



Appraisal of Khusro Bagh at Allahabad, India: Design Paradigm and Mughal Architecture Expression

Deepika Tiwari¹, Mohd Afzal Khan², H. Chinna Saidulu³, Mohammad Arif Kamal^{4,*}

¹ Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

² Department of Architecture & Planning, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee India

³ Department of Architecture, School of Architecture & Planning, JNAFAU, Hyderabad, India

⁴ Architecture Section, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

* Corresponding Author: architectarif@gmail.com

Abstract: Khusro Bagh, located in Allahabad (now Prayagraj), India, is a prominent Mughal-era Garden and burial complex that reflects the grandeur and architectural sophistication of the Mughal period. Spanning approximately 40 acres, the site comprises four primary tombs, those of Shah Begum, Nisar Begum, Khusro Mirza, and Bibi Tamolon, interwoven with Persian Charbagh-inspired landscapes, ornamental pathways, and water features. Built during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, the garden was named after Prince Khusro, symbolizing the historical significance of his tragic life and rebellion against his father. The tombs exhibit a rich blend of Indo-Islamic, Persian, and Rajput architectural styles, characterized by sandstone construction, bulbous domes, intricate jaalis, floral patterns, and geometric ornamentation. This paper utilizes a case study approach, documenting the architectural features, spatial organization, and historical context of Khusro Bagh. Photographic documentation and zoning diagrams reveal the careful planning of built and unbuilt spaces, the circulation patterns, and the integration of natural and man-made elements. The site's elevated plinths; elaborately carved corbels, fretwork, and arabesque calligraphy highlight the Mughal emphasis on ornamentation and symmetry. Additionally, the functionality of water systems, including fountains and wells, demonstrates the engineering ingenuity of the period. The historical narratives surrounding the site, such as the political tensions between Prince Khusro and Emperor Jahangir, Shah Begum's tragic demise, and the architectural patronage by Mughal rulers is discussed in this paper. This paper not only emphasizes the need to preserve Khusro Bagh as a heritage site but also offers insights into Mughal architectural practices, enriching our understanding of India's historical and cultural legacy. The study contributes to broader discussions on heritage conservation, landscape design, and architectural innovation in historical contexts.

Keywords: khusro bagh, mughal architecture, heritage conservation, Allahabad, India

1. Introduction

India is a culturally diverse nation with a wealth of historical structures, including palaces, churches, tombs, temples, and forts. It includes some of the most well-known structures in the world, including the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort, the Qutab Minar, the Ancient Churches of Goa, and the Palaces of Udaipur and Jaipur. The Khusro Tomb, as shown in Figure 1, is one of the most important archaeological structures of Allahabad City in Uttar Pradesh, India (Now known as Prayagraj) constructed by Nisar Begum (Sister of Khusro), in the memory of Khusro, the eldest son of Jahangir and Shah Begum, in the year 1622 A.D. It is a two-storied building with an arcaded wall, surmounted by a large hemispherical dome on an octagonal drum and the small chhatris (a round shape like an umbrella) on all the corners of the Tomb. The tomb's interior, which is a single room with walls painted with floral designs and a medallion with geometric and star patterns on the dome, is the pinnacle of Mughal architecture. Mughal Emperor Jalal-Uddin Muhammad Akbar in his 21st reign year corresponding to 984 Hijri (1576 CE) built a large and strong fort at Allahabad, the southeast corner of which lies close to Sangam - where the rivers Ganga and Jamuna meet and which has religious significance for Hindus—besides constructing this fort, Emperor Akbar, around the same time also built large pleasure garden of about 40 acres enclosed within a stone walled boundary which sextant at a distance of about 5 km. from Sangam. The main portal of this garden, which is double-storied is situated on the road constructed by Sher Shah Sur (now known as Grand Trunk Road) and is situated in a locality known as Khuldabad. The large garden also has another gateway located on the opposite side of the main gateway, which is of smaller size. and is located a km. from the present Railway Station's exit towards the city side. There is mention of Akbar, his eldest son and successor Prince Salim (later crowned as Jahangir), Salim's wife Man Bai and their eldest son Khusro having stayed at this pleasure garden. Prince Daniyal, another son of Akbar also stayed in this Mughal Garden during his governorship (Asher, 1992). The historical events that took place here relate to the reign of Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir and include the

