



BAGU DEWAN SHAH TOMB COMPLEX: AN ENDANGERED ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE

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Abstract

The trend of preaching and spreading of Islam in Bengal has been going on since the past mainly through those persons who are known in our society as *Oli*, *Sufi*, *Pir-Darvesh*, *Gaus*, and *Qutb*. They have played a pioneer role to bring the equality and peace of Islam in this region, encouraged by the greatness of Sufism. By applying the liberal, tolerant and non-sectarian Sufi ideology in the true sense, many renowned scholars have created an exceptional history in the land of Bengal and a large number of historical monuments (Pond, Mosque, Madrasha, and Tomb) were later built around their established *Astana* and *khankas*. All these monuments together are called complex. However, these complexes have been established sometimes centering on the mosque and sometimes on the tomb. Among these complexes are Bagha Mosque complex in Rajshahi district, Shah Neyamat Ullah tomb complex in Chapainawabganj district and Vellabariya Bagu Dewan Shah tomb complex in Natore district etc. are remarkable. The Bagu Dewan Shah tomb complex has fallen into disrepair today behind the scenes. The main object of this article is to expose the life and works of Bagu Dewan Shah, to make public the architectural styles of the tomb complex and to make recommendations for the preservation of the monuments from destruction.

Keywords: Bagu Dewan, Bagu Dewan Shah Mosque, tomb, pond, preservation, importance

Introduction

Bagu Dewan Shah was one of the first sufi-saints who arrived in Lalpur Upazila of Natore district in the 18th century (Nuri, 2000, 63-64). He was born in a Zaminder family of Murshidabab. After childhood, avoiding the luxurious life, he devoted himself to the pursuit of closeness to Allah. At first, he lived in Mominpur village with his wife. Later on, when the pursuit of the creator reached its peak, he moved to the village of Vellabaria. Arriving there, he built a small *khanka* or dormitory for the practice of teaching and learning, and a small mosque which was built of mud for prayers and spent the rest of his life digging a pond for drinking water. Within a short time, his fame spread throughout the subcontinent and innumerable people from different places came here to learn spiritual pursuit and knowledge and they spent the last days of their life in the village of Vellabaria (Nuri, 2000, p. 63). When his mosque was on the verge of collapse after his death in 1820 A.D. Dost Muhammad Khan¹ built a three-domed mosque on the site and a brick built ghat² on the west bank of

¹ Dost Mohammad Khan was born in 1898 AD. His dynasty is known as the 'Khan Chowdhury dynasty of Natore'. The former men of the Khan Chowdhury dynasty were Afghans by race. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, that is, at the beginning of the dynasty,

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the pond. An attempt has been taken in this article to expose the life and work of Bagu Dewan Shah, to make public the architectural style of the tomb complex and to make recommendations for the protection of antiquities from destruction.

