Chandgaon Mosque

Chowdhury para, North Chandgaon,
Postal code 4221
Chittagong, Bangladesh

Architects
Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Clients
Faisal M. Khan
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Commission
2005

Design
2005

Construction
2006 - 2007

Occupancy
2007

Site
5,200 m²

Ground floor
1,048 m²

Total floor
1,048 m²

Costs
336,760 USD

Programme
This mosque on the suburban periphery of the port of Chittagong seeks to fulfill a traditional role as both a gathering place and a place of spirituality. The mosque typology is pared down to its essentials in two identical cuboid volumes. The first is the front court, its heavy masonry walls punctuated with low, wide openings onto the surrounding landscape, with a large oculus above. In the second volume, the naturally lit mihrab wall is balanced by an iconic cut dome. While the apertures give a sense of openness and draw in light and ventilation by day, by night they allow light to shine out of the mosque like a beacon.

‘Think of the rays of the sun shining into houses. They are rays of the sun, and they are light, but they are attached to the sun and not the houses. When the sun sets, their light no more remains.

What we have to do, then, is to become the Sun itself, so all fear of separation can forever be ended.’

Become the Sun itself, Letters, Rumi (1207-1273)
The design consists of two identical cuboid volumes, one as the front court and the mosque proper as the other. The traditional courtyard in front of a mosque, which serves as spill over area during larger congregations, therefore manifests itself in the first structure – open to the elements and offering a preparation before entry to the mosque proper. The design pivots around the tension between the horizontal sweep of the low, wide openings and the gathering people (earthbound) and the vertical reference to zenith of the circular opening or cut-dome (spiritual). Thus in the front court, the visual connection through expansive apertures to the surrounding landscape and locality is offset by the circular disc of the sky above. A similar experience is proffered by the cut-dome of the main mosque, being here brought to balance the naturally lit end wall (alabard).

The design attempts to reflect the traditional nature of the mosque as a central focus and gathering place of a community. In a village-like setting where people generally meet in bazaars and playfields, the mosque – by its openness, generosity of space and direct visual connections to its surroundings – proposes to be a place of meeting and exchange to exceed its primary function of worship and in so doing the mosque reasserts its traditional position as the anchoring place of a given community.