

MULTIPLE COURTYARD MANSIONS OF OLD DHAKA

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ABSTRACT

Many splendid mansions were built in Dhaka in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These borrowed elements in the façade from contemporary and classical European styles, though spatially they followed indigenous arrangement. The dichotomous houses remain as the socio-cultural testament of the society elite of that period. Despite being monumental in appearance, spaces were in a human scale achieved through the use of courtyards. Rooms were laid around the court playing a multi-purpose role. This paper on such multi-court mansions of Dhaka analyses their form spatial arrangement in the context, and links the socio-cultural aspects with the house form.

1- INTRODUCTION

Different phases of socio-economic and political transformations formulated an architectural vocabulary of Bengal Dhaka flourished as a significant centre of trade, education and culture being the regional capital on various occasions. Many intricately decorated mansions were built here during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These used elements from European buildings with some local motifs in the façade, but the spatial arrangement usually followed the traditional Bengali houses laid around courtyard(s)[1]. These remain as a distinct typology used by a certain class of people in a certain time of its history.

House forms change with the change of the society, its culture and need. However, some norms of spatial arrangement and the use of deep-rooted elements survive longer. A court yard is one such element in traditional Bengali houses. It plays the multi-purpose role of a transitory space, a religious space, a social place, a climate modifier, a domain divider, and so on. The general form of a Bengali house is that of rooms or huts surrounding a court

yard. The old Dhaka mansions had multiple courts. This paper on the multi-court mansions of Dhaka describes their form and spatial arrangement, and establishes the link between the socio-cultural context and the house form.

2- TRADITIONAL BENGALI HOUSE

In traditional Bengali houses, the courtyard facilitates all household and socio-cultural activities as the focus of the spatial arrangement[2]. Usually, one court yard represents one family; multiple court yards characterize a number of families (extended or joint) residing in one house. An expanding family is reflected in the addition of courtyards surrounded by similar activities and rooms. It manifests various aspects of life style, values, social customs, culture, climate, location, economy etc. The functional and physical role of a courtyard remains the same in the urban areas as that of the rural ones. Urban houses have become compact and dense compared to their rural counterparts due to the limitations and cost of land, rigid road layout and availability of modern materials, building technique, services etc. Yet the image of a house around a courtyard guides the design[3].

Changes in the socio-cultural context of the majority of urbanites from that of the rural inhabitants was subtle in the first half of this century. Most have become urban dwellers only in the near past; many of them retain strong ties with their roots. Spatial concept of an urban house and many of its attributes remain more or less compatible with that of the rural house. With the increasing availability of developed means and materials, changes are brought in the construction type, use of materials, connection of rooms through veranda and corridor, inclusion of service areas within the main layout, etc. These lead towards further transformation of the form. Even when additional floors were added, the general layout

remained around an inner court retaining the horizontal relationship with the ground. Open terraces on the upper floors sometimes substituted courts.

3- MORPHOLOGY OF DHAKA

Morphology of about a thousand years old Dhaka is based on *chowks* (Market-squares) and *mahallas* (cluster of houses around a *chowk* or along a linear street) (Khan, 1983). In their external appearances, all streets being avenues for selling goods are bazaars. *Mahallas* cannot be readily identified as they are hidden behind the bazaar or street façade. In social definition, *mahallas* are internal family enclaves relating to the house and bazaars are external (Khan, 1985, pp. 107 & 109). However, this pattern gave birth to two distinct forms of *mahallas* based on subsequent plot divisions. This also expresses differences in the socio-economic structure of the localities.

The first form, mainly found in Hindu dominated *mahallas*, is along a narrow strip of land up to 40m long with a road front of approximately 2.5 to 3.5 and height of up to four stories. Being narrow and deep, there are no openings on the side walls; inner courts are the only source for light and ventilation. Despite having several small courts, the interior is generally dark and stifling. The linear site has an access road in front and a canal or service lane at the rear part. This pattern took shape in the pre-colonial period when the indigenous city was dependent on natural and manmade water bodies for drinking water, waste disposal, transport and communication. Therefore, plot subdivision had to take into account the street (formal access) and the service (back), progressively creating the pattern (Rahman, 1996, p. 81). But role of trade and the commercial value of the plot requiring a road frontage for each plot, and the use of the plots as shop-houses, played a major role in forming the pattern.

The ever-changing second category is served with intricate network of lanes and by-lanes grown out of sub-division. Being loosely built, it is perceived through the periphery walls. These were basically developed and occupied for residential purpose. However, with the development of native towns during the colonial period, canal based drainage

system decayed. With organized service, houses reverted to original form, the popular and persistent second form was thus built around a courtyard. The occupation and category of people according to class also varied in these two distinct categories of growth. Businessmen, craftsmen or people from particular occupational group, who were dominantly Hindu, occupied the first type. Most of them needed the use of road frontage for their livelihood. Well-off people and nobles related to the administration, agriculture and trades, or people from alien cultures like the Europeans, Armenians or the North Indians usually inhabited the second type (Ibid, p. 82).

4- TRADITIONAL HOUSES IN DHAKA

Mansions in Dhaka were built along the riverfront enjoying the bounty of the south and the river until it became crowded during the early twentieth century[4]. Most other parts of the city had spontaneous growth along the winding narrow streets. Entries to the plot and the house were guided by the road location. The traditional concept of south-facing house was not always possible to lay because of site orientation. The entry leads to the drawing room, the counterpart of the rural outhouse. The public part of the house is synonymous with the front or formal domain. If space permits, a veranda and a yard would front the public room(s). The front leads towards the inner courtyard, often along a symmetric axis through either a central corridor or a big hall room. There may be other entries leading to the inner court from a secondary road or through a narrow passage bypassing the public domain.

On the ground floor, rooms are arranged around the inner court, sometimes fronted by a veranda, which is the informal or private part of the house. On the upper floors, a continuous veranda overlooking the court often acts as the major and the only circulation space connecting the rooms. Internal stair(s) are placed depending on the size of the house and plot-configuration. This part is the female domain with restricted access, which accommodates multifarious household activities and services. Thus the court yard is the threshold transient semi-public space between the habitable rooms – the private territory and the living (sitting) room – the public territory. It is also the centre of

many domestic activities and a place of social interactions including celebrations and rituals. Rooms, if not directly accessible from it, maintain a conceptual relationship with it making a court the focus of the house. This relationship is horizontal and as the linkage progresses, the degree of privacy changes (Figure 1).

The long proven climatic considerations like south wind, adequate rain protection and shade etc. are followed in the spatial arrangement. The court yard creates a pleasant microclimate, and ensures necessary light and ventilation in the introvert houses in urban context. It acts as a cool sink allowing the cooler air to gather at night. During the day, it is shaded by its surroundings and the warm air rises lowering the pressure. This induces air changes in the adjoining rooms and spaces (Mallick and Huda, 1996). Houses require constant comfort ventilation through exposure to breeze in a warm-humid climate as in Bengal. Due to the arrangement of rooms around an open courtyard, which meets this criterion, most parts of these houses are single room depth with a veranda, which also allows good cross ventilation.

5- COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN BENGAL

In all phases of the evolution of architecture in

Bengal, a sympathetic attitude towards a style congruent and coherent with the local need is shown[5]. Advent of the British colonial power created a deviation from the existing style because of imposition by the rulers and a changed context. Attempts were made during this period (1765-1947) to fit imported styles and forms to the local context. Two centuries of colonial rule severed the continuity of indigenous socio-cultural life and economy. This blocked the development of local architecture which had a rich tradition found in various built forms during the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim rules. The 'devastating' activities of the colonizers were guided by an intention of economic exploitation disregarding the indigenous culture [6].

New forces brought by the colonial rule affected the indigenous society, and so its architecture. While these were influencing the existing urban centres brought by the colonial powers focused on the society's central institution (Eisenstadt, 1966, p. 110). Changes were introduced in the administration aided by the new education system, customs, values etc. Calcutta emerged as a major colonial city against the existing city of Dhaka or Delhi. Early buildings built by the colonizers were visually executed in the neo-classical manner popular in Europe at that time[7]. The style, borrowed from the European Renaissance type

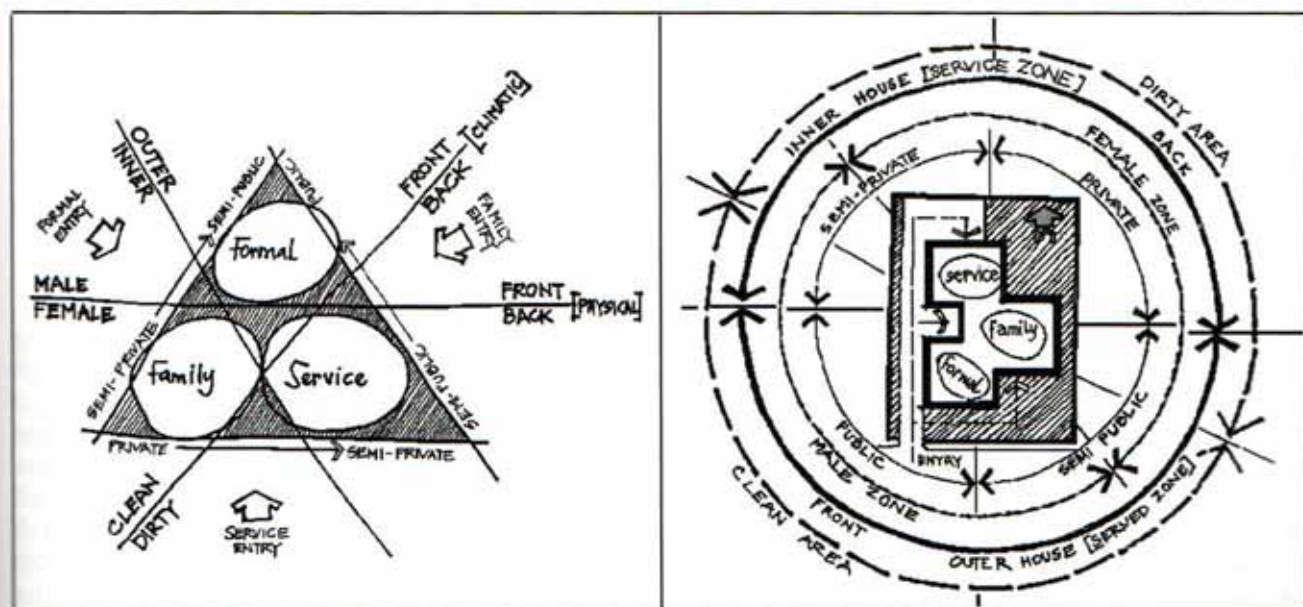


Figure 1: Bi-polar Concept in Traditional Bengali House

appearing in the seventeenth century churches of Dhaka, was later applied to secular buildings.

