

Some Religious Architecture on the Bank of the Bhairov River in Jashore District of Bangladesh: An Observation

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Article Info.

E-ISSN: 2583-6528

Impact Factor (SJIF): 3.477

Available online:

www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 08/Nov/2022

Accepted: 16/Dec/2022

Abstract

This paper tries to explore some Religious Architecture on the Bank of the Bhairov River in Jashore District of Bangladesh historically. Bhairov River is a big river in this region and Jashore is a very important city periodically. There have many religious historical architecture buildings which are situated besides the Bhairov River one after another with harmony. However, every religion group of people performs their prayer or worship in there. This research aims to look after what was the past religious architectural building and communities on the bank of the Bhairov River.

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Keywords: Religion, Jashore, Architecture, Culture.

1. Introduction

Jashore (Old spelling is Jessore) is situated in South Western part of Bangladesh. It has Eight Upazilas. As such Chowgacha, Sharsha, Jhikargacha, Jashode Sadar Upazilla. Among them Jashore sadar upazila is the main city of it. On 6th December 1971, Jessore become the first district of Bangladesh to be liberated. Jashore is a very important city through the ages. Jashore main city has ongoing with the Bhairov River. Bhairov River is a distributary of the Ganga River. Bhairov River is a big river in this region. Here we selected all monuments are related with religious character, yet there have many valuable materials for the study of religious life of the dwellers on the bank of the Bhairov River at Jessore in Bangladesh. Religious Monuments Category are Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian. This paper tries to explore some Religious Architecture on the Bank of the Bhairov River in Jashore District of Bangladesh through historically. There have many religious historical architecture building which are situated besides the Bhairov River one after another with good harmony. Still every religious people perform their prayer/worship in there. This research aims to look after what was the past of religious architecture building and community on the bank of the Bhairov River. It is a preliminary report of this research. This paper attempt to

discuss 9 (nine) historical monuments and sites of four (4) religion. I use taken my photo numbers are 1, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, and others photo taken from internet and others. This research is going on through field visit and analysis by the secondary sources under a project independently.



Fig 1: the Bhairov River from Darathana side of Jashore



Fig 2: Jashore sadar Upazilla.

2. Hindu Temple Architecture

2.1 Jora Shiva Temple, Muroli, Jessore

Jora Shiva Temple towards northwest at a distance of about 200 yards of the Haji Mohammad Mohsin Imambara or Murli Imambara, which is situated very closed on the bank of the Bhairov River and close to the Muroli-Jessore-Khulna metaled road are to be seen two east facing single chambered temples standing nearest in a north south line. They are similar in size and shape. There used the Pair Lion Motif as stucco with pilaster in this Shiva Temple facade at Muroli under Jessore district. Actually Muroli is a Farsi word, which mean is town or city. It was old city during Mughal period. However, this stucco made by usually white lime and grey red color. It is like a real Lion and its mane, tail, and paws are showing as a running position. It is rampant style lion. This temple contains an inscription which records the date of construction in 1189 B.S. equal 1784 A.D. This temple stands on a solid platform which is 2 feet 6 inch in height from the land. The building proper is 16 feet square in plan externally and has an arched doorway on its east side. Presently, the committee of the temple is repairing it and maintenance in good way. Various women regularly go to there for worship and prayer. This is a very good preserved monument of the Jashore district as religious archaeological sites.



Fig 3: Jora Shiva Temple, Muroli, Jessore.

2.2 Akhrapara Temple, Jessore

Akhrapara Mondir or temple infrastructure found same lion symbol illustration and not a very good position. Though At

present, it is a very fragile, yet, the building of the temple survival is threatened by the newly established school nearby and the lack of conservation efforts by the local or archaeological department of Bangladesh. This temple is situated on the bank of the Bhairov River and on the north west of Muroli bus stoppage at a distance about 300 feet, is lying a south facing building that goes by the name Akhrapara Mondir. It stands on a 4 feet high solid platform from the low land and occupies a rectangular space measuring 42 feet since from north to south side and 25 feet 3 inch from east to west side. On ground of its architecture, the date of late 19th century AD.

