

# Sustaining the Identity of Spiritual Mughal Monuments

## Case of Sat Masjid Road Dhaka

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### ABSTRACT

**B**angladesh is home to the fourth largest Muslim population of the world. Numbers of mosques are proportionately dense in relation to the city's population and the capital. The capital, Dhaka, is called the city of mosques. Spiritual buildings are an integral part of the architectural character of Dhaka. It was a flamboyant city during the Mughal era. The architecture of Mughal Dhaka made profound contributions to the history of Islamic architecture. Mughal religious monuments are significant for combining spirituality with identity. Now their identities are struggling with the growth of Urbanization. This study attempts to analyze Mughal spiritual buildings at Sat Masjid Road in Dhaka to protect them from decay and to ensure the restoration of redeemed spirituality.

**Keywords:** *spirituality, Mughal architecture, identity, history*

### INTRODUCTION

The religion of Islam is undoubtedly the most popular one in Bangladesh. Spiritual buildings exercised authority on the social fabric and urban morphology throughout the history of the city. The preservation of Mughal's sacred buildings is more significant than in other cities of the world in terms of its historical significance and dominance of religion in the context of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The importance of understanding and preserving the spiritual root through proper conservation of the architectural elements of the heritage building and passing it intact to future generations is an

universally accepted matter, but in reality it is a neglected issue. Budgetary funds required for repairing and protecting the architectural heritage receives the lowest priority. Expertise to conserve the structure with a proper understanding of its spiritual significance is absent. In the name of development, entire sections of an older heritage are being pulled down or redeveloped in a most unsympathetic manner. (Zahiruddin, 1990, p.97).

For this purpose of research the famous Sat Masjid Road has been taken as a case study because this road is the testimony to many of Mughal's legendary architecture which has a strong spiritual impact on the city.

## Project Rationale:

Dhaka, has a fairly long history of evolution. Before it rose to prominence as the Mughal capital of Bengal and became an urban and commercial centre in the 17th century it was under the sultanates starting from the 14th century. It then came under British control in 1757. Although Dhaka is a testimony to the different faces of history, the religious dominance of Islam is abundantly clear. The Mughal settlements are an integral part of Old Dhaka and as a result many Mughal religious monuments were constructed during their realm. Most of the important examples are Mosques as regular prayer spaces and Eid Gahs as prayer spaces for yearly festivals. All these holy buildings are major endorsements of the long history of Islam in Dhaka as well as in Bangladesh.

Uncontrolled urbanization, changes in land use patterns, the growing density of new settlements, and modern transportation have brought about a rapid transformation to the historical fabric of the Mughal settlements. As a result, Mughal structures are gradually turning into insignificant elements in the transforming fabric. The urbanity of Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, originally developed along the riverfront. However, since 1947 it had been developing outwards. The recent pattern of urbanization has turned Dhaka into a densely populated area and the resultant decay of old traditions are evident everywhere. With the flow of urbanization all spiritual buildings are suppressed in a way that they are losing their sacred quality. Thus the vibrancy of the most sacred places of history are diminishing day by day. This study aims to promote the historic quality of the Mughal holy buildings of Dhaka through clear and sustainable integration of the Mughal settlements in the existing fabric to recover its spiritual aristocracy.

## Aims and Objectives of the Project:

The aim of the paper is to identify the causes of decay and spiritual deterioration of the legendary Mughal religious monuments of Dhaka through a detailed visual examination carried out by the author of this paper. This paper has been divided into two major phases.

The first phase is to analyze the present conditions of historically important spiritual Mughal Monuments of Dhaka, the Sat Gumbad (Seven Domed) Mosque

and the Dhanmondi Eidgah ground in Sat Masjid Road as case studies.

The second phase is to find justification for proper conservation, preservation and restoration of those significant sacred Mughal Monuments to revitalize their spirituality.

The study neither has the power to enact legislation, nor has the resources to conserve the selected structures. Therefore, it has purely an academic task in preparing a base line of data for further research and recommendations.

