

# ***Hidden Treasure of Zeb-un-Nissa in Nawan Kot, Lahore***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Nawan Kot has an ironic tale due to its monument's architecture, which belongs to the Mughal era. This paper presents the eastern side of the garden and its fragments, including a tomb, two fluted Burj, and Chauburji of an unspecified person in Nawan Kot on the Multan Road in Lahore. The tale is usually narrated by Princess Zeb-un-Nissa. Moreover, it is believed that she formed the garden in 1669 A.D. The garden was covered with a wall, and a tower was built on each corner of the garden. The Chauburji was constructed for the royal entrance, and a picturesque tomb is located in the core of the pleasing garden.*

## **Introduction**

Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, is famous for its lush green gardens and historical architecture. It was a significant city during the Mughal period, especially during the reign of Akbar, the third Mughal ruler who made it his capital. Lahore is also known as the 'City of Gardens' in Asia. The Mughals were renowned for their historical constructions, including forts and palaces built of burnt bricks.

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Most of us are familiar with famous places in Lahore, such as the Lahore Fort, Badshahi Mosque, Shalimar Garden, and many others. However, we often fail to appreciate some lesser-known places that were also constructed during the Mughal era. 'Zeb-un-Nissa Garden' is one of these hidden treasures, which includes a tomb, two unseen *Burj*<sup>1</sup>, and a *Chauburji*<sup>2</sup>. It is located in *Nawan Kot*.<sup>3</sup>



Fig 1: Screen shot of Google map, Showing Zaib-un-Nisa Tomb (Google map n.d.)<sup>4</sup>

Zeb-un-Nissa was a Mughal princess, the eldest child of the sixth Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and Dilrus Banu Begum. She was remarkably intelligent and talented, and was a *Hafiz*,<sup>5</sup> proficient in Arabic and Persian. She also learned astronomy and mathematics. The princess was a poetess,

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- 1 Tower.
  - 2 Four Towers.
  - 3 Name of a village on Multan Road near Samanabad, Punjab, Pakistan. That was prominent in the 16th-17th Century.
  - 4 "Zaib-un-Nisa Tomb," Google map accessed Jan 25, 2023, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Zaibunnisa+Tomb/@31.5706922,74.3316299,13z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x3919031cc37db013:0x9d1b24062db4af07!8m2!3d31.5422157!4d74.2942423!16s%2Fg%2F11fct12693?entry=tu>
  - 5 A Muslim who memorized the Quran.

and her pen-name was *Makhfi*.<sup>6</sup> Many years after her death, Nissa's writings were collected under the name of *Diwan-e-Makhfi*.<sup>7</sup> She had her own gardens, including the Garden of Thirty Thousand Trees in Delhi, and another in Lahore. Nissa admired Lahore as a residence and laid out a garden there. The garden was called Mian Bai's Garden and can still be traced through the ancient remains of the Mughal era. Most of us are familiar with its tomb, but we often fail to acknowledge the concealed parts of the garden. There are unnoticed *Burj* and *Chauburji* built around the garden. The garden has now become narrow streets and choked buildings of Samnabad. It is essential to recognize the history of the place and its hidden parts, which were unknown to the world, as well as the restoration work carried out by the Archaeology Department of Punjab and the Tourism Department of the Government of Punjab.

### **Nawan Kot Village**

*Nawan Kot* was a renowned village during the Mughal and Sikh periods. The historical monuments and small houses have transformed the village into the current town with so much hustle and bustle. When traveling from Multan Road, *Nawan kot* to Samanabad, passing by *Chauburji*, one arrives at Moarr Samanabad Chowk. From here, one road leads to Gulshan-e-Ravi, and another leads to *Gul Zaib* Colony, Samanabad. This location used to be known as *Jan'nak Nagar*. The following bus stop is Super Stop, formerly known as *Chahpparr* Stop. A short distance before this stop is the tomb believed to belong to Zaib-un-Nissa Begum.<sup>8</sup> The tomb is set back from the main Multan Road, at Super Stop, behind an iron gate and a large tree providing protection to the tomb. The unnoticed *Burj* and *Chauburji* of Zeb-un-Nissa's garden are located at the backside of Zeb-un-Nissa's Tomb.

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6 Pen name meaning 'the hidden one'.

7 Name of a book meaning 'the book of the hidden one'.

8 Mudassar Bashir and Tabassum Sherwani Khan, "Zaib un nisa Begum: the enigma," *Daily Times, Part II*, July 20, 2019, accessed Jan 28, 2023.



Fig 2: Screen shot of Google map, Showing Nawan Kot Monument Gateway

### Zeb-un-Nissa's Legacy

The princess was born in 1639 A.D. She was fine-looking at the time of her birth, and because of her exquisite beauty, she was named Zeb-un-Nissa, meaning 'most beautiful of all women'. Her lineage traced back to royalty, with direct descent from Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.<sup>9</sup> Her Emperor descendants were not only famous for their statesmanship, but they also inspired the art and culture of the subcontinent. The princess was the eldest daughter of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, and her mother was Dilrus Banu Begum, the daughter of Shah Nawaz Khan. She belonged to the Sunni sect of Islam and was well adept in religious opinions.

