

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE SHRINE OF SULTAN BAHU

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper focuses on discussing the shrine of Hazrat Sultan Bahu as an important place of Sufi spirituality, cultural heritage, and architecture in Punjab. Drawing on the spiritual philosophy of Sultan Bahu, a devoted Sufi, who taught about spiritual love, self-realization, and remembering God, the paper touches upon how these doctrines find their reflection in the atmosphere at the shrine, in current practices of worship. It also gives a detailed discussion on the geographical location, space distribution and structure of the shrine such as the burial chamber, minarets, courtyard, and other related aspects.*

*The artistic and architectural elements of the shrine, including kashigari (tile work), calligraphy, marble carvings, lattice (jali) work, and mirror mosaics, are also explored in the paper: there was a heavy impact on Mughal and Persian influences mixed with local crafts. The symbolic aspects, such as chadar, wishing well, and ritual areas, are paid special attention and help to make the visitors experience some spiritual life*

*Through the combination of architectural analysis, cultural, and religious interpretations, this paper aims to provide an understanding of the shrine as not merely a physical building but a living communal of faith, tradition and artistic legacy. It stresses the importance of the shrine in maintaining the Sufi values and creating a relationship between the material and the spiritual world.*

**Keywords:** Sultan Bahu, Sufi Shrine, Sufism, Islamic Architecture, Kashigari, Mughal Architecture, Cultural Heritage, Spirituality, Calligraphy, Jali Work, Multani Tiles, Devotional Practices, Punjab, Sacred Spaces

### INTRODUCTION:

Sultan Bahu shrine is one of the important landmarks of Sufi spirituality and cultural heritage in Punjab. It bears a deep message of the spiritual teachings of Sultan Bahu whose teachings on divine love, self-purification, and remembrance of God remain relevant to the generations. The shrine is not only a center of worship but also the symbol of the rich tradition of Sufism in the area which welcomes pilgrims as well as scholars.

It is one of the most important strongholds of Sufi spirituality and cultural heritage in Punjab. It is a shadow of rich teachings of Sultan Bahu who took focus in divine love, self purification and remembering God, and remains significant even in the generations to come. The shrine is also a means of worship, but also a symbol of a rich Sufism culture in the area and has attracted both pilgrims and scholars to the area.



**Picture 01: Basti Samundari: Sultan Bahu's shrine can be seen in distant**

Shrine of Sultan Bahu is situated in a populated region. Geographically, it is near Shorekot, the city where he was born. The location coordinates of the shrine from longitude and latitude are 30.87582153081288, 71.84870883357544 respectively. Additionally, the Jhelum and Chenab

Rivers are not far away. Its precise position is in the district of Tehsil Shorekot, next to Garh Maharaja. Since Garh Maharaja is only two miles away, both his followers and any tourists or visitors can easily get there.



**Picture 02: Front Facade of Sultan Bahu`s Shrine**

A montage of artworks, many in traditional form, may be seen on the shrine's walls. Kashigari is a type of painting from Pakistan that shows ceramic

items. This depicts leaves, branches, and other tree parts, and the wide range of colors reflects the Persian influence that penetrates the works. There

is conjecture that this art originated in Kashghar, China, because it was greatly influenced by the Chinese Mongols.

Glazed tiles can be seen on the shrine's exterior. Multani tiles, associated with early Islamic architecture, have been widely used in the region's

mosques and shrines. The Talpur tombs in Sindh, the Nawaban mosque, and other well-known structures have also used these tiles. As a component of the shrines of Abdul Latif, Hazrat Haqqani, and Uch Sharif, it has also frequently been connected to shrines.



Picture 3: Inner view of the Burial Chamber of Sultan Bahu's shrine

The dargah building is square in shape, measuring 33 x 33 feet externally and 27 x 27 feet internally. Apart from the grave of Hazrat Sultan Bahu, there are also the graves of his children and caliphs

inside the dargah. There are total 19 graves (including Sultan Bahu grave) in the inner burial chamber. As one enters in burial chamber from eastern side, there are 3 graves on the right side.



