



Study of the Distinguishing Features of Mughal Mosque in Dhaka: A Case of Sat Gambuj Mosque

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ABSTRACT

Mosque is the main focal point of Islamic spirit and accomplishments. All over the world in the Muslim settlements mosque becomes an edifice of distinct significance which is introduced by Prophet Muhammad (Sm.). Since the initial stage of Islam, Muslim architecture has been developed as the base point of mosque. Mosque architecture in medieval time uncovering clearly its sacred identity especially during the pre-Mughal and Mughal period in Bengal. Dhaka, the capital city of independent Bangladesh, is known as the city of mosques. The Mughal mosques of Dhaka are the exceptional example of mosque architecture wherever the ideas and used materials with distinguishing features have been successfully integrated in the medieval context of Bengal. In this research study, the author selected a unique historical as well as Dhaka's most iconic Mughal era Mosque named "Sat Gambuj Mosque" (Seven Domed Mosque). The mosque, built in the 17th century, is a glowing illustration of Mughal Architecture with seven bulbous domes crowning the roof of the mosque, covering the main prayer area. It is undoubted that this magnificent ancient Mughal mosque is the material evidence of our glorious past with research worthy features and architectural details. This study is an attempt to identify the tangible distinguishing features of the Mughal mosque as well as the selected outstanding historical Mughal mosque. The overall research study conducted here is focused on the accomplishment of the findings in order to relate those distinguishing features with the Mughal mosque characteristics based on the morphological character, architectural features, structure and decoration which will be represented own belief, historical values and cultural exclusivity to the architecture.

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1. Introduction

Paramount example of Muslim architecture especially the mosque architecture was built during the Pre-Mughal and Mughal period. Mosque architecture went through extensive embellishment and perfection, which form the primary image of a complete mosque in the overall regional context of the subcontinent. And the mosque architecture got a new expression during the Pre-Mughal period (1204-1576 AD). The Muslims came to Bengal with the enriched method of construction of Mosque architecture which was the blend of two notions. First one is the regional Bengali style which is conveyed through adaptation of pre-Islamic monumental traditions (Buddhist and Hindu temples) and second one is the contemporary vernacular models (the mud and thatch hut).

During the history of Mughal architecture (1576-1757 AD) in Bangladesh for mosque a new era was started. In the context of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, Mughal

style played a dominating role. The chain of their building activity found expression through the numerous mosques that change the skyline of Dhaka. Perhaps the name of Dhaka as 'the city of mosques' initiated from the mosque building activity of the Mughals, The Mughal mosques in Dhaka indeed have a distinct pattern that categorizes them from the rest. However the Mughals have developed the Mughal mosques in Dhaka with abundant caution and devotion which were not copy of the North Indian model. Although, it is apparent that the design of Mughal mosque in Dhaka had drawn its concept of layout and organization preliminary from the prominent mosques built here in the Pre-Mughal period. (Khan, 1997)

Ancient mosques are the material evidence of our past. The Dhaka was once the glorious capital of the Mughals in this region is now on the verge of oblivion. Mughal glory faded and came to an end with the shifting of the provincial capital to Murshidabad in 1717 A.D. Uncontrolled growth since then is almost destroying the socio-cultural and

historic settings of urban fabric of Dhaka. Encroachments are going on unabated, while open spaces and water bodies are rapidly disappearing, the roads remain invaded and the overall situation get deteriorated. (Hossain, M.S., 2006)

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, well known as city of mosques has a fairly long history of evolution. Before it rose to eminence as per the Mughal capital of Bengal and became an urban and commercial trade center 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 architectures are an integral part of 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. All these

sacred buildings are major endorsements of the long history of Islam in Dhaka as well as in Bangladesh. In Dhaka, the Mughal mosque architecture of different areas possesses separate identity or distinguishing features of architectural pattern.

Here for the research study the author selected a Mughal mosque as well as a historical and architectural monument named “Sat Gambuj Mosque” (Seven Domed Mosque) which is situated at Mohammadpur, Dhaka- one of the most populous residential areas of Bangladesh’s capital city (Figure-01). The edifice reveals seven domes with three over the prayer chamber and four over the corner towers. Therefore it is acknowledged as Sat Gambuz (seven domed) Mosque. This beautiful mosque bears testimony to the style and design of Mughal mosque architecture in Dhaka as well as in Bengal.

