

**FAIZ MAHAL KHAIRPUR MIR'S:  
A STUDY OF SURFACE DECORATION**

*Saeed Ahmed Mangi  
Dr. Abdul Fatah Daudpoto*

**ABSTRACT**

*This article is largely concerned with history, art, design and decoration of architectural surfaces of the building 'Faiz Mahal' at Khairpur Mir's in the Talpur period. The research is designed to collect and analyze the references of surface decoration; geometry, motifs, floral designs and the figurative images of human, bird & animals. The study is based upon the conceptual development behind art of surface decoration on the building erected in Talpur period at Khairpur Mir's.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Talpurs, a clan of Baloch origin, had settled in Sindh in the time of Kalhora Dynasty. Prior to that they were settled in the Multan; where Seraiki language became their mother tongue. This was gradually replaced by Sindhi as their primary language. The Talpurs came to power by defeating the last Kalhora sovereign Mian Abdul Nabi at Halani. The victory allowed Mir Fateh Ali to establish himself at Hyderabad from he ruled the larger part of southern and western Sindh. His cousin Mir Tharo Khan took over South-eastern Sindh and settled his state at Mirpurkhas. Mir Sohrab marched to north east and claimed north eastern Sindh for himself, where he established the Khairpur State.

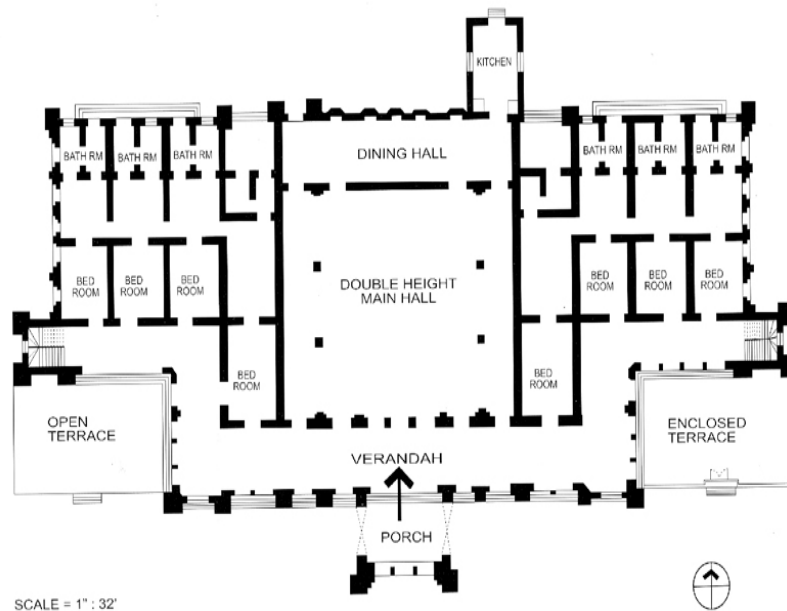
Mir Sohrab Khan ruled on Khairpur for 47 years (1784-1830). When he became old, he divided his state among his sons, Mir Rustam Khan, Mir Mubarak Khan and Mir Ali Murad Khan. When Mir Sohrab Khan was came into old age, he gave chieftainship to Mir Rustam Ali khan and Mir Rustam Ali Khan back to his son Mir Muhammad Hussain, So therefore Mir Murad became angry and went to Britishers against his brother (Khan 1980). When the British attacked Khairpur State Rustam Ali Khan spent wondering life. He roamed city to city for shelter and security. But he failed after he gave himself to the Britishers. He was sent to Poona along with his

nephew, Mir Nasir Khan. He was died in 1846. Mir Ali Murad Khan was appointed the ruler of Khairpur in 1866 (Amrohi 1958). From 1843, Sindh fallen in the British Colonial Raj; however, Khairpur Mirs was declared as only independent state and allowed to retain its political status, due to collaboration with British army in their expeditions of Afghanistan and Rajasthan. In their rule the Talpurs enhanced the income of the state, dig new wells for agriculture, irrigation system was introduced, the Railway Transport passed within the jurisdiction of the state, post office and telegraph was introduced, about 100 schools, one library, a big hospital and four dispensaries were established. Talpurs built up new buildings, put emphasis upon value addition in designs and contributed towards literature, arts, crafts and architecture.

