



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Deciphering Iconographic Symbolism and Spatial Significance: An Evaluation of the Hazuri Bagh Baradari (1818–1819), Lahore's Sikh Architectural Heritage**

<sup>1</sup>Qudsia Asif and <sup>2</sup>Hina Nabeel

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Engineering & Technology (UET), Lahore, Pakistan & Ph.D. Scholar, School of Housing, Building & Planning (HBP), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, Malaysia
2. Lecturer, Department of Architecture, University of Engineering & Technology (UET), Lahore, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author:** qudsiaasif@uet.edu.pk

**ABSTRACT**

A country's heritage not only gives it identity but builds a connection between its past and future generations. First, the study investigates the motivation behind the construction of Baradari in the core of Hazuri Bagh, a significant but arguable location of Lahore. Secondly, it highlights the ornamental details by attempting to understand the iconographic symbolism used within this historical monument. Ranjit Singh's invasion resulted in establishing a Sikh estate in Punjab after the fall of Mughal Empire. The Baradari situated in Hazuri Bagh is an important architectural landmark belonging to that historical period of Subcontinent. The research adopts a qualitative research method based on literature review. It demonstrates that the placement of Baradari within Hazuri Bagh was not coincidental but strategic. It was carefully positioned between two distinguished Mughal monuments, Badshahi Mosque and Lahore Fort, to establish Sikh sovereignty. Further, the analysis of iconographic elements reflects the hybrid nature of Sikh architecture, as they are not only aesthetically pleasing but represents cross-cultural interactions. Hence, Baradari's location and iconography symbolize Ranjit Singh's authority and cultural continuity respectively. More research is required to analyse and compare the Sikh architecture in Lahore with other cities of South Asia.

**KEYWORDS** Hazuri Bagh Baradari, Sikh Architectural Heritage, Spatial Significance, Iconographic Symbolism, Cultural Hybridity.

**Introduction**

Hazuri Bagh was initially developed in the Mughal Period as a 'Serai' (or caravanserai) which was a roadside inn that served as a rest stop and lodging for travellers, traders, and soldiers on long journeys. They were strategically located along major trade routes to facilitate trade and movement of people. Whereas it was redesigned and a Baradari was erected in 1818 A.D. by Ranjit Singh, the founder and ruler of the Sikh Empire in Punjab Province. He united the Sikh community under his leadership and became the focus of 19<sup>th</sup> century Punjab (Arshad, 2016). The concept of 'Baradari' was first introduced during the Mughal times. The term 'Baradari', also written as 'Bara Dari' originated from two Urdu words - 'Bara' means twelve and 'Dar' means door: a pavilion or a building with twelve doors (Parihar, 1999). The Baradari usually has three doorways on each side of the square-shaped structure, which is generally placed in the centre of a garden to allow free flow of fresh air from all sides.

The Emperor Ranjit Singh ruled the Subcontinent from 1799-1839 A.D. When he took over the responsibility after his father's demise, he was only 20 years old. Sikh dynasty started with a revolutionary campaign to conquer the Punjab region and Ranjit

Singh opted for the title of 'Maharaja' for himself. The construction of Baradari at Hazuri Bagh was in accordance with the orders of Ranjit Singh after he conquered Punjab and acquired the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond from the Afghan ruler, Shah Shuja Durrani. The event was a great symbolic success for the Sikhs (Kanhaiyya Lal, 1881). To commemorate the victory, a royal garden, named Ranjit Bagh or Hazuri Bagh was meticulously designed and constructed under the careful supervision of Faqir Azizuddin, a trusted physician and close friend of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This garden replaced the dilapidated Mughal Serai which had previously existed at the site. Jamadar Khushal Singh further insisted on adding a marble baradari (pavilion) in the centre of the Bagh (garden) which would not only add to the aesthetics of the place but would also glorify this historic achievement of the Sikh Period. Consequently, the garden complex was designed by the famous Sikh architect of that time 'Tota Ram'.

Ranjit Singh widely known as the 'Sher-e-Punjab' (Lion of Punjab) constructed several Sikh monuments during his reign which reflect a unique Sikh architectural style, along with some distinctive common features too. Looking closely at the architectural figural images of Ranjit Singh's Baradari, the iconography highlights the influences of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, late Mughal, and Sikh architectural elements. This research tends to decipher the hidden message of Ranjit Singh's baradari as a hybrid architectural design.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh**

Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) known as the founder of Sikh Empire in the Subcontinent, appeared as a prominent political figure after taking over Lahore in year 1799 and officially adopting the title of 'Maharaja' in 1801. This term 'Maharaja' is derived from Sanskrit meaning 'the great king' has been used in Asia and Europe, signifying grandeur, and majesty (Jackson & Jaffer, 2009). Despite early health challenges and regional instability, Ranjit Singh managed to unify the Sikh community through diplomacy and intelligent military planning, resulting into conquering the major territories of Punjab (P. Singh & Rai, 2008). In 1814, he acquired the control of Darbar-e-Lahore (Lahore's throne) from the governor and in 1818, he also occupied the city of Multan (Goulding, 1976). Lahore, which was long considered as the cultural capital of the region, became the administrative and symbolic centre of his empire, where he later revived courtly traditions and projected his political power through displays of wealth, ceremony, and public architecture (Cunningham, 1918; Naeem, 2010).