In her childhood, Nissa revealed great intellect and was tutored from an early age. At the age of seven, she was a

<sup>9</sup> Magan Lal and Jessie Duncan Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W, 1913), 7.

*Hafiz*. Her recitation of the verses of the Quran moved listeners to tears. She was given an educator; a lady called Miyabai, and learned Arabic in four years. Nissa gained fame for her Sufi devotion and zealous interest in poetry. She was proficient in Arabic and Persian. Jessie Duncan Westbrook mentioned an incident in his book *The Diwan of Zeb-Un-Nissa*:

From a young age, she composed poems in Arabic. However, upon showing her work to an Arabian scholar, he commented that the poems were wise and clever, but the language used was that of India, a remarkable feat for a non-native speaker of Arabic. This sparked her drive for excellence, and she turned to writing in Persian, her native tongue. She received guidance and inspiration from her tutor, Shah Rustum Ghazi, a learned scholar who nurtured her literary interests.<sup>10</sup>

She initially wrote in secret, as she adored excessive freedom in the fort. The Princess was a favorite of her uncle Dara Shikoh, who himself was an intellectual and enlightened individual. She modestly attributed her verses to him when she first began to write. She also learned astronomy and mathematics. Moreover, the Princess was proficient in the use of weapons and participated in wars on numerous occasions.<sup>11</sup> She also understood the judicial system and occasionally arrived in the court with her veil upon her face to assist her father's council's matters. The idea of a face concealed until the arrival of the divine beloved intrigued her. Perhaps the charm of life behind intricate lattice work was what drew her, and this is evident in her pen name, *Makhfi*, which translates to 'the hidden one'. Once Nasir Ali recited this verse: "O envy of the moon, lift up thy veil and let me behold the marvel of thy beauty," to which she replied:

I will not raise my veil,  
For if I did, who knows what may occur?  
The nightingale may forget the rose,

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10 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 9.

11 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa* 14.

And the Hindu devotee,  
 Admiring Lakshmi's grace,  
 May turn away from her,  
 To gaze upon my face;  
 My beauty may conquer all.  
 Just as the fragrance within a flower  
 Remains hidden, like in a bower,  
 And cannot be seen,  
 So too, the world cannot see me.  
 Only through the verses I have written  
 Can I be perceived.  
 I will not lift the veil.<sup>12</sup>

Apparently, she was portrayed as tall and slim with a rounded face, fair complexion, and two mole spots on her left cheek. Her eyes and immoderate hair were black, and she had thin lips and small teeth. She did not follow any fashion trends and did not use any cosmetics to beautify herself. In terms of dressing, she was simple and moderate. In later life, she always wore white, and her only ornament was a string of pearls around her neck. There is a beautiful portrait of a lady in the Lahore Museum that corresponds to this portrayal. She has achieved the eternal legacy she may have wished for. In one of her poems, she states, "I am the daughter of a King, but I have chosen the path of renunciation, and this is my pride, for my name Zeb-uh-Nissa, meaning 'glory of womankind', symbolizes my glory."<sup>13</sup>

In 1662, Aurangzeb became ill, and his doctors advised him to change his surroundings. He then shifted his household and court to Lahore. The Princess liked Lahore and created a garden here. In the garden, she walked, wrote poetry, and played with her friends. During Aurangzeb's reign, "Lahore saw a continuation of garden development. On the left bank

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12 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 11-12.

13 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 23.

of the Ravi River, near the road to Multan, a garden was constructed by a woman named Zebinda Begum, who was likely a daughter of Aurangzeb. The grandeur of this walled garden can still be seen from its impressive remaining gateway, which is more monumental in size compared to any other garden in Lahore.”<sup>14</sup>

When they moved to Lahore, Akil Khan (son of the Wazir) was the governor of the city. He was known for his generosity and courage, and was also a poet who was familiar with the Princess’s verses. Their shared love of poetry became the reason for their relationship. Inspired by Nissa’s poetry, Khan was always anxious to see her. He started to ride around her palace; hoping to catch a glimpse of her. One lucky day, while Khan was riding around the palace in Lahore, he caught sight of the gorgeous princess on the palace rooftop. He said, “A sight in red emerges on the palace rooftop,” and she completed the rhyme, “Neither prayers, coercion, nor wealth can entice her.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, their love story began through the words of poetry.

Khan wanted to marry Zeb-un-Nissa, but the King of the time refused. The emperor sent a disheartening note to Khan, warning him that “being the lover of a king’s daughter is no easy feat. Aurangzeb is aware of your actions, and as soon as you arrive in Delhi, you will face the consequences of your love affair. Khan believed the Emperor sought revenge. Thus, poor Zeb-un-Nissa was left in peril when her lover showed cowardice, declining the marriage and sending a resignation letter to the king.”<sup>16</sup> But Khan came secretly to Delhi to meet her. According to historians, Aurangzeb unexpectedly came to the garden where they were meeting. Khan hid himself in a large cooking vessel, and when the emperor inquired about its contents, he was told it was just

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14 Nadeem Ullah, Wang Jiny, and Zhao Jing, “Mughal Gardens and Assessment of Mughal Emperors’s Inclination Towards Lahore, Pakistan,” *North American Academic Research* 1, no. 4 (2018): 81.

