Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

The Blossoming Legacy of Mughal Era: Floral Motifs on the walls of Palosi Piran Monuments, Peshawar.

Zubaida Mughal*
College of Home Economics, University of Peshawar, Pakistan
Email: zubaidamughal@uop.edu.pk

Dr. Rabia Chishti
College of Home Economics, University of Peshawar, Pakistan
Email: rabiachishti@uop.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The Mughal era which spans almost three centuries from the 16th to the 18th century, had a strong influence on the artistic expression in the Indian subcontinent through its complex cultivation of motifs in architectural decoration, textiles and artifacts embellishment. Among its many creative achievements, floral ornamentation stands out as a defining decorative language. This study examines the decorative motifs of the Mughal era architecture with a particular focus on the floral decorative motifs used in the wall embellishment of Sheikh Imama Uddin's Tomb and the adjacent Mosque. Based on site documentation, visual analysis, and historical sources, the study explores a wide range of motifs to demonstrate the use of floral forms contributed to shaping Mughal creative identity and cultural narratives, emphasizing their lasting legacy. Findings highlight the Mughal synthesis of Persian, Central Asian, and Indian traditions in producing richly symbolic floral designs that reflect both imperial grandeur and spiritual depth.

Keywords: Mughal Architecture, Plosi Piran Monument Complex, Tomb, Mosque, Cultural Heritage, Islamic Decorative Arts, Mughal Floral Motifs

Introduction

The cultural essence of any civilization reflected in its art and architecture, the same is true for Islamic world. Islamic artistic traditions have been intensely inspired by the natural sources from the beginning. The design vocabulary, from the use of geometric patterns to the incorporation of plant and floral motifs, derives its basis from these sources. Plant themes and patterns were extensively used to decorate architecture, art and crafts since the early Islamic period. Artists drew inspiration from various plant and flower kinds over time (Khan, 2018; Matloob, 2024).

Starting in the 7th century, the Islamic dominion rapidly expanded across regions, that possessed rich artistic traditions. In the beginning artisans from these regions employed techniques and semi-naturalistic motifs with which they were already familiar. Islamic art embraced plant inspired themes from diverse artistic traditions

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

including the Byzantine Empire in the eastern Mediterranean, Coptic Egypt and pre-Islamic Sasanian Empire in Iran, and the Roman art. Plant-based designs emarged as a prominent decorative element, accompanying Arabic calligraphy and geometric patterns. Floral motifs had become dominant in Islamic decorative art from the 17th century onwards. These motifs gradually replaced the earlier geometric patterns, known as "girih bandi", although these patterns continued to be used (Koch, 2018, p.25). The Mughal Empire, renowned for its deep admiration for nature, demonstrated this transition in their art and architecture (Koch, 2018; Hashmi, 2018).

Mughal art is a blend of Persian, Central Asian, and indigenous Indian elements. It is a distinct aesthetic language that unified natural elements across various artistic mediums, from paintings to architectural embellishments. The founder of the dynasty Zahir Uddin Babur, expressed his love for nature in detailed descriptions of flora and fauna in his memoirs. His great grandson Jahangir encouraged this tradition by commissioning nature studies, promoting realistic and vibrant floral representations. The floral aesthetic reached its zenith during the reign of Shah Jahan. The Taj Mahal exemplifies this artistic refinement. Its walls are adorned with intricate floral motifs, rendered through marble inlay and relief work. This was the time when a new traditional Islamic style of naturalistic floral design with new artistic trends emerged from the fusion of Persian botanical art and European illustrations (Koch, 2018; Hashmi, 2018; Matloob, 2024).

The Mughal period is regarded as the golden age of the Islamic architecture in the Indian Subcontinent. The Mughals commissioned the construction of tombs, mosques, garden, and forts that exemplify the era's refined test and grandeur. While most of the architectural remains lie in the present-day India, a considerable number of structures also remain in different cities of Pakistan including Lahore, Multan, Thatta and Peshawar. Although, not all of these building were commissioned under the royal patronage, however they still displayed the influences of the Mughal design principles combined with the local architectural traditions. These buildings stand as lasting reminders of the evolution of art and architecture in the region (Shaheen, 2016; Ullah, 2012).

Mughal Monuments at Palosi Piran and its Architectural Decoration

The monument complex belonging to Sheikh Imam Uddin is situated along the old Michini Road in the village of Palosi, a mile from the Agriculture University, Peshawar. These structures are built from small burnt bricks set in mud mortar and originally finished with a thick layer of yellowish plaster, remnants of which can still be seen in certain areas.

