

**MULTI-COURT HOUSE OF OLD DHAKA**  
*A Study of Form and Context*

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This thesis is submitted to the Department of Architecture  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Masters of Architecture

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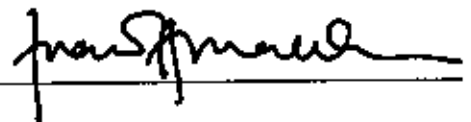
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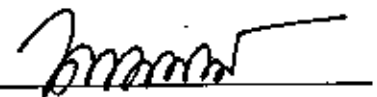
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*To my Mother*  
Your love and wisdom always inspires me...

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## SYNOPSIS

Since houseform has its own language entailing multifarious socio-cultural phenomena, a study on houseform becomes a tool to decipher the inherent taste as well as pastiche of its context. As Bengal has gone through different socio-political vicissitudes, its architecture more specifically the houseform becomes an evident of it. Albeit the social changes, there remain certain elements in domestic architecture that have perpetual meaning and identity. Courtyard is one such element that encompasses an area of multi-dimensional significance. In urban context, the courts have become more enclosed and constricted than its rural counterpart. With the change of physical context, changes are likely to occur also in the cultural milieu, and vice versa.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal is marked by the vigorous social changes caused by educational, commercial and administrative policies under the colonial rule. These also brought changes in the houseform. Many of the houses built during this period displayed a spatial arrangement around multiple number of courts. Most of these houses were located in the traditional mixed-use mahallas. These multi-court houses when looked closely appeared to have displayed a superficial European outlook in its facade but indigenous essence in its spatial arrangement. The study unfolded the results of the contextual forces and the long inherited tradition, reflective of the life style and values of the inhabitants in these buildings. The outcome ultimately led to the modern context of the houseform with the symbolic values of tradition remaining.

The study and analyses thereof are based on literature review and field survey. The survey documented thirteen case studies, all multi-court houses within the study period in Old Dhaka. The analyses of case studies are based on the arrangement of space, relationship between different spaces, relationship between different courts and rooms etc. The relationship explained in diagrams. In a bid to search the context and study the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of it systematically, the study is segmented into nine chapters and several sub-chapters. The initial three chapters establishes the theory part and the tools of analysis i.e. the elements that define culture and society. This is followed by a discussion of traditional houseform in Chapter Four as well as the urban houseform in Chapter Five. A comprehensive study in Chapter Six demonstrates the social, cultural, political and economic patterns and rise of different classes in the urban society of Bengal during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The study in Chapter Seven is based on the analysis of multi-court houses. The spatial analysis of multi-court houses in this chapter is based on the background study and study of the context in previous chapters, and the findings from the case studies that identify the influence of traditional and contextual components in the spatial arrangement. The case studies, compiled in Chapter Eight describe the physical arrangement of spaces.



# Chapter One

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## Introduction

## Chapter One INTRODUCTION



### 1.1 Context of the Study

Architecture, through ages, has been shaped by human need. Being a historic process, it leads from the past to the creation of modern movement. Throughout this passage, it envisages a number of causes and strands of ideas. The Indian sub-continent, more specifically Bengal, has been subjected to different phases of transformations as a result of socio-economic and political interventions. Therefore, it exemplifies a hybrid of styles and cultures. Moreover, tradition also plays an important role in formulating an architectural vocabulary of this region.

Dhaka, due to its centrality in the deltaic plains and proximity of waterways and land communication, flourished as the major city of this region. It served as the capital on various occasions, starting from the Mughal at the beginning of the 17th century. It continued to be a place of significance regarding trade, education and culture. It experienced different cultural and political influences and interventions in the last four centuries which have left their marks on the urban growth, settlement pattern and house form.

With the process of economic regeneration, the society as well as its architecture underwent a rapid change. The opulent class invested their wealth in land or large houses. Besides moderate scale permanent houses, the first generation urban houses, a good number of palatial living quarters - mansions and intricately decorated villas were built during this era. Another form of deep and narrow houses developed in high density commercial area. These took up European elements imported by the rulers in their outlook, but the spatial arrangement largely conformed to that of the indigenous society. Many of those houses were located in the then traditional mixed-use mahallas, many still survive against the wrath and neglect of all those decades.

Among other architectural edifices, these houses are evident of the architectural trend of that time - a monumental form expressing imperialism, huge floor area in the interior, articulate details and superb craftsmanship, yet spaces in human scale and familiar forms. Most of these houses contain courtyards either single or multiple in number which exemplifies the inherent traditional demand of life. Many of them are now either abandoned by original users or are in a dilapidated condition due to misuse, disuse and neglect. Due to primarily socio-economic reasons, such houses are no more built and remain as the testament of the socio-cultural background of a

certain class of people in a certain time of Bengal's history. They should be studied in order to find the social influences that shaped the physical form, as well as a particular pattern in spatial layout, which the present study is a part of.

The styles and transformations are evident specifically in the houseforms where socio-economic dimension in architecture and users' perspectives are very important. Houseforms reflect the prevailing socio-economic and political situation. Therefore, with the change of the society, houseform which embodies the taste and desire of its users also change. However, over the time, it retains some norms of spatial arrangement and the use of some elements remains deep-rooted. Court is one such central element in traditional Bengali house-form which retained its role pervading thousands of years. In almost all societies, existence of court can be found, which may fulfill different purposes in different contexts. In traditional Bengali houses, court plays the multi-purpose role of a transitory space, a religious space, an entertainment place, a climate modifier and so on. Traditional rural courts have become more enclosed and constricted in size in urban areas and assumed further roles of domain dividers.

Urban houses have largely been formed with single identifiable court surrounded by most other rooms. However, the large and long houses of late 19th and early 20th century have been an exception which had multiple courts because of the size and shape of the plot. The large houses with more than one courts are the product of a certain period and class of people who became society elite by virtue of their wealth and association. Houses built by them took up European elements imported by the rulers in their outer facade, but the spatial arrangement largely conformed to that of the indigenous houses. These houses were monumental in appearance, yet maintained a human scale in spatial arrangement. They used the courts to their fullest advantage. Multi-court houses were located in the then traditional mixed-use mahallas, many still survive, many are now abandoned by original users and are in a dilapidated condition due to the lack of proper maintenance.

## **1.2 Necessity and Scope of the Present Research**

Such houses are not built anymore these days and have not properly studied from architectural point of view. A few studies were done on Bengali urban house form; none specifically focused either on multi-court houses or on the extended role of the court. Limited studies by historians, sociologists and such other experts have been done on the socio-cultural, economic and political situation of the particular period when these houses were built. However, the link between the particular house-form

and their socio-cultural and economic context has never been established. Another interesting phenomenon of these houses which has not been researched into is their indigenous arrangement masked by an European appearance. Identifying these areas of potential research, this study proposes to deal with the form of the multi-court houses of Old Dhaka.

This study of the multi-court houses built during the late 19th and early 20th century attempts to determine the form and spatial arrangement of residential buildings of that period. It also establishes the link between the socio-cultural aspects and the house form. Additionally, the study evaluates the role of court in traditional Bengali houseform. All these findings would add to the existing knowledge on the subject, and would provide the basis for further related studies.

The above buildings deserve more attention and study, firstly as evidence of the evolution of local architecture and secondly as good architectural examples by their own merit. 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 which they deserve. It will also help to establish the contribution of socio-economic factors in the determination of house form. Thus it would establish a socio-economic background as a process of evolution and will contribute to the study of Bengali urban house form

### **1.3 Objectives**

The study aims to achieve the following objectives,

- a. To establish through study and analysis the form of multi-court houses of Old Dhaka built during the late 19th and early 20th century.
- b. To study and analyze various roles that courts play in such houses.
- c. To study the socio-cultural context of such houses and their influence on the particular form.

### **1.4 Methodology**

The study and analysis of form is based on literature review, field survey and documentation. Field survey primarily includes the identification and familiarization with the areas causing multi-court houses and spot survey. Spot survey consists of identification and selection of buildings with more than one courts built during the late 19th and early 20th century, observation of different spaces in the house, spatial arrangement of court-houses and their use-pattern.

The study prepares drawings consisting of plans and sections of some selected buildings. It also makes sketches of the courts to show their scale and proportion and the relationship with the surroundings. Representing the type the documentation is done from both primary and secondary sources. This attempts to establish the house form and factors that led to multiple number of courts in a single house.

The analysis of the socio-cultural context of multi-court houses includes a study of Bengali urban society in the late 19th and early 20th century with particular reference to Dhaka. This part of the study analyzes socio-cultural, economic and political context. It is based on published literature, archive documents, collections etc. Relations between society and space, and the role of culture in houseform has also been studied from secondary sources.

### **1.5 Composition of the Thesis**

Different chapters are arranged in a bid to establish the result from different findings. Former chapters are based on established theories and concepts as to the society and culture, and their relationship with houseform etc. Later it establishes the traditional types and styles of houseform, the meanings of spaces, roles of courtyard even in a changed milieu. Case studies are discussed in chapter eight which entails description of the houses. These are associated with different floor plans, sketches of the courts and diagrams showing the relationship between different spaces. On the basis of these description and studies, the analysis has been done in chapter seven. Chapter Seven relates the socio-cultural aspects of multi-court houses with their subsequent physical form. It deals with the findings from the cases and established norms of the traditional houses.

## Chapter Two

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### **Relations Between Society and Space**

## **Chapter Two**

# **RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIETY AND SPACE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The social structure reveals the social system which is based on the behaviour pattern, way of interaction with each other, ways of thinking etc. All these non-physical entities are incorporated in a physical boundary of space. Society, therefore, as exhibits the predominant role in the formation of settlement, also retains the preponderance in the arrangement of space. In fact, the formulation of space and its physical manipulation is a derivative of social demand. The spatial layout convenes both the physical and non-physical into a common identity.

### **2.2 Idea of a Society**

Society can be defined as a group of people occupying a specific locality who are dependent on each other for survival and who share a common culture (Haviland, 1970, p.9). Society therefore, is an extended organization of interdependent groups of people with the social structure expressed in terms of their attitude and behavior pattern towards each other. Social formation is primarily conditioned by a group of people in a common locality with common interest and taste which is engendered by the interaction among them (Mojumder & Haque, 1996). Social interaction or lack of it is primarily conditioned by whether there exists an economic, political or ideological sphere of interest in common among the residents (Gehl, 1987).

### **2.3 Physical Dimension of a Society**

Society within its own culture is divided into sub-cultures or social stratification. A system of social stratification is seen as inhibiting social conflict between individuals and groups as it sets some norms and goals within individual group and interlinks one group with another with the social interest. According to some anthropologists social inequality is the price of social stability. Social stratification results from the unequal distribution of goods and services within a society. The distinction depends on the cultural values, the organisation of production and the access and opportunity of individuals and groups to it within a society (Nanda, 1991, p. 321).

The two basic forms of social stratification are class and caste. In a class system, the different strata (classes) are not separated from one another. Social mobility is possible in this system as an individual on his own attempt and interest can be uplifted to an upper class. In contrast to this, a caste system is based on birth. In other words, it

is hereditary, where an individual of his parents' caste cannot move to another caste (Nanda, 1991, p.312). Social mobility in the caste system is a group rather than an individual effort. A caste that has achieved a certain amount of economic success might try to raise its prestige by adopting the customs of a higher caste group and claiming a new rank itself (Nanda, 1991, p. 316). This attempt to be uplifted is evident in the class system even more than in the caste system. The commonly identified tools in this regard are marriage, education, economic gain and imitation or adoption of elements. For the last tool, a specific culture supposedly influential is taken to be ideal and its elements both physical and non-physical penetrates through imitation into the second culture.

#### **2.4 Environment as a Modulator of Space**

Space is experienced as the three dimensional extension of the world which is around us - the intervals, relationship and distance between people and people, people and things and things and things, and space is at the heart of the built environment. Spatial organization is, in fact, a more fundamental aspect of the designed environment than shape, materials and the like (Rapoport, 1977).

While space organisation does express meaning and has communicative and symbolic properties, meaning of space is frequently expressed through signs, materials, colours, forms, landscaping and the like - i.e. through the eikonic aspects of built environment (Rapoport, 1977, p.11). Space organisation is therefore, the key element and the most useful for comparing environments and rules of organisation. In fact, rules guiding the environment are the products of,

1. organisation of time
2. organisation of communication
3. meaning of space, and
4. organisation of space (Rapoport, 1977).

All these are systematically related to culture. The first rule refers to large-scale cognitive structuring of time such as linear flow vs. cyclic time, future orientation vs. past orientation, how time is valued etc. The second relates to the human interaction relating each other within the society. Meaning of space as mentioned earlier relates more to the non-physical images whereas the organisation of space is the physical outcome which is also a result of consequent environment. All man-made environments are designed in the same sense that they embody human decisions and choices and specific ways of resolving many conflicts implicit in all decision making.



Many apparently mundane activities are the most important in their impact on the built environment (Rapoport, 1977).

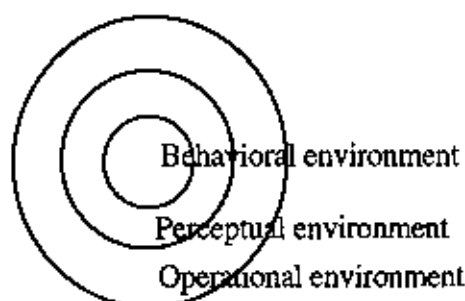


Fig. 2.1 Levels of Environment ( Rapoport, 1977, p 13 )

The organization of environment is the result of the application of sets of rules which reflect differing concepts of environmental quality. The image is composed on facts and values. In fact, the symbolic object through value object and use object leads to the concrete object which creates an environment. Image of environment is related with perception which can be latent or manifested. Environmental perception involves the present stimulus information, present context information as well as stored stimulus information. The concept helps explain how a few basic activities, cognigence and socio-cultural forces can result a particular solution for a particular setting.

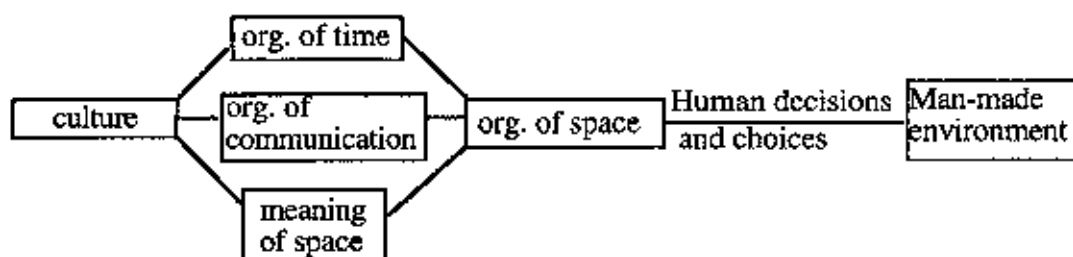


Fig. 2.2 Formation of Man-Made Environment (Author, after Rapoport, 1977)

What may be commonly termed style can be defined as a system of cosistent choices based on the rules and culture of a group. Design can be seen as a choice process, a process of selection and elimination from among a set of alternatives. Both the selection and elimination of alternatives is based on the application of certain crieria which may be explicit, but are commonly implicit and unstated, so that many alternatives are never considered at all being as it were, eliminated through major cultural constraints (Rapoport, 1977). Perception of environment deals with how information is gathered and obtained, cognition with how it is organised and preference deals with how it is ranked and evaluated.

## 2.5 Society as a Modulator of Space

Social structure and spatial structure, one abstract and another material entity are rationally interrelated. But society can only have lawful relations to space if it already possesses its own intrinsic spatial dimension. Likewise, space can only be lawfully related to society if it can carry those social dimensions in its very form. The interrelationship can be recognised in a way that society exists in space. But it does more than simply exist in space. 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 on a definite pattern. In both senses a society acquires a definite and recognisable spatial order* (Hillier & Hanson, 1990, p. 27).

Spatial order is one of the most striking means by which we recognize the existence of the cultural differences between one social formation and another. That is, 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. About this Hillier & Hanson (1990) say *we read space and anticipate a lifestyle.*

Among people psychological, social and cultural characteristics are often expressed in spatial terms as, for example, the separation of various homogenous groups in localities (Rapoport, 1977). From the past to the present, society plays the basic role in the formation of a settlement. It was the core element in the form of settlement. The primary need of shelter and its security and protection against wild nature necessitated the primitive man to live in groups. This gave rise to the basic fabrication or the idea of a society. The formation of groups are evident of different society and culture. Though the purpose of group formation was same all over the world, the way men protected themselves and managed to be grouped together varied.

The history of the Indian sub-continent, specially Bengal, indicates a growth pattern in a society which is reciprocal and evident of social interaction. Even in the Vedic period, villages were formed as collection of cluster of huts which enhanced the social grouping and protection against the wild life of the surrounding forests. These huts were arranged in a beehive pattern, some of them around a courtyard. This collection

of huts reveals the inception of social grouping known as grama - a unit of society and its physical form. Thus the form of a society took shape. Even in the present days, the physical organization of villages of Bengal, barred the topographical constraints resembles those of the Vedic villages to some extent. The society has developed and consolidated through a process of trial and error from generation to generation to take a particular shape, but the basic image inherent in its culture remains constant over the time.

Also in the urban context, social formation guides its physical pattern. Under the Mughal, when Dhaka became the capital city, the development took place along the canals and rivers with constellation of some chawks and mahallas. Chawks were identified as urban pockets of neighbourhood meeting places surrounded by clusters of houses or shops. Mahallas were the clusters of houses with and around the chawk or along major commercial streets. Thus a linear street pattern either along with or through specific mahallas was generated. This city, through its phases of development, shows a growth and settlement pattern influenced by the societal generation.

## **2.6 Summary**

Society is an organisation of groups of people unified by some common goals and interest. Environment from its very basic behavioural level to the social level modulates the space. Space in turn is shaped by society. Society from its very characteristics retains the basis in forming the space, where it physically exists. Space ostensibly a 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.

Therefore, to completely decipher the system of a society it is important to have a clear understanding of the cultural phenomena within it. The following chapter deals with the basics of culture to have a clear understanding of its implication on houseform.

## **Chapter Three**

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### **Influence of Socio-Cultural Aspects on Houseform**

## Chapter 3

# INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS ON HOUSE FORM

### 3.1 Introduction

House is considered to be the basic physical element in the formation of a society and culture. On the other hand, culture is the unequivocal language of mankind within which his behaviour pattern, activities etc. are deeply engrossed. The specific characteristics of a culture - the accepted ways of doing things, the socially unacceptable ways and the implicit ideals - need to be considered since they affect the housing and settlement form (Rapoport, 1969, p.47). Therefore, before analysing the intrinsic qualities of houseform, it is inevitable to identify the extent to which culture influences the consequent form. Added to it, a study is also necessary to comprehend the specific forces that lie in culture to shape the houseform.

### 3.2 Definition of a Culture

Ralph Linton in his book *The Cultural Background of Personality* (quoted from Ember & Ember, 1994) refers to culture as the way of life of any society, not simply to those parts of this way which the society regards as higher or more desirable. Thus he rejects the common belief about culture which refers only to playing music or involvement in literature etc. as he says, *every society has a culture, no matter how simple this culture may be, and every human being is cultured, in the sense of participating in some culture or other. Culture, then refers to innumerable aspects of life.*

Some anthropologists think of culture as the rules or ideas behind behavior. Most anthropologists think of culture as including the learned behaviors as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population (Ember & Ember, 1994, p. 161). Some defining components of culture are that it is commonly shared and is learned through a process.

#### 3.2.1 Identity and Character of a Culture

Some assumptions are frequently made about culture. First, culture is generally **adaptive** to the particular conditions of its physical and social environment. What may be adaptive in one environment may not be adaptive in another. Different societies may choose different means of adjusting. The customs of a society that enhance survival and reproductive chances are adaptive and are likely to persist. This means culture is context-specific guided by its adjustment with the physical environment as well as the social environment.

Second, culture is mostly **integrated**, in that the elements or traits that make up the culture are mostly adjusted to or consistent with one another (Ember & Ember, 1994, p.172). An element in a culture, when in its existence, tries to be all through coherent without creating maladaptivism. For example, when a culture maintains a codified rule and the concept of privacy for its female, it must be replicated in its every form, in the behaviour pattern of the people, their manners and attitude and even in the physical form, i.e. in the builtform.

Third, culture is subjected to **change** which may be an out come of adaptation and adjustment. The impetus for change may come from within the society or from outside the society. A strong existence of external forces may expedite the change or it can act by both of them. An external force, i.e. an external culture may instigate the people in a definite cultural boundary to react or response to that. This in turn creates an internal force making people change their own culture. In fact, culture is changing because of it's receptive quality.

A culture may tend to be integrated for psychological reasons. The traits of a culture - attitudes, values, ideals, and rules for behavior - are stored, after all, in the brains of individuals. Research in social psychology suggests that people tend to modify beliefs or behaviors that are not cognitively or conceptually consistent with other information. Consistency or integration of culture traits may also be produced by less conscious psychological processes (Ember & Ember, 1994, p.170). Again, just as the culture represents an array of adjustment to the physical environment and to the biological demands, it may also represent an adjustment to the social environment. Ember & Ember (1994) remark that a given custom represents one society's adaptation to its environment; it does not represent all possible adaptations. Different societies may choose different means and degrees of adjusting to the same situation.

Besides adaptation, another criterion lies in culture which the anthropologists identify as diffusion. A society may acquire new cultural elements from another society. The process by which cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group is called **diffusion**. Several patterns of diffusion may be identified; e.g. diffusion by direct contact, in which elements of a culture are first taken up by neighbouring societies and then gradually spread farther and farther afield; diffusion by intermediate contact, in which third parties, frequently traders, carry a cultural trait from the society originating it to another group; and stimulus diffusion, in which knowledge of a trait belonging to another culture stimulates the invention or development of a local equivalent (Ember & Ember, 1994,

p. 466). According to Ember & Ember, cultural diffusion is a selective and gradual process, not an automatic one. A society accepting an alien cultural trait is likely to adapt it in a way that effectively harmonises it with the society's own culture and tradition. He further cites the selective acceptance by the Muslims where the diffusion or acceptance depends on the compatibility with the Quoran. The practices of drinking, gambling etc. prohibited in Quoran usually cease to get diffused into Muslim cultures.

### 3.2.2 Different Components of Culture

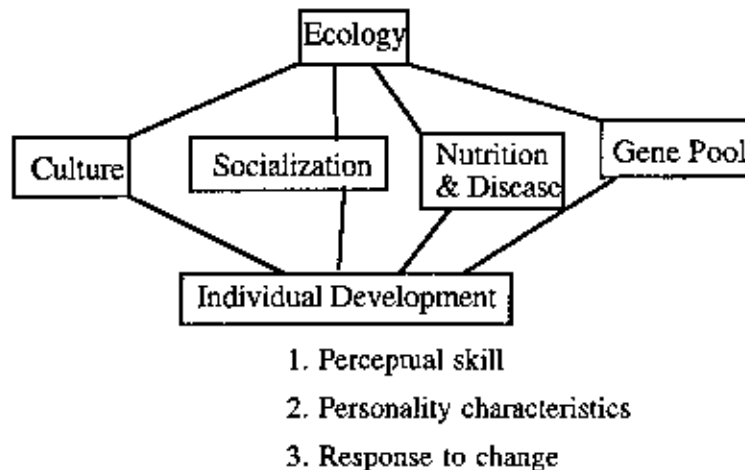


Fig. 3.1 Individual Development in its Relationship to Ecological Factors (Source: Nanda, 1991, p 89).

Fig. 3.1 illustrates the relationship between ecology, culture, socialization and individual perceptual and cognitive skills. It suggests that the environment is the basic factor in human existence. Culture and child rearing practices (socialisation) are ways in which human adapt their environment. The relationship between the environment and culture are not one way. Though environment affects culture, yet culture is reciprocally strong to act on the environment. The ways in which men live all have an impact on nature (Nanda, 1991, p.162).

An economic system is the part of a socio-cultural system that deals with the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services within a particular society. It deals with the relationship of things to people and within the people one another in the process of producing, distributing and consuming goods. One interrelationship between economy and culture is that the later defines or shapes the ends sought by individuals and the means of achieving those ends. Society and economy are interdependent in many other ways too. The ways in which production is

organised have consequences for many social institutions like the family, (possession, obedience etc.) and for the political system. Conversely different types of political systems have effects on the modes of production and distribution of goods. In the pre-industrial societies and among the peasants, it is often difficult to separate the economic system from the rest of culture where it is the primary regulator of the society. Economy is embedded in the total social process, cultural pattern and all other spheres of life (Nanda, 1991, p.197).

### **3.3 Society and Culture as a Modulator of Physical Form**

Culture and its environment is reciprocal. Cultural ecology seeks to understand this relationship so as to realise how a particular culture trait may be adaptive in its environment. A particular culture trait in an environment becomes adaptive only when it becomes coherent with the prerequisites for survival. Environment, both social and physical, affects the development of culture traits as individuals and group behave differently in different situations resulting into different degrees of success for survival (Ember & Ember, 1994, p.183).

The influence of cultural traits on a society's physical form is not incomprehensible. Since a society and its members respond according to their own culture, their subsequent behaviour is expressed in its physical environment. For example, a society with liberal thoughts and ideas, with a less restricted concept about privacy may arrange its physical form with mere demarcation of space. On the other hand, a more codified society may exhibit distinctly defined spaces for individual purposes without interrupting each other.

### **3.4 Concept of a House**

House or dwelling is a concept of both activities like living and residing and a place or structure to contain such activities. Thus it encompasses the manifold cultural and material aspects of domestic habitation. Though a house commonly implies the basic desire for a protective enclosure, it contains the multifarious activities of life which go beyond a mere physical connotation of house.

The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu (Rapoport, 1969, p.46). The provision of a shelter is a passive or secondary function of a house. The main purpose of it is to create an environment best suited to the way of life of the people. Thus a house can be



considered as a social unit of space contributing to the formation of the society and the neighbourhood. For, a single house consists of a family, cluster of houses creates a group or community, a number of clusters create a larger community. In fact building a community is the first step towards the burgeoning of a society. Therefore, a larger community may be identified with its social entity which is created through similar value factors to bind the society members. The inception of generating these factors within each member starts from the house. It creates the basic conception and identification of a particular society. Therefore, from the point of view both physical and non-physical, house is the basic social unit of space.

House form is the result of a continuous process of trial and error, adjustment and adaptation. This process leads to a particular shape and form to be accepted and used by the society while rejecting others. House-forms are remodeled, adapted and their survival upto the present becomes a record of responsiveness to altering life styles and societies in change (Oliver, 1987). In many cases the dwelling is not permanent, the structure is dismantled or demolished to be reassembled on a different site but in the similar form. In such cases it is the idea of the house form that persists, expressed in the continuity of form, layout, structure and use. Therefore, the concept of a house is perpetual that satisfies the socio-cultural and physical needs of a particular society.

There are many other factors that can affect the nature of house such as the availability of certain materials, knowledge of building construction, varying kinds of climate, topography, orientation etc. But all these external forces are mingled with the inherent demand of the society. In fact, it is culture and society which modifies the environment and consequent form. Rapoport (1969) draws clear evidence that neither climate or economy nor the availability of material guide the major character of a house form. In the similar climatic condition, there develop different patterns of houses as is the case with Greece, where both the court form and Megaron form were found (Rapoport, 1969, p.19). Economy has also the same degree of influence on houseform. In Annam, as soon as a peasant has money, he builds a beautiful house which is economically beyond his reach (Rapoport, 1969, p. 34). The factor that instigates him is his attitude towards building a house, not his economic condition. Albeit, these factors have influence on houseform which is indirect. In fact the influences lie in the way in which these factors affect the culture. Therefore, the physical forces are basically the modifier of houseform, whereas the socio-cultural forces are modulator having direct influence on houseform.

### 3.4.1 Socio-Cultural Forces on House Form

Gottfried Semper was probably the first to demonstrate the study of social relationships as a methodology in architectural investigation. He in his article *The Four Elements of Architecture* infers that the evolution of human settlements took place around four basic elements - the hearth, the roof, the enclosure and the mound. These elements, while remaining the determinants have changed in their relative arrangements according to the type of human societies, influence of climate, natural surroundings and social set up.

Among these, hearth is the strongest unifying element around which people assembled first. A religious concept also developed centering this. All these led to a social phenomenon, a formation of social life. Around the hearth the first groups assembled; around it the first alliances formed; around it the first rude religious concepts were put into the customs of a cult. Throughout all phases of society the hearth formed that sacred focus around which the whole took order and shape. Thus it represents the basic social nucleus what Gottfried Semper calls - a germ of civilization. Semper also emphasises that this is also a moral element of architecture, and around this the other three elements were grouped. In his manner of investigation, the beginning is a non-spatial, social-significance-bestowing component, from which architectural elements stem logically.

Semper ultimately concludes the culmination of the above into an architectural form - a house. Rapoport (1969) also has a similar notion as to him house is an institution which possesses a complex set of purposes both socially and physically. Therefore, the form of a house is not the result of physical factors or any such other single factor. It is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors seen in their broadest terms. Each culture has different expectations of its dwellings, and makes demand accordingly on them. These expectations and demands are related to its social structure and to the ways in which its members organize their daily lives. So the internal plans of dwellings and their space use can be indicative of dissimilar value systems (Oliver, 1987, p.128).

The spatial environment of a house is the result of many socio-cultural forces. Such forces include:

- family and clan structure
- social organization
- way of gaining a livelihood
- social relations between individuals

- religious beliefs etc.

Houseform is greatly influenced by the pattern of the family. The neo-local residence where only a single family resides is different from the spatial requirements to that of a patrio-local residence (where son's family lives with their parents). More to say, a joint type extended family must have a different set up of spatial arrangement from that of a nuclear family. In Bangladesh, the well off families mostly in the rural set up support the joint family pattern where extension of family physically takes place through the addition of rooms and courts.

Houses in villages and towns express the fact that societies share some generally accepted norms, goals and values. The form of primitive and vernacular houses are less the result of individual desires than of the aims and desire of unified group for an ideal environment. Social relation between individuals identifies the type of house, either restricted or open. A common neighbourhood society develops the pattern of interaction among them, which is enhanced in the form of houses; for a passive interaction, seeing, it demands houses to be visible from one another having openings face to face; or for a direct interaction, chatting or gossiping, common spaces between buildings are inevitable. Houseform is, again reflective of the relative position and relationship among the family members as Rapoport mentions the relative position of women in the family to be one of the important factors. This is also related with privacy, which is another factor generating a particular pattern or form. In Egypt, men and women always maintain a separation, for the rich it is exhibited in the separate houses, for the poor it is the separation of corners in the same room. Moreover, in the Islamic culture, the high degree of privacy (*purdah*) for the women necessitates the harem, or women's area.

