

# Buddhu Ka Awa: The Nature of the Building

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## Abstract

*Apart from royal buildings, the elites (Umra) of the Mughals also produced a number of monuments including mosques and tombs. However, they do not equally manifest the attributes of royal style. Although, they carry several royal traditions and elements but declining attitudes in the tomb building begins to appear in the 17th century AD. Particularly those buildings or tombs clearly mark the decline in the tomb architecture which was built after the reign of Shah Jahan and perhaps the tomb or Buddhu Ka Awa is also included among those buildings. However, builder seems to maintaining the royal style of architecture as this aspect of Mughal architecture has been discussed by authors in the subsequent pages.*

**Keywords:** *Buddhu Ka Awa, Mughal Period, Tomb Architecture*

## Introduction

Lahore being the inheritor of bountiful and diverse archaeological heritage, occupies a very significant position. It inherits the appreciable and tremendous legacies of historic period which tote up its pride and splendour. It is known for its monuments which are equitably enhancing its beauty and witness the history of Lahore. The art of building which flourished here is magnificently superb and unprecedentedly rich in its architectural context. In short, it is the cultural capital of Pakistan which is known for the variety of its monument. It has been ruled by a number of dynasties, which impressively contributed and added up significant land marks in the assets of Lahore.

Lahore was occupied by Mahmud of Ghazna in 1021-22 AD who annexed it to his vast empire and made it provincial capital. The Ghaznavid political domination continued till the defeat of its last ruler Khusro Malik who was arrested by Shahab-ud-Din in 1186. After the fall of the Ghaznavid Empire, Lahore was plundered by different dynasties including Khiljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids, Lodhis and Suris. However, it excelled magnificently in the art of building during the Mughal rule from 1526 to 1759.

Moreover, the architecture of Lahore touched its peak of grandeur and glory during the Mughal Period. The Mughal emperors beautified the city with some of the finest architectural splendours including mosques, tombs, forts and gardens etc. Few of them have survived the devastated forces of the time and some distressingly manifest their ruins. Among many dilapidated and neglected monuments of Lahore, there stands a domed square tomb traditionally known as *Buddhu Ka Awa*. It is located on the south side of the G.T Road just opposite to the University of Science and Technology (31°34'34.4"N 74°21'21.0"E).

In the course of time the origin of *Buddhu Ka Awa* seems to have been overlapped into a number of confronting views, as it is now differently identified. The word *Buddhu* may be restored most probably as the worship place of Buddha i.e. stupa. After the death of Buddha, stupa became a cult object and it became common practice among Buddhist to erect stupas. It seems that during the Kushana's period a stupa might have been erected in this area which was destroyed after the decline of Buddhism. Stupa was originally made of bricks and these bricks were taken out by the local villagers. Thus, the stupa seems to serve as quarry of bricks and as a result earned its new name *Awa* i.e. kiln, and finally came to be known as *Buddhu Ka Awa* instead of stupa of the Buddha. However, in contrast to this historical explanation, local traditions speak about a brick potter named *Buddhu*, who established a brick kiln as it is known as *Awa* in local language. He used to supply the burnt bricks for the royal edifices of Shah Jahan's reign. Once he stopped a saintly person to warm himself from the warmth of kiln in a cold night. His malediction led the kiln of *Buddhu* become unserviceable ever after. (Latif, 1892).

Moreover, French General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh named Avitable used Buddha Ka Awa as his summer house during the Sikh reign. However, later on this area was occupied by the Pakistan railway authorities. They cut away and levelled down the Buddha Ka Awa (kiln) to provide accommodation for railway workshops and stores, and erected a short heighted pillar as an identification to mark the area of Awa or kiln. However, Buddha Ka Awa rendered its name to a Muslim tomb built, probably, in later the half of 16<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir. Thus, the site of Buddha Ka Awa is now wrapped up within controversies as it presently comprises of two monuments, a tomb and a short heighted pillar within the distance of few feet. (Fig: 1 & 2)

### **Buddhu Ka Awa: Controversies**

Latif (1892) forthrightly describes the Buddha Ka Awa as a brick kiln or *Pazava*. He attributed this Awa to a brick potter named Buddha who, in his opinion, belonged to Shahjahan's reign. Moreover, he continues to explain that the father of Buddha named Suddhu constructed several kilns on the order of Jahangir, Mughal emperor and supplied burnt bricks for many royal edifices. After the death of his father, Buddha continued his father's occupation which he flourished so well. One day it happened that a holy man named Abdul Haq, a disciple of Hazrat Mian Mir came to Buddha's Kiln to warm himself in a wintry and rainy night but he was driven out by Buddha's workmen. This provoked the curse of the *faqir* and consequently the kiln became unserviceable.