Picture 4: Three Graves to the right eastern right side of burial chamber

The names of buried personalities are as follows:

- (1). 10<sup>th</sup> Sajjada Nasheen Sultan Ghulam Jeelani
- (2). 9<sup>th</sup> Sajjada Nasheen Muhammad Habib Sultan
- (3). 7<sup>th</sup> Sajjada Nasheen Sultan Noor Ahmad



**Picture 5: Two graves near the western side gate**

The names on the two graves to the western side near the exit door are as follows:

- (1). 8<sup>th</sup> Sajjada Nasheen Muhammad Ameer Sultan
- (2). Manzur Sultan son of Hafiz Faiz Sultan

As we enter from eastern door, with the shrine of Sultan Bahu grave there are six graves. The names are as following

- (1). Sheikh Fateh Muhammad
- (2). Sheikh Ghulam Bahu
- (3). Sheikh Shareef Muhammad
- (4). Sheikh Saleh Muhammad
- (5). Sheikh Noor Muhammad
- (6). Sheikh Noor Muhammad son of Sheikh Muhammad Hussain



**Picture 6: Six graves on the other side with the west exit door**

The names of six graves personalities are as follows:

- (1). Sheikh Hafiz Muhammad
- (2). Sheikh Mulla Muhammad

- (3). Sheikh Muhammad Hussain
- (4). Sheikh Sultan Muhammad
- (5). Sheikh Ishaq Muhammad
- (6). Sheikh Kher Muhammad



**Picture 7: Outer facade of burial chamber**

The entrance door of the dargah is 4 feet wide and is made of walnut wood with carved leaves and twigs of various flowers inside the wood and the door frame is made of marble. It is six and a half feet in height and its edges are decorated with carved vines scrolls and on the outer side of both doors is a barrel bolt lock with an antique style brass lock. Above the main entrance of the dargah is a pointed arch in the Mughal style with various floral designs supported by dark blue, sky blue, white and turquoise colored Sindhi Kashi tiles

within and decorated with around the triangular top. Above the spandrel are sections of various shapes such as square, rectangular, vertical and horizontal sections, which are decorated with calligraphy, floral patterns and geometrical designs all these designs are made of glazed tiles of blue, white, gold and turquoise colors. In this part, the verses of the Holy Quran, the Persian poems of Hazrat Sultan Bahu and other Sufis are written in the form of calligraphy, one of the most important and special part of Islamic architecture.



**Picture 8: Lattice work on the south of the main chamber**

There is no door on the south wall of the dargah, instead a stone latticework is installed above the latticework is a Mughal style pointed arch, between the latticework and the arch is a relief

decorated with traditional Indus tiles. Domes and small minarets are built, which are built with great artistry and skill in the Mughal style of art.



Picture 9: Blue tile work and lattice work on the parapets and frieze

Tiles carved into the shape of a lotus flower leaf adorn the bottom portion of the Shrine ceiling curtain wall, while a latticework with hexagonal patterns forms an arch above it, and the mesh is put in this arc. The outside is also where the best work is done. Sultan Bahu's poetry has been penned in his honor by Multani artists (whose influence can be seen in the paintings), allowing

supplicants to see and feel. This is followed by small dome shaped minarets decorated with Sindh Kashi tiles usually there is not much carving on the curtain wall, but here the curtain wall is so intricately designed. A masterpiece has been created with the help of Karkar Sindhi tiles which can only be found in Sufi shrines as they are ideal places where different cultures come together.



Picture 10: Outer view of the main gate to the complex

The shrine's straightforward entryway is adorned with white marble passages from the Quran. There is some cheap work visible on the sidewalls, much like in other areas of the mosques. The dargah courtyard's entrance is separated by two gates, each with pillars in the center. Each gate has an oval arch and a straight beam, with a pointed arch built over it. The names of Allah, Muhammad (PBUH),

Hazrat Sultan Bahu, and his words in beautiful calligraphic style are written in the center sections between the arches, and both doors.