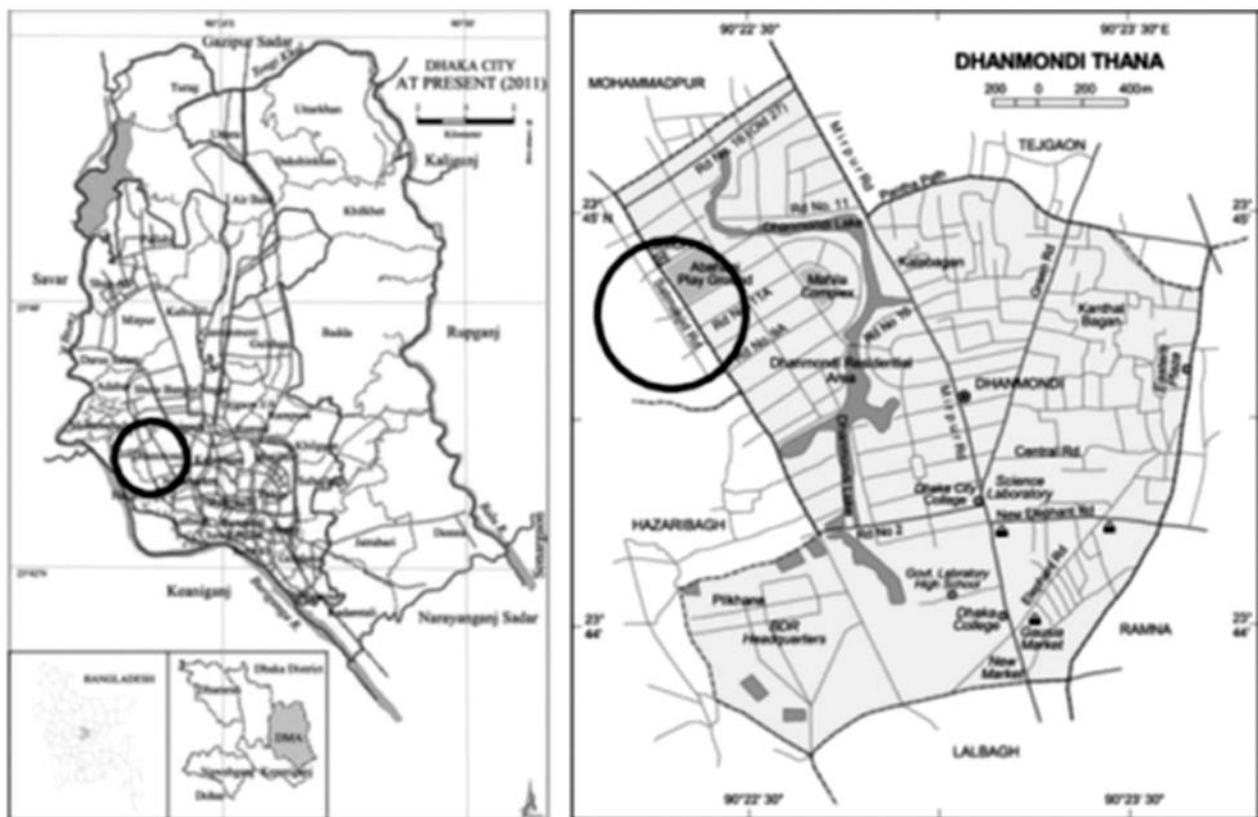


Figure 1. Location of the selected Mughal mosque in Dhaka city map. (Source: Banglapedia).

2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

2.1 Aim

The main aim of this research study is to identify the tangible distinguishing features of outstanding historical Mughal mosque named “Sat Gambuj Mosque” (Seven Domed Mosque) in Dhaka based on the findings in order to relate

those distinguishing features with the Mughal mosque characteristics.

2.2 Objectives

- i. To investigate and understand the historical background and values of the Mughal monument “Sat Gambuj Mosque”.

- ii. To analyze the present conditions of this historically important Mughal Mosque as a case study.
- iii. To find out the architectural features with morphological character.
- iv. To find out the structure and decoration.
- v. To identify the tangible distinguishing features.
- vi. To accomplish the findings in order to relate those distinguishing features with the Mughal mosque characteristics.

3. Methodology of the Study

The methodology of this research study is primarily based on an empirical survey and consequently the research method depends upon qualitative data through observation and documentation. The research progresses according to the following sequential stages:

3.1 Literature Survey

- To explore a contextual study of the region especially the Dhaka city during the Mughal period.
- To investigate and understand the characteristics, distinguishing features and pattern of mosque architecture of Mughal period.
- To understand the historical and architectural significance of the selected Mughal monumental structure, named Sat Gambuj Mosque (Seven Domed Mosque).

3.2 Field Study

- To observe present conditions of the specific Historical Mughal Mosque through field survey and photographic survey.
- To collect data, architectural details and other important information about the Sat Gambuj Mosque.

3.3 Exploring Activity

- To identify the tangible distinguishing features of outstanding historical Mughal mosque named Sat Gambuj Mosque.
- To accomplish the findings in order to relate those distinguishing features with the Mughal mosque characteristics based on the morphological character, architectural features, structure and decoration.

4. General Portrayal of the Study

4.1 The Mosque of Bangladesh in Different Time Period

Before Muslim period Buddhist and Hindu rulers established lots of temple in this region. So that Mosque architecture of

this region had an influence from the temple's plan but other functional layouts were completely different for the ritual purpose. In Bengal mosques the architectural features like the domes, arches, *mihhrabs* and the exterior decoration of the mosques are fundamentally based on the traditional mosque of central Asia but have unique characteristic, though the Muslims of this region adopt the local tradition, skills, materials, and consider the local climate and geography. Through the analysis of the architectural features, form layouts, materials, the mosque architecture of Bangladesh can be analysed into four periods:

- a) The Sultanate or Pre-Mughal period (1204-1576),
- b) The Mughal period (1576-1757),
- c) The Colonial or Post-Mughal period (1757-1947) and
- d) The Contemporary or Modern period (1948 to present).