## Methodology of the Study:

The methodology is primarily based on an empirical survey and thus the research method depends upon qualitative data through observation and documentation. To conduct the research the following sequential steps were used:

Step 01: Made a review of literature for understanding the spiritual and historical importance of the Mughal spiritual structures and the need to properly conserve them.

Step 02: Conducted a field survey to observe existing conditions of the site, new developments, and the state of the old structures.

Step 03: Generated a photographic survey and questionnaire survey to find out the views and intentions of people towards those specific Historical Mughal Monuments.

Step 04: Finally propose recommendations based on the findings in order to generate an awareness in people who are involved in this kind of redevelopment or conservation project work of this particular Mosque and ground.

## Problems of Study:

There are seldom any studies without problems. The present study is no exception. There is no specific code of rules to preserve spirituality of buildings. Some people take advantage of lack of legal bindings for financial benefits and their action goes against the monumentality as well as spirituality of the Mughal buildings.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

### History of Islam in Bangladesh:

The Journey of Islam started in the land of Bengal by Sufi Syed Shahnasiruddin, who came all the way from Iraq to spread the religion. Before the conquest of the Turks, Arabian traders introduced Islam in the area due to their trading contact with the coastal areas. During the 8th to the 12th centuries Buddhism gained in the spiritual popularity because of the Pala dynasty and Buddhist rulers.

The true and large scale conversion of people towards Islam started in the 13th century. One of the most famous saints was Shah Jalal who came from Delhi, India to Sylhet in 1303 to preach Islam. Sylhet has been the center of spirituality since then. Shrines of different saints are part of famous architecture and complexes for spiritual practices in Sylhet.

During the Sultanate period in the 14th century the spirituality of Islam moved slightly towards a different direction from the main stream practice. "Sufism" was the popular term coined in that period and the aim of the Sufi was to attain a spiritual union with god through love rather than through prayers. Many of shrines and mosques were built in that period.

Dhaka came under the Mughal Emperor in the 16th century and became the capital in the 17th century. Prominent Mughal monuments and architecture built during that Mughal period includes prayer spaces like mosques and eid gahs.

History and spirituality are reciprocal to each other. History depicts that number of spiritual buildings increased with different phases of preaching religion and spirituality.

This research only focuses on Mughal architecture in Bangladesh. In 1610 Dhaka became the capital of Bengal during the Mughal Emperor Jahangir's reign. It was then that many mosques, palaces, forts, bridges, and tombs were built in Bengal according to the Mughal architectural principles. Mughal has a unique architectural character in their buildings and other structures. This is a blend of Islamic, Persian and Indian architecture. The buildings of Mughal architecture reflect not only their architectural techniques and wealth but also their love of poetry, personality and other artistic inclinations. Mughal architecture has its origin in its religion, Islam. The

concepts that are apparent in Islam, power, pleasure and death, are reflected in the forts, durbars, mosques, tombs, gardens.

According to the scholars of Islam the main characteristics of Mughal architecture is the existence of various influences of Persian and Hindu architecture. The characteristic features of Mughal architecture include a perfect or near perfect radial or bilateral symmetry, red sandstone with white marble inlays, in later periods pure white marble surfaces, geometric ornaments, domes which are slightly pointed instead of hemispherical ones and surrounding gardens. In addition to the fine-cut stone masonry used for facades, course rubble stone construction was used for the majority of walls. For the construction of domes and arches baked brick was also used although this was usually covered with plaster or facing stones. The design of the gardens is one of the most important aspects of Mughal architecture which provided the setting for tombs and palaces and also used for relaxation. The Mughal Architecture or the Muslim style of architecture that progressed can also be termed as the Indo-Islamic architecture. Hindu architecture was modified and elements of spaciousness, immensity and extent were incorporated by the Mughals or Muslim architecture. The buildings have domes and indentures. The empire provided a protected framework or structure for the flourishing of artistic pursuit and the rulers supplied mammoth wealth in these arenas. The buildings have a central dome and a row of huge entrances. The main entrance is larger than any-other entrance. The main entrance extends from the main structure. The typed stone construction, shallow arches made out of corbels rather than richly ornamented carved piers and columns are some typical Hindu features that have been incorporated into the Mughal architecture. Other constructions that became a part of the Mughal characteristics include; the chhatris - a domed kiosk resting on pillars, and the chajjas and jarokhas- a projecting balcony supported on corbels with a hood resting on columns. Extensive use of tile work, the iwan as a central feature in mosques, the charbagh or garden divided into four, the four-centre point arch, and the use of domes are the features borrowed from the Persian architecture (Islam, 2014).

