

THE SHALAMAR

A typical Muslim Garden

The Shalamar Gardens are located on the Grand Trunk Road, some 3 1/2 miles north-east of the main city. There were two other Mughal gardens known as Shalamar gardens—one at Srinagar, Kashmir and the other one at Delhi. While that at Srinagar still survives, the other at Delhi has completely disappeared.

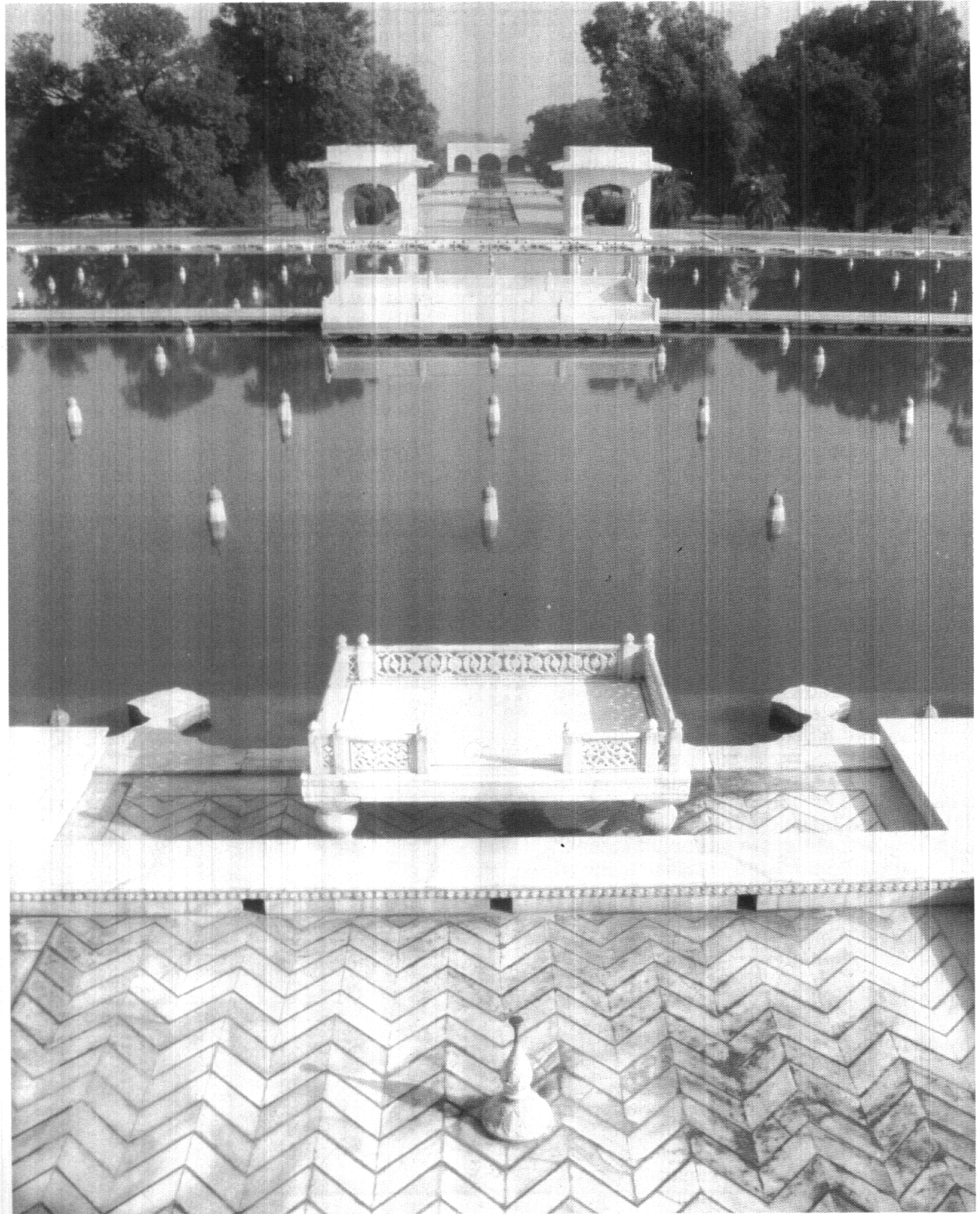
In 1639 A.D. Ali Mardan Khan, a Persian noble and governor of Lahore sought the permission of Emperor Shah Jahan to build a canal from the river Ravi at Rajpur, where its waters descend from the hills into the plains, to Lahore. His request was granted, funds were placed at his disposal and within two years the "Shah Nahar" or Royal Canal was completed with the help of Mulla Alaul Mulk Tunji, an expert in hydrology. In 1641 A.D. Khalilullah Khan, a noble of Shah Jahan's court, was directed by the emperor to select a suitable site on the newly dug canal for laying out a garden. The site he chose was on the old bed of the river Ravi. The foundations of the gardens were laid on 3rd *Rabi-ul-Awwal*, 1051 A.H. (12th July, 1641 A.D.). The gardens and the buildings were completed under the superintendence of Khalilullah Khan. On 7th *Sha'ban*, 1052 A.H. (31st October, 1642 A.D.) exactly one year, five months and four days after the foundations had been laid, the Emperor Shah Jahan paid his first state visit to the completed gardens. Historians of that time, Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori and Muhammad Salih Kamboh have recorded the name of the upper terrace as "*Farah Bakhsh*" (Bestower of Pleasure) and the remaining middle and lower terraces together as "*Faiz Bakhsh*" (Bestower of Plenty). But when exactly these gardens came to be known as Shalamar Gardens is not known. The name "Shalamar" has been variously interpreted most popularly of all as "abode of bliss" or "light of the moon".