4.2 Mughal Mosque during Mughal Period

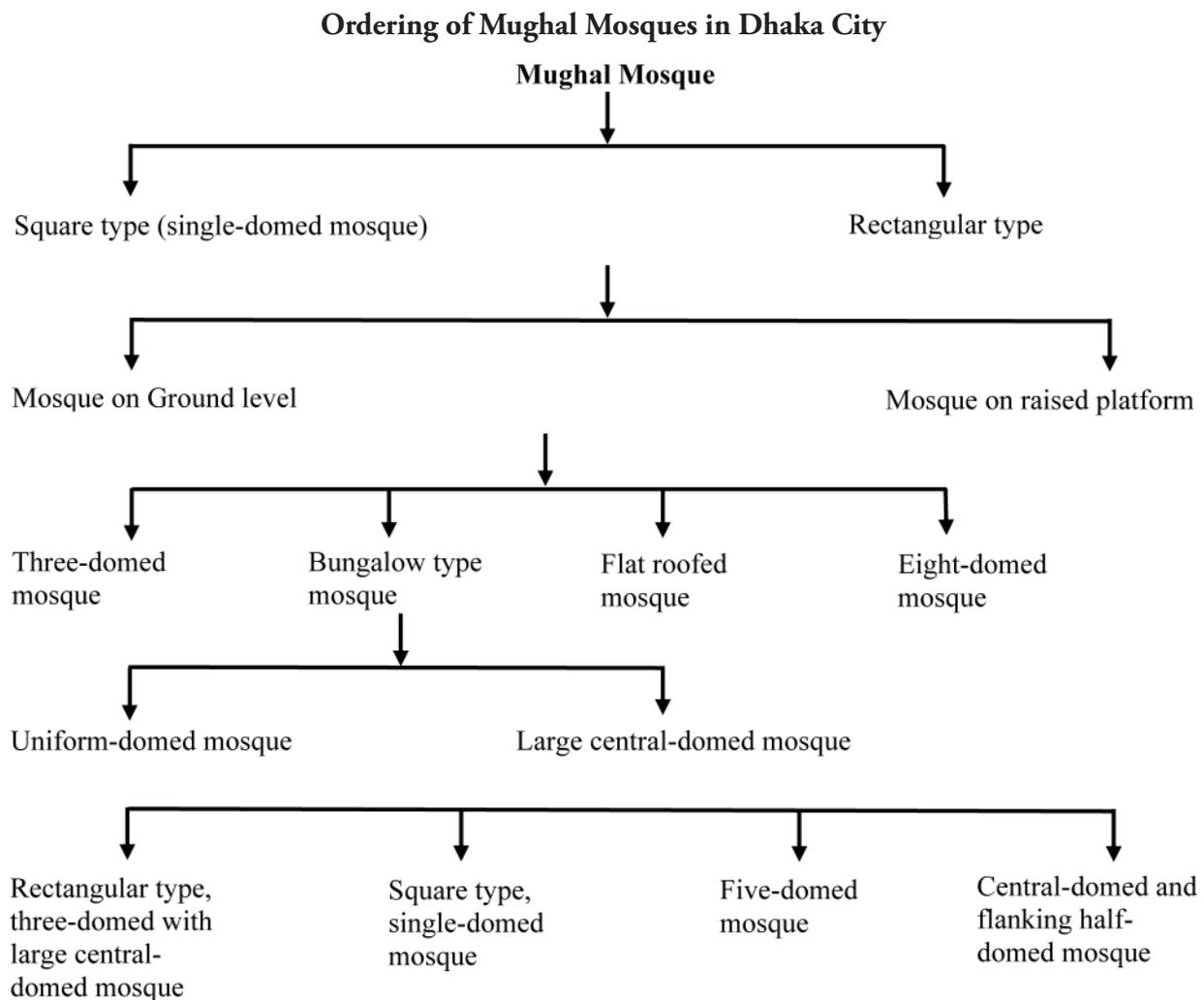
During the reign of Emperor Jahangir, the Mughal capital was shifted from Rajmahal to Dhaka in 1610, by Islam Khan – a Mughal governor. The Muslim architecture of Mughals are recognized as brick-style architecture in 1666 AD. Bengal move toward under the supremacy of the Mughals and they brought new decorum in their architecture especially in mosques. They developed a unique style to Bengal and introduced a new architectural order with the sense of sophistication and modification. Also they discarded some of the earlier established architectural elements. However, during the Mughal era there were inter flow of ideas from different parts of India resulting a standard layout of Muslim architecture. In the middle of the 17th century something approaching a standard imperial pattern had begun to emerge in the Mughal architecture. Sat Gambuj Mosque or seven-domed mosque (selected case of this research study by the author) is the glorious example which is explaining the standard pattern of mosque architecture of Mughal period in Dhaka City (the capital of Bangladesh).

More elaborately about the historical overview of Mughal mosques it is said that; in the sixteenth century the Indo-Islamic architectural styles was started in the majestic capitals of Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri. Also it was appeared in the provinces as these areas were conveyed under the Mughal Realm. In every provincial context there were special features embedded in the vernacular tradition. While, in mosque architecture the Mughal style had a universality that is accepted throughout. Mughal mosques followed an imperial tradition that is contrast to the buildings of the Sultanate period which are characterized by regional identity. The foremost elements of the Mughal mosques are dominant central domes and tall axial entrances which were introduced by the Mughal architects.