15 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 15.

16 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 16.

water that needed to be heated. The emperor commanded that it be placed on the fire, and it was done as instructed.<sup>17</sup>

At that moment, the nervous Princess thought more about her reputation than her lover. Thus, Khan was boiled in front of his beloved Princess. Afterwards, Aurangzeb imprisoned the Princess in her own garden in Delhi. After being released, she isolated herself and wrote poetry. The verses she wrote in this phase were disheartened, depressed, and faithless. She passed away after seven days of illness in 1689 and was laid to rest in her garden in Nawakot near Lahore, as per her prior wishes that she had left before her demise.<sup>18</sup>

No one is sure about the location of the Princess's grave. According to the esteemed historian Lucy Peck in her book, *Lahore – The Architectural Heritage*, Mian Bai, the woman who was entrusted with *Chauburji*, was also tasked with caring for the garden at *Nawan kot* and is believed to have been interred there. Similar to the *Chauburji*, it was historically thought to have been constructed by Zeb-un-Nissa as her final resting place and a beautiful garden. However, it has been confirmed that she was actually buried in Delhi.

Jadu Nath Sarkar believes that she passed away in Delhi and was interred in the 'Garden of Thirty Thousand Trees', located outside the Kabuli Gate. Subsequently, when the British constructed a railway line in Delhi, her tomb was destroyed, and the coffin and the inscribed tombstone were relocated to Akbar's Mausoleum in Agra.<sup>19</sup>

Zeb-un-Nissa designed a garden in Lahore known as the *Chauburji*, or four-towered, and remnants of its walls and gates still exist today. Three of the towers on the archway remain intact, adorned with tile designs featuring cypress trees and blooming flowers. The gateways feature inscriptions

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17 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 16.

18 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 19.

19 Bashir and Khan, *Daily Times*.



in both Arabic and Persian, with one of them indicating that she gifted the garden to her former teacher Miyabai.<sup>20</sup>

After thirty-five years of her death in 1724, her dispersed writings were compiled under the title of *Diwan-i-Makhfi*, known as the *Book of the Hidden One*. It contained four hundred and twenty-one *ghazals*<sup>21</sup> and rubais.<sup>22</sup> The Diwan shares the characteristics of Sufi poetry. She carried on the legacy of Akbar, who sought to unite different religions, and was well-versed not only in Islam but also in Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. Her greatest accomplishment was her ability to seamlessly blend religious customs and practices with Sufism. In some of her works, the sun is celebrated as a divine symbol. The poet frequently mentions the mosque and temple, either together or in contrast, expressing the belief that God is present in both or is too magnificent to be confined to either one:

I am not a Muslim,  
But rather an idol worshipper,  
I bow down to the image of my beloved,  
And offer my devotion to her.

I am not a Brahman,  
I have discarded my sacred thread,  
And instead wear her braided hair  
Around my neck<sup>23</sup>

### **The Garden of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa**

The Mughals were famous for building historic architecture, including many buildings and gardens. Monarchs and noblewomen would often travel with assistants and troops to these gardens, which were designed in both natural and

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20 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 20.

21 A Poet talks about women in poem or fixed verses.

22 Stanzas.

23 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 21-22.

traditional styles. The gardens were created to showcase luxury panoramas with local ethnicities and regional landscapes. Mughal gardens blended both the aesthetic and functional essentials of society.

The basic idea behind the design of these gardens was the amalgamation of human desires for earthly and mystical order. The gardens were symbolic depictions of ecstasy, bringing together human desires for both material and spiritual harmony by combining the ideal possibilities of the world with symbolic depictions of paradise that await the devout in the afterlife.<sup>24</sup>

The garden at *Nawan Kot*, Lahore, was associated with Princess Zeb-un-Nissa. According to Wheeler, the tale goes that the garden was designed under the direction of the princess's favorite lady-in-waiting, Mian Bai. As a result, it became known as Mian Bai's Garden and was gifted to her by her royal patroness.<sup>25</sup>

The monuments at *Nawan Kot* are the remains of the eastern wall of the garden of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa. These three monuments, two *Burj* and a *Chauburji* were connected by a burnt brick wall. According to the Planning and Development Board Tourism Department, Government of Punjab, the length and width of the garden was 188 meters wide and 184 meters in length. They had mentioned these measurements on the information board placed at the *Chauburji*, which they had titled 'The Tiled Gateway of a Garden at *Nawan Kot*'. The eastern towers were linked to two towers on the western side that bordered almost a ten-acre square area of the garden with a tomb at the center. Now, there is no trace of the western side of the garden, towers, and wall. These did not survive, and the garden vanished under urban extension. These monuments are

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24 Ullah, Jiny, and Jing, "Mughal Gardens and Assessment of Mughal Empires's Inclination Towards Lahore, Pakistan," 69.

25 R. E. M. Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan* (London: Royal India and Pakistan Society, 1950), 90.

currently hemmed by contemporary houses and narrow streets from all sides.

