



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Treasures of Talpur Ameers: In context to Art and Architecture of Shish Mahal, Khairpur, Sindh

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## ABSTRACT

The land of Sindh is rich in agriculture and heritage both tangible and intangible as cultural settlement and built heritage as tombs / shrines mosques palaces forts and grave yards. And was occupied by various dynasties from Arabs 711 AD to the present era ruled by indigenous people or alien people in whom Talpur dynasty is one of them rule over Sindh from 1843-1947 AD. First ruler of Talpur dynasty Mir Fatah Ali Khan Talpur, separates the region into three divisions Khairpur (Suhrabani) , Mirpur Khas (Mankani) and Hyderabad (Shahdadani). The Ameers of Khairpur built forts and luxurious palaces and Shahi Palaces, in which Shish Mahal is one of them located in Taluka Kotdiji, District Khairpur. This Palace is beautifully decorated from inside with their good architecture. The objective of this research is to highlight the main features of architecture, scientific documentation and focusing the details of design and decoration. In construction mud bricks with mortar with lime plaster are used and decorated in fantastic floral patterns and embroidery decoration. and to document the layout plan of through GPS and measurements are taken all features drawings photographic Study research provides the data those who are interested in archaeological architectural study of Talpur dynasty of Khairpur, Sindh.

## KEYWORDS

Archaeology, Architecture, Embroidery, History, Paintings

## Introduction

After the battle of Hallani and Behlani near present Taluka of Mehrabpur, District Naushehro Feroz in 1783 AD between Balouch Ameers including Talpur dynasty and Kalhoras. Balouch chiefs win the battle and Kalhoras defeated. Balouch chiefs decided to nominate Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur as ruler Known as Fateh-e-Sindh (Sheedai Moulai, 2002). Later, he separate the region into three small units as handed over to his family as Hyderabad was handed over the Mir Shahdad Khan called Shahdadani Talpurs, Manik Khan given the area called Mankani Talpurs and present Khairpur was under the control of Mir Suhrah Khan Talpur called Suhrabani. While, the early name of the Khairpur was Suhrah pur (Ahmrd, 2012).

From Mir Suhrah Khan to present King Mir Ali Murad Khan (1783 1958 AD) constructed forts, and palaces of Shahi Mahal which is one of the many splendid edifices scattered throughout the Khairpur district (Fig#1). The main hall of the edifice has exquisite craft work on the walls and roof. .The distinctive feature of the Mahal, which distinguish it form of other buildings is the glass and tiny pieces of the mirrors which has been used

immensely and with the crafted patterns, this is why the building called Shish Mahal. The magnificent architecture shows that the rulers of the Talpur dynasty were patterns of art & crafts and classical architecture (Hami, 1994) but unfortunately, unlike Faiz Mahal, the Shish Mahal is deteriorating; the edifice has lost its beauty. It is red brick boundary walls masonry has eroded over time, and has lost height due to the repeated road constructions beside them. Concerned authority has not any acknowledge about the notable value of this artistic heritage to understand techniques of preservation. If the concerned authority protect it, in the historical and archaeological value will be raised and increased the tourism in the region. In this aim, we can get steps to stop converting position of ruins, waiting to be found the exact problems.

### **Literature Review**

The history of Sindh is beginning from the arrival of Arab General Ummad uddin Muhammad Bin Qasim in early 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. They rule over Sindh from 712 AD to 1050 AD with three dynasties as Ummaid, Abbasid and Habbaries. After these dynasties Sindh came under the power of local tribes of Sindh as Samma and Soomra again rule three centuries rule. For short time, Argun and Turkhan came is power and rule over Sindh, Mughal were already in power in India and they dominated over Sindh appointed two Governor as Mir Masoom Bakhari at Bakhar – Sukkur and Shah Jehon at Thatta. That time Thatta was well developed and planned city of Sindh and famous for trade and commerce and religious centre. Later, Kalhoras came and control the region of Sindh. His last ruler Mian Abdul Nabi was week. At the battle of Behlani near Hallani of present District Naushahroferoze Sindh some Balouch united tribes conquered and decided to hand over the powers of Sindh to Talpur selected Mir Faheh Ali Khan Talpur as a ruler of Sindh. He divided the territory of Sindh into three parts within family as Hyderabad was handed over Mir Shahdah Khan called Shahdadani Talpur Mirpurkhas was handed over to Tharo Khan and Manik Khan called Mankani Talpurs and Khairpur was handed over to Suhrab Khan called Suhrabani Talpur. And later at the battle of Miani and Douba Bertisher take over Sindh to 1947.