The Mughal arches became elegant especially four cantered arches were introduced instead of the earlier two arches. Reiterated plaster panels replaced traditional terracotta art. The curved cornices of the pre-Mughal structures as well as mosques were substituted by the straight, horizontal panels which were widely used in Mughal mosques. (Imam, 2000)

In 1576, as a province of the Mughal Empire, Bengal was ruled from Delhi by the governors of Bengal. While in the history of Indian architecture the Mughals are termed as “the great builders”, but in Bengal their efforts were submissive compared to the ongoing contemporary

architecture being practiced in a different place of the subcontinent. The Bengali architectural tradition was disrupted by the Mughals that had been made during the pre-Mughal period. For the usage of plastered surfaces in the Mughal mosques, the traditional expression of brickwork with terracotta decoration was unrestrained. The multi-domed mosques of pre-Mughal periods were replaced by the Mughal period’s typical three-domed mosques (whether uniform-domed or large central-domed). According to the varying ground plans and roofing patterns, the ordering of Mughal mosques are stated below:



4.3 Mughal Mosque with a Large Central Dome

In this research study, the selected Sat Gambuj Mosque is an example of rectangular type and three-domed Mughal mosque with large central dome. Two divergent bays, one is a large central bay and another one is small rectangular bay on either side, inside the mosque is roofed by three domes

where the central one is bigger than the adjoining ones. To place the side domes on circular base above the rectangular bay, the Mughals introduced here two half-domed vaults on the eastern and western sides. The facades are relieved with panels, pierced with triple archways – the central archway is slightly bigger than the other two at the side and set in a protected frontons.

4.4 Historical Experience of Dhaka

400 years rich history of Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh) is something that cannot be forgotten because it has gone through a lot. Be it the *Nawabs* with their wonderful architecture to the British rule and to the more recent Liberation war, Dhaka has seen it all and is still there to convey the tale. (Farooq, M.A.A., 2015)

Therefore, a historical study is required to understand the identity of the particular context and how the expression of religion in architecture changes with social and cultural interpretation during Mughal period.

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 in the south to the Buriganga, in the north to Tongi, in the west to Jafarabad-Mirpur and in the east to Postogola. 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)

Although Dhaka is considered a Mughal city, full of beautiful pieces of Mughal architecture, it is very important to identify the impact as well as characteristics of those Mughal mosques on Dhaka and how they influence people's life. The Mughal era is regarded as a milestone in mosque development in Dhaka. Among those historical Mughal monument, the "Sat Gambuj Mosque" (Seven Domed Mosque) is the finest one (Figure-02).



Figure 2. Image of Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Wikipedia)

4.5 Sat Gambuj Mosque

4.5.1 Historic Overview

Sat Gambuj Mosque” or Seven Domed Mosque is one of Dhaka’s utmost iconic Mughal era Mosques which is situated at one of the most populous residential areas of Bangladesh’s capital city Dhaka named Mohammadpur (Figure-01). The mosque reveals seven domes where three domes above the main prayer chamber and other four above the corner towers. Henceforth it is recognized as Sat Gambuz or seven domed Mosque.

The Sat Gambuj Mosque is dated to be on the second half of the seventeenth-century. But no precise information is acquired about when and by whom this beautiful mosque was erected. Some historians said that most possibly it was built by Shaista Khan from 1664 to 1688 when he was Subahdar and army general of Mughal Realm in Bengal province. On the other hand, according to some other sources it is said that in 1680 AD the mosque was erected by Umid Khan who was the son of Shaista Khan. Therefore, a confusion may arise there about whoever and whenever the mosque was built. It is nearly clear that this archaeological site was constructed in the second half of 17th century.



Figure 3. A sketch of Sat Gambuj Mosque beside the Buriganga River in 1814. (Source: Wikipedia)

During Mughal period, this Mohammadpur area of Dhaka city was known as Jafarabad which was an important business center for the Mughal rein. A stream of river Buriganga was once flowing through the eastern side of the mosque (Figure-03). More precisely the mosque was built on the bank of the river (Figure-04). But the river moved away about a mile to the



Figure 4. Image of Sat Gambuj Mosque in the 60s. (Source: Bangladesh Old Photo Archive)

southern side through the decay of Mughal power and passage of time. After that the mosque was isolated and dilapidated on a swamp. In the nineteenth century, Nawab of Dhaka named Sir Nawab Abdul Ghani took actions to renovate as well as restore this mosque to its previous grandeur. From the north edge of Pilkhana (royal stable for elephants) the earth road was leading. Presently, at western side of Dhanmandi Badshahi Eidgah to Sat Gambuj Mosque, the road was improved which later became known as ‘Sat Masjid road’.

During the rule of Shaista Khan in Bengal, according to historians, this Sat Gambuj mosque was the religious center of rich agricultural villages known as Jafarabad, Sarai Begumpur, Katasur which were located in between Peelkhana and Buriganga River. Basically, the Mughal administrators and merchants used to travel along that antique stream of Buriganga. Near the mosque they used

the quayside to reach the towns along Brahmaputra river by passing pirate crawling Shitalakhsya River. Earliest drawings illustrate that near the mosque boats and merchant vessels used to be fastened at the quayside.

This magnificent Mughal mosque is standing on a high platform about fifteen feet height and provide accommodations of hundreds people approximately. Forward-facing of the mosque is bounded by a large rectangular garden. Some ancient tombs which are considered to be the final resting places of Mughal grandees were well-preserved in this garden (Figure-05). There is a one chambered and decorated structure situated on the opposite side of the garden. It is supposed to be the grave of one of Shaista Khan’s daughters and this mausoleum is acknowledged as ‘BibirMazar or Mausoleum of Bibi (Figure-06).