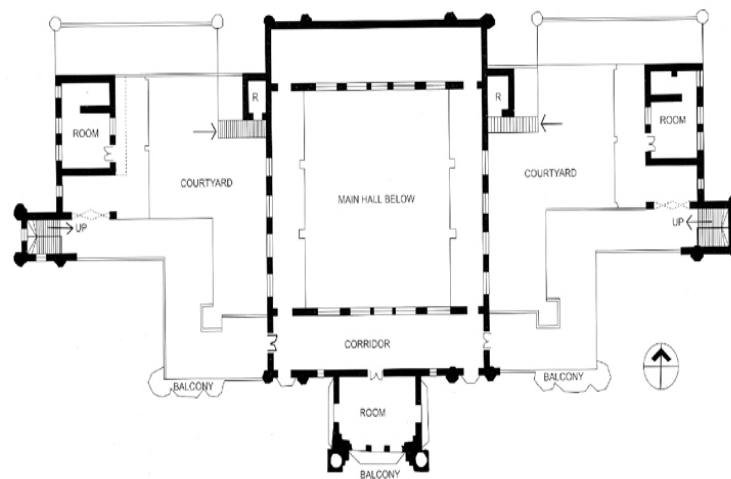
#### **CONSTRUCTION OF FAIZ MAHAL**

Faiz Mahal is a palace and a huge building full with beauty of design elevation, art, and fun. It has an architectural value and historical monument located in the North West corner of Khairpur Mirs city. The building is one of the best typical Architectural style and complete load bearing wall structure with heavy girders and joists used in roof. The construction is made from red burnt bricks bonded with lime and sand mortar, well finished flush joints in brick red extremely, and lime plastered inside with high roofs at various levels having proper ventilation. All the openings are supported with various arches, beautifully decorative, multifold, circular, semi circular, decorated with embossed as well recessed brick work with moldings to form beautiful elevation. An area of 14 acres was reserved for this monument; including the houses, officer's residences, servant quarters, parade area, walk ways, lawns and gardens. Faiz Mahal is a very huge three-storied building, constructed during the days of Mir Faiz Muhammad Khan, who ruled from 1894 to 1909. Its construction was started in 1895 and was completed in a period of two years, however some books mention its period from 1903 to 1905. Khan Bahadur Qadirdad Khan, Minister of the State, resumed the work and after his death Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob followed the progress and got completed in 1905. Ghulab Singh supervised the entire

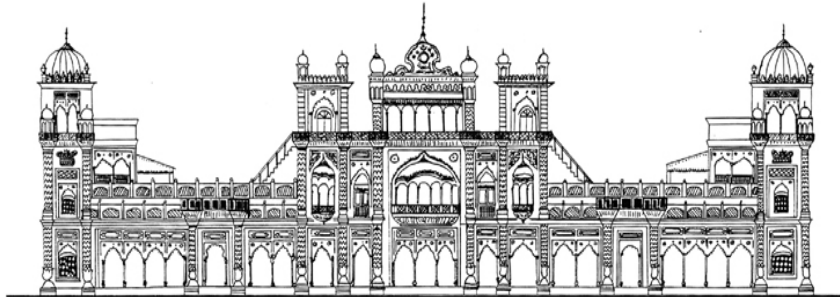
construction and decoration work. Bricks for the construction of Mahal were manufactured within the vicinity. The skilled artisans and masons from Bahawalpur and Jodhpur were engaged along with local labour. The building stands prominently amongst the other buildings of Khairpur. It was built to replace a larger *haveli* that had collapsed in a flood. It served as a centre for royal ceremonies where the Mir received their guests of high rank. The great tragedy towards the founder of this Mahal is that, he stayed only one night at Faiz Mahal and left the next day complaining of claustrophobia. Thus it was used mostly as a guest house where British Viceroys, Governors and other dignitaries have stayed. Several Presidents and Prime Ministers of Pakistan have also stayed here in the Mahal.