The revived classical Greco-Roman architecture adopted in medieval Europe with salient orders became popular in Bengal in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. The semi-circular and segmental arches, the triangular pediment carried over semi-Corinthian, Ionic or composite columns, battlement in parapet, traceroid window, moulded plinth, rusticated walls and other foliated decorative motifs were the architectural elements introduced then. The columns supported crocheted capitals, entablature with architrave; frieze and cornices with brackets were also used in these buildings. Trabeated roofs with tiles and rafters replaced the massive vaults; pure arches were also used. This new hybrid of Mughal and European style architecture emerging in Bengal overlooked the existing rich architecture in brick [8]. Nevertheless, brick was still extensively used even in delicate patterns. But the patterns and mouldings borrowed colonial examples and were plastered over with lime and mortar to give a look like the original done in stone.

The rise of bourgeois, the image attached to the alien classical style, westernization in all fields encouraged by the government, and natives' affiliation towards local building tradition determined the course of Bengal's architecture to follow the nineteenth century. These gave rise to the so-called Indo-Saracen architecture, apparently a mixture of Mughal, neo-Gothic and Renaissance styles (Naqi & Khan, 1995). However, these always had remained the in-built mental map among the local users, which acted as an inherent force in guiding their building motives. Therefore, the style that evolved in the later days was not only a facsimile, rather an exegesis of the different socio-cultural and political forces.

The colonizers tried to fuse their architecture with that of this region. Climate was a major factor, which forced the imported style to incorporate some local elements e.g. overhanging eaves, wooden lattice and veranda. This contributed to the rise of the new style with a strange mixture of elements; for example in the bungalows. However, this popular form was gradually transferred into grand and permanent buildings of various uses.

Climate influenced also the internal arrangement of colonial buildings, mansion or any other type alike. When the building belonged to a local elite, the traditional spatial layout was intrinsic, though it may ostensibly have borne the colonial style in its façade.

6- COLONIAL INFLUENCE ON THE HOUSE FORM

Evidences of house form in Bengal cannot be traced back beyond the colonial period. Buildings made of permanent materials in this region during and before the Mughals were mainly civic and religious buildings like the fort-palaces, mosques and kuttras [9]. However, it can be assumed that urban houses were very much similar to their rural origin in spatial composition, climatic consideration, concept of domain, zoning and privacy, etc. except that these were probably made of more permanent materials like brick and more motifs and elements were used. Also urban houses could be built more densely and compactly than in rural areas [10].

Various new policies of the British affected the life-style of the local people and hence the houses they lived in, which by then were using more durable materials. In the meantime, the emerging hybrid style became popular to a wealthy group of people who longed for power and status. Buildings adopting the new style were built and used by the British, other Europeans and the local elite alike. The bungalows and mansions reflected the social and economic position of the owners through their scale and grandeur and became a recognized media to display their newly acquired wealth and status.

6.1 Bungalow

The bungalow was the first residential building type adopted by the colonizers. Created in contrast to the crowded indigenous 'native' dwellings, it expressed the social and political divide between the rulers and the masses (Desai, 1996). These were built inside the military cantonments as well as in civil lines primarily to house the British administrative and military officers. The most significant built form of the British era, the bungalows influenced the local house form to become more consolidated by bringing the

detached rooms under one roof. This inspired an adaptation of an alien practice into the local context. Though these became popular with the local builders and users, they hardly built exact copies. The adopted form however did not overlook the local climatic requirements, materials and building technologies and particular socio-cultural needs of the users.

Early colonial bungalows were single-story structures of simple symmetric composition with a large hall or parlour in the centre. The veranda around it provided climatic protection. Many had porticoes for carts and later cars. The structure was located on an open land with a front garden. Toilet and wash facilities were kept on the outer side of the houses attached to the bedrooms (Figure.2, 3 and 4). Bungalows showed demarcation of zones between the ruler or 'sahib' and the native servants. The kitchen and the servants' quarter were located behind the house as the 'mehsabah' ran the household with a number of servants. The concept of bipolar domain (Figure.5 and 6) in Bengali house [11] was maintained in the arrangement though part of the dirty or wet zone was brought close to the living rooms because of privacy, security and utility. With social and technological changes, the form became frequent, more imposing and grand.

Bungalows are not a total replication of British cottages. These incorporate elements such as verandas at least to the north and the south. The perforated façade was considered climatically suitable to the colonizers, and was a semi-private transient space to the local people. Introduction of curvilinear extended pitched roof of Bangla chala in the bungalows is another example of climatic response, which was copied from the indigenous form [12]. However, the extrovert spatial arrangement in the middle of an open plot, consolidated form of rooms sharing common walls, and sanitary services attached to the rooms were in contrast to the traditional form until a century later. Living patterns of the British were also not replicated totally in the internal spaces of these houses, though many novel uses were introduced (King, 1984; Haque, 1997; Imamuddin, 1983).

6.2 Mansion

The Indians cautiously began to adopt European values and aesthetics by the end of the nineteenth century. This had an impact on the existing dwellings. The first to undergo transformation were the facades of the large local houses which started to borrow elements from the colonial civic and administrative buildings. However, the plan reflected the long established traditional organization. With further urbanization and introduction of rudimentary town planning, new type of houses on regular plots started to emerge [13]. These small villas were mostly owned by the members of the local affluent class and later the emerging middle-class (Roy, 1998; Desai, 1996). They adopted the concurrent architectural style in their outlook, indigenous inward-looking spaces draped with alien elements and blended with the colonial extrovert typology. Spatial arrangement in these was cellular around internal courtyards for functional, planning and climatic reasons. Most of the houses had inner courtyard (s) and verandas in the front. These had spaces like entrance portico, living room or parlour furnished in European style intermingled with the local sense of privacy, particularly for the women, living habits, eating habits etc [14].

The above two residential types evolved into the pavilion type (extrovert) and courtyard type (introvert) house forms. New methods of plot subdivision and demarcation of the site with a distinct boundary wall in one way gave rise to the pavilion or extrovert type. However, this could not totally ignore the purpose of a court, which gave an introvert arrangement in some parts of the house. Neither the local elite nor the British built totally rational houses, where form and function were independent of each other. Some local people expressed their affluence and association with the rulers by proudly using superfluous ornamentation and imitation of European patterns blended with native styles. As against this, a general urban house type evolved in this region which was occupied by the common people. This form, neither superfluous nor grand, but essentially a more constricted version of the rural type, an introvert arrangement with little leaks, is considered as the traditional urban house form (Figure 7).

<p>Figure 2: Conceptual Making of Bengali House</p>	<p>Figure 3: Horizontal Progression of Spaces in Traditional Houses</p>	<p>Figure 4: Subdivision in Regular Rectangular Plots</p>
<p>Figure 5: A Typical Bungalow Plan</p>	<p>Figure 6: Ground Plan of a Bungalow Type Urban House or Middle and Upper Income Groups common till the 1960s</p>	<p>Figure 7: A Grand mansion (Bungalow Type) the Ahsan Manzil</p>

7- THE URBAN ELITE AND THE MIDDLE-CLASS

The distinction between social groups depends on the cultural values, the organization of production and the access and scope of individuals and groups to it within a society. In a class system, social mobility is possible through an individual's or group's effort; whereas a caste system is hereditary where inter-caste mobility is inadmissible (Nanda, 1991, p. 312). Social mobility in the caste system is only possible by the whole society's participation, rather than through individual effort. A caste that has achieved a certain amount of economic success might try to raise its position by adopting the customs of a higher caste and claiming its new rank (Ibid, p. 316). The common tools to upgrade class are marriage, education, economic gain and imitation or adoption. For adoption, an ideal culture is chosen, and its physical and non-physical elements penetrate through imitation into the second culture.

Prior to the colonial period, land had become the real property and determined the mode of production, and hence the structure of the society. The non-industrialised society depended on agriculture for its subsistence. The social and political scenario of Dhaka and the leadership began to change markedly in the later part of the eighteenth century after the British arrived [15]. Prior to this, a mercantile class had already started to emerge in a predominantly agrarian society. Though both Hindus and Muslims were close in numbers, the Hindus were the first to grab the scopes of social mobility.

Besides the general socio-economic classes, the Hindus observed a strictly birth-ascribed caste system [16]. Sometimes a social and occupational mobility is observed in this otherwise rigid system, most significantly in the upper and middle castes. Many such members left their traditional occupation when their incomes could not support the desired life-styles, and sought new jobs or professions. Normally, non-compliance with the prescribed ritual and regulations would result in social ostracism. But in a changed environment, switching occupation did not affect one's social homogeneity much [17].

The Muslims were divided into *Ashraf* and *Atraf*, the high and low classes. Affiliation was not based on occupation; some were *zamindars* (landlords) or high officials under the previous government, some were religious scholars. But they, claiming noble ancestry, had attitudes similar to those among high caste Hindus, such as considering menial jobs as disgraceful to them. They also contempt the lower group which basically consisted of the workers like weavers, barbers, oil-producers etc. The *Ashrafs* were conservative in nature and often misinterpreted religious rules and obscured regulation to their benefit (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 168, p. 168, Karim 1996)

The decline and fall of the Mughals led to the decline of associated institutions. Gradually a new society emerged on the ruin of the old social order more prominently by the last decades of the nineteenth century. Rules and policies followed by the British in different times affected the society and gave rise to different classes in Bengal, for example, the emergence of the society elite.

8- EMERGENCE OF THE NEO-ELITE

During the colonial rule, separation of administration from land ownership changed the existing social structure. The feudal system gradually transforming to mercantile economy was stratified into different classes, e.g. administrators, service-holders, tradesmen etc. in addition to the strata existing among the Hindus and the Muslims. The legal basis of the landed aristocracy was the 1793 Permanent Settlement Act enacted by the British. Under this, the *zamindars* were given the perpetual ownership in return of a fixed high revenue to abolish the petty *zamindars*. The contact between the new brand *zamindars* and land grew feeble in course of time as they mostly spent luxurious life in the urban areas, and depended on tax collectors, middlemen and touts for revenue collection. This last group too gradually grew influential in the society.

The old *lakherajders* (rewarded tax-free land), progenitors of the exiled and dethroned royal courtiers etc. were also considered the elite. Though the economic and political influence of such people was gradually decaying, yet especially the members of the Nawab's family had revered position. The

zamindars got involved in various social activities. Many of them were known for their charity works and donations made towards many urban and social developments [18]. Some of them collaborated with the colonial government on many issues; some supported and actively helped the Company during the 1857 Sepoy Revolution. Such acts were aimed at retaining their power and superiority in the society [19]. The government also used to nominate the *zamindars* as members of the Local Boards or municipalities.

