

Old Dhaka Tour

History & Sites of Old Dhaka



Chapter 2

Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban

Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban or **National Parliament House**, (Bengali: জাতীয় সংসদ ভবন *Jatiyô Sôngsôd Bhôbôn*) is the house of the Parliament of Bangladesh, located at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. Designed by architect **Louis Kahn**, the complex, is one of the largest legislative complexes in the world, comprising 200 acres (800,000 m²)^[1]

The building was featured prominently in the 2003 film *My Architect*, detailing the career and familial legacy of its architect, Louis Kahn. Robert McCarter, author of *Louis I. Kahn*, described the National Parliament of Bangladesh as one of the twentieth century's most significant buildings.^[2]

2.1 History



Play of light inside the building

Before its completion, the first and second Parliaments

used the *Old Shangshad Bhaban*, which currently serves as the **Prime Minister's Office**.

Construction was started in 1961 when Bangladesh was East Pakistan, led by **Ayub Khan** from the West Pakistan capital of Islamabad. As part of his efforts to decrease the disparity and secessionist tendencies of East Pakistan, Khan aimed to make Dhaka a second capital, with appropriate facilities for an assembly.^[3]

Jatiyo Sangshad was designed by **Louis Kahn**. The government sought assistance from South Asian activist and architect **Muzharul Islam** who recommended bringing in the world's top architects for the project. He initially attempted to bring **Alvar Aalto** and **Le Corbusier**, who were both were unavailable at the time. Islam then enlisted his former teacher at **Yale**, **Louis Kahn**.^[3]

Construction was halted during the 1971 **Bangladesh Liberation War** and was completed on 28 January 1982. Kahn died when the project was approximately three-quarters completed and it continued under **David Wisdom**, who worked for Kahn.^[3]

2.2 History of use by Parliament

Seven Parliaments have used the Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban as the assembly building:

1. Second Parliament: 2 years 11 months (2 April 1979 – 24 March 1982)
2. Third Parliament: 1 year 5 months (10 July 1986 – 6 December 1987)
3. Fourth Parliament: 2 years 7 months (15 April 1988 – 6 December 1990)
4. Fifth Parliament: 4 years 8 months (5 April 1991 – 24 November 1995)
5. Sixth Parliament: 12 days (19 March 1996 – 30 March 1996)
6. Seventh Parliament: 5 years (14 July 1996 – 13 July 2001)

7. Eighth Parliament: 5 years (28 October 2001 – 27 October 2006)
8. Ninth Parliament: 5 years (April 2009 – 4 May 2014)
9. Ten Parliament : Running

The lake on three sides of the Bhaban, extending up to the Members' hostel adds to site's aesthetics and also portrays the riverine beauty of Bangladesh.

The assembly building received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1989.^[6]

2.3 Architecture and design

Louis Kahn designed the entire Jatiyo Sangsad complex, which includes lawns, lake and residences for the Members of the Parliament (MPs). The architect's key design philosophy was to represent Bangladeshi culture and heritage, while at the same time optimizing the use of space. The exterior of the building is striking in its simplicity, with huge walls deeply recessed by porticoes and large openings of regular geometric shapes. The main building, which is at the center of the complex, is divided into three parts – the Main Plaza, South Plaza and Presidential Plaza. An artificial lake surrounds three sides of the main building of Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban, extending to the Members of Parliament hostel complex. This skillful use of water to portray the riverine beauty of Bangladesh adds to the aesthetic value of the site.^[4]

2.3.1 Design philosophy

Kahn's key design philosophy optimizes the use of space while representing Bangladeshi heritage and culture. External lines are deeply recessed by porticoes with huge openings of regular geometric shapes on their exterior, shaping the building's overall visual impact.

In the architect Louis Kahn's own words:

In the assembly I have introduced a light-giving element to the interior of the plan. If you see a series of columns you can say that the choice of columns is a choice in light. The columns as solids frame the spaces of light. Now think of it just in reverse and think that the columns are hollow and much bigger and that their walls can themselves give light, then the voids are rooms, and the column is the maker of light and can take on complex shapes and be the supporter of spaces and give light to spaces. I am working to develop the element to such an extent that it becomes a poetic entity which has its own beauty outside of its place in the composition. In this way it becomes analogous to the solid column I mentioned above as a giver of light.

It was not belief, not design, not pattern, but the essence from which an institution could emerge...^[5]

2.3.2 The Bhaban (Main Building) design

The Bhaban consists of nine individual blocks: the eight peripheral blocks rise to a height of 110' while the central octagonal block rises to a height of 155'. All nine blocks include different groups of functional spaces and have different levels, inter-linked horizontally and vertically by corridors, lifts, stairs, light courts, and circular areas.^[7] The entire structure is designed to blend into one single, non-differentiable unit, that appears from the exterior to be a single story.