However, Chughtai (2000) gives a different story about Buddha Ka Awa. He says that Buddha Ka Awa or brick kiln was established during the reign of Shah Jahan, Mughal emperor. He explained that *Buddhu Ka Awa* would have originally been a stupa built by the followers of Buddha. However, the structure of the stupa was later on dismantled but it gave its name to the place where it was once stood. So the stupa was abandoned and its name survived.

Goulding (2006) however, agrees with Latif's opinion that it was a kiln of Buddha, who was a royal Brick He further added that no traces of this kiln were left as it was demolished in

1850 to provide bricks for the construction of barracks for Europeans troops at Mian Mir. The bricks quarried from the Buddhu Ka Awa for the construction of barracks were not sufficient in quantity, therefore, some Muslim tombs and mosques were also destroyed which badly damaged Muslim heritage of Lahore. Thus, it becomes obvious that the Awa or so called kiln served as a quarry of bricks.

### **Controversies regarding the Tomb Structure**

There are many controversies regarding the identification of the person who is buried inside the tomb which is situated on the southern side of Awa or kiln. Lal (1884) mentioned the burial chamber as tomb of Nawab Nusrat ullah Khan also known as Naster Khan. In his opinion, the tomb was built during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir which was later on used by a French General Avitable as his residence. Avitable also built a remarkable bang low in the vicinity of this tomb during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The tomb remained under occupation of Sikhs till the end of their rule. However, the grave cenotaph of Nawab Nusrat Jhang was removed and the chamber inside was levelled to the ground on the order of General Court and floor was paved. He altered this tomb with so many versatile innovations and converted it into a luxurious residential building. Moreover, a mosque located nearby this tomb, was also added up to this splendid banglow.

Latif (1892) however, designated the tomb standing at the site of Buddhu Ka Awa as the tomb of Khan-i-Dauran which is located on the southern side, closer to the kiln which is now marked by a pillar. Khan-i-Dauran was a renowned figure of Mughal court during the reign of Shah Jahan. His original name was Khawaja Sabar and he earned the title of Yamin-ud-daula Khan-i-Dauran Bahadar Nusrat Jhang. This tomb was constructed by Khane-i- Dauran as a burial place of his wife. He died in 1643 AD and his son buried him here close to the grave of his wife.

Chughtai (2000) describes the tomb of Khan-i-Dauran as a double storey building. Besides this he agrees with the Latif regarding the use of this tomb during Sikh and British period.

However Goulding (2006) disagrees with all above mentioned writers and erroneously identified the tomb as the tomb of Buddha.

Thus, it may be inferred that when the French General Avitable built his summer house on the top of the kiln and added the surrounded monuments to enhance the area of his bungalow. Consequently, the tomb building became a part of residential area of General Avitable and lost its identity and came to be known as Buddha Ka Awa, as originally it stood in the vicinity of the Awa or kiln. Traditionally, the tomb building is now known as Buddha Ka Awa instead of the deceased person for whom this tomb was originally constructed.

### **Architectural Description of the Tomb Building**

Originally, the tomb building was located in the middle of a huge garden which gradually reduced its actual size due to human vandalism. Now the tomb structure stands in the center of an artificial garden which is square in shape, measuring 46'-2" from all sides. The whole area of the garden is enclosed by a fence and entrance is provided on north side through a small gateway. So far as the tomb building is concerned, externally it gives the impression of a double storey building mainly consisting of a lower square chamber which is elegantly crowned by a high dome. (Fig. 3 & 4)

The tomb structure stands on a 25' square raised plinth/platform which is 5 feet in height from ground level. The platform is marked by a pair of staircases on the northern side which provide access to the burial chamber. The burial chamber occupies the centre of this platform by leaving a considerable space round it, measuring 11'-5" from all side in width. However, Lal (1884) mentions that marvelous tomb building was surrounded by a projected space or platform which measured 24' in width from four directions.