It is a matter of debate and most scholar's believe that there is no metaphoric and spiritual representation of Allah in any of the physical features within the spiritual space. Only basic norms and requirements of spaces are important. In terms of decoration

simplicity is encouraged. The reason behind the use of floral decorations and geometric patterns is that the representation of any animal is completely prohibited. In most cases cultural modification from basic Arabic, Persian or Turkish origins was easily adopted into the architectural style. The Mughal features of mosques did not vary from this norm. As there is no direct, written influence, scholars have nevertheless tried to explore the symbolic and metaphysical significance of Islam in architecture.

Simplicity in the features of Mughal buildings reflects the spiritual belief of a simple life according to Islam. The whole Mughal architecture is a fine combination of so many local and foreign characteristics, which identifies it universally with many distinct forms of architecture. Thus features of Mughal architecture are maintained to satisfy primarily the norms of Islam along with the contextual and cultural interpretation. All of these features actually portrays the image of spiritual spaces of the region and taken as symbol and standard.

## Historical Background of Dhaka:

A historical study is required to understand the spiritual identity of the particular context and how the expression of religion in architecture changes with social and cultural interpretation.

Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) conquered Bengal in 1576 and in the subsequent years of his rule (1583-1605) Dhaka formed only a frontier outpost. During the time of his son and successor Jahangir (1605-1627) Dhaka rose to prominence at the instance of Subahdar Islam Khan (1608-1613), who in 1610 transferred the capital of Mughal Bengal from Rajmahal to Dhaka and renamed it Jahangirnagar. From then onwards, with a short break from 1639 to 1659 when Subahdar Shah Shuja's residence was at Rajmahal, Dhaka continued to retain the status of a provincial capital for the next one hundred years. During this period there was all-round development of the Mughal city of Dhaka which, according to the accounts recorded by some foreign travelers like Sebastian Manrique (1640), Nicolai Manucci (1663), Tavernier (1666), Thomas Bowrey (1669-79) and William Hedges (1686), appears to have extended to the Buriganga in the south, Tongi in the north, Jafarabad-Mirpur in the west and Postogola

in the east. In 1717 Murshidabad was made the capital of Bengal by Subahdar Murshid Quli Khan. Dhaka therefore lost the status as a capital town and henceforth continued to have been ruled by the successive naib- nazims on behalf of the Murshidabad nawabs until the middle of the 19th century. During this niabat period further extension of the city does not appear to have taken place, but the building activities in the city were not completely stopped. (Mughal Mosques of Dhaka)

With the shifting of capital from Rajmahal to Dhaka there ushered in a new era in the history of Mughal architecture in Bengal. The Governors or Subahdars, as they were called, were appointed in regular succession to rule the country from this time onwards. They were either of royal blood or in some way closely associated with the royal family. Many of them were keen lovers of art and architecture. It was under their dynamic rules that political stability prevailed throughout the country. Due to that stability they had the opportunity to erect buildings drawing inspiration largely from traditional styles of Upper India. The nobles, notable government officers and by private persons followed this example set by the governors. The city of Mughal Dhaka was thus gradually expanded and embellished with numerous magnificent buildings which took mainly the form of palaces, mosques, tombs, hammams, fortresses, katras, idgah and bridges.