A typical Mughal garden, the Shalamar is surrounded by a high wall with serrated battlements. The inner face of the wall is relieved with cusped arched panels of varying sizes and there are traces to indicate that a band of frescoes, with floral designs, embellished the exterior of the wall below the merlons. The corners are occupied by "burj" or towers surmounted by a red sandstone octagonal pavilion. The garden has been laid out in three terraces descending from south to north covering an area of some forty acres. Originally, the gardens were entered through two elegant gateways in the eastern and the western walls of the lower terrace. In this

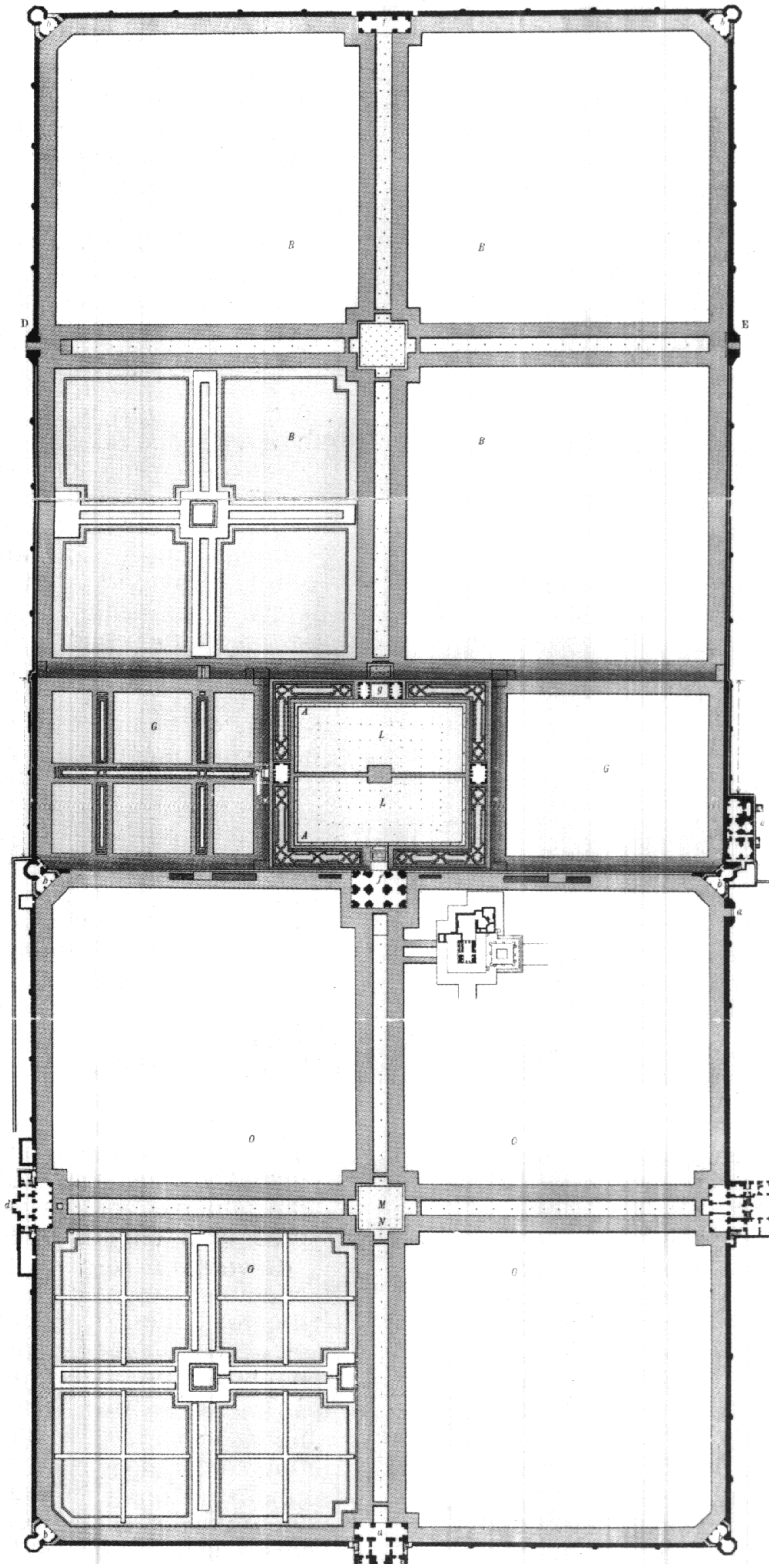
manner the progress was upwards with the cascades facing the visitor and new delights revealed as each terrace was approached. While the upper terrace is nearly 15 feet higher than the middle terrace, the difference in level between the middle and the lower terrace is only 5 feet. Within the upper and the lower terraces each measuring 290 square yards, the symmetrical garden plots are divided by intersecting canals into four square parterres. There are, however, indications to suggest that originally each plot was subdivided further into four parts. The 20 feet broad canals are paved and plastered and contain rows of fountains in red sandstone and marble. Tanks containing fountains are placed at the intersections of the canals. The middle terrace measuring 290 yards by 85 yards is sub-divided lengthwise into three parts. The raised central part contains the great-tank — over two hundred feet across and having more than one hundred fountains — four pavilions and the great cascade. This is the most spectacular feature of the garden. The original names of the terraces - "*Farah Bakhsh*" (Bestower of Pleasure) and "*Faiz Bakhsh*" (Bestower of Plenty) clearly indicate that while in the upper terrace only flowers and sweet scented shrubs were planted, the middle and the lower terraces were reserved for fruit trees. The eastern and the western parts of the middle terrace were used entirely for rose beds. Cypressess, poplars and chenar trees lined the sides of the "*khyaban*" (raised brick pavements) transforming them into beautiful shady avenues. The contemporary historians record that within the gardens were planted fruit trees of every seasons and climate such as mango, cherry, apricot, peach, pear, apple, almond, quince, seedless mulberry and sweet and bitter orange. Roses, tulips, iris, cyclamen, crown imperials, lilies, pinks, narcissus, jasmine, lilac, lotus and many other flowers bloomed exquisitely.

