



A Significant Study of “*Lat ki Masjid*” under Firuz Shah Tughluq

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Abstract: This paper basically comprised a detailed study of the architecture of “*Lat ki Masjid*” which was constructed under Firuz Shah Tughluq. This paper is mainly about the mosque architecture under Firuz Shah Tughluq with special reference to “*Lat ki Masjid*.” As Firuz Shah was a religious man, so he took an interest in erecting many mosques at different places, for instance, Firozshah Kotla, Firozabad, Jahanpanah, and Hissar Firuza, etc. Here is the main concern about the significance of the Mosque erected in Hissar Firuza, particularly Lat Ki Masjid. The Lat ki Masjid is the major Mosque of the palace complex situated in Hissar Firuza, and this Mosque is located to the east of the south court, opposite the Talaki Gate. The main features comprised a unique combination of structures, an L-Shaped ablution tank, and *Lat*. The Mosque is called after the *Lat* (Pillar).

Keywords: *Lat*, Architecture, Mosque, *Hissar-i-Firuza*.

Introduction:

Mosques were the first structures in India associated with Muslim builders. The structural and architectural shapes, building materials, and decoration system presented serious challenges to the builders in the early stages. Consequently, The Turks relied entirely on the local craftsmen to complete their work in the traditional Islamic style and design for the purposes of construction. They also accepted the new, quite different indigenous style technique.¹

In India, stone was mostly used for construction. Conveniently, trabeate, or simple pillars and lintels, were used in the construction process. A large mosque was built using stones depicting characteristic Hindu motifs and figures that had been reassembled and placed around a court.²

There was no dome, arch, or other distinguishing feature of a mosque, but in 1199 A.D., Aibak constructed an arcade to the western colonnade's facade that included a central arch flanked on either side by two minor arches. As a result, a formal sanctuary (Liwan, the pillared cloisters of a mosque) was built from an iron pillar and placed just in front of the main arch.³ Its ornamentation method was restricted to surface ornamentations. Arabesque (decoration with the imaginative intertwining of the ornamental components) and floral patterns of many designs, inscriptions in various scripts, enamel tiles of various colours, gilding (a layer of gold), painting, inlay, and Pietra-dura were the essential qualities. Islam forbids the use of sculpture and representations of people and animals.

Islamic architecture was found in a unique setting at the beginning of the 13th century; the Mosque's architecture was also completely altered, especially on the structural side. Islamic art and architecture underwent a transformation and evolved into a fully established style. During the 13th century or a little later, we discover a mosque that was constructed totally following Islamic principles, with Arches and Domes that are purely Islamic in design. Due to the extension and consolidation of Muslim power throughout the land during the course of the next two centuries, there was a significant increase in architectural activity.⁴

The construction of buildings during the start of the 14th century can be seen as Islamic architecture evolving. The factors led to the Tughluqs were inferior to the Khiljis in terms of quality, and they lacked the resources to fund their architectural designs. This transformation included the economy, religion, capital transfers, the loss of skilled artisans, and contacts between the south and the north. The Tughluqs were not as good as the Khiljis, and they had not enough money for their architectural plans.⁵ Consequently, the Tughluqs' structures appeared less pristine and graceful than those of the Khiljis.

Firuzshah Tughlaq had a devoted, moralistic bent of mind and was also called the prince of builders. His enthusiasm and efforts in building and construction know hardly any parallel in Delhi. Despite the conquests and victories, no other king put so much effort into construction activities that Firuzshah built several cities, forts, royal palaces, dams, mosques, tombs, and other structures. The Sultan established the towns of Firuzabad, Fatehabad, Jaunpur, and Hissar Firuza.

Firuzshah Tughlaq constructed different kinds of buildings in a specific style with the help of his Prime Minister Khan-i- Jahan Junan Shah. He also erected seven mosques in Delhi. Malik Ghazi Shahna and Zahir Saundhar were the chief architects of Firuzshah Tughlaq.⁶ His other construction works include:

In 1354 A.D., in his new city's capital, Jami Masjid, was built in Firozshah Kotla.

Begum Puri Masjid is a mosque in Begumpur village that was built in 1387 AD and is situated on Sri Aurobindo Marg.

The Kalu Sarai Masjid was built in 1387 and is situated on Mahrauli Road in Kalu Sarai.

The tomb of his son Fateh Khan was also constructed by Firuzshah Tughlaq, as was Qadam Sharif (the Prophet PBUH's footprint). He built a mosque, a Madrasa, and a Hauz inside this tomb in 1374. It is situated in the area known as Nabi Karim.

On the eastern side of Basti Nizamuddin, the Kali Masjid was built. An inscription on its eastern gate dates the building to 1370–1371 A.D.

The Khirki Masjid was established around 1375 AD on the northern edge of the Khirki village.

