has its entrance from the northern side which does not open directly into the complex but into a courtyard (plate no 13). There is another courtyard on the

western side having traces of foundations of a few rooms (plate no 13), details of which are not known. It is interesting to mention here that Mr. Lundkhwar, in his article about hammams of Lahore written for the Pakistan Archeology (1974-1986), mentioned a rectangular room measuring 10`x13` located between the western courtyard and the vaulted passage. This room has totally disappeared today. The boundary wall on the western side connecting the two courtyards also mentioned in his plan no longer exists. The present complex consists of only two rooms and a passage.



13. Entrance from the western side, Ladies Hammam





14. Wall, Northern side, ladies Hammam Lhr fort



15. Interior, Central Chamber, Ladies Hammam, Lahore Fort



16. Hot room, Ladies Hammam, Lhr Fort.

1. The passage has two arched entrances, one from the north and one from the western side.

Both entrances are formed through horse-shoe arches. The passage has a round hole in the ceiling meant for the light and ventilation purpose. These kinds of holes are also present in the passages of the main Shahjahani Hammam.

2. Adjacent to the passage is a room which has one entrance from the passage and another from the courtyard. The main entrance from the courtyard has a pointed arch. The walls are extra thick to maintain the inner temperature of the hammam.

The room measures 10'.6" x 10'.6" which makes it square in plan but tapered from the edges makes it an octagonal one. All four corners of the room have panels starting from the dado height and going upward till merges into the *squinches*. The panels have two lines running on all sides to form a border and strongly suggest that the space was meant for the paintings. The *squinch* arches very delicately move upwards together, reducing in scale and turning the square into a round hence forming a dome (plate no 15 & 16). The dome again as seen earlier has an opening in the center which must have been roofed by a wooden covering supplying light, fresh air and keeping away rain (plate no 15). The wall towards the southern side has an alcove not deep enough to be used for storage space but may be with all the royal accessories, a place to sit and relax.

3. Moving ahead into the main room of the bath which still has some features recommending the structure to be a bath complex. It is again square in plan with diameter of 10' x 10' but adding the spaces in the alcoves of two sides makes it a rectangular one. There are some not so deep alcoves on both north and southern walls of the room. The architectural features are the same as in the earlier room building up the dome with the aid of



*squinch* arches. These honey web like structures at one time helps structurally in the formation of dome and adding the component of intricacy and splendor to the arrangement too.



17. Remains of fresco, Ladies Hammam, Lahore Fort.

### **Modes of Ornamentation**

The art of using the small spaces joining to form a large piece was used frequently by the Mughals who had a special love for details in whatever they commissioned. Very fine such example can be seen in the *Bangla* Pavilion lying next to the

*Khawabgah-e-Kalan (Bari Khawabgah)* at the Lahore Fort. Attributed to the Emperor Jahangir, the walls of the structure still bear the exquisiteness transferred by a Mughal's draftsmen into the plain walls of a monument. The small spaces are filled with frescos bearing magnificent geometric details. The similar spaces at the ladies hammam containing the frescos must have been treated with the same delicacy but the carelessness over the time and the absence of restoration has left the walls frayed and blank, showing only a minute touch of green and yellow seen at some points indicating the earthy color scheme of the room (plate no17).

### **Water Supply**

The eastern wall has a tank built in the depth of the wall to make abundant supply of water possible. This tank shares the same wall with the passage linked to the Shahjahani Hammam. A middle size hole can be seen on the upper part of the wall which was probably meant for the provision of water from the network built on the roof top which is again connected to the main well near the *Moti Masjid*. This tank has a vaulted roof with the same hole in the ceiling, the purpose of which remains unidentified. The tank has another water pipe in the lower part of the wall just a few feet above ground level.

There is another recess in the wall in the south eastern corner of room which was used for the storage of water. Same such reservoirs can be seen in Shahi Hammam at Red Fort Delhi. The hammam has the same roof design as in the Shahi Hammam with two low domes having openings in the center (plate 15).

### **Conclusion:**

The hammams or the bathrooms are one of the important alive spaces in a residential area and by observing the living spaces of communities, one can comment on their lifestyles.

After examining the present condition of the bath structures at the Lahore Fort, the distressing condition of the buildings was recorded. The need to preserve structure's historic character and features was felt. The Shahjahani hammam is close to becoming ruins. If in the near future, my voice is heard and measures to preserve will be taken by the authorities, this document of mine will be proof beneficial. Documenting and investigating into this area increases the understanding of the role to protect heritage buildings and will contribute to the literature by extending the current body of knowledge on this issue.

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