Shiva is the second most important male deity of Bengal. Shiva-lingam which were mainly worshipped in the temple. Durga is famous deity also and Durga is wife of shiva and Lion is as a bahan of goddesses Uma/Durga. The Mahisasurmardini motif is common on many of the late medieval brick temple of Bengal, where Durga riding her vehicle lion as Pratapeswar Temple of Ambika, Kalna at Burdwan built in 1849 under west Bengal; Bisheshwar Temple of Sribati at Burdwan; the Radha gobinda Temple, Aatpur (Antpur Temple was built in 1787, constructed by Krishnaram Mitra, the Dewan of Maharaja of Burdwan); Ramchandra Temple, Guptipara, Hooghly; Rajrajeswar Temple, Kotolpur (Hooghly); and Jagatdhatri, Naldanga Temple, Jessore, and so on.



Fig 4: Akhrapara Temple, Muroli, Jessore.



Fig 5: Devi Lakshmi.

2.3 Chanchra Jor Bangla Shiva Temple

Chanchra Shiva Temple is located at Chanchra in Jessore district of Bangladesh. It was built by Manohar Roy around 1798 A.D. Bangladesh Department of Archeology has declared Chanchra Shiva Temple as a protected site. This temple is very impressive and preserved temple among Jashore region. The temple is an 'eight-chala' bangla type temple. The 'eight-chala' style is a special type of Bengali temple architecture where another small 'chau-chala' roof is made over the 'chau-chala' roof of a square or rectangular sanctorum.

The front of the Shiva temple has three arched entrances and the front of the entire temple is beautifully decorated with terracotta plaques. There is a small pond behind the temple structure. Recently, this temple has been reconstruction by the Archaeological Department of Bangladesh under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. However, Shiva is also the creative, fertile, generative principle and in this aspect he is represented by the phallic symbol of the lingam. Several books in Sanskrit and Bangla have been written about Shiva. Among them *Shivapurana*, *Rghuvamsa* (2.35:410), *Lingapurana* and *Bhagavadgita* (3.37:411) (Alain Danielou, 1991:220) ^[1] are more noted.

In the Bangla *Mangalkavya*, the story of Shiva is an essential component of the canto about gods. Childless women of both Muslim and Hindu communities visit these temples, believing that Shiva can make them fertile. The pillars of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka have lion sculptures as a symbol of royal power. Though, lion is part of some Jataka stories, Panchtantra, Kalila-wa-dimna, Gilgamesh, Samson, Heraclea, Sphinx etc. Common people, the artists were also interested in lions. But mostly imagination was used to draw the images and this fact becomes clear from the figures where the edge of the mouth is like a horse. In another side, its eyes and eyebrows are slightly engraved, the presentation of lions – paws with sharp nails, mane, tail, neck and back of the body proved that the images were made lions. As well as we have found clear scene about horse and lion in Mirtulata terracotta plaque of Antpur Temple of Hugly. Especially, Horse's mouth is long shape and thin, but Lion face is round shape.

On the other hand, in Buddhism lions are symbolic of the Bodhisattvas, the sons of the Buddha or Buddha's lion. Bodhisattvas are beings who have attained a high level of spiritual development. The lion in their role of dharma protectors supporting the throne of the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas (Jampa Chosky, 1988: 28) ^[4]. They are also found at the entrance of the monasteries and shrines, in the northern area of Nepal, influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and art. The iconographic representation of the lion originated in Persia. A lion faced Dakini, a tantric deity described as a female embodiment of enlightened energy, appears in Tibetan

Buddhism. The Tibetan Buddhist form is known as *Simhamukha* in Sanskrit and *Senge Dongma*.

