

[Home](#) > [Features](#)

Glory in blue

 by [Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro](#) — July 20, 2018 in [Features](#), [Latest Issue](#), July 20-26, 2018 Vol. XXX, No. 24

 1

The Jilani mosque and tomb in Nasarpur

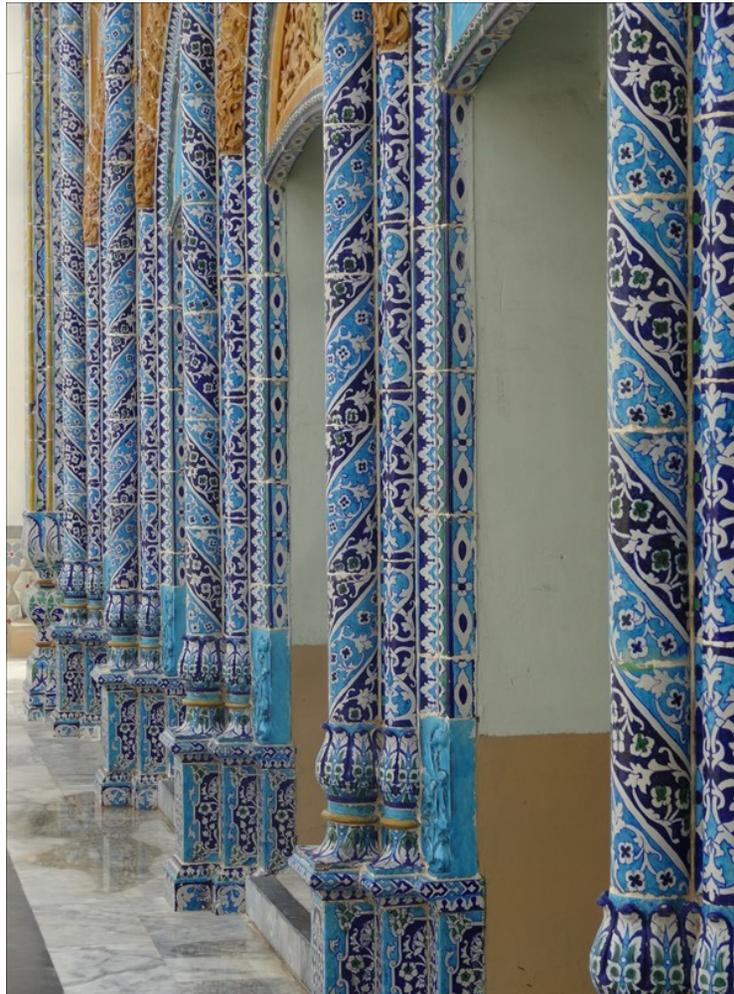
 [Share on Facebook](#)

 [Share on Twitter](#)

Nasarpur, a town famous for handicrafts in Sindh, is believed to have been founded by Nasar Mohanao in the eleventh century during the reign of the Soomra dynasty. From the Soomra dynasty to the British period, the town witnessed a rise and fall which now can be

seen in the large number of tombs and mosques scattered throughout its surroundings. Many saints and sages came from Iran and Central Asia to settle in Nasarpur. The craft traditions of Nasarpur thrived during the Kalhora and Talpur periods. The artisans of Nasarpur were known far and wide, decorating the walls and facades of magnificent mosques and tombs built in various towns and villages of Sindh – and even in Balochistan. Blue and white glazed tiles were used in every tomb, haveli, mosque and other structure of note in the town of Nasarpur. In fact, it became known as the town of mosques and tombs. Some of the prominent mosques include the Amir Nasar Jami, Kiraki, Dar-ul-Qaza, Qazi Makhdoom Ruhallah, Mai Khairi, Akbari, Pir Shah Inayat, Shah Mehmood Jilani, Khambati, Shah Kamal, Kumbranwari, Akhundanwari, Dad Faqirji, Abbasinwari, Darsanwarimasji, Kashigeranwari and Jilani Syedanwari (also known as Rajpari Jilani) mosques.



Pillars of a Nasarpur mosque

Four corner turrets also lend beauty to the blue mosque of the Jilanis

All these mosques were once adorned with glazed tiles. A few of them have been renovated, playing havoc with the beauty of tile ornamentation. Now most of the glazed tiles have been replaced either with modern ceramics or glass work. However, a few mosques still retain the original Nasarpuri glazed tiles. One such mosque is located in the Kashighar locality of Nasarpur. There is actually a shrine complex here including two tombs and a three-domed mosque. This mosque is one of the most magnificent in terms of decoration in the whole of Matiari district. The entire facade of the mosque is adorned with blue tiles, with a parapet carrying beautiful blue slender turrets. Four corner turrets also lend beauty to the blue mosque of the Jilanis. The rear of the mosque was also

decorated with blue tiles, but renovation in 1996 damaged all the tiles and instead it was plastered.