The Kalan Masjid, which is next to the Turkman gate in Shahjahanabad, features an inscription on its eastern gate that dates its construction to June 28, 1387 AD.

The most important features of these mosques are:

The side walls feature three arched facades, while the prayer hall or Qibla wall has five. Vaults are in the transitional stage. Therefore, each bay has four arched arches that resemble the old *Chahartaq* of Iranian art.

The arched facades are protected on all sides by Stone Chhajja, supported by bracket Stone.

The basement had a full storey, and a high flight of steps leading to the entrance was on a very high plinth.

Stone pillars were employed extensively in the interior design, along with rubble and mortar for the construction.

Conical bastions at the corners, batter on the exterior walls, and tapering turrets affixed to the quoins of the entryway.

Cloisters and sanctuary are divided into square bays covered with cupolas; no other dome exists.

As a result, four distinct Tughluq mosque types can be distinguished and their particular variations. All of them were built with the same fundamental components: enormous piers, stucco on the inside and exterior, rubble masonry, and low domes. Tughluq architects benefited greatly from the fact that even the largest mosques and tombs were typically constructed in an extraordinarily short amount of time.⁷

Islamic architecture is characterized by the arch, dome, vault, and minaret combined into a square, octagonal, or rectangular plan. The arches and domes on the monuments built during Firuzshah Tughluq's reign are flawless. The arrangements for the arch structure during Firuzshah Tughluq were by the cross beam at the springing level. The present study investigates the architectural features and techniques of the "*Lat ki Masjid*."

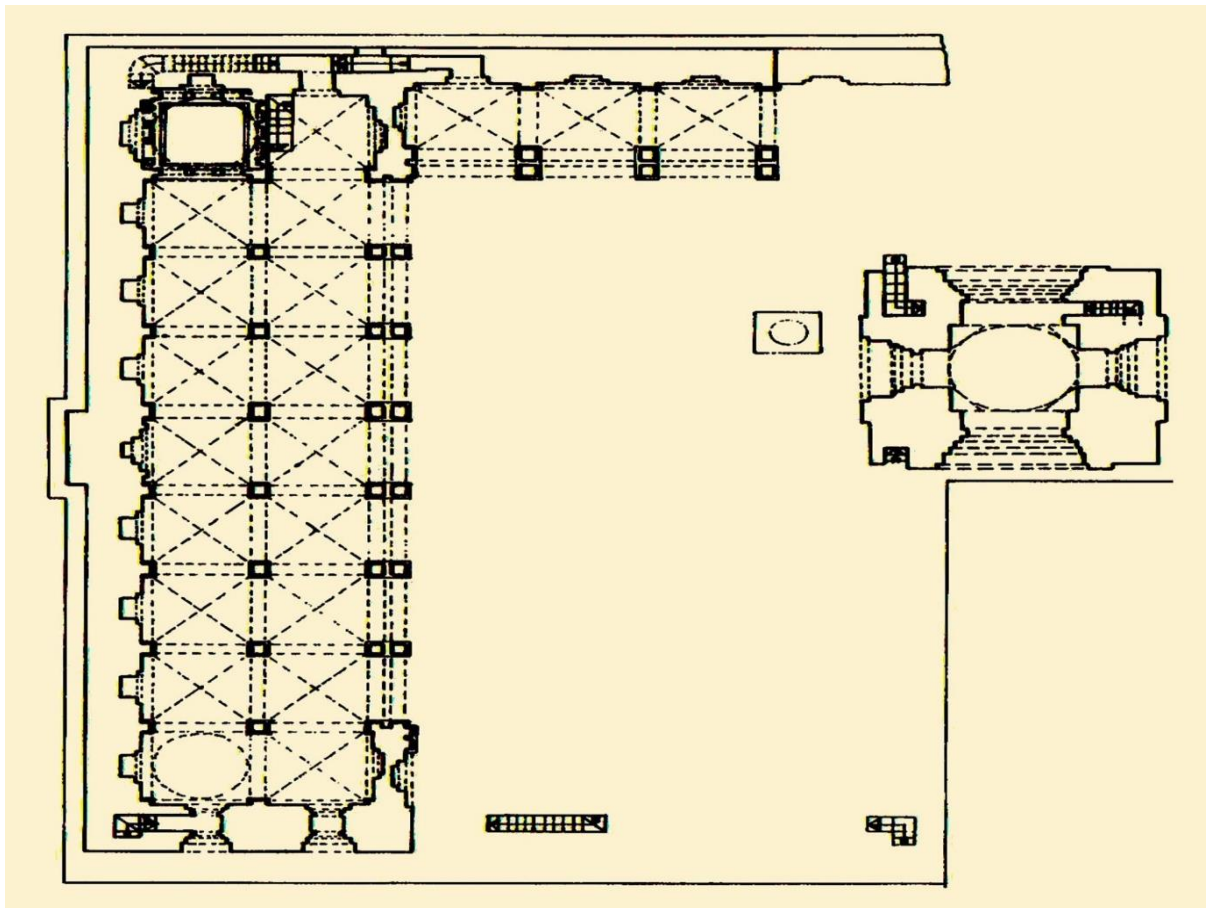
The Lat ki Masjid is the main Mosque within the Hissar Firuza royal complex. Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq excelled at construction. Hissar Firuza was one of the planned royal cities erected by