9- EMERGENCE OF THE MERCHANTS

The high caste Hindus, who were favoured by the British for their performance and obedience, were further benefited by the Permanent Settlement Act. They included the mercantile class, who was in advantageous position even during the Mughals. With the Settlement Act, land became an esteemed property, anybody could buy it. This offered the merchants the opportunity to rise socially through buying zamindari (feudal estates) though land management was less profitable than many other means of living. Instead of developing a capitalistic outlook, the moneyed people adored the aristocratic values, which persisted in spite of radical changes in the social structure under the impact of late-colonial rule (Islam. 1991, p. 82)

Currency chaos occurred in the eighteenth century due to the British domination of the economy and land system. Before that the value of a coin was determined by its metallic content [20]. The brokers became rich through banking transactions. This group, especially the Hindu merchants, had influence over the Nawabs and the society. Many of them used to lend the *zamindars*, traders and often the Nawab [21]. They used to stand financial security to farmers and *zamindars* at high interest rates, which earned them huge wealth. In many cases small *zamindars* could not collect revenues from their subjects in time. To maintain a luxurious lifestyle, many *zamindars* also became indebted to the moneylenders [22]. Thus the moneylenders became powerful enough to influence the administration. This continued under the colonial rule too.

The Europeans were unfamiliar with the local

weight and measurement, as well as the monetary exchange and marketing systems. Therefore, many of the European traders and administrators were also indebted to the moneylenders. Members of this class on many occasions used to contribute to different social and development works, which ultimately benefited the British. They, in return sometimes put responsibility for maintaining law and order and revenue collection upon them. This made them a privileged and powerful community in Bengal, able to control and earn respect in the society. A significant section of the top society echelon emerged from the currency dealers. Also many from the business group turned to be money lenders or currency dealers and vice versa.

Bengal became increasingly involved in international trade and business since the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Development of communication through the introduction of railway, steamer and telegraph, rise of Chittagong as the port city of East Bengal and Assam, the increasing production of cash crops and other exportable goods etc. made this possible. Other than conventional exportable goods like rice, cotton, indigo, betel nut, leather, hide, oil-seeds, etc., jute boom and tea production had international market. It created several categories of middlemen in between the producers and the dominantly foreign exporters. The non-Bengalis and foreigners shared the internal market. A few Bengalis involved in the business at regional level were mainly the Sahas (high caste Hindu merchants), and later some Muslims.

The foreign traders needed the help and services of local agents, numbers of factory councils, some subordinate writers, and a contingent of militia to run the business. *Banias, mutsuddis, gomosthas, paikers, dalals, kayals, sarrafs, mohrers, paiks, peadas* (all high and upper-middle caste Hindu) and labourers related to the business were all natives. The agents or factory employees occupied important position in the society due to their monetary power. Some of them gradually took up businesses themselves and joined the new businessman class. Some of them formed the lower and middle strata of the colonial administration, and the higher stratum of the emerging local middle class.

10- EMERGING MIDDLE CLASS

English education became more important as a result of the expansion of the colonial state apparatus. The administrative policy of the British opened up many government jobs in the sectors like law, revenue, health, communication, police, education etc. for the local people with grasp of English. The Bengalis, the Vishayi Bhadrak (materialistic gentlemen), accepted it readily and formed the first generation of educated urban middle class [23]. Although initially the majority was Hindu, caste had negligible influence in the formation of this socially open class. People having same level of education and services had equal status. Muslims were slower to accept and participate in this change. Educated Muslim service-holders were considered members of the same social group.

The invigorated and educated Hindus of mid and late nineteenth century joined the already privileged community of Bengal. They started to become doctors, lawyers, teachers, police officers, clerks and writers. Many of them who became familiar with the European lifestyle, tried to imitate those in an attempt to become so called civilized in manner and attitude. The affinity for western culture, education and lifestyle gave rise to another social class. This boboo or bhadralok (gentleman) group, contemporary western or European in thoughts and ideas, contributed in the creation of a modern Bengali society [24].

The majority of the emerging middle-class in salaried job remained directly or indirectly dependent on land. They had contacts with their rural origin and spend the savings on land. Many of them from well-off and influential families possessed oriental conservatism and occidental liberalism. They tended to be wise, illuminated but superior representative of people. The educated recent migrant group and progenitors of the decaying middlemen, who could not totally depend on land for their livelihood, also joined them. Other middlemen who dealt with the farmers came into limelight due to the advent of commercial agriculture like jute. They had interaction with the British, connection with the administration, its policy and know how. They were the intelligentsia, moneyed people and new landlords in Bengal and

the natural leaders of the society. As intellectuals they created a society of their own but hardly disseminated their knowledge to the masses [25] though they eventually gave rise to the Bengali nationalism.

However, the Muslims were confused and reluctant to readily accept the new ideas brought by the British and newly educated Hindu nationalists, which were often considered radical. They were contained and besieged with nostalgia of the glorious past, and confined within their own community, shut off from all ongoing developments and progress. Other reasons responsible for such attitude were the lack of confidence on their own ability and upon the leaders, and economic and educational backwardness [26]. Their economic situation started to improve particularly with the development of agricultural trade.

English education was not popular among the Muslims initially despite encouragement from many progressive quarters. Their non-enthusiastic and conservative attitude toward change made them the losers in competitive situations. After the 1857 Revolution, which started in Bengal and spread over India, the British Royalty replaced the then East India Company in governing India, and faced hostile Muslim attempts of resurrection. As a result of continuous soliciting by social reformers, the government gave sympathetic look to their problems. It adopted policies encouraging them to take up education, jobs and thus to become active in the society and administration. From the early twentieth century, Muslim middle-class started to form and gain true influences in civic, social, economic, political and cultural scenario of Dhaka and Bengal. The process was expedited with the partition of Bengal (1905-11) and the establishment of Dhaka University (1921).

11- THE MULTI-COURT MANSIONS

Courtyard houses in Dhaka can be categorized into two types. In a single-court house, the rooms are arranged around a single inner court with or without a front yard; in a multi-court house, there are two or more courtyards in a single house. Both bungalow and traditional houses influences single-court houses, the most dominant form. Here the built form is small compared to the site area,

functions are limited and the size of the house and number of rooms are less. Or there may be small houses on smaller plots where only a limited number of rooms are possible to arrange around a single court in some cases, a large site area may retain a large single courtyard inside, like in the kuttra. Traditional Bengali houses have been of single courtyard type; multiple courtyards were rarely used only in rural areas for extension of a family domain with the increase in the family size. Even the remnants of palaces or contemporary residential houses in rest of India do not show affinity towards distinctly separate multiple number of courtyards in one building.

More than one courtyard is necessitated in large houses to ensure proper light and ventilation and locate all the rooms with both physical and conceptual links. Such an arrangement also facilitates the traditional type of living where all domestic activities are focused on the court, which regulates the spatial arrangement and propagates the image of a house. Depending on the two morphologies of mahalla, multi-courtyard houses are usually either very large on regular shaped plots in residential areas (moderate villas; mansions or institutional type buildings) or very narrow and long in busy commercial districts [27].

The use of courtyards in these houses is similar to that in single-courtyard houses. In these mansions, one courtyard along with the rooms and other spaces related with it form one zone. But the overall grouping or zoning varies according to uses, e.g. formal-public, family-private or service, etc. In pure residential areas with large rectangular plots, the sub-division of plots gives rise to lanes and by-lanes (Figure 7). For service entry, a side alley is used instead of a back alley as in narrow deep plots. Well-proportioned courtyards in these huge buildings make interiors more intimate and facilitate ventilation and lighting as physical components and various activities and interactions as social components.

11.1 Physical Components

The mansions, two or three storied in height, are laid out symmetrically in the public part to give a ceremonious and formal look (Figure 8,9,10,11,12,13). Typically an entry foyer with hall room(s) next to it and flanked by two square

rooms on two sides, one of which may contain the stair, creates this symmetry (Figure 8,10,11,12). Symmetry is often broken in the inner zones for reasons of climate, function, site configuration etc. The lofty main entry, flanked by monumental columns of Doric, Ionic, Corinthian or Composite styles, is given grandeur in its disposition. This directs to the living room, which sometimes is a double height hall, and other rooms for external use (Figure 8, 13).

In some cases the house (Figure 8,9,13,14), or the house proper excluding the public part (Figure 10,11), is set back from the site entry. This forms an entrance court giving a more appropriate setting to the mansions. The entry and living room along with the front courtyard form the formal part of the house, which may also contain guestrooms and offices (Figure 8,10,11) and guard rooms or portals near the entry (Figure 13). This formal or public area belongs to the male domain, and is accessible to the public. Sometimes there is an additional formal courtyard for the most public use only like community gathering, business or professional counseling etc. (Figure 8,10,11).

The sleeping rooms around another courtyard next to the formal one are in the informal zone, where the courtyard is semi-private and rooms are private. The courtyard houses the informal and semi-private domestic and family activities, which require privacy from outsiders. The inner courtyard(s) is synonymous with the female domain (Figure 10). The formal zone leads to the inner part via this court. The arrangement of rooms is like that in the traditional house form-around the courtyard with veranda; similar layout is repeated in the successive courts. The connection between courtyards is usually through corridors, which is the gap between rooms. Such connection in rural houses is through the gaps in between the huts.