To maintain the continuity of the culture and imperial power, the architecture patronage and urban interventions by Ranjit Singh are the most renowned examples of uniting different Sikh, Mughal, and Hindu design styles and architecture (Grewal, 1990). He funded new constructions projects as well as funding the restoration of prominent Mughal monuments to transform the urban landscape of Lahore. The most important architectural work he did was the construction of Hazuri Bagh complex that lies between Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort. Constructed in 1818-1819, marble Baradari served as royal court and ceremonial pavilion and symbol of sovereignty (Naeem, 2010). Rather than imposing centralized legislation, Ranjit Singh focused on pragmatic governance and regional stability, using monumental architecture as a tool for political expression, cultural identity, and imperial presence in the heart of Lahore (Sharma, 2002).

### **Description of Hazuri Bagh Baradari**

The Hazuri Bagh Baradari is widely regarded as the architectural masterpiece of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign. Hazuri Bagh, meaning the King's Garden, is situated between the two most significant and gigantic landmarks of the Mughal Era, Lahore Fort, and Badshahi Mosque. With a width of about 150 metres, the garden is constructed in a conventional 'Charbagh' or 'Chaharbagh' (four gardens) design with a prominent white marble pavilion, called 'baradari' in its centre.



Figure 1: The Chaharbagh Concept of Hazuri Bagh (Picture Source: Walled City of Lahore Authority, Government of Punjab)



Figure 2: View of White Marble Baradari showing three doors on each of its sides (Source: Walled City of Lahore Authority, Government of Punjab)

### Meaning of Baradari

The term 'baradari' was originated and introduced during the rule of Mughal Emperors in the Subcontinent. 'Baradari' is a combination of two smaller words; 'Bara' which is an Urdu word meaning twelve and 'Dar' meaning door. Baradari is a 'twelve-doored', rectangular or square pavilion with a tripartite arcade or colonnade on each of its sides; more generally, a summerhouse (Koch, 1991).

### Purpose of Baradari

It was considered a hallmark by the emperors of the sub-continent, serving multiple functions like hosting performances and gathering of noble courtiers and guests. Additionally, the baradari played a significant role during the summer months when the emperor held his court sessions within this well-ventilated pavilion, allowing fresh breeze to provide relief from the sultry weather. The son of Ranjit Singh is also said to be crowned here in the baradari which is another important historical event witnessed by the monument. The Hazuri Bagh baradari holds great historical significance as it was used to display the bodies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his son, Nau Nihal Singh, after their respective deaths (Baig, 2016).

### Significance of Baradari

The area was originally established in the time of Mughal ruler, Aurangzeb (1658-1707). After Aurangzeb built the Badshahi Mosque in 1673, he developed this open space known as the 'Mughal Serai' adjacent to the mosque, which is now called as Hazuri Bagh, having a central marble Baradari. The mosque's western façade was made in the direction of Mecca and therefore most of the Lahore Fort came in its east. Possibly to maintain the symmetry, a grand gateway was made between the two buildings known as the Alamgiri Gate, west of the Lahore Fort. This was used as a passageway by the Mughal Ruler to access the mosque from the fort for performing Friday prayers in a

ceremonious manner. This passage was frequently watered to reduce the effects of dust and heat for the comfort of the king, where hundreds of troops used to stand in long queues along the way to welcome the emperor (Latif, 1892).



Figure 3: Hazuri Bagh Baradari, with the front façade of Badshahi Masque in the background (Source: Author)

Moreover, the place also served as ‘caravanserai’ for travellers and pilgrims to rest through the night. Conventionally, these were built as open-air courtyards with strong external walls. To make it work effectively as a caravanserai, it is probable that it was enclosed by walls on the north and south sides featuring rooms designated for livestock and guests. Its layout may have resembled that of the Akbari Serai, situated between the tombs of Jahangir and Asaf Khan. The layout of the basement and sub-basement of the baradari follows a conventional gurdwara plan, resembling the architectural design witnessed in Mangat Gurdwara of Bhai Bannu. This religiously inspired architectural arrangement is clearly visible in the construction of Ranjit Singh’s Baradari at Hazuri Bagh. Therefore, a strong connection and significant influence of Sikhism is portrayed within the design and fabrication of this structure.

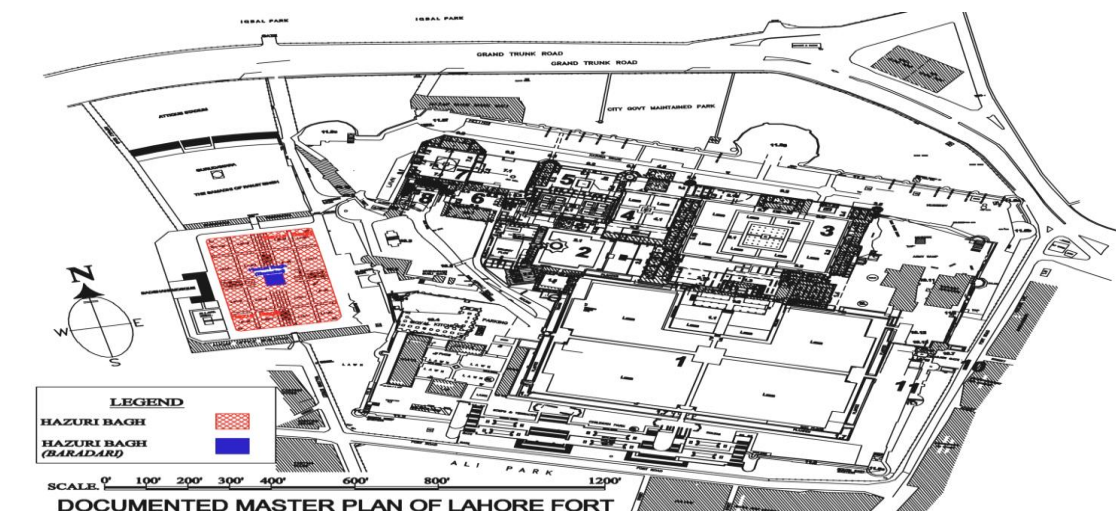


Figure 4: Documented Master Plan of Lahore Fort showing the location of Hazuri Bagh and its Baradari, (Department of Archaeology, Northern Circle, Old Fort, Lahore.)