rebellions of Jahangir as Prince Salim against his father Emperor Akbar and the rebellion of Jahangir's eldest son Prince Khusro against his father Surprisingly, it is not for the emperors, but the Prince Khusro, that the Mughal garden is named and popularly referred to as 'Khusro Bagh'. Probably, it is named as such for being associated with popular sentiments that were more sympathetic to Khusro. Khusro was a favorite of his grandfather Akbar and was liked by the people and Akbar had almost selected him as his successor when Prince Salim rebelled for the second time. Akbar was quite disillusioned with Salim, and was quite ill and did not hope to live and hence wanted to nominate Khusro as the heir. Jahangir, on becoming the emperor got Khusro confined at Berhampur where his younger brother Khurram (later titled Shah Jahan) acted as his jailor. Khusro died there in May 1622 CE. in circumstances that are suspicious by some historians like Johnde Lat, a French historian who says that it was a murder committed at the behest of Khurram. Khusro was initially buried at Burhanpur (Nath, 1976). Thereafter, when the news of Khusro's death was conveyed to Jahangir at Agra, the emperor desired that his body be brought to Agra and then taken to Allahabad for burial near his mother Man Bai's grave in the Mughal Garden. Man, Baiwas the daughter of Raja Bhagwant Das, a noble of Akbar's court and was titled Shah Begum by Jahangir and was buried here in 1012 Hijri (1603-04 CE).



Figure 1. Tomb of Nisar begum in Khuso Bagh at Allahabad, India.

2. Khusro Bagh, Allahabad: The Study Context

2.1 Location of Khusro Bagh, Allahabad

Near the Prayagraj Junction railway station in Muhalla Khuldabad, Prayagraj, India, is a sizable walled garden and cemetery complex known as Khusro Bagh. The distance from the Akbar fort is about 6 km. (Figure 2)



(a)



(b)

Figure 2. (a) Location of Allahabad in India; (b) Location of Khusro Bagh in Allahabad.

2.2 Colonial Architecture of Allahabad

The founding and growth of British power in India were significantly aided by Allahabad (Prayagraj). Without a doubt, Allahabad's history has paralleled the nation's history both during and after British control. In 1857, Allahabad was also crucial. A number of iconic buildings were added to Allahabad's skyline by the British. It was first exposed to the imperialistic tendencies of colonial architecture at that time, which resulted in the fusion of the Indo-Islamic genre with the classic Neo-Classical and Gothic European styles, which is now known as imperialistic Indo-Saracenic architecture. These structures' ornate designs, like those of many other buildings in Allahabad, exhibit a stunning fusion of Eastern and Western architectural traditions. The structures from this era show the antique towers and domes with a contemporary colonial feel. Churches, schools, residences, palaces, and administrative structures are examples of structures with colonial influences. The University of Allahabad and the Allahabad High Court are two notable buildings in Allahabad (Prayagraj), the former capital of the United Provinces. Possibly the best Anglican cathedral in Asia is the All-Saints Cathedral (Figure 3). Sir William Emerson created it, and it is a superb example of Gothic architectural moorings from the 13th century.



Figure 3. All Saint Cathedral at Allahabad, India.