The rear courtyard retains services and ancillary facilities like sanitary and wash, and sometimes cooking, storage, and servant quarters (all case studies). In many houses, a secondary entry serves this as a private access to the inner areas. This makes the courtyard(s) more functional and obscured from outside or the public areas. There can be more than one secondary entries if there is a second road adjacent to the site (Figure. 13, 14),



Figure 8a: Ground Floor Plan

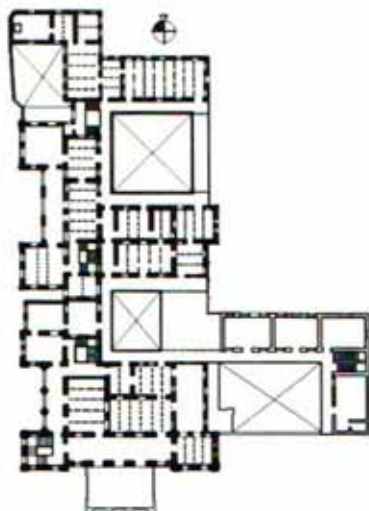


Figure 8b: First Floor Plan

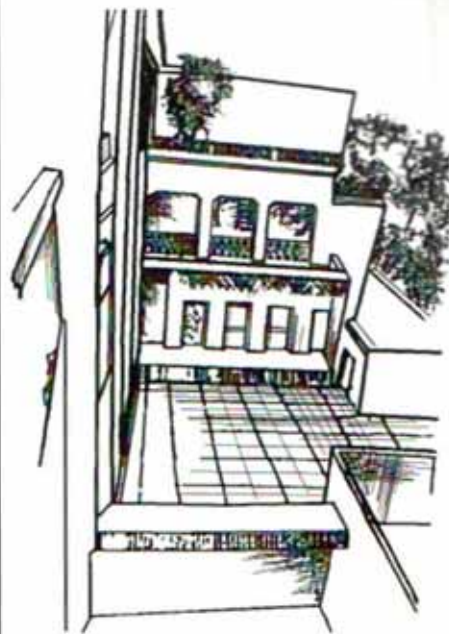


Figure 8c: View of the Secondary Cort



Figure 8c: West Elev. (correct the caption in digram)

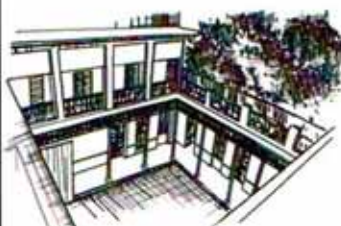


Figure 8d: View of the Private Court

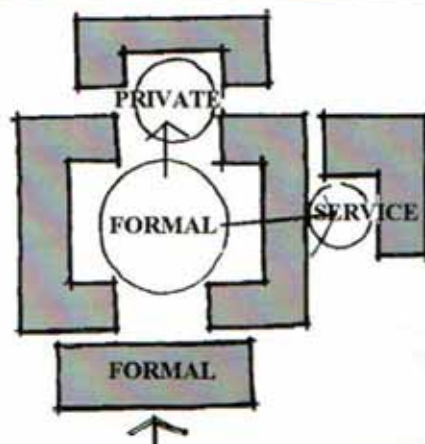


Figure 8f: Space Articulation

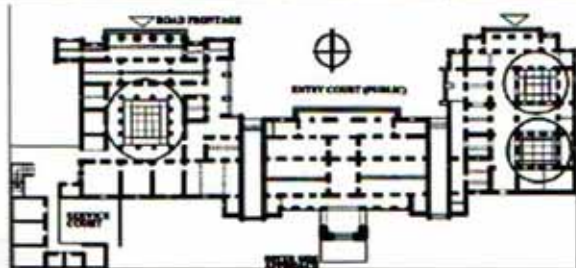


Figure 9a: Ruplal Saha's House (Ground Floor Plan)

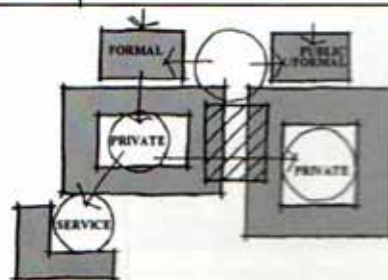
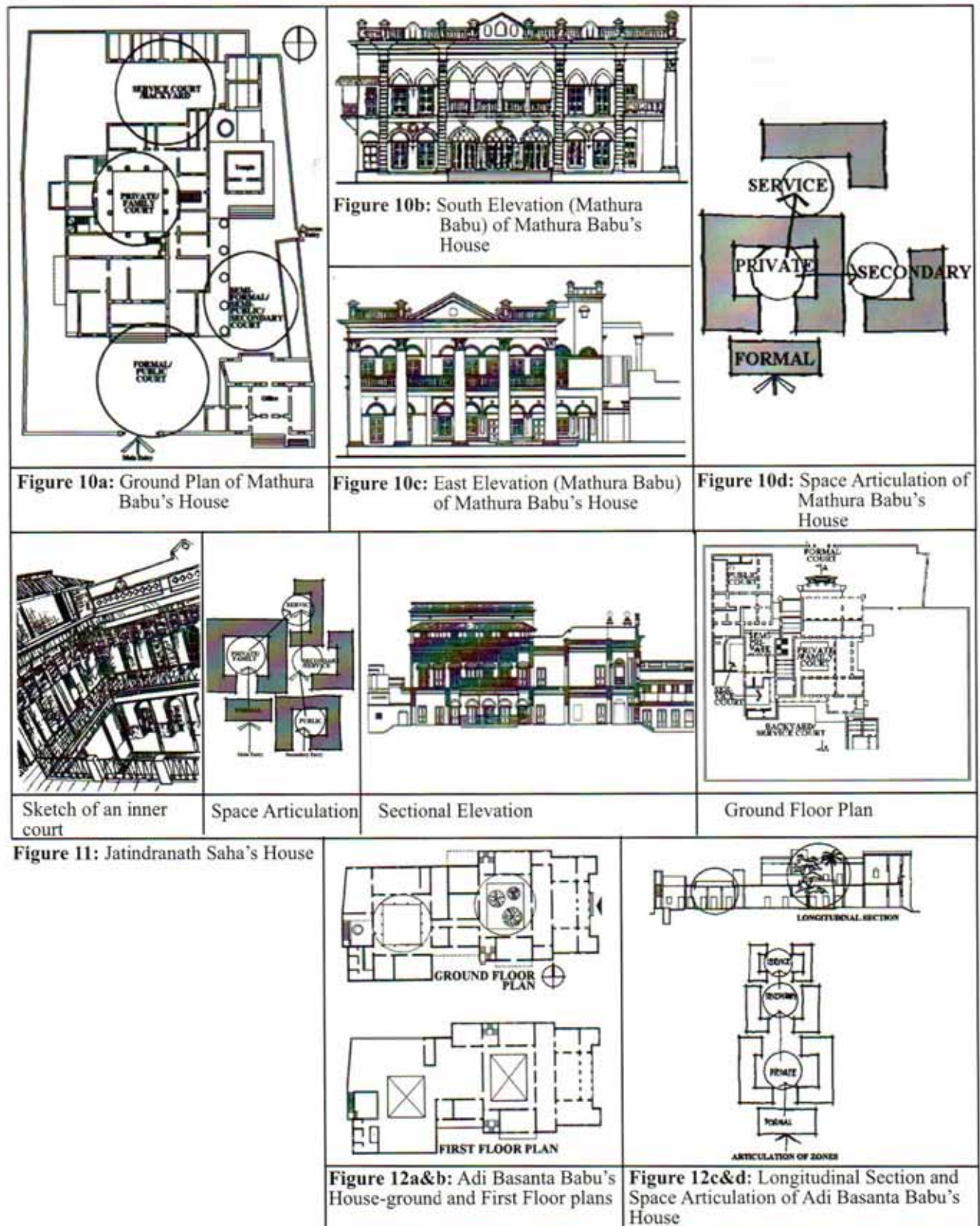


Figure 9b: Ruplal Saha's House (Space Articulation)



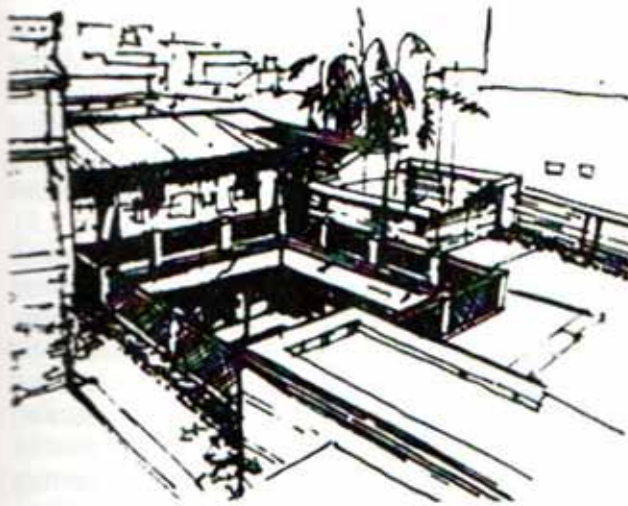


Figure 12e: View of the Second Court from the Terrace in Adi Basanta's House

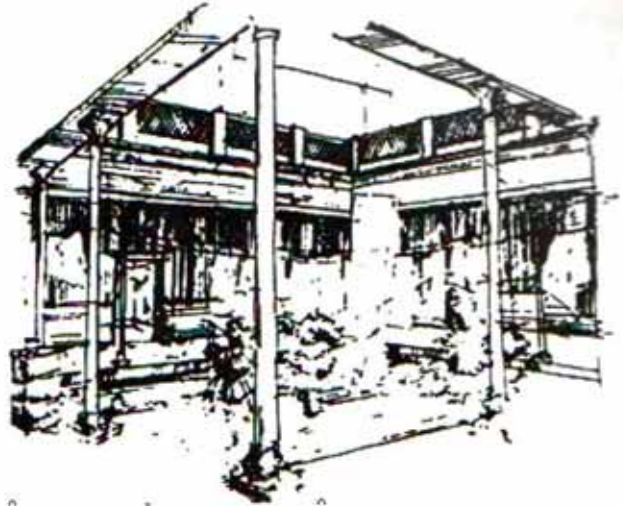


Figure 12f: View of Main Court in Adi Basanta's House.