Religion affects the form, plan spatial arrangements and orientation of the house, and may be the influence which leads to the different shape of the house. For example, in Africa the distribution of round and rectangular houses is related to the distribution of religion; among the Zulu, round houses are found where orientation is unimportant in the religious ideology. In contrast to this the houses of Trano of Madagascar is oriented through strict axes and astronomical rules (Rapoport, 1969, p. 41). Traditional Nepalese houses bear a strong evidence of religious influence. From the religious point of view, the kitchen is the most sacred part of the house and is located on the topmost floor of the house above which no further addition of floor is allowed.

In general, members of a particular family have both the capacity and desire to shape their own environment and to relate it to other members of the society. They

traditionally own the adaptability, competence and sensibility to build their houses with regard to land, climate, necessity and resources available. Embodying the values and needs that are special to them, they have built houses in ways that have often achieved, in their integrity and authenticity, beauty of form and harmony of design (Oliver, 1990, p. 11).

### **3.4.2 Physical Forces on Houseform**

Form in turn is also influenced or modified by physical factors like, topography, climate, availability of material, methods of construction and technology, economy etc. But all these are elements to modify the social forces to affect the houseform. These forces thus indirectly influence the houseform.

Topography determines the variation in houseform which is exemplified in the houses of plain land and hilly region. There lies more a functional requirement relating to the question of survival in a particular environment.

Climate modulates the houses in different region; the impact of climate depends on its forcefulness and severity. Wide range of climatic variation shows strong difference between houseforms. The most common examples are the Igloo of North America, mud and stone houses on the desert areas and the humid tropics with their solution of raised floor, wide eaves etc. (Rapoport, 1969, p.85). Moreover, it guides the orientation, structure, spatial layout and material best suited to it.

Availability of material is a very common factor to guide the form. This also relates to the construction technique. This is evident in the Igloos, or the houses of African Bushman. In fact for every context, it can be concluded that a particular form despite its spatial arrangement expresses the local material in its disposition.

The force of economy on houseform is needless to say as it is obvious in every culture. It has always been observed that the same culture adopts different norms due to its change in economic condition. It affects the availability of material, concept of privacy in its physical layout. As discussed earlier about the Egyptian house, the difference in houseform between rich and poor is clear.

### **3.5 Defining Elements of a Court**

Courtyard in a house can be defined as a central open to sky space in a house around which rooms are arranged and many domestic activities take place. Being the focus of

the spatial arrangement, it encompasses all social and household activities. A court, therefore, has multifarious purposes; physically it creates a common open to sky space among the covered habitable spaces and activities and provides environmental comfort within it. Socially it also plays the central role engendering the interactions and social activities. Courts are visible in many cultures in many forms. Even in the past, settlement of the primitive men took shape around the court.

Functional role of courtyard may vary from culture to culture. In some cultures, it is a very active place incorporating all household activities. In some other context, court may hold a lower degree of activities within it. Its environmental role also changes from climate to climate. Some climate adopts court as a thermal modifier, some may stress on lighting or ventilation advantages. Whatever the degree of utility or usability is, it is needless to underscore the tremendous impact it creates on the society and culture.

### **3.6 Summary**

The basic characteristics of culture provides us with some rational guidelines for the search of a houseform. Since a house does not represent only the purpose of shelter, many cultural aspects are embedded in it. Two distinct forces guide in formulating the house, one the socio-cultural or the abstract and another the physical or non-abstract. Of them, the physical forces are secondary as they are modulated by the socio-cultural forces. Therefore, in the formation of a house, the abstract entity is pre-dominant. A thorough study of traditional houseform in the following chapter explicates this rules of forces.

## Chapter Four

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### **Traditional Bengali House**

## **Chapter Four**

### **TRADITIONAL BENGALI HOUSE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

*Those aspects of cultural behaviour, custom ritual, or use of artifacts which have been inherited from former generations are considered to be traditional. A traditional society is one which depends on the authority of its traditions to affirm present thought and actions (Oliver, 1997).*

Domestic space is a direct outcome of activities associated with culturally defined norms and codes. In Bengal, both the rural and urban houses are reflective of these cultural norms. More specifically, the rural houseform is a direct interpretation of socio-cultural demands. The form can also be considered as the social unit of space. Any particular settlement pattern is evolved from the grouping of such social units. Therefore, houseforms and their grouping reveal the generation of a society. The traditional rural settlement sets the precedence of urban locality. Therefore, it is important to have an understanding of the traditional way of living of the rural people.

#### **4.2 Aspects of Houseform**

##### **4.2.1 Spatial Arrangement**

The rural society of Bangladesh lives primarily on agriculture which shapes their way of life and outlook. Rural settlement and built forms are influenced by the proximity to agricultural land and riverine communication. Settlements are formed like islands on elevated lands in the middle of the agricultural fields. Since most of the rural areas are located in flood-prone zones, the domestic land has to be elevated above the flood plains. This also demarcates the homestead boundary within the main agricultural land. This elevated land for retaining the house is traditionally known as *vita*, meaning the plinth or better compared with a podium for containing the total structure of the houseform. Usually large excavation is done around the *vita* for its formation, which also creates ponds like depressions. Later, these depressions are incorporated with the total set up of the house.

A rural house is basically a collection of huts around an inner courtyard or *uthan*. The courtyard is both the focus of the spatial arrangement with domestic activities and family life. Therefore, the court remains largely in the private domain. Being an inner open space, the courtyard is connected with other activity spaces like the outside

formal space (public domain), backyards for cattle and ponds etc. The built-forms are loosely spaced, usually single room opening on the court. Among them the outhouse or *Baithak khana/Bangla ghar* is the only accessible from outside.

The access corridor, usually indirect for privacy reason, leads to the inner court. On the other hand, access for the male and outsiders is through the *bangla ghar*. Thus *bangla ghar* and the outer courtyard remains in the formal and public domain. The inner courtyard serves the private and family purposes incorporating rooms for residing and other regular house-hold activity spaces. With the expansion of the family and an increase in the requirements of household more structures are added around the court.

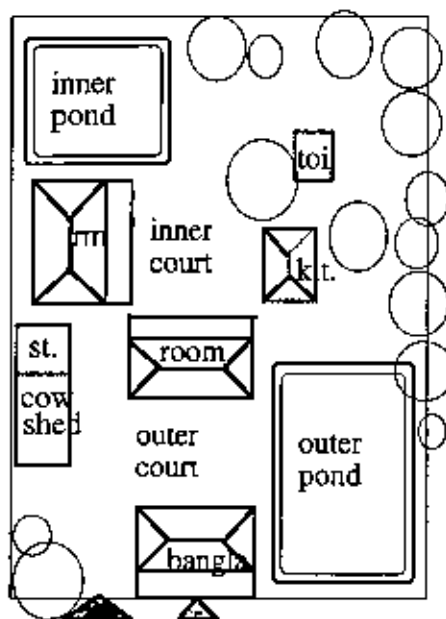


Fig. 4.1 Layout of a Typical Rural House ( Source: Imamuddin, 1984, p. 2.11)

Thus basic arrangement of a Bengali house is based on inner and outer division of space. In the outer domain, there is a yard or outer court fronting the *bangla ghar* or *baithak khana, katchari ghar* (drawing room and office room), an outer pond, toilet for male and cattle shed. The *bangla ghar* is placed on the external periphery, separated from the house-core indicative of the need of privacy of the inner rooms (Ghosh, 1988, p. 81). Sometimes there is also a small room in the corner of the outer court used as a guest accommodation or as a study for children. Haq (1994, p. 65) draws a detailed sketch of the *katchari ghar* comparing it with the western sense of reception structure where there are furniture like benches, chairs and sometimes a wooden *chouki*.



The inner court is surrounded by individual rooms or huts for living with a verandah opening towards the court. It also incorporates the kitchen beyond which there may be an inner pond, a well or tube-well and toilet for female. Larger households may have a separate hut for grain and other storage. In all cases both male and female, toilets are distantly located. In a Hindu house there is usually another hut around the inner court for housing the deity and a *tulshi mandap* which is open to sky.

The owner's hut is given the best and the most important location which is usually a northern structure facing the south. In some cases, two rooms on one side are made with a larger courtyard. The house form is sometimes extended through addition of smaller courtyards centering some other huts. The larger the family, the larger the size of the courtyard and more the number is. Wealth of the owner is another important factor influencing the number of huts in a homestead. If a homestead has a large number of huts then there may be more courtyards or a bigger one (Mallick, 1987, p. 21, 22).

#### **4.2.2 Form, Material and Structure**

The Bengali huts are rectangular in shape with a pitched roof. The most common shape is termed as *Bangla chala*; derived from the use of roofing material. A bent, curvilinear roof with projecting eaves is created due to the character of bamboo from which it is constructed. This is covered with non-durable materials like hay, golpata etc. The form ultimately looks like 'an upturned boat' (Haq, 1994, p. 62). This shape of this *bangla chala* has been replicated in many builtforms with a permanent material. Andreas Volwahren identifies it as *a type of roof which gave the impression that all its planes were curved. The ridges and the eaves were upturned; also the bamboo rafters placed perpendicular to the ridge were curved* (quoted from Haq, 1994).

However, the roof consists of two or four pitched plains. According to the capability of the households, its walls are made with jute straw, mud, bamboo, wood or C. I. sheet plain or corrugated. Floors with brick or mud, roof with straw, hemp, golpata or metal sheets. The entire layout is very loosely spaced and spontaneously merged with the landscape such as ponds, trees on the boundaries and the huts. The technical knowledge for making a structure requires only the basic knowledge of post and lintel system. This is what Haq (1994) states as the accumulated wisdom which brings the real beauty of a structure. He has rightly remarked about the planning process which is natural and reflective of the rural way of life.

### 4.3 Socio-Physical Arrangement of Space

The traditional house form is a culmination of a process which is generated from the life-style of people. The form, character and meaning of a traditional house design are transmitted from generation to generation which set forth certain rules of organisation and pattern (Imamuddin, 1982). Creating a platform or mound to retain the house form is ostensibly an expression of functional requirement as to protect against flood. But inadvertently it sets forth some social norms. The platform qualifies a sense of place and identifies the owner's place within the society (Haq, 1992, p.113).

Basically a rural house is divided into front and back. The division sometimes is based upon the notion of the privacy of spaces; sometimes function, climate and orientation also influence the notion. Whatever the catalyst is, cultural demand plays the vital role since outer house and inner house refers to the public and private part of the house.

The main access to the house is near the Bangla ghar. In fact, Bangla ghar is for receiving and entertaining the outsiders and becomes a formal entry. The location of the informal entry is interesting as it leads inside indirectly enhancing the privacy of the inner part. A strong resemblance is found with its arrangement and sequence to those in the vedic huts (Brown, 1972). The spatial arrangement for access to the vedic huts were indirect which is still found in the traditional rural houses. The main access is located at the outer part or in the road front irrespective of their climate location.

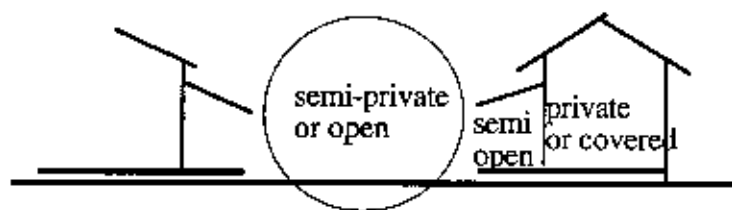


Fig. 4.2 Transition of Space within the House

The spatial progression is revealed in two ways. First, the progression from outside to the inner part. This starts from the street which through the outhouse leads to the inner court. This exhibits a sequential arrangement from public through semi-public to the private domain. The second refers to the inner part where transition of space is found from an open to sky courtyard to a covered room. Veranda plays the role of transition space being a semi-open space. Within the private domain, this sequence

also express the transition from a less private space (court) to a private space (room) where transition space of veranda remains as semi-private.

Being a private space, the inner house plays the role of the informal part of the house. Moreover, a strong demarcation between male and female domain can be felt in a Bengali house. Thus division acts like a socio-cultural code or custom which confines female within the boundaries of the house. The privacy rule apply not to the family and non-family, rather it is applied on male and female distinction (Imamuddin, 1982).

Religious beliefs also exert influence in certain aspects of the house form. Muslim house structures are normally laid out following the cardinal direction of the Quibla (i.e. the Kaaba) for prayer. This direction also determines the orientation of sleeping and location of toilet facilities (Muktadir & Hassan, 1985).

Since women are confined in the inner part of the house, all female dominated household activities like child caring, cooking are taken place in that part. The inner courtyard retains all social activities including social interaction among the female members of different families. Haq (1992, p. 65) describes the courtyard in an interesting way where he draws the picture of an utilitarian and multi-used space. *Under the open sky, every bit of uthan is usable space. The quadrant has many purposes; it is the place to dry clothes or crops, a play arena for children, a location for elders to converse, an arena for story telling or musical events, and a site for ceremonies marking birth, marriage or death. It is also the ring where petty family quarrels occurs and where there solution is arbitrated. The central courtyard is the element which successfully establishes and enriches human relationship.*

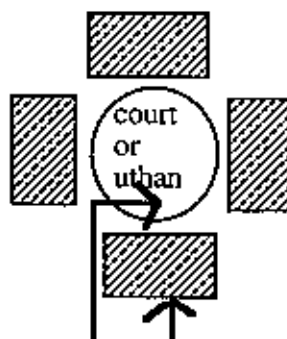


Fig. 4.3 Concept of Arrangement of Spaces around a Court

Therefore, from the socio-cultural and behavioral pattern, the courtyard becomes the center of the spatial arrangement containing the inner core of the house. The inner core becomes a highly protected and revered space. Thus the concept of privacy is

interpreted into its physical demand which is embodied in a courtyard relating to necessary activity spaces. The filtration of space is also guided by the degree of privacy needed.

#### **4.4 Social Meaning of Space**

The social meaning and relative position of activity spaces in a traditional Bengali rural house remained constant over the time. The house consists of the members of an extended family living together. The traditionally known house or 'bari' is more a social entity than a physical one. Bari delineates the idea of a joint family whereas the individual huts represent separate households. Therefore, the vita becomes the social identity not only of the builder, but also of his clan. Therefore the inheritors prefer to cling to their forefather's vita even if they have the means of making another one.

The rural houseform has taken a particular shape through a continuous process of adjustment (Rapoport, 1969). This process took many generations to set some particular pattern or image of arrangement which is an unconscious process (Alexander, 1964). Therefore, the arrangement of huts around the central courtyard implies a deep-rooted social meaning. It acts as a strong unifying element among the members, creating a common platform for their all socio-cultural interactions.

Besides these, the spaces are the outcome of some cultural notions such as, privacy, distinction between male and female, religious beliefs, formal and informal interactions etc. which are described in the following sub-sectors.

##### **4.4.1 Conceptual Image**

The concept of a traditional Bengali house lies in the age-old picture of *a storehouse full of rice, a pond full of fish, and a house full of relatives*. This gives a simple and clear approach of life. Haq (1994, p. 64) found this simple attitude of people towards life to be associated with an agriculture based society with their religious consciousness and peace-loving nature. All of these lead to a specific type of architectural layout.

Conceptually 'bari' is a social entity containing a sense of belonging. Therefore, a member of the family always have a poignancy for his 'bari'. No matter whether he lives abroad for job or livelihood or for any other matter, his conceptual image always influence him in building his surroundings. Therefore, a house becomes a part of his image building process. This is later reflected in the urban house form where the

urbanites migrated from the rural area shaped their environment according to the long established images of traditional house.

The basic conceptual image of a house is very much associated with the concept of domain, which is primarily based on privacy and distinction between male and female area. Imamuddin (1984) metaphorically considers the outer house as the front stage, a window towards the society. Where from the communication is being made with the rest of the world. This is also a medium of presenting oneself to the others of one's wealth, prestige or aristocracy. On the other hand, whatever the households want to preserve, protect or guard from the world outside become a part of the back stage or inner house.

The distinction of zoning is also guided by attitude and activity pattern. Physically, the inner activities are centered around the kitchen. Female members are basically engaged in cooking, preparing for it and other related activities. Thus it can be inferred that *chula* or kitchen is the physical interpretation of a social nucleus. In fact, people using the same *chula* is considered to be a single household. Thus a family is primarily generated from around it which later forms part of the greater community and then the locality. Here we find a conceptual resemblance with Semper's version as he says the hearth to be - *a germ of civilization around which the society is formed* (Haque, 1997, p. 217; see Fig. 4.3).

#### 4.4.2 Concept of Domain

The activity zones are not always delineated in terms of physical boundary. Rather, it is expressed through the behaviour pattern of the users and their attitude towards the use and maintenance of space. Muktadir and Hassan (1985) retain the thought that the role of climate in shaping the traditional house form in rural Bangladesh appears to be less deterministic compared to such other factors as the culture, social codes, customs and norms.

The front and back of a house is an outcome of both climatic and physical influence. The direction of main access to the house is the physical front and direction of summer wind is the climatic front (Imamuddin, 1982, p. 29). When both physical and climatic fronts coincides, the orientation is considered to be the best. An adage (*Khaner bachan*) goes like this ,

*South facing is king of rooms, East is its vassal,*

*West meets the wretched ones, North is belittle.* (Haq, 1994, p.64).

Whatever the influence or reasons are for determining the orientation, the conceptual image remains the vital aspect as these many aspects may not always coincide. Therefore the location of domains remains important in relation to their activities. For example, a Bangla ghar is always located at the front of the house to have the accessibility from the main road to make it more public or open. This location takes place irrespective of the climatic consideration. But in locating services, specially the toilets, climatic aspect is of prime consideration.

Muktadir and Hassan (1985) categorizes the functions which organises the house as:

- i. family function pertaining to the family itself such as sleeping, cooking, eating etc.
- ii. formal function pertaining to the family in a way as it reacts with the larger community, such as socializing and receiving visitors.

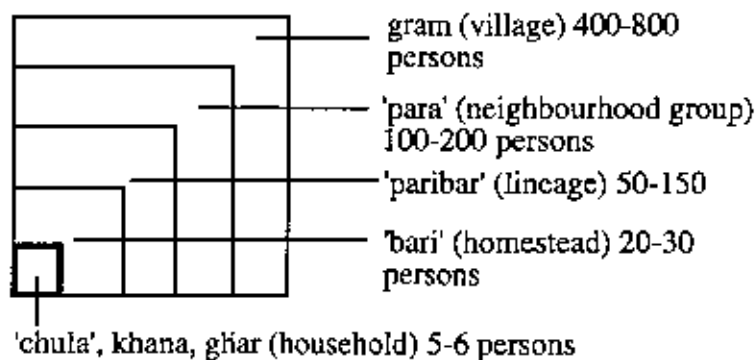


Fig. 4.4 Hearth (Chula) in the Court to Generate the Social Structure (Source: Khan, 1982, p. 6.7)

According to this categorisation, a house is divided into inner and outer parts. Again the culturally defined codes and customs identify them as two domains namely male and female respectively. These are also identified in terms of their degree of privacy, admittance of outsiders, behavior pattern etc. Outer and inner house therefore, refers to the distinction made by activities as formal and informal. Activities may vary from modern set up to a very primitive one. Traditional taste and preferences find expression in the inner house whereas the outer house is more formal to deal with the outsiders. It is also mingled with the traditional concept of privacy.

House can also be divided according to the spaces of different activity patterns or services. Clean and dirty zones are one such division. Dirty areas are those where functions of cleaning takes place. It includes toilets, bath room, all types of washing area; the kitchen and its associated spaces are also included within this zone. The other household spaces are considered to be within the clean zone. This zoning to some extent is based on dry and wet area. Moreover the conceptual attitude towards the use and maintenance of different spaces dominates the idea of this seperation. A

kitchen, for example, is cleaned more times than the living or other rooms, yet it is thought to be within the dirty zone (Imamuddin, 1984, p. 2.26).

#### 4.4.3 Privacy in Bengali House

Concept of privacy in Bengali house is synonymous with male and female domain. The socio-cultural norms and customs creates a strict segregation between male and female rather than family and non-family. These norms and values confines female members within the boundaries of the house which is termed as private part or female domain. All household activities are taken place in the private zone where admittance of the male specially the outsiders is restricted. Even for the male members of the family, the private zone is not always freely accessible. Conceptually *men are seen as strangers as far as household activities are concerned* (Imamuddin, 1982) This is because of their (male) role in the household activities which is insignificant in comparison with the role of female. Male members play a passive role in the family activities. On the other hand, their major responsibility lies in maintaining communication between the outer world and the inner or private part of the house. Male governs the family members in terms of decision making, monetary aspects and other formal activities. Therefore, their association with the private zone of the house becomes regulated, formal and sometimes occasional.

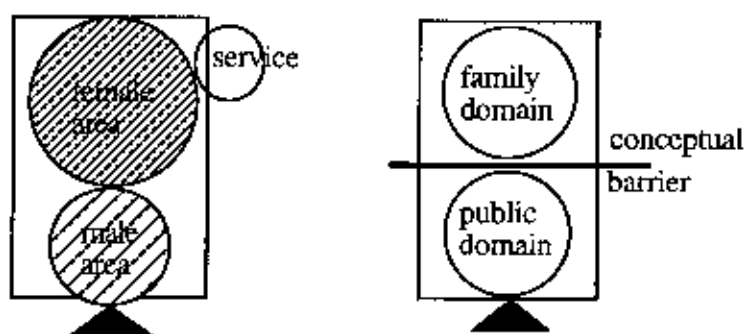
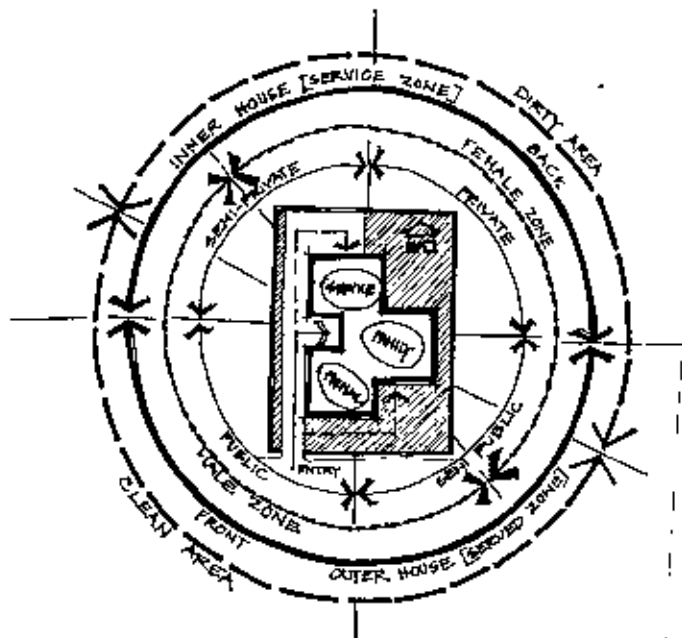


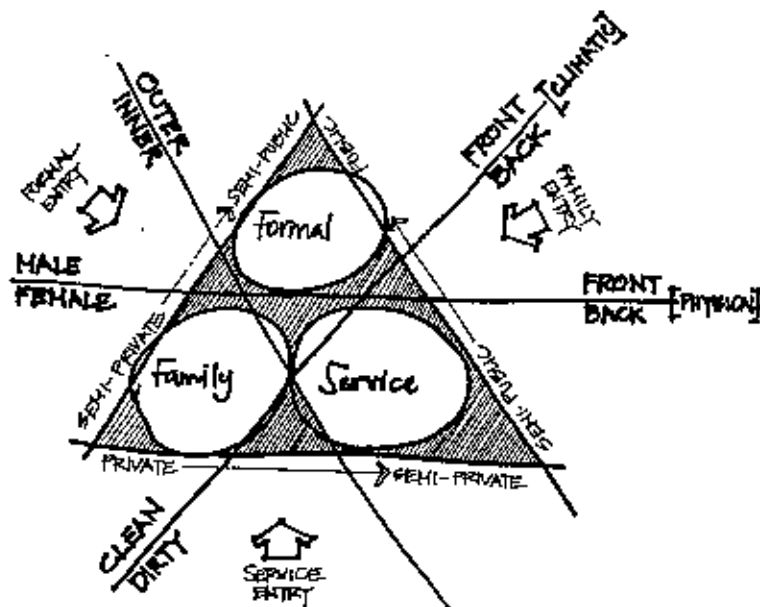
Fig. 4.5 Conceptual Zoning of a Bengali House

Moreover, the traditional custom is to receive the male and female guests in separate parts of the house, usually not together. The female guests are allowed within the inner part or private domain of the house. The female zone is conceived as the most sacred part of the house being a highly prestigious or honored territory. Privacy in a house with respect to male and female is maintained in different ways. In addition to the physical separation of the two domains, it is also guided by the behaviour pattern, attitude towards person and space, time zoning, preferential admittance, special occasions etc. Therefore, the threshold of privacy, being a result of the above mentioned factors becomes flexible.



Conventional location of Bipolar zones of a consolidated house in an ideal site where both the climatic and physical front coincide

Fig. 4.6 Location of Bipolar Zones (Source: Imamuddin, 1982, p.2 23)



This organisational model have been derived from the study of functional separations typical with the design of walk-up apartments of existing court housing in Dhaka

Fig. 4.7 Organisational Model of Contemporary Bengali House (Source: Imamuddin, 1982, p. 2.30)



## 4.5 Summary

Traditional house in a society is a result of accumulated knowledge descended from generation to generation. The rural houses of Bengal with all its physical components retains some strong non-physical components which are the basics of its formation. The chapter identified different components including physical and non-physical zones and values regarding a traditional house. This in turn would help to establish the formation of urban house. Though urban life is apparently different and heterogeneous, there are certain aspects which do not change whether it is in rural or urban areas. Large scale urbanisation is a continuous phenomena of Bengal where people are migrating from rural to urban areas. Therefore, on way to analysing the urban houseform in the next chapter its background and origin of settlement which is essentially rural, had to be studied.

## Chapter Five

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### Urban Houseform

## Chapter Five

### URBAN HOUSEFORM

#### 5.1 Introduction

Urbanization has strongly influenced the domestic architecture. In other words, house form in urban context is an outcome of transformed socio-cultural backgrounds and changing values adapted into the physical restrictions (Imamuddin, 1982, p. 2.9). The transforming life-style as a result of migration from rural to urban areas is a consequence of factors initiating changes; these are technical and infra-structural changes of the urban centres and urban facilities, change due to the occupation and livelihood of the inhabitants, changing pattern of economy etc. All these forces influence the urban socio-cultural scenario which is basically of rural origin. Therefore, urban houseform in the changed milieu is explicative of the newly developed forces both external and internal. The houseform commiserates the socio-cultural changes in urban context with the symbolic value or images engrossed in occupant's mental map.

#### 5.2 Development of Urban Morphology

Urban growth in Dhaka has been found to have strong relationship with waterways. From the pre-Mughal era, the city expanded across the canals and rivers. This activated the city's trade, economy and consequently the urban growth. Even the man-made canals have played an important role for transportation of man and goods. Many of these canals thus influenced the socio-economic and cultural life; historical events are also associated with these canals (Rahman et.al, 1996). In fact, rivers counted Dhaka for being selected as a capital under the Mughal.

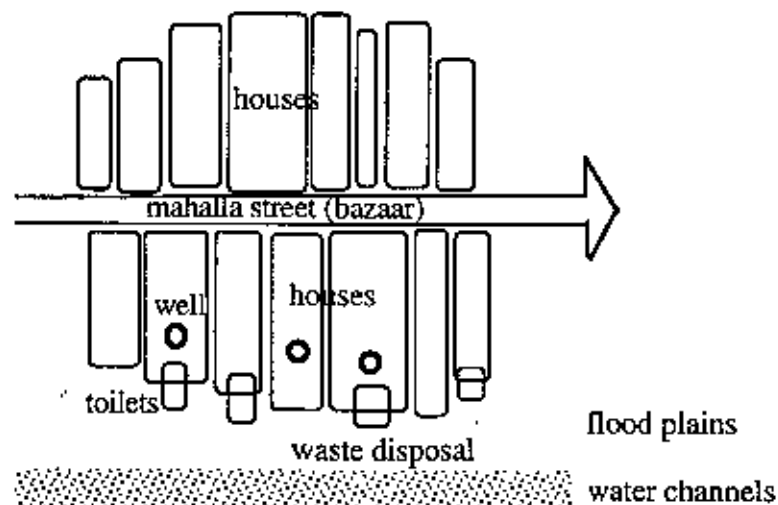


Fig. 5.1 Traditional Mahalla Morphology (Source: Khan, 1982, p. 2.8)

The city developed across the canal with some *chawks* and *mahallas* (Khan, 1982). Physically mahallas are cluster of houses around a chawk or square or along a linear street. In their external appearances, all streets are bazaar, being avenues for selling goods where existence of mahallas cannot be identified. But from the social definition, mahallas are internal and bazaars are external as mahallas are hidden behind the bazaar or street facade and passed unnoticed (Khan, 1985, p.107). Moreover, mahallas are social enclaves relating the houseforms. Thus a linear street pattern along with mahallas are found in Dhaka's growth ( see Fig. 5.1).

### 5.2.1 Settlement and Houseform

Old Dhaka shows two distinct patterns of growth in the form of the neighbourhoods (mahallas). This distinction also recognises differences among the localities and social structure. The first type discerned is mainly visible in Hindu dominated mahallas (e.g. Shankhari bazaar, Tanti bazaar etc.). In this type, there is a long and narrow strip of land with a road front of approximately 10 to 12 ft and a length of around 80 to 100 ft. The built form is usually upto four stories. Being narrow and deep, usually no openings are possible to provide on the side walls. In the interior inner courts are the only source for lighting and ventilation. These courts are quite narrow as the site is, and actually works as light wells. Despite having several small courts for air and light the interiors in general are dark and stifling. Though the house has a unified look, on closer examination it can be seen that the built up area has been adhoc and cumulative (Khan, 1985, p.109).

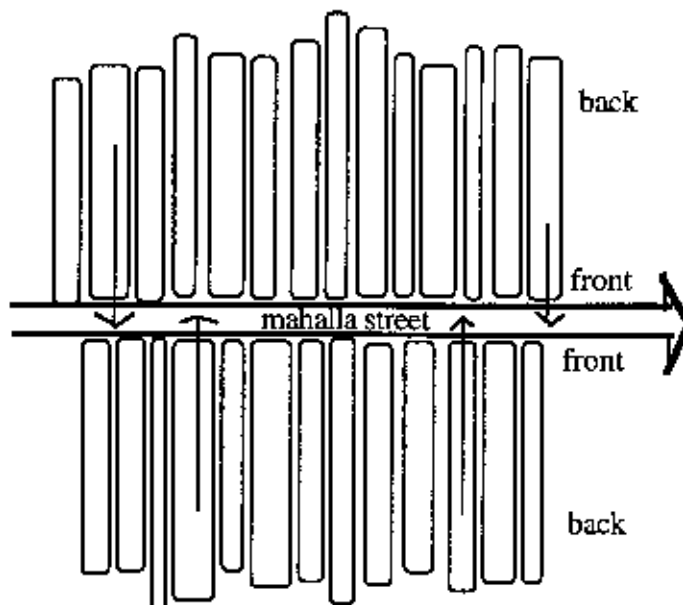


Fig. 5.2 Urban Growth Pattern and Plot Division of Category One (Source: Khan, 1982, p. 6.3)

The linear site had access road on the front and canal or service lane at the rear part. This pattern took shape in the pre-colonial period (Khan, 1982) when indigenous city was dependent on natural and man made water bodies for drinking water, waste disposal, transport and communication. Therefore, plot subdivision had to take into account of 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 played a more predominant role in forming the pattern.

