

SHIRAZ HASSAN

Maktub: *it is written*



Friday, January 7, 2011

Walled City and Gates of Lahore (Part 1)

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The Walled City of Lahore

The concept of walled city is not new to the students of history and it has traditionally been associated with the defense of the city as the wall used to be the first defense line of the city. The concept is centuries old with its mythical presence in Greek epics and folk tales around the world. The gates of a walled city had their structure from this point of view and streets as well used to be narrowed in order to restrict the movement of heavy invading forces, their elephants or horses.



Wall of Old City

Lahore traditionally has 12 gates alongside its main wall which surrounds the city. Each gate has an old tree usually Banyan or Bohar tree a gol Bagh (Circular Garden) and a shrine near it. There also used to be an inn traditionally called "Takya" where travelers used to stay on nights as gates were closed at evenings. There used to be a Hamam as well at each gate for this purpose. Chopal system was the specialty of all gates where

people used to stay at evenings and used to chitchat. The Lahore gates like other walled cities were constructed to enhance the defense of the city. And therefore the amendments or restorations in colonial period are mere embellishments in Gothic style and don't have that functionality which was their prior characteristic in the period of Mughals. The wall encompassed the city and defined its boundary wall as the world advanced and population grew up the city stepped out of its wall and the gates lost their importance and left only as the monumental of their glorious past. The subcontinent has been famous for its walled cities mainly for the cities of Lahore and Delhi. Interestingly enough Delhi has a Lahori gate which faces Lahore and Lahore have a Delhi Gate.

The Gates of Lahore

The Gates are Lahore as known as Delhi Gate, Kashmiri Gate, Sheranwala Gate, Masti Gate, Taxali Gate, Bhati Gate, Lohari Gate, Shah-Alami Gate, Mochi Gate, Akbari Gate, Yakki Gate, Roshnai Gate and a small gate know as Mori Gate.



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One of the Gol Baghs(Circular Gardens) of Walled City

1. Delhi Gate



Delhi Gate

Delhi Gate is situated on the eastern side of the wall of old Lahore. It is the oldest and the most important gate after the Lohari Gate. It was built in the times of Mughal Emperor Akbar when he made Lahore his capital in Punjab. Kanhaiya Lal Kapoor writes in his book Tareekh-e-Lahore, “ This gate faces east and thus opens in the direction of Delhi and so it is called Delhi gate...Amritsar and Jalandhar are also in the same direction.”

Masjid Wazir Khan and Shahi Hamam were built in the area of Delhi gate in the times of Shahjahan and further constructions were made outside this gate during the stay of his son Dara Shikoh and that is why it was called Dara Chowk.

It was a trading hub in the Mughal period and so it is now. During the Sikh reign it suffered a serious blow as the structure was badly damaged. It was rebuilt in the British era as the main structure was deteriorating and the ceiling was in a shabby condition. Architect Ghafir Shahzad writes in his book “Ghar Ghaliyan aur Darwazy”, “ it has a striking resemblance with British architecture for its façade, dual columns and the style of windows.” Heavy traffic and encroachments have affected the beauty of Delhi Gate. We learnt during our research that the government of Punjab has launched a project “ Sustainable Development of Walled City of Lahore Project” in collaboration with the Agha Khan Trust and World Bank to restore and preserve the cultural heritage of Lahore. Telephone and electricity systems will be wired underground. The road from Delhi Gate to Railway Station will be rebuilt and broadened in order to avoid heavy traffic and to curb encroachments around old buildings and Jharokas. There is a ray of hope for this gate in this project.



Wazir Khan Mosque

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Visitors Count



2. Bhati Gate



Bhati Gate

Bhati Gate is on the southern side of the wall of old Lahore. It was also rebuilt in the British period. It also has a resemblance with Gothic architecture especially for its dual arch. Its original beauty was not revived in restoration. Bhati Gate was the center of art and literature as “Paisa” newspaper and literary magazine “Makhzan” were published from here and well-known dramatist Agha Hashar, short story writer Ghulam Abbas, poets Sagar Siddiqui and

Allama Iqbal and many others also used to live here. Theater companies and circuses used to be staged here. Here the Pakistani film industry originated and flourished. But now it has become a past.

3.Lohari Gate

Lahori Gate and the area around it is the oldest part of the walled city or "shaher-e-Panah". Famous Anarkali Bazar is on its opposite side. It was the only gate that was rebuilt on its original design in British period as other gates were built on Gothic style. It had the vital importance from defense point of view in Mughal period and it was true representative of Lahore among all gates. Today its structure is in pitiable condition. The dome is about to fall and 21 feet wooden gate is badly damaged. Advertising banners and wall-chalking have enveloped the entire building. But all the same it stands there reminding its glorious past.



Lohari Gate



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Posted by [Shiraz Hassan](#) at 12:43 AM



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7 comments:



Wajiha January 7, 2011 at 1:07 AM

The most unfortunate thing is that even after living for all this time in Lahore I haven't quite explored the city as well I should have. Maybe I should. Now.

Brilliant depiction of the gates. Good stuff!

[Reply](#)

Qudsia January 7, 2011 at 3:51 AM

Well written.

[Reply](#)



DaniyahSehar January 7, 2011 at 8:36 AM

Commendable effort to revive people's interest in rich heritage and culture of Lahore.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous January 9, 2011 at 2:32 AM

Shiraz...for the 100th time, I hope you will publish your work and the photographs in book form. I have not found anything similar in the market place currently.

Hurry!!!!

[Reply](#)

Syed Sajjad Ahmed January 10, 2011 at 8:36 AM

I like this. I am a city planner and I hope you continue to present your city in print like this. Thanks again.

syed

Reply



Shaun January 13, 2011 at 12:09AM

I think all these gates need beautification . Good article :)

Reply

Cheap Flights to Lahore May 28, 2012 at 6:40AM

I soon realized that no journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within.

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