Wheeler also explained the exterior and design of the gateway and towers of the garden. The name Zabinda Begum is linked to a tiled gateway and two remnants of the walls of a former garden in the village of *Nawan Kot*. Located on the east side of the Multan Road, about a mile south of *Chauburji*, the gateway features a square design with Hindu-style pavilions at each corner. The front and sides are covered in mosaic tiles featuring floral designs in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The back is painted. The pavilions stand out due to their fluted domes, covered in green tiles and supported by four pillars on each side, much like Dai Anga's tomb. The upper level of the passageway features terracotta screens with network and zigzag patterns. Although the exact date of the building is unknown, it is believed to have been built in the middle or third quarter of the 17th century.<sup>26</sup>

Two corners of the enclosure wall still stand, consisting of low octagonal towers with pavilions on top, painted below the eaves and tiled above with gold fluted domes. The identity of the structure is uncertain and is popularly attributed to Zabinda Begum, just like the garden. The village retains notable remains of its defensive brick walls and round-fronted towers, which were built in 1820 A.D.<sup>27</sup>

## I. The Tomb



Fig 3: Entrance of the Tomb

26 Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, 90

27 Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, 90.

The tomb of the Princess is situated on the main Multan Road near Samanabad Mor, Lahore. There is a dispute about who is essentially buried in this tomb, although it is generally attributed to Zeb-un-Nisa. The tomb was the center of the garden, and its architecture is simple yet an example of royal taste. It was ornamented with expensive stones. Some historians narrate the tomb's architecture to the Shah Jahan period due to its characteristics.

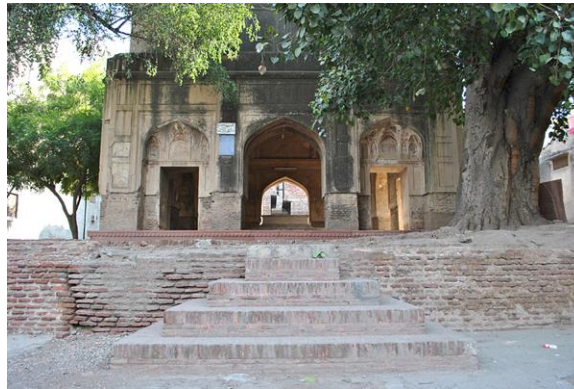


Fig 4: Exterior and Interior of Tomb (Asian Historical Architecture)

According to Bashir and Khan, the dome and floor of Zeb-un-Nisa's tomb lack the characteristics of the Aurangzeb era, indicating that it was not constructed during Aurangzeb's reign, but instead dates back to the period of Shah Jahan.<sup>28</sup>



Fig 5: Exterior and Interior of Tomb

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28 Bashir and Khan, *Daily Times*.

The condition of the tomb was also explained in The Diwan of Zaib-un-Nisa:

The tomb now lies in a state of desolation, a far cry from its former glory days when it was constructed with fine marbles and topped with a golden pinnacle. The tumultuous times of the collapse of the Mughal Empire led to its downfall. The massive entrance gate is big enough to accommodate an elephant and leads to an inner courtyard featuring a tower with four minarets. These minarets are adorned with a beautiful blend of turquoise and yellow tiles.<sup>29</sup>

### Exterior of the Tomb



Fig 6:<sup>30</sup>

The squarish tomb stands on a 1.6 feet high podium. It is almost central and surrounded by houses. Its distance from the road is about 35 feet, and the distance from the left and right-side houses is approximately 23.7 feet. The distance of the backside from the opposite house is almost 25 feet.

The Tomb is a square of approximately 37.8 feet externally. The pyramidal elevated dome is curvilinear externally. Entrance arches are 8 feet wide, 11.3 feet high, and 2.10 feet deep. The front and back doors are 3.4 feet wide and

29 Lal and Westbrook, *The Dewan of Zeb-un-Nissa*, 19.

30 Hina Waseem, "The Ruins Relate the Tales of a Great Monument," *TripAdvisor*, 2016, accessed Feb 11, 2023, [https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g295413-d9810987-r357524228-Zeb\\_un\\_Nisa\\_Tomb-Lahore\\_Punjab\\_Province.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g295413-d9810987-r357524228-Zeb_un_Nisa_Tomb-Lahore_Punjab_Province.html).

5.10 feet high, and the windows are 3.2 feet wide and 5.10 feet tall.



Fig 7: Exterior of the Tomb

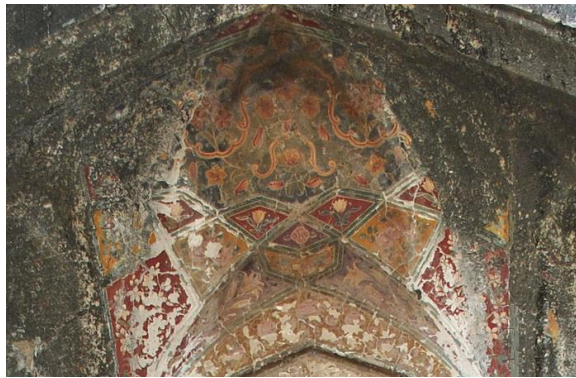


Fig 8: Fresco work on the Tomb

The walls had beautiful frescoes that depict the delicacy of the Mughal Era, but with time, the royalty of the tomb has vanished. In the Sikh period, they had disclosed its adornment and stone facing of the tomb. The tomb soon turned into ruins, but with modern conservation processes, the tomb revived into a new version with colorful patterns. The magnificent dome and the brick crenelated roof edges are truly awe-inspiring. In its prime, the building was adorned with stunning frescoes and intricate design work.<sup>31</sup>

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31 Waseem, "The Ruins Relate the Tales of a Great Monument".