During the period of Talpur built many palaces in which Shesh Mahal is one of them. It is fortified with mud clay and mud bricks outside lime mortar inside beautiful decorated. A famous writer Naseem Amrohvi in his book *Tarikh Khairpur* mention the history of the Ammers of Khairpur (Amrohvi 1958) and Dr Atta Muhammad Hami in his Ph.D dissertation he discuss in details not only the Shesh Mahal but he focus all types of Architectural remains (Hami (1994)

### **Material and Methods**

For this, study researcher uses both methodology used as qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Researcher use relevant historical books and collected the data from various libraries revenue records and discuss with historians and scholars of the region and also uses scientific tools as GPS and measuring kits to documentation and also uses cartographic work to draw the drawings and photographic documentation.

### **The Plan of Mahal**

The various heritages of Talpur period are in square in plan ancestrally they had built buildings in the plan and maximally, each heritage had same similar of plan of construction. Other historical places of Sindh have same architectural influence which is matched with Mughal architecture (Plan#01). Kalhoras and Talpurs architecture's had not too difference in their construction of plan, that why, Talpur had also followed Kalhora's

similarities in the constructions of places. The monuments of Talpurs in the Khairpur state as Faiz Mahal, Dilshad Manzil, Shish Mahal at Kot Bungalow is also a palace of the state which is in square in plan. Four sides of the palace are equal in their length, width and height.

### **Architectural Features**

The made of backed -bricks pathway leads to end in front of the wooden gate which can hardly keep away non-permitted persons. The red colour wall which had surrounded of the Mahal has been spoilt. The whole building is interacted with Jali work. Arches are particularly multi fold arches on the front façade constantly decorate the halls. The square based small towers on the four corners upper as watch towers are extended to bond with parapets of walls. The central planned verandas highlight the significant of the main elevation and acts as crowning elemental feature of the Mahal. The exterior of the Mahal is comparatively so simple and all efforts are a focused on the interior.

The main building over 1071 square feet area at ground with central hall of Mahal 50x20 feet having corridor all around connected at ground floor as well top roof around as a valet arches leading to main roof of central hall at 22 feet height. All around main hall has only nine rooms the each room with each size of 15-0 x 15-0 feet each with attached baths on either side or the hall having access strip in front with a number of open doors and windows all round. Full building is in accord on either, side from central point each is in veneration inside and outside.

Shish Mahal even today in present condition in exclusive sample of architecture splendour, it is equal balanced building of equipoise on either cross with giant lime-stone and marble, mortar columns of central middle hall divided in equivalent sections with divergence of arches, balconies, projections, full of architectural decorative adornments, jallies columns, cornices, roofs and kiosks. Whole of the structure from ground level to ceiling is full work and using skills of construction purely beard bricks masonry walls made in backed- and red bricks, it ornamented with uniformed design and standard - decoration rhythm indoor or outdoor with fine variety of architecture. It is visible clearly artist work of architecture in the every corner of the building. In the structure from ground level to the top -roof is constructed purely of clay-mud backed bricks, red burnt bricks, and sand stone, lime stone and sand mortar (Chughatai, 1972) The interior hall poses enormous marble with decorative dice of glasses and the facade of interior of the hall is erected with moulded red bricks with plaster of marble pieces and mixed to use also sand stone. In the ceiling of the main hall, lime plaster was applied with rowed of girders and jolts. The complete erection of building is made of red burnt bricks, baked -clay mud bricks and used also limestone to bond the rows of walls. All the opening are based on the kind of diversified arches, which are decorated with marvellous design and shape as, semi-circular, circular and built in carved as well retraced brick work to procedure the benefits elevation of the Mahal (Ahmrd, 2012).

There are four ensembles at both sides with donation, of dual rooms in each getup measuring 12.4x12.0 either side with closed bath are on the side room. All two suits have specious bath-rooms built wide rooms in two sections with door in between and back door for cleaning from tear side and window in other section. One section of left section of bathroom has provision of bath-tab. The second right proton has also an half -room reserved for purpose of one more bathroom and where also a large tub is available. The centrally hall jointed with multi - rows of arches around the centre, and the surrounding the centre shows up- falls style arch-way doors constructed like Islamic religious place

mosque, where this splendid point of building shows symbol of royal construction of the royal palace (Soomro, 2013).