Literature Review

Tomb complex occupies a large part in the Muslim architecture of Bengal. But very negligible secondary sources are available about Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb Complex. Due to its inconvenient location, the Tomb Complex cannot attract researchers. For this reason, Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb Complex and Mosque retained neglected in the archeological history of Bangladesh till today. Although the different life events of Bagu Dewan Shah are discussed in the books *Cabrete Abmar* (Nuri, 2000) and *Kriti Manusber Kotha* (Ahmed, 2021), they neglect the architectural aspects of the mentioned topic. *Bangladesher Pratnasampad* (Zakariah, 2011) is an essential book on architectural sites of Bangladesh whose content is arranged on a district basis. Still, no information is included in it about Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb Complex. One Ph.D. research has been conducted under the title of “Mughal Mosque Types in Bangladesh: Origin and Development” (Bari, 1989). However, the mosque of Vellabaria Bagu Dewan Shah did not take place in this research work. *Banglapedia* is a core source of Bengal history including art, architecture and archaeology. There is a separate entry on Tomb Architecture in *Banglapedia* (Islam, 2006) where the origin and development of Tomb Architecture in Bengal have been discussed. Tomb architecture originated around the tombs of the conquerors, saints and gazis of the region. However, the origin and development of the tomb architecture of medieval Muslim Bengal, not present-day Bangladesh, has found a place in it in many ways. Different types, styles and features of tombs were erected on the tombs of Sufis, saints, conquerors, local elites and aristocrats. However, the entries are not found in a single volume but are alphabetically arranged in different volumes. These entries refer to Tomb Architecture's construction materials, architectural structure, birth and deceased date, etc. Although many tomb architectures were included in it, Bagu Dewan Shah's tomb complex was not included in *Banglapedia*. So far, there has been only one core work (Begum, 2015) on Muslim tomb architecture in Bengal or Bangladesh. In the book, the author discusses various issues, including the development of Muslim tomb architecture, Muslim tomb of Bangladesh: geographical context, Muslim tomb of Bangladesh: an architectural review. Muslim tomb architecture in Bangladesh: She has provided detailed information about one hundred and fifteen mausoleum architectures in the Sultanate, Mughal and subsequent period. In her architectural descriptions, she analyzes its dimensions, architectural designs and features, whether it affected any period, and other contemporary architectures. However, neither Bagu Dewan Shah nor his tomb complex found a place in this book. Although the Bagu Dewan Shah tomb complex is vital in architectural design and period, it has not come to the notice of any researcher so far. For a good reason, the Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb Complex could be a unique research work. As an endangered architectural site, the research may be considered logical and rational to inform enthusiastic and Inquisitive reader about its history and heritage and protect it from future damage.

the zamindars were skilled in Arabic and Persian. Zaman Khan Chowdhury, the father of Dost Mohammad, the only member of the family, took a job with the English East India Company to study Persian and was appointed Nazir of the Natore Criminal Court. He owned a lot of real estate during his tenure. After his death, his son Dost Mohammad Khan, who was fluent in Persian and English, became the owner of the estate and established the zamindari in Natore under the Permanent Settlement Act. He gradually increased his property by purchasing from the company. Various areas including Bilmaria, Kholabaria Kalam, Dhanaidah, Tebaria, Piprul of Lalpur became under his zamindari. After that he became a well-known zamindar in that region (Rahman, 1989, 122).

² A ‘Ghat’ is an architectural structure with the series of steps leading up and down a river or pond. It is usually used for bathing, washing clothes and collecting water.

Methods

Though the methods of Art and Architectural study are somewhat different from any other arts and humanities study or research, this study is a mixed-method in nature. Here a very minimal number of data and information has been used in quantitative form. On the other hand most of the information has been used in qualitative form. Both primary and secondary sources of data and information have been used in this study. Secondary sources are comprised of books, journals etc. On the other hand primary sources include site survey, field study and observation. Early nineteenth century Bengal architectural features and styles have been manifested through the Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb complex. With a view to understand of the phenomenon and consequences, other architectural sites have been included and analyzed. To depict the structure of the sites included in this study, measurements have been done and written through a very close site survey. For interpreting structural frame, ornamentation, and decorative style, observation was precisely done very closely with in-depth insight. A comparative study has been done on a limited scale based on the historical method in association with field study.

The article is divided into five segments. The first section explores the Life and Works of Bagu Dewan Shah. The second section identifies the Location of the Tomb Complex and includes a description of the Tomb Complex. The third section discusses the influence of the Bagu Dewan Mosque on the Mosque architecture of Bangladesh by mentioning present Conditions. The fourth section investigates the preservation of architectural heritage. The fifth section is the prospects of the importance of preservation of architectural heritage.

Life and Works of Bagu Dewan Shah: Bagu Dewan Shah was a follower of the Hanafi³ and Qadiriah⁴ sects. His real name was Khalilur Rahman. He was born in 1683 A.D (Nuri, 2000, pp. 63-64). His father, Shaikh Badruddin, resided at Pukuria, which was 12/13 km away to the west of Murshidabad, and his mother was the daughter of an aristocratic Muslim family at Bagha (Rajshahi). After his mother's death, he came to the *astana* of Mawlana Danish Mand at Boro Bagha area of Natore for the purpose of spiritual education. Subsequently he was moved to Mominpur and from there to Vellabaria village where he spent the rest of his life.