According to historical records, the destruction of the building is attributed to Ranjit Singh, who took its valuable materials to build his summer residence in *Hazuri Bagh*, located in front of the *Alamgiri Gate* of the Lahore Fort, Punjab, Pakistan.<sup>32</sup>

### Interior of the Tomb



Fig 9: Interior of the Tomb (Asian Historical Architecture)



Fig 10: Fresco work on the Tomb

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32 "Tomb of Zaib Un Nisa, Multan Road, Lahore," Directorate General of Archeology Tourism Department, Government of the Punjab, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://archaeology.punjab.gov.pk/tomb-zaibunnissa>



Fig 11: Ceiling of the Tomb

The tomb is approximately 27 feet square inside with a semicircular dome internally. Her grave is located in the middle of the tomb and covered with white marble. The grave is placed on a 1.4-foot-high plinth and measures 12.7 feet long and 9.7 feet wide, while the grave itself is approximately 7.1 feet long, 2.5 feet wide, and 2 feet high. The tomb is square and has four sides, each featuring a central arch with cusped curves and smaller cusped arches on either side, as well as low doorways. The internal chamber holds an unmarked grave.<sup>33</sup>



Fig 12: Flooring of the Tomb

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33 Tomb of Zaib Un Nisa, accessed January 25, 2023.



Historians note that the tessellated flooring and mosaic work in the tomb are precisely like the design of Jahangir's tomb floor. A section of the original mosaic floor composed of white and black marble, known as *Sang-e-Badal*, has survived to this day. The surviving pieces of flooring are identical to those found on the veranda in Jahangir's tomb located in Shahdara near Lahore.<sup>34</sup>

## II. **Burj (Tower)**



Fig 13: Burj 1

Historically, it is known that the Mughals built *Burj* towers on the corners of forts to station troops. These towers were connected to the outer walls of the fort or garden. At *Nawan Kot*, two burnt brick *Burj* towers were discovered at the rear of the Tomb of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa. One is located on the northeast side, and the other is situated on the southeast

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34 Tomb of Zaib Un Nisa, accessed January 25, 2023.

side. The current distance between both towers is almost 90 meters. The fortification wall is approximately 91 cm wide and 335 cm tall from the ground, forming the eastern edge of the garden.



Fig 14: Burj 2

The towers are octagonal and cover an area of approximately 26 feet in diameter. The octagonal structure was common during the Mughal era, specifically during Emperor Akbar's reign. The Mughals were inspired by Persian art, ancient Roman and Greek architecture, and their influence was prominent in Mughal architecture, miniature paintings, and mosaic work. Both towers are made

of burnt brick. The original red burnt bricks were small in size, approximately 8 x 8 x 1.5 inches.

### Exterior of the Burj



Fig 15: External wall Burj 1 and 2

The total area around the tomb is approximately 39.5 x 29.8 feet, and the towers are roughly placed in the center of that area. The octagonal tower has 8 sides, each of which is 6.5 feet wide, and the eaves of each side of the tower are 7.5 feet wide. We do not know the actual apex of the tower because almost half of the *Burj* has leveled to the ground over time. As more houses and streets were built, *Nawan Kot* rose up, and the current height of the lower area of the towers is approximately 12 feet.

Both octagonal towers are crowned by pavilions with corrugated domes, which have pillars and arches. Each arch is 4 feet wide and 6.5 feet in height. According to historians, the towers were once painted and decorated with stones and tiles externally, and the domes were covered with gold, but

now no traces of this royal look remain. These are now ruining of brick towers standing in the middle of urbanization. There are a few pieces of mosaic work on the pavilion under the eaves, featuring beautiful geometric and floral patterns, and some beautiful mosaic work around of the dome. There is a small piece of broken wall on one side of both towers, which is around 4 feet wide.

### Interior of the Burj



Fig 16: Interior Burj 1 and 2

Before the conservation, the *Burj* was filled with junk and waste, and the concealed area was not distinguishable. These were shelters for street animals, and cats and dogs had been living there for many centuries. The pavilion's interior also served as a house for birds, and no fresco was found there now.



### III. Chauburji (Four Towers)



Fig 17 & 18: Front Left and Front Right side of Chauburji

The Chauburji is one of the eastern gateways of the garden, constructed in the likeness of the main *Chauburji* located on Multan Road in Lahore at the intersection of Bahawalpur Road.

According to Wheeler, “The Chauburji Gateway, located approximately two miles south of the fort on the west side of the Multan Road in Lahore, stands among the many tiled buildings in the city. It gets its name from the four octagonal towers that once graced its corners.”<sup>35</sup> An inscription on a tile above the arch reads:

‘This garden, modeled after the garden of Paradise,  
has been founded...