When the Sikh rule established, the importance of Badshahi Mosque had reduced due to Ranjit Singh's devotion to Sikh religion. The Badshahi Mosque started to be used as a military magazine. Since the area was no longer required as a parade ground or caravanserai, Ranjit Singh ordered to convert this place into a garden. The newly constructed garden later came to be known as Hazuri Bagh. However, it is not necessary that the garden which was created back then would be exactly like what we can see today as it was renovated during the British rule (Wescoat & Bulmahn, 1996).

One significant aspect of Hazuri Bagh is the central marble baradari. With its width of 13.4 metres, the baradari looks relatively smaller compared to the grandeur of surrounding structures such as the Badshahi Mosque, Roshnai Gate, and Alamgiri Gate of the Lahore Fort. The history suggests that the marble baradari was constructed following the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to celebrate and commemorate the possession of Koh-i-Noor diamond from the Afghan Ruler, Shah Shuja Durrani (Latif, 1892). This event of acquisition happened when Shah Shuja Durrani faced defeat from his enemy, Dost Mohammad Khan in Kabul, and fled away to seek refuge with Ranjit Singh. Knowing the fact that the diamond was in his possession after the death of Ahmad Shah, Ranjit Singh warmly welcomed him as a guest at Mubarak Haveli, however, he later asked him to hand over the diamond. Despite Shah Shuja Durrani initially denied the acquisition of diamond during the imprisonment by Ranjit Singh, he eventually surrendered it when the situation intensified. Ranjit Singh finally secured the possession of Koh-i-Noor diamond in the year 1813, following celebrations throughout the city. This was the occasion when Ranjit Singh ordered the construction of a garden between the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort. Jamadar Khushal Singh proposed to build a pavilion in the centre of the garden utilizing the marble already available in Mughal tombs and shrines. Ranjit Singh approved his suggestion by initiating the construction of the marble structure, called baradari.

The construction of Hazuri Bagh and baradari was completed in 1818-1819, when Ranjit Singh started to use it for court proceedings, making important decisions and meeting delegations. While this is regarded as one of the few Sikh architectural monuments present till date by some historians, it is also contested that this structure was built by stripping off marble (an expensive and scarce material at that time) from other notable structures of Mughal period like the tombs of Shah Sharaf, Zeb-un-Nisa, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, and Asaf Khan (Bansal, 2015).

However, a counter argument is also available against the claims of marble being reused by Ranjit Singh. According to William Moorcroft, a British traveller employed by the East India Company, who visited Lahore in May 1820 mentioned that Ranjit Singh was responsible for the conservation of buildings commissioned by the Mughal Emperors, Shah Jehan and Jehangir. As per speculations, Jehangir's tomb has a missing roof structure which is claimed to be the likely source of marble for the Hazuri Bagh Baradari. Whereas a picture taken by another traveller in 1921 denying the allegations by showing that the roof of Jehangir's tomb was intact at that time, suggesting that both the roof structure and Hazuri Bagh Baradari coexisted during that period (A. Singh, 2015).

Many royal gatherings were conducted in the courtyard which have been portrayed in paintings done by European artists. The domed tower on the roof of the baradari was Ranjit Singh's personal gurdwara. The baradari was also used to honour state guests by Ranjit Singh. For security purposes, Ranjit Singh built an outer wall around the fort with a moat to reduce danger from incoming invasions. These inner and

outer walls can be seen today as well but the water body cannot be found (A. Singh, 2015).

### Architectural Details of Baradari

The Baradari structure constructed during Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's reign originally consisted of a sub-basement, a basement, and two upper floors. Although it was built in the Sikh period, the design carries a strong Mughal influence, especially in its spatial organization and ornamental details. The structure is nearly square in plan, with each façade symmetrically mirroring the others, embodying the balanced aesthetics typical of late Mughal architecture. The white marble baradari originally consisted of two levels (figure 5), but the upper level collapsed due to heavy storm or lightning in July 1932 (Aijazuddin, 2004).



Figure 5: Hazuri Bagh Baradari before 1932, with its two levels, having Alamgiri Gate in the background. Source: Department of Archeology, Govt. of Punjab



Figure 6: Hazuri Bagh Baradari now, without its upper level, having Alamgiri Gate in the background. Source: Department of Archeology, Govt. of Punjab



Figure 7: White marble baradari situated on three feet raised platform in the centre of Hazuri Bagh.

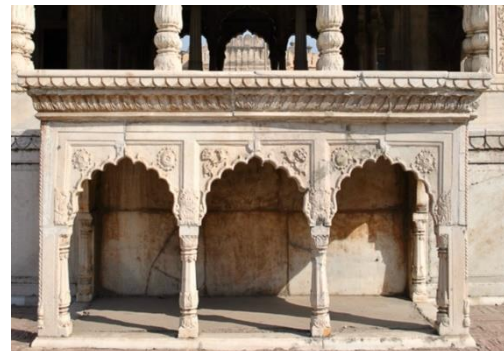


Figure 8: Detail of Shah Nasheen (projected platform) on each side of the marble baradari.