The main committee rooms are located at level two in one of the peripheral blocks. All parliamentary functionaries, including Ministers and chairpersons of some Standing Committees, have offices in the Bhaban. The Parliament Secretariat also occupies offices in the same building.^[7]

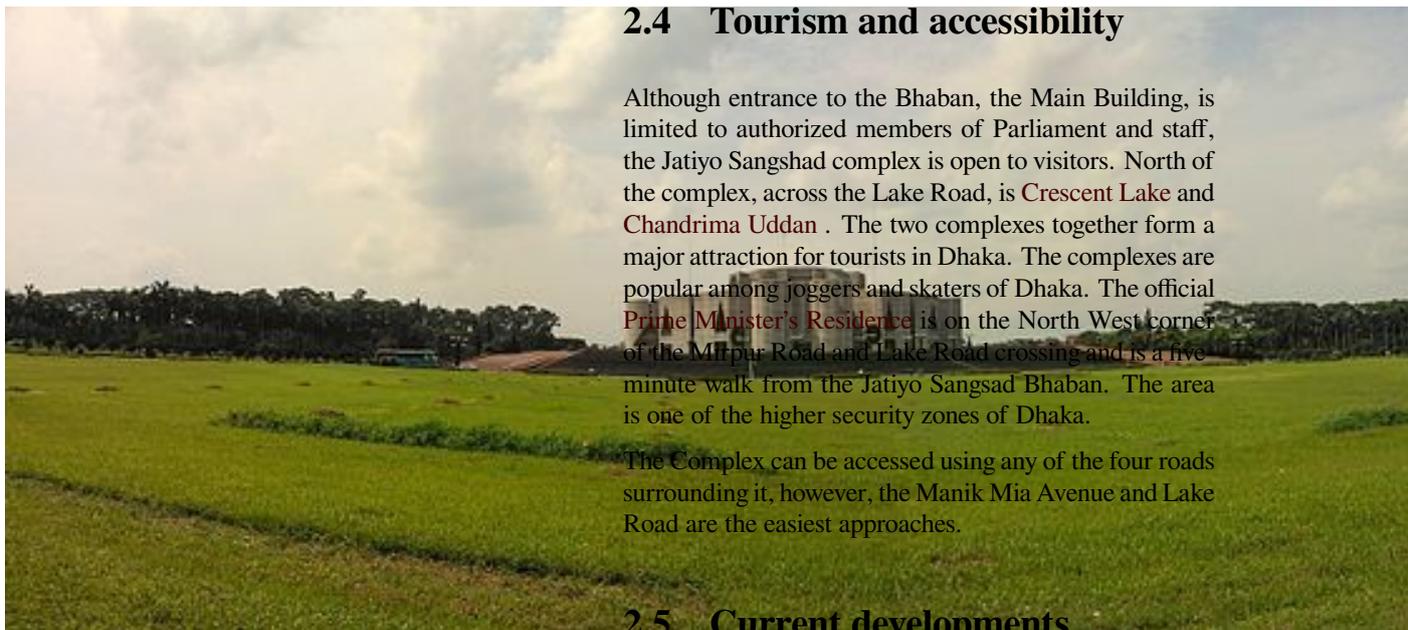
The Main Plaza

The most important part of the Main Plaza is the Parliament Chamber, which can house up to 354 members during sessions. There are also two podiums and two galleries for VIP visitors. The Chamber has a maximum height of 117' with a parabolic shell roof. The roof was designed with a clearance of a single story to let in daylight. Daylight, reflecting from the surrounding walls and octagonal drum, filters into the Parliament Chamber.^[7] The efficient and aesthetic use of light was a strong architectural capability of Louis Kahn.

The artificial lighting system has been carefully devised to provide zero obstruction to the entry of daylight. A composite chandelier is suspended from parabolic shell roof. This chandelier in turn consists of a metallic web, spanning the entire chamber, that supports the individual light fixtures.

Upper levels of the block (that contains the Chamber) contain the visitor and press galleries, as well as communication booths, all of which overlook the Parliament Chamber. The block also contains:

- at level one, a library;
- at level three, MPs' lounges; and
- at the upper level, party rooms.



view of Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban

2.4 Tourism and accessibility

Although entrance to the Bhaban, the Main Building, is limited to authorized members of Parliament and staff, the Jatiyo Sangshad complex is open to visitors. North of the complex, across the Lake Road, is **Crescent Lake and Chandrima Uddan**. The two complexes together form a major attraction for tourists in Dhaka. The complexes are popular among joggers and skaters of Dhaka. The official **Prime Minister's Residence** is on the North West corner of the Mirpur Road and Lake Road crossing and is a five-minute walk from the Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban. The area is one of the higher security zones of Dhaka.

The Complex can be accessed using any of the four roads surrounding it, however, the Manik Mia Avenue and Lake Road are the easiest approaches.

2.5 Current developments

During the government term that took office on 28 October 2001, the Government communicated plans to “complete Louis Kahn’s plans” by constructing residences for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. According to some prominent architects, no such plan existed in the original design. Although the construction was started, it was halted and the issue is still unresolved.

The South Plaza

The South Plaza faces the Manik Mia Avenue. It gradually rises to a 20' height and serves as a beautiful exterior as well as the main entrance (used by members during sessions) to the Parliament Building. It contains:

- controlling gates;
- a driveway;
- a main mechanical plant room;
- a large car parking space;
- a telephone exchange;
- offices of maintenance engineers;
- equipment stores; and
- an open plaza with steps and ramps leading directly to the main building.^[7]

Presidential Plaza

The Presidential Plaza lies to the North and faces the Lake Road. It functions as an intimate plaza for the MPs and other dignitaries. It contains marble steps, a gallery and an open pavement.