The building is one of the examples of spectacular architecture of the dynasty of Sindh, it is accepted to see immense piece of decorative elements in the building which identified the proof of the past. Interior of central hall has plenty numbers of hand painted tiles, on the ceiling, and very impressive is witness of craft is wooden carved doors and tinted windows, and with presence of colourful painting, it is all edifice of the building.

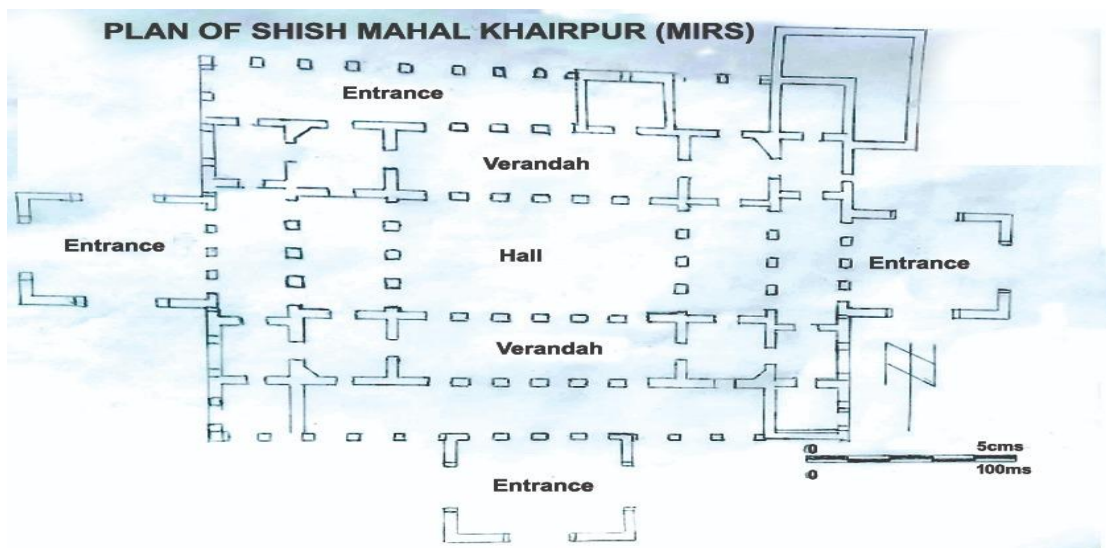
The corridor is flourished with colourful and designed floral patterns. The characteristic features of the Mahal, seems differences of other buildings of the state, notice as glasses in tiny pieces and mirror work on the walls and ceilings which had been designed by hand crafted patterns (Balouch, 2004).

### The architectural Details

The figures of the site are described with explanation of architecture and highlighted in its features of characteristic elements with periodical invasion through legacy of the time. It is also notified that enough similarities of art and architecture had borrowed from other dynasties which were ruled contemporary.



Fig#1: The main gate of the Shish Mahal looking west side.



Plan#1 Shows Layout Plan of the Mahal

A mud - made path way starts from the national highway. The pathway ends to access western gate. The western gate of the Mahal takes to reach at Mahal only twenty minutes from this pathway in walking distance. The leading pathway of Mahal brims in mud when it rains. It has not built a cement blocked pathway to access easy on the carriage.

### Gates of the Mahal

The three gates of the palace were made of the pavilion-type round-arches on the four sides of the palace, rose on the plinth of the centre of the building and extended to seem as pavilion of the Mughal garden. Each gate has surfaced floor of roof- bricks. And flights of a few steps leads to the round-arches to the entrances under the corridor of the Mahal, the round shape of arches erected above the each door and the each door made of wood these had been colour with half white colour recently by concern authority. The wooden door of the each entrance entirely closed with corridors of the main hall. The third gate was erected on the building due to edifice of the more extension to attractive to building. Or might be erected to reach easily on the Mahal, and could be possible reason of the security, because there was no any strong boundary around the garden of the Mahal (Fig#2)



Fig#2: The eastern side of the gate of the Mahal.