The ground floor of the baradari is almost same as it was originally constructed. It follows the classical hasht bihisht (eight-paradise) layout, centred around a main chamber surrounded by open galleries (figure 8). Twelve marble columns with scalloped arches support the central hall, while open galleries encircle the perimeter (figure 9,10). There are no internal walls except a room in the north-west corner of the pavilion, which enclose the staircases leading to the rooftop and two basements. Accessed by the staircases on all four sides, the building stands on a raised marble podium measuring approximately sixty-five feet on each side, and about three feet high from the ground (figure 7). Each façade features a projecting platform with three cusped arches, known as Shah Nasheen (figure 8), believed to have served as the Maharaja's ceremonial seat. The

podium and platform flooring incorporate marble work with inlay of coloured stone arranged in irregular manner, as much of this decorative surface is now damaged or lost. The central ceiling of the baradari is adorned with stucco tracery and convex mirrors (figure 11), once extending to the adjoining corridors, which are now roofed with deodar wood after renovation (figure 12).

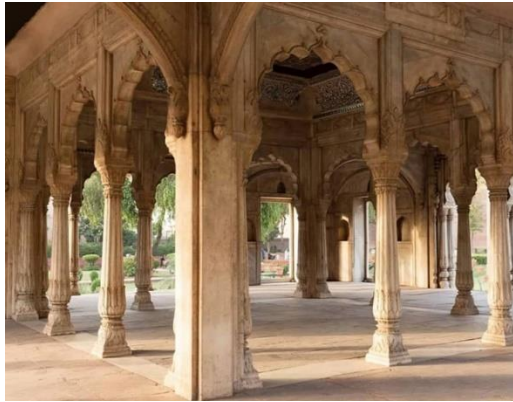


Figure 9: The Central Chamber supported on white marble columns and surrounded by



Figure 10: Interior view of the central chamber resting on twelve columns with scalloped arches.

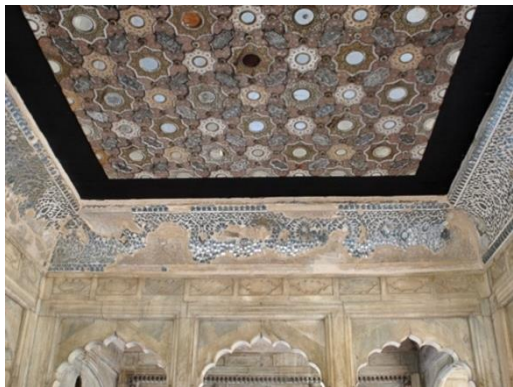


Figure 11: Ceiling of the central chamber with stucco work and mirror detail.



Figure 12: Ceiling of the side gallery renovated with deodar wood.

Beneath the main hall lies a basement and a sub-basement, which imitates the layout of the ground floor, however replacing the high-grade marble with less expensive substitutes like brickwork plastered with lime mortar. Ventilation is provided through small honeycomb grills at the base of each façade, allowing light and air to enter. A red sandstone staircase of fifteen steps descends to the basement, which leads to a marble threshold foyer and a central chamber featuring twelve arched openings. Below the basement lies the sub-basement, accessible by another flight of steps, though the ceiling of the sub-basement has collapsed over time.

An L-shaped staircase of sixteen marble steps leads to the rooftop, which includes a square platform at its centre, approximately twenty feet wide and raised few inches above the roof surface. The parapet, built of white marble, is supported by carved brackets, and ornamented with finely detailed jali (lattice) screens forming hexagonal patterns (figure 13 and 14). The use of red sandstone and inlaid floral motifs in black and yellow colours on the rooftop, reflects stylistic continuity of Mughal design traditions. Initially, the baradari also had a first floor above the ground level, which was eradicated due to severe weather conditions in early 1930s (figure 15). Annual Report 1930-34 by the Archaeological Survey of India is an important source of information regarding this

incident occurred in July 1932. It was first to report the collapse of the upper floor of Baradari (Aijazuddin, 2004).

The baradari's elevation emphasizes horizontal balance with triple-arched openings framed by the decorative marble columns, intricate floral spandrels, and projecting chajjas (cornices) on all four sides, which are the characteristics of late Mughal craftsmanship (figure 13 and 14). All things considered, Hazuri Bagh Baradari represents a combination of Mughal architectural elegance and Sikh regal support. It bridges the style shift between the Mughal and Sikh eras in Lahore's architectural history with its exquisite symmetry, copious marble work, and ornamental language, which symbolizes both political domination and aesthetic continuity.



Figure 13: Baradari's facade with a range of ornamental embellishments and decorative



Figure 14: The carved brackets support the intricate jali work on the parapet wall.

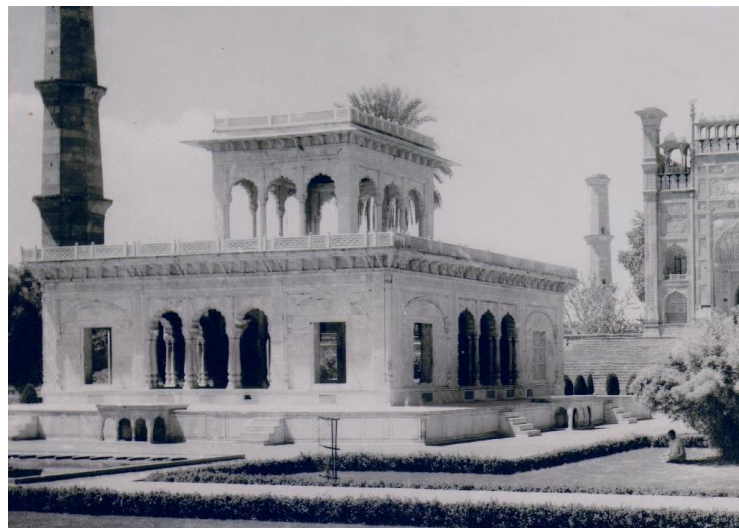


Figure 15: Hazuri Bagh Baradari complex, before 1932.  
Source: Department of Archeology, Northern Circle.