Figure 5. Sat Gambuj Mosque with high platform & a large rectangular garden. (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 6. BibirMazar or Mausoleum of Bibi. (Source: Wikipedia)

The original character of the mosque can be traced from the book of Charles Doily, published in 1928-30. He has also drawn a sketch of the mosque, which proved that the domes and the arches were in ruined condition. Even then he praised a lot for its architectural beauty as well



Figure 7. The white-plastered, magnificent Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Author)

as its suitable location i.e. at the edge of river Buriganga. He also compared it with the structure of Venice built at the edge of river Adriatre. Later on Rahman Ali Tais wrote a book (1910) from where it is possible to find out the ruined condition of the mosque and its different stages of restoration. According to him Nawab Sir Ahsan Ullah Bahadur repaired the mosque. As a result people gradually started to pray here five times in a day. From this statement it is evident that the mosque was in such a ruined condition that people could not even pray there. (Khan, 1997)

4.5.2 Present Condition

Afterward the culmination of the Mughal rule Mosque adjacent villages were abandoned and the mosque was almost ruined due to disuse and conquering vegetation. The mosque and the ancient graves were restored throughout the Pakistan period. Presently, the mosque is conserved by the department of Archaeology and museum. The conservation was done according to the original plan of the mosque. About a decade ago in 2003 the original color of the mosque was pale red which has been changed to white during the time of renovation of the mosque under a project acquired by the department of archaeology (responsible authority for conservation of archaeological sites). Far ahead, in the previous financial year the government involved in another project to make a few more repairs over the mosque. The repair works include mainly changing the mosque's damaged plaster and restore it to its former look (Figure-07). There were very little space both in the front and back side of the mosque. The Directorate of Archaeology acquired some land around the structure and developed it into a garden. The required services like water supply for ablution and for gardening are arranged properly. Sewerage services are also provided adequately. Under the ministry of Culture the maintenance of this ancient Mughal mosque is done by the department of Archaeology. Now a days it received good care from its custodians and is in a good state of preservation.



Due to unplanned modifications many of its Mughal features have been destroyed. This modifications include the use of terrazzo on the floor inside the mosque. It is necessary to take appropriate maintenance so that no additional insensitive modification and violation can extinguish this precious historical heritage edifice. A gigantic multistoried madrasa complex named Jamea Rahmania Arabia was built at the place where the serene river bank was flowing once upon a time.



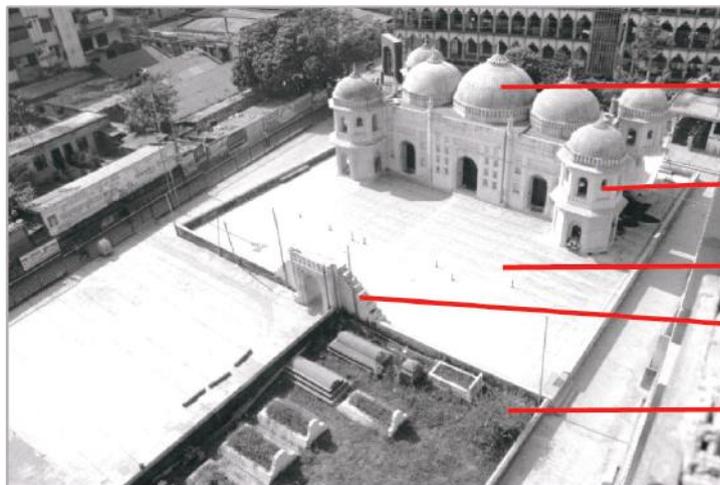
Figure 8. Madrasa complex built insensitively close to Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Wikipedia).

4.5.3 Morphological Character:

The Sat Gambuj Mosque is documented as one of the outstanding examples of the mosque architecture as well as the most innovative of all the spiritual monuments of Mughal periods built in Dhaka city. The Mosque was built on a 15'-0" (4.6 m. approx.) high but tressed platform at the edge of river Buriganga. Present-day the river which is

considered to be one of the streams of Buriganga has been driven southwards due to the prompt growth of city.

Sat Gambuj Mosque is a three-domed rectangular mosque with larger central dome and it is constructed at the western side of the platform (Figure-09, 10 & 11) and (Table-01). All the elements of the mosque is harmoniously balanced and gives a sense of graceful proportion of the structure.



Larger central dome

Double storied corner tower

High platform

Gate way

Large rectangular garden

Figure 9. The magnificent Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Prepared by the author)

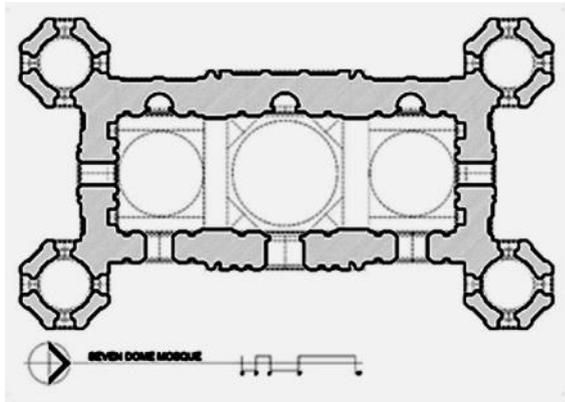


Figure 10. Plan of main mosque. (Source: Banglapedia)

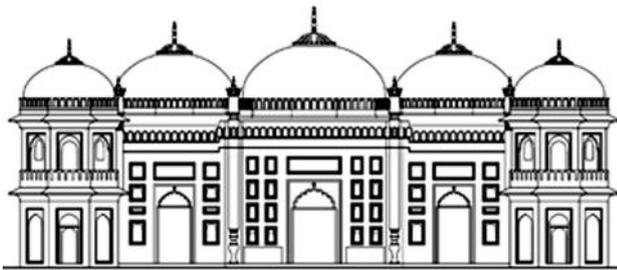


Figure 11. Front elevation of Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Banglapedia)

Table – 1: Basic Form of Sat Gambuj Mosque

The Mosque is a three-domed rectangular mosque with larger central dome
Internal measurements 47'-3" x 16'-3" (144 m x 5 m) approx.
External measurements 57'-4" x 29'-3" (175 m x 89 m) approx.
Wall thickness 4'-3" to 5'-3" (1.3 m to 1.6 m) approx.