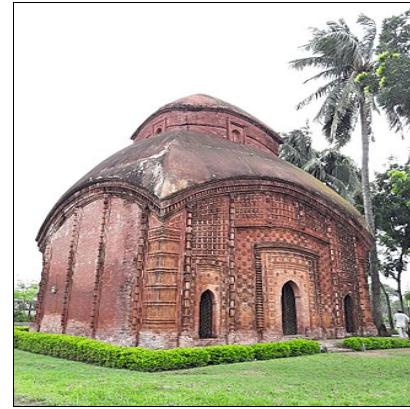


Fig 6: Chanchra Jor Bangla Shiva Temple.

3. Buddhist Monastery Architecture

3.1 Bharat Vaina or, Bharat Rajar Deul, Ghowrighona, Jashore

Bharat Vaina village on the west bank of Bhadra River at Ghowrighona union in Keshabpur Upazila on the Khulna-Jessore border. This village and area surrounded by rivers and green trees will take anyone's mind away. This archaeological site is known to the locals as Bharat Deul or Bharat Rajar Deul. Legendary archaeologist Kashinath Dixit conducted a preliminary survey of the Bharat Vaina mound and the surrounding area in 1922-23. Subsequently, excavations were carried out by the Department of Archeology, Government of Bangladesh in 1974-75, 1996-2001, and most recently in 2016-17. Archaeologists say, may be it was built between the 7th and 9th centuries AD. Archaeologists believe that this cruciform temple is an important addition to the evolution of East Indian temple architecture after the 7th century AD. The land design of the central temples of Somapur Mahavihara, Shalban Bihar, Vikramshila Mahavihara is similar to this temple. The architectural structure of this temple later influenced the Buddhist temple architecture of Southeast Asia.

According to the Department of Archeology, it was a five-century-old Buddhist temple beneath the mound and probably one of the 30 Sangharams of Samarat described by Hiuen-Tsang. The ancient temple is said to have been built by an influential king named Bharat. The main temple is supposed to be located on 1 acre land. Excavations around the site have uncovered parts of the wreckage, suggesting that the structure's superstructure has been completely destroyed. The present visible part is probably the foundation or elevated platform of the ruined building. A sketch by the Department of Archeology shows that a total of 72 closed cells have been raised step by step. The walls of the top step of the mound are 9 feet wide.

There are four entrances around the main temple. Considering the structure, it is believed that the eastern side was its main entrance. The bricks used in its construction measure 36 centimeters, 26 centimeters, and 6 centimeters. Such a large brick has not been seen to be used in any sites in this region. In addition to the architectural ruins, a terracotta head of the Gupta period, a few fragments of terracotta hands and feet, a few earthen lamps, ornamental brick pieces, two pieces of brick with footprints and a small earthen pot have been collected, which are preserved in the Khulna Divisional Museum.



Fig 7: Bharat Vaina or, Bharat Rajar Deul.

4. Christian Church Architecture

4.1 Jessore Catholic Church

The History of the Jessore Catholic Church, in order to know the details from the book of Christianity, which one written by Father Joseph Rana Mandal. The kingdom of Samatati Jessore was once the lush beauty of South-West Bengal and the magnificent touch of Bagratati beautiful forest. The foundations of the kingdom of Jessore were Vikramaditya and Basanta Roy. It can be said that the church of Jessore was the first Catholic Church in Bengal during the reign of King Pratapaditya. Ancient Jessore kingdom or region is not only famous for its Hindu shrines, but also for its Muslim mosques, but it has always been sacred to Christians as its original indigenous shrine.

Establishment of Jessore Catholic Mission at Father Marietti Pim, Who was born in 1826 AD. Father Marietti entered Bengal on 17 June 1755, when he was 26 years old. Father Antonio Marietti arrived in Jessore in July 1857 and began his preaching work, when Jessore covered Jessore, Khulna and the Sundarbans. Jessore Catholic Church built in 1856 A.D. in Jashore. It is situated behind the police supper office and nearesr the chudanga bus stand. At that time there were only a few Baptist families living in Jessore and people were initiated by them, where they were conducting their activities in a beautiful way. During 1857, Father Marietti buys a mansion from Smith, an English indigo planter in Jessore, and uses it as the Catholic Church's own home and residence.