In such a deltaic land of Bengal where no building stone is available and no hardwood grows, all of the structures in Dhaka were built of brick with lime mortar. These short-lived materials combined with the pitiless forces of nature and the thoughtless piracy of man caused the disappearance of a large majority of the structures in Mughal Dhaka. But many still survive, some of which are now either in ruins or repaired to the extent of giving them a modern look. Others are in fairly good State of preservation with subsequent restorations and repairs by the successive department of archaeology. (Mughal Mosques of Dhaka)

As in any other Islamic cities, mosques are regarded as an essential part of Dhaka city. It is very important to identify the impact of mosques on Dhaka and how they influence people's life. The Mughal era is regarded as a milestone in urban development in Dhaka. Historical studies of the Mughal era's spiritual monuments will help to in proposing recommendations for spiritual sustainability.



## Physical Aspects:

Dhaka had a glorious past during the Mughal rule. The city was full of gorgeous pieces of Mughal architecture. Some significant structures are still there on Sat Masjid Road and nearby areas. This particular road of Dhanmondi goes south to north. Pilkhana's 4th gate is the south point and Mohammadpur bus stand is the north point. It is a very old road; even the 'Pilkhana' (Place for Elephants) area and north point's Allah Karim Mosque have a Mughal flavor.

The name Sat Masjid is also evolved from a Mughal architectural heritage called Sat Gambuj Mosque. Actually, this road leads to the Sat Gambuj Mosque. Commonly, two names of this mosque are used, Sat Gambuj Masjid and Sat Masjid. Sat Gambuj Mosque, the most famous one, is on the south point of the ring road, very close to Sat Masjid Road.

On the opposite side, there is an old mausoleum on a high base. As the inscription of this mausoleum is missing and there is no reliable reference it is called the 'Unknown Tomb'. But its size and ornamentation

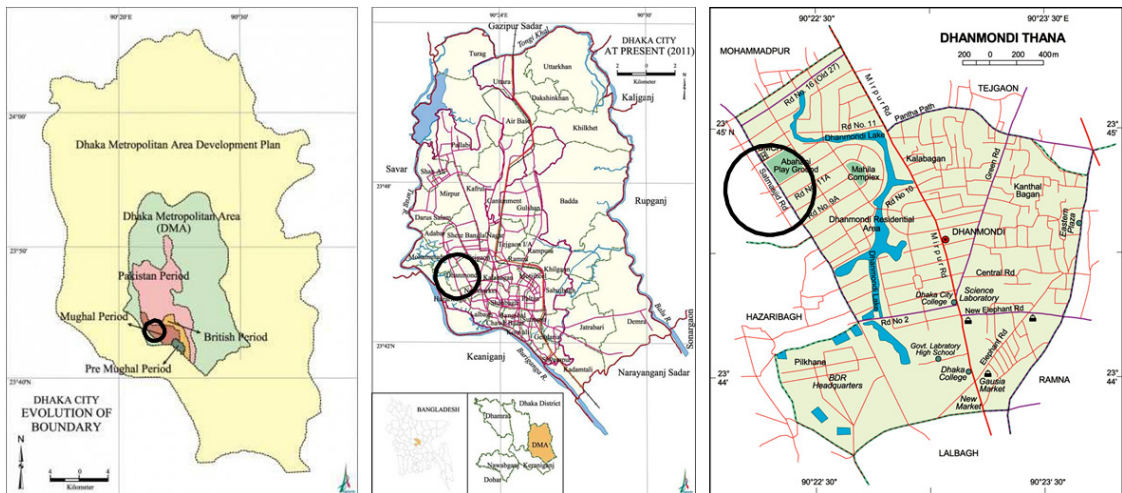


Figure 1, 2 & 3:  
Location of Site in Dhaka Map



Figure 4:  
Image of Sat Gambuj Mosque



Figure 5:  
Image of Unknown Tomb (HAQUE, 2009)

declares that it is definitely of an important person. The architectural style also indicates it was likely built in Shaista Khan's time. The roof is a flat vault, instead of a dome. It is a square structure with three openings, except on the western side, which has a mihrab (niche). That is very uncommon in the region. (Figure 4 & 5)