The second category is loosely built and is ever changing. Plot is regular but filled with intricate network of lanes and by-lanes due to the sub-division. Again being loosely built, it is perceived through the periphery walls (Khan, 1982, p. 6.3). These areas 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 organised service, houses reverted to original form, the popular and persistent second form was thus built around a courtyard (Rahman, 1996, p. 81; see Fig. 5.3)

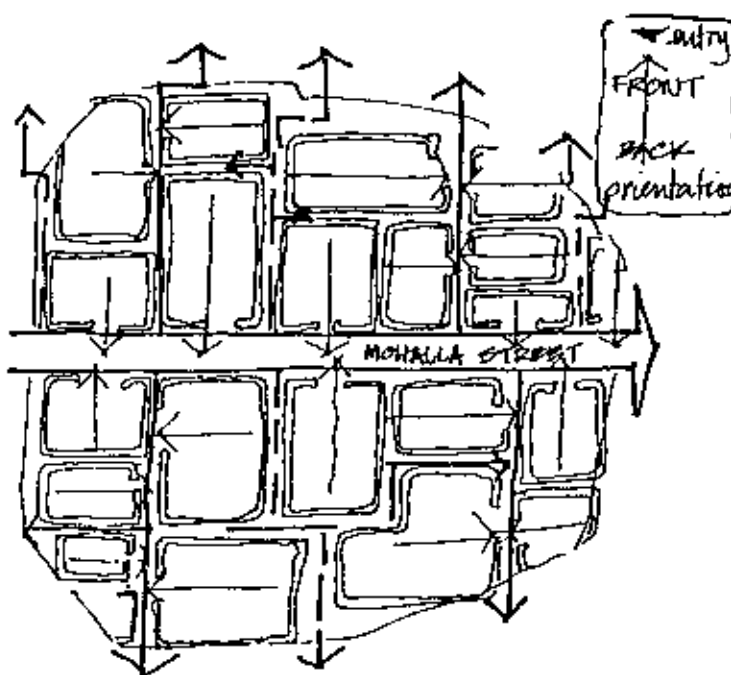


Fig 5.3 Urban Growth Pattern and Plot Division of Category Two (Source. Khan, 1982, p. 6.3)

The occupation and category of people according to class also varied in these two distinct categories of growth. The first type was occupied mostly by businessmen, craftsmen or people from particular occupational group. Most of them desired road

frontage for economic reasons, and consequent plot divisions gave rise to the particular narrow-deep form. The second type was usually inhabited by well-off people and nobles related to the administration, agriculture and trades, or people from alien cultures like the Europeans, the Armenians or the North Indians. (Rahman, 1996, p. 82)

### 5.2.2 Forces Influencing the Urban Houseform

The first attempt to create an urban house is the demarcation of the site. This is the same as in the rural areas though the approach is different. It is through the introduction of boundary wall to delineate the idea of territorial demarcation. Khan (1982) remarks that walls are even better built than the house proper. The physical reason might be the densification in urban land which requires a strict demarcation of the property line. But conceptually it transforms the idea of *vita*, a sense of physical identity, isolation from the public areas. Therefore, the boundary wall not only implies the need of demarcation of site, but also signifies the need of self-sufficiency and a sense of possession. Its significance should be underscored as it reveals the compactness of a house within a limited land. The concept of privacy by enclosing a particular area as in the rural houseform has been implanted here through the boundary wall.

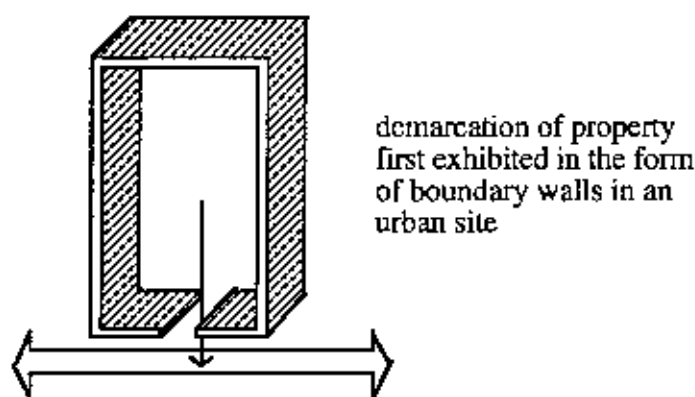


Fig. 5.4 Boundary Wall, a Conceptual replacement of 'Vita' (Source: Khan, 1982, p.6.11)

The urban house displays the sense of privacy and progression of space in a transformed manner. The accessibility into urban site acts as a vital phenomenon in forming the urban house. The houseform, as it is more compact due to the limitation of site exhibits the privacy within its limited boundary. Though the first generation urban houses were less affected by scarcity of urban land, the rural archetype could have been transplanted into urban archetype. In later days, the regular plot demarcation, road layout etc. due to densification force the houseform to adjust itself also with climatic and functional considerations. The concept of front and back in

rural archetype houseform was thus reshaped to form an urban archetype (Khan, 1982). Moreover, the introduction of building laws which confers the area to be left on each side also affects the builtform.

Moreover, the shape of the plot guides the house form. A narrow linear site has lesser possibility of central planning around a court whereas a site with wider front can adopt the traditional set up more easily. In the first case the symbolic transformation may take place where the court can be in the form of a lightwell, small and narrow in size but retaining the same value object. In case of a wider plot, the court also creates an inward looking housetype which meets the climatic consideration and social aspects simultaneously.

Albeit the physical forces, the socio-cultural forces to affect the formation of an urban house. The preponderance of rural images plays the significant role. Even under urban constraints, introduction of a courtyard is explicative of more a social demand than its climatic or functional need. The concept of privacy has been maintained through this. The outhouse is transformed by living room; and the court still remains the hub of the whole arrangement maintaining the similar notion of privacy, male and female domain, front and back etc.

### **5.3 Patterns of Urban Houseform**

The urban people are heterogeneous, in their background, occupation and socio-economic situation. Therefore, the urban houseform may take a diversified character. In the primary stage of urbanisation, the urban centres of this region were more like glorified villages with concentration of people providing wider opportunities for socio-economic exchange (King, 1947). The socio-cultural sphere was dominated by the rural traditions composed of clearly defined and easily recognisable roles and rules. But this society underwent a rapid change during the colonial period due to the centralised policy of administration enhancing the urban based institutions. The introduction of new educational and occupational systems changed the living style and family structure. These changes left their marks on builtforms, more specifically on houseforms (Rahman, 1996, p. 79).

But since the origin of urban people are deep rooted in the rural set up, there have always been some elements common to guide the urban settings of house-form. According to Inamuddin (1984), the design and organization, the dwelling houses of Dhaka can be classified into two broad groups - introvert and extrovert. Introvert typology refers to inward looking courtyard house where the entire organisation is

derived in relation to the centre. The surrounding structure may be detached or enclosed. The extrovert house is outward looking having the component parts in free relation to one another (Imamuddin, 1982, p. 30).

He further categorized this type into composite and consolidated. Composite type indicates a free standing house within a given compound having detached service structures situated behind the main block. This is fashioned after the colonial Bungalow compound complex. The consolidated type is characterized by integration of living and service part of the house into a single mass which was further consolidated with time (see Fig. 5.5).

### 5.3.1 Introvert Typology

Introvert type of houses are found in many societies and cultures. Houseform centering a courtyard serves different purposes in different culture, guided by a number of variables. Norbert Schoenauer, referred to by Imamuddin (1982) presented four major factors of general acceptance of courtyard house in urban context. First, **psycho-social factor** which relates to privacy aspects, second **economic factor** allowing the maximum density within an existing technology; third the **climate** for domestic comfort and fourth the **religious** reason as the internal court may act as an image of paradise.

These factors and their relative importance may vary in different culture and time. According to Rapoport (1969) the psycho-social factor and religious factor are predominant as they are the major cultural forces to shape the builtform; these in different ways might affect the rest of the factors. However, economy and climate may also play the major roles. Therefore, regarding the cultural context, the scenario may vary with the introduction of some other forces that persists in the image of rural house. These are the family structures either joint or extended, functional and occupational pattern, strict demarcation of space according to age and sex, female confinement within the inner part of the house, religious and social rules governing the association with guests and servants and also the climatic forces.

Even the type of court varies according to religion. Muslim houses require strict privacy of the courtyard for their women who are confined within it. Whereas Hindu houses need a separate deity room and Tulshi Mandap. Privacy restriction is also loose compared to that of the Muslim houses. In this context, we find the interpretation of courtyard in a Muslim house in the mid 19th century by Abdus Sharar:



*It is necessary for houses in India to have courtyards so that woman may be able to enjoy fresh air within the perimeter of their own homes ... There has always been a distinct difference between Hindu and Muslim houses and this exists to this day. In Hindu houses the courtyards are small and the building is constructed without regard to whether or not air and light will get in. In contrast to this, Muslims like bright, open houses ... (King, 1984, p. 55).*

This segregation and demarcation of zones through courts also recalls the concept of *andar mahal* prevailing in the palatial houses of zamindars and kings. In view of this, it is important to recognise that culture is stronger than the religion in the formation of court and thus privacy. Although Muslim women are more restricted than the Hindu women, but the sense of privacy for women remained almost same in this continent for both the religion. Therefore, both the Muslim and Hindu houses are marked with the similar types of courts with similar value system with certain variation, as they belong to the same culture.

The detached house form is a direct transformation of basic rural arrangement as discussed in Chapter Four. This particular houseform is the outcome of first attempt in urban context. In the initial phase of urbanisation, development was at a slower pace, the densification was low. Therefore, the adaptation of indigenous rural dwelling to new urban context was gradual; the evolution of urban house form was complementary to both basic psycho-social needs and economic forces.

Making the form enclosed is more an urban approach than the rural one. In fact, it coalesces the rural images with urban constraints. Physical constraints due to limitation of urban land, social and technical advancements in the city, changing concept of privacy and security with respect to high density urban living may have prompted the development of enclosed type introvert house (Imamuddin, 1982, p. 2.15).

### **5.3.2 Extrovert Typology**

Extrovert typology is a form adopted due to socio-cultural changes under the influence of colonial period. New life-style and values were introduced in urban living during this period. This gave rise to a new system of urban house form i.e. extrovert type. This form is an adoption of colonial Bungalow style. The bungalow compound complex represents a culture, life-style, set of values and behaviours of the inhabitants which are totally different from those of either the metropolitan society or the indigenous culture in which it was located (Imamuddin, 1982).

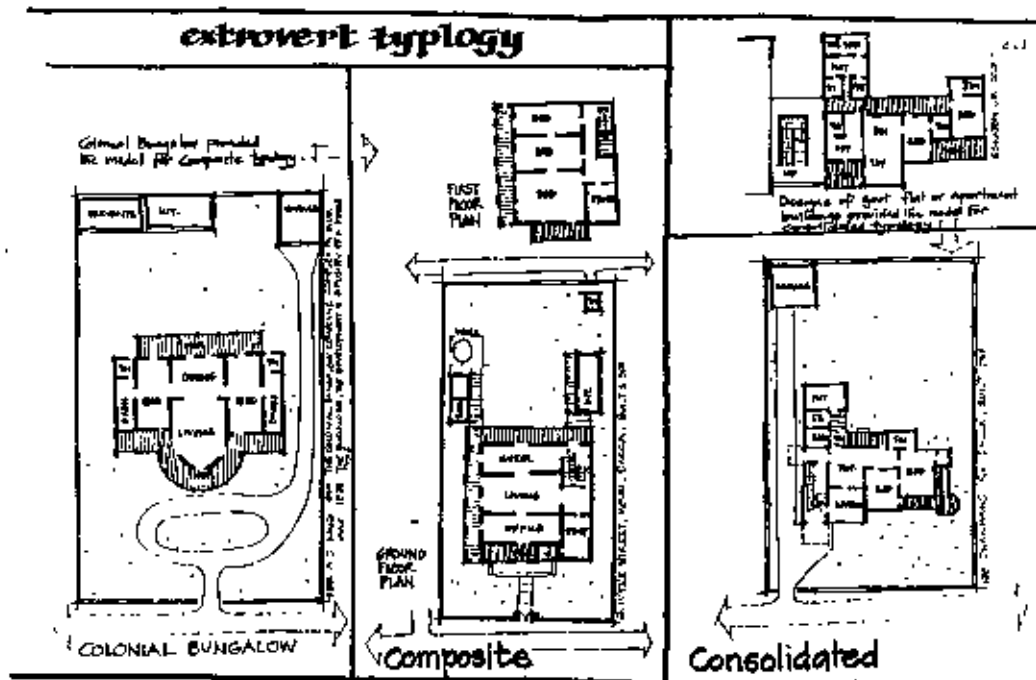
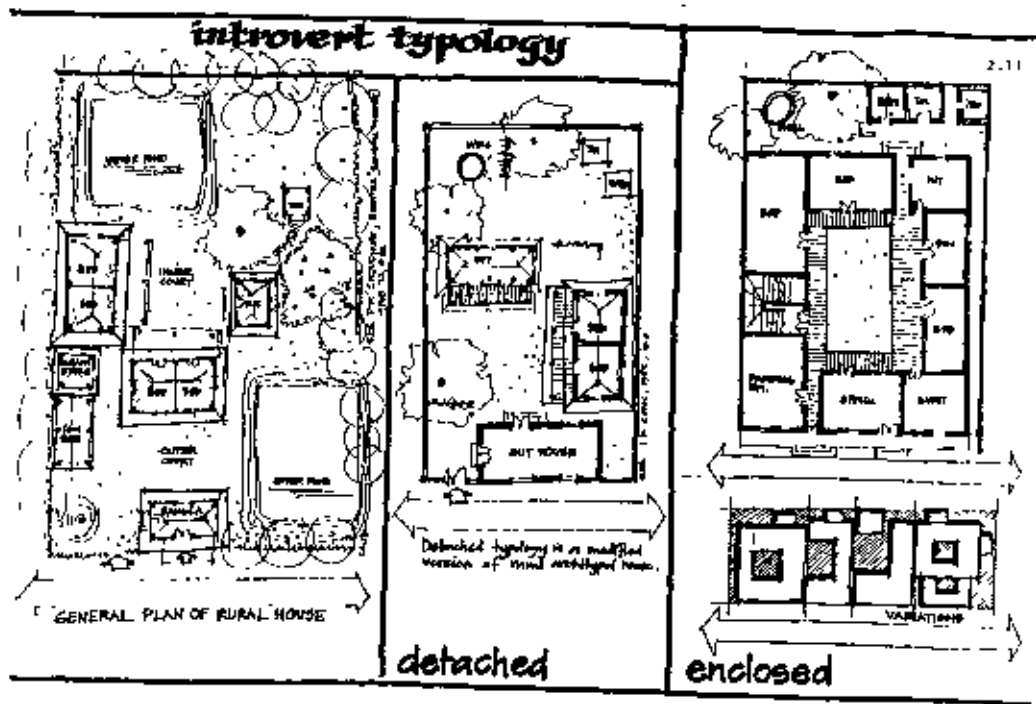


Fig. 5.5 Urban Houseform Typology (Source: Imamuddin, 1984, p. 2 11, 2.16)

Two categories also of extrovert typology is observed, composite and consolidated. Composite type commonly determines the bungalow type house which has been adopted with slight modifications. Some of this type is mostly found in the part of Dhaka originally inhabited by the society elite during the colonial period. This indicates a freestanding house without any courtyard which is situated in the middle of the plot and is outward facing. These are generally single or double storied houses with detached service structures at the backyard of the compound. In this category, zones are according to formal, informal and service activities. There run verandas along the house which is suitable for this tropical climate.

The other type is the consolidated type, which is characterised by integration of all spaces into a single mass. This is facilitated by the improvement of services and technology and is inspired by the novelty of mass-housing apartment, a descendent of the post-war westernised concept of living. Later in the local context, modern houses has become synonymous with consolidated house popularly known as flat type. A considerable part of urban houses are these medium-rise walk-ups built for the government employees. Presently this is considered as an appropriate solution encouraged by the government. (Rahman, 1996, p.80)

#### 5.4 Analysis of Urban Houseform

In the changing urban environment due to commercialization, densification, occupation etc. the value object in defining the domestic space has been subjected to change. The introduction of new occupation during the colonial period influenced the urbanites to lead a dual life (King, 1977). Their dichotomous values found expression in the domestic design. Boundaries were drawn between formal and informal activity areas within a house corresponding to western and local living habits and style (Rahman, 1996, p.80).

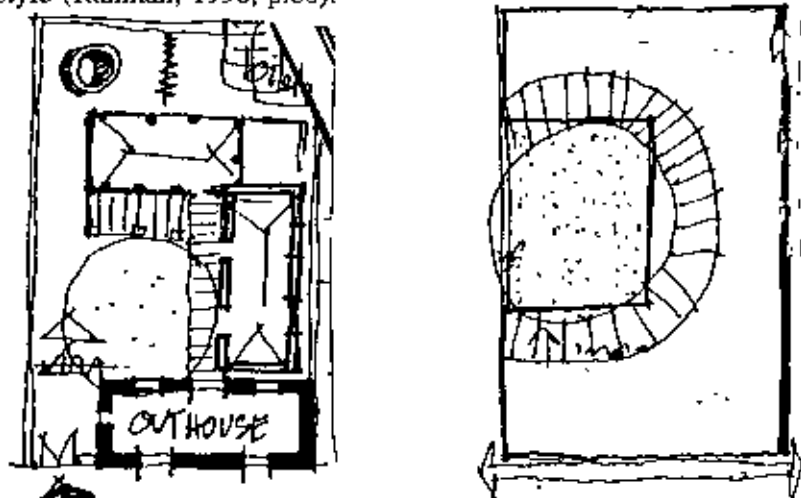


Fig. 5.6 Formation of Urban Houses

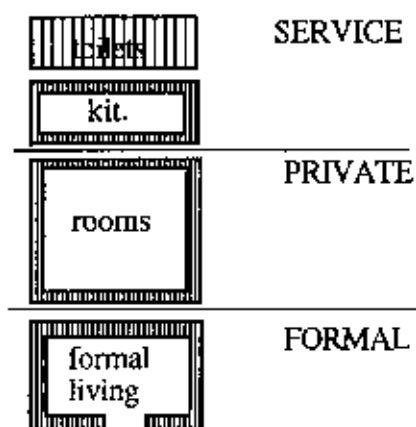


Fig. 5.7 Organisational Pattern of Urban House Revealing Three Distinct Zones

The earlier versions of urban houses show apparent efforts to maintain the socio-cultural distinctions with different domestic spaces and functions. The front part is left for receiving the outsiders both in the introvert and extrovert typology. Service part with toilets, kitchen, store and servants living area became a separately placed zone. Between these two zones, there remains the family spaces or habitable rooms. In some large houses, these two zones (formal and service) are placed at the two opposite ends of the house around the inner court. Later in modern urban houses, though there is no separate blocks, three distinct zones can be identified easily. These are formal, family and service zones, which again expresses the bipolar distinction of formal and private zones, front and back etc.(see Fig 5.4).

#### 5.4.1 Influences of Prevailing Patterns

The term Bungalow originated in the south-east part of India after the word, 'Bangla'. King (1984) claims that it was primarily European. In the first phase of its development, during the era of mercantile capitalism of the seventeenth century, the bungalow was a product of cultures in contact (the Indians), an indigenous mode of shelters adopted and adapted for Europeans' living in India (King, 1984, p.14). It describes the common hut of Bengal peasant, which had a sloping roof on two sides and two gable ends. King (1984) further describes that in India it was a symbol and identity of new imperial power; and this was transformed from the simple Bengali hut to meet the requirements of a European commercial and governing class.

King's (1984) description of colonial bungalow compound complex (quoted from Imamuddin, 1984, p.2.17) draws a resemblance with composite house type. *Most typically, it consisted of a low, one-storey, spacious building, internally divided into separate living, dining and bedrooms each with an attached room for bathing. A verandah, forming an integral part of the structure or alternatively, attached to the*

outside walls, surrounding part or all of the building. The bungalow is invariably situated in a large walled or otherwise demarcated compound, .... the kitchen servants, stabling and room for carriage or car, are separated from and placed at the rear of the bungalow.

Khan (1982) remarks that in bungalow, a western cottage is dressed in eastern clothing. The internal house structure is of a western house while the compound tries to recreate the home environment of the English country houses. The by law houses, as the bungalow is a concretisation (architectural mass to be viewed from all sides) unknown in native culture.

The introvert typology are more reflective of the traditional layout than these by law houses. As discussed earlier, it displays the distinct segregation of different zones. The court has a multifarious role retaining the similar value and activities as inherited within the traditional houses. Even in a dense urban situation the progression of different zones implies similar meaning of spaces.

The outhouse is transformed into a living room, the services are located at the rear part of the house. In fact, bungalow are less influential than the traditional houses in the urban context.

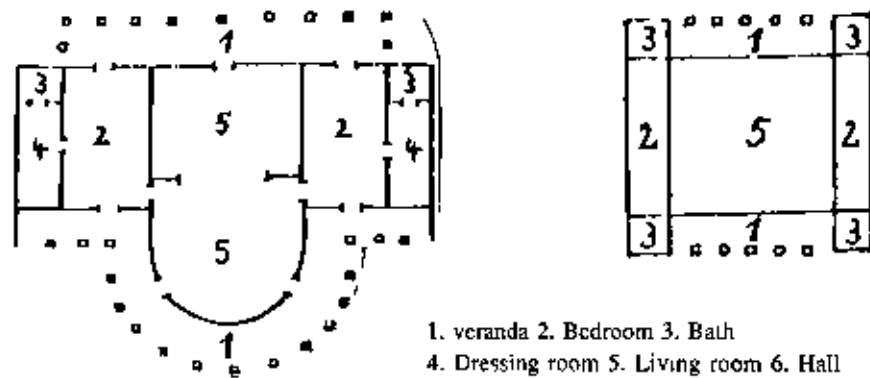


Fig. 5.8 Bungalows (Source: King, 1984, p 29)

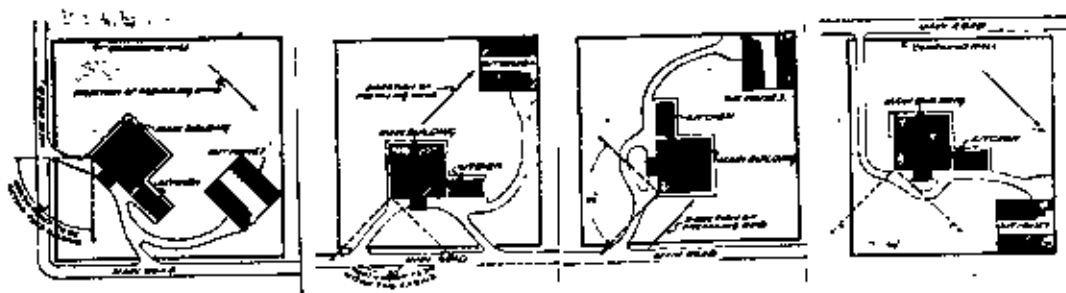


Fig. 5.9 Bungalow Compound (Source: King, 1976, P.133)

## **5.5 Summary**

Urbanisation in Dhaka is the result of different socio-political forces. Urban houseform therefore, is expressive of these forces in its external and internal disposition. Since the different forces of modernisation and colonisation are more evident in urban area, the urban houseform tends to be more modern and diversified. Moreover, urban constraints are inevitable in its formation. This changes dealt with the typology that occurred in urban houses. It also analyzed the influences behind it. As the society influences the houseform, the next chapter deals with the social set up of the study period.

## Chapter Six

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**Urbanisation and the Society of Dhaka in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and  
Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

## **Chapter Six**

# **URBANISATION AND THE SOCIETY OF DHAKA IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This region has been subjected to more than 200 years' colonial rule, first by the British Colonisers and then by the Pakistani rulers. Advent of the British rule in this continent saw the decline of the fortunes of Bengal and its principal city Dhaka. However, Dhaka regained momentum during the end of the 19th century and onward. During this period of resurrection, new economic and administrative systems gave rise to different classes or groups within the indigenous society. A new elite group and a middle class emerged during the late 19th century who were basically land owners and traders. They soon started to dominate the new social order and participated in the civic activities to enhance this domination. The architecture of Dhaka with its political vicissitudes has undergone phases of transformation when traditional norms and cultures mingled with the new styles brought by the foreign rulers. This socio-economic scenario and transformation profoundly influenced its builtforms.

### **6.2 Dhaka in History**

Dhaka has witnessed several phases of relapse and regeneration as a major city of this region. Its history can be divided into five phases based on the different ruling powers:

a. pre-Mughal upto 1608 A.D. b. Mughal (1608-1765) c. British Colonial rule (1765-1947) d. post-Colonial period (1947-1971) e. Post Independence period (1971 to onward). The present research deals with the late 19th and early 20th century when Bengal has already passed more than a century of British Colonial rule and a national resurgence had just started.

Very little has been found in history about the pre-Mughal Dhaka. In early 16th century, Bengal was at the edge of sultanate rule. In 1438, Sher shah, the Afgan ruler of Bengal ousted the last sultan Giasuddin Mahmood from the throne. During this time, the struggle between the Mughal emperor Humayun and Afgan ruler Sher Shah took place repeatedly for the mastery over the sub-continent. Ultimately, Sher Shah defeated Humayun from Bengal and also went on to capture Delhi. Sonargaon was his capital of Bengal which he connected with Delhi by constructing the Grand Trunk Road (Kamruddin, 1970, p. xxiv).



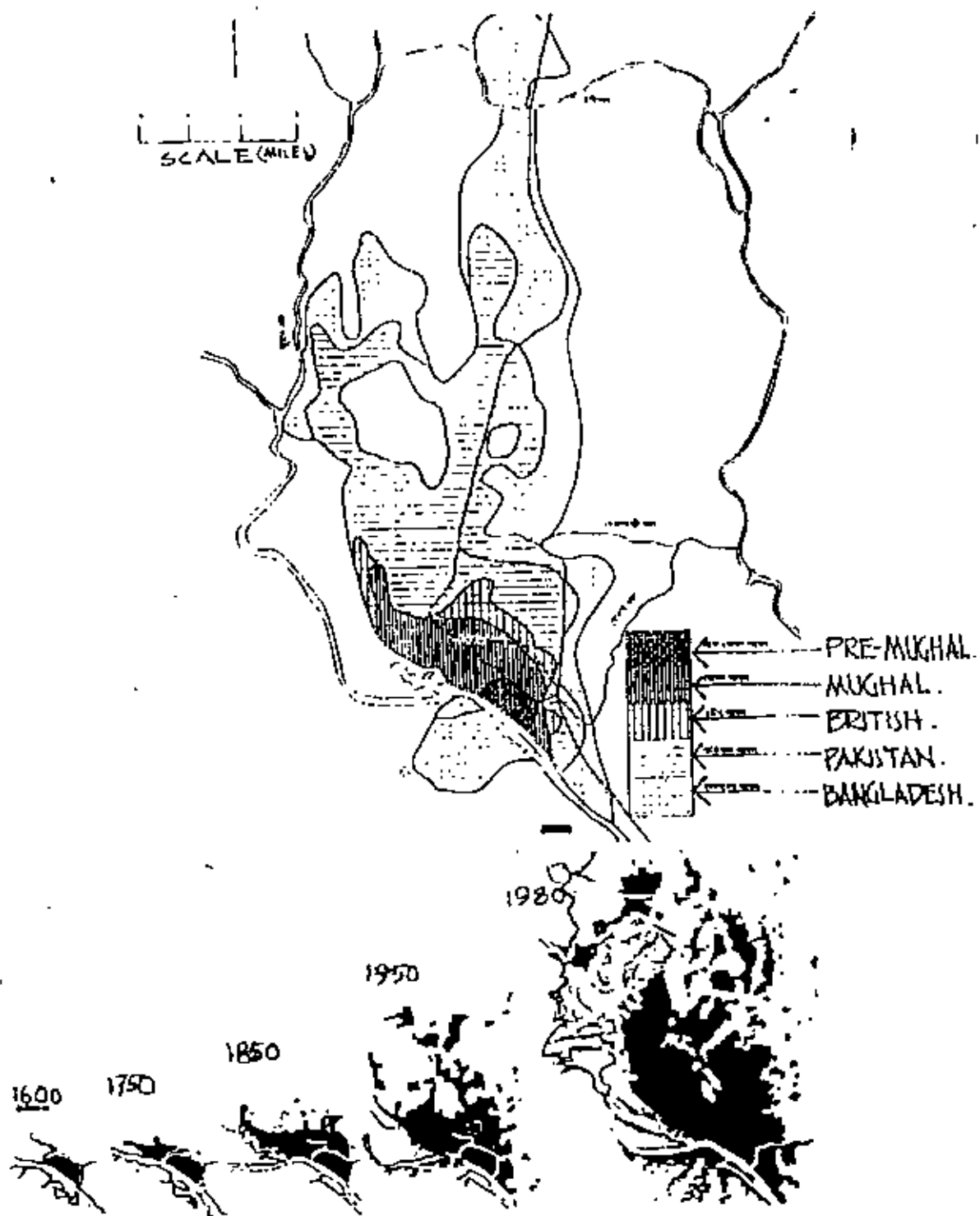


Fig. 6.1 Chronological Growth and Expansion of Dhaka during Different Period

Later, Bengal was annexed to the Mughal empire during the reign of Akbar in 1576 A.D. as a province. Several of the local feudal chiefs (*Baro Bhuiyan*) resisted the Mughal supremacy (Karim, 1994). However, in the long run they were compelled to submit to the vast and well-equipped Mughal army. Isa Khan of Kishoregange and Kedor Roy of Vikrampur were the two most valient of the Bhuiyans (Kamruddin, 1970, p. xxv).

The formal foundation of the city since known was in the early 17th century during Islam Khan (1608-1613) though evidences are found in form of its existence even in the 9th century (Karim, 1991). This Mughal subahdar (governor) of Bengal during the reign of emperor Jahangir transferred the seat of government from Rajmahal to Dhaka in 1610. He named Dhaka as Jahangir Nagar to establish the sovereignty of the Emperor. Further resurgence against Mughal supremacy was fiercely fought and contained. Dhaka was known to be highly prosperous and developed quickly in the stature as the metropolis of the province during that time. Being important as an administrative centre, its trade and commerce also attracted foreigners. The flourishing of world famous fine cotton (muslin) goods manufacture brought Dhaka wealth and fame. As a result, the population increased leading to further expansion of the city. Dhaka grew into a large, wealthy and prosperous town to become the queen of the cities of the eastern India (Siddiqui et.al, 1990, p.6).