Other information

- Completion date: 1982
- Function: civic
- Construction cost: US\$32 million^[8]

2.6 Gallery

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- View at sunrise
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- Assembly Hall
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2.7 Notes

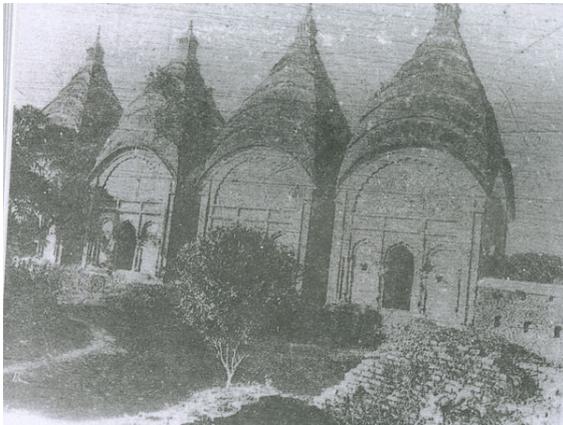
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- [2] McCarter, Robert (2005). *Louis I. Kahn*. London: Phaidon Press. p. 258,270. ISBN 0-7148-4045-9.
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Chapter 3

Dhakeshwari Temple

Dhakeshwari National Temple (Bengali: ঢাকেশ্বরী জাতীয় মন্দির *Dhakeshwari Jatio Mondir*) is a Hindu temple in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is state-owned, giving it the distinction of being Bangladesh's 'National Temple'. The name "Dhakeshwari" (ঢাকেশ্বরী *Dhakeshwari*) means "Goddess of Dhaka". Since the destruction of Ramna Kali Mandir in 1971 by the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War, the Dhakeshwari Temple has assumed status as the most important Hindu place of worship in Bangladesh.^[1]

3.1 History



1890 CE photograph of the four Shiva temples inside the main temple complex

The Dhakeshwari temple was built in the 12th century by Ballal Sen, a king of the Sena dynasty, and many say the city was named after this temple.^[2] The current architectural style of the temple cannot be dated to that period because of the numerous repairs, renovations and rebuilding which have taken place over time. It is considered an essential part of Dhaka's cultural heritage. Many researchers say that the temple is also one of the Shakti Peethas, where the jewel from the crown of the Goddess Sati had fallen. Although there is not enough historical context to establish this as a fact, researchers were directed to this site while trying to locate the particular Shakti Peetha. Since ages, the temple has been held in

great importance. The original 800-year-old statue was taken to Kumartuli, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. There remains the replica of original idol in Dhaka. The temple was further damaged during the Muslim mob attacks of 1989–90.

It is widely believed that the Queen, wife of King Bijoy Sen went to Langolbond for bathing. While coming back she gave birth to a son, known to historians as Ballal Sen. After ascending to the throne, Ballal Sen built this temple to glorify his birthplace. Legends say that Ballal Sen once dreamt of the deity covered under the jungle. Ballal Sen uncovered the deity from there and built a temple, named for Dhakeswari. Whatever the legends describe, Hindu religious consider Dhakeswari to be the presiding deity of Dhaka, which is an incarnation or form of Goddess Durga the Adi Shakti. The idol of Durga is called Dhakeswari .

3.2 Structure

3.2.1 Exterior view



Main temple structure

Within the premises of the Dhakeswari there are temples of two types of architecture. The ancient one is of the Poncharotna Goddess Durga's which lost its actual look after the renovation work. Bradley Bird wrote this at the beginning of this century. The present temple is two hun-



Entrance to the main temple compound



Main temple structure from the west side

dred years old which was built by an agent of East India Company. Most probably he had renovated the temple. Other than this there are four Shib Temples. According to hearsay, in the 16th century King Mansing built these temples by laying four Shib Lingas there. But this information seems to be unreliable. The fusion of Bangla chowchala and shikor temple is notice in the architecture of Dhakeshawri. Ratan Lal Chakraborti in an article mentioned that “ the structure and architecture of it is like a Buddhist Pagoda”. From this he assumed that the temple was probably built in the 10th century.

How did Dhakeshari temple look like in the 19th century? Ridoy Nath Majumder described about the temple. At that time the temple was covered by jungle and in its north the Urdu road went westward towards Pilkhana and at its south west was Mirpur road. At its south there was a wood and Urdu bazar was at the east.

3.2.2 Interior view

The temple was panchorathno, at its front Natamandir and around it there is a row of rooms and a big pond and nahobottola gate through which elephant used to go. At its east there are tombs of some saints who used to pray or



The Goddess statue at the Dhakeshwari Temple

meditate at the temple. Outside the temple there are 5-6 pagoda with a shiblinga. The priest of Dhakeshawri temple used pray every day. The deity is doshvuja. It is believed that it is made of gold. At the left and right side of the deity there are some other murti. Like the ancient temples its inside is dark. To see the deity light is to be arranged. The temple is owned by many because it is bought by the new caretaker from the old caretakers. Jotindramohan bought it in 1901. Dhakeshawri is crowded but it is an abode of peace. The low sound of the tongue mixes with the evening light and tune of temple bell and make the peaceful environment a happy event.

3.3 Declaration as National Temple of Bangladesh

In 1996, Dhakeshwari Temple was renamed Dhakeshwari Jatiya Mandir (National Temple) reflecting its position as the center of Hindu culture and worship in Bangladesh.^[3] This was the culmination of a major campaign by Bangladeshi Hindu groups who had been demanding official recognition for the primary Hindu place of worship following the declaration of Islam as the state religion in 1988. As a result, the flag of Bangladesh is hoisted every morning outside the main temple premises, and it follows the National Flag Code rules such as rendering half-mast on nationally declared days of mourning.

As is the practice in other leading religious places of worship in Bangladesh, day-long prayers are common prac-

tice during important national holidays such as Independence Day, Language Martyrs' Day, Victory Day and birth and death anniversaries of former leaders such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman.

3.4 Threats to temple security

The Dhakeshwari Temple was severely damaged during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, and over half of the temple's buildings were destroyed. The main worship hall was taken over by the Pakistan Army and used as an ammunitions storage area. Several of the temple custodians were tortured and killed by the Army though most, including the Head Priest, fled to their ancestral villages then to India and therefore escaped death.