Moreover, access to the burial chamber is provided through an arched entrance facing north. The arch of entrance is cusped in shape which accommodates a rectangular doorway leading into the burial chamber (Fig. 5). Its entrance arch reminds the typical Mughal cusped arches

seen in the buildings of Shah Jahan, but it less refined and ordinary in treatment. The central arched panel is flanked by two slightly recessed arched panels. Each arched panel is marked by a rectangular plain band above which separates lower blind arch from the upper most moulding line. Lower panel elusively accommodates a slightly recessed blind arch set within a rectangular frame. The whole surface of these panels was once, pronouncedly ornamented with the paintings and foliage pattern of different colors. But unfortunately, not even the faint traces of these decorations are visible now. Whole decorative scheme disappeared due to the severe weathering. It also seems that it was later on white washed, the vestiges of which still survive.

Thus, the elevation of the lower part of the tomb appears tripartite in design as it is divided into three parts. It is further marked up by a slightly projected cornice just below the parapet. However, the crowning feature of this whole lower composition that is parapet is now missing at some places due to structural deterioration. The tripartite scheme, consisting of three arched panels, central being larger, repeats on all sides.

The whole structure of tomb building is strengthened by engaged piers on four sides.

Piers are built of typical Mughal burnt bricks and front of the piers seems originally truncated with two offsets. While the rear piers show extension indicating arcades which has now been totally demolished. Latif (1892) erroneously mentioned that there were vaulted chambers round the mausoleum supported by six pillars on each side. Infact, these pillars were four in number as the actual space does not allow the construction of more than four pillars. Moreover, there was a passage as well beside the western boundary wall of the tomb building which led towards the residence of General Court Sahib, but now completely vanished. Thus, the actual tomb chamber was originally covered by a double storey arcaded structure probably like a pillared veranda, which is now disappeared (Fig. 6 & 7). However, its remnants are still visible on the rear wall of the tomb. Moreover, parapet is reported to have originally been marked by kiosks or domed pavilions with eight arched openings. (Lal, 1884)

The square burial chamber is adequately crowned by a high dome which is gracefully enhancing the beauty of the tomb building (Fig. 8). Externally dome may be resolved into three portions. The lowest part consists of an octagonal base which is marked by arched windows on four cardinal points. Above this octagonal wall, there rises a high drum which is circular in shape. It greatly manifests the central Asian tradition. However, the plain surface of the drum is disturbed by a slightly projected line of brick masonry which looks like a molding. However, drum is followed above by a circular neck on which actually dome rests. The neck is slightly recessed and marked by a projected line of brick masonry which separates the dome from the high drum. It is lavishly ornamented with a band of miniature arches. Each arch is skilfully embellished with floral designs which show flowers and leaves interconnected with each other through a stem. However, the artist tried to add the slight touch of naturalism to the whole decoration. The curvature of dome is externally decorated with a typical chevron motif. Moreover, use of yellow and blue glazed tiles is magnificently adding the beauty to the structure. Signs of floral designs in mosaic can still be seen on some of the yellow tiles. However, the dome finally terminates into an inverted lotus which manifests a typical Indian tradition. It is now almost ruined (Fig. 9).

### **Interior of the Tomb**

So far as the interior of the tomb building is concerned, the lower storey is totally altered with white washed and not a single trace of any decoration on the walls is left. It is occupied by two grave structures (Fig. 10). Originally, the actual cenotaph of the graves had been leveled down while this tomb was being used by General Aitavale as his residence. However, it seems that after the creation of Pakistan, the graves cenotaph was restored to mark the place of burials but not according to their original form.