### Arch Designs

Arch is main feature of the Muslim architecture; Egyptian and Greek were using one kind of the simple shade of round mark in their buildings to symbolize importance of their places. With passage of time, the Roman dynastic rulers also used the semi-circular arch in their buildings. When Muslims came in the power in 6<sup>th</sup> century and it had been

introduced various types of arches in their cultures, as aims to construct arch to indicate and symbolize of bravery because, the arch hanging load of chain, and never sleep but always stand in the huge complex of walls. In the culture of Muslim rulers made form of different designs of arches in there palaces, mosques, forts, castles and shrines. The first invaded different designs of arches in the Umayyad density to have had built mosques tombs in the Syria, Iraq and Span and as well subcontinent when if we see first mosque in the subcontinent, it was Bhanbhore mosque in Thatta Sindh, where is erected small opening arch in the mosque.

In the subcontinent, Muslims rulers had launched tradition to use various types of design of arches in their monuments. From sultaate period to Mughal period (1200-100 AD) they had use different terms and elements in the beautiful way.

### Arches

The narrow concentrated of thrust of vaulted on vertical line that supports by rising of butters. .This kind of arch was permitted lessening of lateral thrust of foundation in the period Gothic architecture. Under the more arches, there has been sighted a little segmental arch above the door. Additionally, it was constructed vastly eternal arch due to resolving of difficulty of bearing level of columns to have a set series of vaulted arches to be suitable in the ground (Fig#3).

### Exterior façade of the Mahal

The exterior portion of the building is unique to have a long band of the walls under the nook-shaft of pillars which gives an attractive look of a vault of arches in series. Above of spandrel the triangular space closed by the curve of an arch and the square shape of ventilations are enclosed the facade (Shaikh, 2001).

The spandrel had been depicted with windows, and these windows are divided into four wooden grills and opened to use for ventilation purpose. These windows are covered expertly in the wooden frames with half lin56tel of the arch. The arches have a look of a half- broken hole in the wall. One more notable feature is sighted in these arches as false arches which can be called "blind arches". Blind arches are erected between the rows of the windows and doors.



Fig#3 Exterior view of facade of the building

### The portal views of Mahal

To the northern side of the Mahal, a row of cinquefoil arches are erected on the dado platform of the building. The arches are constructed in material of usage lime stone. These arches are entirely present on the northern side and a half set of these arch are also available in southern side. The strait row of arches is erected on the eastern side, where the large number of bricks has fallen from the part of walls. Cinquefoil arches firstly meet us in the Mughal monuments in like, Lahore fort, especially in which have Diwan-e Khas and Shish Mahal. The outer wall- arches are erected for purpose to have strong base columns in the support of ceiling. These columns are made of lime-color in especially bright-white (Grhani, 2008).

Upper portion of the cinquefoil arches have a jali work which is designed in the rectangular type of ventilations. Above the ventilation, with straight border of jali which is decorated with net carnation bordered with large band of parapets and are erected on the top layer of ceiling. Each net of jali is segmented with small plinth of pinnacle (Fig#4)



Fig#4 Portal view from northern side

The architectural pieces of decoration are censored and coordinated with precision of handcrafts, and had focused to use of massive skills in the gradation shape to apply cement with tiles. It is intensified in modification to have the realism of Indigenous hierarchy which was tended in the culture of the state to follow style in the royal palace. In reason that public visit to it it's naturally phenomena and become impress to know their culture. In contrast between colourful design and toneless design which have differed roots of carvings to light with beauty and it has been included to make interested in the work of architecture in the different parts of the building (Brown, 1956).

White colours of floral arches had been erected in the veranda. The veranda is close with few steps of door and it is enclosed with main hall of the Mahal. In the veranda, there are standing a few multi foil arches. These multi foil arches have been pointed with straight line of purple colour and its colourful beauty reflects attractive scenery in the whole environment of Mahal. It is noted that each column of arch has been made with row of floral design. The row of arches is standing on the square shape of platform, where each arch is 7 feet in height and weight has same 7 feet. Two sides of the hall measures about 173 x 60 with height to close 23 feet totally noted. Another feature is notified in the row of arches that in the veranda has erected the Nook shaft in the two sides of each column.

The purpose of giving nook shaft in each column that made differentiate in other columns of arches. It is a looking like technical pillar and these pillars have been carved with mortar pilaster and attached each side of an arch in equal angle (Khan, 2003).