A significant portion of the temple land has been lost due to the *Vested Property Act* and confiscation by the Bangladesh Government, and the current premises are considerably lower than the historic reach of the property. Muslim mobs have attacked the temple complex many times,^[4] with the last major attack taking place in December 1992.

3.5 Religious and socio-cultural activities



Durga puja celebrations in Dhakeshwari Temple

Dhakeshwari Temple is a hub of socio-cultural as well as religious activity. Each year, the largest celebration of Durga Puja (the most important event in the Bengali Hindu calendar) in Dhaka is held at the National Temple, and a stream of dignitaries (such as the Bangladeshi President, Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, Members of Parliament and media celebrities) come to felicitate the Bangladeshi Hindu community from the temple premises. Several thousand worshippers and onlookers (including Muslims) stream through the premises where they are offered prasad (food - usually rice and lentils).



Dhakeshwari Temple (1904), Photograph taken by Fritz Kapp.

A *Bijaya Sammelani* (cultural program following Durga Puja) takes place in the adjoining parade ground a few days after Durga Puja is complete, and is also a major cultural event in the Dhaka calendar, regularly attracting some of the top performers from the Dhaka music and film industry.

One of the most important events of the year is the *Janmashthami* procession which starts from Dhakeshwari temple and then proceeds through the streets of Old Dhaka;^[5] this occurs on the day of Lord Krishna's birthday, which is also a public holiday in Bangladesh and second only to Durga Puja in importance in the Bengali calendar. The procession dates back to 1902 but was stopped in 1948 following the establishment of Pakistan and subsequent attacks by Muslim mobs in Dhaka. The procession was resumed in 1989.

Concerts and charity drives (such as flood relief) are also a regular fixture within the temple throughout the year. Each year, Dhakeshwari Temple hosts major blood drives and inoculation programs which are open to all residents of Dhaka city.

At the old time, festivals happened on the month of Chaitra in temple complex of Dhakeswari. This place was crowded by various colored shops. Virtuous people used to visit the temple to gather religious merit and get back to their home. Millions of Hindu religious people would take bath at Langolbondon on the month of Choitra on Sukla Ostomi time to get rid of their sins. People in huge numbers used to come to Dhakeswari temple on foot from different roads to be blessed by the deity Durga. It was the best moment of their whole year. With great hope they would come out from their home, and it was reflected on their faces, to get rid of their sins by worshiping the Deity with exclusive devotion and bowing their head to meditation of Bhagaban. They forget about everything-hunger, sleep, restlessness - and they just believe that they will be blessed and they step up for the temple. All those people were divided into small groups with each group having ten to twenty people. The groups consisted of

mainly women, only one man, who is the oldest of the village, was there for taking care of them. They came from very long distance by forming groups. People of different ages, including the oldest and skinniest, were also gathered with these groups. Young people from the nearest city to the temple volunteering for the people would come from long distance to be blessed by the Deity, with a great concentration, eagerness to the worship of the Deity and often bowing by shouting “Oom Dhaka eswari”.

In present days, each year, the largest celebration of Durga puja (the most important event in the Bengali Hindu calendar) in Dhaka is held at the National Temple, and a stream of dignitaries come to felicitate the Bangladeshi Hindu community from the temple premises. Several thousand worshippers and onlookers (including Muslims) stream through the premises where they are offered prasad (food - usually rice and lentils). A Bijaya Sannidan (a cultural program following Durga Puja) takes place in the adjoining parade ground a few days after Durga Puja is complete, and is also a major cultural event in the Dhaka calendar. Durga Puja comes to an end after five days, through the celebration of Bijoya Dashami after performing the sacred rituals of Sashthi, Saptami, Ashtami and Navami. Bijoya Dashami will end with the idols of Durga and her four children Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesha taken in processions for immersion in river or sea. A procession starts from the temple.^[6]

3.6 Present condition

It was severely damaged during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, and over half of the temple's buildings were destroyed. The main worship hall was taken over by the Pakistan Army and used as an ammunition storage area. Several of the temple custodians were tortured and killed by the Army though most, including the Head Priest, fled to their ancestral villages and to India and therefore escaped death. After that everything was destroyed of Dhakeswari temple at the time of riot on rule of Ershad president of Bangladesh at 1990 except the outer slough.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi prayed at the temple during his official visit to Bangladesh on 7 June 2015. He was given a model of the goddess Dhakeshwari by the temple authorities.^[7]

3.7 Gallery

- Dhakeswari Temple
- Deity Durga
- Shib Temples
- Main Entrance



National Temple complex, 360 degree view. May. 2015

3.8 See also

- Hinduism in Bangladesh
- Architecture of Bangladesh
- Kantajew Temple
- Ramna Kali Mandir
- Shahbaz Khan Mosque
- Shona Mosque
- Bagha Mosque
- Dhamrai Jagannath Roth
- Khan Mohammad Mridha Mosque
- Sixty Dome Mosque
- Saat Masjid
- Lalbagh Fort

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Chapter 4

Khan Mohammad Mridha Mosque

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The **Khan Mohammad Mirza Mosque** on **Lalbagh** road is situated less than half a kilometre west of the **Lalbagh Fort**. Two **Persian** inscriptions, one over the central archway and the other over the central **Mihrab**, speak of its construction during 1704–05 AD by one **Khan Muhammad Mirza**.^[lower-alpha 1]

The large platform is 38.10 m from north to south and 28.96 m from east to west. Its height is about 5.18 m from the ground level. Underneath the platform are vaulted rooms on all sides except the eastern side. In the eastern side, there is a **stairway** which ends with a gateway aligning the central doorway of the mosque proper. It is through this gateway that one can reach the top of the platform.