The monument complex in Palosi Piran consists of three monumental structures; the tomb of a well-known religious scholar Sheikh Imam Uddin, the tomb of his wife and the adjacent mosque. According to Rehman (1981), the well-known Sheikh was born to Sheikh Kabir (Pir Bala) and Taj Bibi from the Khilil tribe on March 5, 1611 CE. in Budhni near Peshawar. He gained fame as a prominent religious scholar in the region. Thus, when he passed away on January 28, 1650 CE, his disciples, including Shaikh Abd al-Razzaq and Shaikh Abd al-Haq initiated the construction of a grand domed structure over his grave. The construction was directed by Haji Iskandar and Ustad Fateh Muhammad (Lahori), and was completed in 1659 (Rehman, 1981). A nearby

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

pavilion-like structure located to the west of the tomb is thought to be the tomb of his wife. No inscriptions confirm this, and the exact date of her death remains unknown. It is presumed that she lived for several years after her husband's death. The tomb contains a single unbaked grave covered in layers of mud plaster. The structure itself remains devoid of ornamentation.

The third structure in the complex is a three domed mosque located to the west of Shaikh Imam-Uddin's tomb. The mosque is fronted by a paved open platform, enclosed by a one-meter-high wall on three sides. The exact date of the mosque's construction is unknown; however, similarities in style, color palate and techniques, with those found in Sheikh Imam Uddin's tomb, suggests that both the structures were not only built during the same historical period but likely designed and executed by the same architects. (Wahid, 1992; Shaheen, 2016).

Architectural Decoration of Palosi Piran Monuments

The Palosi Piran monuments, specifically the tomb of Sheikh Imam Uddin and the adjacent mosque' embody the sophisticated aesthetic traditions of Mughal architecture in its wall decorations. While externally, these buildings are undecorated, the interior walls displayed extravagant ornamental work featuring a combination of floral and geometrical motifs with vibrant colors. The motifs are applied to the surfaces using a local variation of tempera technique. These decorations are found on the key architectural elements, such as dado panels, arches, spandrels, cornices, and domes. The use of vibrant color palate primarily consisting of red, green and yellow enhances the visual appeal of the patterns. Additionally, animal motifs, including fish and birds, appeared uniquely in the tomb's decoration, adding to its symbolic richness. The tomb and the mosque follow the same style of decoration, though with some variations. The façade is largely plain and undecorated, featuring recessed panels. In contrast interior sanctuaries are adorned with elaborate decorative patterns, prominently features floral and vegetal motifs.

Themes of Decoration

The Palosi Piran Monuments display diverse range of decorative motifs, requiring detailed analysis to understand their stylistic variations and trace their origins and sources of inspiration. These motifs can be broadly divided into floral and geometric categories, each of which can be further subdivided into more specific groups. Among the floral decorations, a wider array of plant motifs is represented, including various types of flowers, trees and leaves, floral scrolls and floral arabesques. Notably, some floral scrolls incorporate bird head designs resembling various birds' species, reflecting symbolic and aesthetic richness. Additionally, ornamental panels are often structured as shoulder-shaped arches, cusped arches, and pointed arches, contributing significantly to the architectural embellishment of the Palosi Piran monuments (Rahman, 1981; Misbah, 2003; Shaheen, 2016).

Research Methodology

This qualitative study employed descriptive and historical analysis to investigate the floral designs of Palosi Piran Monuments.

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Data Collection

To document the floral motifs and trace their origin, a combination of field investigation and archival study was conducted:

Field visits and photographic documentation:

A site visit was made to document floral designs on the monument's walls. High-resolution pictures were used to capture delicate design elements. Motif placements, compositional arrangements, and stylistic variants were identified.

Historical & Archival Research:

Existing literature, historical records, and previous studies on Mughal and regional architectural ornamentation were reviewed. A Comparative analysis with floral motifs from Mughal-era monuments, manuscripts, and decorative arts was conducted to identify stylistic influences and artistic continuity.

Floral Motif Analysis

Stylistic Categorization: The decorative themes were categorized on the basis of structure, stylization and compositional framework

Visual Analysis: The decorative themes specifically the floral were analyzed within the lens of the iconic Mughal style and the influence of Islamic Architecture.

Symbolic Interpretation: Analyzing the historical references and scholarly interpretations helped to understanding the cultural and artistic significance of the architectural themes in the decoration.

Data Interpretation.

The outcomes were synthesized using the descriptive analysis, which reveal the major stylistic characteristics, influences from the past and connections to the Mughal and broader Islamic ornamental traditions. The study also the relevancy of motifs to the local heritage and their importance in architectural embellishment

Literature Review

Floral decoration in the Islamic Decorative Vocabulary

Muslim artisans skillfully employed floral ornamentation across a wide variety of artifacts from the early Islamic period. This practice was driven by two key factors: first, the prohibition of figural representation in Islamic art, and second, due to the influence of artistic traditions from regions conquered by the Muslims. Naturalistic vegetal motifs, borrowed from Sassanid and Byzantine artistic traditions, were also an essential element of early Islamic architecture, as evidenced in the Dome of the Rock (691 CE), Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Umayyad Mosque (709 CE). The most common motifs include palm, pear, and acanthus trees, while vine leaves decorate the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. In a similar way, the floor mosaic from the bath at Khirbat al-Mafjar reveals a tree motif in a naturalistic depiction with animals under its branches (Abdullahi & Embi, 2015; Rice, 1991). The facade of the Mshatta Palace from the eighth century offers a remarkable example of vine ornamentation. By the