It has been gifted to Mian Bai

by the generosity of Zabinda Begum, the woman of the  
era.’<sup>36</sup>

35 Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*.

36 Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, 90.

### Exterior of the *Chauburji*



Fig 19: Front and Back of Chauburji

*Chauburji* is featuring Mughal-era architectural elements on its exterior. It consists of a square-shaped base with four minarets, a central archway, and intricate decorative tile work and mosaic in shades of blue and yellow. The minarets have a circular shape, and the building is adorned with floral and geometric patterns. However, only the facade of the building remains today, and the rest of the structure has been lost over time.



Fig 20: Mosaic work on Arch of Chauburji

The building's red brickwork is typical of the Muslim buildings of the subcontinent; the doorways and windows running through the interior corridors are examples of the living style that characterized Mughal structures. Although most of the

inscriptions on *Chauburji* have been lost. *Chauburji* showcases a fusion of architectural styles that combine Mughal and older Timurid styles from Central Asia, along with Perso-Arabic styles from the Middle East. Its notable characteristics include the minarets, which significantly broaden at the top, making it a distinct feature that is not found elsewhere in the subcontinent.



Fig 21: Mosaic Work on Walls and Arch of Chauburji

This smaller gateway of the garden was built on the same pattern as the main *Chauburji*, making it a smaller version of the immense *Chauburji*. It confirms the Persian architectural influence on the Mughals' constructions. The structure is similar to the Wazir Khan Mosque, with inspiration from Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra, Agra, India. The end at the top has coved platforms which doubtless carried 'Hindu' pavilions.

It is located in the southeastern corner of the garden. The total area of the *Chauburji* gateway measures 61.9 x 72 feet. The front and back of the *Burj* or tower that makes up the gateway are 42.9 feet wide, while the sides are 36.8 feet wide, and the height is 30 feet. The front and back sides of the gateway are divided into two parts by a large arch in the middle, which is 10 feet wide and 24 feet tall. Each side of the wall on either side of the arch is 16.2 feet wide and contains four small arches, for a total of eight arches in the front and back of the gateway.

The two upper arches on each side measure 4 x 6.4 feet and are adorned with terracotta *jalis*,<sup>37</sup> which are intricate screens made of baked clay. The *jalis* are 2 x 4 feet wide and feature intricate geometric patterns that add to the building's aesthetic appeal. The *Burj* or tower on either side of the gateway measures 42.9 feet in width and 30 feet in height. The sides of the *Burj* are 36.8 feet wide and contain decorative elements such as intricate tile work and small minarets at the corners.



Fig 22: Stairs entrance of *Chauburji*

To reach the top of the gateway, there are stairs located within the structure. The entrance to the stairs is through a door that measures 7.8 x 2.9 feet. The width of the stairs is 2.10 feet, and each stair's height is 11 inches. About half of the stairs are covered with arches, which are constructed around the stairs. The arches are 7.7 feet in height and 4 feet in width, and they provide a decorative element to the stairway. The arches are likely made of brick.

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37 Grills.





Fig 23: Measuring Roof of *Chauburji*

The *Chauburji* gateway has four pavilions, each with a fluted dome. The width of each pavilion at the top corner measures 6.9 x 6.9 feet and the height is 11.3 feet below the eaves and dome. Each pavilion has three small arches that measure 1.8 x 5.3 feet on each side, and the domes are supported by four columns on each side. These pavilions would have served as decorative elements of the gateway, adding to its grandeur and beauty. The total area of the gateway from pavilion-to-pavilion measures 36.2 x 42.7 feet, and there is also a platform that measures 15 x 8.4 feet. This platform was likely used for sitting or relaxation, and would have provided a vantage point from which to view the surrounding area.

Externally, the entire *Chauburji* is covered with attractive traditional floral mosaic tile work. The mosaic work is colorful, but green, yellow, and orange colors predominate. The remains of the mosaic still enrich the current record of famous *kashi* work. The floral patterns are arranged in a symmetrical fashion and are repeated throughout the building's exterior, giving it a uniform and harmonious look. The tile work also includes intricate geometric patterns that add to the building's aesthetic appeal. The mosaic tiles used in the building's construction were made by hand and are of exceptional quality. The tiles were carefully crafted by skilled

artisans who used traditional techniques to create each piece, making the tile work a true work of art.



Fig 24: External wall of Chauburji

The tile work is not only aesthetically pleasing but also serves a functional purpose. The tiles are durable and weather-resistant, protecting the building's exterior from the elements and preserving the delicate decorative elements for centuries. Overall, *Chauburji's* traditional floral mosaic tile work is a testament to the skill and craftsmanship of Mughal-era artists and adds to the building's beauty and historical significance.

### **Interior of the *Chauburji***

Unfortunately, the interior of *Chauburji* is not accessible to the public as it is mostly in ruins, and the remaining portion of the building does not have accessible interior space. The building's façade is the only part that remains standing, giving us an idea of the kind of intricate and beautiful interior decorations that it may have had in the past. From the

remaining decorative elements on the exterior, we can infer that the interior of *Chauburji* was probably adorned with beautiful frescoes, intricate tile work, and decorative calligraphy.