## Material and Methods

A comprehensive literature review was adopted as the primary research method for this paper, as it demonstrates researcher's engagement with study and enables a systematic and critical evaluation of existing knowledge, while assessing the quality of previous work (Grant & Booth, 2009). A well-structured literature review further synthesizes diverse sources to consolidate existing schools of thought and to develop a coherent understanding of the topic (Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002). In conformity with the scope and

objective of this paper, all existing relevant literature was gathered through focused search using various academic databases including JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar, and HEC Digital Library for *Hazuri Bagh Baradari*, considering it an important architectural monument from Sikh Period. Historical texts and archival sources were also consulted from the Punjab Archives and relevant heritage conservation reports (e.g., UNESCO, Walled City of Lahore Authority). The search focused on the literature addressing the emergence and political consolidation of the Sikh Empire in the Indian Subcontinent under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (P. Singh & Rai, 2008), followed by the historical development and socio-political context of *Hazuri Bagh Baradari* within the urban and cultural landscape of Lahore.

Once, the relevant literature was identified, data were extracted based on two guiding research questions; first, how and why the garden complex was constructed at such a strategically significant location, centrally positioned between two major Mughal landmarks, the Badshahi Mosque, and the Lahore Fort. Secondly, what architectural features, and iconographic representations define the Baradari and reflect the cultural and political symbolism of the Sikh court. The extracted information was organized and critically analysed to identify thematic patterns, contradictions, and gaps within the existing body of research (Booth et al., 2012; Grant & Booth, 2009). This fresh approach supported in developing a better understanding of the Baradari's architectural and historical significance. It provided a strong academic basis for this research and contributed to more in-depth study of Sikh Period architecture and conservation of heritage in South Asia.

## Results and Discussion

### Spatial Significance of the Baradari

The Baradari positioned at the geometric core of the historical Hazuri Bagh quadrangle, serving as a spatial and symbolic centre point among Lahore's most iconic Mughal monuments. To the east stands the Alamgiri Gate of the Lahore Fort, representing Mughal imperial strength, while to the west rises the magnificent Badshahi Mosque, symbolizing spiritual grandeur. The northern side is occupied by the Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Roshnai Gate of Lahore Fort, both important indicators of the urban heritage and continuity. On the southwest, within the premises of the Badshahi Mosque, rests the tomb of the most admired poet-philosopher of the subcontinent, Allama Muhammad Iqbal. This deliberate spatial organization allows unobstructed visual and symbolic connections from the baradari to each monument, strengthening its role as the core of Lahore's historic hub. Measuring about 13.4 meters on each side, the Hazuri Bagh Baradari appears modest in scale when positioned between the magnificent Lahore Fort's Alamgiri Gate, and the grand Badshahi mosque. Despite its comparatively smaller size, the Baradari asserts an undeniable presence within this monumental ensemble.

Renowned Scholars have mentioned the importance of baradari and its prominent location within the centre of Hazuri Bagh in their books. Muhammad Wali Ullah Khan was a renowned historian. His writings in terms of history are appreciated and quoted among the readers and researchers, because of their authenticity. He discussed in his book 'Lahore and its Important monuments' about the Hazuri Bagh Baradari as a prominent architectural heritage of the Sikh Period. The literature highlighted the challenges faced during the construction of baradari and its significant location between the two masterpieces of Mughal Architecture. The baradari was not an ordinary structure, it was a historical landmark built to celebrate the triumph of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Khan, 1959).

Syad Muhammad Latif was also a very famous Indian historian. His several books have the oldest available data which was based on reliable sources. He described in his book titled 'Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains & Antiquities' about the Hazuri Bagh Baradari that despite being a small-scaled monument as compared to the nearby Badshahi Mosque and Lahore Fort, it is a prominent architectural contribution of the Sikh Empire. The acquisition of Koh-i-Noor diamond as the actual reason behind the construction of this baradari has also been narrated (Latif, 1892). Mr. Muhammad Baqir, author of 'Lahore: Past and Present', has also described Syad Muhammad Latif's account of the monument.



Figure 16: Location of Hazuri Bagh and Baradari. Source: Google Maps.

A thorough grasp of the political, social, and cultural dynamics of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule can be gained from the literature on Hazuri Bagh's Baradari, which explains how the urban environment and architecture served as a vehicle for identity construction and power throughout the Sikh Period. It provides a priceless window into the setting in which this architectural marvel was designed and built. In addition to being a marvel of early nineteenth-century architecture, the baradari provides a thorough spatial story that reveals Maharaja's conception of sovereignty. Its strategic location between the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort, which are the most prominent Mughal locations, sends a powerful message and is highly symbolic. Ranjit Singh highlighted the Sikh presence in one of the largest metropolises that had been formerly within the empires of the Mughal by constructing white marble pavilion at the center of Hazuri Bagh square. Consequently, the scene turned into a deliberate clash of the forces of the past and the present, in the context of which the new Sikh empire asserted its dominance through architectural intervention and an impressive central positioning.

The site of Baradari was very well strategic and held cultural and political importance. The fact that it is placed in the center of the park, with the magnificent fort on one side and the royal mosque on the other, could be regarded as its demonstration of the harmony of the divine order and the material force. It illustrates Maharaja Ranjit Singh's deliberate attempt to establish himself as a monarch on par with his Mughal forebears. In addition to improving surveillance and providing Maharaja with an

appropriate location to hold court, make public appearances, and oversee significant official matters, the pavilion's symmetrical architecture and raised marble podium increased its visibility and dominance. Ranjit Singh's military prowess and great leadership have led modern historians to refer to him as the "Lion of Punjab" (Bansal, 2015; Grewal, 1990). He demonstrated his power not only via military prowess but also through architectural accomplishments. In this sense, the Hazuri Bagh Baradari symbolizes the power of the Sikh Empire as well as a cultural continuance of past architectural traditions that have been modified to convey a unique Sikh identity.