Later in 1717, during Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, the capital was shifted from Dhaka to Murshidabad. Due to this action Dhaka's growth and development waned. However, it did not lose its significance as an important center of administration, trade commerce and manufacturing for it remained the headquarters of a regional administration (Siddiqui, 1990, p. 6).

However, due to the decadence of Mughal supremacy after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the subsequent take over of power by the British in 1765, Dhaka lost much of its position as the most important urban center. The chaos due to the transformation of power created an anarchy. In absence of any valid authority during this time, the city administration collapsed and the law and order situation worsened (Islam, 1991, p. 79). In 1763, the capital was shifted to Calcutta - which gradually took administrative and military control over the country and monopolised the trade and commerce. Import of mill-made cheap cotton goods was a severe strike to the commerce of the city, which ruined its textile industry.

Decline of Dhaka that began with the transfer of capital started to reverse at the beginning of the present century. The city gradually rose to become the undeclared

capital of East Bengal during the late 19th century. With the expansion of British administrative set up since the institution of Divisional Commissionership in 1829, Dhaka became a divisional headquarters (Akhtar, 1991, p.185). Following the partition of Bengal in 1905, Dhaka was reinstated as the provincial capital and the seat of government of East Bengal and Assam. Thus, it started to regain its previous glory and status as a major seat of administration. However, the declaration of Dhaka as a provincial capital was nullified in 1911 in the face of opposition to the division of greater Bengal by the rising nationalist quarters. After the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947, Dhaka became the capital of eastern province of Pakistan again and subsequently the capital of the sovereign country Bangladesh after the Independence in 1971.

### **6.2.1 Potentials of Dhaka as a Capital City**

Selection of Dhaka as a capital had been influenced by geographical, political and economic viabilities. Its central and naturally secured position, proximity to waterways, affiliation of people irrespective of groups, clans and political homogeneity, all counted it for being selected as a capital. Dhaka, thus rose to be a prominent urban center second only to the metropolis Calcutta (Akhtar, 1991, p.184).

Due to the constant battle among the local chiefs and the Mughal empire, it was necessary for the Mughals to set up a cantonment with a huge number of army. Such set up in Dhaka needed a large supply of daily necessities. This motivated a group of people like traders and suppliers to focus to Dhaka for business. Moreover, transfer of such a huge army was always associated with an influx of people of different occupation. Thus Dhaka emerged as an important city (Karim, 1994, p.23). Its commercial importance was gradually strengthened since it was involved with trading of various goods, such as fine textile, leather etc.

The changing course of the river Ganga left the previous capital Rajmahal half a league away from it which made operation of navy difficult. Thus the Arakans and Portuguese pirates were growing stronger. Moreover, the awful law and order situation in the lower part of Bengal due to their rapacious attack necessitated a shift of the capital. Dhaka is connected by water with great rivers, the Ganges (Padma), the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and thus with all neighbouring districts. Due to this strategic location, it was easy to keep watch over the enemies; particularly the Portuguese pirates' movement and also to counter attack quickly. Also Dhaka was at the southern-most tip of a vast highland formed in the Pleistocene period.

When Islam Khan was moving from Rajmahal, the entire establishment, military and the court moved with him with their paraphernalia. While Islam Khan was in Shahjadpur (present Pabna) on his way to Dhaka, he sent three imperial officers accompanied by a great number of soldiers, boats and subordinate staffs to Dhaka (Karim, 1991, p. 26). According to Karim (1964) the administration was the major reason of Dhaka's flourishing. The huge administrative set up engaged about fifty thousand people around the Mughal centre of Dhaka - *the Dhaka Kella* (fort). He also indicated land and trade being two other reasons for the significance of Dhaka (Karim, 1994, p. 24). During the Mughal regime, representatives used to be employed to communicate with the immediate superior. Thus ranks like subahdar, the highest authority, diwan, bakshi, faujdar etc. were created. Even the zaminders used to send Naib or estate representative to the capital to deal with the official duties (revenue or any legal proceedings). As Dhaka was the center of administration, even the traders and foreign companies had to keep connection with Dhaka regularly.

Under the British rule, Calcutta as a capital gradually grew as the major urban centre of the province monopolising its administration, trade and economy though strategically Dhaka was convenient to administer control over Assam, Bengal and Burma under a single jurisdiction. On the other hand, Calcutta was a distantly located capital to serve this purpose. Thus the glory of Dhaka declined which began to be regained in the late 19th century.

A growing sense of nationalism among the newly educated and emerging elite and middle-class resulted into the formation of many organisation and political movements. Thus it became necessary to create more local administrative centers by breaking the hegemony of Calcutta. The plan of territorial readjustment can be found in Lord Carzon's address on 20th February, 1904, *we offer Bengali nation the opportunity of forming a second unit round a second center* (Akhtar, 1991, p.188). This prompted Dhaka being conferred the status of a capital once again of a newly created province which was already dominated by the enlightened section of the people and had considerably developed urban set up and infra-structure (Akhtar, 1991, p. 188).

Another potential of Dhaka was the economic importance of Eastern Bengal while it being both geographical and commercial centre. Thus Dhaka became the natural centre of a vast hinterland rich in commodities like jute, rice etc. Moreover, the jute boom led to the swelling of population in the city associated with the improvement of communication system. Dhaka was connected by regular steamer services as an adjunct to the Eastern Bengal Railway, running from Calcutta to Kushtia. The railway

service was extended upto the river port of Goalundo on the Padma in 1871 (Akhtar, 1991, p. 187).

### **6.2.2 Urbanisation in Dhaka**

Bengal was predominantly an agro based society, urbanisation started here with the exchange of surplus agricultural goods. The centres of exchange were marked with urban values. According to King (1975, p. 308) in the early stage of urbanization, the urban centres were more a glorified villages with greater concentration of people providing wider opportunities for socio-economic changes. The process of urbanization was slow. Rural traditions strongly dominated the socio-cultural sphere resulting into an almost similar life-style and living pattern of urban and rural population.

For Dhaka, its strategic location had the most vital role in an urban formation as explained in the previous section. Three elements contributed to the development and urban growth in Dhaka. First the Mughal rulers with their paraphernalia, second Bengali professionals like craftsmen and workers and third the foreign companies and traders (Karim, 1994). Mamun (1986) suggested that rewards for settling in Dhaka as declared by the Mughals also contributed to steady urbanisation soaring to 900,000 in 1700 A.D., perhaps second only to London.

Pre-Mughal Dhaka ranged from Babu Bazaar on the west to Sadar ghat on the east due to the establishment of locally termed thana, when it was a Mughal outpost. Further development took place primarily to the west and north-west after its becoming a capital. The growing population consisted of artists, craftsmen and other professionals who settled on the east. The Mughal, the Armenian and the Indian traders settled all around the city. European developments resulted into the growth of Tejgaon farther north (Karim, 1994).

The city reached its height of prosperity during the reign of Shaista Khan, the Mughal subahdar who was first appointed in 1663. The initial east-west linear growth of the city owed to the river course. The length was approximately two leagues in the 17th century. James Taylor identified the boundary of Dhaka during the Mughal era as the Buriganga on the south, Tongi on the north, Zafrabad on west and Postogola on the east (Karim, 1991, p.33). The Dulai canal possibly formed the north-eastern boundary of the old city.

The names of the localities of different parts of the city indicate the pre-dominance of craftsmen and professionals based on religion in the pre-Mughal period. Near about the capital city of Sonargaon under the Baro-Bhuiyan during the pre-Mughal period, Dhaka possibly grew as a center of artisans and craftsmen and thus having some commercial importance (Faruqi, 1991, p.45). During the Mughals, the administrative officers, the courtiers and zaminders were included in the upper class. But they had a difference in status with that of the Subahdar and supreme rulers. This upper class used to maintain a class difference with the lower class. This ultimately gave rise to different localities for different social stratum. (Mamun, 1986, p.55)

Dhaka's growth was first halted when a complete anarchy ensued following the battle of Plassey. In 1765, the city had an estimated population of 450,000; in 1793 it covered an area of four miles long and two and a half miles broad. By 1801, the population declined to 200,000 and the limit of the city had shrunk from Enayetganj on the west to Faridabad on the east, a distance of about three and a half miles, and from Buriganga on the south to Dewan Bazaar on the north, a distance of about a mile and a half. The city was filled with ruins and jungle. In 1840, James Taylor found it to have degenerated into a filthy and unsanitary place (Siddiqui et.al., 1990). Sir Charles Trevelyan describes like this '*the population of Dhaka has fallen from 150,000 to 40,000 and the jungle and malaria are fast encroaching upon the town..... Dhaka, which was the Manchester of India, has fallen off from a very flourishing town to a very poor and small one*' (Islam, et.al., 1985).

But three decades later from 1872 onwards, the population growth was steady as recorded in the census reports. The population in 1872 was 69,212 within the municipal area of six square miles (Siddiqui et.al., 1990). Urbanisation was hastened following the declaration of Dhaka as a capital in 1905, which however declined again with the annulment of the declaration in 1911, and influenza epidemic in 1918. The growth rate declined between 1911 to 1921 to only half of that in the previous decade. The centralised policy of administration, new education system, scope of acquiring job by dint of qualifications as against inherited occupation etc. hastened the changes in urban living.

From the composition of communities in different phases, three distinct pattern of urbanization may be identified. First in the early stage of urbanization the city was divided into mahallas, each one containing a particular occupation group. These were identifiable residential entities with homogenous population related through occupation, religion, geographical origin or caste membership (Schoenauer, 1981). Names of localities in different parts of Dhaka clearly bear the testimony of the

existence of localities according to occupational pattern. Viz., Banglabazaar for book publishers, Shankharibazaar for the conch craftsmen, Sutarnagar for carpenters, Kamarnagar for blacksmiths, Patuatuli for artists, Khamartuli for potters etc. Thus communities were compartmentalised on the basis of socio-economic status or group.

Second pattern of urban morphology was formed during the colonial period when with diversity of urban occupation, people having heterogenous occupation and socio-economic status lived in the same community. This still can be found in the informal part of the city; segregation only existed between the living areas of the locals and the Europeans. The British colonial urbanisation can be termed as a process of manifestation of the political and economic changes (Ahmed, 1992). The dominance dependent relationship changed the indigenous production activities of the urban centres. The colonial administrative policy created new job opportunity for the locals and thus influential natives were formed who ultimately developed the indigenous city which encompassed Wari. Ramna was also developed during the early 20th century as a seat for administration and high class European residential area. Third pattern evolved due to the compartmentalization of communities according to socio-economic status or groups which evolved in the post-independence period of Bangladesh. The part of the city designed mostly in this century on formal planning is characterised by segregation of communities according to income classes. This gives rise to the farther northern and north-eastern growth, creating satellite towns and expanding the city's boundary.

### **6.2.3 Residential Development**

Residential development in Dhaka initially took place along the river Buriganga. During the Mughal period, society elite consisting of the Mughal high officials and zaminders used to live along this riverside development. The upper class used to maintain a demarcation with the lower class. This ultimately gave rise to different settlement areas according to social stratum (Mamun, 1989, p. 55). Subahder and upper class settled around the river Buriganga whereas the lower class resided in the inner part of the city. The trader class built their modest houses which identified themselves with neither of lower class nor of the upper aristocrats. The location of their settlement was usually around *Becharam Deuri*, *Aga Sadeq* and *Ali Naqi Deuri* ; north from the riverbank and east of the original fort. The Mughal rulers and officials also settled in and around the present Azimpur, Bakshibazar and Nawabpur areas west to the fort.

Attraction of the river front as the most lucrative and prestigious residential area continued upto the beginning of the 20th century. It extended nearly a mile from the Dulai canal to Babupura (Mamun, 1993). Houses were started to be built on the two sides of the Dulai canal in the second half of the 18th century (Rahman et.al., 1996). European traders starting with the Portuguese, set up their factories in the north of Dhaka around Tejgaon from early 17th century (Karim, 1964). During this time, riverfront was already heavily built up. This barred the foreigners from finding suitable land at locations other than Tejgaon for better communication. This led the Europeans settlement closer to the canal. High European civil officers and local elites used to live along the river (Islam, 1996).

Late 19th century saw some residential development of the upper-middle class people. This took place in the areas like Gandaria, Wari, Swamibag etc. The establishment of Dhaka as the capital of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam brought the development of the civil lines in Ramna area and beyond, at the north of the city limits. This included both the residential and commercial developments. *A new town was being established. Big government offices and beautiful houses for their employees were built on the field of Ramna. Every house was on big compound, and empty, spacious and well-planned avenues ....The rich are buying as much land as they can and constructing houses in the jungles of Ramna* (Mojumder, 1920). The British and local elite preferred the riverside for residential development till the annulment of partition of Bengal in 1905. By then, the demand for riverside residential development which was gradually transformed into the main commercial district gave rise to the development in Ramna (Islam, 1996).

#### **6.2.4 Trade and Commerce**

Dhaka has been a centre for trade and commerce for centuries. During the Mughal period merchant of Moor, Mughal, Pathan, Turani and Armenian origins thronged to Dhaka. It also attracted the Dutch, the Greeks, the French, the Portuguese and the English. (Siddiqui et.al., 1990, p. 31). Therefore, Dhaka, as a river port had to handle a huge quantity of various kinds of commodities (e.g. world famous muslin cloth, pottery, various arts and crafts products etc.). These were for both internal markets as well as to distant lands. Metals such as iron, copper and tin were the main imports which were meagre in quantity compared with the exports. Bengal was the richest province of the British empire and the granary of India. The wealth and resources of Bengal were virtually dedicated to maintain the imperial army (Kamruddin, 1970, p. xxvi).



Till the 19th century Dhaka muslin continued to be very popular with the world's fashion connoisseurs; large quantities of it were exported to European markets. Very fine textile cotton, silk and brocades were produced in Bengal which were famous for their artistic delicacy and formed the main export. Bengal was also famous for filigree and delicate works on gold, silver, brass, shells and wood. During this period, different castes were involved in different birth-ascribed profession. Also higher caste Hindus were mainly involved in trade and commerce whereas lower caste Hindus remained either artisans or cultivators.

By 1817, the popularity of muslin and other indigenous textile started to decline with the introduction of cheap mill-made yarn and clothes from England. This threatened the survival of the local textile industry. With this the commercial importance of Dhaka city began to reduce. The rise of Calcutta as another important urban centre of Bengal reduced Dhaka's share of the provinces trade and commerce. However, at this time, jute and indigo began to emerge as new items. In the late 19th century, Dhaka's main exports were cloth, indigo, betel nut, saffron flower, soap, leather, jewelry etc. In the early 20th century, the main export item was jute, when Narayanganj emerged as Bengal's principal jute trading center (Mohsin, 1991).

### **6.3 Evolution of Urban Society**

According to Bhuiyan (1995), during the Mughal period, the society of Bengal was divided into three major categories of people:

1. The upper class consisting of members of the royal court, zamindars, revenue collectors etc.
2. Middle class comprising of persons with some education, lower category government employees, courtiers of zaminders and petty traders.
3. Lower class of peasants and other categories of laborers, artisans and craftsmen.

This classification did not include the rich trader group which became an inevitable segment of the society probably little later. Karim (1992) described different classes in the pre-British society which broadly included - aristocrats of different categories, mercantile community, ulama class and general people. Aristocracy was claimed by two groups, firstly by those who held high positions under the Nawabs by virtue of their performance and efficiency of works; and secondly the landed gentry. To consolidate victories over the local rebel leaders, the Mughal government began to distribute tax-free vast land to the loyal subjects promoting them to the status of land lords or zaminders. Thus a feudal system began to spread heads of which became

powerful socially, politically and economically. These people also formed a significant part of the top echelon.

Zamindars were the administrative representatives. In spite of their loyalty to the imperial power, they had constant rivalry with the Mughal rulers for the profit of production. The profit went to the account of these two ruler classes instead of to the laborers and peasants who were the main contributors to the production process. The inequality in the income between upper and lower class was so high that it resulted into the strict demarcation among social classes.

According to Bhuiyan (1995) the middle class emerged as a result of declining feudalism of the Mughal era and rising capitalism under the British. About the mercantile community Karim (1992) remarks that this group also belonged to the upper class; because of their wealth they used to hold a significant position in the society. The ulama class was also very influential in the society though they were neither wealthy nor high officials. The society paid them the highest esteem due to their devotion to and knowledge of the religion. Educated Sheikhs and Syeds, mostly of Persian origin, scholars, physicians and businessmen constituted in this group.

Besides the above groups, the vast population of the country constituted the peasants, small traders, and agricultural and industrial labourers living mainly in the rural areas. The general people were divided into numerous classes according to their respective occupations. Agriculture was the principal occupation of the people; there were other categories too such as Jeley (fisherman), dhopa (washer man), sutar (carpenter), kamar (blacksmith), kumar (potter) etc. (Chakrabarty, 1992).

The social scenario of Dhaka began to change in the later part of the 18th century due to the advent of British rulers. In 1763 an anarchic situation ensued when the East India Company took over the city. This event led to the collapse of the city administration. For the whole year the city had no administration, no authority, no law and order (Islam, 1991, p.75). Meanwhile activities of bandits, *fakirs* and *sannasis* worsened its situation. The city aristocrats (descendent of Nawab families and its courtiers) attempted to quell the situation but in vain; The British soon interfered and imprisoned some of them. This instigated many city dwellers to move out of the city. The British tried to set up a puppet government headed by *Mutsuddis*, but nevertheless failed to bring the normalcy. Introduction of the post of Naib-e-Nazim as the chief administrator of Dhaka helped to appease the situation. All these incidents which the city leaders could not control put their leadership into question and diminished their stature.

### 6.3.1 General Stratification in the Society

**Caste:** Besides the socio-economic classes, a birth ascribed caste system existed among the Hindus which is more or less still maintained. In general, the Hindu religion consists of four classical social orders or *varnas*. At the top of it were the *Brahmans*, priests and scholars; next were the *Kshatriyas*, the warriors, then *Vaisyas*, the business community and at the bottom of this pyramid the *Sudras*, the untouchables. A Hindu is born with his caste, pre-determined by that of his father and cannot change his status. But in Bengal there are six castes which according to their social status are the *Brahmans*, *Baidyas*, *Kayasthas*, *Mahisyas*, *Raj Banjshis* and *Namasudras* (Chackrabarty, 1992, p.170).

Through the rigid caste system, sometimes a social and occupational mobility is observed, most significantly in the upper and middle castes. Leaving their traditional occupation when their incomes would no longer support the desired life-styles, many in these categories sought new jobs. Normally, failure to comply with the prescribed ritual, rules and regulations would result in social ostracism. But in a changed environment, switching occupation did not affect one's social homogeneity. Thus Chakrabarty (1992, p. 172) quotes from the 1911 census of India that Brahman and *Pundits* became the shareholders of different profitable businesses, for example, the Great Eastern Hotel Company in Calcutta. They even got actively involved in tannery and winery business, which previously were the purview of the Saha businessmen. So the Sahas could no longer be undermined socially for running wine shops. "*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*" (Census of India, 1911, quoted from Chakrabarty, 1992).

**Class:** The preponderance of the Muslims in this region continued upto the Mughal period. Internally they were divided into two major classes- Ashraf and Atraf, the high and low classes (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 168). The Ashrafs claimed noble ancestry, while the Atrafs had no such pretension. There is a resemblance between the high caste Hindus and upper class Muslims in their social responses. This class is not identified from a single occupation since some of them were zaminders or high officials under the previous government, some were Islamic scholars. But they had similar attitude like high caste Hindus, for example, to do the menial jobs was disgraceful to them. They also contempt the lower group which basically consisted of the workers like weavers, barbers, oil-producers etc. The Ashraf class was conservative in nature and strictly obscured the religious rules and regulations.

### **6.3.2 Social Structure under the British**

Social structure, as demonstrated by Mamun (1986), is co-related with the contemporary mode of production. During the colonial period, land had become the main property and determined the mode of production. The society as it was not industrialized, fully depended on the land and agriculture for its subsistence.

During the colonial rule, the synonymosity of land and administration in the previous set up was taken aback from the Zaminders, whereas the administration totally remained under the jurisdiction of the representatives of the colonial government. This created drastic changes in the existing social structure. The feudal system transformed and gave rise to a capitalist society which was stratified into different classes such as administrative, service holders related with new administration, zaminders, traders etc. At the same time the previously existing social strata among Hindus and Muslims also remained intact. Mamun (1986) categories the society during the colonial period into Zaminder, Middle class, Traders and Peasants.

**a. Zaminder :** A new class of zaminders emerging out of the Permanent Settlement Act held the topmost position in the society (Mamun, 1986). They owned the land and also collected revenue. But the contact between the zaminder and land grew feeble in course of time as they spent luxurious life mostly in the urban areas. For revenue collection, these absentee zaminders had to depend on tax collectors, middlemen and touts. This last group also thus gradually grew influential in the society.

Besides zaminders, there were other people who also belonged to the topmost class. These were the old lakherajders (holders of tax-free land as reward), progenitors of the exiled and dethroned royal courtiers (Nawabs and Naib-e-Nazim) etc. Though the economic and political influence of such people were gradually decaying, yet they were still revered in the society, specially the Nawab families.

**b. Middle Class :** The middle class consisted of mainly the self-employed people, and those with different types of salaried jobs. Professionals such as lawyers, physicians and sometimes middlemen or estate officers are also included within this group. Mamun (1986) cited from the government report that the progenitors of the upgraded middle class or such other persons, who could not totally depend on land for their livelihood started to acquire formal education with the hope of getting government services. Thus a group of educated middle class was formed.

Socially this was an open group. Although the majority of the members were Hindus, caste had insignificant influence in the formation of this class. People having similar educational background and services were considered to be of the same class. Muslims were slower to absorb this change through education and service, though those who were educated took up jobs and were considered to be within the same social group (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 175).

**c. Traders :** Bengal became increasingly involved in international trade and business since the first quarter of the 19th century (Mamun, 1986, p. 105) which gave rise to a group of wealthy traders. Rapid development of communication, rise of Chittagong as the port city of East Bengal with a vast and fertile hinterland, the increasing production of exportable goods etc. made this possible. Other than conventional exportable goods like cotton, indigo, betel-nut, leather etc., jute boom and tea production linked Bengal with the international economy. It created several categories of middlemen in between the producers and the exporters though the market was dominated by the foreign traders. The internal market was jointly shared by the non-Bengalis and foreigners. A few Bengalis involved in the business at regional level were mainly the Sahas.

The foreign traders needed the help and services of local people in different tiers. The business internally was run with the help of local agents, numbers of factory councils, some subordinate writers, and a contingent of militia. From the native side they were *banias, mutsuddis, gomosthas, paikers, dalals, kayals, sarrafs, mohrers, paiks, peadas* and required number of labourers (Islam, 1991, p. 77). The local factory employees or agents occupied important position in the society due to their monetary strength. Some of them gradually took up businesses themselves and emerged as the new business class.

Mamun (1986) did not identify the currency dealers within the trading sector. But it is known that a significant section of the top society echelon stratum emerged from the currency dealers. Islam (1991) distinguishes them as a different class in the society. But they can be included under the traders group as many from the business group turned to be money lenders or currency dealers and vice versa.

**d. Peasant or Lower Class :** The lower class was that group of people who had no relation with the social, economic or political power. Nevertheless their hard work went for the benefit of the powered group. There existed different sub-categories within this group which was mainly identified from the occupation as mentioned in

the earlier sections. Besides the farmers, labourers and petty traders were also considered the lower class.

### 6.3.3 Emergence of Society Elite

The decline and fall of Mughals led to the decline of associated institutions; and gradually a new society emerged on the ruin of the old social order. This became more clear by the last decades of the nineteenth century. Rules and policies followed by the British in different times gave rise to different classes in Bengal. The emergence of such classes, specially the society elite, was the result of colonial administrative policies. Those who achieved success through their association with the British were the leading members of the new society. The local people nearest to power became society elite. Result of their individual success later perpetuated to other family members. Many of them formed the lower stratum of the colonial administration, and the higher stratum of the emergent local middle class (Islam, 1991, p. 81). Four particular groups are found to be emerged in Dhaka out of the mentioned categories as the social elite group during the late 19th and early 20th century. These groups are the results of different policies taken by the rulers in different times.

a. Zaminders, lakherajders and progenitors of royal courtiers as usually formed the topmost class. The legal basis of the landed aristocracy was the **Permanent Settlement Act**, introduced by the East India Company in 1793. Previously, zaminders were basically revenue collectors who did not own the land. The land ownership lied with the imperial government under which they were petty administrators. But under the new act, zaminders were given the land ownership too (Kamruddin, 1970, p. xxxiii). The company wanted to increase the income from land by conferring the right of proprietorship while fixing the revenue in perpetuity. The rate of revenue fixed on land was high enough to abolish the petty zaminders and feudal lords. Anybody could buy zamindari under this act and peasants lose their right on land as it became zaminders property.

The zaminders used to carefully maintain their social status, they encouraged inter-marriage among members of similar families. They also took it up as their responsibility to get involved in various social activities. For example, many zaminders living in Dhaka were known for their charity works and donations towards the development of Dhaka (Mamun, 1993). Many of them collaborated with the colonial government on many grounds and extended their cooperation to the British government. Some of the zaminders of Dhaka and Pabna during the Sepoy Mutiny in

1857 supported and actively helped the Company. They did it purposefully to survive and to retain their own supremacy in the society (Mamun, 1986, p. 99). The government also showed its appreciation by awarding them titles, such as 'Maharaja' to Suryakanta of Mymensingh, 'Nawab' to Abdul Gani of Dhaka etc. The zaminders were also used to be nominated by the government as members of the Local Boards or municipalities. Mamun (1986) identifies this group to be totally dependent on colonial system, without effective role in social mobility.

**b. The currency chaos** occurred in the 18th century due to the British domination over the economy and land system. But its origin goes back to the 17th century when the value of a coin was determined by its metallic content. Every region had its individual currency which needed to be exchanged. There were seven types of currencies in vogue in Dhaka's market, of which Arcot was the major. Sicca, another currency retain its original value only for a year; after this, *batta* or discount had to be paid on it. Since government revenue was collected only in sicca, all currencies had to be converted to sicca for revenue payment (Islam, 1991).

It required a degree of specialization to deal with the currency exchange. This gave rises to currency dealers as a kind of first generation bankers. Many people were involved in various types of currency business socially who were known as *seths* (money lender), *sarrafs* (money exchanger), *potdars* (jewellers), *banias* (merchant) and *mahajans* (pawn man). The *seths* and *banias* who were the big capitalists mainly controlled the market. As bankers they used to issue *hundies* or bills of exchange. All the members of this currency dealing class were not equally influential in the market. For example, the *sarrafs* who basically dealt with *batta* system rather than issuing *hundis* had no significant capital compared to those of *seths* and *banias*.

Money-lending was a significant phenomenon even in the 17th century. Under the nawabs, brokers became very rich through banking transactions. With prosperity, specially the Hindu merchants like Jagat Seth and Umichand, held influence over the nawabs and the society (Karim, 1992, p. 64). Jagat Seth was the nawabs principal revenue collector. He used to make up the revenue of the defaulting zaminders and later recover it on ten percent interest. Many like him used to lend the zaminders, traders and even the Nawab. For example Nawab Aliwardi Khan often borrowed money from Jagat Seth to finance his military operations against the *Marathas*. After the battle of Plassey, Jagat Seth lent Mir Jafar more than five million of rupees in accordance with an arrangement with the Company (Karim, 1992, p. 67). Umichand was another famous bania who was later appointed as *diwan* (tax collector) under the

nawab. It is no wonder that these money lenders became so powerful that sometimes they even influenced the administrative decisions.

This group's influence continued under the colonial rule. They used to stand financial security to revenue farmers, zamindars and taluqdars at high interest rates which earned them huge wealth (Islam, 1991, p. 80). The deadline for revenue payment was strictly maintained by sun-set law. The slightest delay would have put the zamindery at stake. This sometimes compelled the zaminders to borrow money from these currency dealers for paying government revenue punctually. Moreover, the revenue fixed under the Permanent Settlement Act was quite high, and in many cases small zaminders could not collect it from their subjects in time. The luxurious lifestyle of many zaminders also made them indebted to this money-lenders. Therefore, *"It will not be an exaggeration to remark that by the end of the 18th century most zaminders and taluqdars of eastern Bengal fell indebted to the seths and banias of Dhaka* (Islam, 1991, p. 80).

The Europeans were also dependent on this community since they were ignorant of the local weight and measurement system, as well as the monetary exchange and marketing system. Therefore, not only the local zaminders, taluqdars or revenue payers but many of the European traders and administrators were also indebted to this class. Members of this class on many occasions used to make money contributing to different social and development works which was basically done in favour of the British government. This benefitted the Company and the company in return sometimes put the responsibility for maintaining law and order and revenue collection upon them. These made them a privileged and powerful community in Bengal. Thus the currency dealers held some control and respect in the society.

c. Permanent Settlement Act benefitted the high caste Hindus who were already liked by the British for their performance and obedience. This group included the mercantile class, who were always in advantageous position even during the Mughal. With this act, land became esteemed as the greatest private property, and anyone having money could buy it. This offered the mercantile class and office *amlas* the opportunity to rise up socially through buying zamindari as zaminders held the highest status in the society. This was inspite the fact that land management was less profitable than trading, money lending and money exchanging. Instead of developing capitalistic outlook like the British, the moneyed people adored the aristocratic value system which persisted inspite of radical changes in the social structure under the impact of colonial rule (Islam, 1991, p. 82).



Zaminders like Mathuranath Das, Jiban Krishna Roy, Madan Mohan Basak etc. primarily upgraded their status by huge land. Mathuranath was basically a poddar who had a mint and was involved in batta system. Later with economic prosperity, he started to issue hundis. According to Mamun (1993), though he became rich, yet he could not achieve a respectful position in the society. The reason was that he did not own any zamindery. It was only his son Madhusudan who started to buy zamindery and the family ultimately achieved the revered position in the society. Anada Chandra Roy was an influential lawyer of Dhaka before becoming a zaminder. After his prosperity in law business, he bought the zamindery of Armenian Zaminder, Lucas. He was also the first elected chairman of Dhaka Municipal Authority. Jiban Krishna Roy, probably the most influential zaminder of the early 19th century, was the son of a trader who bought zamindery out of business profit (Mamun, 1993, p. 82). Hafizullah, an uncle of Khwaja Alimullah, the founder of Dhaka's nawab family, advised the later in his death bed to withdraw all capital from business to invest in zamindari, mainly in *chars* (river islands). Amiruddin Daroga earned lot of money as a police officer and then bought land properties and declared himself a zaminder.

d. The Bengali middle class was born out of a peculiar socio-economic transformation which started with the colonial rule Chakrabarty (1992). The centralized administration policy of the British Government created many government jobs in the sectors like law, revenue, health, communication, police etc. These were opened for the local people with a knowledge of English. With the creation of new jobs as a result of the expansion of the colonial state apparatus, English education became more and more important. The Bengalis, the *Vishayi Bhadrak* (materialistic gentlemen) accepted the English education readily and formed the first generation of educated middle class (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 174). T. B. Macaulay was a member of the Supreme Council of India. His minutes of 1835 which launched English education and knowledge in India opened the way for the growth of westernized Indian middle class. Its objectives 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 colour, but English in taste, ...'