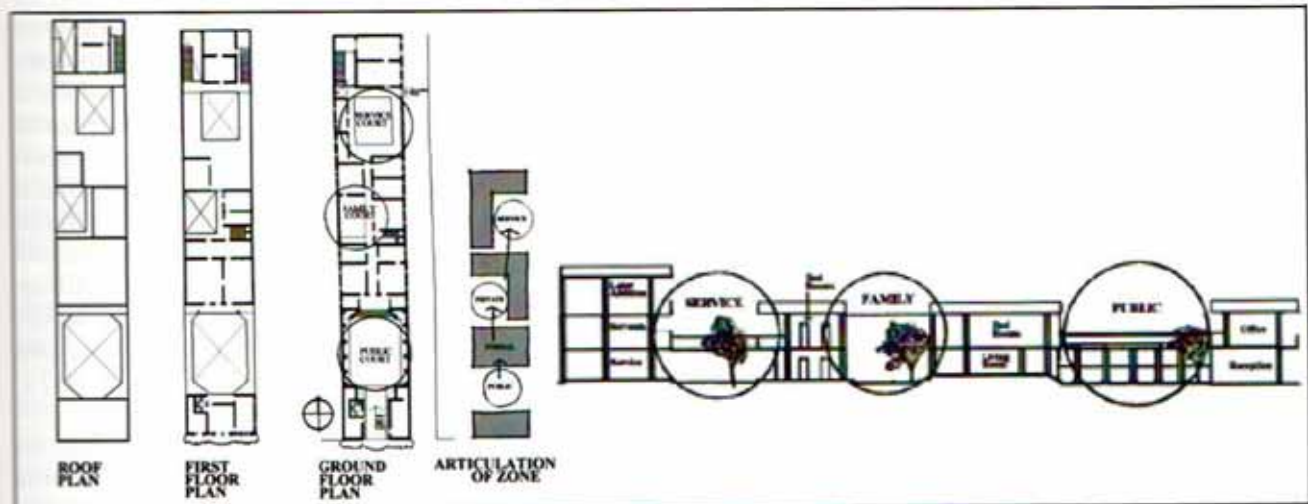


Figure 13: Prasanna Babu's House and Prasanna Babu's House(Long Section)

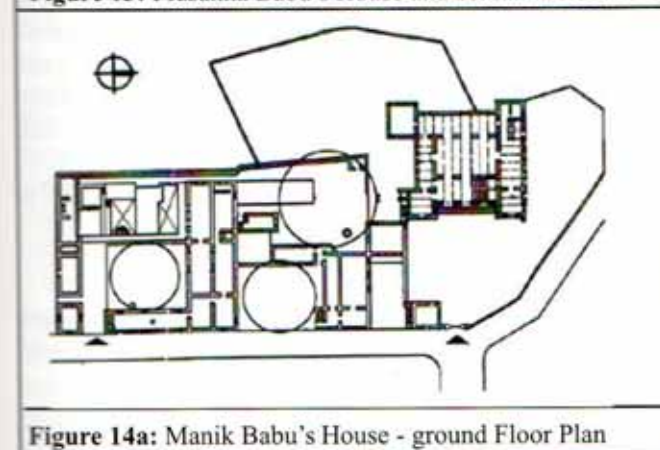


Figure 14a: Manik Babu's House - ground Floor Plan

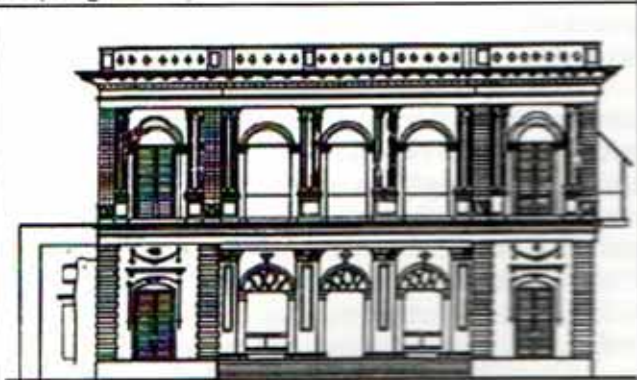


Figure 14b: East Elevation - Manik Babu's House

or by other mode of transport like waterways (Figure 8,9). When there is more than one road traversing a site, all equally important, equal importance is given on all the facades facing the road. Entrances, sometimes as elaborate as the main one, are created on all such sides (Figure 8,9,10,12,14).

Several stairs are ideally located to serve individual group of rooms around the courtyards (forming one zone). Rooftops become terraces either overlooking the inner court or the front road, and thus remaining either semi-private (Figure 8,11,12,13) or semi-public in nature (Figure. 8,9,12,13). The service zone sometimes contains a guest and servants block (Figure. 8,9,10,14). In case of two-court houses in the absence of a third (service) court, the distinction remains between the formal-informal, public and private domains (bipolar zoning). Services areas in such houses usually share the family domain.

The flow from courtyard to room through veranda remains the same as in the traditional houses. This shows a transition from open court to the semi-open veranda through which a covered space is approached laterally. The transition is also evident in the lateral progression into the house, e.g. the public court leads to the semi-private court, from there to semi-private verandas while rooms with the maximum privacy are at the end. Here the transition is more restricted and gradual than the transition from court to room. Living rooms can be marked with the controlling mechanism or 'lock' between the private and public zones (Rapoport, 1977). The living room or the outer house is considered a window to the outside world, a medium of formal communication and interaction with the society (Imamuddin, 1983) [28].

Simultaneously a gradual transition is also observed with the degree of privacy and the nature of the space. Accordingly, an inner court is semi-public in nature, while the veranda fronting the court is semi-private and the rooms private (Figure 1,5,6). It also guides the type of activities that could take place in the courts, verandas or rooms and the progression of the relationship. Courts and verandas could house most social, cultural and many domestic activities as those are semi-public or semi-private in nature.

The buildings were placed on high podiums of moulded plinths decorated with simple geometric shapes (Case 1,2,3,4,6,7). Corinthian and composite columns with foliated capital were very common on the façade (Case 1,2,4); Doric columns were rarely used (Case 3). Columns were sometimes grouped (Case 5) or placed on pedestal (Case 2,5). These could sometimes be square in section with flutes (Case 1), or integrated with walls in the form of pilasters (Case 1,2,4,7). Solid inter-columnar space (walls) were paneled, openings used to be placed symmetrically along the vertical axis (Case 1,2,3,4,5,7). Traceroid windows were common, the space between the arch and the opening usually divided into three parts, with a circular opening at the top (Case 1,4,5,7).

The porch, a not so common element; was usually placed on heavy piers (Case 1). Most other times entries were to foyer-veranda (Case 2,3,4,7). Embattled parapet with embrasures and merlons or parapet with balustrades was very common. Pinnacles using local elements like miniature temples or pitchers were used at the end or turns of the parapet (Case 4). Pediments were used with tympanum being filled with floral patterns (Case 2,4). Similar patterns were also used in the frieze where triglyph was absent. These were topped with intricate floral gables (Case 2,4). Modillion or plain brackets were used to hold the cornices. Rusticated walls, particularly the piers and the wall corners, were popular (Case 1,2,3,4,7).

All type of arches were used at the opening to span column to column distances, doors and windows. Most common were trefoil and multifoil, three centred cinquefoil, pointed saracenic, pointed segmental, Venetian, equilateral, drop and semi-circular arches. Sometimes protruding and decorated keystone was used (Case 4). Window openings were sometimes encircled with spiral robe patterns (Case 1,2). Sometimes trefoil ventilator openings adored the faced (Case 3,4,5,7). Dentils were also a common use.

11.2 Socio-Cultural Components

In Dhaka, the society elite built the multi-court mansions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when Indo-Saracen style with obvious classicism had set its mark on Indian architecture. Dhaka, being an important centre in administrative

set up and urban network, could not escape the trend. Hence the new buildings put on the hybrid style in appearance which was approved by the colonial power 29. This style pre-empted the rising local elite to adopt it to meet a dual purpose of being faithful to both tradition and power.

Colonizers erected superb buildings in classical styles symbolizing power and glory. However, the implantation of one type of building in another climate with different types of materials was difficult. The European prototype was used as a full-scale model on which spaces were added and functional modifications were made. Such manipulations of forms and images of glory had a vast appeal to the neo-elite. The emancipated individual rising to lead the society in spite of being born as a native endeavoured to consolidate his social position and the newly acquired status by adopting a taste for things western. The colonizers or indigenous rulers, warranting the political loyalty of the subjects, aimed at maintaining a relatively passive type of obedience and identification. Whenever possible, they were ready to utilize the existing traditional loyalties or transfer them to the new setting without much change in their basic social and cultural orientation (Eisenstadt, 1966).

Other forces that influenced the late nineteenth and early twentieth century mansions are:

11.3 Administrative

During this period, the urban elite group and the middle class were opposing the colonial rule in a nationalistic fervour. At the same time they were more congenial to the rule and receptive of its benefits. They increasingly participated in civic activities, contributed to infrastructure development and got involved in municipality administration 30. The local elite began to interact with the British rulers due to political, administrative, commercial, and sometimes social reasons. This illuminated them with western ideas, life-styles and culture; ultimately reflected in their ways of life (Mamun, 1986). For example, the European ways of celebrating various festivals and occasions like the New Years, or ball-dances held in a big hall room, equally attracted the local elite. Introduction of large open spaces, entrance lobby and lofty hall rooms etc. in the public zone is a consequence of

this social predilection 31.

The Europeans like the Armenians, the French or British traders originally built some of the mansions, later the local affluent either copied or bought these. Ahsari Manzil (Figure. 4), the most famous palatial house of Dhaka, exemplifies the populist influence and taste imported by the Europeans. Zamindar Ali Mian bought the house from the French traders and repaired it to contemporary taste, and also made an extension of the original house 32. Its internal spaces were decorated in western taste and living style even when it was used by the Nawabs. This largest bungalow style palace, unlike other mansions, has no internal court. It has big living room, library, billiard room, dining hall all furnished in European manner.

11.4 Educational

The formal education system introduced by the colonial rulers brought new thoughts and ideas to the local people. The manners, ways of living and social behaviour of the Europeans entered the aspirants' minds through their exposure to books and media, visits to Europe and interactions at various levels and capacities with the foreigners. Education allowed them to climb the higher rungs in the administrative and social ladder. Their access to metropolitan society and familiarization with the life-style also became obvious. Thus paraphrasing of the colonial style in house form created a dichotomous vocabulary.

On the other side of this dualism was the nationalistic uprising among the Bengalis due to exposure to western education, and the contemporary revolutions in other parts of the world. This led to the consciousness to political and civil rights, and self-reliance. Rise in various professional groups, specially the lawyers, teachers, journalists and litterateurs, contributed to this process of self-actualisation. This phenomenon is also evident in the rise in the numbers of non-political and secular socio-cultural organizations and societies like youth clubs, drama groups, etc. there were also liberal neo-religious groups like the Brahmas 33. The elite group and the urban middle class were in the forefront of all such movements. Hall rooms, front courts and terraces played a significant role in facilitating social

gatherings, rehearsals etc.

11.5 Rituals and Festivals

Festivals and rituals were an integral part of Dhaka's social life, many of which are still extant. For example, the Ashura 34 has been celebrated with joy and ecstasy at least from the time of the Mughals (Karim, 1992; Sarkar, 1992; Mamun, 1989). The Nawab used to celebrate all the Muslim festivals and led processions with great enthusiasm. These continued under the patronization of the local leaders even after the Nawabs' demise. The long procession of thousands of people carrying the cenotaph and other icons was magnificent in its mood and attitude (Rahman, 1998). The local leaders headed this and all people irrespective of their religion participated, which aggrandized the festivities (Mamun, 1989).