There was a myth that, when he was born, the people around him suddenly heard the sound of a tiger (in the Bengali language, the tiger is called Bagh), that is why everyone called him Mia Bagu. Later on, he came to be known as Bagu Dewan Shah. He devoted himself to spiritual pursuits leaving his father's estate.

After the death of his mother, he became a novice of *Jaheri* knowledge at the Bagha area. Then he went to Bhagalpur (Bihar) to acquire knowledge of the Holy Qur'an. Nevertheless, due to the illness and death

³The Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence is one of the four traditional Sunni madhabs (schools). It was named after Abu Hanifa al Numan b. Thabit, a Persian tab'i whose legal opinions were mostly upheld by two of his most important pupils, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad al-Shaybani. It arose from the Kufa ancient school's main body and absorbed the Basra old school as well. The Hanafi school flourished in Iraq and extended eastwards under the sponsorship of the Abbasids, firmly establishing itself in Khorasan and Transoxiana by the 9th century, when it was supported by local Samanid monarchs. Despite the fact that the Hanafi school recognizes the Quran and Hadith (narratives about the Prophet Muhammad's life and sayings) as primary sources of law, it is known for relying heavily on systematic reasoning (*ray*) in the lack of precedent. The school now has a stronghold in Central Asia, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, and former Ottoman Empire countries. (W. Heffening-J. Schacht, 1986; T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

⁴ Members of the Sunni Qadiri tariqa are known as Qadiriah (Sufi order). It is also known by the names Qadiriyya, Qadriyah, Qadri, Qadriya, Kadri, Elkadri, Elkadry, Aladray, Alkadrie, Adray, Kadray, Kadiri, Quadri, or Qadiri. It was called after Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, a pious Hanbali jurist who resided in Baghdad between the 11th and 12th centuries. Abd al-Qadir was a popular preacher and Sufi ascetic, but he never founded a formal Sufi group during his lifetime. Al-Jilani may have meant for his few ceremonies to be limited to his small group of followers, but his sons expanded the society into an order and fostered its growth throughout North Africa, Central Asia, and India. The order is informally organized, allowing each regional group to construct its own ritual prayers. It emphasizes benevolence, humility, piety, and temperance (*dhikrs*). The major body (the Qadiriyyah proper) follows an orthodox Sufi theology and is led by a descendant of al-Jilani, who also serves as the guardian of his Baghdad tomb. The Jiliyyah, a tiny North African sect that worships al-Jilani as a supernatural being and integrates Islamic mysticism with pre-Islamic beliefs and traditions, worships al-Jilani as a supernatural entity (Campo, 2009; T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021).

of his master, he did not stay there for long and moved to Medinipur. There he acquired deep knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith from Mawlana Badi Uddin. Then he started to take education in Murshidabad Madrasa under Badi Uddin. It was here where he gained the knowledge of *Bateni*. Then he returned to the Bagha area and meditated many times in the nearby mosque of Jamal Mawlana. At that time, he did not stay in the same place permanently. Sometimes he traveled in the desert, sometimes in the open field, and sometimes in the forest. Thus, after 18 years of making love with God, he reached *MakameTalkin* (A unique position to meet with God). He then moved to Vellabaria and spent the rest of his life there.

Within a short time, his reputation of Jaheri and Bateni knowledge spread throughout the whole subcontinent. For this reason, a large number of people came to him from different regions to learn spiritual knowledge. Among his devotees, Shah Nuri, Shah Muhammad Taki, Shaikh Sahraf Ali Gafrullah, Haji Muhammad Anwar, Haji Almas Habshi (Jahangirnagar), Jafor Hussain (Bihar), Haji Sultan Lahori, Shaykh Hedayetullah (Mushidabad), Khandakar Muhammad Taki, Mah Muhammad Zahir, Shaykh Muhammad Arshad, Kazi Aynul Haque, Abdul Karim (Bagha-Rajshahi), Mia Muhammad Akkel Ali (Islamabad), Shaykh Ahsanullah (Goalpara), Khandakar Shamsullah, Muhammad Quraysh (Elacipur), Molla Muhammad Salih (Jokdia), Shah Lausuddin Rasulpuri (Burdwan), Mawlana Amzad ibn Muhammad (Sylhet) are notable (Nuri, 2000, pp. 115-125).