Five arched ways open to a verandah further leading to the main prayer chamber of the mosque. The main chamber of the mosque is divided into two aisles and a nave, each with a dome.



A close view of Syed Najamuddin Shah Jilani's tomb

This mosque has two parallels – one at Kamaro Sharif and the other at Shaikh Bhirkayo, both in Tando Allahyar district. The mosque at Kamaro Sharif is believed to have been built by Pir Muhammad Ashraf Shah Quraishi during his lifetime. Pir Muhammad Ashraf Shah was a suhrawardi saint from Multan and settled in Sindh where today his tomb and mosque is located. The second mosque is of Shaikh Bhirkayo, the exterior of which is also tastefully decorated with blue and white glazed tiles. The profuse use of mural painting in the Shaikh Bhirkayo mosque as compared to the Jilani mosque of Nasarpur is the only difference between the two. But recently it has also lost its original beauty due to renovation in the interior of the mosque.

The Jilani mosque is believed to have been erected by Pir Fateh Muhammad Jilani in 1911. In fact, there are two mosques of the Jilani Syeds in Nasarpur. The first was built in 1095 AH/1684 and is located in Sonara Mohalla, which is known as the Mehmood Shah Jilani mosque. One of the eminent masons and Kashigars of Nasarpur – Haji Ahmed, son of Khamiso Khan – worked on this mosque. The second mosque of the Jilanis is located in the Kashighar Mohalla.



Minaret and domes of the Jilani mosque clad in blue ceramics

The interior of the Jilani mosque, also known as the Rajpari Jilani mosque, at the Kashighar Mohalla of Nasarpur, is simple and lacks any decoration. It is possible that formerly it was painted and the painting may have been damaged during renovation in 1996. Apart from the facade, the drums or lower sections of the ribbed domes are also decorated with tiles. Two rear minarets are also ornamented with blue tiles. The bases of the front pillars, the tile lattices and the corner vertical yellow bands all reflect the aesthetics and skill of the local builders of Nasarpur. Two of the tombs – one in the north and one in the south of the mosque – belong to the Jilani Pirs of Nasarpur. The northern tomb is embellished with blue tiles. It is a square structure, profusely decorated with glazed tiles. The tomb has four corner minarets which rise from the thickness of the wall. The facade of the tomb has four panels with ochre and yellow tiles. The pishtaq of the tomb has blue and white tiles, with two slender pillars rising from the base of the building and terminating above the parapet. It encloses the soffit above the door frame and a large inscribed panel bearing the name of Shah Najumddin Jilani, a Qadiri Pir interred in the tomb. On either side of this large inscribed panel there are also two other inscriptions bearing the names of the mason (osto) and artisan (kashighar). On the left is an inscription bearing the name of Allah Rakhio Kashighar, the son of Ahmed Kashighar who decorated the tomb with glazed tiles. On the right of the large inscribed panel is another inscription which records the name of the osto (mason) – Mian Haji Ghulam Rasool Multani.

The western, eastern and northern walls of the tomb are all decorated with glazed tiles. Both the floor and the ceiling of the tomb are also embellished with the blue tiles of Nasarpur. There are seven graves inside the tomb, belonging to Syed Qamaruddin Shah Jilani, Syed Badaruddin Shah Jilani, Syed Najamuddin Shah Jilani, Syed Ahmed Shah Jilani, Syed Nooruddin Shah Jilani, Nazar Muhammad Shah Jilani and Pir Ahmed Shah Jilani II. Syed Ahmed Shah Jilani was the first person from the Jilani family to settle in Nasarpur town. The tomb is believed to have been erected by Syed Nazar Ahmed Shah in 1911 – the same year when Pir Fateh Muhammad Jilani laid the foundation of the mosque.

The southern tomb is noted for its painting, stucco and modern wall tiles. It contains 15 graves of the Jilani Syeds who were descendants of Syed Ahmed Shah Jilani. Not much is known about the history of the Jilani Syeds of Nasarpar. But it is believed that they belong to the Qadiri silsila of Sufism. These Qadiri Sufis are, in fact, the patron saints of the Kashigars of Nasarpur.

The author is an anthropologist and has authored three books: 'Perspectives on the art and architecture of Sindh', 'Memorial Stones: Tharparkar' and 'Archaeology, Religion and Art in Sindh'. He may be contacted at: zulfi04@hotmail.com

Tags: Heritage



Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro

Related Posts