Processions were usually watched and cheered from verandas and terraces by the women and children. The general people used to gather in a *chowk* or in front of the houses of the mahalla elite. This influenced the design of the public part of the house. The religious rituals were pan-religious in celebration. For example, Hindu festivals like Durga Puja (worship of the goddess of war), Lakshmi Puja (worship of the goddess of wealth), etc. were inseparable part of the society; people from all religions used to participate and enjoy the occasions. Individual deities designed with fine craftsmanship, and puja mandapas (podium), used to be erected in the leading mahalla elite's houses. Gradually it became their responsibility to patronize, where the social intention of mass celebration got priority over its religious role. The outer court of the multi-houses used to serve as the place for public festivals and rituals.

In the family courts of Hindu houses a small altar with a niche used to be built under Tulsi (holy Basil) tree. It is a regular ritual in a Hindu house to light a lamp in the Tulsitala every evening to frighten away evil spirits. Courtyards also played an important role in secular social activities. Programs pertaining to marriage, birth and other ceremonies, and even death, are centred in the courtyard. Both Hindu and Muslim marriage ceremonies were performed with great fanfare having a strong social meaning. The associated preparations and activities

necessitated large open space in house 35. The number of courtyards and their zoning facilitated a segregation of male and female participants in such ceremonies. The social forces were intrinsic in the spatial arrangement, which revealed the long established traditional demand.

Favourite pastimes of many *zamindars* and aristocrats were cock Figurehts and goat Figurehts; taking place in streets, *chowks* or formal courts. To accommodate such community activities, consideration was made in many house designs for the provision of an outer court larger than the other courts inside. Kite flying was another popular leisure activity and a seasonal festival, which needed an open field. In urban context, due to the scarcity of land at hand, roof terraces substituted the open field and used to be used for kite flying.

11.6 Domains

Residential expectations of the growing urban middle class were determined partly by the desire of the rural based elite living in the city (the so called landed gentry) and partly by the techno-economic possibilities and western associations. Westernisation influenced both the public and private domains of living, behaviour and activity. Opposite pulls of tradition and westernization forced the urban middle class to assume a dual life-style. Their dichotomous values found expression in the domestic design and living. A boundary was drawn between the formal and informal activity areas within a house corresponding to the two opposite patterns and life styles. The traditional joint family pattern engendered the house form of an extended type requiring numerous rooms for family use. The permeability into the private courts was determined by the degree of relationship of the intruder with the bona fide user.

The sense and degree of privacy was maintained with male and female domains. In general, women had universal entry to the internal family courts whereas men were admitted only selectively. Privacy, male-female distinction, role of women, segregation of services etc. were some established values and norms followed in the zone demarcation. The female household members were mostly kept confined within the boundaries of the house where the courtyard was their breathing space and their

universe. Therefore, the inner court meets more of a socio-cultural purpose of providing interactions, as well as privacy, than other physical demands. Three distinct types of activity patterns are inherent in the traditional set up - formal or public, informal or private and services. In multi-court houses, the separate courtyards accommodate these separate types of activities. Thus their location and use is automatically guided by the domain concept.

11.7 Material

Brick was a material abundantly available; most of the local buildings including the palaces used brick. It was permanent in nature and regional in flavour though wood was extensively used in many of the bungalows, and also in some mansions. That some of the elite had brickfields, and thus could make good and inexpensive use of it, also encouraged the wide-spread use of brick 36. The brick walls, 50 cm or more in thickness, were usually covered with lime plaster. Stucco and other ornamentation on plaster in many of the buildings show the elegance of the mansion and the taste of the owner. This was, however, an influence of the classical styles imported by the colonizers.

The local craftsmen used high quality cast iron pillars, ornate railings, wooden carving, broken ceramic tiles, terra cotta decoration etc. Repousse work was also introduced during this period especially on railings, posts, capitals, pilasters, drop walls and colonnades. Ancestors of many craftsmen moved to Dhaka with the Mughal entourage; others were hired from Calcutta (Ali, et. Al., 1994). Most buildings adopted the local technology using purlin and rafter, popularly known as the Ganga-Yamuna system. In some cases, wooden rafter and purlin technique had been transmitted or copied in the durable brick buildings with tile floors or expressed externally. Some local mason and craftsmen learnt techniques, e.g. use of wrought and cast iron, I-section beams etc. from the European builders. These allowed covering a large space with flat roofs rather than with pitched or vaulted roofs as practiced by the local builders.

11.8 Climate

Introduction of multiple number of courtyards was also required to solve the climatic problems arising

out of the extended depth and large covered areas of the house. Natural lighting and ventilation can be invited in these houses only through the internal courtyards as a void. Moreover, this enhances an introvert layout facilitating every group of rooms or zone with required light and ventilation besides functional zoning and privacy (Mallick & Huda, 1996). Also, multiple levels and higher floor heights kept the rooms cooler compared to rooms in other houses with smaller floor heights.

11.9 Pastiche

The aristocracy was also exhibited in the houses of the nouveau riche. The newborn self-styled aristocrat class consecutively aspired to acquire all habits of an ideal civilized class-that of their British masters, as a model 37. The grandeur of the house was a symbol of high status and wealth. This encouraged the elite to have a house with multiple courts with different mahals (sections). The wealthy native had their houses decorated with Corinthian pillars and filled with English furniture 38.

The populist fashion was engendered by several local trends. For example, hunting was popular among the royal courtiers and aristocrats from an early date, and a popular pastime of the colonizers. The display of hunting trophy in the living room was an example of acquired taste and class. Large sofa or divans with pillows, gramophone, tiger and deer skin, mantle piece, false fire places, wall clocks, large painted portraits, large smoking pitcher of brass, photographs, banners, etc. filled the living room. These made it a kind of display centre of family wealth, status, achievements and associations or connections.

11.10 Social Activities

The wealthy and influential society leaders were involved in various philanthropic activities and charity works. For example, members of the Nawab's family of Dhaka, more particularly Nawab Abdul Gani, made monetary contributions and donations on many occasions for the introduction and improvement of the city's infrastructure and services (Alamgir, 1997). Many civic and municipal activities had to be funded by such charities and generous donation by both European and local elite. Many of the elite befriended Europeans to take advantage of the situation;

donating to civic works was part of such strategies 39.

Sometimes, works of charity were performed with lot of publicity to show the gracefulness of the donor. The outer courtyard was used for the agglomeration of general mass, to which the elite used to pay visit from a grand portico with his grand and benevolent disposition. Sometime, the outer courtyard was also used for community affairs like meeting, mitigation etc. or important social or political announcements.

12- CASE STUDIES

12.1 *House of Reboti Mohan Das or Sada Bari (White House), Jaluanagar* (Figure 8): Reboti Mohan Das, a moneylender and one of the first elected members of Dhaka Municipality, was involved in social activities. The house is one of the famous and grandest mansions of Dhaka built in the early twentieth century. The building is 27 m to the east of the main road. The exterior, plastered in white, exhibits, plastered in white, exhibits grandeur in scale, style and proportion.

The house is entered from the south through a portico placed on four piers. This leads to an elongated foyer in front of the main living room, and to the staircase on the west. There is another approach from the western side through a double height foyer cut by a curvilinear balcony. This exhibits monumentality on the publicly visible side of the house through the use of slender columns, flanked by solid blocks on both sides. The foyer leads to a second living room adjacent to the first one. These together form the public area through which one is led to the inner courtyards.

Das's brother added the three-storied block using more geometric elements on the façade later to the north. This part too has a formal entry foyer in the west approached by a flight of steps arranged symmetrically. From this side too, the house has a typical arrangement, that is living room after the entry along the axis and the inner court surrounded by rooms just behind it.

A corridor running on the west with rooms along it connects the two major inner courtyards. There

was a secondary entrance to a small court and then to a veranda on the northwest side. Besides a stair, this connects one of the two major inner courts via a corridor. An abutment to the east from the entry consists of servants and guest quarters. This part, also approachable from the famous Dholai channel on the east, has a semi-public courtyard.

The house has five interior courtyards of various sizes and three others outside. The courtyards fall within different distinct activity zones namely formal, private and service. The first inner courtyard integrates various semi-public activity spaces. The second larger one on the north has a colonnade on the channel side. Rooms of varying sizes are simply arranged around. There are a number of stairs in separate zones. The house partly rises up to the second floor. The first floor contains bedrooms and terraces towards the channel.

12.2 *Ruplal House or Armeni Shaheber Bari (House of Mr. Armenian), Farashganj* (Figure 9). Ruplal and Raghu Nath, the descendants of Mathura Nath Das, bought the house from Aratone in the late nineteenth century. Aratone, a typical Armenian merchant during the early nineteenth century, accumulated wealth and influence from salt business. Fond of kite flying, pigeons and cockfighting, he lived in luxury. Das owned a mint and had batta business; later with prosperity, he started to issue hundis. But this could not earn him the dignity and status that he longed for, as he had no land. But his sons, Madhusudan and Swarup Chandra, the father of Ruplal, bought vast estates to become one of the most influential aristocratic families of Dhaka during late last century.

Chandra commissioned the Martin Company of Calcutta to modify and extend the house to a grand mansion, considered second only to the Ahsan Manzil. Ruplal, a connoisseur of music, regularly used to arrange both oriental and occidental musical soirees to entertain society elite in the house. The Europeans and other elite in honor of Lord Dufferin on his 1888 visit to Dhaka attended a ball-dance party here; facilitated by a remodeling work of the house adding a wooden dance floor.

The complex can be approached from the main

road on the north and by a private entry from the river on the south. It consists of three distinct blocks: the most imposing western one of Ruplal, eastern one of Raghu Nath, and a central connecting block. The smaller central block, probably the original part of the huge mansion, is built in a bungalow pattern. Its distance from the main road created the front court surrounded by the three blocks each fronted by verandas on the court side. Two depressed three-centred archways connect it with the other blocks at upper level. A gabled roof, probably a later addition, tops the archway.

As a contrast, the two newer blocks have inner courts, two in each one, surrounded by rooms. The entrances from the north to individual blocks, fronted by foyers, are grand in scale and disposition having double height Corinthian columns with pediment and entablature. These lead to the living rooms and other external rooms on either side. Two blocks linked by corridors forming the formal part of the house flank foyers. The living rooms lead to the internal court surrounded by circulation corridor to connect the series of rooms around it. In the ground level, none the blocks are directly connected with the central block.

The eastern block is different in external treatment. Its entry facing the front courtyard has no arches. The Corinthian columns are rather stout like Indian columns. Courtyards are of similar size in this block while in the Ruplal's block, there is an oblong service court partially open to the riverside. The same layout is followed in the upper floors of all the buildings, used for habitable purposes, except that they are connected with each other, and have terraces with a panoramic river view. Thus the three main courtyards bear equal importance from its zoning and privacy aspects.