The canal water brought from the river Ravi at Rajpur, about one hundred miles north east of Lahore, entered the gardens from the south. Flowing underneath the "Aramgah" building in the middle of the southern side of the upper terrace, it reappeared in the main canal, filling the central tank at the intersection of the canals and overflowed to side canals. Crossing the upper terrace and passing underneath the building in the middle of its northern side, it rippled over the marble cascade and discharged into the main tank on the middle terrace. This tank served as a

SHALIMAR GARDENS. A VIEW ON THE MAIN AXIS



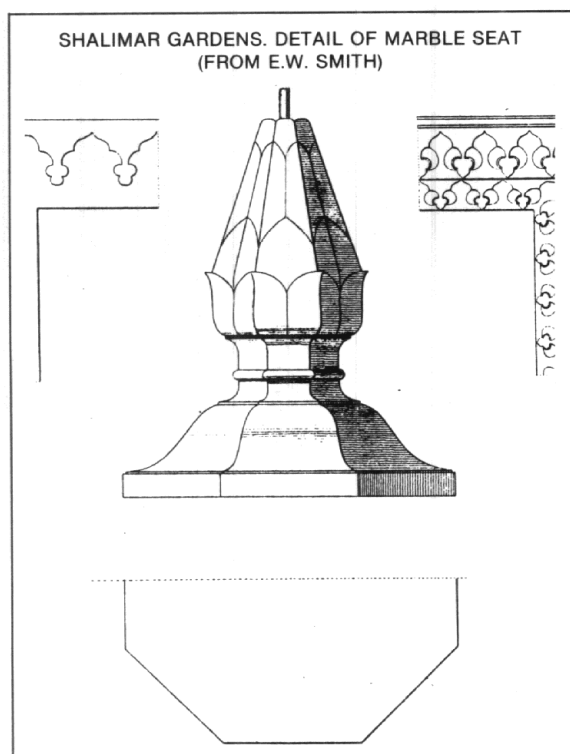
SHALIMAR GARDENS. PLAN (FROM E.W. SMITH)



storage reservoir to supply water to the "Sawan Bhadun" and to the fountains in the lower terrace. After filling the tank the canal water split into two small cascades in the eastern and the western sides, and flowing over the "Sawan Bhadun" it passed into the lower terrace canals. Eventually it flowed out of the northern side of the Shalimar Gardens. The canal water was also used to irrigate grassy plots, trees, etc.

The fountains in the upper terrace and the "Hammam" or "bath suites" were not fed by canal waters. Independent arrangements for the same included wells and elevated large reservoirs outside the gardens. An earthen colaba line of 12" dia. supplied the water to the fountains. Another similar line of 7 1/2" dia. served the "Hammam". About one foot underneath, two feet on the sides and four and a half feet above the colabas, bricks were laid in lime mortar in order to protect the colaba line.

"The garden contains so many buildings" wrote a seventeenth century historian, Muhammad Salih Kamboh, "that when the emperor alongwith the royal harem, encamps there not a single tent need be pitched".

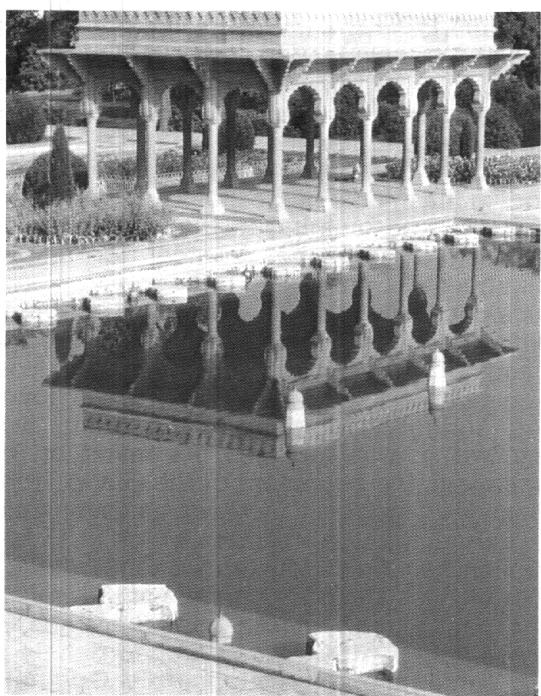


These charming buildings include "baradaris" or "summer pavilions", "diwan-i-khas-o-am" or "Hall of private and public audience", "khwabgah" or sleeping chambers, "hammam" or "bath house", elegant gateways and towers.