Ground floor plan of Faiz Mahal



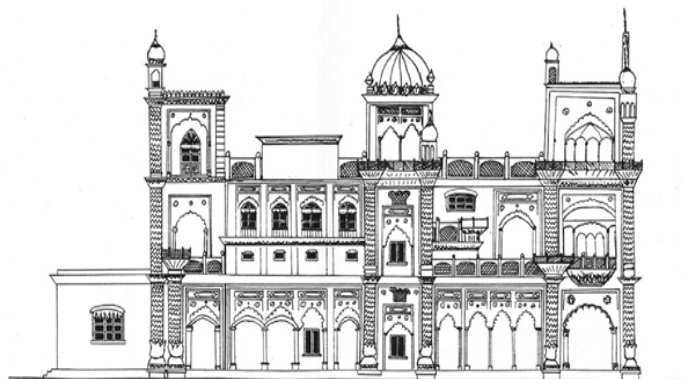
First floor plan of Faiz Mahal



FAIZ MAHAL (Front Elevation)



FAIZ MAHAL (Rear Elevation)



FAIZ MAHAL (L.H.S Elevation)

**FEATURES OF THE FAIZ MAHAL**

The south is the wind direction in the city of Khairpur, therefore, the elevation facing the wind is protected from the glaring sun by means of a deep veranda, which shades the entrance to the rooms and keeps them cool also. Faiz Mahal have the V-shaped brick pattern columns, which appear as tree trunks with a continuous climb similar in character to the indigenous date tree. The cupolas act as viewing pavilions, whereas the central mini balcony on the first floor is placed on an axis to the gardens to maintain the geometry of the plot. The intricate *Jalli* work in sandstone is a juxtaposition of separate molded pieces which have been put together by work of art. The arches, especially multifold arches on the front facade repeatedly decorate the corridors. The square based towers on the four corners appear as watch towers of a fort. The central projected porch highlights the importance of the front elevation and acts as a crowning element of the building. The interior, however, is comparatively much simpler, and all the efforts are focused on the exterior. The main hall or the drawing room as they call it is the only area where one sees focused efforts. The several chandeliers in the double height space are the glory of the room. The furniture here is of the finest quality. The main building covers 1537square feet area at ground, with central hall of 43'×50' having corridor all around connected at ground floor as well first floor around as a balcony leading to main roof of central hall at 32 feet height. It has four suits of two rooms 13' -6"×14-6" each with attached baths on either side or the hall having corridor in front with plenty of opening doors and windows all around. Full building is in harmony on either side from central point in every respect inside and outside. Faiz Mahal even today in present condition is unique example of architectural beauty. It is well balanced building of symmetry on either side with huge marble columns of central middle hall divided in equal sections with variety of arches, balconies, projections, full of architectural decorative moldings, *jallies* (nets), columns, cornices, cupolas, and kiosks. Whole of the structure from ground level to 3rd floor is full of engineering skill, constructed of purely load bearing brick masonry walls decorated in red brick moldings with uniform

design and dimension rhythm inside and outside with fine specimen of Architecture. Its artistic workmanship is visible from each and every edge and corner of the building. The whole structure from ground level to the third floor is constructed purely of red brick, lime and sand mortar. Its facade is built with molded red bricks and red sandstone columns, though the interior hall uses massive marble piers. Heavy girders and joists are used in the roof and at many places lime plaster has been applied. The building is one of the best typical architectural styles of that time being practiced in Sindh. It is complete load bearing wall structure with heavy girders and joists used in roof. Full construction is made from red burnt bricks bonded with lime and sand mortar, well finished flush joints in red brick extremely, and lime plastered inside with high roofs at various levels having proper ventilation. All the openings are supported with various arches, beautifully decorative, multifold, circular, semi circular, decorated with embossed as well recessed brick work to form the beautiful elevations of the building.





