

# Maqbara-i-Jahangir:

## Classic Mogul Architecture

> Writing: M. Zubair Tahir  
Photography: Faraz Ahmed

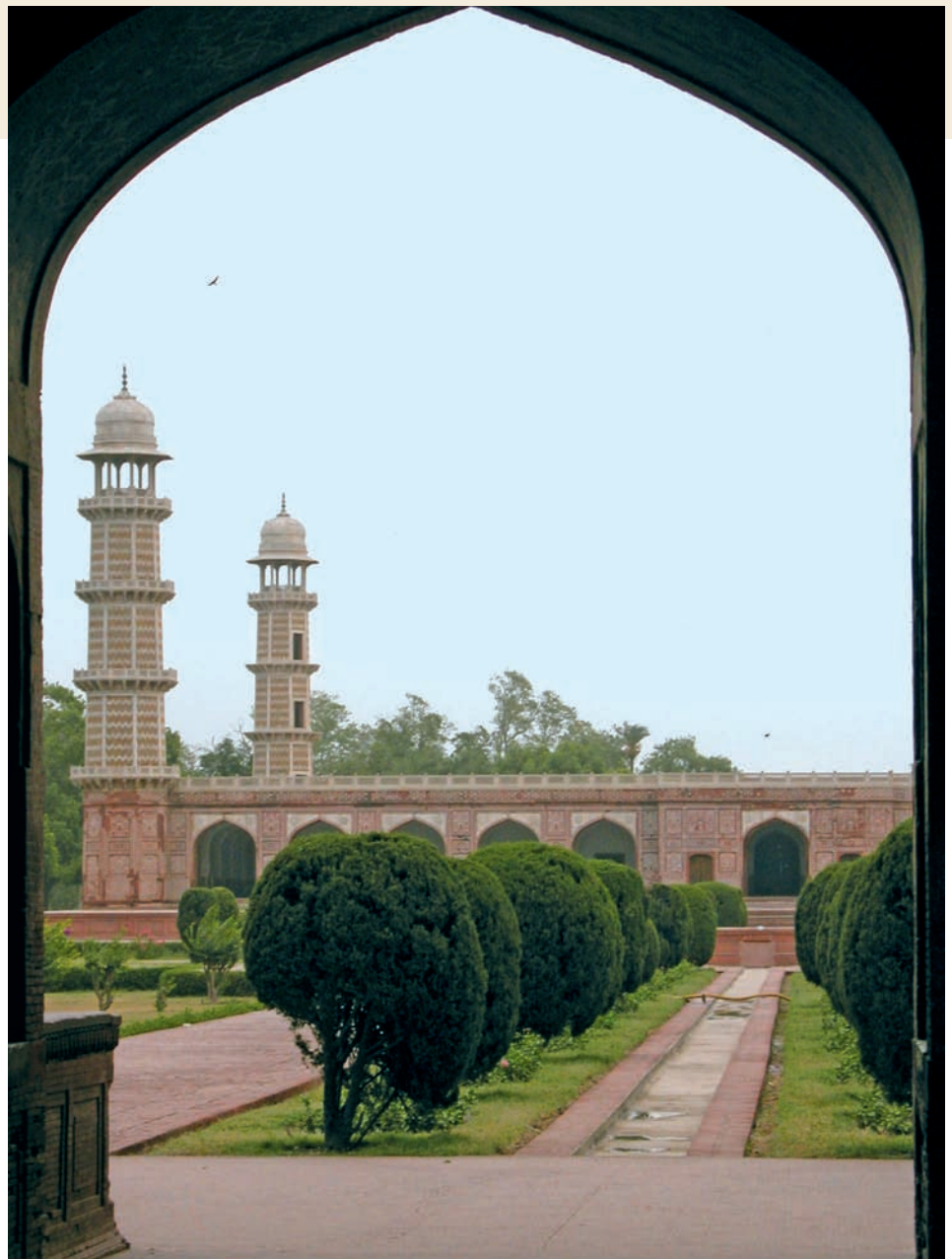
The tombs of the rulers are like preserved miniatures of past civilizations: they are the historic and cultural heritage left behind for generations to come. Unlike the living legends their occupants reflect their respective era like a vivid, colourful, perceptible and explicable still life painting.