The invigorated class who became acquainted with the Western education and hence culture mainly joined the other already privileged community of Bengal. They started to become doctors, lawyers, teachers, police officers and writers under the British education system. which made them familiar with the Europeans' lifestyle. They tried to imitate those as a bid to become so called civilized in manner and attitude. This

affinity for western culture, education and lifestyle gave rise to another social class. This group, western or European in thoughts and ideas contributing in the creation of a modern Bengali society, was called *baboos* or *bhadraloke* (gentleman). The neo-literate Hindus of mid and late 19th century of this region basically formed this class. Dr. Misra presented a vision about 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).

Mamun (1986) identifies their characteristics as being directly or indirectly dependent on land, but the majority of them remained in the job. They also used to maintain contact with their rural origin and spend the earnings from services on land. Many of them came from well off and influential families. This middle class was a resultant group of oriental conservatism and occidental liberalism. They tended to be wise, liberal representative of people but at the same time superior to them.

Another rural-based group was also added to this class. This group migrated to the urban areas and became eligible for government and other salaried job through education. This group mainly included the progenitors of the decaying middlemen. Other middlemen who dealt with the farmers came into light due to the expansion of commercial agriculture and jute boom.

The middle class gradually started to occupy a significant position in the society due to their interaction with the British, connection with the administrative policy and the know how. They became the intelligentsia, moneyed people and new landlords in Bengal and the automatic leaders of the society. As intellectuals they created a society of their own and hardly disseminated their knowledge to the masses (Kamruddin, 1970, p. xxxii). This nullified the ideas of mid-nineteenth century educationalists who believed that if education began at the top, it would infiltrate to the masses.

The Muslims were confused and reluctant to readily accept the new ideas brought by the British and newly educated Hindu nationalists around them which sometimes were radical. Failing to realise the reality of time they were contained and besieged with a nostalgia of their past glory. Thus they were confined within their own community, being shut off from all ongoing developments. Chakrabarty (1992, p. 177) identifies another reason responsible for this negative attitudes to be the economic backwardness. The majority of the Bengali Muslims could not afford and did not want to take up English education. However their economic situation started to improve with the agricultural expansion.

Chakrabarty (1992, p. 177) further remarks that a limited number of upper class Muslims were educated in English; nevertheless it did not become popular among the general Muslim population initially despite encouragement from all quarters. In competitive situations, Muslims were in a backward position due to their non-enthusiastic and conservative attitude to embrace the social mobility. The 1857 Sepoy revolution started in Bengal and ultimately spread all over the India. This resulted into the change of ruling system, when the British Government replaced the then East India Company. Thereafter, the British administration faced the Muslims with their hostility and early attempts to resurgence. As a result, the government gave sympathetic look to the problems of Muslims and adopted several policies to encourage them to take up education, jobs and thus to become an active part of the society and administration. Thus in the early century, Muslim middle class truly started to emerge and gain influential positions in Dhaka's civic, social, economic, political and cultural scenario. This process was aided more with the short-lived partition of Bengal and the establishment of an University in Dhaka.

#### **6.4 Summary**

A comprehensive study of socio-economic transformation in Dhaka in this chapter identified the urban influences. The late 19th and early 20th century Dhaka is marked by a social change giving rise to different classes. British administrative policies had affected various spheres of the society creating new ways of living. These incorporated the changes in the political field, new system of education, pattern of services and occupation etc. All these influenced the socio-cultural dimensions of life of the indigenous society. Thus a social reformation entailed various social groups. These new classes were pliant to the colonial customs and norms. However, the study engenders the forces that were explicated in the builtform of the prerogatory groups. The following chapter on the basis of the findings of this chapter attempts to unfold the influences that lie in the formation of houseform under the colonial doctrine.

## **Chapter Seven**

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**Socio-Economic Aspects of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Multi-Court Houses**

## **Chapter Seven**

# **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MULTI-COURT HOUSES**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In Bengal, emergence of urban classes specially the society elite during the late 19th and early 20th century is a direct consequence of colonial rule. This emerging class, already having influences in the society by dint of their wealth and honour, gradually infiltrated into the city's administrative machinery. This phenomenon found expression in different ways, such as the way of living, the style of living, the place of living; sometimes these revealed grandeur and magnificence of this prerogatory group and sometimes expressed very much utilitarian spatial layout due to trade and economy. Nevertheless, their houseform concomitant with the social life divulges the concurrent socio-cultural phenomena. An attempt to unfold the extent of influence on houseform reveals that the apparent grandeur of the houses seems to be expressive of the power of imperialism and the utility be the expression of commercialism. But the planning features construe the inherent norms and knowledge of tradition. The multi-court houses, though mostly palatial in scale and appearance as originated by a particular elite group, ultimately explicates the long established traditional layout.

### **7.2 Architecture in Bengal under the Colonial Rule**

The architectural style in Bangladesh coherent with its culture, climate and society took thousands of years to evolve. Throughout this passage of time, it envisaged different influences knowingly visible in Buddhist monasteries and in Hindu temples upto the 11th century A.D.; later, in the Muslim Sultanate period during 13th to 16th century, and under the Mughal rule from 16th to 18th century. All these phases show a sympathetic attitude towards the architecture of Bengal, which was congruent and coherent with the local demand. About the Mughals, Muktadir & Hassan (1985) remark that they used their knowledge inherited from their central Asian ancestors without giving much attention to the socio-cultural needs of the indigenous population. Sympathy to the vernacular was limited to the consideration of local materials and climate only.

Introduction of British colonial power in Bengal created a deviation from the architectural styles, as it overlooked the architectural continuity of this region. Hence, introduction of some new styles and architectural forms had been observed which were attempted to made compatible with this culture. Haque (1988, p. 25) remarks

that two hundred years of British colonial rule in the sub-continent had severed the continuity of Bengali socio-cultural life and economy, including the development of architecture which prior to the advent of Mughals and the British had a rich tradition expressed in the monasteries, temples, mosques and other built forms of the region. Islam et.al (1985, p. 25) term the influence as 'devastating'. His interpretation is that the activities of the colonisers guided by the sole intention of economic exploitation, totally disregarded the culture of Bengal. Azim (1991, p. 18) also supports this view having a similar contention as she terms it to be a 'rupture' in the overall architecture of the region.

Thus through various influences, the colonial rule had affected the architecture of Bengal. It introduced new social forces and life-styles which in turn influenced its architecture. It was not only the initial response of the pre-existing centres and strata that were induced by external forces (colonial power), but also the very modern centres were initially established by such external forces. Most changes introduced either directly or indirectly by the colonial powers have been focused on the central institution of the society (Eisenstadt, 1966, p. 110). In this continent this was seen in the centralised administrative set-up enhanced by the new education system, economy, customs, values etc.

During the colonial period, Calcutta, as mentioned earlier emerged as a centre of the British rule. Therefore, early buildings built by the colonisers in Calcutta show resemblance with those in Britain. They were visually executed in the neo-classical manner popular in Europe in those days. Islam et.al (1985, p. 25) term those to be the exact facsimiles of building in Europe. For example, Calcutta Government House, Serampur College and Dhaka Old State Bank.

Ahmed (1985, p. 35) describes this style as European Renaissance type initially appearing in the 17th century churches of Dhaka, and subsequently applied to the secular buildings. He mentions succession of phases in architectural style during the British rule. Late 18th and 19th century buildings were built with semi-octagonal or round corners and tall doric columns. The revival of the classical Greco-Roman architecture adopted in mediavel Europe with salient *orders* classified under *Tuscan*, *Ionic*, *Corinthian* and *Composite* became very popular in this part of the world including Bangladesh. The new architectural elements introduced during the 19th century were the semi-circular arches, the triangular pediment carried over semi-Corinthian, Doric or Ionic columns and other foliated motifs in plaster. These columns appeared with capitals, entablature with architraves; freeze and cornices were also visible in the colonial buildings (Rashid et.al., 1994). Trabeated roofs with tiles

and rafter replaced the massive vaults, pure arches were also used. A new hybrid of Mughal and European style emerged in late 19th and early 20th century. In the wake of first partition of Bengal in 1905, this was patronized by Lord Curzon, a great admirer of Mughal art and architecture.

Architecture of Bengal under the British was a resultant of forces exerted by the foreign rulers and local demands. Naqi and Khan (1995) identified a number of motives which determined the course of architecture in Bangladesh to follow the 19th century. They were, 1. the rise of Bourgeoisie in India, particularly the Bengali society 2. the prestige attached to the classical style 3. the government's encouragement of westernisation of the upper class 4. natives affiliation towards Indian architecture which gave rise to an apparently Gothic new imperial style developing into the so-called Indo-Saracenic style.

However, for the local people there always had remained an inherent component or force, the inbuilt mental map in guiding the motives. Therefore, the style evolved in the later days was not only a facsimile; rather an exegesis of the different socio-cultural and political forces.

The colonisers found their own way to fuse the architecture with this region. Climate was the main force influencing the imported style of the British. Locally used architectural elements, such as overhanging eaves, wooden lattice and veranda began to be incorporated in the British buildings which gave rise to a new type with a strange mixture of elements (Islam, 1985). This is more particular in the bungalow houses as discussed in Chapter Five. However, the transformation of bungalow architecture exhibiting more grandeur and permanency appears to be the later style. This is found in mansions and villas, and also in other administrative and commercial buildings. Climate also influenced the internal arrangement of buildings. When the building refers to a local owner, the traditional spatial layout is intrinsic, though it may ostensibly be a derivative of the colonial style.

Bengal in the later half of the 20th century experienced a major political breakthrough. It first departed from the colonial rule in 1947 and then gained the independence in 1971 resulting into Bengal emerging as a new nation. During its first phase, most building construction was under the governmental jurisdiction which involved no trained architect or designers. Azim (1991) remarks about the architecture of this period as the heyday of international style. The post-independence phase is marked with the gradually emerging awareness of nationalism and search for identity in all aspects including architecture.

### 7.3 Colonial Influence on Houseform

Very little evidences of houseform can be traced back to the Mughal period. Some residential buildings during this period were made of brick which were not very significant in number and size. The overall indigenous residential architecture exemplified the rural pattern of non-durable type, even the use of brick in vernacular architecture was restricted. In fact, Mughal buildings made of permanent materials in this region were mainly civic buildings like castles, mosques and kuttras (Mamun, 1991). Kuttras are one form of residential quarter built around a courtyard. This form may have originated in Northern India from where the rulers descended. Bara Kuttra was made in around 1822 A.D. as the Mughal Governor Shah Suja's palace. But after it was built, the prince gave it away to its builder and designer Abul Kashem (Mamun, 1993, p. 174). It was associated with the concept of providing a free of cost resting place for the passers by. Twenty two shops were built around the court of the kuttra from which rent the maintenance cost used to be borne (Mamud, 1991, p. 8).

The advent of British and introduction of their various policies affected the local house form which by then was more permanent in nature. The styles as already mentioned above about the colonial architecture found expression in various administrative, commercial and residential buildings built and mainly used by the British occupants in this region. Among these buildings a large number of residential buildings were built not only by the British but also by other Europeans and the local elite. These buildings demonstrated the social and economic position of the owners by its scale and grandeur. The residential architecture of this region under the colonial rule is marked by the evolution of two patterns, the Bungalows and the Mansions.

**Bungalow:** The bungalows were the first residential adoption by the colonisers in this context. Created in contrast to the crowded indigenous 'native' dwelling types, the bungalow represented a spatial separation and expressed the social and political divide between the rulers and the masses (Desai, 1996). These were located in the military cantonments as well as in civil lines. Early colonial bungalows were single-storey structures of simple symmetric composition with a large hall in the centre. The veranda runs around it providing climatic protection and the builtform was located in the midst of an open land forming an entrance garden. All sanitation activities were located on the external walls. This houses showed clear demarcation of zones between the ruler or 'sahib' and the native servants. The kitchen and the servants' quarters were located behind the house as the 'mimsahib' ran the household with a



multitude of native servants. Therefore, the concept of front and back found expression in it. However, in the later days, the inception of social changes made the form more imposing and grand. However, even this grandeur was emerged and influenced by the local climate, materials and building technologies and special socio-economic needs of the users evolved through the years in the context of the region.

**Mansions:** By the end of the 19th century, the bungalow was on the threshold of Indian acceptance both by the Europeans and the locals in the form of mansions and villas. The early impact of colonial influence was, however, felt on the existing dwellings in the traditional urban areas of India as Indians cautiously began to adopt European aesthetics. Therefore, the first to undergo a transformation were the facades of the traditional houses while the plan organisation remained the same. These mansions and villas adopted the concurrent architectural styles in their outlook and in most of the cases was owned by local affluent class (Desai, 1996). Therefore, in their spatial arrangement, these mansions were reflective of the long established traditional tastes and values. These palatial buildings adopted classical orders externally. The spatial arrangement was cellular in nature having courtyards inside for both functional and climatic reasons. The entry is usually from the south, emphasis on axuality is also visible. Thus essentially an indigenous spatial arrangement was draped with alien elements in most of the houses. An inward looking house was blended with the colonial extrovert typology. Therefore, most of the houses are found to have veranda running around and at the same time an inner courtyard. It had spaces like entrance portico, living room furnished in European style which are descended from the European style. This style converged with the local sense of privacy for women, living habits, eating habits etc. as Azim (1991) refers to the kitchen to be the last to be affected as *the eating habits remain the last bastions of a true authentic culture.*

These residential typology can be identified in a different manner, the emergence of **court type** and **pavilion type** houseform (introvert and extrovert) as discussed in Chapter Five; the second one was the result of the British land policy of plot subdivision giving rise to demarcation of site with a distinct boundary wall. This also encouraged the adoption of bungalow style, being extrovert in nature. Azim (1991) identifies the bungalows to be the most interesting of the British structures. In fact, bungalows were the most forceful builtform of the British era which affected the local houseform. But this was basically an adaptation of European taste into the local context. In the long run, the styles of bungalows became the populist style for the local builders.

The second form does not replicate a British cottage, but incorporates elements such as the veranda running along the north and south of the buildings, which were primarily climate responsive. Introduction of curvilinear extended pitched roof or *bangla chala* in the bungalows is another example of climatic responsiveness which is basically an inheritance of the indigenous innovation. Living patterns of the British were also not replicated in the internal spaces of their houses. The placement of kitchen and servants quarters at the back away from the main building distinguishes the segregation of space domains into front and back, formal and informal (Imamuddin, 1984).

According to Azim (1991), neither the indigenous elite nor the British built totally rational houses, where form and function could not be extricated from each other. Superfluous elements are visible in both kinds of buildings. The local people had expressed their affluence and association with the rulers by a superfluous use of ornamentation, 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 general mass of local people. This houseform, neither superfluous nor grand also exhibits a rural to urban transformation. This form has already been discussed (see Chapter Five).

#### **7.4 Courtyard Houses**

In Bengali houses, courtyard is the focus of all household and socio-cultural activities. Therefore, this space also became the centre of the spatial arrangement. This arrangement is much evident in the rural houses. Sometimes a court characterises a family unit, i.e. a single court house consisting of an individual family, whereas multiple courts can express a number of families. Expansion of family is physically expressed by the addition of courtyards surrounded by similar activities. In urban scenario, the role of a courtyard from its socio-cultural point of view necessarily remains the same. In fact, it is such an element that retains its values unchanged.

##### **7.4.1 Court in a Changed Context**

Introduction of court houses in urban context manifests various components such as values, culture, climate, location, economy etc. Therefore, also in the changed milieu, the conceptual image of a house around a court guides the indigenous design decisions. In modern context, house form retains more compact and dense character than its rural counterpart due to the limitation of urban land, commercial value of

land, rigid road layout and availability of modern materials and technique etc. But the socio-cultural values of the urbanites are not far from those of the rural inhabitants from where most of them had migrated. Therefore, they retain the similar spatial concept as with that of the rural people. Changes occur in the construction type, selection of a more permanent material, connection between rooms through veranda etc. Very often, the house extends vertically to become multi-storied, still around around an inner court and retains the conceptual relationship with the ground. Even in some cases where scarcity of land is very much evident, courts are found in the form of open terraces on the upper floors (case 9). Here the symbolic transformation is observed.

The entry into an urban house is often guided by the road network except along the river where houses would prefer the riverview and therefore a promenade. Otherwise, it is basically a spontaneous growth. The traditional concept of south-facing layout thus becomes not always easy though attempts are always made. However, the long established climatic consideration remains in the internal arrangement of spaces around the court.

The entry leads to the formal part synonymous with the front or public domain of the house. If space permits it to a small court fronted by a veranda. This again directs toward the inner courtyard. There may be other entries from secondary roads if there are more than one road along the site or through a narrow passage bypassing the main outhouse. These secondary entries are directed to the inner court or the informal or private part of the house.

In the ground floor, rooms are arranged around this inner court. In the upper floors if any, a continuous veranda is provided inside facing the court which acts as the major and sometimes the only circulation space connecting the rooms. Usually the main staircase is located near the outhouse. In case of necessity, depending on the size of the house and configuration of the plot, other internal stairs are added. Rooms are arranged one after another along fronting the veranda.

#### **7.4.2 Courtyard as a Modulator of Environment**

In Bengali houses the courts play more of a socio-cultural role. But it also warrants a very significant role in creating a pleasant micro-climate. The introvert house type in urban context is provided with necessary light and ventilation from within the court. In addition to providing light and shade, 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

risers thus creating a lower pressure which induces air changes in the adjoining rooms and spaces (Mallick & Huda, 1996). House in a warm-humid climate, as in Bengal, require a constant exchange of air i.e. ventilation for thermal comfort. Therefore, buildings are necessary to be opened up to breezes (Koenigsberger). It enhances the suitability of the arrangement of rooms around an open courtyard. Due to such courtyard arrangement, most part of these houses have single room depth with a veranda for a single court which also allows very good cross ventilation.

### **7.4.3 Conceptual Manifestation**

Conceptually the houses display spatial distribution similar to that as in the traditional houses ( see Chapter Four). The living room replaces the 'katchari' or outhouse. The inner part remains within the female domain consisting of multifarious household activities. The access inside the house is restricted. Here court is an intermediated space between the habitable rooms- the private territory and the living rooms- the public territory. Moreover, court is a multipurpose space since it entails various functions and activities. It is the centre of all household activities as in the traditional layout and at the same time remains the place of intimate social interaction. The traditional festivals and rituals usually take place in the court. Rooms, if not directly accessible from the court, still sustains a conceptual relationship with it. The image of the house retained similar values since the concept of privacy, position of women in the family, rituals, norm etc remained unchanged even in the urban scenario. Therefore changes remain only in their physical manifestation.

### **7.4.4 Typology**

Two types of court houses can be observed in Dhaka. The first one is the single-court house where the rooms are arranged around a single inner court with or without a frontyard; other one is the multi-court house where there are two or more courtyards in a single house. Single-court house is derived from bungalow and traditional houses where the builtform 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 scale houses where a limited number of rooms are possible to arrange around a single court due to the shortage of urban land. In some cases, a large site area may retain a single court inside, which would be grand in scale incorporating multifarious activities.

On the other hand, multi-court houses are usually either very large or very narrow and long. The use of courtyards in this houses depicts the similar arrangement in their

relationship with rooms. But the overall grouping may vary according to different zones.

## **7.5 The Multi-Court Houses**

### **7.5.1 Physical Components**

Multi-court houses are found all over Old Dhaka. Two distinct patterns of such houses can be discerned. This categorization originated from the site configuration as discussed in Chapter Five. The first category of multi-court houses are the large mansions and moderate villas usually on good proportioned rectangular plots. The other type of multi-court house is the linear type built on narrow and long plots on streets with tremendous commercial value.

The first category retains a regular site layout along the mahalla street. However, in many cases the sub-division of plots gives rise to lanes and by-lanes and thus reduces the site area. However, the house generally retains a symmetrical pattern, specially in the living zone (case 5, 6). Symmetrical layout is broken in the inner zones for reasons like climatic, functional, topographical etc. though it is retained in the overall pattern. The main entry leads to a lofty space - the entrance lobby which directs to the living room. In some cases the house is placed with certain set back from the entry to the site, forming an entrance court (case 2,6,13). This entry and living room along with the adjacent courtyard form the formal part of the house. This part also contain small sized guest rooms and offices (case 1, 5) and sometimes guard rooms near the entry (case 6). The living room, however, leads to the inner part of the house, more specifically to the inner court. The physical arrangement of rooms around the court is similar to that of the traditional houseform which depicts rooms around the court with veranda. Similar layout is repeated in the successive courts. The connection between courts is usually through corridors which is the gap between rooms.

The rear courtyard retains services and ancillary facilities while the inner court is usually preserved for the main functions of the court. This is usually surrounded by the habitable rooms used mainly by the family members.

In many houses, a secondary entry prevails which serves the rear court or acts as a private access within the house. This is mostly facilitated by a secondary road adjacent to the site. There can be more than one secondary entries. There also remain more than one stairs in multi-court houses which are ideally located to serve individual

group of rooms around the courtyard. Some of the rooftops on the upper floor become terraces either overlooking the inner court or the front road.

In the second type of multi-court houses, the houseform is the result of commercial forces shaping the sub-division of plots. A regular residential plot with commercial potentiality, sub-divided linearly along its depth to give road frontage to all sub-divided plots gives rise to a linear plot and hence an elongated pattern of houseform (case 7,8,9,10).

Entry to the house is through a side alley like corridor or front room. The house is divided into three segments; the commercial part facing the street, the residential part in the middle and the service zone consisting of toilets and washing areas at the rear part (Imamuddin et.al,1989). The linear corridor gives access to different zones and courts through corridors. Access from the court to the rooms in most of the cases is direct without the transition of veranda which is not possible to provide in the site, sometimes as narrow as 6 ft (case study 10). Even in the upper floors, individual stair leads to individual group of rooms thus introducing more than one stair in the house. Upper floors are mostly habitable spaces. Terraces are also common. Courts are usually very small in size and virtually act as light wells and ventilators; sometimes corridors instead of verandas and rooms traverse the courts. Rooms usually do not open to the court but to the corridor which connects all the rooms. Only windows are placed facing the court to invite light inside the rooms.

### **7.5.2 Socio-Cultural Components**

Of the two types of multi-court houses, the first type, the mansions and villas were inhabited by the society elite, the affluent group of people and nobles related to administration, agriculture and trades, or people from other cultures like the Europeans, the Armenians or the North Indians. The other type was mostly occupied by petty businessmen and craftsmen or people from specific occupation groups (Rahman, 2 1996). However, both these forms divulge the inherent nature of the society and the social class, reflective of the concurrent socio-cultural phenomena.

These residential buildings were built in the late 19th and early 20th century. This was a time when Indo-Sararcenic style had set firmly on Indian architecture where classicism became obvious. Dhaka being an important centre in colonial set up could not escape the forces. The residential buildings of this period showed traditional courtyards and conceptual grouping in their layout and classical expression in the fenestration. In other words, this was visibly an Indian style enabling the local

sponsors to acknowledge their cultural roots and life style; at the same time it adopted the imperial style in appearance which was approved by the colonial power (Mowla, 1995). Thus this new style preempted the local royal and rising elite to adopt it to meet a dual purpose of being faithful to both tradition and power.

Colonisers identified their power with the erection of superb buildings in classical styles. However, the implantation of one type of building in another climate with different types of materials was not without difficulties. The European prototype used as full-scale model on which spaces were added and functional modifications were made. These manipulations of forms and images of glory had a vast appeal to the neo-elite of the Indian society. The emancipated individual rising to lead the society in spite of being born as a native endeavored to consolidate his social position and the newly acquired status by adopting a taste for things western; residences being the most visible and expressive of these (Haq, 1995, p. 1).

Since the colonial powers or indigenous rulers were interested in maintaining the political loyalty of the population, they aimed at maintaining a relatively passive type of obedience and identification, and whenever possible ready to utilize existing traditional loyalties or to transfer them to the new setting without much change in their basic social and cultural orientation (Eisenstadt, 1966). However, many forces either social or political, influenced the physical form, specially the houseform. In fact, houseform during this time was the derivative of forces including material and non-material components.

#### **a. Administrative**

During the late 19th and early 20th century the urban elite group and the middle class started to show some opposition to the colonisers, and at the same time became more open and receptive to them. This resulted in their increasing participation in civic activities, contribution to infra-structure development and involvement in municipality administration. Dhaka Municipal Committee was officially established in 1864 and the first elected municipal authority was formed in 1884. The election was held for 14 posts and mostly zaminders, rich traders and educated professionals got elected. Ananda Chandra Roy, the famous lawyer of Dhaka was the first elected chairman of Dhaka Municipal Committee (Mamun, 1993).

Due to political, administrative, commercial and sometimes social reasons the local elite began to interact with the British. Such interactions illuminated them with western ideas, life-styles and culture which were ultimately reflected in their own ways of life. For example, the European ways of celebrating various festivals, ball-dances held in a

large room, attracted members of this elite group too. Introduction of large open spaces, entrance lobby and hall rooms etc. in the outhouse is a consequence of this social predilection. Ruplal House is a good example, where both oriental and occidental cultural programmes used to take place in presence of music connoisseurs, invited local and European guests. In 1888, Lord Duffrin in his visit to Dhaka joined the ball-dance party in Ruplal's house (Mamun, 1993). To welcome him, even a silent competition was there regarding which house had a proper hall to hold the reception party.

#### **b. Ownership**

Bungalow style sometimes had been followed in the local mansions. In some cases, such houses were originally built by the Europeans like the Armenians, the French or British traders, and later was bought by a local affluent. Ahsan Manzil, the most famous palatial house, was originally used by the French. Zaminder Ali Mian bought the house and repaired it. The internal spaces of the Manzil were reflective of western way of living even when it was under the Nawabs. It appeared to be a very large bungalow palace with big living room, library, biliard room etc. All the rooms were furnished in European manner which was the evidence of populist influence imported by the European of that time. Similarly Ruplal house, another famous mansion, was also bought by a local money lender from an Armenian trader and extensions were made later (Mamun, 1993).

#### **c. Education**

The formal system of education imported by the colonial rulers brought in new thoughts and ideas to the local people. The European manners, their ways of living and social dealings infiltrated into a particular group of people through their exposure to books and medias, visits to Europe and also through the interactions at various levels and capacities with the Europeans. Since the education allowed them to climb the higher ranks in the administrative ladder, their access to the European society and familiarisation with the life-style became more obvious. Therefore, their paraphrasing of the colonial style in houseform created a vocabulary which was ostansibly dual in nature. At the same time, exposure to western education arouse the concept of nationalism among the Bengalis. This led them to the formation of political parties which fought for self reliance and eventually independence from the British. The elite and urban middle class were in the forefront of this movement. Outhouses played a significant role in facilitating such movements, meetings etc.



#### **d. Rituals and Festivals**

Traditional festivals and rituals of Dhaka recounts its glory during that time, many of which is still extant. For example, the Muslim ritual of 10th *Moharram (Ashura)* had been celebrated with joy and ecstasy from the time of Mughal empire (Karim, 1992). The Nawabs used to celebrate all the Muslim festivals and led processions with great enthusiasm. These continued under the patronisation of the local leaders even after the Nawabs were gone (Sarkar, 1992). The long procession of thousands of people carrying the symbolic elements, cenotaph was magnificent in its mood and attitude. This was headed by the local leaders which aggrandised the cheerfulness of the ritual.

Processions were usually overlooked and cheered from verandas and terraces by the women and children. The general people used to gather in a chawk or in front of the houses of the local elite which had a great bearing on the design of the public part of the house. These rituals though religious in origin, were irrespective of a particular religion in its celebration. For example, the Hindu rituals like *Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja* etc. were inseparable part of the society and people from other religions also used to enjoy the occasions. The deities were designed with fine craftsmanship. Individual deities and puja mandapas were established in different houses of the Hindu local elite. Gradually this became a tradition for them to maintain this ritual on their own expenses, where the social intention of mass celebration was more inherent than the religious one. The outer court of the multi-court houses used to serve as the place for rituals and festivals.

Besides religious festivals, courtyards also played an important role regarding secular social activities. Programmes pertaining to marriage, birth and childhood ceremonies, and even death is centered around the court. Marriage ceremony in both Hindu and Muslim is celebrated with great enthusiasm having a strong social value. The ceremonial activities (Gaye Halud, Sat Pak) necessitated large open space. Even in this social context, the segregation of male and female guests in such ceremonies were obvious which used to take place according to division of courts. Therefore, in the spatial arrangement, the social forces are intrinsic revealing the long established traditional demand.

Cock fight was another social festival. Many zaminders and aristocrats were fond of observing this. Usually these took place in streets, chawks or formal courts. To accommodate these social incidents, the design enhanced the consideration of an outer court which was comparatively large than the other courts inside. Kite flying was a very popular leisure activity and a seasonal festival which needed open field. But in urban context, due to the scarcity of land roof terraces substituted the open field.

#### **e. Division of Domains**

There grew up an urban middle class whose residential expectations were determined partly by the norms of the rural based elite living in the city (the so called landed gentry) and partly by the techno-economic possibilities prevailing in the cities themselves (King,1974). Westernisation influenced both the public and private domains of living, behaviour and activity. Opposite pull of tradition and westernisation forced the urban middle class to assume a dual life-style. Their dichotomous values found expression in the domestic design and living. Boundary was drawn between the formal and informal activity areas within a house corresponding to the two opposite patterns and life styles.

The traditional family pattern of joint nature engendered the houseform of an extended type requiring numerous rooms for the family use. The permittance into the private courts was determined by the degree of relationship of the member with the house owner. Moreover, the sense of privacy was also synonymous with the demarcation of male and female, therefore, in general, women had the admittance to the internal courts whereas men had selective admittance.

Therefore, privacy, male-female distinction, segregation of services etc. were some long lasting values and symbols which found expression in the demarcation of different zones. In this region, the female has always been treated to be confined within the boundaries of the house. Therefore, the inner court serves more a social purpose of providing 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 seperate courts perform these three types of activities. Thus their location is automatically guided by this domain concept.