Allah Karim Mosque is a large mosque, with a shopping complex, at the Mohammadpur bus stand. Seeing its present condition, it is quite impossible to believe that it is a very old mosque, once called Allah Kuri (or Kurir) Mosque. Dr Ahmad Hasan Dani wrote in the 1950s: "It is reported that the inscription was removed by the Raja of Bhawal in the last century". Why did the Raja do so, there is no explanation. It may just be a story. But an inscription was there. An empty space (for a plaque) on the central gateway can be seen in old images. It cannot be dated due to the missing inscription. Also the original main structure has been demolished. By observing that, experts had assumed the mosque was from Shaista Khan's time. Destroying old heritage sites is a common trend in this country; so it is no surprise that a near-to-ruins structure was demolished in the 1950s and a new structure built in its place. The actual small single-domed structure was square in shape, with four corner minars as shown in figure. (Figure 6 & 7)

A row of modern buildings is the barrier between Bibi's Mosque in Lalmatia's F Block and Sat Masjid Road. Situated beside a huge pond, this mosque actually was a very old mausoleum, and may be one of oldest in Dhaka. (Figure 8)

The mosque's unique old structure is single-domed with a central nave. The date of this building is not definitely known. However, the use of a simple arched openings with no attempt to emphasize the central doorway and the sparse decorations places it in the pre-Shaista Khan's period. It is also difficult to state the object of the building. No grave now exists inside, but the people in the general local speak of its destruction. The existence of a mihrab raises doubt of its being a tomb, because in Bengal one never sees a mihrab inside a tomb as can be seen Northern India. Who Dara Begam was, cannot be definitely stated.

The building is now repaired, with some new features added to the interior. As there was no grave inside, the local people have mistaken it for a mosque and it is now used for prayer. The mihrab in the western wall consolidated this belief. But it is not a mosque, as it has a verandah with aisles on the south side, instead of on the eastern side, which is common for a Mughal or pre-Mughal mosque. (Figure 9)

The main attraction is the large dome, 25 feet in diameter, and there is no other example of such a big dome in Dhaka. Primarily, its shape is totally round, as can be seen in photos taken in the 1950s. But changes were made during renovation, possibly in the 1970s. Definitely, the room below was strongly built to bear the weight of such an enormous dome. The transformation from a tomb to mosque was completed in the Pakistan period. Currently it is part of a madrasa (residential institution for Islamic education) complex, and it is hard to accept it as a heritage site. (Dara Begam's Tomb Dhaka)



Dacca. Allakuri's Mosque (Cir.1680)



Allakuri's Mosque (turned into a market complex)

Figure 6:  
Original Image of Allah Kuri Mosque (collected)

Figure 7:  
Existing Image of Allah Kuri Mosque



Dacca. Dara Begam's tomb (mid-17th century)

Figure 8:  
Original Image of Dara Begam's Tomb (collected)



Dara Begam's tomb

Figure 9:  
Existing Image of Dara Begam's Tomb

Eidgah is one of the most important spiritual Mughal Monuments of Sat Masjid Road Dhaka. (Figure 10 & 11)

Eidgah on Sat Masjid Road, between roads 6/A and 7/A of Dhanmondi, and is 374-years-old. This is the only site among Sat Masjid Road's Mughal structures where an inscription can be found. As per the inscription, the Eidgah was built by Mir Abul Qasim (a Diwan of Shah Shuja and builder of Boro Katra). Only the western wall is original, but its façade bears a different look after two major renovations.

In the middle, there is a central mihrab, with six other mihrabs on both sides. An inscription was set just above the central mihrab. The other three walls, which were about six-feet high and had completely collapsed, have been rebuilt. The present walls contain metal grills, which is totally unacceptable.

It is reported that the ruler and other elites came here to pray during Eid (Biggest Festival for Muslim community). A branch of an extinct river (Pandu River) was the way to come here. However, the present condition of the Eidgah is horrible, with different utility services having set up offices around it to serve citizens' interest. (Khan, 2015 )

The old structures represent a very rich urban heritage, which is almost missing from written history. But all of the structures are in awful condition. Hopefully, the Department of Archaeology (DoA), entrusted with protecting such sites, will take a lead in making things better. The first task must be the removal of unwanted construction which is acting as a barrier around these Mughal spiritual monuments.