**M**aqbara-i-Jahangir is the tomb of the fourth Mogul ruler, starting from Babur who was the first to enter India in 1526 to establish Mogul rule which continued until 1858 and ended with Bahadur Shah Zafar as the last Moghul Ruler. Humayun and, Akber were the predecessors of Jahangir. He ruled from 1569 to 1627, and his successor son, Shahjahan stretched it from 1628 to 1658. Shahjahan's era is known as the golden age of Moghul Architecture. Some of the well known architectures, built during the time of Shahjahan include, the Red Fort (Delhi), Agra Fort, Jamia Masjid Dehli, Masjid Wazir Khan (Lahore), Moti Masjid (Lahore), Shahjahan Masjid (Thatta, ▶



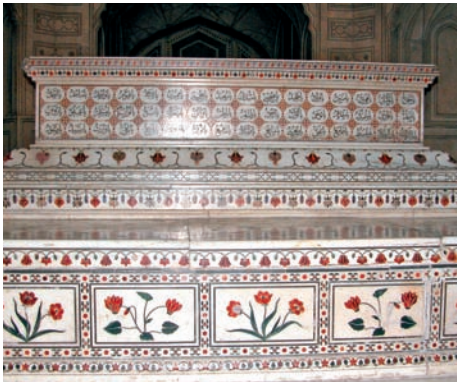
Asif khan's tomb

قبر آصف خان



The Mausoleum

الضريح



The tomb

القبر

Pakistan) and the iconic Shalimar Garden of Lahore.

On top of the list however is the world famous Taj Mahal which he built over the tomb of his wife 'Mumtaz Mahal'. Shahjahan also built Maqbara-i-Jahangir in 1637 (ten years after the death of his father) as the eternal abode of his father emperor Jahangir. It is located on the bank of the River Ravi, near a small town Shahdra (Shah-Da-Rah in Punjabi means King's Way). On the other bank of the River Ravi, lies Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan and capital of Punjab province. Shahjahan was a born Lahorite (1592).and his association with Lahore is reflected through the architecture of his time including Maqbara-i- Jahangir.

Vastness is the first impression at the very first glance of the Maqbara and suggestive of the broad hearted builders of this architecture. The second glance measures the four; four- tiered, thirty meters lofty minarets showing red and white brick rows and columns. A long pathway of red brickwork with a central canal which is not functional now, leads to the main entrance of the mausoleum. Original trees along the canal are not there anymore but other trees have been planted to perceive the original perspective. The actual marble coffin is located in the centre of the raised platform and the interior is decorated with intricate Mogul artwork. The marble coffin bears the inscription of the ninety nine attributes of the Al-Mighty Creator in exquisite Arabic calligraphy.

Wet-in-wet is a technique used in water colour paintings to smudge and diffuse colors through graded washings to give ▶



Lateral view

منظر جانبي



Courtyard

الفناء



Courtyard



Mausoleum's entrance

مدخل الضريح

subtle and vanishing effects. Contrarily 'Pietra Dura (Stone-in-stone) is the technique of inlaying semi precious stones in marble to achieve clarity, vividness, freshness and permanence in intricate designs. This technique, locally known as 'Patchi-Kari', has been used so dexterously here that the beautiful designs appear as clear and fresh even today as if they were inlaid only yesterday. Jahangir's period is characterized by the abundant use of white marble. Semi precious stones like Topaz, Lapis Lazuli, onyx and Jasper, have been used in the stone-in-stone work here. This rich, beautiful, and precise Patchi-Kari is equal to that of the Taj-Mahal's in all respects of quality. Curvilinear, floral and geometrical patterns in durable fresco invite a keen observation to note how the indigenous materials and craftsmanship had been utilized to paint the lasting impressions.