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

ninth century, however, these motifs became more stylized, as seen in the "third style" of Samarran decoration. The decoration of the Samarra Mosque in Iraq exemplifies this approach, where Muslim artists deliberately transformed vine leaves and branches into abstract forms (Saoud, 2004; Mughal, 2016). In the 13th century, the Mongols invaded Western Asia and established a Mongol Court in Iran. Islamic designs began to incorporate familiar Chinese art elements, such as lotus and peony flowers. Through stylization, these motifs evolved into unique and stunning forms that were not found in nature. In the early 15th century, Ottoman art was heavily influenced by Iranian design, incorporating scrolling leaves, lotus, and peony flowers into rich pattern systems. Similarly, the Mughal dynasty displayed a profound appreciation for floral imagery, as evident in their ornately decorated architecture, textiles, ceramics, rugs, and miniature paintings. Akbar, in his memoir Ain-i-Akbari, referred to plants as one of "the great gifts of God" (Diamand, 1930; Misbah, 2003; Mughal, 2016). Sharma and Gopta (2012) highlight that among the various themes used in Mughal architecture, flora and fauna were of paramount importance, reflecting the monarchs' deep admiration for nature. This artistic fascination is also captured by the court poet Kalim, who praised the craftsmanship of court artists in his poetic expression

"They have inlaid stone flower in marble, which surpasses reality in colors if not in fragrance, those red and yellow flowers that dispel the heart's grief, in reality are carnelian and amber" (Koch, 2005, p. 146)

Result and Discussion:

Flowers are one of nature's most exquisite gifts, captivating us with their vibrant colors and enchanting fragrances. From ancient times, their allure has inspired humanity, making flowers a timeless choice for decoration and aesthetic expression. Similarly, a broad category of floral motifs present in the decoration of the Palosi Piran monument complex includes leaves, trees, flowering plants and floral scrolls.

Some types of flowers used in the understudy monuments are described below:

Chrysanthemum

The chrysanthemum belongs to the dicotyledonous group and it is a winter flower of short blooming period of two to three months (Sharma et al., 2023). This flower has smaller petals and resembles a ball in shape. It is arranged in four, five or more whorls, the tips are pointed (Misbah 2003). It is explicitly depicted in the mihrab of Palosi Piran Mosque. The soffit of the left arch entrance of the central nave of the Sheikh Imam Uddin Mosque also features chrysanthemum flowers (Fig.1).

Lily:

Lily is related to monocotyledonous group and grows in cold climates. The flower plant is short, linear and a cup shaped corolla with fused stamens arises from the stem. The stem of lily flower plant is thin and sword shaped (Al-Shami et al. 2024). The depiction of lily flower plant is very common in the Mughal monuments, where it prominently featured in various forms of surface decoration on historical monuments and Mughal miniatures across the region. For example, lilies can be seen on the soffit of the Taj Mahal, in the decoration of Muhabat Khan Mosque in Peshawar, and in the mirror work of the Naulakha Pavilion at Lahore Fort. The same flower is also used to

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

adorn Jahangir's tomb, in the inlay work of Badshahi Mosque and Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore (Khan, 2018). In the mosque understudy, this flowering plant decorates the northern arched alcove of right bay. It has thick green leaves often seen in the floral scrolls executed in the spandrels of arches. Beautiful examples can be seen on the pilaster of the recessed arches of the tomb and in the mosque decoration (Fig.2, 3). An orange and pinkish lily plant is framed in cusped arch panels on each side of the frame, depicted in the north-western corner of the tomb chamber. The lily flower also adorns the floral vases illustrated inside the tomb chamber. The spandrels of the recessed arches inside the tomb chamber are painted with orange lily flowers. Moreover, the south-east corner of the tomb chamber contains floral vases featuring lilies.

Fig. 1: Chrysanthemum in the Mosque decoration **(**Source: Author)

Fig.2 : Stylize Lilly flower painted in the Tomb decoration (Source: Author)

Fig. 3: Lily flower in the decoration of the Mosque (Source: Author)

Sunflower

The sunflower, also known as "Gul-i-Aftab parast" in Persian traditions, which is derived from the Persian words, "aftab" means "sun," and "Parast" meaning "to follow". The sunflower, with its golden petals and sun-like appearance, that turn its head toward the sun, readily fits this description (Kalam et al., 2021). Another reason for this name is the sunflower's unique ability to turn toward the sun automatically, a phenomenon that has fascinated observers for centuries. The term is frequently used in classical poetry and plant descriptions that contain sun related symbolism. During the Mughal era, the sunflower was widely used as an important decorative motif. In the decoration of the aforementioned mosque, the sunflower appears in the concave area of the mihrab (Fig. 4 a). In the upper portion of the mihrab, out of seven decorative arches, four contain sunflowesr rendered in their natural golden yellow hue with thick green leaves. Sunflowers are also displayed on the soffit of the central arches, above the small arched niches. The craftsmanship is realistic; however, here, the color scheme is rendered in an unnatural red tone (Fig. 4 b).