Figure 1: Front View of Faiz Mahal Khairpur



Figure 2: Interior View of Faiz Mahal Khairpur



Figure 3: Detail of Man Balcony of Faiz Mahal Khairpur

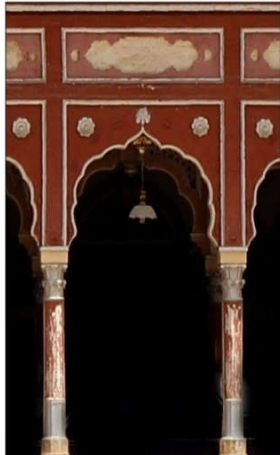


Figure 4: Detail of an Arch of Faiz Mahal Khairpur



Figure 5: Detail of an Balcony of Faiz Mahal Khairpur



Figure 6: Detail of an Balcony of Faiz Mahal Khairpur



***Ground Floor Construction and Decoration***

The magnified main hall 43'×50' with side corridor 8'-6" from both sides is commonly used as drawing hall with furniture all around, and display of paintings, models etc. There are four suits at both sides with provision of two rooms in each suit measuring 13'-6"×14'-0" either side with attached bath are provided. All four suits have spacious bath rooms divided in two sections with door in between, and back door for direct cleaning from rear side and window in other section. One section of bath room has provision of bath tub and wash basin and white glazed tiles to floor and walls up to height. There is a verandah joint with main front and directly opens to main verandah as well as main hall. Corners have stair case box with doors and small store attached to it within that box. All floors of main hall and side suits were colorful cemented floral tiles which are now provided in front verandah and all rooms as well as hall floors are replaced.

***First Floor Construction and Decoration***

First floor comprises of various levels. Roof of rear bath rooms and L-shaped verandah both sides is at 16 feet. Top level is finished with floral tiles laid in patterns. Same verandah roof is connected from both sides to corridor roof all around the hall one step height up i.e. 15'-6" with same pattern floral tiles. The height of main rooms of suits is raised up 5'-0" more and has roof at 20 feet top levels, finished with brick tiles. The top of fire chimneys of rooms are visible at this roof. There raised roof of bed rooms serve the ventilation through ventilators provided in all suits. Both extreme corners have provision of spiral stairs inside square chamber with direct approach to each level of first floor, as well as second floor of corner rooms at top, leading to kiosks, also where stair closes forming canopy all around, where from columns and arches support the cupolas on both sides.

***Second Floor Construction and Decoration***

There is provision of one room with attached bath and projected slopped (tapered) front verandah, over the first set of suits. The main hall and gallery around it has roof at 12 feet top

levels. Straight flight with pipe railing from first floor leads both sides to top floor of main hall. Full area of this floor is well finished with brick tiles in patterns. Its projected portion over porch raised by 12 inches, has another structure with decorated canopy windows from three sides and brick finished wall with three doors and two windows towards roof side. Outer corners above top of main columns have beautiful kiosk arches finished with small cupolas. Two rooms which are symmetrical in structure are raised to both corners of backside over main hall roof to beautify the rear side of building all along the projection of typical columns, which are well surface decorated.

### ***Third Floor Construction and Decoration***

The final roof at 47 ft. height over projected portion over porch in front accommodates two cupolas in front corners over base of main columns and two square kiosks Structure at rear corners. Its frontage has crown like structure, forming beautiful design pattern as center of entire building symmetrical in all features from ground level to apex, equally balanced both sides. It is finished with projected canopy with 1'-6" as parapet wall all around with floral pieces. Final roofs of both rear room structure has square, Kiosk with cupola at two corners over top of main columns. It is finished with projected canopy all around with 1' -6" parapet wall with patterns of solid bricks. All the main roof levels are finished with canopy, projected outside in patterns, different for each floor and runs through all around the entire building from four sides. All the parapet walls are in panels, finished with rounded coping bricks with floral patterns at each column of panel. All the cupolas have pointed neels, with series of flowers and pointed structure at top. Both side corridors are included in main hall to serve as galleries, with decorated fire places both sides.

At the top roof, main hall is providing upper floor of gallery all around with direct vision to hall. There are heavy girders in longer directions and joists run to receive roof tiles. The main hall has false roof with tin sheets having molded flower patterns with colorful finish. The central porch projected 17 feet outside 30 feet wide is the main feature of the whole building with projected, and