Jahangir's wife, NurJahan (Light of the world) was known for her outstanding beauty and intellect. She helped him in the state affairs and her brother 'Asaf' was a favorite courtier of Jahangir. Asaf's tomb is also within the same vicinity. The boundary wall has an attached raised platform with cubicles with frontal archways, built upon it. The intended use was the visitor's comfort and provision of residence for the staff on duty. Collectively these cubicles are known as 'Akbari Serai'

The first mogul rulers were only too preoccupied as they had to establish their writ in a multi faceted and turbulent

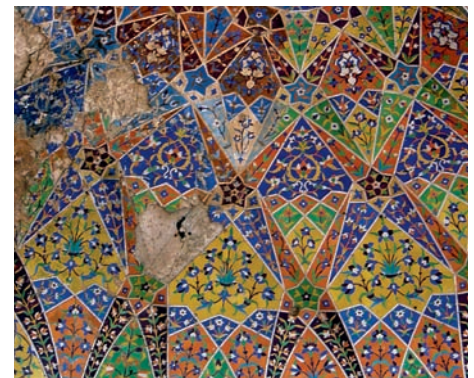
society of India. By the time of Akber, things were smooth enough to let him think of some innovative religious mergers of Islam and Hinduism. Every Mogul ruler had a liking for architecture. Trends in the early Mogul period were more like Arabian and Persian architecture. Later on, a unique and synergised amalgam of the 'Persian style' and "indigenous resources" (both materials and craftsmanship) evolved. The hybrid architecture not only passed the test of time and survived but also achieved excellence as in the case of Taj Mahal. All these buildings have some common factors, like openness, geometrical and floral patterns and use of indigenous red stone, white marble and central water channels. Moghul architecture succeeded in establishing its own identity. Jahangir was known for his justice and he improvised a system to allow easy access to all. A golden chain attached with a bell, hung outside his palace. Pulling the chain, anyone in need of justice could seek it directly from the king. Jahangir was known as 'Salim' in his princehood and his romance with a slave girl "Anarkali" (bud/ flower of pomegranate), ended as a tragedy when by a royal decree of a disapproving father, she was buried alive in the walls. This fiction occupies a place in Urdu classics. Architecture did not progress in the time of Jahangir, as much as it did in the time of his successor son, Shahjahan.

Jahangir was a naturalist and a good writer. His memoirs 'Tuzk-i-Jahangiri' comprise the descriptions of the, then prevalent, fauna and flora along with



Pietra Dura-detail

البياشي-كاري



Decorative pattern

زخرفة

illustrations by his court artists. When a Turkey, brought from Goa, was presented to him, he described it in a picturesque style and ordered his court artist to illustrate the bird. A distinguishing feature of Mogul art is perhaps a larger inclusion of animal pictures like elephants, peacocks, tigers, deer etc. Anyone interested in seeing good specimens of fresco, Pietra Dura, and exquisite Arabic calligraphy, will find the tomb of Jahangir a place worth visiting. During or after a rainy day, the red brickwork is washed and having absorbed the rain water, appears very fresh and prominent particularly in reference to the contrasting lush green plantation. Scattered pools of water help perceive the functionality of then functional and now non functional canals. Jahangir's tomb is a national heritage and it has been illustrated on the one thousand rupees note of Pakistan which is now being replaced by a new currency note. Jahangir's tomb is a favourite picnic point for the Lahorities and an easily accessible tourist attraction. Some parts of the building have been damaged on account of severe seasonal effects while others had been affected by carelessness on the part of ignorant visitors. Seeing such damage, I, at times, recall the following verse of Ghalib, the great Urdu Poet: "Ya Rub Zamana Mujh ko Mitata hai Kis Leeyay? Laohay Jahan Pay Hurfay Mokarrur Naheen Hoon Mein"

(Why, O, God! Time exerts to erase me? while I am not a re-writable word on the slate of this world!) ■



Tomb's entrance

مدخل الضريح



Fresco in the vestibule of the tomb chamber

جدار غرفة الضريح



The floor

الأرضية



Pattern inside the arch of entrance زخرفة في قوس المدخل