12.3 *Mathura Mohan Chakrabarty's house or Smriti Mandir (Memory Temple), Dayaganj* (Figure. 10): Mr. Chakrabarty, a schoolteacher, established a famous herbal laboratory in this building served by two roads on south and east. The main entrance courtyard on the south is created by an 11 m offset of the house from the road. The entrance arcade, unlike in the previous cases, is single storied. This directly leads to the living room flanked by two rooms on either side. Several rooms on the eastern side open to a colonnaded

veranda that connects a secondary building and surrounds an oblong courtyard. This second block on an extended podium houses a community temple. Another later building, use as gatehouse, was erected on the same axis with the temple. These two smaller blocks, the colonnade, the courtyard etc. were added later and form a public space.

Both the public courtyards lead to the secondary or family court in the middle of the main block. A staircase restricts view from the main entrance to this court. Corridors surround it on three sides except to the south where the formal zone is. The corridor is surrounded by family rooms on east and west wings with a start in each wing. The courtyard of moderate size displays perfect human scale, and excellent light and shading. Another court is formed on the north or back of the house accommodating service spaces.

12.4 *Huse of Jatindra Kumar Saha or Mangalabas (Goodwill House), Farashganj* (Figure 11): Zamindar Saha owned this present kabi nazrul College Hostel. The prominent features of the façade are the grand entrance foyer, distinguished with a convex podium protruding out and heavy square piers. This leads to a big veranda flanked by a stair and an exterior room on two ends. The veranda leads to the living room, beyond it is the corridor running around the main courtyard. The symmetrical arrangement in the formal part was not carried through inside the house since it provides access to the lateral rooms and the southern veranda through the corridor.

This house has four inner courts. A stair, used only by women, separates two courtyards. The rooms around the second courtyard are small and do not relate directly with the main courtyard and the hall rooms. There is another courtyard at the northwest corner adjacent to the approach road with a separate entry. This courtyard along with its surrounding rooms was used for more public and official functions. The southwest courtyard was a subsidiary area for service, caretakers and servants. The upper floor of the house has similar pattern of spatial arrangement within the same grouping. There are terraces on the south and southwest corner in the first floor while the western part rises by another floor. The house, same as the previous

three examples, contains all examples of the typical elements that were being used on the facades.

12.5 *Adi (Original) Basanta Babu's House or Sutrapur Zamindar Bari, (House of the Landlord of Sutrapur), Sutrapur* (Figure. 12): The house was bought by Sitanath Roy Chowdhury from its first owner and extended. Both the owners were *zamindars*. The detailing of the arches, round columns in the ground floor and piers on the upper floor blended with the iron railing give elegance to its façade. Chowdhury could not finish the house according to his plan before his death and many works on the first floor remain unfinished. The building, mostly at the exterior is not even plastered. Hence bricks of various sizes and shapes can be seen exposed, which is an evidence of how the intricate copies of European elements were being done.

The house, set back about 4.5 m from the road, elongates east-west. An alley traverses it to the south while the north is an open space. The typical entrance verandah flanked by two rooms, leads to an inner hall room through the outer living room. Next to the inner hall is the semi-public court with circumambulating corridor. The arrangement is symmetrical with flanking rooms on either sides of the hall room, living room and entrance veranda. Even the staircase and two other rooms on either sides of the courtyard are in symmetric arrangement. The first courtyard is connected to the family courtyard at the middle with a corridor flanked by rooms. This courtyard has colonnaded circulation corridor around it leading to the bedrooms and a service courtyard at the back.

The service courtyard consists of a well and a narrow stair leading up to a terrace. The terrace takes about a third of the first floor area to the west and is surrounded by high walls. The rest of the first floor has rooms typical in plan to that of the floor below. From the south road, there is a small portal-entry which after crossing a small elongated courtyard led one to a veranda and from there, to the house interior.

12.6 *Prasanna Babu's House or Bara Bari (Big House), Farashganj* (Figure. 13): This three-storied late nineteenth century house displays a magnificent scale and proportion. Prasanna Babu was a

moneylender and trader. The house measures about 12mX60m, built up to the property line. The main road is at the south while a narrow secondary road runs along the length of the house to the east. A guardhouse, guestrooms and office block from the entry. The central aperture through this block, flanked by low-height rooms on either side, leads to the colonnaded public courtyard. Grand steps lead towards an entrance lobby flanked by two small square rooms. These form the public zone of the house. A central corridor with symmetrically arranged rooms on either side directs towards the family court. Unlike in the previous examples, the entry to the interior domain is without crossing the living room.

The second courtyard takes the western half of the width, the rest is taken by a room and a staircase. The central corridor further extends to another large court accommodating services around it. There are three staircases in three different zones-public, family and service. There is a curved balcony with cast iron balustrades overlooking the commercial street in front. The guardhouse in the front block, the habitable rooms in the family zone and part of the service area, rise to the first floor. The front part is connected with the rooms behind in the upper level through the colonnade roof. Part of the building is three-storied, which were later additions, there are small terraces on the rest.

12.7 *Manik Babu's house or Goala Bari (Milkman's House), Hazaribag* (Figure 14). The house has segregation between formal and informal zone. The *kachari ghar* (outhouse used as office) is totally separated from the main structure. The approach runs on the east and northeast of the house in a curvilinear manner. The entry is located opposite a T-junction at a point where the road turns. Two building masses, the house proper and the public block flank the entrance court. The outhouse has verandas on its front and backsides; stairs and other ancillary facilities are articulated laterally. This part of the house follows bungalow-arrangement.

The entry inside the house proper is through the living room. But as there are other courts adjacent to the road, there are secondary entries too to them. Besides two external courtyards, there are three

inner courtyards, two on the east and one on the northwest corner. The northeastern courtyard contains the main grouping of rooms whereas the southernmost has the services, kitchen and servant areas around it. The connecting veranda around the courtyard is absent. Rooms, now either extinct or in severely deteriorated condition, were possibly approached directly from the court though there are remains of corridor linkages between some of the space.

13- CONCLUSION

Social structure and spatial structure, one abstract and another material entity, are rationally interrelated. Space can only be lawfully related to society if it can integrate the social dimensions. The interrelationship can be recognized in a way that society exists in space, but just not simply 40. Spatial order is one of the most striking means by which we recognize the existence of the cultural differences between social formations, i.e. the differences in the ways in which members of those societies live out and reproduce their social existence. In everyday life and language, the experience of spatial formation is intrinsic, if we experience society in an unconscious way 41.

Psychological, social and cultural characteristics are often expressed in spatial terms, e.g. the separation of various homogenous groups in localities (Rapoport, 1977). From the past to the present, society played the basic role in the formation of a settlement. Environment modulates the space from basic behavioural level to the social level, which in turn is shaped by society. Society retains the basis in forming the space, where it physically exists. Space ostensibly physical entity, conserves the social structure within it. This abstract force is guided by the psychological and cultural norms to transform into a non-abstract entity.

In this region, villages were formed as collection of cluster of huts enhancing the social grouping and protection. The huts were arranged in a beehive pattern usually around a courtyard. This was the inception of social grouping known as grama; the physical organization, barred the topographical constraints, has persisted till the present days. The society has developed and consolidated through a process of trial and error from generation to

generation to take a certain form, but the basic image inherent in its culture changed little. Also in the urban context, social formation guides its physical pattern. Dhaka, through its phases of development, shows a growth and settlement pattern influenced by the societal generation.

Rise of the urban society elite and the middle-class during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Bengal owes to colonial rule. They gradually infiltrated into the administration by dint of education, employment, wealth, social position and association. They were anxious to consolidate and express their position in the society. The expressions were more vivid in the way and place of living. A contextual analysis of the grand and magnificent mansions they used to live in, shows that the grander display the new found wealth and status due to the all pervasive power of imperialism, while the much utilitarian planning layout integrates the inherent norms of indigenous living, climate and tradition.

Seven examples selected from different parts of Old Dhaka show that imported elements were used to drape the exterior of these mansions; behind this was a local layout using a strong and uniform vocabulary, which could not be transformed easily. The forces like norms of space utilization, sense of privacy, zoning and domain division, orientation, climatic considerations, spatial dimension, rituals, available materials etc. were stronger in defining the form, and hence slower to change, compared to the short-lived taste and trend. Therefore, these mansions, while alien in their external disposition, were very much traditional in the core. Despite their huge scale and proportion, a humane ambience was mostly achieved through the introduction of multiple number of courtyards shaping the whole spatial composition.

Moderate houses were built by the first generation urbanites, which seldom followed the bungalow style; these were rather courtyard houses. Continuous urbanization, faster in the 1920s, 1950s, and since 1970s, has put tremendous pressure on residential land. As a result, the house form has become more consolidated and has gone higher with the advent of modern technology and services. Bangladesh has undergone many political and other upheavals in this century, which have

changed the face of this country. Yet the traditional image of living around a courtyard has not changed much conceptually. Physically the court has been replaced lately by family lounge, around which a house is symbolically evolved (Shabin, 1997).

The dichotomy, which is the premise of this article, has resurfaced in the residences of the nouveau riche in Bangladesh, more particularly in Dhaka. These houses built since the mid-1980s, have indiscriminately picked up imported elements that were used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century mansions for the same purpose again-to create a class of their own, alien to the local culture, but considered a (misconstrued) part of the extended globe⁴². However, the internal form of these houses is more westernised than the early mansions because of increasing availability and affordability of modern and luxurious materials from the world market, and more real exposure

and experience of western living style.