4.1 Origins and inspiration



Mahomed Mosque at Dhaka (1885).

Khan Mohammad Mirza mosque, an archaeological site located in southern **Dhaka**, near **Lalbagh fort**. The mosque rises above its surroundings because the **tahkhana** or underground rooms of the mosque are above grade. The roof of the **tahkhana** forms the platform on which the mosque is situated. The spacious prayer place before

the main mosque is open in all directions allowing air to flow and keep the **Musullis** cool.^[1]

4.2 Architecture and architect



The domes on the mosque

The main mosque where the **Imam** and a few **Musullis** are accommodated consists of three domes bears testimony of the **architecture** practiced during the sixteenth century. Two **Persian** inscriptions, one over the central archway and the other over the central **Mihrab**. According to an inscription found, the mosque was built during the rule of Deputy Governor of **Dhaka**, **Farrukh Siyar**, by a **Khan Muhammad Mirza**, who could have been the architect. The construction was orders by a **Qazi Ibadullah** during 1704–05 AD.^[2]

The platform is 16'–6" above the ground level. The **tahkhana** comprises vaulted rooms for living purposes. The mosque is accessed from the east, up a flight of twenty-five steps. Area wise, the mosque occupies only a small portion of the platform.

4.3 Prayer Hall

The prayer hall is a rectangular structure measuring 48' x 24' and is capped by three domes, the central being

the larger one. The smaller sizes of the side domes are achieved by using intermediary pendentives. The corners minarets are short and slender, rising just above the parapet and are capped by ribbed copulas. The annex to the north of the mosque serves as a *madrassa* or religious school and has a *hujra* or arcaded hall that is used for travelers and visitors. The facade of the mosque is decorated with paneling and ornamental merlons along the parapet. The entrances to the prayer hall are framed by multi-cusped arches and engaged columns on either side.^[3]

4.4 Interior



Tomb in front of the mosque

The interior is divided into three bays by two lateral arches. Each bay contains a *mihrab* that is marked by multi-cusped arch within a rectangular panel.

4.5 Gardens

Various kinds of seasonal flowers are cultivated in the garden at the eastern portion making the compound a sight for sore eyes. A 'Mali' appointed by Department of Archaeology is in charge of the upkeep of the garden. A well in the northern portion of the garden once used for supplying water for 'Ozu' a way of becoming fresh before prayer is now abandoned. In the southern side of the garden stands a tall, old palm tree bearing the symbol of ancient for the place.^[4]

4.6 Location and ownership

This ancient structure can be beheld at 150 meter west on the road that goes beside Lalbag fort. The mosque being an architectural site of Dhaka city is also used as a mosque. Mutawalli of the mosque says, "Though the mosque is owned by the government as an archeological site and is being supervised by the Department of Archeology under Ministry of Cultural affairs there is lack of sincerity and transparency in the government intervention."

4.7 Restoration and controversies

In 1913 the Archaeological Survey of India listed Mirza's Masjid as a historic monument; by then it had undergone alterations and appropriations that had to be demolished to restore it to its original form. The earliest photograph available on the mosque shows a ruined structure at the turn of the nineteenth century just before this early restoration attempt. Thereafter both the DOA and mosque committee have undertaken periodic repairs, some of which ignored the architectural and historic importance of the building. To compensate for the damaged drains and stop further deterioration the authority provided new outlets to drain rainwater out from the upper terrace (*sahn*); and improved water and sanitation services. The site experienced many encroachments that constricted the boundaries of the compound, which drew serious attention of the architects and other conservation enthusiasts when it was included as a case study in an architectural conservation workshop in 1989 in Dhaka, sponsored by the AKTC and UNDP.^[5]

4.8 Conservation and criticism

Conservation of invaluable heritage sites in the 400-year-old city of Dhaka has always been ignored, leading to destruction of the sites. Destruction of heritage sites and historical monuments started during Pakistan period on a moderate scale but it gained momentum after independence. Heritage properties suffered destruction in an appalling extent during military rule. According to conservationist architects, friezes and other ornamental features of the old buildings are replaced with dissimilar and odd-looking features. Details of the ornamental works, their sizes and proportions are lost in the intervention. According to conservationist architects, friezes and other ornamental features of the old buildings are replaced with dissimilar and odd-looking features. Details of the ornamental works, their sizes and proportions are lost in the intervention. Though the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), the Metropolitan Building Rules of 2006 (revised in 2008) and the Antiquities Act of 1968 require the government to take measures and institute a standing

Chapter 5

Lalbagh Fort

Lalbagh Fort (also **Fort Aurangabad**) is an incomplete 17th century Mughal fort complex that stands before the Buriganga River in the southwestern part of Dhaka, Bangladesh.^[1] The construction was started in 1678 AD by Mughal Subahdar Muhammad Azam Shah who was son of Emperor Aurangzeb and later emperor himself. His successor, Shaista Khan, did not continue the work, though he stayed in Dhaka up to 1688.