The number of Catholics in the area has been increasing since 1860. In December 1861, Father Marietti, accompanied by Father Enrico Langer, traveled to Jhikargachha, 10 miles south of Jessore, preaching Christianity to six families and about 40-50 families in the nearby village of Shimulia. People want to convert to Christianity in there. Presently, there have a lot of Christian family.



Fig 8: Catholic Church of Jashore



Fig 9: Inside of Catholic Church of Jashore.



Fig 10: Catholic Graveyard in Jashore.

5. Islamic Religious Architecture

5.1 Sheikhpur Jame Mosque

Sheikhpur Jame Mosque is an ancient mosque located in Jessore district and one of the most preserved antiquities in Bangladesh. It is located in a village called Sheikhpura in Sagardari union of Keshabpur upazila. It is located 12 kilometers away from the upazila headquarters. During the Mughal rule, the Mughal rulers built various structures and mosques in many places of Jessore region. Archaeologists have confirmed through its structure and three domes similar others Mughal mosque of Bangladesh that is why, historian called the Sheikhpura Shahi Mosque was built during the Mughal period. The installations are believed to have been built during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.

In 1997, the Bangladesh Department of Archeology registered this mosque in Sheikhpura as a protected antiquity. It is said that Michael Madhusudhan Dutt received his early Persian education in this mosque. The Sheikhpura Mosque has three domes which have been built according to Mughal architecture. It is believed that there was a verandah on the east side of the mosque, supported by four pillars, the ruins of which still exist.

There is one meter high wall on the east side from the main verandah. There are two entrances on the south and north sides of this walled courtyard. The size of the mosque is 21.5 meters and 16.6 meters in length and width respectively and it is 12 meters high. This Sheikhpura Shahi Mosque looks very beautiful structure.



Fig 11: Sheikhpur Jame Mosque, Keshobpur, Jashore.

5.2 Hazrat Gharib Shah (Ra.) Majar

A special day of the week woke up the dead Bhairab of Jessore beside Hazrat Gharib Shah (Ra.) Majar. That day is Friday. On that day, Aul-baul of Bengal is singing melody with khanjani and dotara became popular all around the *majar* and on the bank of the Bhairab River. There is a strange jingling voice. The music of the saintly devotees, accompanied by the harmonium, makes the surroundings rejoice. Stirring the minds of ordinary people. Sometimes ghazi songs, songs of saints, Baul songs as well as Lalon songs and dances are performed there. At present still this culture in there. Every Friday, a gathering of spiritual devotees and devotees sits around the tomb of Hazrat Garib Shah Dewan (Ra.), a famous religious leader and spiritual devotee who was formed in the lap of Bhairab. The fans of the Hazrat Garib Shah Dewan (Ra.) are gathering there and it started from noon on Friday. Fans of Garib Shah came from far and wide, especially from Magura, Narail, Jhenaidah and Satkhira districts around Jessore.

It is located at Bakultala on the banks of the river Bhairab, on the opposite side of the Collect-orate building, just west of the Daratana Bridge junction in Jessore. The mausoleum of the historical Hazrat Garib Shah (Ra.) of Jessore is covered with a huge century old banyan tree. This installation is located on the banks of the once dead Bhairab River. The tomb is a single-domed one-storey building and its tomb is small but very neat and very beautiful and covered with many precious colorful envelopes. The shrine is always full of devotees. Many swear in the name of Garib Shah. As a preacher of Islam, he is still remembered in the history including the people of Jessore.