2.3 Mughal Architecture in Allahabad, India

Mughal architecture is a distinctive Indo-Islamic architectural style that flourished under the Mughal Empire (1526–1857) in the Indian subcontinent. Blending Persian, Islamic, and Indian elements, it is celebrated for its grandeur, symmetry, and intricate ornamentation. This style reached its zenith during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, showcasing a harmonious blend of structural innovation and artistic excellence. Key features of Mughal architecture include bulbous domes, slender minarets with cupolas, large courtyards, exquisite calligraphy, and detailed floral and geometric motifs. Red sandstone and white marble were extensively used, often inlaid with semi-precious stones in Pietra dura work. Mughal architecture not only represents a pinnacle of artistic achievement but also reflects the cultural synthesis and imperial vision of the Mughal rulers. It continues to inspire awe and remains a vital part of India's architectural heritage. Akbar the Great's vision for the Allahabad Fort was based on majesty and splendor. His goal was to make this fort a visual representation of the Mughal Empire's might for the other kingdoms in and around the Indian subcontinent. Given this Mughal Emperor's inclusiveness, it is reasonable to conclude that the Allahabad Fort's architecture is the best conceivable fusion of Persian, Mughal, and Hindu styles. Despite the fact that the military has restricted access to some areas of the fort, travelers can nevertheless be in awe of its beauty. Its three entrances were built such that neither a man nor an elephant could climb to the top. The Jodhabai Palace, which enhances the magnificent Hindu architecture, is another gem within the fort. The combination of the Mughals and the Rajputs is portrayed through the "chhatra," circular dome structures, and glazed tiles. Rich Persian and Islamic architectural patterns may be seen in the palaces constructed inside this fort for the emperor's other wives, Zenana and Mariam-Uz-Zamani. Akbar added a gem to the crown by raising the Ashoka Pillar. This pillar, which dates to 232 BC, bears inscriptions from the early Mughal era, the Mauryas, and the Guptas. On your next trip to Allahabad, you can see the 35-foot-tall pillar, which is open to the public. Saraswati Koop, the source of the Saraswati River, and Akshaya Vator, the "indestructible banyan tree," are two of Prayagraj Fort's most contentious areas (Veenaworld, 2022). Although there are still a number of limitations on these places of worship, devotees are now free to visit.



Figure 4. Allahabad Fort on the bank of river Yamuna.

3. Documentation of Khusro Bagh Allahabad, India

3.1 Zoning of Khusro Bagh, Allahabad

Khusro Bagh is a Mughal-era walled garden with a charbagh layout, divided into entrance, garden, mausoleum, and utility zones. The three main tombs—Khusro Mirza, Shah Begum, and Nithar Begum—are centrally placed, surrounded by lush greenery and pathways. High boundary walls enclose the site, preserving its historical and architectural significance amid the urban landscape.

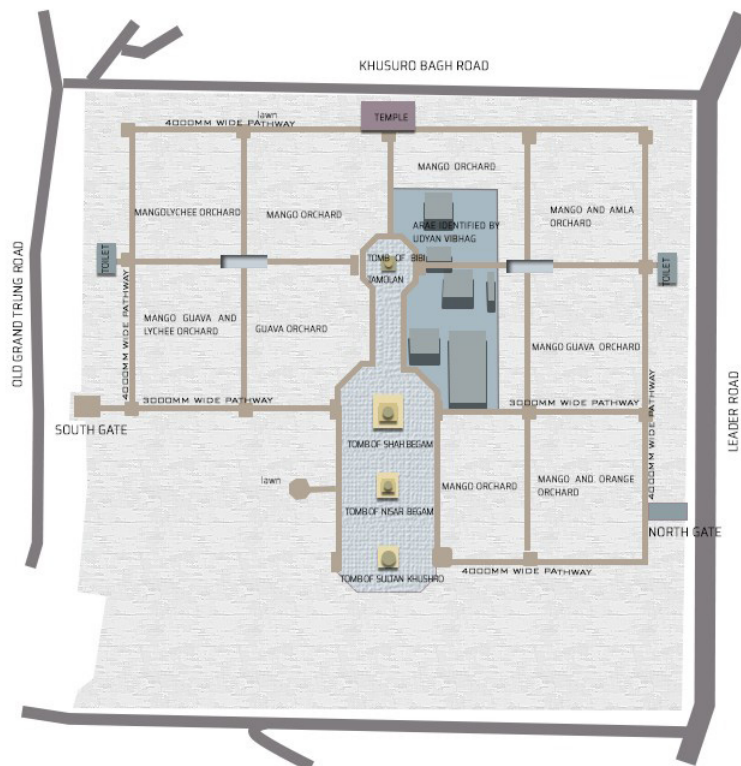


Figure 5. Zoning plan of the Khusro Bagh.