Figure 10 & 11:  
Some images of Mughal Eidgah on Sat Masjid Road



## EXISTING CONDITION OF THE AREA AND REASONS BEHIND DECAY AND DESTRUCTION

To understand the existing condition of Mughal architecture of Sat Masjid Road, two most prominent structures have been chosen as case studies for detailed analysis of that specified area. These monumental structures built during the Mughal dynasty, have historical, spiritual, architectural and heritage value and is a testimonial of a past era.

### Case Study 1: Saat Gombuj Masjid

It is popularly known as Saat Masjid, after which an adjoining road was named. There is no inscription. But experts say it was built in the 1680s in the time of Shaista Khan, as the building style is from the Subahdar's era. At the time, the mosque was on the bank of the Buriganga River, which in past added beauty to the place. The situation is totally different today. A madrassa is there now, encroaching on the river, The mosque is seven domed, which is the basis for its name. Four hollow large towers and domes make the mosque different from other mosques of Dhaka. The front yard is divided into two parts. There are some old graves in the outer one. The mosque is longer north to south, like other Mughal mosques. The middle dome is the largest. The central entrance is adorned with two minarets. The four corner octagonal towers were built using a special design. The prayer hall is one-storied, but towers are two-storied. (Figure 12)

Saat Gombuj Masjid, bears the scars of “ill-conceived renovations” by the archaeological officials and mosque authorities, who brought changes to its

original design over the years. The mosque's original color pale red was changed to white about a decade ago, and several other changes were made on various occasions. Sources said, the color was changed when the department of archaeology, which is responsible for conservation of archaeological sites, took up a project to renovate the mosque in 2003. Later, in the last fiscal year, the government engaged in another project to make a few more repairs; including changing the mosque's damaged plaster and restore it to its former look. (Figure 13 & 14)

Dr Ataur Rahman, current regional director of the department of archaeology, said the plan to change color was “ill-conceived” and “wrongheaded.” Apart from the color, the management committee of the mosque incorporated several changes in its design, including constructing a washroom with tiled floor, side walls and modern toilet facilities. According to Ataur such changes may add to a gradual process of distortion of archaeological sites, which require proper awareness of common people and proper renovation by the authorities. Government should be strict about implementing guidelines with regard to renovating a monument. Originality of an archaeological site should not be damaged or altered. The Buriganga River used to flow past the mosque when it was built on a beautifully landscaped land covered with forests. With time, the river changed its course and now flows off one kilometer west of the mosque. Saat Masjid is about 38 feet long and 27 feet wide and the thickness of its walls measures four feet. In recent times, the authorities lengthened the prayer hall by making canopied rooms at the front to meet the increased attendance of those offering prayers. There are three large onion-shaped domes placed over the main prayer hall and four small ones on all four corners of the rooftop hence the name Saat Gombuj Masjid (seven-domed mosque). (Siddique, 2013)



Figure 12, 13 & 14:  
Different phases of Sat Gambuj Mosque (Collected)





Figure 15 & 16:  
Insensitive developments surrounded by Sat Gambuj Mosque

Few years ago a multistoried madrasaa building was built without minimum sensitivity to the spiritual as well as historic value of this Mughal structure. The identity and integrity of this historic building is endangered. (Figure 15 & 16)

## Case Study 2: Dhanmondi Eidgah Ground

The Dhanmondi Eidgah ground, is an unique Mughal landmark that has been facing threat of decay due to negligence and lack of initiative to preserve it. This historical site has links with the glorious past of the country. The Mughal Subehdars and Diwans used to come here to say Eid prayers. The 358-year-old Eidgah is still being used. There are rules and laws to preserve such places of historical importance. But, like many other historical sites situated elsewhere in the country it is suffering from a kind of apathy from

the quarters concerned. But city dwellers cannot afford to lose it. (Save historic Dhanmondi Eidgah, 2015) (Sun, 2015) (Figure 17 & 18)

