The mosque was constructed by the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, who, unlike the previous emperors, was not a patron of art and architecture. He built the mosque between 1671 and 1673 under the guidance of Fidai Khan Koka, his "master of ordinance".

Front view

On 7 July 1799, the Sikh army of the Sukerchakia chief, Ranjit Singh, took control of Lahore. After the capture of the city, the Badshahi mosque was desecrated[8] by Ranjit Singh, who used its vast courtyard as a stable for his army horses, and its 80 hujras (small study rooms surrounding the courtyard) as quarters for his soldiers and as magazines for military stores. Ranjit Singh used the Hazuri Bagh, the enclosed garden next to it, as his official royal court of audience. In 1818, he built a marble edifice in the garden facing the mosque.

In 1841, during the First Anglo-Sikh War, Ranjit Singh's son, Sher Singh, used the mosque's large minarets for placement of zamburahs or light guns. It was used to bombard the supporters of Chand Kaur taking refuge in the besieged Lahore Fort, inflicting great damage to the fort itself. In one of these bombardments, the fort's Diwan-e-Aam (Hall of Public Audience) was destroyed (it was subsequently rebuilt by the British but it could not be exactly restored in the previous state). During this time, Henri De la Rouche, a French cavalry officer employed in the army of Sher Singh, used a tunnel connecting the Badshahi mosque to the Lahore fort to temporarily store gunpowder.

Entrance gate, showing the full name of the mosque in calligraphy

In the 1870s

In 1849 during the British Raj, the British continued using the mosque and the adjoining fort as a military garrison. The 80 cells (hujras) built into the walls surrounding the its vast courtyard on three sides were originally study rooms, which were used by the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh to house troops and military stores. The British demolished them so as to prevent them from being used for anti-British activities and rebuilt them to form open arcades or dalans.