3.2 Built and Unbuilt Spaces of Khusro Bagh

Khusro Bagh's built spaces include the grand entrance gate, three intricately carved Mughal tombs, pathways, and minor administrative structures. The unbuilt spaces consist of lush gardens, open courtyards, and water channels, following

a charbagh layout. The balance between built and unbuilt areas enhances the site's historical, aesthetic, and environmental significance, creating a serene, enclosed Mughal-era landscape.

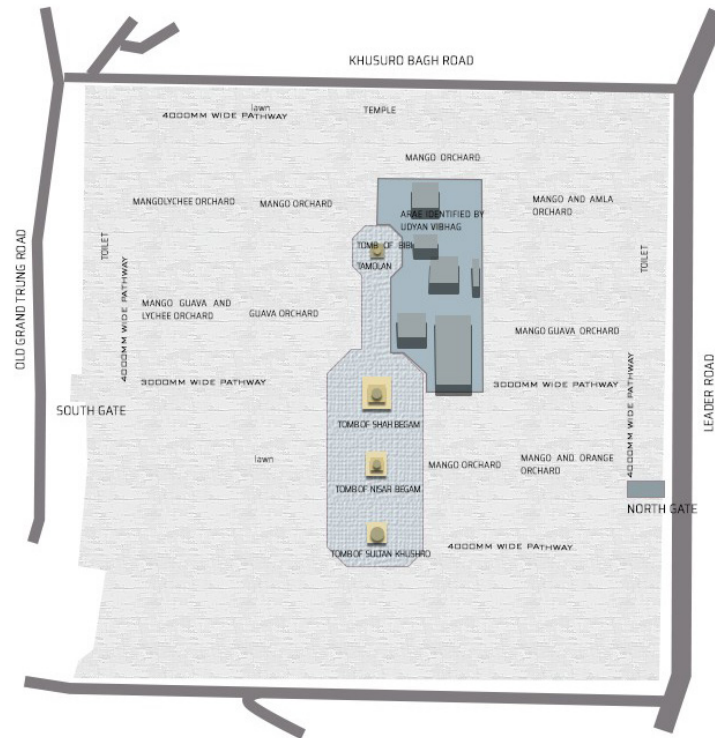


Figure 6. Built and unbuilt ratio of Khusro Bagh at Allahabad.

3.3 Site Planning and Landscape Design

Landscapes and gardens played a significant role in Mughal architecture. Using the Persian Charbagh design, the Mughals created stunning gardens that were divided into four smaller sections by walkways or flowing water (Ruggles, 2008). The trees are of Mango, guava, orchard, lychee, gooseberry, orange.



Figure 7. Site Plan and Landscaping of the Khusro Bagh at Allahabad.