The minarets are also constructed with crowns decorated with ceramic tiles which enhance the aesthetic beauty of the entire gate and reflect Mughal architecture.



Picture 11: Main entrance

It is impossible to help feeling a certain reverence on approaching the main entrance of the shrine of Sultan Bahu. The name of Sultan Bahu appears above the door with grace, and verses of the Holy Quran are well selected to glorify the superiority of Allah, and to invite the faithful to faith, purity and devotion. The simplicity of the ornamentation is addressed to the soul more than words may be, and in keeping with the message of Sultan Bahu himself, that the true beauty is in the clearness of

the heart and not the exterior. Passing this threshold is not so much as entering a building, as it is stepping softly into a sacred area, in which the noise of the world has died away, and just the yearning to the Divine is left. The entrance is not a monument to the greatness, but a quiet custodian to the spiritual heritage Sultan Bahu left. All the stones and all the words cut into its surface appear to echo a call to humility, devotion and memory of the Divine.



Picture 12: Carved marble stone at the entrance door

The burial room also has etched marble footstones in its entrance. As time goes by, the colors the hues used to move in, have faded away. The portals of the shrine are decorated with marble carved stones, beautifully designed to increase the feeling of holy and sacredness. These sculptures composed of marble are fine-detailed and carry the artistic heritage of the era both in their simplicity and beauty. The smooth face of stone, covered

with spiritual signs and geometrical characteristics, invites the guest to stop and ponder about the encounter of divine beauty and human origin and workmanship. The very form of the architecture is as though the epitome of the simplicity and sobriety taught by the teachings of Sultan Bahu, understated magnificence of the marble is a reminder that spiritual richness does not rest in the extravagances, but rather in quiet wisdom.



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**Picture 13: Title of the Kashigar painted and the pattern designs on the main arch.**

The names of the Kashigar artists and secrets are also engraved on the arch. Muhammad Hussain

Punjabi is termed as a Mystery and Faqir Abdul Razzaq as a Kashigar.



**Picture 14: close up of the arch**



**Picture 15: Verenda floor**

The courtyard, which serves as the heart of the complex, features a cheap design adorned with floral motifs in gold and white.



**Picture 16: Minarets of the burial chamber**

A minaret has been installed on the four corners of the roof of the dargah. The structure of the minarets of this building is very unique with the color of Mughal architecture and the exterior of the minar is decorated with Sindhi tiles. Each minaret has three parts: base, pillars and canopy (kiosk). The base of the minaret starts from the roof of the mosque, followed by a square shaped pillar built of fine bricks and to beautify it the outer surface is decorated with colored Kashi tiles.

The part above it is called Chhetri or Kiosk which has a balcony and is surrounded by netting. On top of the same canopy, a dome has been built according to the height of the minar and its volume, this dome has also been molded with beautiful colored tiles, if we are built on the four corners of the roof of the Dargah of Hazrat Sultan Bahu. If we talk about the four minarets, we get the connection with the Mughal architecture. Whether those buildings are in present day

Pakistan or in India, each minaret on the four corners of the tomb reflects the Mughal architecture, like the tomb of Mughal emperor

Jahangir, and four minarets have also been built on the tombs of Ishmael-ud-Daula in India.



**Plate 17: Minarets of the Mosque**

At the base of the minarets of the mosque are octagonal pillars similar to the minarets of the dargah - the pillars of the minarets are decorated with white, sky blue and dark blue glazed tiles, with floral motifs. Just above the pillar is a kiosk with a latticed balcony railing, and the interior of the balcony is decorated with semi-circular arches decorated with glazed tiles, just above the balcony is a white glazed cupola in the Mughal style, which is decorated with tiles.