He was a generous man. He used to keep very little of the gifts for himself which he received from different people. He distributed the rest among his close relatives, servants, and *fakir-Miskin*. Saving people from danger and insecurity, showing humanity, a little satisfaction, perseverance, etc., were one of the main aspects of his character (Nuri, 2000, 108). He was the benefactor of the people. Once Alivardi Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, left his fort and went to Vellabaria to meet Bagu Dewan and took up a position at Kalitagi twenty miles from Bagha (Rajshahi). Suddenly one of the pedestrians reached with news to Bagu Dewan that Subahdar would come to his *Astana* (dormitory). As soon as he heard the news, he said that the Nawab would not reach here. Because of his arrival, the crops of most of the working people will damage in this region. In the long run, the Nawab did not come to the *Astana* of Bagu Dewan but sent many gifts for him and returned his fort (Nuri, 2000, p. 93).

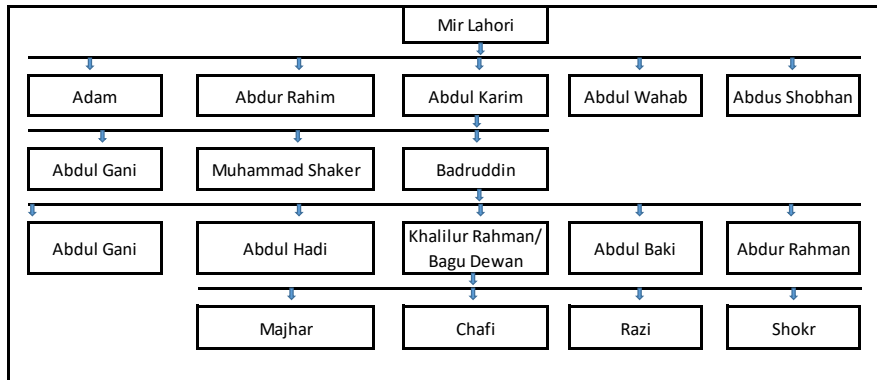
Bagu Dewan used to advise his devotees and followers to follow the rules and regulations of the *Sariab*, fulfill the rights of their parents, and serve them and fulfill the rights of their subordinates. He also encouraged his disciples to perform the *mustahabb*, especially the supererogatory prayers, the *ishraq*, and *chaste* prayers, and the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Bagu Dewan always urged his followers to acquire knowledge of the *Sariab* (Nuri, 2000, p. 39). In addition to enjoy good deeds, he also forbade evil deeds. He did not allow birds to be slaughtered in the dormitory and even refused to allow fishing in the pond. It was forbidden to cut the branches of the thorny trees and to eat *tabarak* before the Friday prayers (Nuri, 2000, p. 43).

Bagu Dewan also taught to his disciples many spiritual knowledge such as: (i). To get Allah, one should always be engaged in *zikir*. He spent maximum time of the day in *murakabah* and *zikir*. (ii). The who has the knowledge of *jaheli*, he will win against the forces of Devil. For this reason he urged the true seekers to acquire knowledge of *Sariab*. (iii) Eating is obligatory to save the lives. If one eats more for prayers and obedience of Allah, then it is *Sunnab*. (iv) It is legal to kill robbers, bandits and tree thieves. In this case the same order on the battlefield. But is not legal to use their wives without marriage etc. The teaching of Bagu Dewan influenced his disciples and others in many ways. The people of this region enlightened by his moral teaching and established peace and happiness. The practice of *zikir* followed by him is still practices in this mosque.

At the end of his life, he used to have colds and coughs due to oldness. It was difficult for him to use water for *ozu* (ablution). That is why he used to do *tayammum*. However, he used to perform the five daily prayers with the congregation. He used to go to the Bagha area and try to perform Friday and Eid prayers.

However, due to old age, sometimes he performed *Zohor* on Friday without *Azan* and *Iqamah*. Bagu Dewan left this world in 29 Zilqad 1178 A.H. (20 May 1765 A. D.) at 82 years.