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Fig. 4 a,b: Use of sunflower in the decoration of Mosque (Source: Author)

Daffodils or Narcissus:

Daffodils or Narcissus are essentially the same flower, belonging to the Narcissus genus in the Amaryllidaceae family. Narcissus is a monocotyledonous group and grows in cold climate (Misbah, 2003). This flowering plant adorns the wall surfaces of the Palosi Piran Mosque, which can be seen in the front arch of the left bay. The plant has thick long green leaves; the flower is executed within a miniature false arch and has sharp petals (Fig.5). The southeastern corner of the tomb chamber features Indian red colored daffodils or narcissus. The floral vase of southwestern corner of the tomb chamber also displays the same flower.

Tulip:

The tulip, a member of the monocotyledonous group, blooms in cold climates. Known for its highly stylized, radiant appearance and cup-shaped corolla, the tulip became highly prized in Europe (Amiri et al., 2017). The Tulip is a significant motif in Mughal art, frequently featured on various artifacts of the Mughal court. The vibrant, cup-shaped tulips often appear in Mughal decorations, painted with remarkable delicacy by court artists, reflecting their deep botanical knowledge of the flower.

Emperor Babur, known for his fondness for tulips, established a tulip garden in Kashmir and named it the "Tulip Garden". He also noted the abundance of tulips in Afghanistan, about which he said “The land is richly diversified by various kinds of tulips, and I counted them to be scattered in 32 or 33 different sorts of tulips. One of these species has a scent somewhat like a rose”. The artist Mansur often depicted Kashmiri tulips in full bloom, although his illustrations were primarily influenced by Central Asian varieties (Misbah, 2003; Mughal, 2016).

In Mughal architecture, the tulip emerged as a popular decorative motif. It can be seen in stucco stalactite work, often in shades of Indian red, accompanied by thick green leaves in the aforementioned monuments. Tulips were featured on the soffits of recessed arches and corner pendentives in the south bay of the mosque, as well as on the soffit of the north bay arch entrance and in the floral scrolls of miniature false arches. In some instances, the tulip, with its fourteen stems, is entirely rendered in green and Indian red, creating a stylized and denaturalized representation of the flower (Fig. 6).

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Fig. 5: Narcissus in the decoration of Mosque
(Source: Author)

Fig. 6: Tulip and Iris in mihrab decoration (Source: Author)

Iris:

The Iris belongs to monocotyledonous group of flowers and grows in cold climates. It has sword shaped leaves, which are arranged dichotomously similar to tulips. Small sized iris flowers are executed in the stucco work in the mihrab (Fig. 6, 7), recessed arches, and corner pendentives of south bay of the mosque understudy. These are beautifully arranged in the geometrical shapes of triangles and quadrilateral. It is also executed on the soffit of arch entrance to the North Bay (Fig. 13). Iris is depicted on the arch piers of east, west, north and south of the central nave of the Palosi Piran mosque.

Poppy flower:

Despite being native to temperate Asia, the opium poppy is most frequently used in Mughal decorative arts. On a darker note, opium was a common drug used by several Mughal emperors, most notably Jehangir. As a result, the poppies frequently appeared on water pipes and other artifacts of that period. The poppies can also be seen on Kashmiri shawls, carpets, embroidered or block printed textiles as well as on the walls of the Taj Mahal and Itimad ud Daulah. Due to the Mughals' semi nomadic lifestyle, when tents functioned as mobile palaces, it also appears on tents (kannats) or panels. Poppy flower is extensively employed in the decoration of the mosque of Palosi Piran (Fig. 8 a, b).