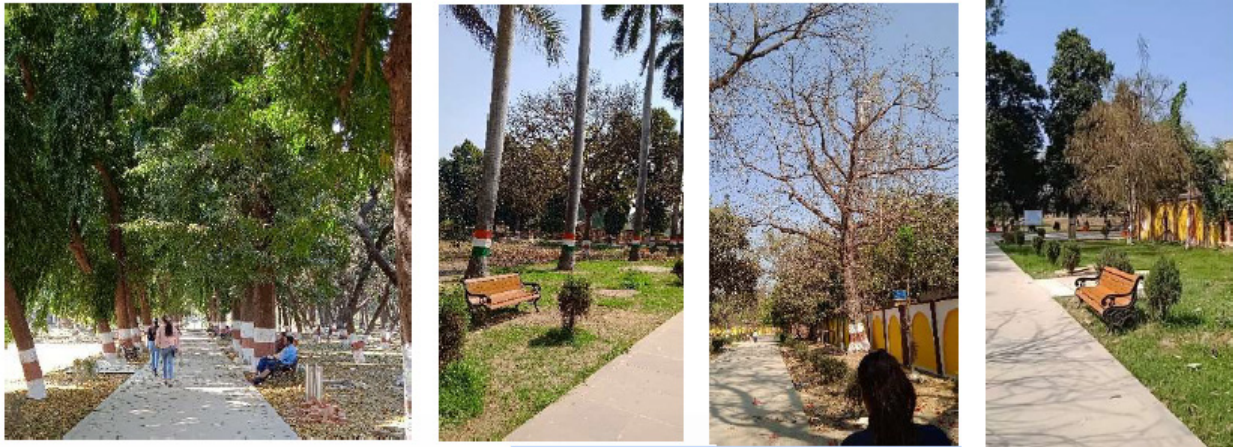


Figure 8. Trees and shrubs on the side of the pathway.

3.4 Plan, Section and Elevation of the Tomb

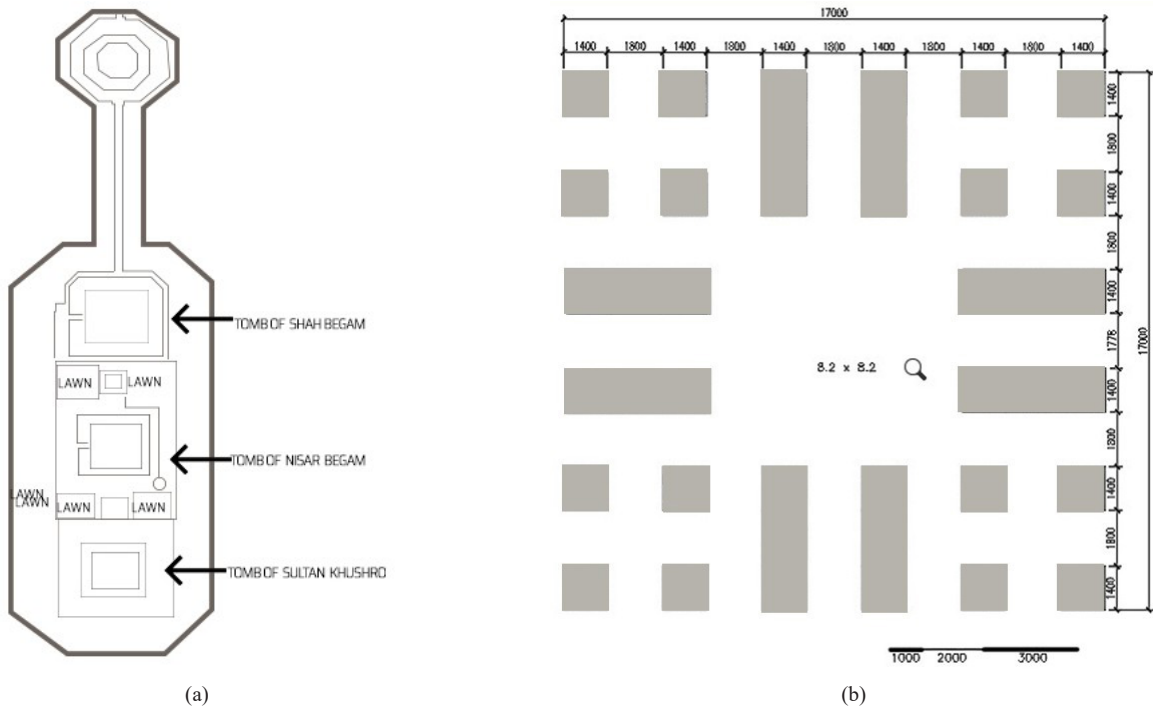


Figure 9. (a) Plan of the Khusro Bagh; (b) Ground Floor Plan of the Tomb.