beautifully decorated floral pattered balconies from three sides, one at corridor level (15 ft high) other at main hall roof level (32 ft high). Front porch columns symmetrically go up to final roof and one floor further 15 ft high (57 ft high), with 1'-6" projected cornices all around. Another main feature of typical heavy brick columns in pairs with V-shape brick patterns projected on equal intervals are the main beauty of this huge complex. These columns with heavy square base and lotus bud type floral base cup are provided at extreme corners forming a tower for staircases either side having balconies at each floor level with typical projections. It has further more watch tower square room 13 ft high with final cornice projected all around and main central cupola (tomb) with four floral moldings at corners. Three beautiful corner lanterns at top floor level and arched opening doors to all four sides. Symbolical pair of columns up to main hall roof are elevated both sides at corners of hall, which are again repeated at the edges of projected verandah up to corridor level, ending with raised plate from all along parapet wall to front side. The most peculiar and typical feature of all these columns is the square foundations with various projections and three inch wide floral bed running all around the base of the building at this level. The octagonal lotus floral leaves bottom above square pedestal form base of column unto 4'-0 levels from floor level. The stem from 4'-0 to 15'-0 is provided with projected (raised) V-shape spirals 3" thick all around with gap of 3" width. Internal octagonal surface of column is 2'-0 dia and external dia 2'-6". The same pattern of spirals is repeated in all the stems after each floor. The base of various patterns of projection and grooves is separately provided on each floor.

### ***Parapet Walls***

All sides of building are balanced and equally treated with multifold arches beautified with perforated parapet walls high in panels. Roof of bed rooms and main hall is controlled with another perforated parapet wall with raised floral patterns over projected columns. The main hall roof at centre is beautified with high parapet walls with large size of perforated *jallies* all around

projected outside with wooden decorative patterns and also projected downwards.

### ***Ventilators and Fancy Lights***

This is another aspect of beauty; all the doors and windows have glazed fan lights above the heights of doors and windows mostly semicircular for bed rooms, segmental for windows, and equilateral type in main hall, all around. All the rooms have ventilators both sides through and through in series so much so that upper corridor balcony all around hall have large size ventilators on east and west side and plenty of windows on back side and door openings to frontage. All the products are designed with skilled craftsmanship and decorated with highly aesthetical approach.

### ***Brick Masonry Work***

The most valuable material is the use of red bricks, in all above features, along with construction of walls, columns, parapets, projections, floral patterns and moldings. All the bricks and floral patterns are molded in required shapes before the firing.

### ***Doors and Windows***

All the windows and doors of the building are made with teak wood surmounted with arches semicircular, equilateral and pointed Brick arches of various types. All type of wood work has been done by the Kashmiri Artisans at that time (Interview 10 December 2013). Almost all the doors are solid paneled and double shutter. Upper portion of fanlight is protected with radiating iron bars, glazed in color glasses. Glazed panels are also decorated with wooden battened patterns both-in doors and windows. Rear side ground floor windows are casement type projected outside with main window and side windows. All other windows on various floors are covered with wooden shades having balusters projected downwards in various patterns. Main doors approaching to outsides are supported with fly proof shutters in wooden frames.

## CONCLUSION

Faiz Mahal is unique for its beautiful architecture and its decorative patterns, well balanced symmetrical building with huge columns of central middle hall divided in equal sections with variety of arches, balconies, projections, cornices, cupolas and kiosks, all these things make it a wonderful piece of art that makes it different in a sense that there is no other architectural monument which is comparable to this one in Sindh. It is full of architectural and engineering skills, from ground level to third floor, decorated in red bricks, moldings with uniform design patterns, especially the surface decoration is quite remarkable which reflects the socio-cultural elements of Sindh as well as art and architecture. This monument has symbolic features of the architectural interest and love of royal Talpur families towards art, architecture, floral decorations in relief form with gold and silver colors upon the surfaces. Mir Faiz Mohammad Khan who constructed this art piece of architecture, was also fond of poetry, therefore, the reflections of his poetic nature can easily be seen in whole building. The hiring of Sikh architecture and craftsman from Jodhpur and Bahawalpur tells us the cultural communication of artistic traditions of Indian Sub-continent and in those days Sindh was not faraway since the artistic atmosphere as it is true that Sindh has been the cradle of arts and crafts from the time immemorial. As the people of Indus valley were the great town planners, builders, engineers, who got inspiration from the contemporary cultures. Hence Faiz Mahal is only one of the most significant art pieces of its own kind in Sindh.

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