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Fig. 7: Iris flower motif at the entrance of the mosque
(Source: Author)

Fig. 8 a, b: Poppy flower motif on the pendentives of Mosque
(Source: Author)

Larkspur Flower

The larkspur flower has long been cherished by gardeners and florists for its beauty and vibrant colors. It is characterized by tall spiky blossoms in striking shades of blue, purple, pink and white. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, it holds deep symbolic significance. Also known as Delphinium, a name derived from the Greek word for dolphin due to the flower's nectar spur resembling a dolphin's beak, it is native to Europe and temperate Asia Yin, Cai, & Ding, 2020. The larkspur's elegant, elongated form made it a favored motif in Mughal decorative art. Its vivid blue and purple hues along with tall spiky shape were highly esteemed for their symbolic meaning and visual allure. Stylized depictions of the larkspur flowers appear in the Mughal textiles, painting borders, rugs, and frescoes, demonstrating its wide spread admiration among the Mughal rulers. These flowers were often used as part of grand decorative compositions adorning royal garden, palaces tombs and other structures. Beyond their decorative role, they symbolized the dynasty's profound connection to nature and divine splendor. Within the Palosi Piran Mosque, the larkspur flower is frequently featured in the intricate embellishment of the mihrab arch, where its elongated form is carefully incorporated into the design (Fig.4 a).

Lotus Flower:

The lotus flower grows in freshwater environment. It symbolizes purity, serenity and resilience. Its cyclical opening in the morning and closing in the evening link it to the sun, making it powerful emblem of enlightenment, creation, rebirth, and immortality. Across different cultures and religions, the lotus flower holds diverse symbolic meanings including prosperity, power, land fertility, peace, love austerity and worship. In ancient Egyptian architecture, the lotus flower was a significant decorative motif. In Japan the lotus flowers are traditionally cultivated in the temple ponds, symbolizing spiritual purity. In Chinese culture, the lotus is associated with purity, peace and fertility. Due to its unique capacity of sprouting, blooming, and producing seeds simultaneously, it has become a symbol of past, present and future (Aamir, 2017; Badiee, 2000; Rhys, 2024).

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

The lotus flower (Nymphaeaceae) has been depicted in artistic imagery for nearly four thousand years, revered as sacred and symbolic in numerous ancient cultures. It is known as Nilufar in Persian and padma, kamal, or kanwal in South Asian traditions, where it carries profound spiritual significance. In the Subcontinent, the lotus flower played a major role in the artistic repertoire Initially, it was deeply rooted in religious and spiritual contexts, representing abstract concepts such as purity and creation, with its visual form reflecting these philosophical ideas. In Buddhist art, the lotus flower is associated with the birth Buddha (Aamir, 2017; Badiee, 2000; Shah, 2001). The earliest example of this association can be found on the "Ashokan" columns in India, dating back to the third century BCE. During subsequent centuries, the motif became a central ornamental feature. From the second century BCE, lotus medallions were used to embellish the vast railing of the Bharhut stupa. Similarly, the lotus blossom was very finely carved in the Mathura school of art, which dates from the 1st century CE. Furthermore, its use may be traced in Gandhara art dating from the 1st to the 5th centuries CE (Shaheen, 2016).

As the socio-political and cultural dynamics evolved in the Subcontinent, so did the meaning associate with the lotus motif. During the early medieval period, Hindu artists incorporated the lotus into temple decorations, particularly in the salt range dating from the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries CE.

During the Mughal period, lotus was considered an integral part of imperial decorative arts prominently featured on textiles, paintings and the surfaces of built structures. In the Mughal architecture, domes were often crowned with an inverted lotus, symbolizing the outpouring of Allah's mercy upon devotees, nurtured through the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This symbolism is notably reflected in the Palosi Piran tomb and mosque (Fig.9, 10). However, in the later Mughal period, this sacred connotation diminished significantly; the motif was increasingly treated as a mere decorative element within the broader design repertoire of artisans (Misbah, 2003; Shaheen, 2016).

Fig. 9: Inverted lotus flower on the dome of the tomb (Source: Author)

Fig. 10: Lotus flower on the domes of the Mosque (Source: Author)

Marigold:

The marigold originates from Central and South America, particularly Mexico. During the early 16th century, it began to spread to various parts of the world. Its genus name Tagetes is derived from Tages, a demigod renowned for his beauty. In the 16th century the African marigold (Tagetes erecta) was first introduced in Spain from there, it gained popularity across southern Europe. Similarly, the French marigold (Tagetes. patula) was brought from Mexico, paralleling the spread of the African

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

marigold. The marigold now widely found and used in major events in India was first introduced to India by the Portuguese from Mexico (Harris, n.d.; Mir et al., 2019). Its appeal caught the attention of the Mughal emperors, leading to its cultivation in the imperial gardens. In Fig. 11, the marigold appears for the first time in Mughal art. Mughal painters were particularly inclined toward depicting garden landscapes in their compositions, carefully observing and portraying the surrounding flora. They skillfully portrayed this striking flower, which was also considered as an important flower in the floral study of Mughal historical illustrations. In Pl. 1(b) the Mughal artist rendered the flower in a flattened perspective, presenting almost its cross section to emphasize the intricate arrangement of the patels. This style of the botanical representation was prevalent in the later Mughal period, where the representation of real phenomena often fused with creative expression (Das, 2020).