The northern and southern side of the main prayer chamber is surrounded by two enormous double storied hollow corner pavilion, having dome at the top. The hollow octagonal tower (Figure-12) replaced the usual slender towers at the four corners of a mosque and justified the nomenclature of Sat Gambuj or seven domed mosque. There are arched shaped door and panel work at both the levels of the pavilion. At the lower stage, among the eight sides, four of them comprises of door openings and four of them are ornamented with panel work. Similarly at the upper level four sides are having arch shaped door openings and rest four are ornamented with arched panels with a small opening for window. Here all the opening and doors have multicusp ornamentation. The towers level are clearly identified with the help of projected eve with merlon ornamentation. (Khan, 1997)

The corner tower (Figure-12) is an exceptional type of architectural element. As a result it has been identified as an especial and different type of mosque architecture among the Mughal mosques in Dhaka city.



Figure 12. The corner tower of the magnificent Sat Gambuj Mosque. (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 13. The gate way, in the middle of the eastern border of mosque. (Source: Wikipedia)

A small gate way (Figure-13) was constructed in the middle of the eastern border of the open courtyard to accommodate a place for “*adhan*” or “call for prayer” from its top. It is a later addition and has got resemblance with the central part of the mosque. There are also merlons with multicusp ornamentation. There are some steps at both sides of the gate way.

4.5.4 Architectural Features.

The selected Mughal mosque, for this research study, named Sat Gambuj (seven domed) is a white-washed onion-dome mosque

and designated as the finest example of the pure Mughal-style mosque in Dhaka. Architectural features of this mosque are quantified in the following Table-02 and Figure-14.

Table 2. Architectural features of Sat Gambuj Mosque

Characteristics	Description
Eastern wall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The wall has projected fronton at the center with two engaged turret at the projected ends. The top of the turret is pinnacle shaped. – Three arched entrances (four centred), flanked by shallow niches and multicused ornamentation. The central main entrance is bigger than the side ones and this entrance is emphasized by multi foil archways and slender engaged columns with bulbous base. All the three entrances were built under a half circular domes. – Central doorway 6'-0" (1.8 m. approx) wide. – Side doorways 4'-6" (1.37 m. approx) wide.
Western wall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has projected fronton at the outer façade of the western wall with two engaged turret. The top of the turret is pinnacle shaped which is above the parapet level. – Two kinds of panel work-upper level rectangular panel and lower level arched shaped panel.
Northern and Southern walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have single entry, under a half centred dome about 3'-5" (1.04 m, approx.) wide. – Projected fronton having engaged turret, which are pinnacle shaped at the top of the parapet level. – Decorated with arched shaped panel work.
Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mosaic work.
Roof	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Three domes with larger central dome. – Each of the domes are rest on the octagonal drum.
Parapet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Horizontal with merlon ornamentation.
Colonnades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prominent.
Arches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Multi foil.
<i>Mihrab</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Three <i>mihrab</i> in the <i>qibla</i> wall (western façade) with multi cusped ornamentation in the arched opening. – Center one is larger than the side ones.
Corner tower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 12'-3" X 12'-3" (3.7 m X 3.7 m) approx. octagonal tower, double storied with arched panels and window surmounted by cornice and crowned by domes with lotus finials.
Cornice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Straight.
Niches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Presence of niches on the internal and external wall of the structure.

4.5.5 Structural System

The transition of the square to a circle of the dome is done through pendentives (Figure-15). Domes are resting on the octagonal drums decorated with merlons. The main chamber hall's interior is divided into three bays with two lateral arches. Half circular domes are used for the transition of larger dome to smaller sized side domes.

4.5.6 Decoration, Ornamentation and Materials

The surface of the central *mihrab* is embellished with moulded plaster relief. Series of merlons on the octagonal drum of the domes. This pattern of ornamentation is being followed in the middle strip of the octagonal pavilions. Rectangular and arched shaped panels with niches at the eastern wall. Arched shaped ornamentation in different sides of the built form. Multi cusped ornamentation and detail

works have been done inside the panels and the niches. However, all decoration as well as ornamentation remain modestly done by plaster work in different style as rectangle and arched panels, flat, four-centered or multi-foiled arches. This Mughal mosque was made by brick masonry with lime mortar and facades were simply plastered. (Figure-16 & 17)

5. Exploring the Findings

The Mughal mosques have distinctive characteristics and the Sat Gambuj mosque is an incomparable example of Mughal mosque in Dhaka as well as in Bengal with seven domes. The foremost vision of the Mughal mosque was to serve two purposes. First vision was to show their respect for the religion and the second vision was to establish a symbolic expression of their rule in a place or region. To achieve the second goal, Mughal mosques developed with easily