The multi-court mansions are no more built; these deserve more attention and study, firstly as evidence of the evolution of local architecture and secondly as good architectural examples by their own merit. It would establish a background in the process of evolution and ill contribute to the study of Bengali urban house form. Restoring buildings to their old use or adapting them to a new use are practices much neglected in Bangladesh. A study on these splendid houses may form a basis for further conservation activities. Also these remain as living testaments of a hybrid type of architecture. Studies will further enhance the argument that the contribution of socio-economic factors in determining house form is much greater and stronger than available materials or building techniques■

NOTES

1. A form expressing imperialism, huge floor area in the interior, articulate details and superb craftsmanship, yet the spaces were in human scale and familiar forms. Many of them are now either abandoned by original users or in a dilapidated condition due to misuse, disuse and neglect (Ali, et. al., 1993, p. 166; Rahman, 1996, p 79).
2. Basically a number of inward-looking 1-room huts around a courtyard. In well-off households, one hut, fronted by an outer courtyard, may act as the outhouse where formal social activities take place. Other south or east facing huts are used as family bedrooms, while the kitchen and sanitary areas are kept to the west. Houses have pitched roofs, little windows and sometimes veranda runs in front of them. Both the courtyard and the veranda are used for multiple functions. The houses are divided in some conceptual and functional zones determining the degree of privacy and accessibility, progressive from the outer court to the inside. For details see Haq (1994) and Imamuddin (1983).
3. This has been the most common practice when land was not scarce and life was less metropolitan. Even in the rising morphology of multi-storied flats, the courtyard is being replaced by an internal family living space (Shabin, 1997).
4. D'Oyle drew sketches of 24 early 19th century houses on a promenade along the river Buriganga. See Mamud, et. al. (1991) and Mamun (1993, p. 174) for description of these houses.
5. It took elements from Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples up to the 12th century AD; and passed the Sultan period during (13th-1618th C.). The Mughals used knowledge inherited from their central Asian ancestors ignoring the socio-cultural needs of the local population. Consideration to vernacular was limited to local materials and climate only. See Muktadir & Hassan (1985).
6. Many authors supporting this view with similar contention termed the discontinuity a 'rupture' in the overall architecture of the region. For example, Haque (1988, p. 25); Islam, et. al. (1985); Azim (1991).
7. Such as the Calcutta Government House, Serampore College and Dhaka Old State Bank. Islam et. al. (1985, p. 25) and Naqi & Khan (1995) termed those to be the exact facsimiles of buildings in Europe.
8. In the wake of 1905 partition of Bengal, the British Viceroy to India Lord Curzon a great

9. admirer of Mughal art and architecture patronized this.
9. Some residential buildings during this period, insignificant in number and size, were made of brick. The overall indigenous residential architecture exemplified the rural pattern mode of non-durable materials; even the use of brick in vernacular architecture was restricted. The Kuttra form, dormitory building built around a courtyard, came from Northern India from where the rulers, members of the royal courts and many nobility descended.
10. Mamun (1989 & 1993) described the early colonial houses in Dhaka to be copies of traditional rural houses. The materials were impermanent and non-durable and techniques used were indigenous and rudimentary.
11. Conceptually, a traditional Bengali house is divided into opposite domains of front and back, public and private, formal and informal, dry and wet, dirty and clean etc. the bi-polarity guides the location of various spaces in a house and hence determines the form. See Imamuddin (1983); Haque (1997).
12. The term bungalow was probably derived from Bangla chala.
13. In 1888, the first planned residential area in gridiron pattern was laid out in Dhaka for the emerging elite and middle-class. See Roy 1998).
14. The kitchen was the last forte to be affected, ... as the eating habits remain the last bastions of a true authentic culture (Azim, 1991).
15. In 1763 an anarchic situation ensued when the East India Company stormed the city. Administration collapsed; activities of bandits, fakirs and sanyasis (rebel Saints and Sufis) aggravated the situation (Islam, 1991, p. 75). The British quickly imprisoned some of the aristocrats, which forced many to move out of the city. The British tried to set up a puppet government headed by Mutsuddis (usurers and merchants) but failed to bring normalcy. Introduction of the post of Naib-e-Nazim as Dhaka's chief administrator helped to appease the situation. All these incidents, which the city leaders could not control, put their leadership into question and diminished their stature. Thus the social dominance of Royal aristocrat began to wane, which could not be readily restored.
16. A Hindu is born with his unchangeable caste, pre-determined by that of his father. In general, the Hindu religion consists of four classical social order or varnas (color). At the top of it were the Brahmans, priests and scholars; next were the Kshatriyas, the warriors, then Vaisyas, the business community. At the bottom of this pyramid were the Sudras or the untouchables. In Bengal, six castes are seen which in descending order of their social status are the Brahmans, Baidyas, Kayasthas, Mahisyas, Rajbangshis and Namasudras (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 170).
17. Chakrabarty (1992, p. 172) quotes from the 1911 Census Report of India that Brahman and Pundits became the shareholders of different profitable businesses, for example, of the Great Eastern Hotel Company in Calcutta. They even got actively involved in tannery and brewery business, which previously were the purview of the Saha businessmen. Therefore, the Sahas could no longer be undermined socially for running wine shops as ... when they (Brahmans) intruded on the trades and occupation of lower castes, they had no moral right to protest against their coming up to them and shaking hands with them.
18. Mamun (1985 & 1993) lists many such examples. *Zamindars* like Mathuranath Das (Case Study 2), Jiban Krishna Roy, Madan Mohan Basak etc. gained high status by buying huge amount of land. Anada Chandra Roy was a prosperous lawyer before becoming a zamindar by buying out Armenian Zamindar Lucas. Roy was the first elected chairman of Dhaka Municipal Authority. Jiban Krishna Roy, the most influential zamindar of the early 19th century, bought zamindari from business profits. Hafizullah advised his nephew Khwaja Alimullah, the Founder of Dhaka's Nawab family, in his deathbed, to withdraw all capital from business to invest in zamindari. Amiruddin Daroga earned lot of money as a police officer and then bought land properties and declared himself a zamindar.
19. The British awarded titles by appreciating their role e.g. 'Maharaja' to Suryakanta of Mymensingh, 'Nawab' to Abdul Gani of Dhaka etc. (Mamun, 1986, p. 99).

20. Every region had its own currency, which needed to be exchanged. There were seven types of currencies in Dhaka's market in late-eighteenth century. Of these, sicca retains its original value only for a year; after this, batta (discount or commission) had to be paid on it. Since government revenue was collected in sicca, all currencies had to be converted to it for revenue payment. This gave rise to specialized currency dealers, a kind of first generation bankers. Many people were involved in various types of currency business. The seths and banias with large capitals controlled the market and issue hundies (bill of exchange, security bonds). All currency dealers were not equally influential in the market. For example, the sarrafs, who dealt with batta system but not hundies, had no significant capital compared to those of seths and banias (Islam, 1991).
21. Jagat Seth was the Nawab's principal revenue collector. He used to make up the revenue of the defaulting *zamindars* and later recover it with interest (Karim, 1992, p. 64). Nawab Aliwardi Khan often borrowed money from Jagat Seth to carry out military operations against the Marathas. After the Plassey battle, Jagat Seth lent Mir Jafar, the puppet Nawab, more than five million rupees as pre-arranged with the Company. Umichand was appointed the Diwan (tax collector) under the Nawab. (Ibid, p. 67).
22. Sunset law strictly maintained the deadline for revenue payment, slight delay would put the zamindari at stake. This sometimes compelled the *zamindars* to borrow money from the currency dealers for paying government revenue timely. Therefore, ... it will not be an exaggeration to remark that by the end of the 18th century most *zamindars* and talugdars of eastern Bengal fell indebted to the seths and banias of Dhaka (Islam, 1991, p. 80).
23. The 1835 minutes of T. B. Macauley, an member of the Supreme Council of India, launched English education and knowledge in India. It opened the way for the growth of westernized Indian middle class. Its objective was imparting ... to the native population the knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of English language ... to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern. A class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste... (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 174).
24. Dr. Misra gave an account of this class, ... new functional groups arose with an increase in the size and variety of business. They included for example, engineers and overseers, technicians and supervisors, managers and inspectors, deputies and assistants (Bhuiyan, 1995).
25. This nullified the ideas of mid-nineteenth century educationists who believed that if education began at the top, it would dissipate to the masses (Ahmad, 1975, p. xxxii).
26. The majority of the Bengali Muslims could not afford and did not want to take up English education (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 177).
27. Imamuddin et. al (1989) did a limited study of the form of such houses.
28. Descriptions by Bishop Heber in the early-nineteenth century are available in Mamun (1989). The daughter of a foreign-trained doctor begum Shaista Ikramullah explains the attitude of this class. ...out house was furnished to look exactly like an English house. In the drawing room, there were heavy sofas, ...lace curtains, gleaming brass and silver, ...The dining room had a fairly massive side-board ...displaying a love of heavy silver. The hall and the study were furnished in the typical English style of the time... (Haq, 1995).
29. Khan (1983), Rahman (1996), Mowla (1995), Haq (1995), Naqi & Khan (1995) all addressed the issue from various angles.
30. Eight years after the British company-soldiers defeated the Bengal army in 1757, Dhaka went under its administration. It gained the absolute right over Bengal in 1772. Since 1781, the post of Collector was created to administer Dhaka. Collectors tried to develop city's infrastructures and institutions. By 1828, Dhaka was reduced to a district town deprived of many revenue earnings (Mamud, 1991). With a scope for meagre earning due to the enactment of Chwkidari Law in 1837, Magistrate Skinner formed a civic committee in 1840. It worked under constraints till 1863. The Dhaka Municipality to be run by elected representatives was established in 1864 and made into the present Dhaka City Corporation 113 years later. Ananda Chandra Roy, a famous lawyer turned zamindar, was the first elected chairman of Dhaka Municipal Committee.

All municipal commissioners were rich and elite philanthropers. In its Initial years, the civic committee or the municipality could take care of only the conservancy and drainage, which became of prime importance (Khan, 1983; Alamgir, 1997). Subsequently other services like Road maintenance, street lighting, water supply etc. were taken up by the municipality.

31. Ruplal House is a good example (Case Study 2).
32. Also see Case Study 2 (Figure. 9) on Ruplal house.
33. Brahmas are enlightened Hindus who condemned the caste system. Many leading society members and reformers, e.g. the Tagores, Swami Bibekananda, Raja Rammohan Roy etc., embraced this religion.
34. 10th day of the Muslim holy month of Muharram commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain, Grandsons of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh); specially celebrated by the Shia Muslims.
35. Such as Gaye Holud (taking tamarind bath before the wedding), Sat Pak (ambulating walks during wedding), etc.
36. For example, Radha Balav, son of Ruplal first established the brickfield near Dhaka.
37. Haque, (1997), op. cit., and various EARTH articles, op. cit.
38. Descriptions given by Bishop Heber or Begum Shaista Ikramullah, op. cit.
39. Ibid & Haque (1997). Buckland Bundh was constructed to protect Dhaka of river erosion and to be used as a promenade on an ancient Mughal dike with donations from both European and local elite.
40. It takes a definite spatial form in two senses. First it arranges people in space that it locates them in relation to each other, with a greater or lesser degree of aggregation and separation, engendering patterns of movements and encounter that may be dense or sparse within or between different groupings. Second, it arranges space itself by means of buildings, boundaries, paths, markers, zones and so on, so that the physical milieu of that society also takes a definite pattern. In both senses a society acquires a definite and recognizable spatial order (Hillier & Hanson, 1990).
41. We read space and anticipate lifestyle. Ibid.
42. Islam, (1995), op. cit.

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