Genealogy of Bagu Dewan Shah



Source: *Cabrete Ahmar*, P. 30

Location of Tomb Complex: The historical Vellabaria tomb complex is located 14km southwest of Lalpur Upazila headquarter (Gopalpur) beside Durduria Union Council. The Shrine complex consists of the tomb of Bagu Dewan Shah and his disciples, pond, and madrasah (Figure 1 & 2). The boundary wall somewhat protects the entire complex. An Assistant Officer of Durduria Union land office, Lalpur, Natore, says that, according to the land survey, the total land area of the tomb complex in Ramkrishnapur Maouza (Bangladesh, Ministry of Land, RS Record) is 10.49 acres (Md. Tayob Ali, personal communication, 26 May 2019). To the east of the mosque is a pond. On the west bank of the pond is a brick-built ghat (paved ghat) used as a fountain. There is also a swietenia mahogany garden to the west of the mosque, a madrasah to the north, and Bagu Dewan shah's tomb and his disciples to the south. Over the hundred years old, mosques stand as a burning witness of the medieval Muslim architecture. Every day many people come from distant places to visit the tomb and the mosque. The tomb and the mosque attract everyone's attention. On Friday, many people come here from different places with vows, distribute shrines, and turn them into pilgrimage places.

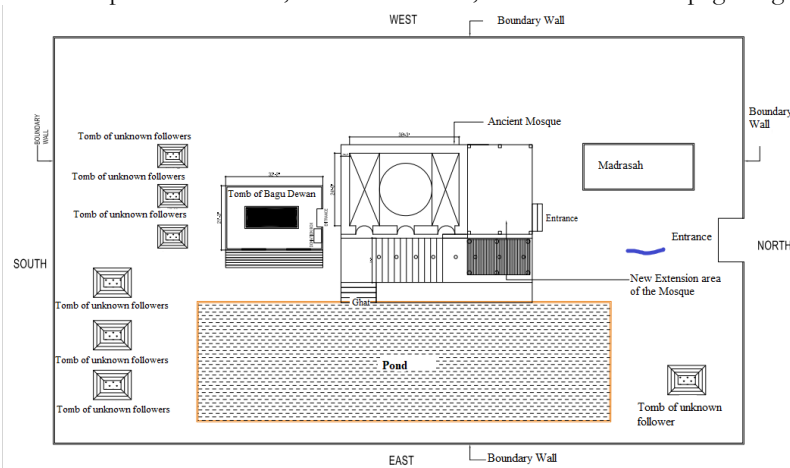


Figure 1: Ground plan of Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb Complex



Figure 2. Tomb complex of Bagu Dewan Shah—Tomb of Bagu Dewan Shah, Mosque, Madrasha and Pond

Description of the Tomb Complex

Tomb/Shrine: A mausoleum generally refers to a stone or brick building built over the tombs of the ruling class or their family members or courtiers, or even a particularly important person. Observing the architectural and archeological inscriptions of the Sultanate and Mughal periods of Bengal, one can see the three types of tomb architecture: the ruler, courtiers, and Sufi-saints (Banglapedia, 2006, p. 236). The names of Gazi and warriors have sometimes been included in the list of Sufi saints. The Arabic and Persian terms for burial in India are grave, *mazar*⁵, *rawza* and *Astana* (Tughlaq, 1954, p. 144). However, the word *Samadhi*, common in Bengal, is used in contrast to grave and monument. However, the term *Rawza*, *Dargah*, *Astana* are especially applicable to the burial of Sufi saints. Hazrat Bagu Dewan Shah's tomb at Vellabaria in Lalpur is one of the many tombs in Bangladesh.

