

1983 TECHNICAL REVIEW SUMMARY

Masjid-E-Chughtaiyan
Lahore , Pakistan

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Three layers of spatial organisation are employed to lead from the public street to the intimate prayer hall . Beside the mosque , the project also comprises 2 shops , which are rented to supplement the mosque's operating expenses .

Date of Completion : July 1972

I. OBJECTIVES

The Chughtai Family being fervent Muslims are descendants of a well-known family of builders and artists and have sought to create a place of worship and school for the neighbourhood children, and to also fulfill their late father's aspiration for such a centre.

II. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The cornerstone for the mosque was laid in 1935 before the creation of Pakistan in 1948.

Formerly a small agricultural community called "Pakpattan" the community was absorbed within the municipal limits of Lahore. The settlement is still essentially a rural one; most residences are simple mud-brick shelters. The main road on which the mosque is located reveals the characteristically closed aspect of Islamic housing. The site consists of a raised, square platform (900 square metres) and surrounding terrain, on which the builder also constructed his own house in 1953.

III. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Three layers of spatial organisation are employed to lead from the public street to the intimate prayer hall. Two shops and the minaret mark the street facades; entry to the interior courtyard and ablution facilities is through an arched portal that serves as the minaret's base; a small prayer chamber lies off the courtyard and is surmounted by a white dome; a wooden jali (lattice screen) terminates the end wall of this small chamber and lies between the two shops on the street facade. Three cusped-arch portals facing the courtyard lead to the simple prayer hall. The mihrab is incised into and protrudes from the qibla wall. A small caretaker's quarters lies next to the prayer hall, and is also entered from the courtyard.

Burned brick was used for construction of the walls, arches, and dome; some use of concrete and steel has been made, for example, in the base ring of the dome. Most walls are left unfinished; standing in rich contrast to them are ceramic details such as the calligraphic portal inscription and blue faience work on the cornice and minaret. The minaret is rendered in grey cement mortar, and the entry and prayer hall portals and the dome are whitewashed. The ground plane is paved in burned bricks.

IV. CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULES AND COSTS

The project was completed in three phases:

in 1965 the prayer hall, courtyard and shops for RS 5400;

in 1972 the minaret and dome for RS 4300; and

in 1980 the ornamental and finish work for RS 2600.

The total cost of the project was approximately US \$1,770 and was entirely financed from the family's private resources.

V. TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

This unpretentious and modest Mosque is compact and extremely functional for the multiple usage of the Muslim community in the immediate area. It also functions as the crossroad and social interaction point for the local community as evident during our review.

The entire building measuring only 32 feet 6 inches by 31 feet 7 inches is divided into 3 zones: the first fronting a service road contains the 2 units of shops and the main entrance to the Mosque; the second zone is a semi-enclosed courtyard where the ablution trough is located and the Koranic lessons taught to the children; and the third zone comprises the main prayer hall and a caretaker's room.

Two shops rented out at Rs. 100 per month each supplement the monthly operating expenses of the Mosque, i.e. Rs. 100 to the Khatib, Rs. 25 - 50 for electricity and Rs. 18 for water.

The building is tucked at a corner of the 1 acre compound of the Chughtai Family house. There is ample daylighting and natural ventilation induced by the internal courtyard and during summer the ventilation is assisted by electrical fans donated by the people.

Materials chosen for construction include traditional hand-made clay bricks, plastering and some special hand-painted glazed decorative tiles in blue from Multan as frieze to the external finish especially at the base of the dome, the minaret and fascia. The technology employed is primarily load bearing brickwork with lintols over openings. Windows, screens and doors are of timber.

The materials used seem to be maturing well with little maintenance. Currently, only the dome and main entrance are painted white while the rest are left unpainted. The owners intend to progressively upgrade and improve the level of finishes to the Mosque, depending on financial availability.

A water fountain intended in the recess immediately below the dome is yet to be commissioned.

Although attached to one corner of the Chughtai Family plot, the massing, scale and volume of the Mosque harmonise and contribute to the continuation of physical feature with its immediate neighbourhood of mud houses (Katchi Abadi), while the symbolic Islamic architectural elements of the dome and minaret giving itself a strong identity as a place of worship.

The project cost is approximately US \$1,770.00 and was entirely financed by the Chughtai Family.

VI. AESTHETIC ASSESSMENT

The physical beauty of the Mosque arises from its simplicity of expression and depth of significance. The use of Islamic forms such as the arches, the minaret, the dome and Arabic Koranic verses reinforced its Islamic qualities and identity. Its modest and unpretentious scale in comparison to the existing environment further enhance its character and significance.

However, Masjid-E-Chughtaiyan's greater beauty lies in the spirit by which it was originally conceived as a family death wish through its construction and final utilisation.