It is known from history that Hazrat Garibshah (Ra.) was a disciple of Hazrat Khanjahan Ali (Ra.). When Hazrat Khanjahan Ali started his journey from Barobazar towards Bagerhat. Then his disciples, soldiers and devotees were going with him. Arriving at Jessore at that time, he left Garibshah and Borhan Shah in charge of the area and instructed them to build a bridge over the river for the convenience of the people. It is said that Khan Jahan Ali asked Hazrat Garib Shah, one of his companions, to build a bridge over the river Bhairab at that time. The Arabic word for bridge is jors. Jessore may have got its name from that Jasar word. However, basically Hazrat Garibshah could not complete the work of the bridge. He died in Jessore. Many believe that he died in the place where he now lives. And that is why he was buried there. A mausoleum was then built around it. A tomb with a dome has been built on it, which still exists today. According to Satish Chandra Mitra's book Jessore Khulna, Hazrat Garibshah (Ra.) was a famous preacher of Islam during the Sultanate period. In this

ceremony or majma, as the devotees of Garib Shah, Sadhu Baba came, so many ordinary people irrespective of men and women appeared. There is no shortage of spectators around the event that day. Every Friday afternoon, the banks of the river Bhairab turn into a fair. Daratana invigorates the area and is now one of the most popular recreational centers in Jessore.



Fig 12: Hazrat Gharib Shah (Ra.) Majar.

5.3 Hazrat Borhan Shah (Ra.) Majar

Hazrat Borhan Shah Ulugh Khan (Ra.) was a disciple of Pir Khan Jahan Ali of Bagherhat. He was a companion of Hazrat Garib Shah (Ra.) also. Under the direction of Pir Khan Jahan Ali, he was entrusted with the task of propagating Islam in the Murli Kasba area of Jashore kingdom. He also used to explain the ideology of Islam to people like Hazrat Garib Shah (Ra.). He is fast asleep at a place called Karbala on the west side of the road leading to the cantonment along the police line in Jessore town. The brick altar of Borhan Shah's tomb has a circumference of 24 X 16 feet and round shape infrastructure. The altar is about 5 feet high. The place was formerly forested. A servant cleared the forest and established a mosque. The pucca grave was discovered in the jungle. On the east side of the tomb is a huge pond. The lake was excavated by Hazrat Borhan Shah. The pond is now known as Karbala Pond. On the west bank of the lake lays a black rock. It is said that no one can remove that stone of Pir. At present the place around his grave has become a graveyard of common people. Hazrat Borhan Shah (Ra.) has served Islam all his life. People respected him. As a result of his tireless work, the spread of Islam became much easier. His active life will keep him alive for life. At present there is a road named Hazrat Borhan Shah (Ra.) in Karbala.



Fig 13: Hazrat Borhan Shah (R.) Majar.

5.4 Haji Mohammad Mohsin Imambara

Haji Mohammad Mohsin Imambara or Murli Imambara is an Imambara located in Jessore district which is one of the antiquities of Bangladesh. This Imambara in Murali was built by Haji Mannujan Khanam who was the half-sister of Haji Mohammad Mohsin. In the late 18th century, Mannujan inherited the property of the region. Later, when Nawab Sirajuddaula was defeated, Mannujan and her husband established Zamindari in Syedpur area, but in 1804, Mannujan's husband died and Mannujan became the owner of the entire property. He built this Imambara in 1802 along with other installations at Murali. Before Mannujan's death in 1803, he gave all his property including this Imambara to Haji Mohammad Mohsin. On 19 March 1986, the Department of Archeology of the Government of Bangladesh declared this Imambara as preserved antiquities. The rectangular Murali Imambara was used as a meeting room. Its total area is 18.29 m in north and south and 15.24 m in east to west. The whole structure is based on ten pillars which are divided into 3 series.



Fig 14: Haji Mohammad Mohsin Imambara at Muroli.

Conclusion

We tried to show four religious architectural sites and there description beside we would like to say that Jashore is a rich heritage land through the ages and here all religious people were staying under much closed by relation and harmony. Another perspective is that there are a lot of folk religious cultures still are present socially and harmoniously. This paper gives some introduction for the future students and who can try to make sure a new light from here and some clues from here.

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