After the death of Bagu Dewan Shah in 1765 AD., his disciples and followers transformed his grave into an architectural structure to commemorate his contributions. The grave was kept unprotected under the open sky for a long time. Recently, containing a room building has been constructed around the grave. It measures 21 feet 3 inches east-west and 32 feet 2 inches north-south. The grave of Bagu Dewan is located in the middle of the room, and the grave is covered with black, red, and green cloth (Figure 3). There is an entrance on the north wall to enter the room and an iron donation box beside the entrance. People who come to the tomb pay cash in this donation box in the hope of getting rid of the danger and getting closer to the Creator. Besides, on the north, south, and west of the pond, there are tombs of Mawlana Amzad ibn Muhammad and unknown followers of Bagu Dewan Shah (Figure 4, 5 & 6). Most of the tomb of unknown followers have collapsed due to fragility of materials, rainy and steamy-humid weather, and lack of preservation.

Pond: There is a large pond to the east of the Bagu Dewan's tomb and the mosque. In the middle of the east side of the pond, there is a brick-built landing stage (ghat) which was consisted of 18 steps in a staircase. The stairs start from the pond and end at the entrance to the east wall of the mosque. Each step of the stairs is 14 feet 8 inches, width 2 feet, and height 7 inches. The steps of the stairs were plastered. The brick-built ghat was

⁵ The word generally 'mazar' means to visit, but it means tomb building in Islamic terminology. In this article, it has been used as a tomb building.

once used as a fountain. The present condition of the ghat is not well. The brick-built ghat on the west side of the pond (east side of the mosque) is going to destroy day by day. Every step of the staircase is in broken condition. So its beauty can be preserved by reconstructing the ghat.

Mosque: In Islam, a mosque, also known as an Arabic masjid or jami, is a house or an open space where Muslims pray. Masjid is an Arabic word that signifies "place of prostration" before Allah.



Figure 3. Tomb of Bagu Dewan Shah



Figure 4. Unknown followers of the Tomb of Bagu Dewan on the north side of the pond



Figure 5. Unknown followers Tomb of the Bagu Dewan on the south of the pond



Figure 6. Unknown followers Tomb of the Bagu Dewan on the south-west of the pond

It is also used in Persian, Urdu, and Turkish. The masjid jami, or "collective mosque," is a large state-controlled mosque that serves as the center of communal worship and the location for Jummah (Friday prayer), as well as smaller mosques run privately by various groups within a society (T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Vellabaria Bagu Dewan Shah Mosque is a small rectangular mosque. In the beginning, the Friday prayers were not performed in the mosque; later on it was converted into a Jami Mosque.

Construction materials

The three-domed mosque built in small brunt bricks is a marvel monument of medieval art and architecture. Small thin brick masonry with lime-stone is excellent. Lime-stone had been used as mortar. It seems to be the perfect work of a skilled artist to see the layout of the mosque. The name of the actual architect or engineer is not known, but there is no doubt that a skilled architect drew the plan and designs.

Layout and Structure

The rectangular mosque measures 36 feet 3 inches north to south and 24 feet east to west from the exterior. Each of the mosque's walls measures two feet ten inches in thickness. The exterior angles of the mosque are strengthened by octagonal towers, which are traditionally extended beyond the parapet and topped over with cupolas. The beauty of the cupola has been enhanced by attaching lotus finials. The mosque's prayer chamber is 27 feet 6 inches wide in the north-south direction and 14 feet wide in the east-west direction. One aisle prayer hall is divided into two rectangular and one square 'bay' by two four-centered arches. The arches are placed on four pilasters, two on the east and two on the west walls. The middle bay is larger than the two adjacent bays. The measurement of the middle bay is 14×14 feet, and the adjacent bay is equilateral, measuring 5×14 feet. The central (square) bay is covered with a semi-circular dome, while the two adjacent (oblong) bays are roofed over with *Chau-Chala* vaults (Figure 7). The corners below the dome are filled with beautiful Bengali pendentives. The dome and the *Chau-Chala* vaults are crowned with lotus and *Kalasa* finials. The Parapets and cornices are straight as the usual Mughal fashion.

Corresponding to the central archway, there is a single semi-octagonal *mihrab* inside the *qiblah* wall. The *mihrab* shows a rectangular projection on the exterior side, now without any bordering turret. The *mihrab* measures 4 feet 6 inches wide, 7 feet 8 inches high, and 2 feet deep. The three-step pulpit is placed beside the right side of the central *mihrab*.