It is very important that no central dome has been built in the building of this monastery, if we see the dargah of Hazrat Sultan Bahu's caliphs or most of the elders from his line, instead of a dome, the roof is completely straight except for your dargah. The dargah of Pir Bahadur Ali Shah and then the dargah of Sultan Muhammad Abdul Aziz were also built without a dome.



**Plate 18: Front facade (darbar entrance)**

The entrance to the dargah courtyard is divided into two gates, the middle of which is decorated with pillars. Both gates have a straight beam and an oval arch on top of which a pointed mihrab has

been constructed in the central sections between the mihrabs are the names of Allah, the name of Muhammad (pbuh), the biography of Hazrat

Sultan Bahu, and his written words in beautiful calligraphic style.

Three minarets on both the gates are elegantly constructed in traditional style, between the

minarets there are crowns decorated with ceramic tiles which enhance the aesthetic beauty of the entire gate and reflect the Mughal architecture



**Picture 19: Green and Yellow checked pattern on Façade**

We observe additional indications of the elaborate decorations, featuring glazed yellow and green tiles arranged in a pattern that resembles a chessboard. The checked design, probably inspired by classic motifs has its aesthetic and symbolic value as it may depict the balance between the spiritual harmony and the earthly life. The vibrant green

and yellow colorings conjure up an effect of energy and rebirth to harmonize with the calm whiteness of the marble sculptures. These elements working together form an animated and inviting passageway; a unity of the material and the spiritual world as one passes through the gateway of the sacred space.



**Picture 20: Central Arch**

The names of great Plateures in Islamic history are inscribed in the center archway of the shrine of Sultan Bahu, indicating the strong spiritual ties which unite Sultan Bahu with the larger Islamic tradition. On one side of the arch, the names

Imam Aliand Imam Baqar etc are written that represent the spiritual authority, and knowledge that has been handed over to the generations of Imams. On the opposite side, the names of Imam Taqi and Imam Mahdi etc serve as a reminder of

the ongoing spiritual guidance and the awaited return of the Mahdi, a key Plateure in Shia Islam.



Picture 21: Floral patterned tile work on the shrine of Sultan Bahu



Picture 22: Geometric latticework and the colorful tile decoeration



Plate 23: Arch and Path-way between Mosque and Burial Chamber

The outer section of the main arch showcases kashigari. The triangular areas, or spandrels, that remain are adorned with floral designs accompanied by inscribed Quranic verses as well. The sides feature the previously mentioned glazed

tiles in both earthy terracotta and olive green hues. Due to deterioration and insufficient upkeep by the central authorities, some tiles have been substituted with English tiles that seem incongruous.



Plate 24: Arched gate at the entrance to the surrounding houses near the shrine

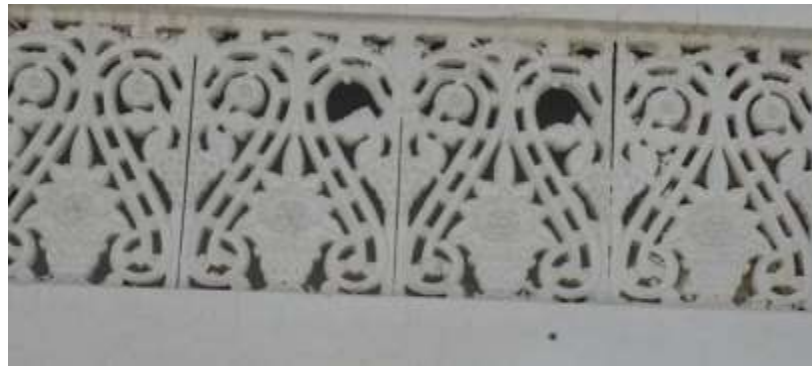


Plate 25: Tile work (Photo by researcher)

The outer facade is covered in Italian tiles, representing the diversity of building material used in the shrine's construction.