The Eidgah was constructed in 1640 by Mir Abul Qasim Dewan who was ordered by Prince Shah Shuja - Mughal governor of the Bengal and the son of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. A newly constructed building within five feet of the Eidgah has blocked the main entrance. According to an expert's opinion a drilling rig used during the construction of the building is believed to have weakened the Eidgah's foundation due to vibration. Digging a road by WASA (Water and sewerage Authority) and PWD (Public works department) near the wall of the ancient structure is posing a threat to its existence. A library and a mosque built in its premises have spoiled the elegant look of the heritage monument. The wall of the Eidgah has been used as a sidewall for constructing a dormitory for the employees of the Eidgah Mosque. Moreover, random use of its



Figure 17 & 18:  
Insensible growth surrounded by Dhanmondi Eidgah ground (Collected)



Figure 19 & 20:  
Arbitrary use of its abandoned land of Dhanmondi Eidgah ground (Collected)

abandoned land is accelerating the process of decay. (Save historic Dhanmondi Eidgah, 2015) (Sun, 2015) (Figure 19 & 20)

The oldest surviving Mughal Eidgah structure in the capital stands concealed by permanent structures as a local mosque committee has turned a grocery shop into a 'research centre' and is erecting a six-storey mosque on the Eidgah premises without Rajuk approval. Dhanmondi Eidgah mosque committee is constructing the building and maintaining the research centre without approval from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) as required by the Building Construction Act and Dhaka Metropolitan Building Rules. The under-construction building within five feet of the Eidgah has blocked the main entry to it. Devotees of Eid-congregation and the aspiring visitors now have to take a detour around the new mosque to get to the Eidgah. The monument has also been overshadowed by the grocery shop that mosque committee has turned into a 'Islamic Research Centre' within ten feet of Eidgah's central Mihrab (central prayer-niche). (Ali, 2009)

## Reasons behind Decay and Destruction

All the materials used in the construction of historical buildings undergo deterioration when exposed to aggressive environments. The rate and symptoms of such a process is influenced by a number of factors, including the properties of material itself, the natural factors and human actions. These factors either act separately or in various combinations. Conservation refers to systematic measures taken to keep the monument in good condition. (Awan & Kazmi, 2008) Some of these reasons behind decay

and destruction of spiritual Mughal monuments are given below:

Neglect and ignorance are possibly the major causes of destruction. A number of issues such as social, economical, political and administrative etc. are the underlying causes of neglect.

Concerned people are not bothered that construction of a huge building around these spiritual monuments has spoilt the divine look and spiritual implication of the religious monument.

There is no existence of buffering space between the public realm and the spiritual monuments. For the case of The Eidgah, it is located adjacent to the Saat Masjid road, which is comparatively one of the busy roads of Dhaka. The wall of Eidgah is directly exposed to the road, so pollution has greatly affected the stone. There has been no fortification or consideration towards a historical as well as spiritual monument.

Mechanical vibrations transmitted to the subsoil by heavy traffic on the road, have proved to be destructive for the historic building. The vibration from surrounding construction can cause loss of foundation strength by affecting subsoil, and loss of structural strength in super structure.

Proper maintenance is missing for these spiritual monuments. For example Eidgah is not only a historical relic but also an architectural piece and a cultural treasure of the nation. But due to inadequate number of guards, un-authorized visitors are very common. The visitors damage the monuments by writing on walls, climbing on different elements of building, using it as playground etc.

Government has no proper regulation to protect all the heritage icons of Dhaka city. Less awareness about the sanctity and historical value of the Mughal structure among the local people.

Improper guidance and limited knowledge to protect the original look of these heritage structures is one of the reasons causing the decay and destruction. Poor conservation is the result of lack of technical knowledge, regarding restoration work. Repairs are often done inexpertly or using unsuitable materials, which react un-favorably with the original material, causing further damage. Altering the original design and detailing plus unplanned conservation activities in the wrong sequence also comes under poor conservation techniques. In some places deterioration is due to improper building techniques, which was applied at the time of reconstruction in the name of conservation by builders.