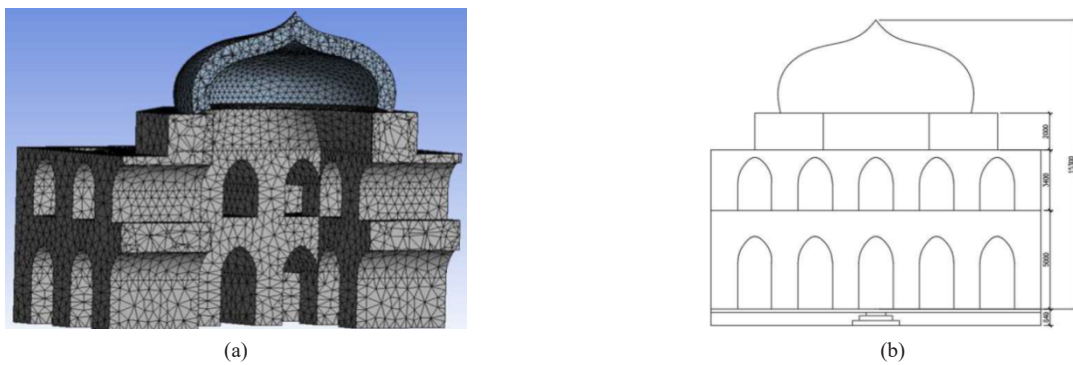


Figure 10. (a) Section of Khusro Bagh; (b) Front Elevation of Khusro Bagh.

4. Tombs of Khusro Bagh at Allahabad, India

4.1 Shah Begum's Tomb

Aqa Reza, Jahangir's senior court artist, is credited with designing the main entrance, the surrounding gardens, and the three-tiered tomb of Shah Begum, who died in 1604. The four sandstone mausoleums within this walled garden are a magnificent example of Mughal architecture. Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber was the father of Shah Begum, who was originally Manbhawati Bai. She is distressed by the conflict between her son Khusro and her husband Jahangir, she committed suicide in 1604 by swallowing opium (Milani, 2022). Her tomb was designed in 1606 by Aqa Reza and a three storied terrace plinth without a main mound, inviting comparisons with Fatehpur Sikri by experts. The tomb however has a large chhatri that surmounts the plinth and the arabesque inscriptions that adorn her tomb were carved out by Mir Abdullah Mushkin Qalam, Jahangir's greatest calligrapher. (Figure 11)



Figure 11. Shah Begum Tomb in Khusro Bagh, Allahabad.

4.2 Nisar Begum's Tomb

Nisar, Khusrau's sister, is buried next to the Begums. This is the most ornate of the three in terms of architecture. It is raised on a platform and has panels that show the scalloped arch design. There are rooms within the plinth with intricately painted ceilings featuring concentric circles of stars. The floral decorations on the central room's wall feature Persian cypresses, wine jars, flowers, and plants. (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Nisar Begum's Tomb in Khusro Bagh, Allahabad.

4.3 Khusro's Tomb

The final of the three tombs in Khusro Bagh is Khusro's tomb. After Khusro revolted against his father, Jahangir, in 1606, he was first imprisoned in the garden. After attempting to flee, Jahangir's orders caused him to become blind. Prince Khurram, Jahangir's third son and Khusro's brother, ordered his murder in 1622. He would go on to become Emperor Shah-jahan. The tombs fretwork windows and the tomb of his mare lie near his own. (Figure 13)



Figure 13. Khusro's Tomb in Khusro Bagh, Allahabad.

4.4 Bibi Tamolon Tomb

In the far west of the series, this fourth mausoleum of the complex, locally referred to as Bibi Tamolon's tomb, has no inscription and no indication that it is a tomb. It is occasionally linked to the Fatehpur Sikri begum in Istanbul, although according to another account, Khusro's sister constructed it for herself and is buried somewhere else (Figure 14).