The southeastern vertical panel of the tomb chamber features interlocking circular motifs, which divide the entire panel into distinct sections. Each section is adorned with delicate floral arrangements, showcasing the intricate craftsmanship of the artisans. In one of the sections, the central element is a stylized marigold floral composition, carefully placed inside a vase-like structure (Fig. 20). The bouquet consists of rounded flowers with detailed petal work, accompanied by gracefully rendered stems, leaves, and smaller buds. These elements are painted in earthy tones of green, red, and brown, creating a harmonious and balanced aesthetic.

Pl. 1 a, b: Marigold in Mughal Miniature Paintings (Source: Das, 2020, p. 101)

Fig. 11: Marigold motif in the tomb's wall decoration (Source: Author)

Roses:

Belonging to the dicotyledonous group of flowers, roses are renowned for their pleasant fragrance and soft petals (Misbah, 2003). In the aforementioned mosque, roses are depicted in the spandrels of the central main arch entrance, including the side bays and the left and right arches of the central nave. They are also featured in the stucco work on all the corner pendentives of the south bay of the mosque.

Morning Glory:

Morning glory belongs to the dicotyledonous plant family (Misbah, 2003). In the mosque, the intermediate arch above the mihrab showcases motifs of morning glory painted in a light pink hue. In the eastern intermediate arch of the mosque's central nave, morning glory is also depicted.

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Zinnia:

Zinnia is a member of the dicotyledonous group. It is a herbaceous plant from the Compositae family. In many species, the concentric whorls of petals are arranged in a specific order. Zinnia resembles the chrysanthemum, but its petals have rounded tips, unlike the pointed petals of chrysanthemums (Misbah, 2003). In the mosque, a floral vase flanked by back-to-back birds holds zinnia flowers, depicted in the southeastern corner of the tomb chamber (Fig. 12a, b).

Fig. 12a, 12b: use of Zinnia motif in the decoration of Tomb (Source: Author)

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Floral Motifs Depicted in the Palosi Piran Monuments and Their Representation in Mughal Architecture

The following table presents a comparative analysis of the selected floral motifs observed in the architectural ornamentation of the Palosi Piran monuments and their corresponding representation in the Mughal art and architecture across the Indian subcontinent.

Name	Structural Basis in Monument Representation	Stylistic Features / Degree of Stylization	Compositional Framework (Placement & Arrangement in the Understudy Monument)	Placement & Arrangement in Various Mughal Buildings of the Subcontinent
Chrysanthemum	Dicotyledonous flower with multiple small, pointed petals arranged in 4–5 whorls forming a ball shape.	Naturalistic depiction with moderate stylization; petals rendered with attention to pointed tips.	Depicted in the mihrab of the mosque and on the soffit of the left arch entrance of the central nave of Sheikh Imam	Commonly appears as a floral border or filler motif in Mughal decorative panels and stone inlays.

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

			Uddin Mosque.	
Lily	Monocotyledonous plant with thin, sword-shaped stem and cup-shaped corolla with fused stamens.	Semi-naturalistic; colored in orange, pink, and green hues; slightly stylized floral scrolls.	Found on northern arched alcove, pilasters, recessed arches, spandrels, and floral vases of the tomb chamber.	Prominently used in the Taj Mahal, Muhabat Khan Mosque (Peshawar), Naulakha Pavilion, Jahangir's Tomb, Badshahi Mosque, and Wazir Khan Mosque.
Sunflower (Aftabi)	Dicotyledonous plant with large golden petals and thick green leaves.	Realistic rendering with occasional color modification (e.g., red tone); symbolizes the sun.	Seen in the concave area of the mihrab and on the soffit of central arches above niches.	Used as a symbolic motif in Mughal art and architecture; often in ceiling and panel decorations.
Daffodil / Narcissus	Monocotyledonous plant with thick, long green leaves and sharp petals.	Moderately stylized; sharp-petaled flowers with defined form.	Featured on the front arch of the left bay, in floral vases of the southeastern, and southwestern corners of the tomb chamber.	Commonly appears in Mughal miniature borders, garden frescoes, and tomb inlays.
Tulip	Monocotyledonous flower with cup-shaped corolla and elongated stem.	Highly stylized and denaturalized; often in Indian red and green.	Depicted on soffits of recessed arches, pendentives of south bay, and miniature	Frequently seen in Mughal stucco and inlay work (e.g., Taj Mahal,