The mosque's interior could be entered through three semi-circular arched doorways on the eastern wall (Figure 8). The doorways are of similar shape and projected slightly towards. The arched doorways are again inserted into a rectangular frame. The length of each doorway is 3 feet 4 inches, and the height is 7 feet. The north and south walls also had two such entrances, but it appears to have been shut down later.

Due to the tomb of Bagu Dewan Shah is located beside the mosque, many people come to the mosque on Friday for *Jummah* prayers. For the lack of space, the mosque had been extended in 1998 by a former member of the parliament, Mr. Momtuz Uddin, and was constructed a new one-storied building on the east side adjacent to the mosque. The measurement of this extended area is 53 feet north-south and 31 feet east-west. Despite the extension of the mosque, it failed to accommodate the worshipers on Friday. In 2015 the then-member of parliament advocate Abul Kalam Azad converted the extended part into a two-storied building to accommodate the prayers of additional worshipers. Although the mosque was extended in two phases, the structure of the original mosque was kept intact (photograph-8).

Ornamentation

Most of the original ornaments have been destroyed due to several renovations of the Bagu Dewan mosque. Even then, some aesthetics can be noticed in the decoration of the mosque. The entire building is covered with plaster, now washed white with lime. Inside the mosque there are four small alcoves. Such alcoves were probably built to hold religious texts in the mosque or lamps or candles to keep for deletion of the darkness at night. Some new features are noticed in the decoration of the mosque's exterior: the corner towers and the turrets set upon a beautiful *kalasa* base. There are four moulding designs under the octagonal corner towers and two sections of small recess have been noticed below it (Figure 12). Mouldings are also noticed in the pedestals of the corner towers.

The frieze of the mosque is decorated with a row of undulating leaves and flowers, and under the frieze, a row of blind merlon is noticed. The beauty of the mosque has been enhanced by using this type of decoration (Figure 10). Such frieze and merlon designs can be observed only on the east wall, not other walls due to damage and renovation. The drums have not been used for the placing of the dome in this mosque. The central dome and adjacent *Chau-Chala* vaults are crowned with beautiful lotus and *kalasa* finials (Figure 7).

Date of Construction

There is an inscription above the central doorways on the east side of the mosque, which gives us the date of construction of it. According to the Persian inscription, Dost Muhammad Khan built the mosque in 1237 AH (1821-22 AD.) (Figure 13). Similar type of mosque, with *Chau-Chala* vaults and central bulbous dome is seen at

Zadunagar in Bholahat Upazila of Chapai Nawabganj. It was also constructed in early 19th century (Bari, 1989, 284-86). So far as the researchers know that, there is no influence of other mosques and shrines into the Bagu Dewan Mosque and complex.



Figure 7. Dome



Figure 8. Arch doorways



Figure 9: Extension mosque on the north side



Figure 10: Frieze design on the parapet



Figure 11. Merlon and frieze design on the parapet



Figure 12. Corner tower



Figure 13. Inscription

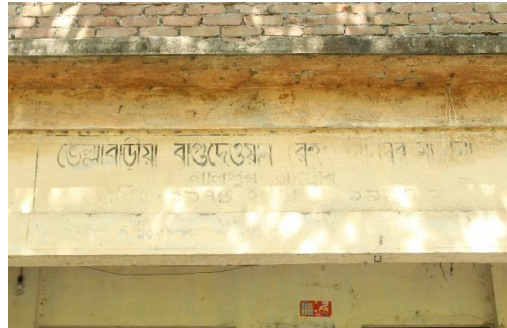


Figure 14. Name plate of Madrasha

Influence of Bagu Dewan Mosque on the Mosque architecture and its present Conditions:

More than a half-century later, a wealthy man took the initiative to build a new three-domed mosque, and he built the present mosque with bricks and limestone in the same place of the Bagu Dewan Shah mosque. The architectural styles of the mosque greatly influenced the construction of other mosques in this region. The Baura and Nabirpara Shahi mosques in Lalpur Upazila are the best examples. Both were built in the first half of the nineteenth century. The decorative methods of the frieze and merlon design of the parapet, doorways, and corner towers of Baura mosque and Nabirpara Shahi mosque are similar to Vellabaia (Bagu Dewan Mosque) mosque (Ahmed, 2019, pp. 41-45). However, over time the plaster of the mosque is deteriorating due to negligence. Moreover, the various parts of this mosque have been renovated by the mosque committee at different times. As a result, the corner towers and parapet of the east wall of the mosque is losing their original shape day by day except the dome. In such a situation, it is very much necessary to renovate the mosque according to its original design.