Based on its architecture, it is speculated that the interior would have consisted of a central chamber or hall with smaller rooms on the sides. The central chamber may have had a dome-shaped roof with decorative elements such as stucco work and frescoes. The distance between the front and back arch of *Chauburji* is approximately 36.9 feet. On both sides of the central arch, there are two small passageways, each with an entrance area measuring 12 x 8 feet. The upper stages of these passageways are adorned with terracotta *jalis*, or intricate screens made of baked clay. These screens feature intricate geometric patterns and add to the building's aesthetic appeal.

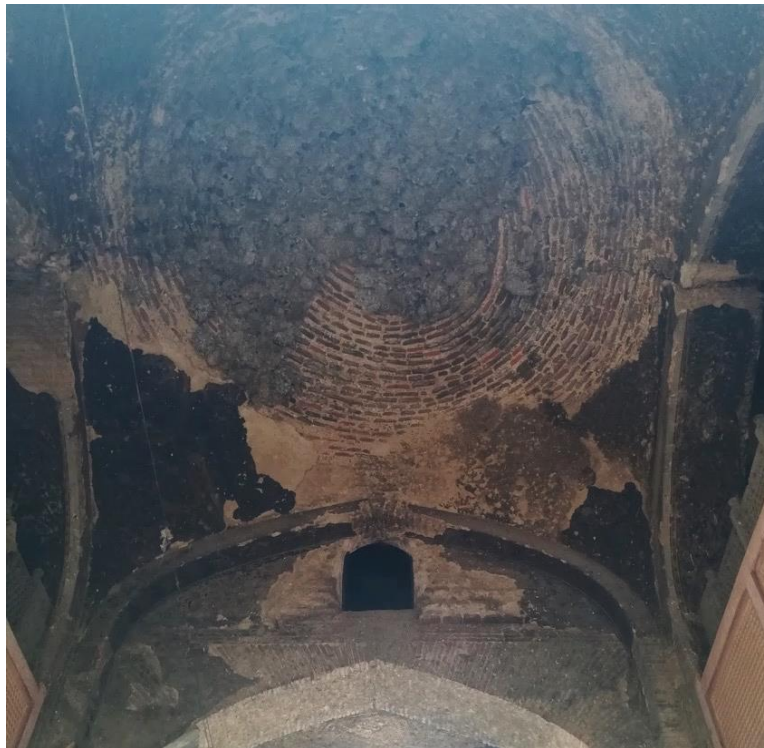


Fig 25: Internal dome of *Chauburji*

The ceiling of these passageways is covered with bird's nests. Over time, the accumulation of nests has led to the complete coverage of the ceilings. Overall, these features of the passageways in *Chauburji* give a glimpse of the skill and artistry of Mughal-era architects and artists. The intricate terracotta *jalis* and environmentally conscious design elements are a testament to the creativity and ingenuity of this period of architectural history.

It's important to note that the building has undergone restoration work in recent years to preserve its remaining exterior elements, which include the central archway, the four minarets, and the decorative tile work. However, restoration work on the interior of the building is unlikely due to the lack of surviving structural elements.

**1. Conservation**

**I. Latest Conservation of the Tomb**



Fig 26: Note at the entrance



The tomb has been conserved by the Directorate General of Archaeology, Youth Affairs, Sports, Archaeology, and Tourism Department of the Government of Punjab. They have provided important information about the tomb at its entrance to enlighten visitors about its historical significance.



Fig 27: Front and back pose of the tomb

The tomb's architecture is a beautiful blend of Indian and Central Asian architecture. The tomb is square in plan and stands on an elevated platform. Its pyramidal elevated dome, curvilinear, and vaulted externally and internally is the only example of its type in Lahore. A portion of the original tessellated floor, with its Shahjahanian touch and delicacy, has survived the vandalism of the Sikhs, who stripped off the ornamentation and stone facing of the tomb. The existing patches of tessellated flooring are exactly similar to that of the veranda in Jahangir's Tomb. Conserved by the Directorate General of Archaeology, the building is declared protected under the Antiquities Act, 1975; hence damaging this building is a cognizable offense.

In an interview with Daily Times in 2018, Malik Maqsood Ahmed, the Deputy Director of the Archaeology Department, stated that the restoration of the monument was underway for the first time in its history. The team was striving to bring back the former grandeur of the monument, with work being done on both the interior and exterior. The flooring, with its geometrical design characteristic of the Mughal era, was being repaired, and the significant features of the tomb, such as the tombstone, doorways, fresco, and inner flooring had

been restored. The red sandstone used in the restoration had been imported from India, while small bricks and lime plaster were utilized in the process. Ahmed reported that nearly 90 percent of the work was done and expected to be completed by June 2018. Additionally, he mentioned that benches and a sitting area for families were also being developed at the site. When asked about the ticketing system and re-use of the monument, he stated that it would be free and open to all, as he believed that visiting heritage sites was a fundamental right and provided both education and social benefits to everyone.<sup>38</sup>



Fig 28: Entrance door of the Tomb

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38 Shahab Omer, "Restoration Work on Princess Zebun Nisa's Tomb Near Completion," *Daily Times*, May 5, 2018