Plate 26: Decorative Jali: perforated stone slabs



Picture 27: Jali design two

The architecture features various motifs within a lattice framework that contributes to the shrine's aesthetic appeal. An exception to this is the jali work, which, while not particularly intricate or refined, showcases two distinct design patterns.

One pattern includes a dome, a minaret, and a bird, while the other features a motif of grapes accompanied by a tulip flower. Despite the differences in design, both patterns are crafted from the same material: concrete or cemented jali.



Picture 28: Marble Jali Window facing the grave

The marble window jali facing the grave at the shrine of Sultan Bahu is an important architectural element. These jalis are normally detailed carved lattices which allow the passage of light and air, however permitting privacy and

presenting a feeling of religious solace. This feature can also be interpreted as a relationship between the physical and the spiritual world in the context of shrine .



Picture 29: Floral Carvings on Spandrel

The ornamental life of the shrine of Sultan Bahu is further enhanced by the floral patterns of the spandrel of the shrine. The triangular spaces between the arches that are in between the arches are called spandrels and can be used as ornamental

centers in Islamic architecture. Floral designs, especially Islamic art, tend to be symbolic in meaning (associated with paradise, growth and nature).



Picture 30: Engravings on the Inner Cornice

Another peculiarity of the architectural style is the engraving on the inner cornice of the shrine of Sultan Bahu. Cornices is a type of ornament that is found at the top of a wall or arch, where they support walls and offer aesthetics. The method of inscriptions on the cornice is usually of a complex

design or inscription which can have a symbolic or religious meaning.

Islamic architecture has a strong tendency to have geometric patterns in cornices, arabesques or even calligraphic features and there may well be a verse or religious saying engraved on it.



Picture 31: Main entrance

The minarets of the main entrance of the shrine of Sultan Bahu are not complicated in any way as it can be traced to the larger architectural ethos of humility and spiritual orientation. The simplicity of these minarets does not contribute to visual lavishness like some of the shrines or mosques which feature minarets that are so big and so intricately constructed that they remind us not of the spiritual character of the shrine, but of the

visual spectacle. This part of the architecture of the minarets possibly reflects the teachings of Sultan Bahu, who dismissed the significance of spiritual purity, humility, and being free of the material extravagance. The simplicity makes sure that the architectural elements of the shrine do not take the focal point: the tomb and the spiritual experience attached with it.



Picture 32: Another small burial chamber of Peer Laal Shah



Picture 33: Inner view of burial chamber



Picture 34: Chadar Above Sultan Bahu's Shrine

Hanging over the grave of Sultan Bahu, properly ornamented is a chadar which contributes to the sanctity and beauty of the shrine. This chadar is not draped over the grave, but instead is hung over the grave in a canopy-like fashion to represent honor and protection of the soul.

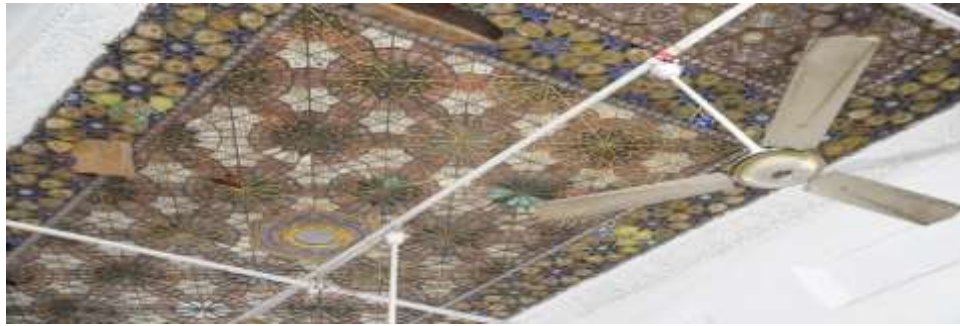
Chadar can be crafted of fine and embroidered coverings, usually velvet or silk, and beautifully decorated with elaborate patterns. It is often stitched with flower patterns, verses of Quran or

Sufi poems, in vivid threadwork, usually in the colors of gold, silver, green and red. Hanging chadar also can be adorned with tassels, beads, and minor objects, which make it look festive and sacred.