## Hall

After the crossing verandas initially to reach at Shish Mahal which is so kind moments while entering the Mahal (Fig#5). It is also like the Shish Mahal of Lahore which was built by ShahJahan in Lahore fort. It is not simple, if we visit the Shish Mahal of the Talpurs ruler it is being called by visitor; this is Shish Mahal of Talpurs. This Shish Mahal of Talpurs is going to be described with the plates.



Fig#5 The interior view of hall with floral and embroidery patterns

The main hall of Shish Mahal which is called the Shish Mahal opens out on four sides of flanked or either side by single story having around open galleries and enclosing with four rows of round arches. The Tajar type of the hall is centered in main hall of the Shish Mahal having a lot of mirror work in the ceiling, walls, door, arches, ventilation, floor etc. The important notable feature of this Mahal is the convex glass mosaic workmanship (*Aina Kari*) and stucco tracery as well gilt work. The spandrels of main gates of arches and based of the pillars having double columns with cusped arches and ornamented with Petra dura work and jali work also included. It is so similar in features of the Mahal of Mughal dynasty, Shish Mahal Lahore fort, if we specially focus on the ceiling and its decoration such as *Ainakari* (mirror work). The Mahal was not only built for the living but also one of the rests for guests and foreign delegations (Brown, 1956).

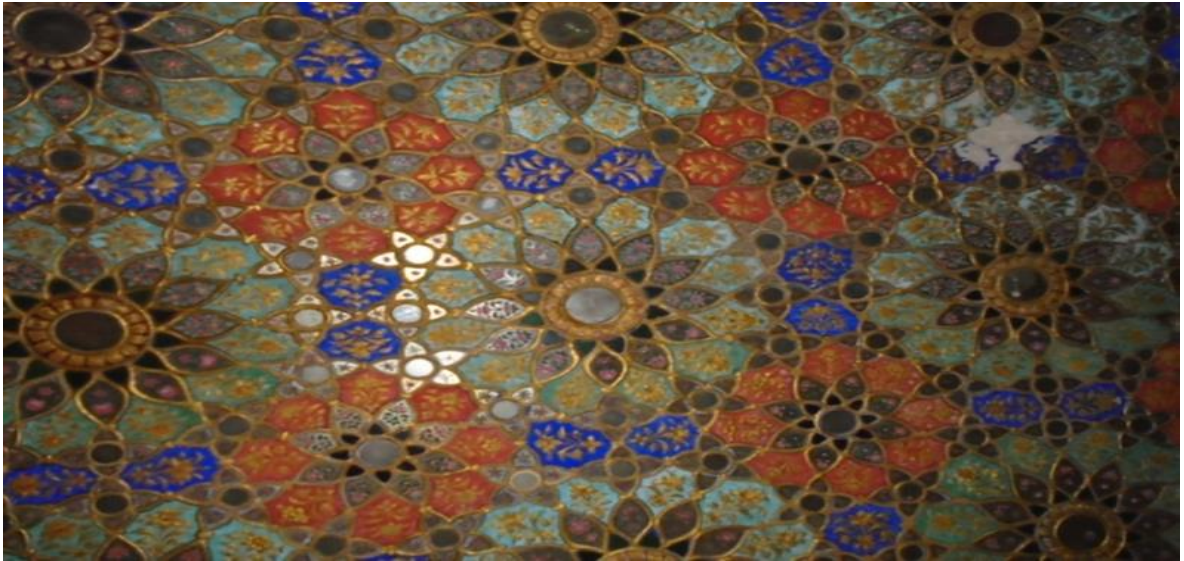
Erecting of Shish Mahal on the six doors on four sides gives good scene of the old tradition of south Asia when Muslims came in subcontinent and had introduced the Islamic art school of thought in Subcontinent to show their sacred symbolizations and began modernized with the different passage of time. Because, design of arches firstly introduced by the Muslims in the subcontinent, latterly was being followed by various Muslim dynasties to build monuments in their ruling (Dani, 1998).

The Shish Mahal of Khairpur was first Mahal in the Sindh which was built in Talpur dynasty in the time of their absolute power in the Sindh. Any no Mahal was built in Sindh like Shish Mahal to remained rule many dynasties. The Shish Mahal is an attractive palace to make a history of their enjoying their lives when they sat on the throne of rule (Dani, Unity and Diversity in Islamic Architecture, 1998) in the state, it itself will tell its important when will you visit it (Allana, 1998).