Figure 17: Hazuri Bagh Baradari from the east, with Lahore Fort's Alamgiri Gate in the backdrop



Figure 18: An additional view of Baradari from the west, with the Lahore Fort's Alamgiri Gate at the back



Figure 19: View of Hazuri Bagh Baradari from the Alamgiri Gate, with Badshahi Mosque in background



Figure 20: West View of the Hazuri Bagh Baradari looking towards Badshahi Mosque from Lahore Fort

Before getting into the architectural similarities of Sikh Baradaris, it is important to understand the importance of the aesthetic elements used in the construction of these structures. These elements, known as iconography, provide the reflection of the different periods of history which influenced the monument and left an impact on the ruler. Architectural iconography is the use of symbols, themes, and characteristics in a building to signify cultural, religious, or political ideals (Kalkanis, 2018; Panofsky, 1955). It helps a viewer to look at architecture not only as a physical form but also as a story which explains the ideas, ideals and history of its evolution. This approach makes it possible to analyze and understand monuments like the Baradari as sources of identity, memory, and cultural fusion.

The different cultural influences which prevailed in the construction of Hazuri Bagh Baradari are expressed in its imagery. The motifs and ornamental elements in the monument were impacted by Hindu, Buddhist, late Mughal and Indo-Persian cultures, whereas it was commissioned in the Sikh period. This hybridity of styles was used in the

nineteenth century Punjab where it was fashionable to borrow and adapt earlier styles (Grewal, 1990; Latif, 1892). The baradari is an illustration of the way the themes and designs in architecture evolved throughout the period of multiple dynasties, where different customs intertwined, without replacing them completely and leaving the past behind.

The idea of iconography is crucial to comprehending the Hazuri Bagh Baradari's visual meaning. The exterior elevation of the Baradari is decorated with cusped arches having finely carved ornamental panels. South Asian art and culture has a tendency of associating images of fruit bowls, flower vases and peacocks with an image of wealth, beauty, prosperity and royal subjugation (Koch, 1991).

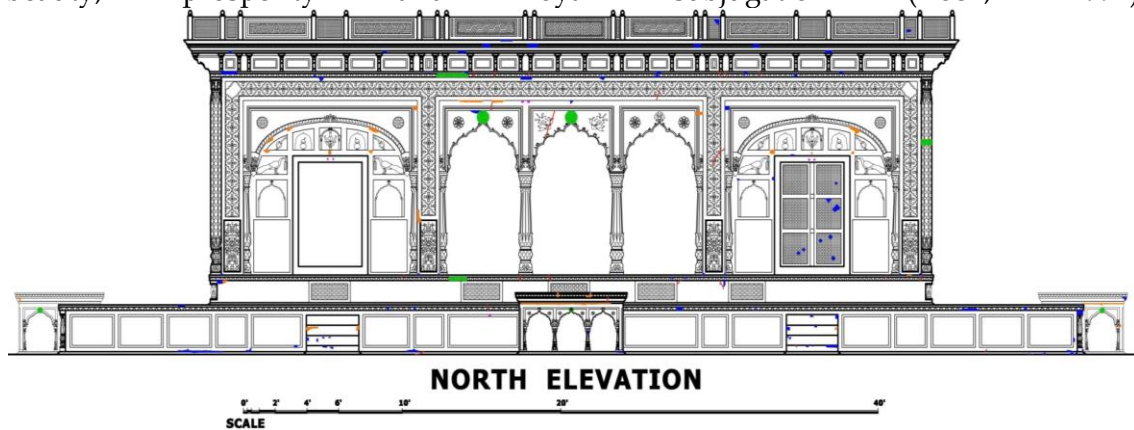


Figure 21: Hazuri Bagh Baradari North Elevation (Source: Author)

### Iconographic Elements of The Baradari

These elements or icons are not merely decorative effects, but they reflect the political atmosphere, artistic culture and cross-cultural relations of that time. The iconography of the Baradari that is a blend of Sikh, Persian, Hindu and Mughal is evidence that the construction can be used to represent the integration of multiple cultures. Patterns, designs and materials in the monument are used to express the ideas related to power, continuity and change in a rich historical background.

### Column shaft and base

In South Asian architecture, columns have always played a significant structural and symbolic significance. However, they were elaborated and more dramatic during the Sikh period, showing that there was a shift to more expressive design (Grewal, 1990; Koch, 1991). This is evident in the elaborately cut column bases of the Hazuri Bagh Baradari, in which pairs of stylized leaves are also put in a continuous design on the lower torus of the column. These designs do not only enhance the beauty of the columns, but also convey an idea of growth, success and continuity, which is a frequent theme in South Asian iconography and art.

The column shafts are decorated with large leaf patterns, a theme also present in other prominent Sikh constructions such as the exit of the Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Ath Dara pavilion, with eight portals (Latif, 1892). Such patterns are evidence of workmanship and care in that they were skillfully etched in high quality marble. The growing popularity of such decorative elements in the Sikh era is due to shifting artistic preferences, and the need to make a unique Sikh architectural style (N. S. Khan, 2018; G. Singh, 2021). Overall, the decorated columns of the Hazuri Bagh Baradari

exemplify how structural elements were used not only for support but also to express the cultural symbolism and visual storytelling.