The chadar over the grave is decorated which has various symbolic meanings. It represents a covering over the saint with great piety and reverence. It represents the high level of spirituality of Sultan Bahu and the blessings used

to pass down through his presence. Such coverings in Sufi tradition signify the sanctity of the location,

and the divine favour of the resting-place of a popular saint.



**Plate 35: Mirror mosaic on the ceiling of the mosque**

A unique aspect of artistic beauty and spirituality is the mirror mosaic on the ceiling of Shrine of Sultan Bahu mosque. This elaborate decorative art, commonly referred to locally as sheesha kari, is done by placing small, incised pieces of mirror into plaster and making dazzling designs. As light hits the surface, the mirrors are reflected in several

ways, its reflection giving the effect of shimmer that contributes to the divine and heavenly ambiance of the mosque.. This technique has roots in Persian and Mughal architectural traditions and has been widely used in religious and royal structures across South Asia.



**Picture 36: A close up of the mirror work on the ceiling of the Shrine of Sultan Bahu Shrine**



**Picture 37: A close up view of inner burial chamber of Sultan Bahu Shrine**

The tomb of Sultan Bahu grave is about 5 feet above the floor, on which are spread embroidered sheets of different colors and around the grave is a wall-like structure made of shesham wood (locally called 'Pling') is kept, which is decorated with traditional Multan craftsmanship, as this platform is changed from time to time, earlier this platform was made and sent from different parts of the country, but now is made and installed by the craftsmen of Rahim Yar Khan

The sides of the bed are decorated with thick wood carvings and are decorated with floral patterns in

red, black, yellow and green which reflect the regional art, the bed is raised in the middle towards the head of the dargah. has been placed, on which a crown made of talakadhai has been placed. Quranic verses, Kalma Tayyaba, Ismullah Zaat and some lines of Persian words of Hazrat Sultan Bahu have been written on the platform. To strengthen and make the bed last, stainless steel pipes were provided to join the wooden legs between the bed. Other times that building is composed of silver, gold, silver wood.



**Picture 38: Courtyard containing a covered pond and a trees**

The tranquility of the courtyard is a place where one can reflect on the environment and contemplate the spirituality behind the shrine and

the physical environment. The silence and shadowed area surrounding the pond may be a spot to think, meditate and revive ones spirituality,

supporting the purpose of the shrine to be a plunging and reflecting centre.



Picture 39: Inner view of the mosque



Picture 40: The ceiling of the mosque at the Shrine of Sultan Bahu



**Picture 41: Wishing well or Talab**

In the shrine is a well-popular pond, that is scarcely a foot and a half deep. This water is considered holy by many, who believe dropping money into the water into it can make their desires come true. Parents might even decide to drop in a doll or

other such thing into the hands of their child. The pond is believed to be miraculous because there have been cases when the banknotes have been totally found weeks later and still seeming to be undamaged, even after being dipped in the pond.



**Picture 42: Wishing Chain**

Another important and relevant element associated with the spiritual life of Sufi saint is the

wishing chain at Sultan Bahu shrine. It is commonly perceived as a means of devotees to

obtain some blessings, gratify desires or pour out their heart which embodies their prayers. The

chain has become a tangible and intangible meaning, deep in Sufi mysticism practices.



Picture 43: *Wazu Khana*

This place of ablution was in the form of a pond which was built inspired by the Mughal style of architecture and there was no shade on it. A palace was erected like a building of irregular arches, pointed in the form of a baradari and the round

pillars were constructed all around the building, adorned with glasswork. Later on verandas were built around the baradari and water pipes were installed.



Picture 44: Other graves at the Shrine



Picture 45: Name of the Current Shrine Superior made of white marble plate of Muneeb Sultan.



Picture 46: Restoration and renovation work at the shrine

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