What kind palace when it was regarding of singing melodies to utilize by the emperors in the time of their royalties of the state, in the occasion of the pleasures (Shaikh, 2001). Decorative ceiling of the Mahal having different kind of decoration and signs of the designs, geometrical pattern hiving with design of flowers and each flower has small roses



of petals in the different piece with construed mirrors and having bunches of roses with central stars. Each stars enclosed with black mirrors and it has also work of blue tiles to symbol the art of central Asia. Blue tiles are given in the corner of each bunches of the flowers. Central part of flower of bunch had goal mirror (Fig# 6,7,8)



**Fig#.6.** Shows various colors and designs of paintings



**Fig#7.** the ceiling decoration of southern veranda

The lush decoration of the ceiling of verandas in the Mahal is so attractive when we see its designs and decorations. It has only blue tiles works, which is mostly used in the monuments of central Asia (Kalhoro, 2004).

The ceiling of the southern veranda has fresco painting to make round leaves with irregular line out of the rose patterns. And other features, having which like rows of bands

with up-down flower chain of multi-derived of rose petals, another small daffodils flowers are seen in the light brown colour. Start line of the band of blue color divided to bunch of flowers into half into bunch flowers in the lower part of the roof.



Fig#8. The ceiling of Veranda. From north

The northern veranda of Mahal has different kinds of elements of the decoration, which has carnation of the tiles and mirrors; the of the architectural features of the Mughal period has in the Mahal which are included as fresco painting, geometrical pattern and these patterns are set as well small dashes of mirrors. Red colours type stars and plant-leaves surrounding circle of mirrors seem with pose in rectangular type panels. Each panel of the ceiling is divided for the difference designs. Each panel has been given borders with different decorations like blue tile and dices of tiny piece of wood and plastic. The blue tiles of usage are given similarity of central Asian art.



Fig#9 Blue star painting in the ceiling.

Fresco painting is called to Naqashi is an art form painted on the walls as well as ceiling of building. It is particular, as it is prepared wet of plaster. The fresco painting is made from fruits and plants and different elements of earth and nature of universe. In these walls has fresco painting to construct of fruits and flowers on the main front of the southern side of the veranda. Square type of ventilation is present on the centre and upper part of the walls and ventilations had been banded with wood. The each upper portion of the wall has decoration of different design as like Fresco painting with carnation of grass and floral motifs and each side of the wall. In between the wall and ceil has three decorative bands. These bands are sorted with light colorful lines and are designed with small stars and arch type stroll lines (Fig#9).

Mirror work on the pillar of interior Shish Mahal is intestine to have rows of little triangular shape of glass into small pieces on the each column of the walls. The mirrors give normal reflects in the darkness of internal parts of the Mahal. Strait belts of the each corner, having blue color bands and these bends are constructed with cement around each column of the mirror. Line of given in both of the side of the belt. Each side of the belt has been covered with of yellow design on the walls (Fig#10).



Fig#10The mirror work on the corner walls of the palace.

### **Jharoka**

A stone window type of Jharoka is art of Indo Islamic architecture of South Asia was used commonly used by The Mughal rulers. It is type of overhang enclosed of balcony in the Mahal. It may be used for the beauties of the buildings. In Jharoka, the windows are covered to use as a balcony purpose. .In the Talpurs dynasty of the Khairpur, many Jharokas are present in the palaces, like in the Faiz Mahal, and Shahi Mahal. These Jharokas are so tremendous in designs. And these are kind larger in different parts of palaces (Ahmrdr, 2012).

The Jharokas of the Shahi Mahal are constructed in the style of Sikh period. When we see its feature of resisted dome with floral type thigh pinnacle is erected. The base is covered with lotus type resisted dome, having stone pillars between these two domes.

### **Results**

During my all field visits, examine and observe many queries as proper uses by owner its security and damages, which was not handled properly features and precious decoration, are alarming recently 2022 heavy monsoon rains destroying the structure.

### **Recommendations**

Researcher observe quick attention is required in this popular palace and decided to documented the Mahal scientifically and give the fruitful suggestions to the concerned local administrations and related department of Government of Sindh for restoration and conservation, preservation of this antiques palace. Researchers also give suggestion to the youth of the region, those who are interested to do more research and to save the cultural heritage and make it tourist spot to enhance the revenue and promote the tourism of the region

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