Fig 29: Paint work on arch of Tomb



Fig 30: Window pattern of Tomb

The external walls of the tomb are painted in white. Beautiful paintwork is done on its entrance arch using orange, green, maroon, and white colors. Geometrical shapes and flower patterns are amalgamated stunningly, which are Islamic floral designs. The doors and lattices in the building were restored to align with the Mughal architectural style, but the intricate *Kashikari*<sup>39</sup> designs on the external and internal walls were destroyed. The original floor has been replaced with a new one made of red stone, and the grave has been refurbished and improved. Additionally, the previously mentioned trees have been cut down.<sup>40</sup>



Fig 31: Grave of princess in the centre of Tomb

The ceiling is decorated with a sphere pattern in the center. In the middle, there is an orange lotus flower, which represents the purity and integrity of the princess. The outer floral pattern is in a circle, and a sphere is commonly associated with eternity. The design pattern is a fusion of traditional and modern design. All these design elements have been reconstructed by the Walled City Authority. No remains of the design existed at the time of conservation.

39 A technique of mosaic art.

40 Bashir and Khan, *Daily Times*.





Fig 32: Paint work on internal arch of Tomb



Fig 33: Paint work on ceiling of Tomb

## II. Conservation of the Burj

In conservation, broken walls were repaired and covered the floor around *Burj* with bricks and cement. The door of octagonal tower covered with bricks and cement. Iron gate on entrance protect the *Burj* from bike parking.



Fig 34: Front and Side view of Burj 1



Fig 35: Pavilion of Burj



Fig 36: Floor and wall of Burj 2



Fig 37: Iron gate at Burj 2



### III. Conservation of the *Chauburji*



Fig 38: Note from Planning and Development Board and Tourism Department of the Government of Punjab

The conservation of *Chauburji* and *Burj* were started in 2022 by the Planning and Development Board and Tourism Department of the Government of Punjab. They named *Chauburji* 'The Tiled Gateway of a Garden at *Nawan Kot*'. Essential information about *Chauburji* and *Burj* were provided at the gateway entrance to convey their importance to tourists and locals.



Fig 39: Front and Side view of *Chauburji*

The Tiled Gateway is the eastern entrance to a now-vanished walled garden, probably built during the period of Shah Jahan. It is unknown who built the garden; however, some tradition wrongly relates it to Princess Zeb-un-Nissa. Not only is it attributed to Zeb-un-Nissa constructing the garden, but she is also said to have spent a large part of her life here in self-imposed imprisonment. In the garden complex, she was running a public kitchen where beggars, *Dervish*,<sup>41</sup> *Malang*,<sup>42</sup> monks, and *Yogis*<sup>43</sup> were fed every day. The tomb erroneously called of Zaib-un-Nisa was built in the center of the garden, and the date of construction is quoted in some references as 1669 CE.



Fig 40: Front and Back of *Chauburji*

The tile mosaic work on the facades of the gateway has deteriorated significantly. However, its remnants indicate the highest quality of craftsmanship. The corner pavilion at the top resembles the pavilions of Dai Anga Tomb. The corner towers standing in isolation provide a clue about the length and width of the garden, which was 188 meters wide and 184 meters in length. The Tiled Gateway, along with corner

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41 A person who stays away from worldly affairs.

42 A person who dances and whirls on the beat and has no link to the world.

43 A person who practices Yoga.

towers, are protected monuments under the Antiquities Act 1975.



Fig 41: Chamber of *Chauburji*



Fig 42: Ceiling of *Chauburji*



Fig 43: Stairs of *Chauburji*

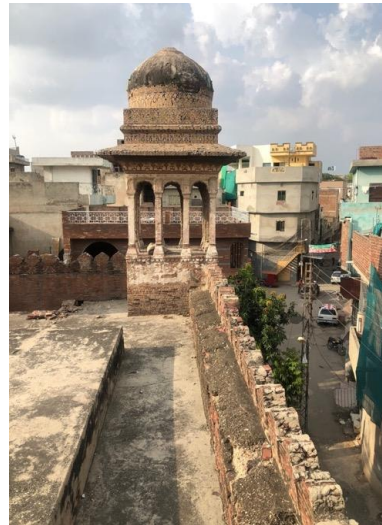


Fig 44: Pavilion of *Chauburi*

### Conclusion

*Nawan Kot* is an interesting site due to its Mughal Era monuments, which provides an ironic contrast to its current state. The paper focuses on the eastern side of the garden, which contains several structures, including a tomb, two

*Burj*, and a four-tower entrance gate known as *Chauburji*. According to legend, the garden was created by Princess Zeb-un-Nissa in 1669 A.D. She was a Mughal princess and a poetess known for her intellectual abilities. The garden that she built was enclosed by a wall, with a tower at each corner, and the *Chauburji* was built as a grand entrance. The tomb, situated at the heart of the garden, adds to its picturesque beauty. This paper is an effort to understand the history of these places and their hidden parts, acknowledging the history of a location, including its lesser-known aspects. Furthermore, it also highlights the restoration efforts carried out by the Punjab Archeology and Tourism Department so that cultural heritage can be preserved for later generations.