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

			false arches.	Itimad-ud-Daulah); symbolic of imperial elegance.
Iris	Monocotyledonous flower with sword-shaped leaves arranged dichotomously.	Stylized small-sized flowers arranged geometrically (triangles, quadrilaterals).	Found in mihrab, recessed arches, pendentives, and soffit of north bay entrance.	Used in stucco and tile work of Mughal mosques; also common in Kashmiri decorative motifs.
Poppy Flower	Herbaceous plant native to temperate Asia; associated with opium cultivation.	Stylized but identifiable; soft rounded petals with curved stems.	Extensively used in pendentives and wall decoration of the mosque.	Common motif in Taj Mahal, Itimad-ud-Daulah, Kashmiri shawls, carpets, and tent panels (kannats).
Larkspur (Delphinium)	Tall spiky blossoms in blue, purple, pink, and white; elongated floral spikes.	Stylized elongated forms; visually dynamic compositions.	Incorporated in the mihrab arch decoration with vertical emphasis.	Popular motif in Mughal textiles, frescoes, rugs, and miniature painting borders.
Lotus Flower	Aquatic plant (Nymphaeaceae) with broad petals; symbolic of purity and rebirth.	Semi-naturalistic; sometimes inverted form atop domes; spiritual symbolism.	Featured in the dome finials and upper decorative bands of tomb and mosque.	Prominent motif in domes, panels, and friezes of Taj Mahal and other Mughal monuments; inherited from Buddhist and

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 11 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

				Hindu art traditions.
Marigold	Herbaceous plant with rounded, dense petals and short stems.	Stylized floral bouquet in earthy tones; symmetrical composition.	Adorns southeastern vertical panel of the tomb chamber within circular motifs.	Featured in Mughal miniature paintings and botanical studies; decorative in garden imagery and textiles.
Rose	Dicotyledonous flower with layered petals and fragrance.	Semi-naturalistic with stylized petal arrangements.	Seen in spandrels of main and side arches and in stucco work on pendentives of the south bay.	Common decorative motif in Mughal inlay, painting, and textile design; symbol of beauty and love.
Morning Glory	Dicotyledonous plant with climbing stems and trumpet-shaped pink flowers.	Simple, naturalistic rendering.	Painted on intermediate arch above the mihrab and eastern intermediate arch of central nave.	Occurs in Mughal murals and border patterns; represents freshness and new beginnings.
Zinnia	Dicotyledonous herbaceous plant with concentric whorls of rounded petals.	Stylized resemblance to chrysanthemum but with rounded petal tips.	Depicted in a floral vase flanked by birds on the southeastern corner of tomb chamber.	Found in later Mughal floral studies and textile decorations inspired by garden flora.

The result shows that the floral motifs of the Palosi Piran monuments demonstrate a deliberate balance between naturalistic representation and Mughal stylization. While certain flowers such as the tulip, rose, lilies and iris retain a recognizable natural form, others like the chrysanthemum, Morning glory, and Marrigold a higher degree of

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

abstraction and ornamental innovation. The compositional framework further highlights the purposeful placement of motifs—lotus and composite flowers dominate central and architectural focal points, whereas lilies, narcissus, and marigolds occupy borders and secondary decorative bands. This layered approach not only reflects the Mughal aesthetic vocabulary of combining realism with abstraction but also underscores the integration of local artistic choices within an imperial decorative tradition. The findings affirm that Palosi Piran, though a provincial monument, embodies the same stylistic sophistication found in major Mughal sites, bridging local expression with imperial visual culture.

Conclusion

The floral motifs of the Palosi Piran monuments embody the Mughal fusion of natural inspiration, stylistic innovation, and symbolic expression. As shown in the analysis, their structural variety, stylization, and compositional frameworks reflect both imperial Mughal aesthetics and regional craftsmanship. More than mere decoration, these motifs convey cultural depth, spiritual values, and artistic refinement, highlighting Peshawar's role in sustaining Mughal heritage. Documenting and categorizing these designs not only deepen our understanding of Mughal art but also emphasizes the urgent need to preserve such monuments as enduring testimonies of South Asia's cultural and artistic legacy.

References

Abdullahi, Y., & Embi, M. R. (2015). Evolution of abstract vegetal ornaments in Islamic architecture. Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research, 9(1), 31–49.

Amiri, A., Kafi, M., Kalate-Jari, S., & Matinizadeh, M. (2017). Morphology and responses of Tulipa gesneriana L. to light quality in combination with GA and cold storage time. Indian Journal of Agricultural Research, 51(6), 568–573. https://doi.org/10.18805/IJARe.A-280

Aamir, N. (2017). From divinity to decoration: The journey of the lotus symbol in the art of the subcontinent. Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 1(2), 203-216. https://pssr.org.pk/issues/v1/2/from-divinity-to-decoration-the-journey-of-lotus-symbol-in-the-art-of-subcontinent.pdf

Asher, C. B. (1992). Architecture of Mughal India. Cambridge University Press.

Australian National Botanic Gardens. (n.d.). Callistemon citrinus. Australian Government. Retrieved September 21, 2025, from https://www.anbg.gov.au/gnp/gnp2/callistemon-citrinus.html

Bhatti, M. I. (2002). Lahore fort: Pakistan's glorious heritage. Lahore, Pakistan: M. Ilyas.