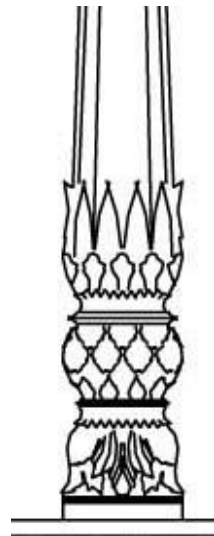
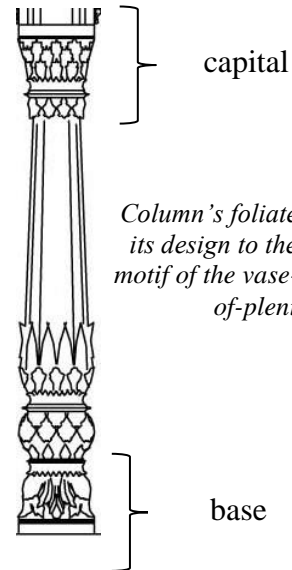


Figure 22: column base and shaft detail (Source: Author)



*Column's foliated capital, related i its design to the pūrṇaghata (Indic motif of the vase-and-foliage or vas of-plenty) capitals.*

Figure 23: Capital & base detail of a typical Sikh Column of Hazuri Bagh Baradari (Source: Author)

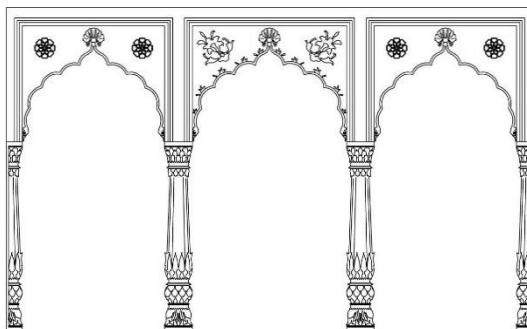


Figure 24: The foliated details of column capitals and bases (Source: Author)



Figure 25: Bust, fragment of a funerary relief dated 591/1195. (courtesy of Bernard O' Kane)

The above illustrated images show the common Sikh Architectural Features commonly used in the monuments of Punjab.



Figure 26: This detail of marble pattern used in baradari's elevation is inspired from the Mughal Period (Source: Author)

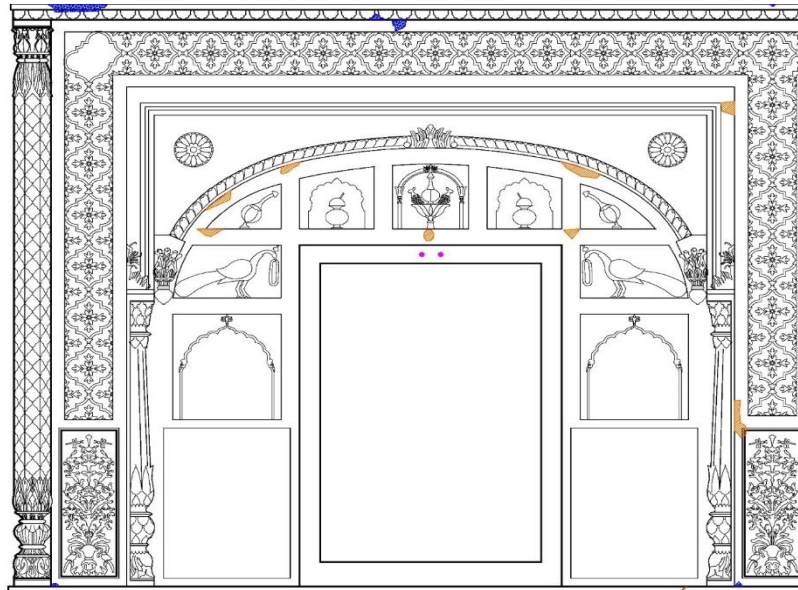


Figure 27: North elevation of Hazuri Bagh's Baradari indicating various figural images (Source: Author)

The above elevation illustrates the figural images of peacock, fruit vases, and serving drinking vessels. The upper corners have two lotus motifs that represents the Buddhist and Hindu influences. The floral panel on both sides indicates the dragon fly figure on the top and the parrot figure on the bottom of the panel (see fig. 29).

### Lotus motif - Padma

The Lotus (see fig. 27) has long been associated with the Divine stature, undergoing various interpretations across different cultures. However, this sacred symbol has gone through a lot of transformations. Buddhists have associated it with spirituality while Muslims have adopted it as a feature of arabesque patterns. These patterns were linked to divinity in the Mughal era and therefore, held a great importance. However, the common man viewed it as only a decorative element in artwork particularly in the late Mughal period. Hindus, on the other hand, have always associated lotus with their gods, attributing deep symbolism to its presence. The droplets of water resting on its petals are interpreted as a smiling religious man who is not concerned about the worldly affairs and its problems (Aamir & Malik, 2017).

### Peacock figures

Peacock motif has been another notable feature (refer to fig. 27) which held considerable significance as a divine symbol during the Mughal time. Peacocks were often associated with paradise, even some poets such as Shams-i-Tabasi described the peacocks as the most sacred and esteemed creatures in paradise. This elevated the symbolic power of the peacock, associating it with the divine bodies such as the sun. The peacock has been portrayed as the guardian of the tree of life and the solar system, becoming a prominent feature in the Mughal-era construction. Shah Jahan's peacock throne is one of the most distinguished examples, which was adorned with two jeweled peacocks. Although it was stolen by Nadir Shah in 1739, but a replica of it featuring four peacock figures was crafted (Malecka, 1999). Moreover, there are significant Christian influences associated with the representation of the Peacock figures.

