

AUTHENTICITY OF THE HOUSE FORM: WHAT CAN CONTEMPORARY HOUSING DESIGN LEARN FROM EVOLUTION OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE HOUSING TYPOLOGIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF KARACHI?

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ABSTRACT

This paper documents and analyzes the evolution of three housing typologies within the context of Karachi: The Hindu *Ghar* (House in Urdu), the Colonial Bungalow and the Parsi *Khanay* (House in Persian), with respect to their response to the incorporation of indigenous social and environmental values and processes in the built form. Karachi, being a port city, has historically been the business center for the Hindu merchants and has been the colonial trading post in the 19th century. Both the Hindus and the Colonists have left an impact on the built form of the city, in terms of the evolution of certain housing typologies. The Parsis, a religious minority, absorbed different aspects of these impacts, and accommodated it in their house form.

The introverted Hindu *Ghar* is analyzed as an indigenous mixed-use development that evolved as a response to social, economic and climatic needs of the merchant class.

The extroverted Colonial bungalow is investigated as a hybrid built form that was introduced as a foreign element but was adopted by locals and eventually became part of the native landscape.

The Parsi *Khanay* is reviewed as an example of the adoption of the Colonial style bungalow, which was modified to address social needs of an introverted minority community. The value and prominence of these pre-independence housing typologies is reviewed for the contemporary built form landscape of Karachi.

In studying the evolution of these typologies lessons are drawn with respect to urban morphology, sense of aesthetics, climatic response, use of technology, respect for traditionalism versus modernism, and incorporation of natural elements. The indicators that have been outlined for this analysis are as follows:

1. The relationship of the house with the urban morphology in terms of plot, building, streetscape, density, land use, open/ built ratios.
2. The response of these designs to local climate.
3. The usage of global versus local technology, materials, crafts and skills.
4. The incorporation and preservation of natural habitats, flora and fauna.
5. The amalgamation of local social values and sense of aesthetics versus global imagery.

A case study methodology has been undertaken for this research based on semi-structured urban interviews and morphological documentation. The key findings point towards many elements used in the design of these housing typologies, which were physically and socially responsive and help in drawing principles, which can be incorporated in the design and teaching process of contemporary houses within the context of Karachi, to create forms which connect to the local. The intention is that students and professional develop this understanding and are able to differentiate between origins and adaptations of local and global components of house design in order to make informed design choices in the context of Karachi.

Keywords: House, housing typology, bungalow, *khanay*, *ghar*, Karachi