Research Findings

Preservation of architectural Heritage: The ancient architectural building is an essential resource of culture. Culture is a fundamental element of forming a state. The state shall adopt measures to protect against disfigurement, damage, or removal of all monuments, objects, places, or particular artistic or historical importance or interest (Bangladesh Constitution, 1972, Part-II, Article-24). The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes this issue in the principle of governing of the state. Historic awareness about architectural heritage is not acquired a man by birth. Besides, the concept of cultural heritage is not widespread among the common people of the country. As a result, awareness is not being created among students and general people. It's a matter of regret that, in Bangladesh, the eagerness and enthusiasm of policy-makers, ordinary or professional people to preserve the architectural heritage are decreasing day by day. On the other hand, in the world's culturally developed countries, the preservation of architectural heritage is recognized by the state. So a defined and specific course of action needs to be materialized to preserve the heritage and legacy as the inheritor of Bengali heritage. Two strategies can make it easier to preserve the architectural heritage. The first one is to apply technical knowledge; and the second one is to work with promised opportunities and development strategies (Imam & Mamoon, 1993, 42). The following strategies must be followed to protect the Bagu Dewan Mosque from possible impairment and damage.

1. All conservation efforts should consider a variety of factors, including the value of history, architecture, age, function, materials, and maintenance, and should be supported by a variety of interested parties (Ahmad, 2011, 94);
2. Using the indigenous construction techniques and materials;
3. Selection of experienced and skilled artisans and contractors in the renovation work;
4. To use the suitable and durable materials for the renovation work;
5. To maintain the original appearance of the mosque;

6. To build the extended part in keeping with the similarity with the original structure of the mosque;
7. To take the effective initiative of the department of archeology in the renovation work.

Importance of Preservation of architectural Heritage

Architectural heritage conservation has long been recognized for its value to a variety of sectors and communities. It is well-known for preserving evidence of previously occurring events. Powell asserts that historic structures have both explicit and implicit historical significance (Powell, 1994, p. 112). The various areas of importance for the preservation of architectural heritage can be highlighted below:

1. Building conservation is viewed as a necessary component of efforts to preserve civilization's remnants, as heritage demonstrates the continuity of the built environment;
2. Each historic structure is unique, evidenced by its architecture, origin materials, setting and layout, and relationship to the cultural landscape. It is not a fully built environment without the historic structure, which is an integral part;
3. Psychological emotion and nostalgia are evoked by architectural heritage, particularly for those who have sentimental attachments to older structures. The situation establishes a meaningful connection between a historic structure and human psychology;
4. Old structures and monuments can tell their own stories and events, demonstrating the existence of civilization through the impact of the event;
5. The transformations of historic buildings help to create cultural tourism, which will contribute to the economy in our country.

Conclusion

Bagu Dewan Shah tomb complex is one of the prominent architectural sites in the later Mughal period. Bagu Dewan was one of the Sufi-saint who came to Lalpur Upazila in the eighteenth century and built a small *khanka* and small mosques with mud at the village of Vellabaria for preaching Islam and giving people a life of peace and happiness. In his life time he became very influential by doing generous and lifesaving works for general people among the religious people of Bengal. After his death, he also remained the same influential or much more influential centered on his tomb complex. It represents a unique identity and architectural feature of tomb architecture in Bengal. But with time the original structure of the building is going to be destroyed gradually. In this context, it is critical to preserve the architectural heritage of the Bagu Dewan Shah Tomb complex using the recommended approach, as it provides a sense of identity and continuity in a rapidly changing world. Therefore, it is expected that the history of Bengal architecture will be further enriched if the necessary arrangements are made for the preservation of the tomb complex by the Bangladesh archaeology Department.

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