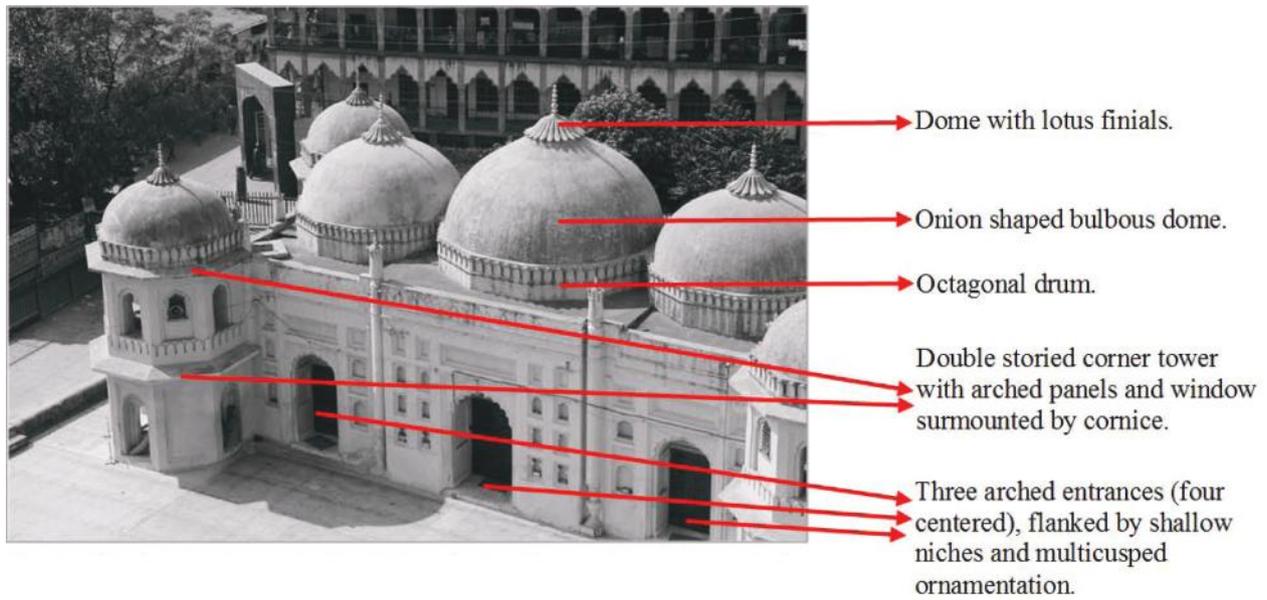


Figure 14. The eastern façade of the selected Mughal mosque named Sat Gambuj (seven-domed) with some architectural features. (Source: Prepared by the author).

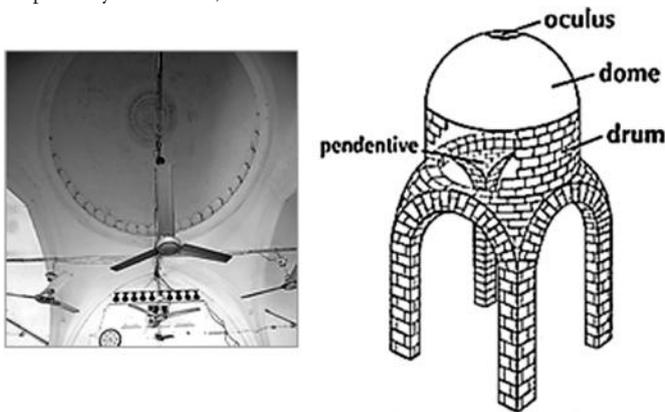


Figure 15. Dome on pendentives. (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 16. Interior prayer space with central mihrab in the qibla wall which is multi cusped ornamentation in the arched opening. (Source: Wikipedia).



Figure 17. Decoration and ornamentation details made by plaster. (Source: Wikipedia)

identifiable defined character which became the distinguishing features of Mughal mosque in Dhaka. The distinguishing features were strong enough so that the modifications required by site and additional requirements could not affect the overall atmosphere. However, the surrounding nature played a very important role in the inclusive visual image of the Mughal mosque. That is the reason to build the selected magnificent Mughal mosque, Sat Gambuj (seven dome mosque), in the edge of Buriganga river.

5.1 The Features of Mughal Mosques in Dhaka

The architectural characteristics of the Mughal mosque during Mughal period are different from those of the Sultanate period. Basically, the Mughal mosques were divided into two types:

- a) *Jam-e-mosque* and
- b) *Waktiamosque*.

The basic features or characters of the Mughal mosques in Dhaka as well as in Bengal are:

- Unlike the mosques of the Sultanate period, there is no royal gallery inside the mosques of the Mughal period.
- *Do-chala* design came to be added with the mosque architecture of this time.
- Generally, squares and uniform domes mosques are built more in number in the rural areas than the urban areas. A long nice pineal was used at the crown of the domes. The evolution of this architectural style is noticed in different regions of Bengal.
- Mostly, Mughal mosques comprise of a single prayer hall as well as single-aisle with three or five bays. The exterior surfaces of the mosques are plastered and panelled, the cornices are straight, and the buildings look less ponderous than Sultanate ones because of the higher domes.
- There were no terracotta ornamentation on the walls like in the Sultanate period; rather the walls were decorated with lime-sand coatings and different colours.
- Mosques were decorated with various artistic works in rectangular portrait and arch-style.
- The arch door was a unique feature of the Mughal style. Front facade was highly ornamented with rectangular panels, each comprising multi-cusped arches. The main arched door opens under a half dome.
- No stone piers have been used to carry the domes. In this regard, the central dome was generally larger.