#### **f. Material and Climate**

Availability of material also influenced the architectural style. Brick as a local material instigated most of the local buildings including the palatial buildings to be made in brick. Brick as a material was more permanent in nature, regional in flavour; although in many of the bungalows, wood was extensively used. It was enhanced by the fact that some of the elite possessed brick fields and thus could make a good use of it. For example, Radha Ballav, son of Ruplal first established the brick field in Dhaka (Mamun, 1993). The brick walls in most of the cases were claded with plaster. Ornamentation on plaster in manyof the buildings divulged the elegance of the owner (case study 6). This was, however, an influence of the classical styles imported by the colonisers. The local craftsmanship is expressed in the cast iron pillars, ornate railings,

wooden carving etc. Some wooden buildings expressed the local technology using purlin and rafter popularly known as the Ganga-Yamuna system (Imamuddin, et.al., 1994) wood carving etc. Even in some cases, the local technique of rafter and purlin had been transmitted in the durable brick buildings. This was possibly a nostalgic set up of mental mapping of the local elite (the use of dentil).

Facilitation of climate also plays a predominant role in the courts. The depth of the house necessitates its use. The provision of lighting and ventilation is possible in these enormously deep houses only through the introduction of courtyards inside as a void. Moreover, this enhances an introvert layout in the houseform which facilitates every group of rooms or zone with required light and ventilation.

#### **g. Pastiches**

The aristocracy which could be ascended through buying zamindery was also demonstrated in the houses of the nouveau-rich. Thus a self-styled aristocrate class was born who consequitively aspired to acquire all habits of an ideal civilized class- that of their British masters. In fact the grandeur of the house was taken to be a symbol of prestige which encouraged the elite to have a house with multiple courts with different *mahals* or segments.

In the superficial demonstration, the wealthy native had thier houses decorated with Corinthian pillars and filled with English furniture (Heber, 1820). The daughter of a foreign returned doctor Begum Shaista Ikramullah's description further explains the attitude of these class. ... *our 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 times...* (Haq, 1995). The populist fashion was engendered by several local trends. For, hunting was very popular among the kings and zaminders from a very early date. The display of hunting trophy in the living room an inclusion of local taste.

#### **h. Social Activities**

Moreover, the local leaders and wealthy influencials were involved in various philanthropic activities and charity works. This was found in the case of Nawab Abdul Gani who contributed money for several times for the betterement of the city (Mamun, 1993). Sometimes, this charity works were done openly to pronounce the gracefulness of the influencials. Regarding this, the outer court was used for the agglomerated general mass, whom the elite visited from a grand veranda with his

grand and benevolent disposition. Sometime, the outer court was also used for community dealings like meetings, mitigating problems etc.

### **7.5.3 Analysis of Form and Spatial Arrangement**

#### **7.5.3.1 Type a**

Introduction of multiple number of courts becomes necessary when the house has a large number of rooms and lofty spaces. The huge and massive scale of buildings due to its spatial requirement champions a climatic demand to reduce its depth. Courtyards are also used to make interiors more intimate. These give rise to a building with many courtyards which facilitates ventilation, lighting as physical components and various activities and interactions as social components. Moreover, separate courts can be identified with separate domains of a house and thus meet the conceptual and spatial demands. Houses are usually symmetrical. Though the inner part are less reflective of it.

#### **Form, zoning and progression of space**

The first category of multi-court houses i.e. the mansions and villas are usually two or three storied in height. The spatial arrangement exhibits the multiplication of a single court house but the concept of zoning adjusts the traditional single court type house within the multi-court arrangement. More to say, three distinct zones are observed in a multi-court house typical with the traditional house as described earlier.

The formal zone or the **public court** belongs to the male domain. It consists of living rooms, offices, and guest rooms. Sometimes the fore court (case 6) and the first court (case 1) forms this formal group. The informal or **private court** is the most enclosed female domain. The forms the main court with habitable rooms for the family members. The **services court** forms the third group. This sometimes contain a guest block. Sometimes, separate service entry leads to this zone making it less visible from outside.

The main entrance to the building is given a grandeur in its disposition flanked by monumental columns of Doric, Ionic, Corinthian or Composite styles. The entrance lobby is usually a lofty space. This leads to the living room and other external rooms (Case 1, 5). This consists of the formal part of the house; the courtyard located with this acts as a public court requiring a less stringent degree of privacy. In fact, the living room placed with a set back from the main road forms the outer or fore court. The main entry is sometimes surrounded by ancilliary rooms like guard rooms or guest rooms forming a court entirely for public purposes (case 6).

The main habitable rooms around another court beyond this formal part can be identified as private zone. This court retains all activities related to the informal zone requiring privacy from outsider. The private court of this zone is synonymous with the informal court or the female domain (case 3). The service court is usually placed at the rear part which location is similar to that in a traditional house. In case of two-court houses, the distinction remains in the formal-informal, public and private domains according to the concept of bipolar zoning (see Chapter Five).

### Transition of space

The transition of space from court to room through veranda remains virtually same as in the traditional court-houses. This exhibits a transition from open to sky court to the semi-open veranda through which a covered space (room) is approached. The transition is also evident in the transmittance into the house. For, the public court to the private court leads to the rooms of ultimate privacy. Here the transition is more restricted than the transition from court to room since it is involved with the social concept of privacy. Living rooms can be marked with the controlling mechanism or 'lock' (Rapoport, 1977) between private and public. Imamuddin (1984) elaborates this as he metaphorically considers the living room or the outer house as a window towards the outer world.

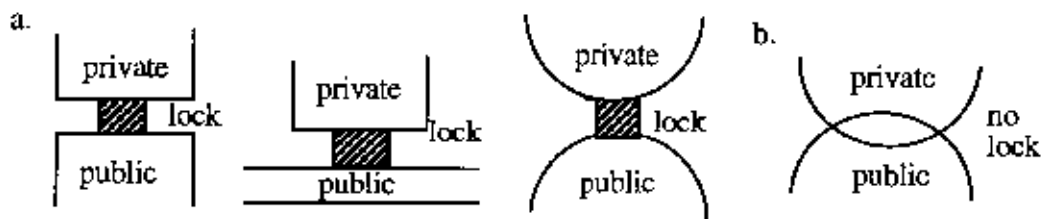


Fig. 7.1 Lock of Spaces in Different Ways (Source: Rapoport, 1977, p. 19)

This transition is also that of degree of privacy and the nature of the space. According to this argument, a court is semi-public in nature, while the veranda fronting the court is semi-private and the rooms private. Thus the type of activities that could take place in the courts, verandas or rooms are also defined.

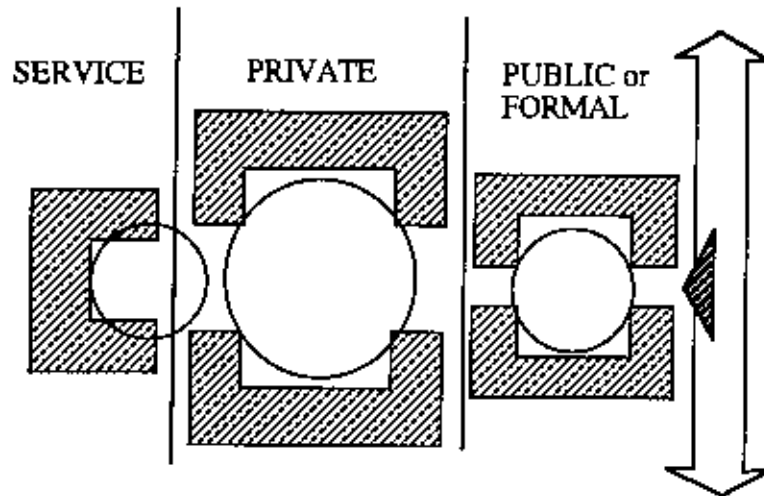


Fig. 7.2 Transition of Spaces in Multi-Court Houses ( type a)

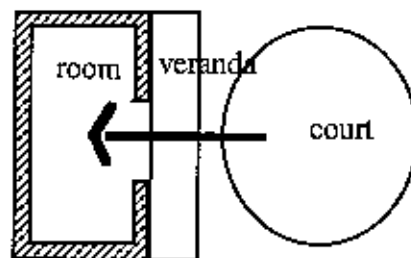


Fig. 7.3 Relationship between Spaces from Court to the Room (Type a)

### Response to Climate

Courts have various climatic implications according to different climatic situation. As mentioned earlier, courtyards in these multi-court houses act as a cool sink at night to provide thermal comfort during the day time. It also provides light and ventilation. The traditional arrangement of veranda across the single depth elongated rooms is replicated in these urban houses. These features are very much reflective of a conscious effort of houseform in a warm humid climate. In fact in these large mansions, courts are introduced to reduce the depth of the building so as to provide adequate light and ventilation. The size and proportion of courts are therefore, compatible with these climatic requirements.

### Type b

In the second type, linear site with strictly demarcated boundary walls on either sides provides safety for the occupant since his commercial involvements are contained within this area. Due to densification, the horizontal expansion could only take place backwards which was limited by the plot size. Thus vertical extensions upto four storeys are more frequent.

### **Form and zoning**

The houseform is usually more than two storied and upto four storey high. The court in this context is transformed to a light-well since the side walls are totally blocked by building masses of different plots which rise with a sharing wall and the void is relatively small. The wells remain the only sources of light and air inside. Multi-courts are introduced due to the physical and climatic requirements. But use of the courts ultimately distinguishes the space domains, segregation of male and female domain, public and private domain etc. Since rooms are placed in a linear and progressive manner in this typology, the court is not surrounded by rooms on all sides but are usually located on two sides as the court is created through the break along the continuation of rooms.

Even in this narrow linear configuration, the concept of domain evokes the arrangement of spaces. Three distinct zones are also found here, the road front along with commercial activities contains the living room forming the **public part** (case 8, case 9). The central court is reflective of **private domain** or female domain. The rearmost court is left for **services** and other household activities. Even in some cases, the court is formed in the first floor in the form of terraces while the ground floor is entirely covered (case 9).

### **Time Zoning**

Another type of spatial and conceptual segregation is achieved by an important non-material tool. This is time zoning. The earlier part of the day includes the spaces within the male domain; as soon as the male members leave the house for jobs or commercial activities and thus their uses subside, the innerpart totally remains within the female domain. Female members then use it for various domestic purposes.

### **Transition of space**

The formal or commercial front is the only approach into the house. This leads to the private court through a narrow corridor (case 9,10). The transition from open space to enclosed space through veranda is absent in long narrow multi-court houses. Therefore, rooms are accessible only through the corridor. Upper floors are mainly used for residential purposes. Unlike the previous type, continuation of connecting veranda around the court on the upper floor is almost absent. Rather, Separate stair leads to separate groups of rooms around the court. But the predominant role of courtyards in grouping the activity zones remains the same. Since the court is merely a light well, the role of terraces is important being the open recreation space.

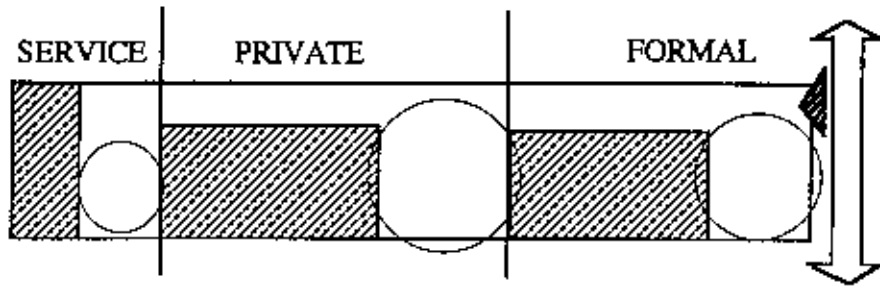


Fig. 7.4 Transition of Spaces in Multi-Court Houses (Type b)

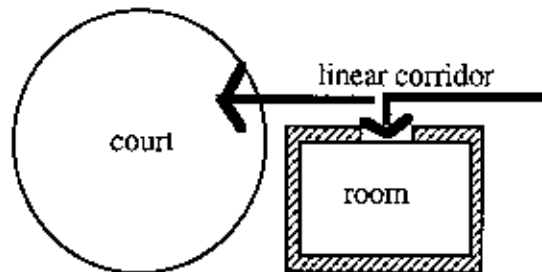


Fig. 7.5 Relationship between Spaces from Corridor to the Court and the Room (Type b)

### Response to Climate

Courtyards in these houses are much more functional from environmental point of view. It acts as the main source of light and ventilation. Three separate zones are incorporated with courts to provide light and ventilation to each zone. Introduction of courts are visible even in the form of terraces. Due to the scarcity of open land, terraces play the role of openness of courtyard. Here the symbolic transformation takes place ( case 9).



## 7.6 Cases

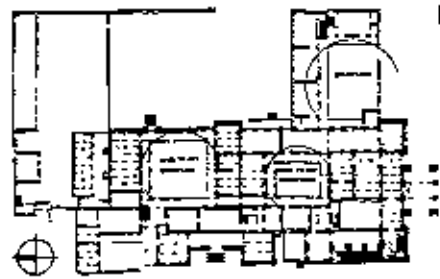
### CASE 1: House of Reboti Mohan

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Location: Jalua nagar

Year of Construction:

Early 20th Century



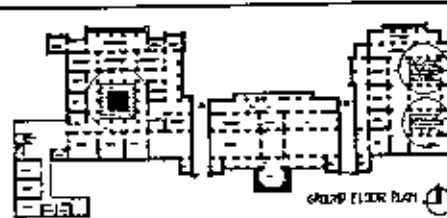
### CASE 2: Ruplal House

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Location: Farashganj

Year of Construction:

late 19th Century



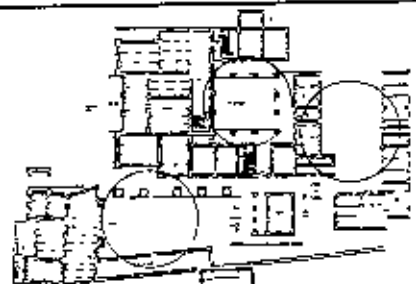
### CASE 3: House of Mathura Mohan Chakrabarty

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Location: Dayaganj

Construction Period:

Early 20th Century



### CASE 4: House of Jatindra Kumar Saha

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Location: Farashganj

Construction Period:

Late 19th Century



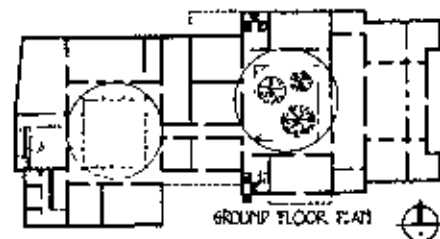
### CASE 5: *Adi* Basanta Babu's House

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Location: Sutrapur

Construction Period:

Early 20th Century



### CASE 6: Prasanna Babu's House

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Location: Basanta Kumar Das Rd.

Farashganj

Construction Period:

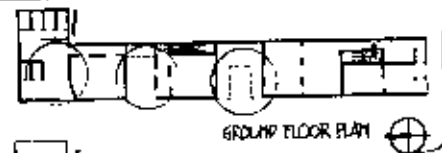


**CASE 7: Sudarsan Chakra Zew**

Location: 62, Shankhari bazaar

Construction Period:

Late 19th Century



**CASE 8: Dhbangsha's House**

Location: 64, Shankhari bazaar

Construction Period:

Late 18th Century



**CASE 9: House of Hrishikesh Dhar**

Location: 32, Shankhari Bazaar

Construction Period:

Late 19th century

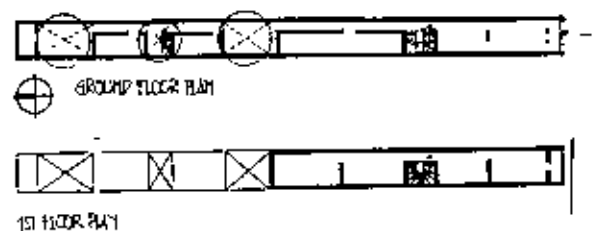


**CASE 10: House of Prakash Chandra Dhar**

Location: 89, Shankhari Bazaar

Construction Period:

Late 19th Century



**CASE 11: House at Lakshi Bazaar**

Location: 5, Nandlal Dutta lane, Lakshi Bazaar

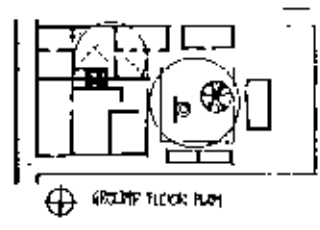
Construction Period: Mid 20th Century

**CASE 12: House of Mangal Das**

Location: 29, K.B. Road, Gandaria

Construction Period: Early 20th

Century

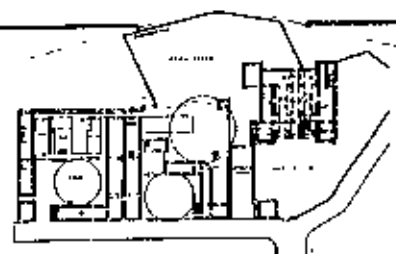


**CASE 13:**

Location: Nawabganj

Construction Period:

Late 19th Century



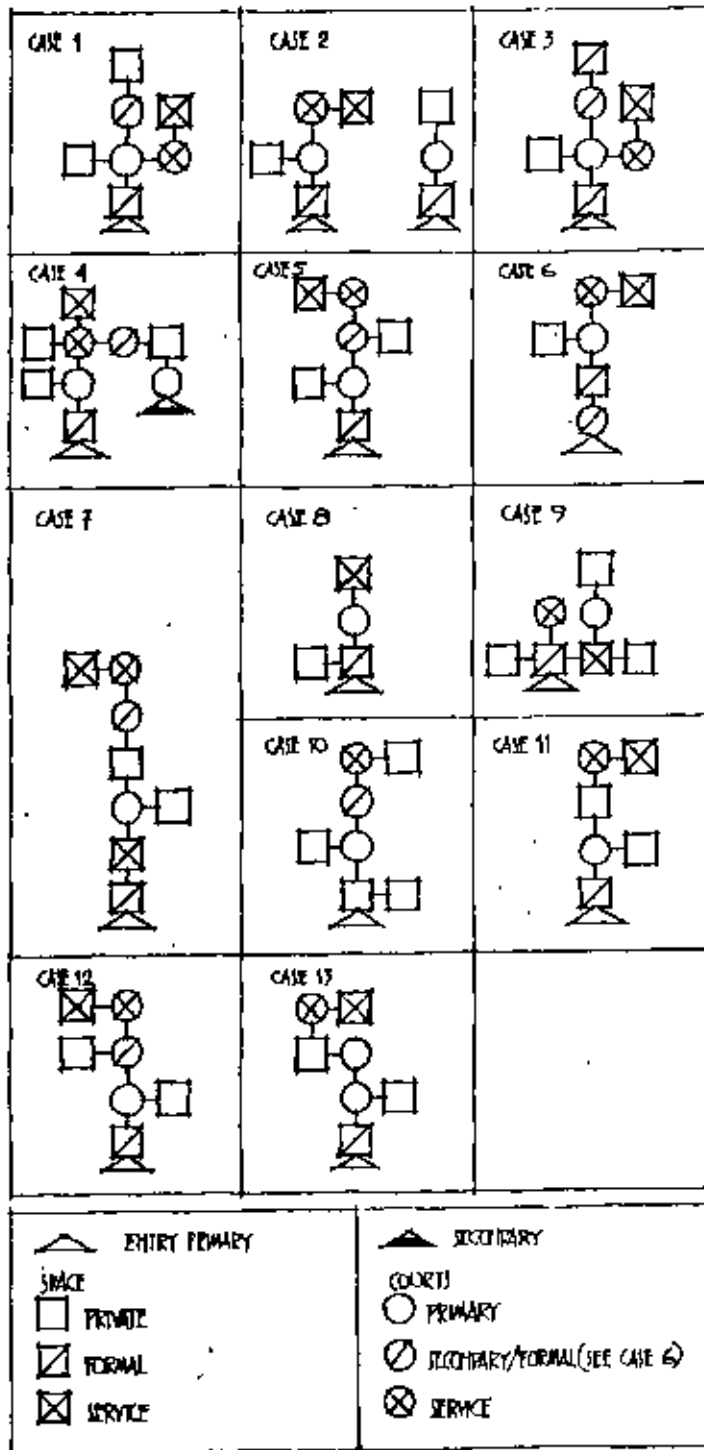


Fig. 7.6 Space Building Morphology

## 7.7 Summary

This chapter firstly attempts to analyze the prevalent architectural style under the colonial regime. More specifically it identifies the style that lied in the houseform. Secondly the study entails the type and character of the multi-court houses. These houses were built in different parts of Old Dhaka in certain socio-cultural context as discussed earlier. This study attempts to search for the context directly influencing this particular house-form. In a bid to identify the basis, both spatial and contextual analysis have been done. The search is based on the analysis of spatial arrangement and analysis of the forces lied behind its formation. Based on the case studies in the following chapter, this chapter draws some inferences and identifications of the spatial and behavioural pattern of these houseforms.

# Chapter Eight

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## Case Studies

## **Chapter Eight**

### **CASE STUDIES**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

In a bid to identify the prevailing spatial pattern of the multi-court houses, a comprehensive study has been done on Old Dhaka's examples since most of the multi-court houses during the late 19th and early 20th century are located there. These houses show a relationship between different spaces which is functional and the same time traditional. An expanded houseform due to various reasons exhibits the long established cultural pattern in a transformed context. This chapter encompasses merely a physical descriptions of different activity spaces which established the basis of analysis in the previous chapter.

#### **8.2 Study Area**

Late 19th and early 20th century depicted an upsurge within the society which left its mark in the architecture of the period. More specifically the houses built during the time plausibly exhibit the social situation. Therefore, the selection of the case studies basically depends on the time period; the locality comes next, for, the time period already demarks the concurrent growth. But the existence of multiple courts in one house and the role they played in a particular socio-cultural context become the most important aspect. Multi-court houses are found in the older part of Dhaka strating its growth during the Mughal period and part of the British period. New Dhaka started to grow only from the begining of this century though sporadic Mughal settlements were already there. Development during the study period underwent in many parts of the Old city more peculiarly in the south-east and south-west. These developments were mostly spontaneous and done and lured by the indigenous population true to the inherent traditional morphology. These are mostly mixed use areas. Thirteen case studies are selected from Farashganj, Sutrapur, Jaluanagar, Gandaria, Dayaganj, Lakshibazaar, Hazaribag and Shakharibazaar areas.

Farashganj, the name bears the testimony of the French inhabitants. During the 18th century the French were involved in business in Dhaka. In 1740, the Naib-e-Nazim of Dhaka permitted them to establish a bazar or 'ganj' on the river. This ganj was ultimately termed as Farashganj (Mamun, 1993). The area basically grew on two sides of a busy commercial street elongated east-west. The buildings are usually oriented north-south on this road. Some of them parallel to the main street were a promenade to the south along the river on an embankment built during the Mughal period.

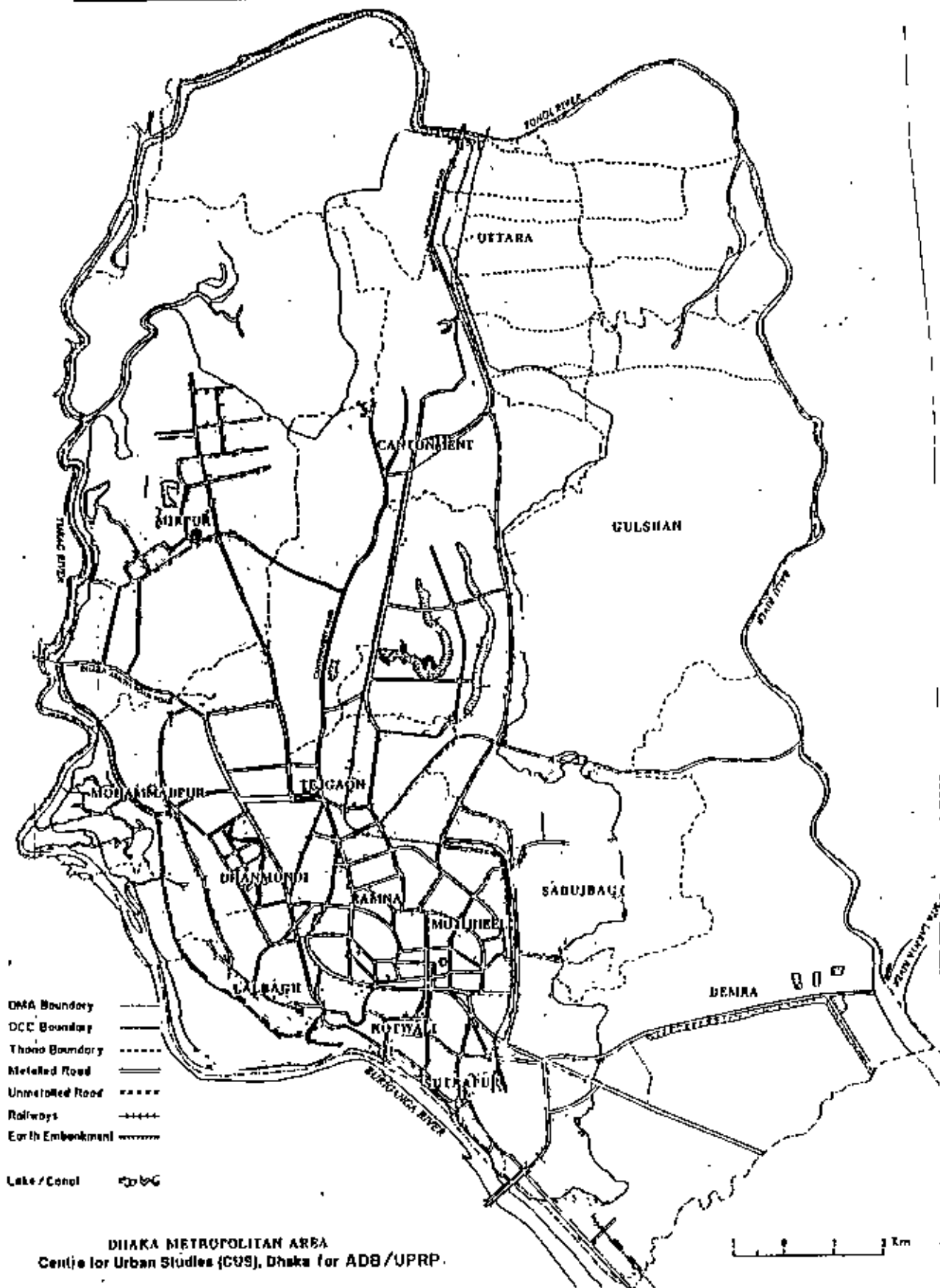


Fig. 8. Locations of Cases in Old Dhaka

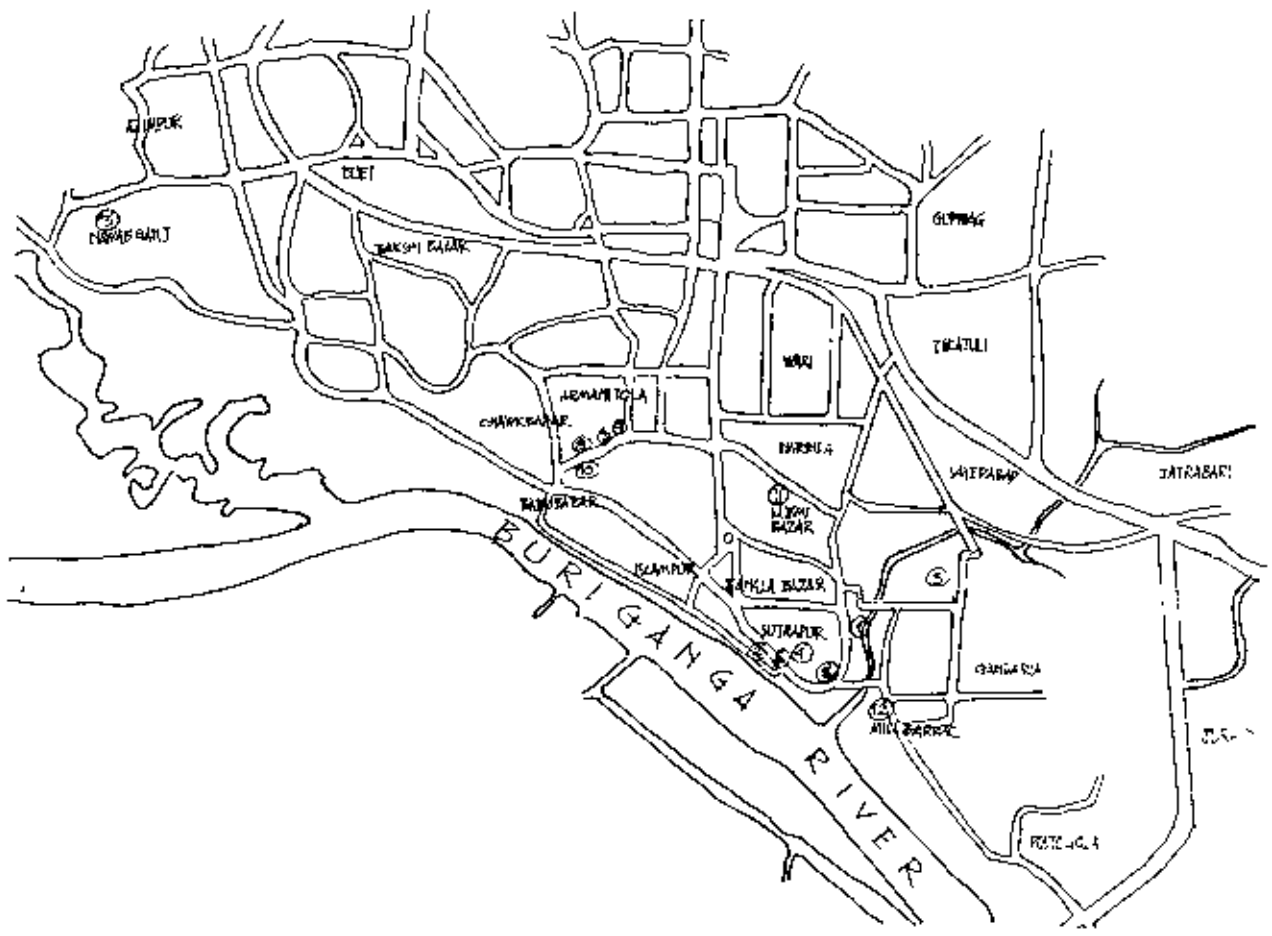


Fig. 8. Locations of Cases in Old Dhaka



Many late 19th and early 20th century houses still survive in the area which is now used either for commercial purposes as shops, offices and godown or as multi-family houses.

The growth of Gandaria across the famous Dulai river and established in the 19th century as a part of urban area was the incidence of early 20th century. Deen Nath Sen, the deputy inspector of the schools of East Bengal was the founder of the present Gandaria. He with two other eminent lawyers of Bengal, Ananda Chandra Roy and Rajani Kanta Choudhury bought the vast land here. Later, only Deen Nath Sen built his residence while the other two moved from this area (Mamun,1993). This was one of the earliest partially planned purely residential area occupied by learned middle class government officers and professionals. This is connected with Farashganj to the west by the famous iron bridge of Sutrapur constructed in 1828 (Mamun, 1993).