5.1 History

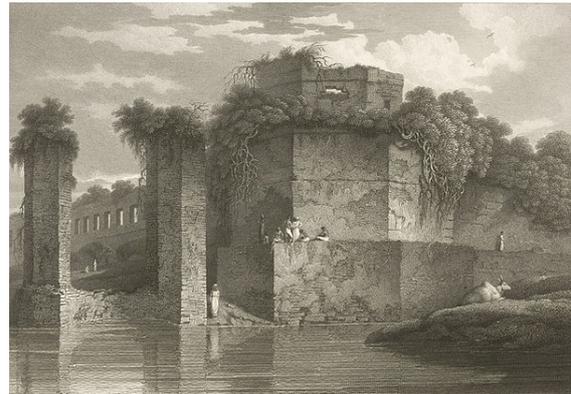


South gate of the fort painted by Johan Zoffany in 1787

Mughal prince **Muhammad Azam**, third son of Aurangzeb started the work of the fort in 1678 during his vice-royalty in Bengal. He stayed in Bengal for 15 months. The fort remained incomplete when he was called away by his father Aurangzeb.

Shaista Khan was the new subahdar of Dhaka in that time, and he did not complete the fort. In 1684, the daughter of Shaista Khan named Iran Dukht Pari Bibi died there. After her death, he started to think the fort as unlucky, and left the structure incomplete.^[2] Among the three major parts of Lalbagh Fort, one is the tomb of Pari Bibi.

After Shaista Khan left Dhaka, it lost its popularity. The main cause was that the capital was moved from Dhaka to



1814 painting of the fort by Charles D'Oyly



Photograph of the south gate in 1875

Murshidabad. After the end of the royal Mughal period, the fort became abandoned. In 1844, the area acquired its name as Lalbagh replacing Aurangabad, and the fort became Lalbagh Fort.^[3]

5.2 Structures

For long the fort was considered to be a combination of three buildings (the mosque, the tomb of Bibi Pari and the Diwan-i-Aam), with two gateways and a portion of the partly damaged fortification wall. Recent excavations carried out by the Department of Archaeology of



Photograph of the south gate taken by Fritz Kapp in 1904

Bangladesh have revealed the existence of other structures.

The southern fortification wall has a huge bastion in the southwestern corner. On the north of the south fortification wall were the utility buildings, stable, administration block, and its western part accommodated a beautiful roof-garden with arrangements for fountains and a water reservoir. The residential part was located on the east of the west fortification wall, mainly to the southwest of the mosque.

The fortification wall on the south had five bastions at regular intervals two stories in height, and the western wall had two bastions; the biggest one is near the main southern gate. The bastions had an underground tunnel.

The central area of the fort is occupied by three buildings - the Diwan-i-Aam and the hammam on its east, the Mosque on the west and the Tomb of Pari Bibi in between the two - in one line, but not at an equal distance. A water channel with fountains at regular intervals connects the three buildings from east to west and north to south.^[1]

5.2.1 Diwani-i-Aam

Diwan-i-Aam is a two storied residence of the Mughal governor of Bengal located on the east site of the complex.^[4] A single storied hammam is attached on its west. The hammam portion has an underground room for boiling water. A long partition wall runs along the western facade of the hammam.^[1]

The building is situated about 39 meters (136') to the west of the tank, running from north to south. The external measurements of the building are 32.47m x 8.18m (107' x 29').^[5]

There are living quarters on each level of two stories and a main central hallway connecting them. There is a Hammamkhana (Bathhouse) in the southern part of the building which is one of the seventh Hammamkhana still ex-

isting in ruins in the heritage of Bangladesh.^[5]

Recent excavations (1994–2009) show that there was a special room below the room of Hammamkhana, where archeologists found the arrangements for heating water, supplying the hot water as well as cool water to the Hammamkhana through the terracotta pipes which was specially manufactured for such purpose. The discovery of black spots in the underground room proof that fire had been used for the purpose of heating the water for the Hammamkhana. There was also a toilet room by the side of Hammamkhana.^[5]

All the building along with the arrangements of Hammamkhana clearly shows that it was very much in use by the Subadar of Bengal and that Subadar was Shaista Khan. From the report of the Governor of English Factory it was learned that Shaista Khan used to live in this room and some Europeans were kept in custody here.^[6]

5.2.2 A water tank

A square shaped water tank (71.63m on each side) is placed to the east of the Diwan-i-Aam. There are four corner stairs to descend into the tank.^[1]

5.2.3 Tomb of Bibi Pari

The tomb of Bibi Pari, the daughter of Shaista Khan, is in the middle of the complex. There is a central square room. It contains the remains of Bibi Pari covered by a false octagonal dome and wrapped by brass plate.^[1] The entire inner wall is covered with white marble. Eight rooms surround the central one. There is another small grave in the southeastern corner room.^[1]

5.2.4 Lalbagh Fort Mosque

5.3 Some views of the fort

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5.4 Stories

From the time of construction till date, various myths have revolved around the fort. Among all the historical stories and debates, it is widely believed that Lalbagh Fort stands as a monument of the unfulfilled dreams of Prince

Muhammad Azam, beloved son of Emperor Aurangzeb. In the mid 17th century, he was serving as the Viceroy of Bengal and began the construction of the impressive Lalbagh Fort complex.

Therefore, the popular stories about the fort begin. Before the construction was finished, Prince Azam was called back to his father, to assist in the war against the Marathas. Legend says after the Mughal prince departed, Shaista Khan continued with building the project, but upon the untimely death of his much-loved daughter Iran-Dukht, warmly known as Pari Bibi, the construction was stopped. Bibi was engaged to Prince Azam at the time of her death.