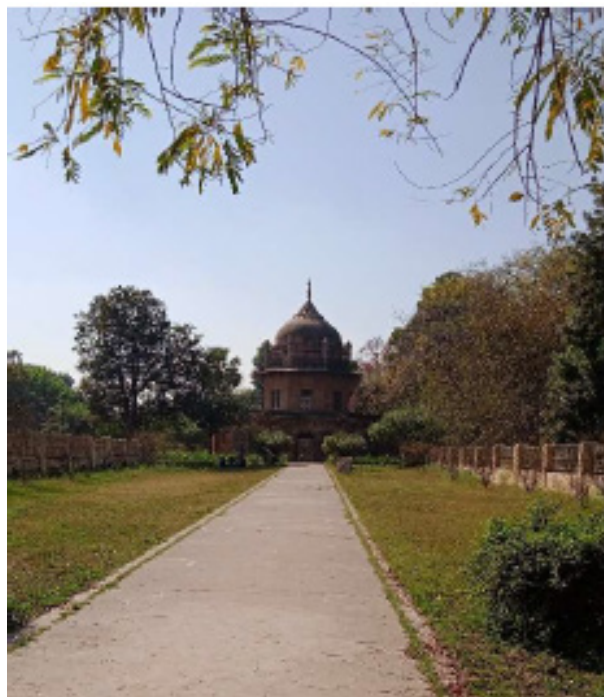


Figure 14. Bibi Tamolon's tomb in Khusro Bagh, Allahabad.

5. Architectural Features of the Historical Buildings

5.1 Water Spout

The beautifully carved spout has been used as the water drainage system in all the tombs (Figure 15)



Figure 15. Details of a carved spout for water drainage.

5.2 Corbels

The corbels form one of the most important Architectural elements in supporting the outer just about the walls. These are supported by the projected part of the roof. These corbels are well decorated like other Mughal period buildings (Figure 16).



Figure 16. The corbels above the arch.

5.3 Arch

A large iwan, a high arch, with pendentives and coloured stuccowork, punctuates the center of the facade and is set back slightly (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Pendentives and stucco work in the archway.

5.4 Chhatri or Kiosks

These are erected as a canopy over tombs and were used as ornaments. In particular, Chhatri can be found in Mughal architecture. A dome with Chajja beneath it is supported by a tiny tower with four main stone columns (Figure 18).



Figure 18. A Chhatri or kiosk on top of the tomb.

5.5 Jaali

During the day, sunlight streaming through the jaali would create a dynamic effect of light and shadow by casting patterned silhouettes on the interior walls and floors. The jaali's main non-aesthetic purpose was to reduce the inside room's temperature. Additionally, the jaali helped to protect the privacy of these structures' occupants (Figure 19).

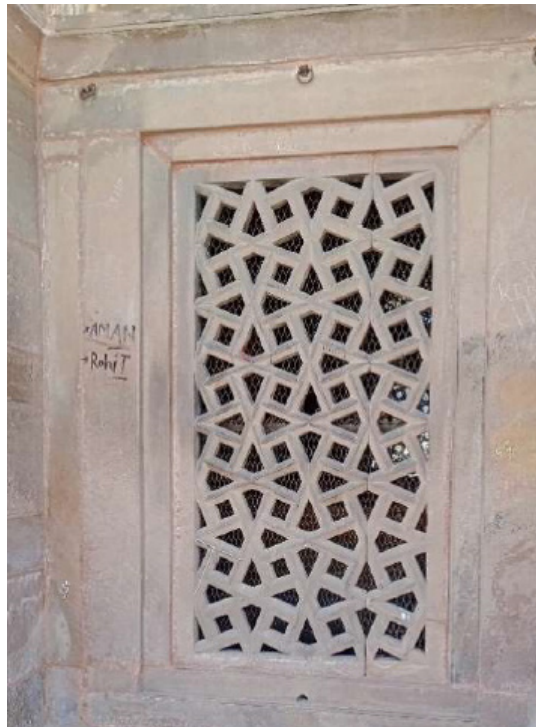


Figure 19. Intricate stone latticework or jaali in Khusro's Tomb.