Bidie, G. (1881). Australian plants in India. Nature, 23(595), 555–556. https://doi.org/10.1038/023555b0

Badiee, J. (2000). The image of the mystic flower. The Journal of Bahá'í Studies, 10(4), 1-28. https://journal.bahaistudies.ca/online/article/download/447/372/882

Dani, A. H. (2002). History of architecture in Pakistan. Islamabad, Pakistan: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research.

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

Das, S. (2020). A critical review of European figures and Christian themes in imperial Mughal paintings (Doctoral dissertation, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee). Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Dimand, M. S. (1930). A handbook of Mohammedan decorative arts. New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Diamand, A. (1930). Art of the Near East. London, England: Thames & Hudson.

Hali. (2013, June 14). Flora Islamica: Plant motifs in the art of Islam in Copenhagen. Hali: The International Journal of Oriental Carpets and Textiles. Retrieved November 4, 2025, from https://hali.com/news/flora-islamica-plant-motifs-in-the-art-of-islam-in-copenhagen/

Harris, S. (n.d). Tagetes species (Asteraceae): French and African marigolds. In Plants 400 – Oxford University Herbaria & Botanic Garden. University of Oxford. Retrieved [3rd Nov. 2025], from https://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/plants400/Profiles/st/Tagetes

Khan, A. (n.d.). Floral motifs: Decoration and meaning in Mughal architecture of India in the 17th century (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Department of Architecture, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Khan, A. (2018). The historic precedence to floral imagery in Mughal architecture. International Advanced Research Journal in Science, Engineering and Technology, 5(6). https://doi.org/10.17148/IARJSET.2018.5615

Kalam, M. A., Habeeb, A., Noor, A., Rifat, I., & Rahman, S. (2021). Gul-i-Aftabparast (Helianthus annuus L.): An under-exposed, useful flower of Unani medicine having nutraceutical and medicinal properties. Acta Scientific Pharmaceutical Sciences, 5(7), 117-123.

Koch, E. (2005). The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism, and Urban Significance. Muqarnas, 22, 128–149. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/22118993-90000079

Koch, E. (2018). Flowers in Mughal architecture. In S. Reddy (Ed.), The weight of a petal: Ars Botanica (Vol. 70, Issue 2). Marg: A Magazine of the Arts. The Marg Foundation.

Matloob, M. (2024). Symbolism and aesthetics: Analyzing Mughal motifs in art and architecture. Perennial Journal of History, 5(1), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.52700/pjh.v5i1.186

Mir, R. A., & colleagues. (2019). Potential and cultivation and production of Tagetes, a native of Mexico and other warmer parts of America, naturalised in both tropics and subtropics. American Journal of Plant Sciences, 10, 309-338. https://doi.org/10.4236/ajps.2019.102024

Misbah, G. (1999). The Wazir Khan Mosque: Its aesthetic beauty. Lahore, Pakistan: Ferozsons. ISBN 9690014145

Misbah, G. (2003). Floral and geometric motifs in architectural ornamentation. Lahore, Pakistan: Punjab University Press.

Mughal, Z. (2016). A study of border decoration in the Mughal miniature paintings: Its modification and application in textile designs (Unpublished M.Phil. thesis). University of Peshawar.

Rahman, A. (1981). Cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Peshawar, Pakistan: Archaeological Survey of Pakistan.

Ratliff, B., & Evans, H. C. (Eds.). (2012). Byzantium and Islam: Age of transition,

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

7th–9th century. New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Reynolds, A. (2017). The grapevine, viticulture, and winemaking: A brief introduction. In B. Meng, G. P. Martelli, D. A. Golino, & M. Fuchs (Eds.), Grapevine viruses: Molecular biology, diagnostics and management (pp. 3–29). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57706-7_1

Rice, D. S. (1975). Islamic art. London, England: Faber & Faber.

Rice, D. T. (1991). Islamic art. New York, NY: Thomas and Hudson.

Saoud, R. (2004). Introduction to Muslim art. http://www.muslimheritage.com/uploads/MuslimArt.pdf

Shah, I., & Sehrai, N. (2001). A short survey of stucco decoration in the Mahābat Khān Mosque, Peshāwar. Ancient Pakistan, 14, 9–18.

Sharma, R., & Gupta, I. (2012). Mughal seed in modern architectural decoration. Bonfring International Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management Science, 2(4), 112–116.

Sharma, S., & Gopta, R. (2012). Themes in Mughal architecture. Delhi, India: Heritage Publications.

Sharma, N., Jangra, M., & Singh, H. (2023). Phytochemicals, therapeutic benefits and applications of Chrysanthemum flower: A review. Heliyon, 9(8), e20232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20232

Yin, T., Cai, L., & Ding, Z. (2020). An overview of the chemical constituents from the genus Delphinium reported in the last four decades. RSC Advances, 10, 13669–13686. https://doi.org/10.1039/D0RA00813C