There are also legends and debates about the identity of Pari Bibi. Few researchers claim she was a nine-year-old Ahom princess. Mir Jumals Ahom's expedition brought a war adjoining the Garo hills. He took the daughter of Ahom Raja to compel him for the full execution of the previous peace treaty. Later, the emperor made her convert to Islam and married her off to prince Azam. However, overshadowing all the debates, people now believe that she was the loving daughter of Nawab Shaista Khan.^[7]

5.5 Important facts

Archeologists after a recent excavation discover continuity of the main fort walls towards east below Shaista Khan Road and opine that the present area of Qilla only represents half portion as planned by Prince Azam Khan. The gate at south-east of Fort (adjacent to Lalbagh Shahi Masjid) as per requirement fits properly as the Central Gate in the middle of Fort, the other half on east- likely planned for administrative purpose (Girde Qilla area)- were incomplete or extinct long ago.^[8]

5.6 See also

- History of Dhaka

5.7 References

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[5] The Archaeological Heritage of Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Nov 2011. p. 589

[6] The Archaeological Heritage of Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Nov 2011. p. 597

[7] *the Archeological heritage of bangladesh*. asiatic society of bangladesh. Nov 2011. p. 592.

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5.8 Further reading

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- Lalbagh Fort by Our Dhaka City

Chapter 6

Star Mosque

Warning: Page using Template:Infobox religious building with unknown parameter “renovation” (this message is shown only in preview).

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Star Mosque (Bengali: তারা মসজিদ; also known as *Tara Masjid*), is a mosque located in Armanitola area, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The mosque has ornate designs and is decorated with motifs of blue stars. It was built in the first half of the 19th century by Mirza Golam Pir (Mirza Ahmed Jan).^[1]

6.1 Historical background

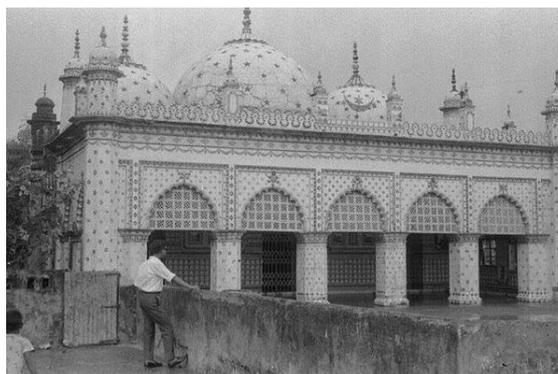
Star Mosque was first built by Mirza Ghulam Pir, as a three domed oblong edifice. But an over enthusiastic and zealous merchant named Ali Jan Bepari completely remodeled and reconstructed it with extremely delicate and richly colored tiles of variegated patterns. Ali Jan has added the new verandah, that is mentioned in the introduction, on the east and spent lavishly on importing Japanese and English decorated China clay tiles to improve the inner and outer show of the mosque. It is now a five domed structure. In 1987, two domes have been raised on an extension to the northern side without any respect to its antiquity, architectural style and decoration.

6.2 Architecture

Built in the Mughal style by Mirza Ghulam in the late 18th century, this mosque was originally a simple rectangular mosque, measuring 33' x 11' with three doorways on the east façade (main façade) and one on the north wall and another on the south wall. Three domes crowned the mosque, the central one being the larger. Towers accented the corners and the façades displayed plastered panel decoration. In early 20th century, Ali Jan Bepari financed its renovation when a front verandah was added. The surface was redone in ‘Chini Tikri’, a pop-

ular broken china decoration. The mosque is one of the very few examples of exclusive chinitikri mosaic, found in the striking blue star mosaic, which gave the mosque its name Star Mosque. In 1987, the prayer hall was extended by the Department of Architecture to include two more domes.^[2] It was decorated with imported china clay tiles and used both methods of applying chinitikri and used solid color, cur clay tiles and formed patterns by placing the colored tiles in white plaster. The domes and the exterior are covered with different colored star shaped china clay tiles. The upper portion of the eastern façade also incorporates a crescent motif. The work assumed another texture by using assorted glazed tiles on the interior. The three mibrabs and the doorways are decorated with mosaic floral pattern. A plant and vase motif is repeated as a decorative element on the pendantive and the interior of the verandah wall.

6.2.1 Exterior decoration



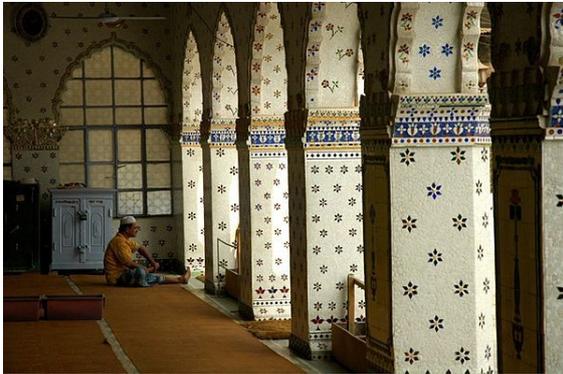
A 1967 image of the mosque

In early 20th century, Ali Jan Bepari, a local businessman, financed the renovation of the mosque and added a new eastern verandah. The surface was redecorated with Chinitikri work (mosaic work of broken China porcelain pieces), a decorative style that was popular during the 1930s. The mosque, which previously lacked any historical significance, is one of the few remaining architectural example of the Chinitikri (Chinese pieces) method of mosaic decoration. This decorative technique

is found in the striking star motif that is in part the reason for the mosque's current acclaim and popular name, Star Mosque or Sitara Masjid. In 1987, the Ministry of Religious Affairs commissioned Giasul Huque and Zahiruddin Zahiruddin to make additions to the prayer hall, which was extended to include two more domes.