Firuzshah Tughluq. He built the city in the desert region, perhaps for his hunting operations. East of the South Court and just opposite the Talaki Gate is the Lat ki Masjid (Plate I). The name of the Mosque is derived from the *Lat*, a reconstructed ancient column located in the northeast corner of its courtyard. A well-known monument in Hissar (Figure I), Lat ki Masjid has drawn the interest of numerous scholars.⁸

The column is a 13.75-meter-tall tapering cylinder with four registers, a finial, and an iron shaft at the top. The lower register is a 3.30-meter-tall, single-piece of yellow stone that was once an ancient shaft that has been altered. There is currently no epigraph on the stone's surface because of how extensively it has been damaged. Cunningham, however, gives his reading of many brief inscriptions, which he concludes were written by pilgrims to the ancient site of the column in the 1st century A.D. He also reveals that the stone may be part of the shaft, the other part of which is constructed at Fatehabad. Cunningham's suggestion may be correct since the column at Fatehabad is in many ways comparable to the column at Hisar, and its lower register is also part of the shaft of an ancient column. It is once again a single piece of yellow stone. In Hissar, no record exists that Firuz Shah constructed the Lat ki Masjid column. Still, the attribution is not without foundation, as it was his practice to reconstruct ancient columns. Apart from the one at Fatehabad, other examples are found at the site of his capital Firuzabad,⁹ and at the *Kushk-i-Shikar*¹⁰ in Delhi, and another in Jaunpur, constructed by Ibrahim Naib Barbak, Firuz Shah's half-brother, and his governor of the area.¹¹



Plate 1 Lat ki Masjid with *Lat* (Pillar)



Red sandstone drums in three registers with contrasting red and white stone bands may be seen in the Lat ki Masjid column, which is located above the ancient shaft. The lowest of the ornamented bands has rows of diamond and disc motifs and a row of niches, resembling in miniature the gallery of a minaret; although the column is solid and does not, of course, function as a *mi'dhana*, the tower for the call to prayer.¹²

The Lat ki Masjid is constructed on a platform with huge walls, battered on the outside. The structure as it now has the remnants of a northern wing and a prayer hall on the western side of a courtyard. Sandstone blocks make up the Mosque's walls up to the level of the vaults' springing, but baked red brick covered in plaster makes up the top portions of the walls, the vaults, and the roof. The pink monolithic sandstone pillars supporting the arches may be reused material from ancient temples. The shafts of the pillars are divided into four registers, square, octagonal, sixteen-sided, and round. On the top of the shafts are convex fluted capitals supporting ante capitals in the form of square blocks. The columns are all of a similar type, but slight variations in their decorations.

Around the courtyard, a double row of pillars is used. The red sandstone slabs used on the lower surface of the inner walls and the pierced stonework screen in the window openings are carved specifically for the building, and the screens have geometric designs. The central mihrab of the Mosque is rectangular in plan and imitated behind the qibla wall. The ceiling of the Mosque is cross-vaulted except for the northwest and northeast corners, each of which has a small dome standing on pendentives. The plaster of the arches and vaults appears to have been painted originally. Evidence of red paint could still be seen but

might be of a later period. The central mihrab of the Mosque is rectangular in plan and projects behind the qibla wall. It is built out of carved stone and consists of a series of lobed arches set in a rectangular frame. This frame and the innermost arch rest on pilasters carved in the form of wooden columns with vase-shaped bases and capitals. The other bays have smaller secondary mihrabs and small window openings with pierced stonework screens above them. In the southern wall of the prayer hall are two arched doors, both with an additional cross lintel at the level of the springing of the arch.¹³

In the northern corner is a small gallery on the ground floor standing on eight square pillars and eight pilasters. This gallery provides a small hidden area and has its mihrabs, the outer arch of which is decorated with a spearhead fringe. On either side of the mihrab is a niche for candles or lamps. On the northern wing of the Mosque, only three bays remain.

CONCLUSION:

However, the remainder of the wall on the eastern side signifies that the building continued for at least one bay. The presence of water pipes, an L-shaped tank, and a pond indicate that water played a significant role in the Lat ki Masjid. Despite not being wholly demolished, the Mosque is one of the town's finest examples of Firuzian architecture. The amalgamation of materials, with stone used for its durability and color and its appropriateness for controlled engraved ornaments, exemplifies Firuz Shah's taste for strong, symmetrical buildings enhanced by creative changes.¹⁴

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