The lower storey is followed by squinches on four corners which provide an octagonal base above square and marks the phase of transition. Each squinch is decorated with honey comb pattern, marking the tier of intersecting arches and accompanied by an arched window (Fig. 11). Moreover, the interior of the dome is discernibly ornamented with stalactite or

*muqarnas* pattern which includes different geometric patterns such as squares, lozenges and triangles. These shapes are overlapping with each other in such a manner to devise tier of small cells. The inner space of the dome is also covered by concentric circles from which originate the different geometric designs such as triangles and circles. However, the apex of the dome is covered by a sun flower from which concentric intersecting lines are sprouting (Fig. 12).

## **Conclusion**

The discussion above clearly demonstrates that the site of *Buddhu Ka Awa* is very significant in architectural and historical context as it is marked by two monuments. So far as the term *Buddhu Ka Awa* is concerned, it has been derived from the pre-existing name of stupa (cult of Buddha). It may be concluded that most probably in ancient times a stupa was built which was originally made of bricks. In subsequent period the bricks of stupa were taken out by the local villagers. Thus, the stupa served as quarry of bricks and earned its name *Awa* i.e. kiln and finally came to be known as *Buddhu Ka Awa*.

However, the tomb in the vicinity of this *Awa* or kiln is designated as the tomb of the wife of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhang. He constructed this tomb as the burial place of his wife during his stay in Lahore. Different writers have mentioned this as the tomb of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhang who is mistakenly reported to have been buried in Lahore. According to *Maasar ul Umra*, he was died in Gawalyar and buried in local graveyard. The tomb of the wife of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhan represents square tomb tradition in Lahore which was infact originated from Moosa Aahangar. However, it greatly incorporates the pre-existing tradition of Mughal architecture such as glazed tiles, honey comb pattern, wall panelling and high dome.

Although the tomb of the wife of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhan was built during the reign of Aurangzaib Alamgir and it was the declining age of Mughal architecture. But the Tomb of the wife of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhang still marks the glorious period of Mughal Art of building. It is generally expressed that the golden period of Mughal

architecture was ended with the death of Shahjahan but this impression does not seem true in the presence of the tomb of the wife of Khan-i- Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jhang.

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## Figures



Figure 1: Tomb on the Site of Buddhu Ka Awa



Figure 2: Pillar marking the Site of Buddhu Ka Awa



Figure 3: Front view of the tomb

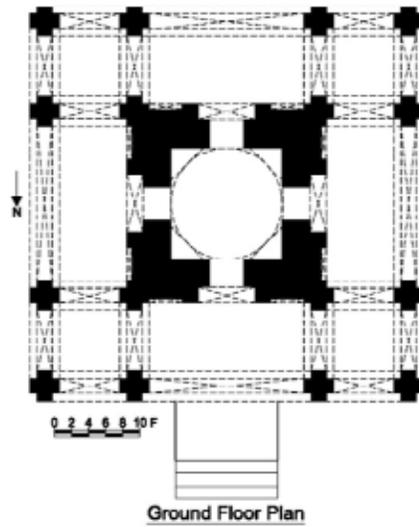


Figure 4: Ground Floor Plan of the Tomb



Figure 5: Arched entrance to the Tomb



Figure 6: Remnants of arcaded chamber around the Tomb Building



Figure 7: Remnants of arcaded chamber around the Tomb Building



Figure 8: First Floor Plan of the Tomb

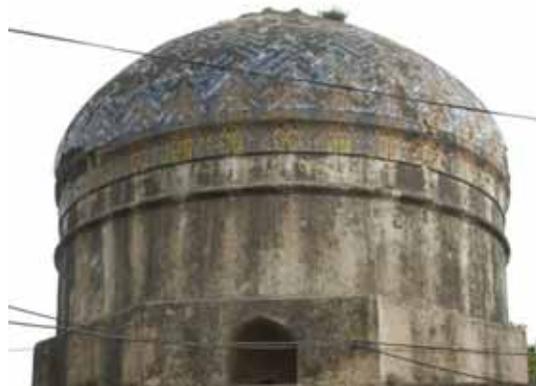


Figure 9: Dome above the Burial Chamber



Figure 10: Grave Cenotaphs inside the Tomb



Figure 11: Squinches below the dome



Figure 12: Interior Decoration of Dome