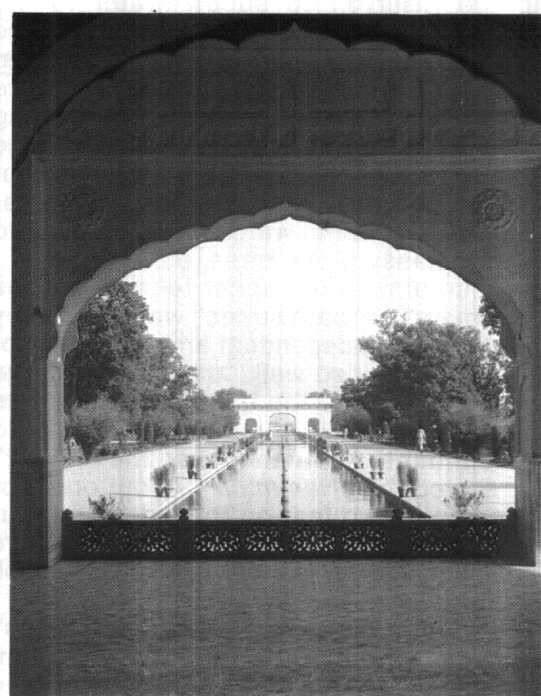
The upper terrace alone has eight buildings, four in the middle of the sides and four in the corners. The building in the middle of the southern side was the "Aramgah" or "resting chambers". Comprising three rooms — two side ones being double storey — it is fronted with a deep verandah having three cusped arched openings in front and one in each side. The middle room has a fountain like a "foaming spring". Originally the building was decorated with frescoes. As result of the change in the alignment of the Grand Trunk Road the "Aramgah" now serves as the main entrance. the upper terrace which is 15 feet higher than the middle terrace terminates on a brick wall. The northern face of the wall, in the central part of the middle terrace, is embellished with cusped arched panels in red sandstone and white marble. Originally the entire wall was surmounted by an exquisite marble grille as mentioned by the Historian Muhammad Salik Kamboh but at present it is topped by a terracotta railing of the Sikh period. Two red sandstone staircases through the wall, one each on the east and the west of the "Aiwan", provide access to the central part of the middle terrace. Beyond the staircases two ramp paved with bricks on edge lead to the eastern and the western parts of the middle terrace.

In the middle of the eastern side was originally the building of "Jharoka-e-Daulat Khana-e-Khas-o-Am" or "Balcony of the Hall of Private and Public Audience". In front of the "Jharoka", on the outside, there was a hall having a separate enclosure of its own. This enclosure is also commonly known as "Naqqar Khana" or "house of drumus". Opposite the "Jharoka" on the western side of the terrace is a similar building known as the "Khwabgah Begum Sahib" or sleeping chambers of the Empress. It might also mean the residence of Princess Jahan Ara, the eldest daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan, who held the title of "Begum Sahib".

The arcaded building in the middle of the northern side, overlooking the great marble cascade and the two lower terraces, is the "Aiwan" or "Grand Hall". Originally it was also embellished with exquisite frescoes. The walls have marble dadoes. Mirrored ceiling in various bays is a reminiscent of Sikh

