



## Goaldih mosque the pre-mughal antiquity

**E**ARLY 16<sup>th</sup> century Sonargaon. At the very early hours, when everything is serene, the sound of the Muezzin's call for the Fazr Prayer stretch up to the horizon over the vast verdant green fields, the rippling river waters, the peaceful village under the canopy of trees or surrounded by bamboo groves and over the sleeping township of a tired Sonargaon after a long busy yesterday of activity.

As the Muezzin awaits for the inhabitants of the locality to join in the upcoming Fazr Jamat, the first prayer of the day, defying the early hours of the day, the cold winter dawn or sacrificing the comfort of warm blankets. Offering namaz or prayers in a mosque is still a common scene in any part of the country as it was once true for Goaldih, a village of Sonargaon.

People of that time are long gone, but stands yet is Goaldih Mosque as the silent witness of that time on that very ground telling us, the descendants, of such a peaceful and prosperous settlement which has now become a story of the past.

A land enriched with the deposits of various rich cultures left by the flow of different religious communities is Sonargaon, the once celebrated metropolitan capital and

thriving centre of trade and commerce as well as the seat of learning art and culture.

A flourishing Hindu Dynasty must have ruled the entire region in the early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the later part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Sultan Balban brought the entire region under his rule and spread Islam in Sonargaon and other areas of Bangladesh.

Sharfuddin Abu Tawwamah an eminent scholar, born in Bukhara and educated in Khorasan, turned Sonargaon to famous centre of Islamic learning not only in Bengal but also throughout India.

The famous saint-scholar of Pandua, Shaikh Alaul Huq lived here for a few years when he was exiled from Pandua with his learned grandson, Shaikh Badr-i-Islam and great grandson, Shaikh Zahid.

The golden era of peace and prosperity in the history of Bengal dawned with the accession of Sultan Hussain Shah in A.D 1493. not only in art and culture, but also in the field of architecture.

Around the 16<sup>th</sup> century the city was swarmed with *pirs*, *faqirs* and other religious mendicants. Information relates that at least 150 *gaddies* (shrines and chilla-khanas) of *faqirs*



are distinguishable.

Mosques are the symbol of Islam and cynosure of Muslim society. The development of mosque style in fact reflects the growth and embellishment of Muslim society and hence the innumerable mosques built in and around Sonargaon reflect the aptitude of Muslim rulers towards fine arts as well as religious devotion.

A few mosques have endured destruction and decay to testify that grandeur. Amongst them are the one built during A.D 1513 in Muazzampur by Khawas Khan, another mosque built with drinking house by Taqui-ud-Din in A.D1522 - 1523 and the mosque of Goaldih in A.D1519.

The territory of Sonargaon that had developed during this period cannot be defined. But relics and ruins are scattered in the existing villages of Aminpur, Dulalpur, Goaldih, Mograpara, Sadipur and Muazzampur etc.

Goaldih, a declining village lies four miles from Panam. Goaldih did not give this decaying impression in the pre-Mughal days. It was a flourishing social arena in all its splendour and liveliness. Now, stands only two mum antiquities depicting its the past glory leading to look into our heritage.

The two old mosques, the Goaldih Mosque built during the reign of Hussain Shah and the other Abdul Hamid's Mosque, built in 1705 A.D when the last great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb reigned.

This mosque is the oldest religious structure built in A.D1519 existing in Goaldih, Sonargaon. The inscription written in beautiful cursive Arabic reads that the mosque was built by Mullah Hizabar Akbar Khan.

The green blades of the soft new grass still belong to the same mother earth that sleeps deep below the lands of Goaldih. The young trees surrounding the premises of an old aged mosque extend boughs of comfort and solace to their ancient companion despite the difference in age.

Moss has wrapped the aged bricks and decorated terracotta surfaces with care and warmth as if protecting old grandfather with a green blanket. Despite its aged decaying look or moss covered surface, Goaldih

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mosque still stands radiantly glowing on the green grounds of courageous youth.

The Mosque was once the most ornate building of Sonargaon. The terracotta decoration that embellishes the surface of the mosque relates to those seen in Gaud or Hazrat Pandua.

Three arched openings give access to the interior while the pillars at the doorways are of sandstone. The mosque is square and was originally roofed over by a single dome holding itself high with grace and dignity. But time and the blackened hands of nature devoured the original dome

as it collapsed.

However, the mosque had been renovated later. There are no columns or pillars inside. The four walls as they ascend give place to the eight walls of an octagon are quarter domes as they rise from the pendentives.

Conforming to the style of the mosque architecture of the time, there are three mihrabs or arched recesses. The mihrab niches have cusped arches, enclosed within a rectangular fronton and capped by an arched recess with a rosette in the centre. The central mihrab announces its importance by the

dark beautifully carved basalt stone and exclusive ornamentation of delicate arabesque work.

The two side mihrabs are made of brick, bold and beautiful. There is no verandah on the east and the mosque is entered through three archways. The bricks in the archway have been ground and smoothed by manual labour.

There are two doorways one each at the northern and southern ends. Four three-layered circular bastions or towers stand in each corner. The gently curved cornice, the warm red terracotta panels with floral and geometric patterns have given the

mosque it's unique dignity. This beautiful mosque descends from the Binat Bibi Mosque of Dhaka, the Khan Jahan mosque of Bagerhat and the Baba Saleh Mosque of Narayanganj.

Footsteps of devotees no more echo inside the mosque at the very early hours of the day or at different prayer times. Neither *aazan*, nor verses from the Quran is heard. Everything in and around Goaldih Mosque is now silent, hushed to earth with its past.

But any one who loves to wander in the sandy dust roads of Goaldih visit the time that has gone forever then may be with a sincere inner sense one can easily hear the melodious recital of the Quran, or the *aazan* or even the soft trudge of those village people that stopped in 1852 who haunt the premises.

Life in the Goaldih mosque has faded away in the mystic world of past leaving behind fragments of history, the trail of which can be found embedded on the fascinating old walls of the Mosque.

.. *Story: ZAKIA RAHMAN, Architect*  
*Photo: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN*