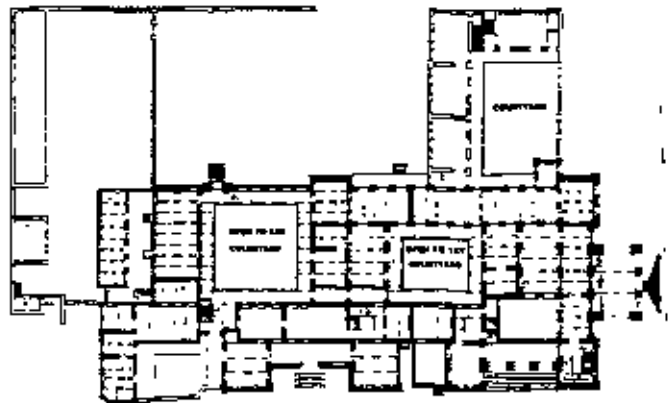
Shankhari Bazaar was developed during the Mughals who brought the Shankharies (conch cutters) to Dhaka; the Mughals allotted them revenue free land to encourage the growth and trade. Trade flourished for a few centuries even under the colonisers. This situation first exacerbated after the partition of India with Dhaka being the provincial capital of the Muslim majority. However, the Hindu craftsmen are still dominating the trade and commerce of the area though there exists the interruption of homogeneous professional pattern and occupation group.

### **8.3 Physical Description**

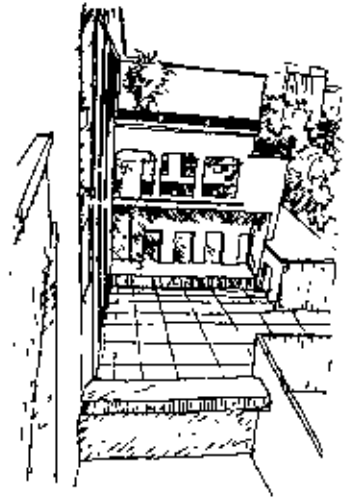
#### **8.3.1 Case Study - 1**

House of Reboti Mohan Das: This is one of the famous and grandest mansions of Dhaka built in early 20th century. Reboti Mohan Das's house is located in Jalua nagar; the Dulai Khal flows to the east of this building which was also approached from the water by means of steps (Ali,M.M.ct.al.,1993). The owner, Reboti Mohan Das was among the society elite; a trader who was basically involved in money lending and also participated in civic activities. He was one of the fourteen first elected members of Dhaka Municipal Authority (Mamun, 1993).

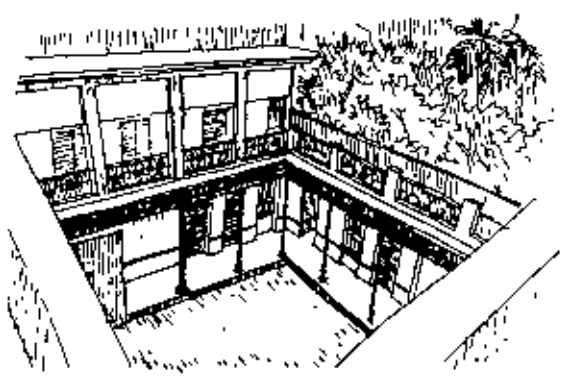
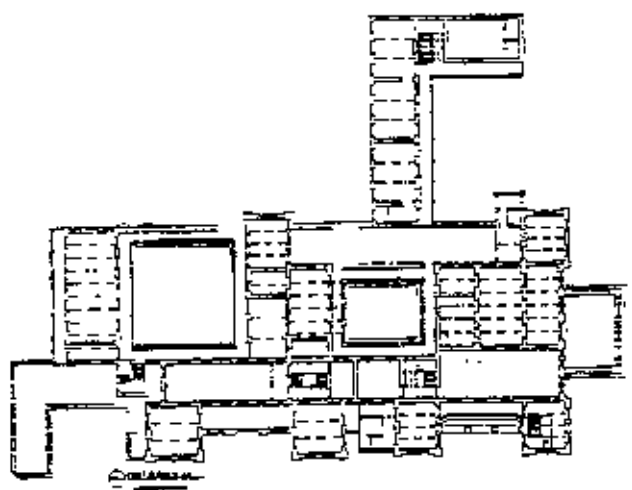
The building is placed with a setback of 90 ft from the main approach road which runs on the west side of the house. The exterior exhibits a sense of grandeur in its scale, style and proportion. The house is approached from the south through a portico; the southern approach leads to a linear veranda or lobby space which directs



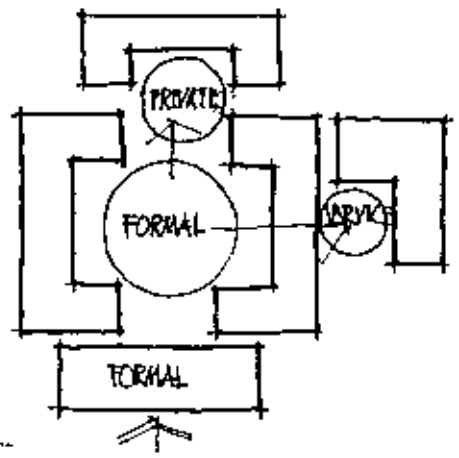
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



VIEW OF THE SECONDARY COURT



PRIVATE COURT



ARTICULATION OF ZONES

Fig. 8 2 Case Study 1

towards the inner room through an outer living room. It also leads to the staircase on the west. Another linear corridor runs on the east to connect the rooms on the north. Another approach located on the western side exhibits the monumental scale through the use of double height columns. This double height lobby is flanked by massive blocks on either sides. One is containing the stair and the other space is left for the purpose of an inner room (Ali,M.M.et.al.,1993). This lobby directs to another living room adjacent to the previous one. Thus the outhouse is formed through which spaces are transferred to an inner courtyard. There remains another courtyard on the northern part of the house. A secondary entrance is evident on the north-west side which connects the rooms through the entrance veranda. These rooms are opening to the corridor of the north court. This court is again connected with the previous one by this corridor which is quite linear and directional. Another block projected eastward consisting of servants and guest quarters has also formed another courtyard on the south-east corner.

Thus the house has a total three courts of various sizes; these courts are distinct with different activity zones namely formal, private and service. The first one suggests to be the main court encompassing various activity spaces. But the second one on the north is larger in size with a collonade on the river side. Moreover, rooms are simply arranged around it instead of complexity of functions. Therefore, it may inferred that the front court was more formal in nature than the second one, which was private. Rooms are repeatative with varying size. Introduction of a number of stairs is a factor of seperate zone since each group consists of independent stair. The house ostansibly being double storied rises upto the second floor. The first floor contains mainly the habitable rooms and terraces.

Reboti Mohan's house exhibits some external features which displays pastich for the European style. It also bears the character of pavilion type architecture situated on large plot which is mingled with the traditional inward looking architecture.

### **8.3.2 Case Study - 2**

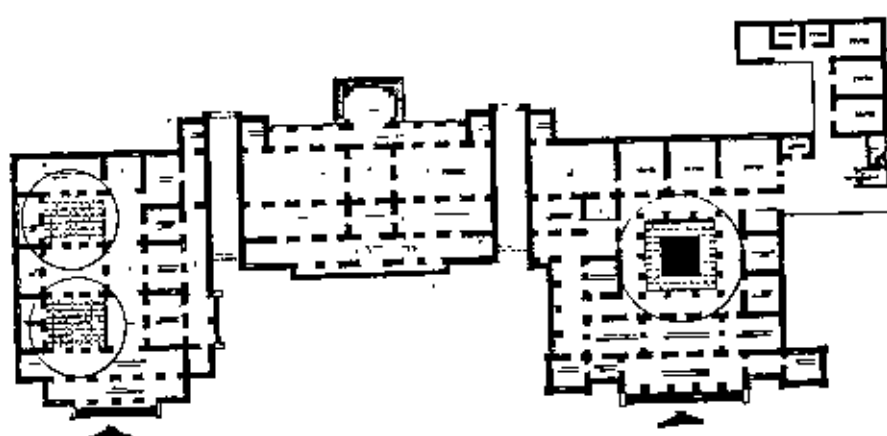
Ruplal House: This is an example of houses of the emerging merchant class of the late 19th century. Ruplal and Raghu Nath, the decendants of Mathura Nath Das, a famous money dealer bought the house form an Armenian merchant, Aratone. During the early 19th century Armenians were enjoying the monopoly in salt business which made them rich and influential. Aratone was one of them. He was fond of kite flying, pigeon and cock fight and used to lead a luxurios life (Islam,1995).

Mathura Nath Das started his currency exchange (batta) business and gradually became rich. This motivated him to transfer the business from batta to Hundi (issuing security bonds) which was more prestigious. But this could not earn him the dignity and aristocracy that he longed for. Later, his son, Madhusudan and Swarup Chandra bought zamindery to enter the aristocratic class in the society. The zamindery along with money dealing made them one of the most influential families of Dhaka during that time. Ruplal was the son of Swarup Chandra.

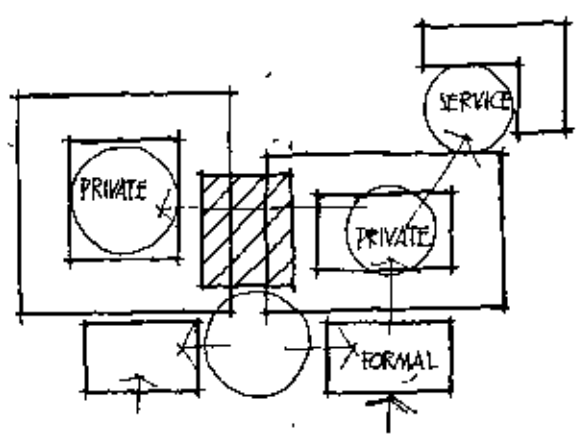
Ahmed (1989) describes that the site with an existing building was bought by Swarup Chandra who commissioned the Calcutta based Martin Company to build them this grand mansion. But Mamun (1993) rejects this proposition as he infers that the house was built by Aratone long before it was acquired by Chandra who probably made some modifications and extensions of the house. The house was considered second only to the Ahsan manzil in its elegance. Ruplal was a connoisseur of music and hence music soiree in the presence of society elite was a regular feature of the house. It is known that Lord Duffrin in the year 1888 on his visit to Dhaka came to this house to enjoy a ball-dance party held in Ruplal house in his honour (Mamun,1993).

The house is located at Farashganj, on the northern bank of the river Buriganga. On its north runs the main Farashganj road forming the main approach to the house. It is an example of riverside mansions, usually more preferred to the elite with private entrances from the riverside too. The complex consists of three distinct blocks, western one being Ruplal's block, eastern his brother Raghu Nath's and a central connecting block. Of the three, Ruplal's is the most imposing. The entrance is grand in its scale and disposition having double height Corinthian columns with pediment and entablature. The grand double height portico leads to the living room and two other external rooms on either side of the living room. The entrance lobby is flanked by two blocks linked by corridors. Thus a outhouse or formal part of the house is formed. However, the living room leads to the internal court surrounded by circulation corridor to connect the series of rooms inside. In the ground floor the Ruplal's block is not directly connected with the central block. Rather a corridor, plausibly a *Rwak* is visible which was probably left for public use.

The central block is less imposing consisting of rooms in regular order. However, it provides a setback from the main road offering an entrance court within the three blocks. The two archways that connect this to the east and west block are treated differently. The western archway is topped by a gabled roof which seems to be a later addition (Ahmed, 1989). The eastern connecting archway reveals the similar style of



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



ARTICULATION OF ZONES

Fig. 8 3 Case Study 2

the central block. The western block (Raghu Nath's block) is differently treated externally. The western entry facing the entrance court has no arches. The Corinthian style columns are not that grand; rather they display more an Indian style of origin (Ahmed, 1989). The northern entry leads to the entrance lobby or veranda which leads inside through corridor. Two courts of similar size are evident in this block which is surrounded by corridor and series of rooms. The same layout is followed in the upper floors of the total building. The only significant change in the upper floor is that the blocks are connected with each other. The upper floor was mainly used for habitable purposes.

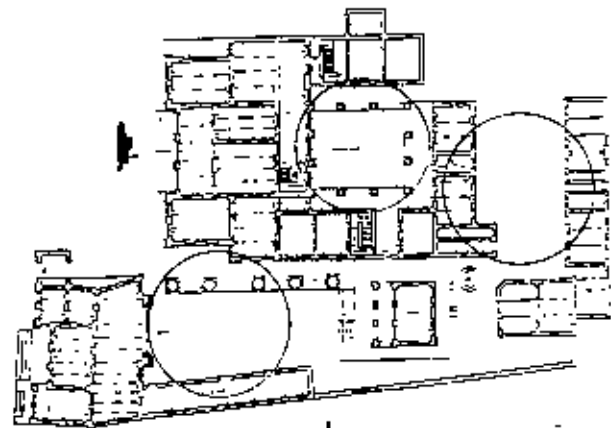
Thus the three courts in this house bears almost similar degree of importance from its zoning and privacy aspects. Another space is visible on the south of Ruplal's block, which probably formed the service court. Terraces are very significant with a panoramic river view.

### 8.3.3 Case Study - 3

House of Mathura Mohan Chakrabarty was located at Dayaganj, north of Gandaria. The owner, after his graduation used to teach in a school. Later he established the pharmaceutical laboratory named 'Shakti Oushadhalay' on his own residence (Mamun,1993, pp.273).

The main entrance on the south creates a distance of approximately 35 ft from the main building. The entrance veranda, unlike the previous two cases, exhibits a single storied arcaded space. The veranda directly leads to the living room and is flanked by two rooms on either sides. The eastern room leads to a colonnaded corridor which connects the rooms on the east side. There are grand columns in this side. Instead of characterizing the monumental entry like other mansions, the grandeur of this veranda is disposed to a negative side. *...they are located at the south-eastern corner of the whole scheme, a location rather negative in character as they neither lead to a meaningful distribution area, nor do they recognise the position of an axis, with respect to which spaces are arranged* (Ali,M.M.et.al.,1993). However, this grand corridor opens to a secondary court on the eastern side. Another court is located on the north side or back of the house accommodating service spaces.

Approach and vision from the main entrance to the main court is restricted by the introduction of stair within an enclosed space. Instead of leading directly to the inner court, the space along with the stair leads to upper floor. *A linear corridor like space at the north, (accommodating a staircase) was probably an open circulation area*



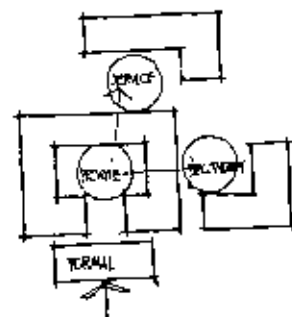
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION



09. First Floor Plans, Residence of Madame Nash Chalmers



ARTICULATION OF ZONES



SOUTH ELEVATION

Fig 8 4 Case Study 3

*surrounding an inner courtyard* (Ali,M.M and others,1993). Two living rooms from the entrance veranda lead to this enclosed space. Corridor runs on the three sides of the central court connecting the rooms and other two stairs on east and west. This court can also be approached from the eastern court and the service court. *Consisting of the facade of pillared verandas and the rooms leading out of them, this courtyard of moderate size and proportion displays excellent light and shading;* (Ali,M.M.,et.al.,1993).

#### **8.3.4 Case Study - 4**

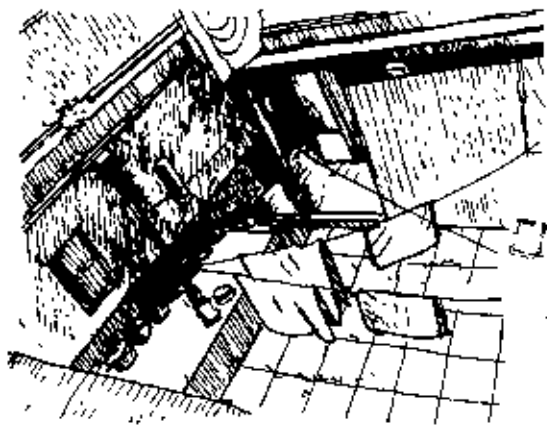
House of Jatindra Kumar Saha: Present hostel of Kabi Najrul Islam College, the house of Jatindra Kumar Saha or zaminder bari is located at Farashganj. Mr. Shaha was a big landlord and influential person.

The approach road on the north is running very closely allowing no full view of the house. Ali et.al., (1993) infers that the location of the road might have been far away from the building initially. The main entry of the house is possibly the most remarkable feature of the house. The grand entrance lobby with a convex plinth projecting out of the background surface holds heavy square piers. The entrance facade incorporating huge free-standing pillars exhibits the monumentality, being the most identical feature. This leads to the veranda flanked by a stair and an exterior room on either side, which is similar to that of Reboti Mohan's house. However, the veranda leads to the living room, beyond which is the corridor running along the court. The symmetrical arrangement of the entrance lobby was not followed in the courtyard since it provides access to the lateral rooms and the southern veranda through the corridor.

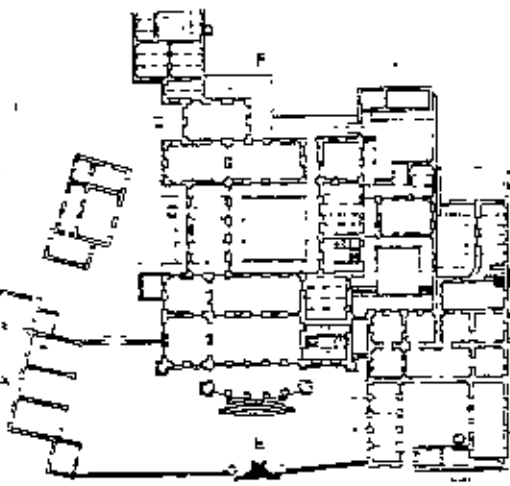
A second courtyard is located just beside the other side of an inner stair which was probably left mainly for the women (Ali,M.M.et.al.,1993). The rooms around the second court are small in size and do not relate directly with the main court and the hall rooms.

This court might have been used as a subsidiary area for the caretakers and servants. The existence of another court at the north-west corner is observed which is adjacent to the approach road and an access to it from the road is possible through the entry from the main road. This suggests the formal part of the house (outhouse) surrounded by rooms left for public use, whereas the previous courts served the main purpose of accomodating the main habitable spaces. Upper floors also suggests the similar pattern of spatial arrangement within the same grouping. Moreover, there are

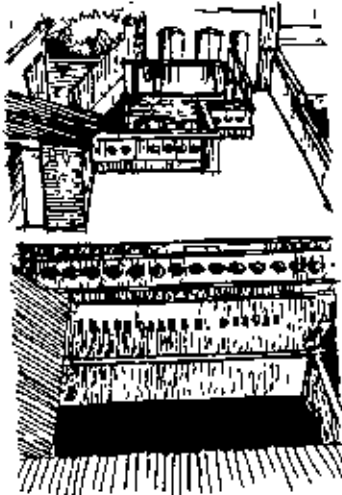




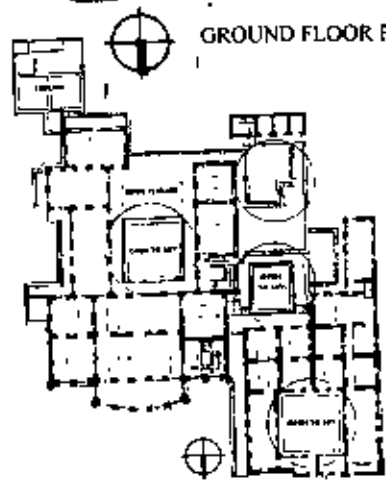
SERVICE COURT



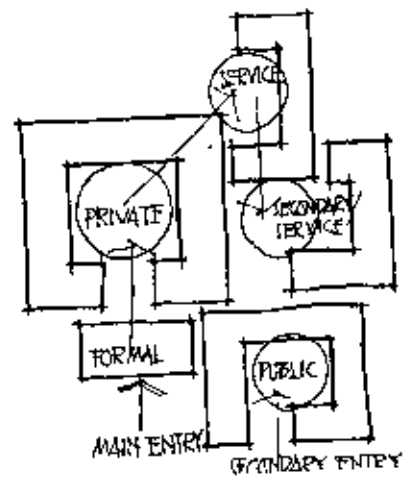
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SECONDARY COURT & SERVICE



PRIVATE COURT



ARTICULATION OF ZONES

Fig 8.5 Case Study 4

terraces on the south and south-west corner in the first floor. Western part rises upto the second floor. The fourth court at the back of the house is left entirely for services.

### 8.3.5 Case Study - 5

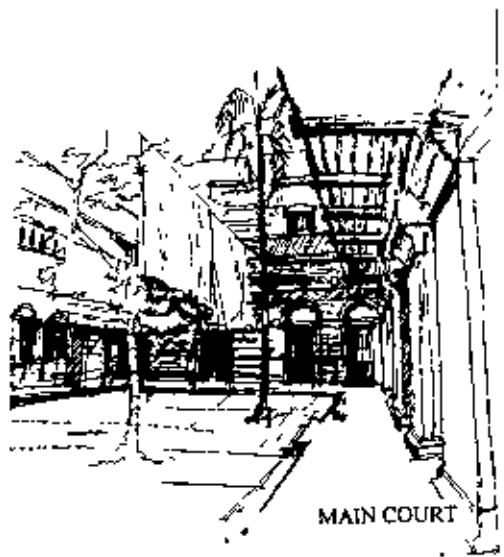
*Adi Basanta Babu's House:* The house is located at Farashganj, at the beginning of the road bearing its owner's name who might have been a . However, the house was later purchased by Sitanath Roy Choudhury who was a landlord from Barisal. The house spreads linearly having eastern entry overlooking the famous iron bridge. The house has a traversed by an alley to the south while the north is an open space. The house is placed having a setback of approximately 15 ft from the gate. The entry is similar to that in other houses. The entrance veranda leads to the outer living room again opens to an inner hall room. This inner hall transfers to the court with corridor on each side acting as a circumbulatory. The arrangement is symmetrical with flanking rooms on either sides of the hall room, living room and entrance veranda. Even the staircase and existence of two other rooms on either sides of the court shows the symmetry in arrangement.

The court is connected with another court at the middle with a corridor which is flanked by rooms. The second court has colonnaded circulation corridor around it leading to the bed rooms and a service court at the back. The service court consists of a narrow stair and a well leads to a terrace up. This 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.

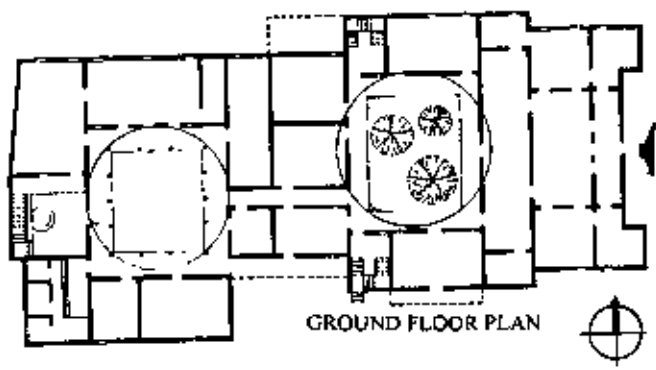
The detailing of the arches, round columns in the ground floor and piers on the upper floor blended with the iron railing expresses its elegance externally. However, according to its present occupiers, the original owner could not finish the house as he planned before his death and many works on the first floor remain unfinished.

### 8.3.6 Case Study - 6

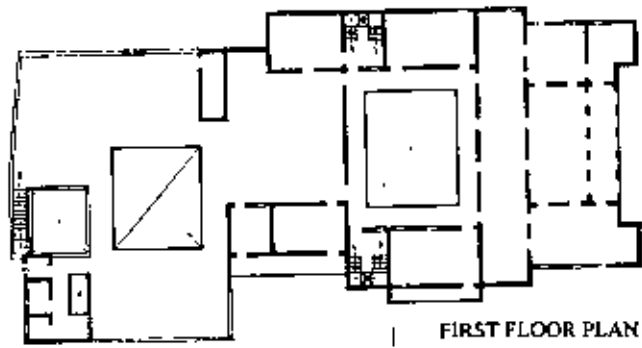
*Prasanna Babu's House, 45, Basanta Kumar Das Road:* Located at Farashganj, the house displays a magnificent scale and proportion. This three storied house was built in the late 19th century. The owner, Prasanna Babu was a trader who basically dealt with money lending and exchanging(source- local people). The house is locally known as 'bara bari' meaning the big house which is rightly termed since the house is approximately 40 ft wide and 200 ft long. The main approach road is to the south of the building while a narrow secondary road runs along the south of the length of



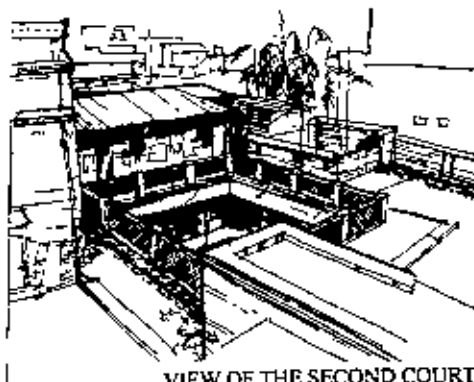
MAIN COURT



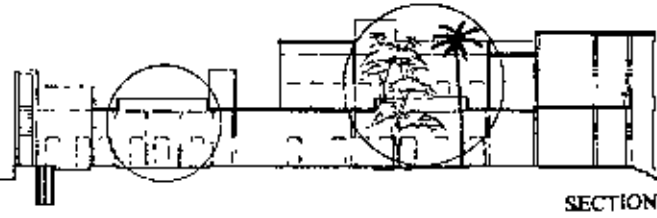
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



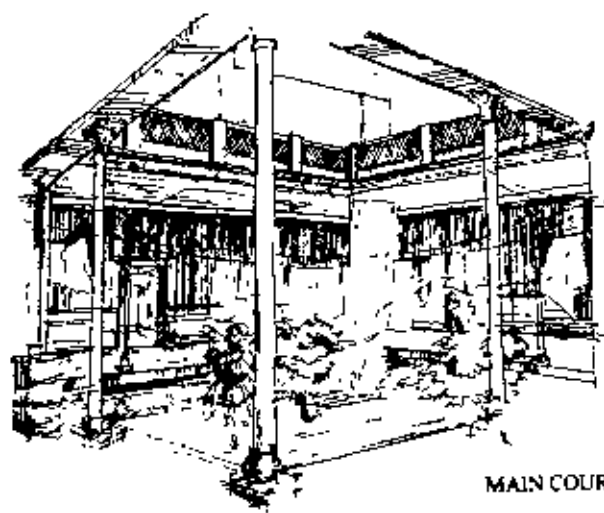
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



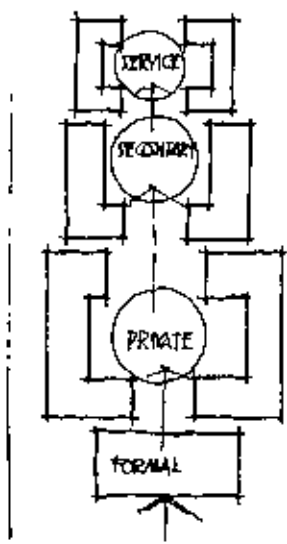
VIEW OF THE SECOND COURT  
FROM THE TERRACE



SECTION



MAIN COURT



ARTICULATION OF ZONES

Fig 8.6 Case Study 5

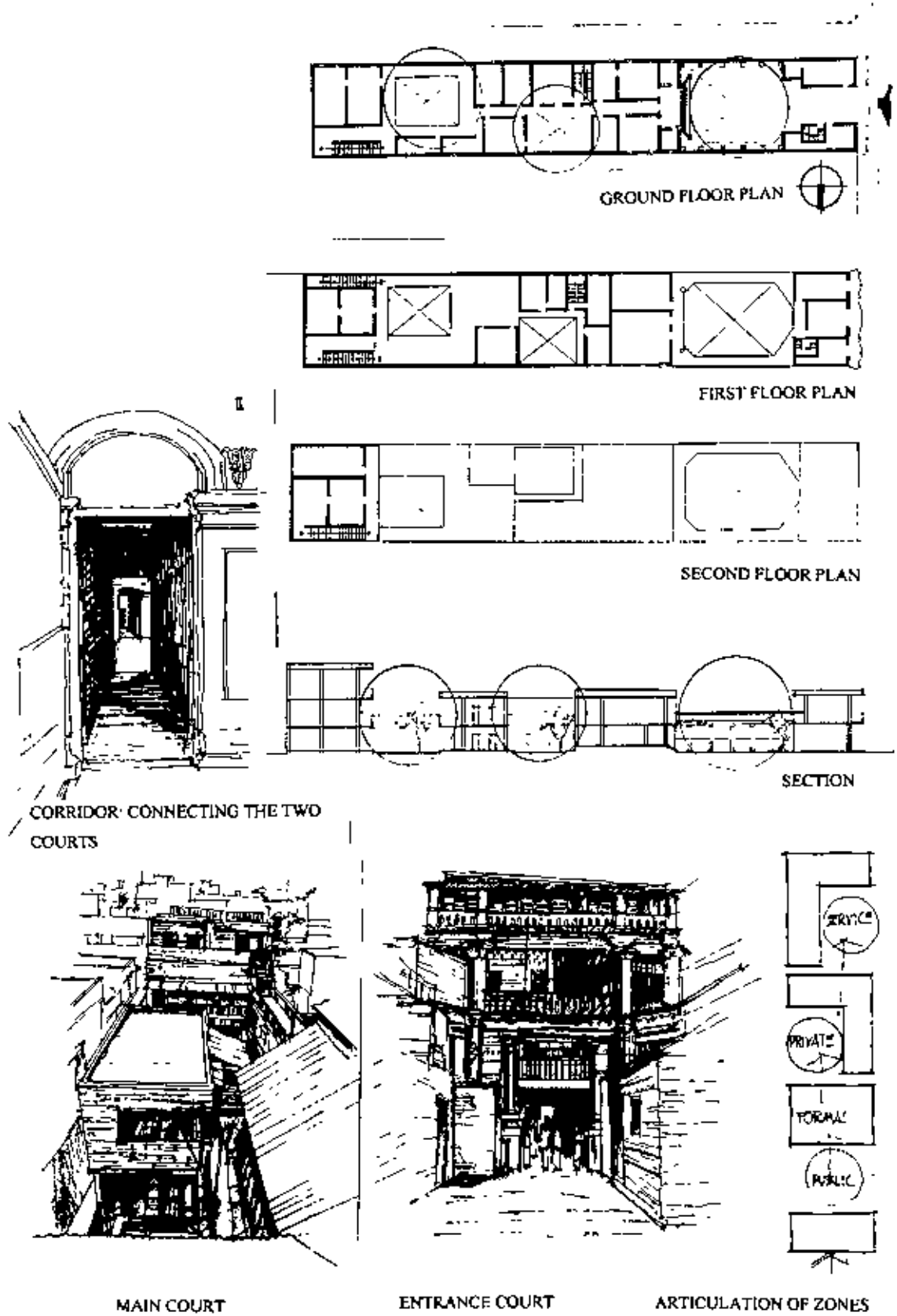


Fig. 8.7 Case Study 6

the house to the south. Though the plot size provides enough area, still the house is built following the site line. Therefore, the main focus remains in the internal arrangement.