5.6 Decorative Carved Doors

There are five arch-shaped holes on each face. The first one features a central door that enters into the central room, which is 8.2 m by 8.2 m in size. Wood has been utilised in the construction of all four apertures, two of which are sealed with masonry infill and the other two with perforated walls (Figure 20).



Figure 20. A carved wooden door.

5.7 Domes

Bubble dome or onion shaped dome is used for the tomb, which is a characteristic features of the Mughal architecture (Khan & Kamal, 2022). The dome of the tomb is made of sandstone, which gives a beautiful look. (Figure 21)



Figure 21. Onion shaped dome.

5.8 Water Supply System

Mughal gardens are well-known for their exquisite waterworks. The water supply in Khusro Bagh well is used. All the fountains are connected with the well and well are the only water source of Khusro Bagh (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Provision of a fountain in Khusro Bagh.

5.9 Decoration and Ornamentation

The essential character of Mughal architecture is the architectural ornamentation in their buildings. These ornaments are inspired by nature (Kamal & Cetin, 2011). Nisar begum tomb is the most decorated tomb in all of them. The central arch is decorated with concentric geometrical patterns and painted in primary colors (Figure 23). Stone carving is used for ornamentation.



Figure 23. Ornamentation over an arch of Nisar Begum's tomb.

5.10 Columns

Each of the individual pillars is 1.4 m by 1.4 m square, with a visible 1.8 m gap between them. These pillars rise to a height of 8.4 meters (second story) and form enormous hollow pillars that measure 4.6 meters by 4.6 meters. A robust weight transmission mechanism is constructed by the 16 corner pillars (group of 4 pillars). Additionally, there is a centre internal section with two 1.4 x 4.6 m rectangular pillars. There are eight of these pillars in all. The central room is 8.2 m by 8.2 m. As a result, there is a 1.8-meter central open space between the corner pillars (Figure 24).



Figure 24. Design details of a column.

5.11 Plinth

Raised plinth is one of the key features of the Mughal architecture. This varies in all the tomb. The plinth is decorated with ornamental work. These plinths have been constructed with sandstone. The lowest plinth of all of four of them is the Khusro's tomb. (Figure 25).



Figure 25. The raised plinth of Khusro's tomb.

5.12 Building Construction and Material

Building material for the construction of tombs is basically locally available materials. For the construction of dome sand have used and for the doors wood have been used and iron have been used for the fixing of door and stone in construction (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Sandstone as a basic building material for the construction of tombs.

6. Conclusions

The study of Khusro Bagh demonstrates its significance as a testament to the grandeur of Mughal architecture and its cultural implications. The integration of architectural ornamentation, including domes, chhatris, and Jaalis, alongside Persian Charbagh-inspired landscapes, encapsulates the splendour of the era. The historical narratives associated with Shah Begum, Nisar Begum, and Khusro Mirza imbue the site with deep cultural and emotional resonance, reflecting the socio-political dynamics of the Mughal empire. The site's architectural details, such as sandstone construction, ornamental plinths, and intricate calligraphy, serve as a reminder of the era's craftsmanship. The photographic documentation provides valuable insights into spatial arrangements, material usage, and the influence of Mughal aesthetics on Indian heritage. The study underscores the importance of preserving Khusro Bagh as a vital part of India's built heritage. Its current state necessitates conservation efforts to protect its structures, intricate decorations, and landscaped gardens from urban encroachment and environmental degradation. By appreciating and safeguarding such sites, we not only honour India's architectural legacy but also inspire future generations to learn from and cherish the rich cultural history they represent. Khusro Bagh's architectural legacy needs to be restored, and the Archaeological Survey of India ought to investigate the site's declining state (Kamal, 2024). In order to maintain this famous constructed form for future generations, the locals should also be taught the value of heritage and encouraged to keep this planted garden unique.

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