### Fruit vases and serving vessels

The depicted elevation (see fig. 27) showcases the figural depictions of fruit, including grape-filled pots/vases and serving drinking vessels on the top. A similar representation is observed in the frescoes portraying Sikh Gurus, illustrating them seated on the thrones and the attendants of the court entertaining them by playing music and presenting a variety of drinking vessels (see fig. 28). The following illustration from the book 'Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan' authored by (A. Singh, 2015) features the frescoes depicting Sikh courts.



Figure 28: Fresco of Guru Angad Dev, the 2nd Sikh Guru in the Bedi Palace's interior. Source: Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan, by Amardeep Singh (2015)

### Dragon fly

Dragon flies (see fig. 29) have generally been associated with transformation and change in a positive manner. They symbolize the celebration of life's joys and amplifies the light in it, leading towards a brighter future. They are believed to eradicate the darkness and shadows, offering guidance to bring someone out of the challenging situations.

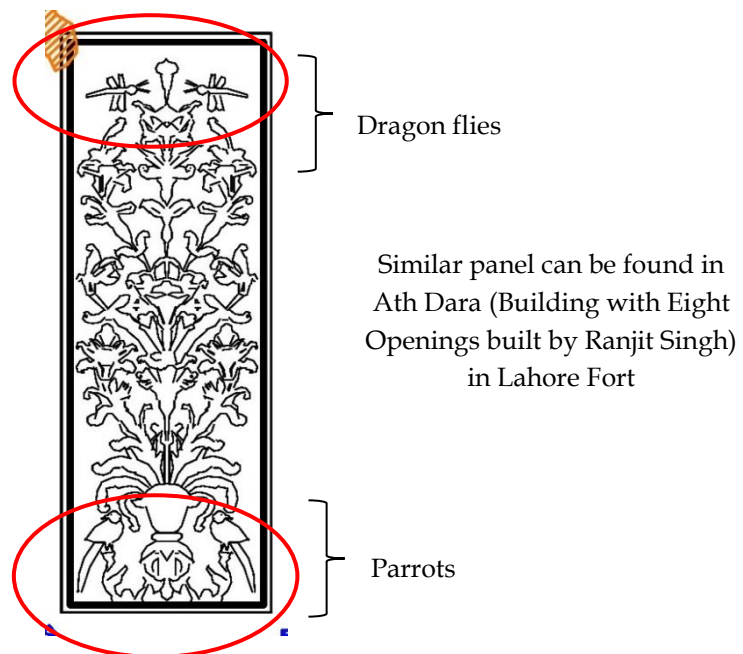


Figure 29: The floral panel indicates the dragon fly figure on the top and the parrot figure on the bottom of the panel.

(Source: Author)

## **Parrots**

Parrots (refer to fig. 29) have been very popular throughout the history in books, folklores, arts and ancient texts. Popular Hindu scriptures dating back to 2500 years ago such as 'Puranas and Vedas' have described parrots as significant figures serving as educators, messengers and narrators. The Rigveda, one of the oldest Hindu texts, contains the earliest written mention of a parrot which referred the bird as Thiththi in Sanskrit, and attributes its connection with helping to cure diseases like the treatment of jaundice. Moreover, the Yajurveda includes multiple citations of keeping parrots as pets and even a reference of parrots mimicking human speech. Therefore, it was believed that including images of parrots and dragonflies in the ornamentation of a place indicates good omen and invites positive energy only.

## **Conclusion**

This study has critically examined the Hazuri Bagh Baradari as a key architectural and cultural artifact of the Sikh period in Punjab, constructed under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1818-1819. This paper demonstrates that the monument is a mirror of the contemporary political, cultural and social life through the analysis of its location and ornamental features. The Baradari was located between the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort which were two important Mughal features in an effort to demonstrate the Sikh sovereignty in an already established imperial setting. It is an important location of concentration of both the general population presence and the administration due to its central location in the Hazuri Bagh quadrangle that instills a feeling of stability and importance.

The findings indicate that the Baradari was a powerful signifier of power and legitimacy besides being a ceremonial and administrative center where Ranjit Singh received the officials and his courtiers. Its political and cultural timelessness is further manifested by the fact that it has continued to have its meaning and recognition even with the change of governments, including the British rule. This discussion proves the point that the location of the Baradari was intentional and not accidental, which is important to understand its meaning.

Moreover, the analysis of its iconographic elements shows the hybrid nature of the Sikh-era architecture unveiling a variety of creative sources. The fine column carvings and designs such as lotus flowers, vases, fruit patterns and bird figures are an expression of Hindu, Buddhist, Mughal and other local traditions. These elements are aesthetically pleasing besides relating to affluence, authority, continuity and cross-cultural interaction. Hence, the Baradari illustrates a good example of how architecture was used to project a unique but non-exclusive Sikh identity.

To conclude, the Hazuri Bagh Baradari is not simply a building, but a representation of the Sikh heritage in the region, as well as cross-cultural influences. This study advances knowledge of Sikh architecture and emphasizes how crucial it is to interpret historical structures in order to completely grasp their significance and function within the South Asian setting.

## **Recommendations**

Even though Sikh-era monuments have a high historical and architectural value, no comprehensive documentation and thorough research on the materials, construction

methods, and aesthetic design features has been done. This work indicates that further, multidisciplinary research is needed on Punjabi Sikh architecture. Further studies ought to be focused on the understanding of the construction process, materials, and condition of monuments like Hazuri Bagh Baradari. Such a method might be supported by such techniques as architectural surveys, analysis of archival records, and scientific tests of materials.

Moreover, one can learn more about the differences in regions, design innovations, and typical architectural features by comparing the buildings of the Sikh period in Lahore with other cities in South Asia. There should also be increased attention to studying and recording ornamental features and their meanings in their historical contexts. Besides promoting academic knowledge about Sikh architecture, such studies will also help in the conservation and restoration of these important historical locations.

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