



Chini mosque

A unique representation of culture

SYEDPUR 'Chini mosque' is one of the best architectural pieces of work in Bangladesh. Uniquely created with local initiative, designs and finance, the mosque is an enticing tourist attraction.

To glorify and draw people towards religion, the practice of building artistic mosques from the ancient period by renowned Islamic saints and leaders with royal support was going on till the end of the nineteenth century.

The building of Syedpur 'chini

mosque' is a continuation of that process but with a little difference that it was constructed only by popular subscription.

The historical 'chini mosque' built in 1863, is situated at Islambagh in the northern end of Syedpur town alongside the Nilphamari-Syedpur road.

Although Dhaka is called the city of mosques, Syedpur, despite being small, can be called the same. From the ancient periods numerous mosques were built at every nook and corner of this

town. But among all the 'chini mosque' is stands out.

'Chini mosque' was a small tin shed. As the numbers of devotees increased, it became necessary to turn it into a 'pucca' structure make it look attractive increased.

In 1920 Haji Abdul Karim on his initiative designed and constructed the pucca structure on a 39 x 40 square foot area. But rumour says that Haji Islam designed it. This creation came from either of these two men who had no artistic qualification from

any institution.

But the creation remains a wonder. People helped out in its construction by either contributing money, material, labour or both.

In 1965 the southern part of the mosque on a 25 x 40 square foot area was built. This traditional mosque has 27 minars and three big domes with five more minars remaining half done. There are doors in the north and south at the southern part of the mosque, providing adequate ventilation and light.

The main building is two storied. The walls of the mosque are decorated with 243 alloyed marble stones. The exterior walls of the mosque are covered with numerous pieces of decorated china clay. Twenty five tonnes of china clay pieces are used for this purpose, donated by a glass factory in Bogra.

The reflection of the sun's rays on the china clay pieces of the wall looks like a constellation of twinkling stars. A moonlit night looks the same. The mosque and its beauty is protected by a 24-hour guard. The entrance to the mosque is restricted to the five time prayer, increasing the feeling of spirituality.

Foreign tourists are attracted to its magnificent beauty. Tourists from Pakistan, India, Iran, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and other countries have visited the mosque. Some of them even prayed and a few led the Friday Jumma prayers, while non-Muslim tourists take back memories in the form of photographs.

The mosque is not only used as a prayer hall but also as a centre

for spreading religious and moral values. The mosque committee takes careful measures in appointing *Imams* (Priests) and *muazzins* (Orator of Azan).

The Imam of this mosque is respected and accepted everywhere.

With the passing of time, the population of Syedpur town has increased. At present the mosque cannot accommodate additional devotees. Even the present devotees find it very difficult to perform 'Ozu' (Washing of parts of the body before prayer) for want of space.

The exterior walls have become dirty and moss has gathered on the walls.

This unique representation of our culture and heritage, "The chini mosque" stands without care or maintenance from the authorities.

The mosque has only 12 shops as its own property. The rent of the shops and collections from the local devotees.

Locals should first be conscious of the value of the "chini mosque" in order to protect it and lend a hand to any renovation and development work. The authorities are urged to help uphold the beauty of this piece of architectural heritage.

Or else, the sounds of *Azan* will quietly fade away.

Story: **EAM ASADUZZAMAN**
Photo: **AKM MOHSIN**