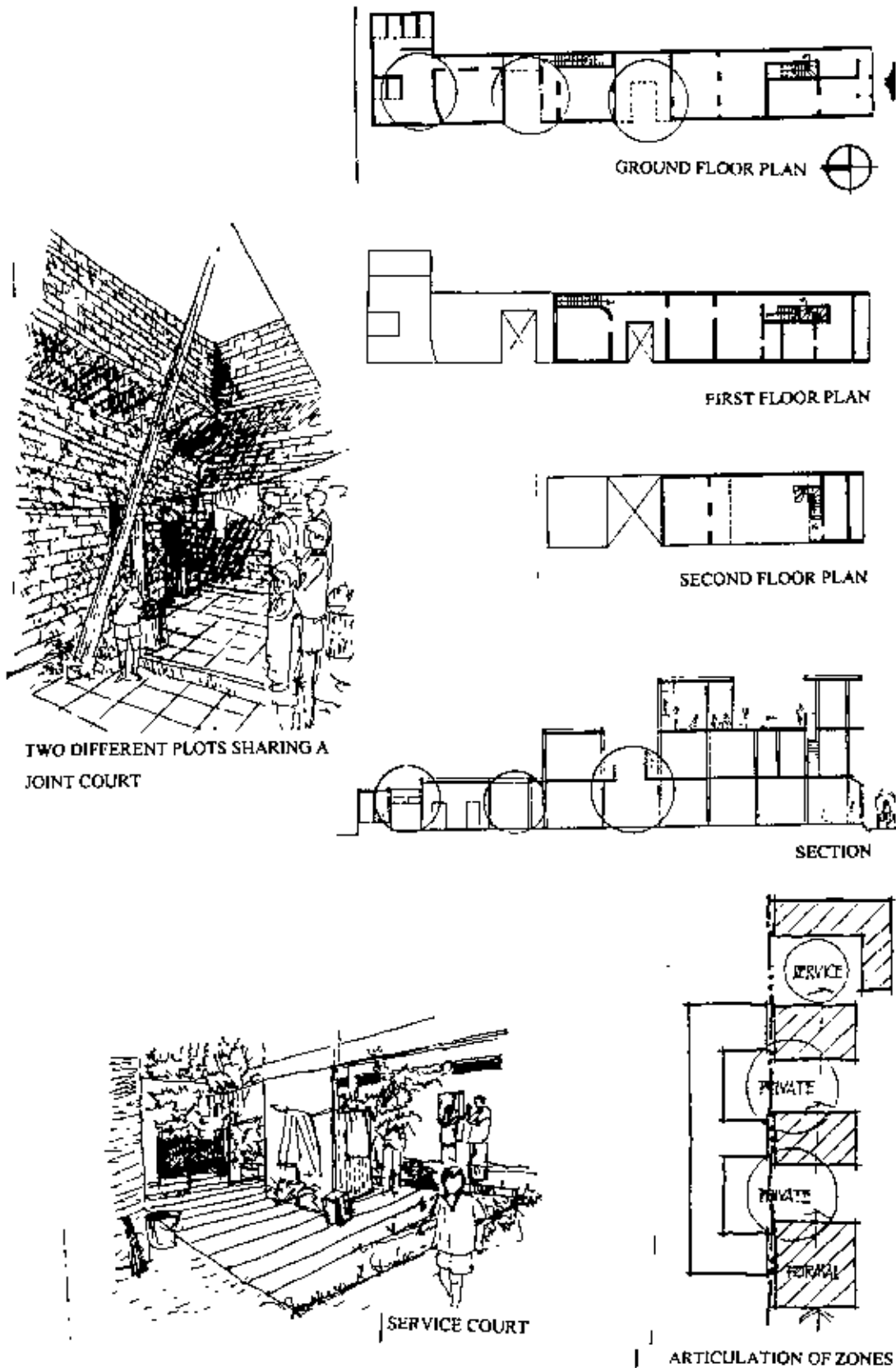
The central entrance is flanked by lower structures possibly guard rooms on either side leading to a colonnaded courtyard. This external octagonal courtyard gives access to the internal part of the house through a series of grand steps. This leads to an entrance lobby flanked by two small square rooms on both sides. A central corridor with symmetrically arranged rooms on either sides directs towards another court. These were the living rooms. Unlike in the previous examples, the entry is independently guiding inside, without crossing the living space. However, this second court takes almost half of the width of the house, the other half consists of a stair within an enclosed space. This court is more private and mainly used as a family space surrounded by habitable rooms. A third court is connected with this family court through corridor which is larger in size than the previous one accommodating services around it. There are three staircases distinctly located in three different zones - public, family and service.

The front part may have been used as a guest or office room with a road and curved balcony with cast iron balustrades on the upper floor overlooking the commercial street in front. The first floor rises partially which includes the guard house on the foremost part, the habitable rooms above the family zone and part of the service area. The front part can be connected with the rooms through open corridor above the colonnade. The entire floor and its different zones are connected. At the rearmost part, another stair in the first floor leads upward to the second floor which consists of three rooms only probably added in a later period.

### **8.3.7 Case Study - 7**

**Sudarshan Chakra Zew, House no 62, Shankhari bazar :** This house is an example of linear growth with multiple courts which was built in the late 19th century. The owner was a Sebayit (person who maintains the temple), the house has a temple on its top floor. But his major occupation was typical with the area; he was involved in the trade of shell cutting and making shell ornaments.

The approach road runs on the south of the house; the total site has a road frontage of only 12 ft. The length is approximately 80 ft. Both sides are blocked with sharing walls of neighbouring houses. This necessitates several courts for lighting and ventilation. The front part is occupied for commercial use; therefore, a very narrow



TWO DIFFERENT PLOTS SHARING A JOINT COURT

SERVICE COURT

ARTICULATION OF ZONES

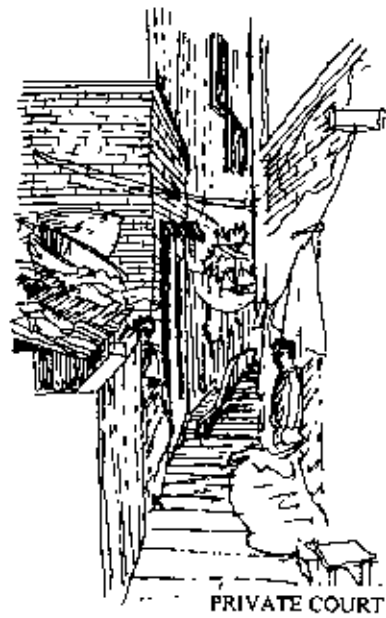
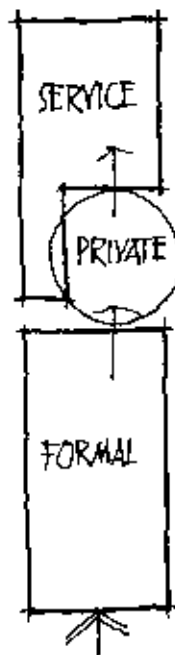
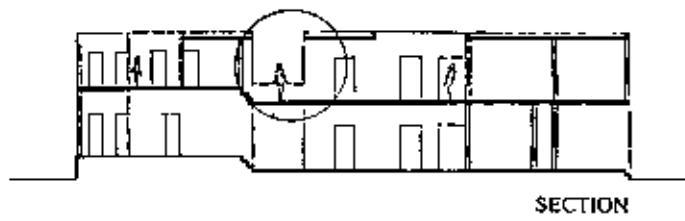
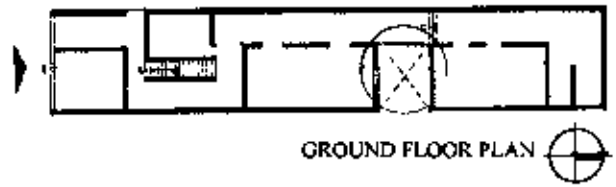
Fig 8 8 Case Study 7

and linear entrance corridor leads to the inner parts of the house. A stair directly leads from the main entrance to the upper floor which is used for habitable purpose. In the ground floor, the first court is used as a supportive space for cooking and kitchen activities since the adjacent spaces on the south are left for cooking for the entire house. This is because of the present existence of a number of families which turns it as a tenement house. Originally, as a single family house under one ownership, the first court was the main court occupied by the family members around which there remains an existence of rooms. The next court is flanked by a room and a veranda. The third and rearmost court is used for services like bathing, toilets etc.

One of the most remarkable characters of the house is that the courts are not bounded within the two side walls. Rather, it is extended to the adjacent plot sharing another similar court of that plot thus making the court larger. Thus the feeling of light well is eliminated and a sense of sharing is interpreted. This marks the evidence of previous site layout, which was basically a regular one instead of being linear. The plot division gives rise to series of rooms in a repeatative manner but the courts are retained with their original configuration. Only the service court remains utterly isolated. The room width covers the entire width of the house; therefore, the problem of access to the rearmost rooms through the foremost rooms has been eliminated by the introduction of stairs in different location. This gives independent access to the rooms. The first floor constitutes mainly the habitable rooms and terraces. The second floor consists the temple which can be approached from the first stair located near the entry. Even in the terrace level, the temple could be approached by the neighbouring houses.

### **8.3.8 Case Study - 8**

Dhbansha's house, 64, Shankhari bazar: The owner had the same occupation as with the previous one, trade of shell cutting. The name of the original owner was Nitya Gopal Sur, from the local sources it is known that the house was built in the late 18th century. Front part of this house is used for commercial purpose besides which is a narrow and only one entry. A front stair leads to the upper floors. Ground floor consists of only one court in the middle of the whole house which is approached through the linear and covered corridor. This actually acts as a zone divider as it segregates the service zone at the back. However, the front part along with the commercial front remains within the public zone. The rooms behind the commercial zone serves as living spaces. The zone demarcation lies in the floor division where the upper floor is reserved for the private purposes containing the habitable spaces.



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Fig 8 9 Case Study 8





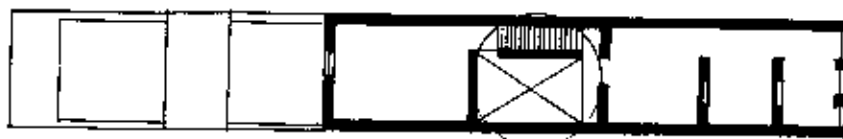
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



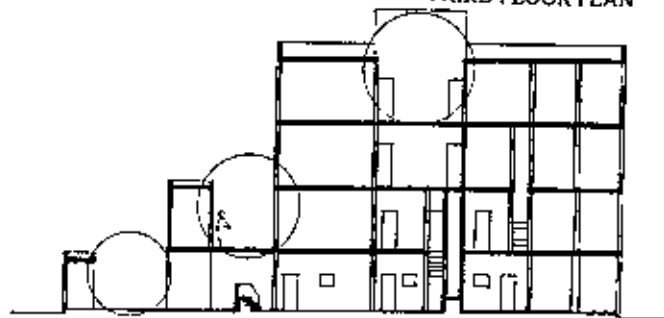
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



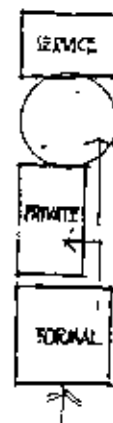
THIRD FLOOR PLAN



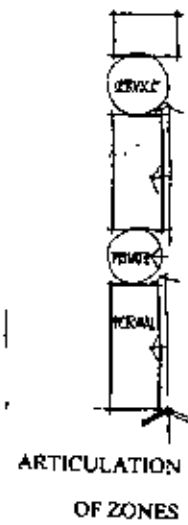
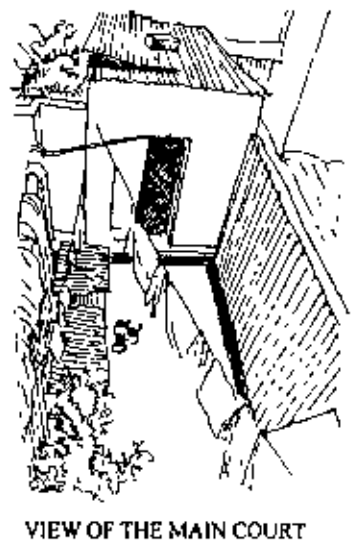
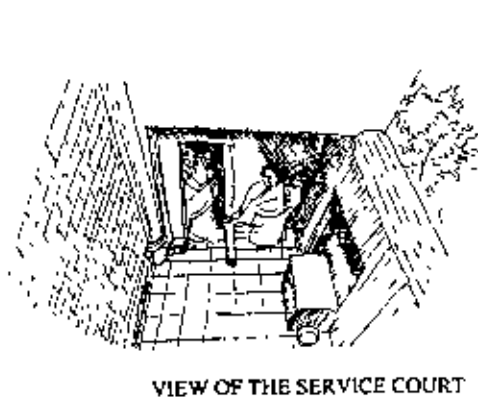
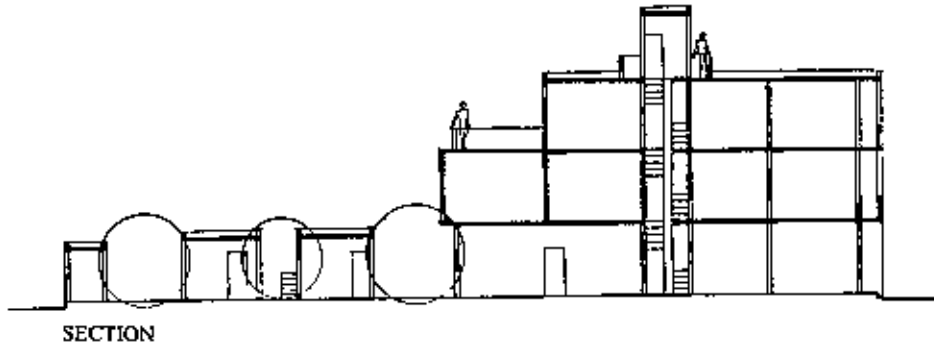
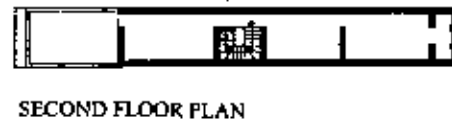
SECTION



VIEW FROM THE TERRACE - COURT  
ON FIRST FLOOR



ARTICULATION OF ZONES



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Fig 8 11 Case Study 10

Moreover, there prevails three courts, presumably lightwells along the main corridor. One of these relates the central court in the ground floor.

### **8.3.9 Case Study - 9**

32, Shankhari bazar: The house was owned by Hrishikesh Dhar whose major occupation was business. The year of construction of the house is late 19th century. This house has a road frontage of 14 ft and the depth of 105 ft. The approach road runs on the south side. The ground floor is totally covered, only the backyard remained open to sky forming the service court. The front part of the ground floor consists an open space with four columns which is used as a living space. The narrow corridor runs along the side wall and leads to different rooms and stairs. The four storied building contains a court or open to sky space on the first floor and second floor. In this house, the distribution of space supported by a court is difficult to observe since courts are mainly introduced to provide light and ventilation. However, the service court exists at the back of the house. Other courts, conserves a heirarchy of space along with their functional role. The court in the second floor with a linear stair, from its size and proportion becomes predominant. Courts are in the form of terrace on the first floor and second floor. Though both of them basically serves the habitable rooms. The section of the house reveals a spatial hierarchy as the northern part is gradually stopped. But the terraces are not connected with the habitable spaces.

### **8.3.10 Case Study - 10**

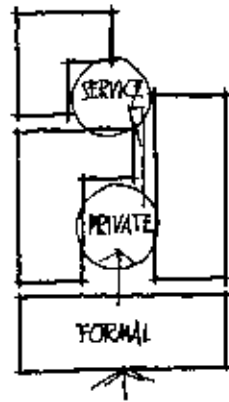
89, Shankhari bazar: This is also an example of Late 19th century houses. This house was owned by Prakash Chandra Dhar.

This is an extremely linear site with a road frontage of only 6 ft. The length goes to more than 80 ft. The linear circulation corridor is compelled to be very narrow allowing only one person walking laterally. However, the front court eliminates the narrowness of the corridor and leads to a stair. Next to it is the disproportionate linear room which opens to the corridor. This room is flanked by court. This second court is mainly used for inner or private court having rooms on either side. Another staircase is located here. The kitchen and toilets are located at the rear most part of the house having a service court.

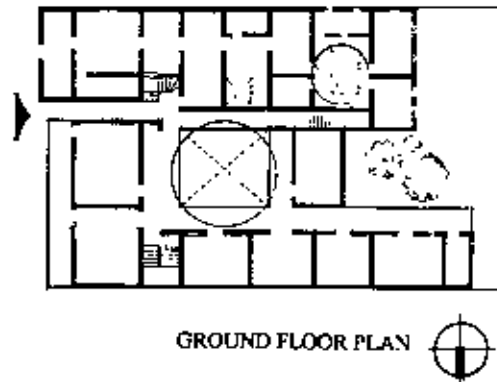
### **8.3.11 Case Study - 11**

5, Nanda Lal Dutta lane, Lakshmi bazar: Original owner of the house was Mansur Khan whose occupation was business. The house was built in the mid of the 20th

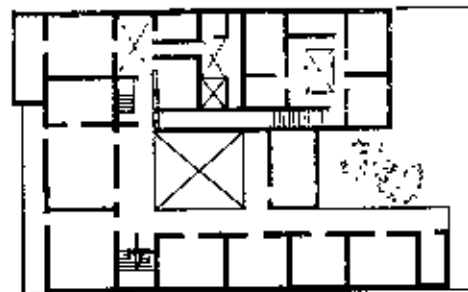
CASE STUDY - 11



ARTICULATION OF ZONES

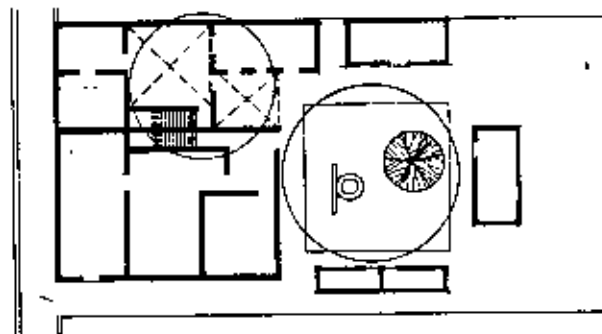


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

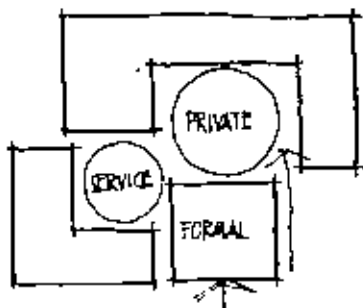


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

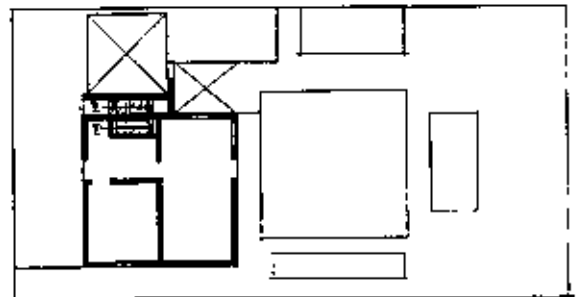
CASE STUDY - 12



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



ARTICULATION OF ZONES



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Fig 8 12 Case Study 11 & 12

century. This is a typical house existing in the Old Dhaka. The approach road is very closed with the building on its east side. This two storied building is entered through a narrow corridor beneath a staircase which leads to the habitable rooms upward. But the layout suggest that this was a later modification or a secondary entry since there exists a living room with a veranda in the front side. This living room seems to lead to the inner part of the house containing a court. On the back side along the main axis of the first court, remains another court, locationally being more private. This is adjacent to the service court. This third court is located on the south-west corner of the house.

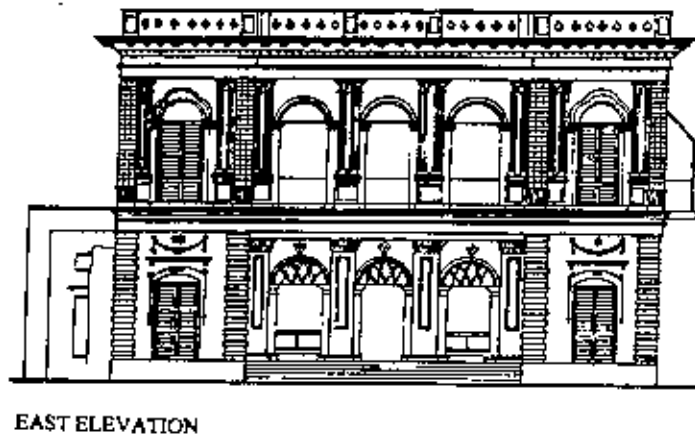
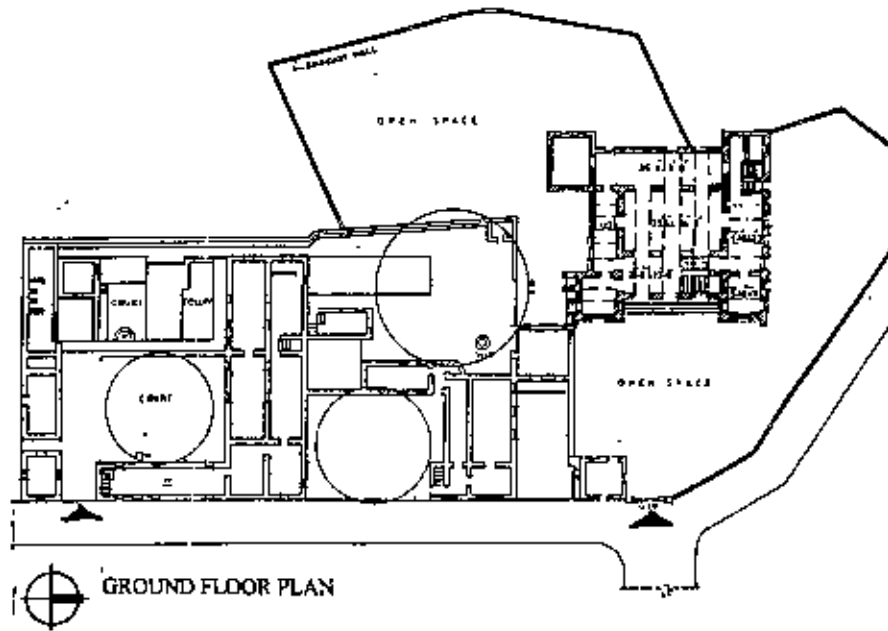
This house contains two distinct activity blocks separated by the courts. Except the living room and the veranda, the southern portion is basically the service zone consisting of the kitchen, toilets, service stair and servants quarters. The northern part of the house shows series of rooms in a repeatative manner around the first and second court. Since the side walls of the total building has a little option to be opened outside for light and ventilation, the court remains the major source of light and ventilation besides its other socio-cultural and functional roles. Therefore, the location of different zones, the placement of the habitable rooms on the north appears to be quite sensitive and climate conscious approach since the court invites the southern air into the major rooms.

The northern part being served as a main habitable zone and the southern part for supportive functions and services. Moreover, in the frontmost part were the living rooms though approached from the main circulation corridor along the first court. The only one entry leads directly to the inner open space from where activity zones are being dispersed.

### **8.3.12 Case Study - 12**

House of mangal Das, 29, K.B. road : Balai Chandra Ghosh was the original owner of the house. His occupation was business. The house was built in the early 20th cenmry.

The access road runs on the east of the house. The front facade of the house is adjacent to the road leaving no set back. The entry is through a narrow alley type corridor with the northern boundary wall. This corridor gives access to the living room and ends at the court inside. The court is typically surrounded by circulation veranda. The front block is also approached from this main court which connects a small size court on the south-east corner. However, adjacent to it is a stair. In fact, there are two seperate stairs sharing a division wali. This court seems to contain



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Fig. 8 13 Case Study 13.

services around it being separated by the wall. The front block of the house rises upto the first floor with a terrace overlooking the street. The main court is surrounded by some other isolated rooms which end at the ground floor. In this house, the arrangement of rooms is more similar to its rural counterpart.

### **8.3.13 Case Study - 13**

House of Manik Babu located at Hazaribag. This house displays a clear segregation between formal and informal zone. The outhouse or kachari ghar is totally separated from the main structure. The approach runs on the east and north-east of the house in a curvilinear manner. The entry is located on the east at the junction of two roads. An entrance court is found which is formed by two building masses, the house proper and the living room block. This formal is surrounded by verandas on its front and back sides; stairs and other ancillary facilities are articulated laterally. This part of the house is built in a fashion which exhibits the features and spatial organisation that are evident in colonial bungalows.

The entry inside the building is possible through the living room block. But existence of two other courts adjacent to the east road suggests the existence of separate entries inside the main house. However, there remain three major courts, two on the east and one on the north-west corner. The north-eastern court contains the main grouping of rooms whereas the southern most encompasses the services having a separate service entry. The connecting veranda around the court is absent. Rooms were possibly approached directly from the court though some evidences suggests the corridor linkage between some of the spaces.

## **8.4 Summary**

These case studies have been selected from different parts of Old Dhaka. All these show certain degree of diversity in their articulation of space and background. But nevertheless it encompasses a strong uniformity in the spatial relationship among them. This is due to the non-physical inheritance of traditional forces demonstrated in its physical disposition. All buildings strongly exhibit the traditional norms; sense of privacy, zoning which are transformed in different manner around courts. The replacement of single court house exhibits the similar notion towards space demarcation as identified by the grouping around an individual court.

## Chapter Nine

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### Conclusion



## Chapter Nine

### CONCLUSION

Society is an institution shaped by many external and internal forces. As a result of these forces, changes take place within the society. These changes are more obvious when the society is under the direct control and contact of the forces emerging due to different reasons like political, administrative, economic etc. Since the region of Bengal was under the British colonial rulers for about two hundred years, the above phenomena have influenced the Bengali society profoundly and still linger in some way or other. From the mid-20th century many societies have been perceived as being transitional between the traditional and the modernised. In all societies, tradition is valued for the continuity and perpetuity to integrate the past and the present. The study therefore, attempted to identify the contextual forces on houseform of Bengal which have influenced the perpetuity.

The identification of the basics of a society reveals some rules and criteria of the society and culture. This also divulges the extent of influence of the society and culture in the formation of space and builtform. From anthropological view, culture as it refers to *innumerable aspects of life*, is constantly changing by way of incorporating various *aspects*. Therefore, it is 1. **adaptive**, 2. **integrated** and 3. **changing**. Moreover, culture is subjected to diffusion which refers to a process by which cultural elements borrowed from another culture are incorporated into the culture of a recipient group. Moreover, culture is **learned**, **shared** and is based on **symbols** (Haviland, 1970). Therefore, these phenomena are considered to be the part of the process in a culture which engenders openness in it. *The extent of the openness and flexibility of any modern society is dependent not on the total erosion of the particularistic ties, but on their specific structural placement with regard to more universalistic ones. .... And while obviously the extension of social mobilization and differentiation is a necessary condition for the development of modernization, it is the extent to which such extension will foster openness and status flexibility that will assure the conditions sufficient for the sustained growth as against breakdown* " (Eisenstadt, 1966).

Cultural aspects of houseform is a totalitarian concept encompassing all its criteria. Therefore, the changes or movements in a culture and the subsequent houseform is not a result of deviation from culture. Rather, it is a natural phenomena within the limit of culture. But the question lies in its retention of fundamental rules, either symbolic or expressive. However, a study of rural archetype house and its urban

counterpart during the first generation urban houses shows a strong resemblance between the rural and urban houseforms. This resemblance is partly expressive and partly symbolic. A more detail study of the multi-court houses and their spatial arrangement reveals the forces of influence. To decipher the contextual forces influencing the form, an extensive study has been done on the growth of Dhaka's different social classes. Moreover, the colonial policies influencing their lifestyle and consequent houseform was a part of the analysis.

The case studies and observations showed that these multi-court houses built by the affluent class used elements from the Indo-Saracenic style on their facades. Nevertheless they were basically explicative of the social, cultural, political and economic context of the owners and the time. In spatial arrangement, they invariably embodied the traditional concept of space domain, zoning, privacy in similar arrangements. The multiple number of courts retains the basic grouping of a traditional house. Concept of domains of a traditional house is still represented by the courts i.e. the three distinct domains (formal, private and service) are physically expressed through more than one court. Here the cultural norms are found to be inherited unchanged and transplanted into new physical forms

The study also reveals that the demand for court is inherent in our socio-cultural context and therefore, retains the demand in the present context too. Courts are being transformed even in the modern houses where it symbolically takes place in the centrality of the whole space organisation. The houses built in the 1950s till to the present time are found to have rooms arranged around the dining space, which necessarily becomes the centre of all household activities. Also in the houses of luxurious type and apartments of the 1990s, an additional family lounge is found which becomes the focus of the private zone. This replaces the centrality of dining and represents the lost court in the traditional form. Other than in these examples, some multi-storied apartment buildings also have arranged groups of flats around courtyards. Here the court acts as a social space, which is its primary role, but in a community level. All these efforts exhibit the necessity of a central space as a social element in the indigenous houseform which in some cases also modulates the environment. Therefore, the study identifies the significance of the perpetual demand and provision of such spaces in all context. It is basically the symbolic transformation emerging from the inherited demand issued forth from the tradition.

One major limitation of the research on the multi-court houses was the accessibility into the selected houses. In most of the cases, the present occupants became suspicious when approached for information. This was because many such houses,

being abandoned after the original owners left for India after 1947, are now illegally occupied (Rahman, 1996). Another difficulty was that most of the buildings were in a dilapidated condition. In some cases, extensive extension and re-modelling were done which made the identification of original houses near impossible. The name and history of the original owner, and the construction year were sometimes not available even after consulting all standard means and search.

The study, though complete in itself, nevertheless provides the scope for further studies and research. Future research and studies can be undertaken on the environmental aspects of these houses which the present study has not elaborated. A comprehensive study can be made on the conservation and preservation prospects of these houses. Study can also be done on the detail ornamentations, styles and features of facade treatments of that particular time. Moreover, a study of local houseform in the period after the study period of the present can follow. Albeit the houseform of the time period mentioned here, study can encompass other builtforms as well. Since these houses in most of the cases are occupied by multiple number of families, a research on the present use pattern, remodelling and adjustments, and the social lives of the present occupants can present interesting findings. The social and physical roles of courts among other different cultures can also be identified, studied and compared. From spatial point of view, the demand of a central space in houseform can be further searched out which takes different shapes and pattern in different context.

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