



With the partition of the subcontinent, even the remnants of the raised platform that once housed the Akbari Palace disappeared. In its place, a concrete tile floor was laid to accommodate the parking of vehicles for various department officers, erasing the traces of the palace that once stood in all its grandeur.



Discovering & Conserving the Hammam

Amidst heaps of rubble and forgotten debris, the Walled City Authority Lahore embarked on a daunting task of cleaning the area. To their surprise, a hidden staircase emerged, leading to a basement that unveiled the magnificent chambers of Akbar's era Hammam. The meticulous process of excavation, carried out in 2019, breathed new life into the enigmatic Akbari Hammam. Following most prominent works have been carried out at the Hammam and the ruined platforms / chambers associated with the extinct Akbari Palace:



Before



After

- Concrete work upon earth adjacent to the rear end of Eastern Suites associated with the Jahingiri Quadrangle
- Work upon the actual edifice of Hammam by effectuating lime soil upon the site in order to preserve its original condition
- Making the edges of the ruined chamber rooms of the Akbari Palace more prominent by smearing Lime Soil upon them subsequently grouting the same
- Filling of empty spots within the rear wall of Eastern Suites associated with the Jahangir Quadrangle through the use of Lime Soil
- Etching out a trajectory for drain , so as to parry off the accumulation of rain water in the premises of the site of both Akbari Palace and Akbari Hammam
- Erecting a boundary wall near the edifice to ward off the rain water from accumulating in the premises of the site of both Akbari Palace and Akbari Hammam



Before



After

Now, lovingly preserved by the Walled City of Lahore Authority, Akbari Hammam stands as a testament to the city's rich heritage. Its doors have been opened to the public, inviting them to explore the wonders of this hidden gem. Step inside and be transported to an era of opulence and indulgence, as the secrets of the past unfold before your eyes.

Akbari Hammam is a testament to the relentless efforts of preservation, ensuring that the legacy of Lahore's architectural marvels lives on for generations to come. Discover the magic that lies within these ancient walls and immerse yourself in the captivating stories of a bygone era.



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A Marvel Discovered!
Akbari Hammam
Inside **Lahore Fort**



Conserved by
WCLA
2019 - 2021

Nestled discreetly at the rear end of the Eastern Suites, within the enchanting Jahangir's quadrangle of the Lahore Fort, lies the Akbari Hammam, an erstwhile hygiene haven. Once an imposing frontispiece of the now extinct Akbari Palace or pavilion, it stood as a testament to the grandeur of bygone eras.



In close proximity, the Akbari Gate of Lahore Fort further reinforces the undeniable link between the Akbari Hammam and the long-forgotten Akbari Palace or Pavilion. Regrettably, only a handful of dilapidated platforms and remnants of this once-majestic structure remain, steadily fading away with the passage of time.

Yet, even as these remnants wither, the Akbari Hammam stands as a poignant reminder of the opulence and architectural marvels that once graced the Lahore Fort, beckoning us to uncover the tales of a bygone era.

Echoes of the Past The Akbari Palace & its Surroundings



Embedded within the annals of history, the Akbari Palace, a notable edifice erected by the Mughals, graced the Lahore Fort. Bearing the name of the illustrious Emperor Akbar the Great, this grand palace was intimately connected to his reign. Its strategic position lies in proximity to the Akbari Gate, an eastern entrance to the fort. The Akbari Gate served as the primary royal route for dignitaries traveling between Lahore and Delhi, leading directly towards the Delhi Gate.



In the present day, the Akbari Hammam finds itself nestled near the rear walls of the Eastern Suites, which are an integral part of the Jahangiri Quadrangle. A water reservoir, now bereft of its original purpose, also stands in close proximity to the magnificent Akbari Palace, silently witnessing the passage of time. These remnants of the past serve as a reminder of the rich heritage that once thrived within the Lahore Fort.

Architecture

Akbari Hammam formed part of this now extinct Akbari Palace or pavilion and was used perhaps by the Great Emperor and his retinue for wash up and inducing hygiene purposes. An excerpt taken from Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori's, *Badshanma*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, 148, has been reproduced here to enunciate the existence of such a hammam/ghusalkhaana:



"In the reign of his Majesty (Akbar), whose abode is heaven, between the Diwankhana (hall of audience) and the royal harem there was a room in which the Emperor used to bathe. In this place some courtiers received admittance, and the Prime Minister and the Paymaster also, being honoured by the Royal pleasure, presented to the Emperor their urgent requests. In the course of time the private apartment for the reason of having a bath room built near it became known by the name of Ghusalkhana"



Before



After

From an architectural perspective, the Akbari Hammam boasts a solid foundation and intriguing design elements. Access to the hammam is granted through an entrance located on the eastern front, leading to a passage that runs in a north-south direction. The most notable feature of the hammam is a cruciform room with semi-octagonal alcoves on its east and west sides, accompanied by a water tunnel to the north.

The foundations of three rooms are clearly discernible to the east and west of the cruciform room. Additional spaces adjacent to the water tunnel, which connect to the Jahangiri Quadrangle, were likely added during later periods, possibly during Sikh rule, to facilitate the provision of hot water. Although there is limited evidence of a hypocaust system—a subterranean heating system—it appears that bathing took place in the alcoves on the eastern and western edges of the hammam. Furthermore, the design of these alcoves suggests that multiple occupants could engage in bathing simultaneously.

In an article titled "Mughal Period Hammams in the City of Lahore" by Ali Muhammad Khan Lundkhwar, published in the *Pakistan Archaeology Archives* (1974-1986) and edited by Ihsan H. Nadeem, mention is made of a Ladies Hammam located near the Akbari Palace. Interestingly, it is claimed that this particular Ladies Hammam was situated in the basement, distinguishing it from the Shah Jahani Hammams near Paen Bagh. It is intriguing to note that the Ladies Hammam at the Akbari Palace comprised three bathing rooms, suggesting that multiple individuals could partake in bathing at the same time. This implies that the Basement Ladies Hammam was not reserved for the royal family or dignitaries, but rather served as a bathing facility for female attendants or maidservants of the royal household.

Hammam Through Turbulent Times Sikhs & British Rule

Within the walls of Lahore Fort, not a single structure was spared from the ravages of neglect, as the Sikhs and later the British ruled with little regard for the rich heritage they inherited. The decline of the Akbari Hammam and the Akbari Palace/Pavilion serves as a poignant example of this historical defacement. The once-majestic Akbari Palace now exists only as raised and ruined platforms, a mere shadow of its former glory.



During the Sikh rule, the breach in the fort was made through this very Pavilion, as they sought to assert their dominance over the citadel and overthrow the Turkish/Iranian rulers of the subcontinent. Maps from that period, like the one traced by Major A.H Cole in 1883, show the Akbari Palace and its associated structures, including the Hammam, in a somewhat adequate condition, capturing a snapshot of their past splendor.

When the British took control of Punjab in 1849, they recognized the need to fortify the Lahore Fort against potential Sikh uprisings. Military barracks and outposts were strategically erected near the Akbari Palace, extending all the way to Diwan-e-Aam. While these British sentry posts grew stronger and more imposing, the foundations of the Akbari Palace and its Hammam were left to crumble into ruin.