Involvement of high influential people in mosque committees, who are so fast in establishing connections with the government's policymakers that concerned agencies, cannot keep pace with the normal rules and procedure.

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The National Building Code, 2008, requires that any development work within 250-metre radius of an archaeological and heritage site must have permission of government's high-powered Nagar Unnayan Committee before approaching the Rajuk for plan approval. These rules have clearly been flouted for unknown reasons during the construction of buildings around the Eidgah as well as Saat Gombuj Masjid situated at the Satmasjid road, of the posh Dhanmondi residential area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

These Mughal Monuments should be preserved for two reasons. One reason is the historical significance and the other is spiritual significance. From the perspective of historical significance, Satgumbad Mosque and Mughal Eidgah have attempted several times to save the old structures as they are already listed as heritage sites for Dhaka. Authorities should take some steps to protect and preserve heritage buildings, which are already in danger.

Due to religion is being one of the more important

driving forces of social context of Bangladesh, proper steps should be taken to preserve the spiritual essence of the city. These spiritual buildings are carrying the identity of religion.

Some original recommendations along with the suggestion made by Hossain in his paper "Strategies to integrate the Mughal settlements in Old Dhaka": (Hossain, 2013) to save the spiritual Mughal monuments are given below.

It should be done by consensus between public administrations, academic institutions, citizens' representatives; with the purpose to avoid any act that may damage the meaning and image of the monument and the general interests of The Satgumbad Mosque. The Mosque is one of the mostly visited Mughal structures in Dhaka.

The Mughal buildings along the river bank already lost their original approach from the riverside and inner city because of the change in the river course and the newly imposed settlements on the fabric. The access linkage between the artifacts and the ghats should be improved to ensure an interesting approach from the river bank as well as representing the water body in mosques as a symbol of ablution space and preparation to devote oneself in prayer.

The riverside elevations of the Mughal buildings need to be recovered to reveal the identity and integrity of the historic city.

Owners, users, and all stakeholders need to unite on a common platform to generate collective action that will protect the heritage properties. Traditional community-based management systems that have substantial control over the local society may be considered, along with government systems, to manage urban services from the neighborhood to city levels.

The efforts should be shifted from restoration work to regular maintenance of building. Regular pointing and grouting is necessary to strengthen the structure.

Proper planning is required which should address ecological and cultural problems associated with that area. Conservation, ecology, planning response to cultural and environmental degradation, transportation, architecture, air pollution, drainage and planning based on tourism is required.



Different degrees of interventions may be synthesized for different Mughal monuments to avoid rigidity in architectural conservation. Urban fabric through the development of contextual circulation patterns can also promote interrelation among monuments to indicate connectivity in spiritual spaces. Managing the urban dynamics to control the increasing pressure on establishment functions that cause rapid transformation is important. Policy and plans should be formulated to focus on the adaptive reuse of historical spiritual spaces and thus safeguard historical patrimony and ensure religious viability.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Mughal monuments which are may be made of stone, lime, plaster or ordinary clay becomes almost ethereal because of its spiritual value. These historical as well as spiritual monuments carried more weight than the building itself because they inspire and heal them or provide them with a place for peace. Their significance cannot be judged as a building, its existence has since been legendary and passed on generation after generation. These Mughal monuments are recognized as sacred places and also as a unique source of knowledge and understanding of their own culture what could be considered as the equivalent of a university. The Satgumbad Mosque and Mughal Eidgah are the heart of the significant Sat Masjid Road, an area of special cultural value and significance. A small effort by the academic and public institutions can easily enhance the glory of Sat Masjid Road, which will mark the real cultural identity. The trained designers will be able to conserve and preserve the spiritual heritage of Sat Masjid Road and the indigenous aesthetics of spiritual monuments will be continued as the grandeur of Mughal Architecture in Dhaka.

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