- The mosques of Mughal period are bungalow sized uniform-dome, three-domes and sometimes built on a high platform. One dome mosques are most common in Bangladesh.
- The corner towers of the mosque of this period are much higher than those of Bengal mosque of sultanate period and they have kiosk plaster on them.
- The Mughal style flourished in the newer cities, and it actually took place on basis of technological excellence and building materials.
- Some mosques are rebuilt in the Mughal period. Older materials had been used in the renovation process, plastered walls are also seen. (Rahman, 2007)

The distinguishing features or characters of Mughal mosques in Dhaka as well as in Bengal are;

- The faceted pier supported the cusped arch.
- Engaged ribbed / molded corner turrets (tower)
- Horizontal, straight cornice.
- Heavy brick façade.
- Plaster decoration.
- Dome on octagonal shoulder (drum). (Khan, 1997)

5.2 Distinguishing Features of Mughal Mosque in Dhaka and Sat Gambuj Mosque

Here for the research study, the author try to accomplish a comparison of the distinguishing features of mosque architecture of Mughal period in Dhaka city and the Sat Gambuj mosque (seven dome - which is a unique example of Mughal mosque in Dhaka city). This comparison is described in the following Table 03.

Table 3. Distinguishing Features of Mughal Mosque in Dhaka and Sat Gambuj Mosque

Building Elements	Mughal Mosque in Dhaka	Sat Gambuj Mosque
Walls	Mosques are made of brick with heavy wall thickness, however the ornamentation on the carved brick facades of the Pre- Mughal period was exchanged by flat surface decoration made of plaster. Therefore, brick facades are plastered and decorated with plaster pattern.	Brick is used for making the entire mosque with heavy wall thickness (Figure 10). The facades of this mosque are plastered and decorated as well as ornamented in different style. The plastered work are done as rectangle and arched panels.
Parapet and Cornice	Horizontal and straight	Parapet of this mosque is horizontal with merlon ornamentation. Cornice is also straight here.
Arch	Arches are mainly four-centered or multi-foiled.	Mostly arches are four-centered or multi-foiled.
Dome	The domes rest either on shored or on transverse arches, basically on octagonal drum though pendentives or squinches. As a result they got the advantage of height beauty and grandeur. While the dome is crowned by a tall beautiful finial. Mainly three domed.	The transition of the square to a circle of the dome is done through pendentives (Figure 15). Domes are resting on the octagonal drums. The mosque is a three-domed mosque with larger central dome and the domes are crowned by lotus finials. (Figure 14).

<i>Mihrab</i> and <i>Qibla</i> Wall	Mostly three <i>mihrab</i> in the <i>qibla</i> wall (western façade) with multi- cusped ornamentation in the arched opening.	Three <i>mihrab</i> in the <i>qibla</i> wall (western façade) with multi- cusped ornamentation in the arched opening. Center one is larger than the side ones. (Figure 16).
Corner Turret (Tower)	The corner minarets generally short height above the parapets are topped by the plastered kiosks.	Octagonal hollow four corner turrets (towers), double storied with arched panels which is above the parapet level. Windows of corner turrets are surmounted by cornice and crowned by domes with lotus finials.
Minarets	Absence of minarets.	There is no minarets in the Sat Gambuj mosque.

From the above comparison table of the distinguishing features it is undoubted that, this magnificent ancient Sat Gambuj (seven domed) Mughal mosque is the material evidence of our glorious Mughal past. Almost all the main distinguishing features of the Mughal mosque are likely present among this unique Mughal mosque. Therefore, this mosque is an exceptional example with research worthy features and architectural details of Mughal mosques in Dhaka city. Although the mosque is declared as a protected archaeological structure which is already conserved by the archaeology department with proper maintenance, but the uncontrolled and insensitive developments (surrounded of the Sat Gambuj mosque) is an alarming condition for this beautiful Mughal mosque.

6. Concluding Statements

It is obvious from the aforementioned discussion that the Mughal mosques in Dhaka city, capital of independent Bangladesh, had an individuality of its own. As an accurate and splendid reflection of Mughal mosques in Dhaka city, the selected ancient Mughal mosque named “Sat Gambuj Mosque” (seven-domed mosque) is unquestionably made a profound contribution to the socio-cultural history and heritage of Dhaka city as well as Bangladesh.

Sat Gambuj Mosque with its distinguishing features as well as architectural details, structure and materials, decoration and ornamentation is inimitable. Presently, the mosque is striving to survive for embracing its original Mughal beauty among the face of contemporary uncontrolled developments (like the gigantic madrassa), climatic adversaries, misuse of the surroundings and land scarcity. Although this Sat Gambuj mosque is conserved with few short comings by the department of archaeology, but the attempt is praise worthy and many lessons could be learnt from it.

This Mughal mosque is carried more weight than the building itself because it inspires and heals the lacking's of the flavor of Mughal period. Its presence has since been legendary and passed on generation after generation. This Mughal mosque is recognized as sacred place and also as a

unique source of knowledge which have historical, spiritual, architectural and heritage value and is a testimonial of a past Mughal era.

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