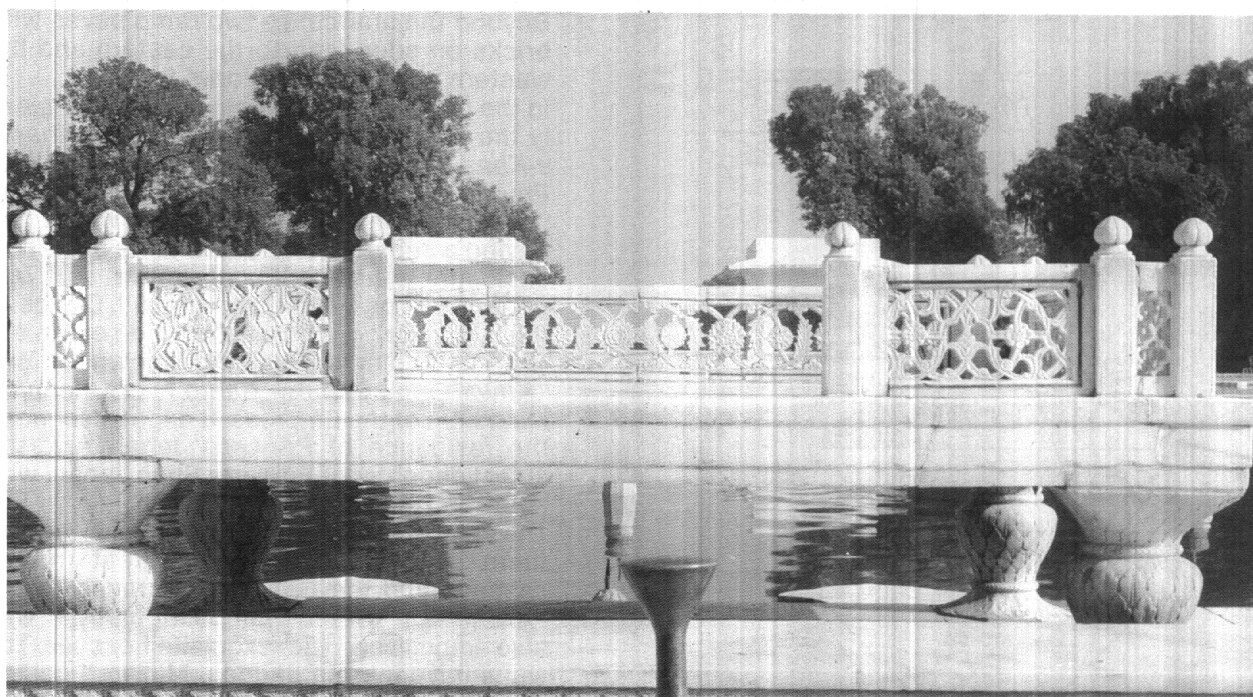


SHALIMAR GARDENS. A *BARADARI*



SHALIMAR GARDENS. A VIEW ON THE MAIN AXIS

SHALIMAR GARDENS. A *CHABUTRA*



repairs. This hall was used for ceremonial purposes.

Close to the "*Aiwan*", on its south-east, is a small and simple building, with an underground cellar, built by Ranjit Singh (1799-1839 A.D.). It was here that the famous traveller Moor Craft stayed during his visit to the Sikh Ruler's court in May 1820 A.D.

Each corner of this terrace is occupied by a "burj" or tower comprising an octagonal chamber surmounted by a red sandstone octagonal pavilion.

In the eastern wall of the middle terrace, near its southeast corner is located the "*hammam*" or "bath suite" comprising a "*sard Khana*" or "cold bath" and a larger "*rakht Khana*" or "dressing room". Originally the interior of the bath was decorated with delicate pietra-dura work.

On the eastern and the western fringes of the great tank are two pavilions originally built in red sandstone. In the centre of the great tank approached from the pavilions by red sandstone causeways is a raised platform called "*mahtabi*" or "of the moon" since it was used for sitting out of doors to enjoy the moonlight. Originally the "*mahtabi*" was paved with marble and had grilled marble railings.

In between the great cascade below the "*Aiwan*" and the tank is placed a royal marble throne with skilfully perforated railings. It was this throne that the emperor used on important occasions.

On two sides of the middle of the northern side there stand two pavilions which originally were built in marble but now are lime plastered. In between the pavilions lies a deep tank. Its three marble-faced walls have "*chini-khana*" or "small niches" in which golden flower vases were placed in the day time and camphored wax candles at night. The fourth side of the tank i.e. the northern side is open. The candles make an endless chain of shimmering light and create colour reflections on the water-sheet in front of the niches. This is called "*Dip Mala*" or "chain of lights". Popularly the scene is also described as "*Sawan Bhadun*" after the two months associated with spells of rain and bright sun respectively.

Besides the two elegant gateways embellished with enamelled tile-work mentioned earlier, the lowest terrace also contains an arched pavilion in the middle of the northern side. This was the "*Daulat Khana-e-Khas*" or "Hall of Private Audience". The dado of its wall was in marble and the entire building

was originally decorated with frescoes. In the middle of this hall there was a fountain like a foaming spring. The gateways are the only structures in the garden where tile mosaic decoration has been used.

Sattar Sikander

SHALIMAR GARDENS. DETAILS OF FOUNTAINS