The mosque is decorated with Japanese and English china clay tiles and utilized both methods of the Chinitikri application. One approach uses solid color, cut clay tiles and form patterns through the placement of these colored tiles in white plaster. The domes and the exterior surface are covered with different colored star shaped China clay tiles. The upper portion of the eastern façade also incorporates a crescent motif.

6.2.2 Interior decoration



Interior of the mosque

Chinitikri tile work assumes another texture by using assorted pieces of different designs of glazed tiles on the interior surfaces of the mosque. The three mihrabs and the doorways are decorated with mosaic floral pattern. A plant and vase motif is repeated as a decorative element on the pendentives as well as on the interior of the verandah wall. As a decorative element, the Japanese Fujiyama motif, is found on the surface between the doors.

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6.4 External links

- [A photo blog post on Tara Masjid /Star Mosque in Kothay](#)

Chapter 7

Armenian Church (Dhaka)

The **Armenian Church** (also known as **Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy Resurrection**)^[1] is a historically significant architectural monument situated in the Armanitola area of old Dhaka, Bangladesh. The church bears testimony to the existence of a significant **Armenian community in the region** in the 17th and 18th centuries.

7.1 History

Following the domination of their homeland by Persian powers of the time, Armenians were sent by their new rulers to the Bengal region for both political and economic reasons. Although the Armenian presence in South Asia is now insignificant, their presence in Dhaka dates back to the 17th century.^[2] Armenians came to Dhaka for business. In Dhaka, Armenian merchants traded in jute and leather, and profitability in these businesses convinced some to move permanently to Bangladesh.^[3] The area where they lived became known as Armanitola.^[4]

In 1781 the now famous Armenian Church was built on Armenian Street in Armanitola, then a thriving business district. The site was an Armenian graveyard before the church was built, and the tombstones that have survived serve as a chronicle of Armenian life in the area.^[3] Agaminus Catachik, an Armenian, gave away the land to build the church. Michel Cerkess, Okotavata Setoor Sevorg, Aga Amnius, and Merkers Poges helped build the church.

In the fifty years following the church's construction, a clock tower was erected on its western side. Allegedly, the clock could be heard four miles away, and people synchronised their watches with the sound of the tower's bell. The clock stopped in 1880, and an earthquake destroyed the tower in 1897.^[2] The Armenian played a prominent part in the jute trade in Dhaka and are reputed to be the pioneers of that trade in the second half of the 19th century. Today, the last Armenian that takes cares of the church is Mikel Housep Martirossian (Micheal Joseph Martin).^{[5][6]} He was also one of the Armenian who was in the jute trade.

7.2 Architecture



Armenian Church, 2008

The church is 750 feet (230 m) in length. It has 4 doors, 27 windows. The main floor is divided into three parts: a pulpit enclosed by railings, a middle section with two folding doors, and an area separated by a wooden fence for seating. There is a spiral staircase into the second floor of the church. Beside of this there was a watch house. It was built by johans paru piyete sarkis. The house broke down by an earth quake in 1897. There was a square tower in between the church. A shonkhonill special type of minar used in India to show respect minar was on the top of that. The corridor of the church is 14 feet wide. There is beautiful paintings in the church, it was done by the artist charles port. There is a room behind the pulpit

used for baptism, with a 3 foot deep marble baptismal font.

7.3 Modern use

Mother Teresa stayed in the church compound during a 1996 visit to Dhaka.^[7]

In the old graveyard, amongst the 350 people buried there, a statue stands at the grave of Catachik Avatik Thomas, portraying his wife. The statue was bought from Kolkata and the grave is inscribed with the words “Best of Husband.”^[1]

Today, the church is usually closed. It has been the subject of BBC and AFP documentaries. It has been recognized as a heritage site under the jurisdiction of the Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh.^[8]

7.4 See also

- Armenian architecture
- Armenian Apostolic Church
- Christianity in Bangladesh

7.5 Notes

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[8] “Govt to preserve historic religious places: Minister”. *The Independent*. Dhaka. Retrieved 7 February 2016.

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7.7 External links

- A photo blog on Armenian Church in Kothay

Chapter 8

Ahsan Manzil

Ahsan Manzil (Bengali: আহসান মঞ্জিল, *Ahsan Monjil*) was the official residential palace and seat of the **Dhaka Nawab Family**.^[1] This magnificent building is situated at Kumartoli along the banks of the **Buriganga River** in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**. The construction of this palace was started in 1859 and was completed in 1872.^[1] It was constructed in the **Indo-Saracenic Revival architecture**. It has been designated as a national museum.

8.1 History

In Mughal era, there was a garden house of Sheikh Enayet Ullah, the landlord of Jamalpur porgona (district), in this place. Sheikh Enayet Ullah was a very charming person. He acquired a very big area in Kumortuli (Kumartuli) and included it in his garden house. Here he built a beautiful palace and named it “Rongmohol” (Rangmahal). He used to enjoy here keeping beautiful girls collected from the country and abroad, dressing them with gorgeous dresses and expensive ornaments. There is a saying that, the foudjar of Dhaka (representative of mughal emperor) in that time was attracted to one of the beautiful girls among them. He invited Sheikh Enayet Ullah in a party one night and killed him in a conspiracy when he was returning home. That girl also committed suicide in anger and sorrow. There was a grave of Sheikh Enayet Ullah in the north-east corner of the palace yard which was ruined in the beginning of the 20th century.

Probably in the period of Nawab Alibardi Khan around 1740 century, Sheikh Moti Ullah, the son of Sheikh Enayet Ullah, sold the property to the French traders. There was a French trading house beside this property. The trading house became wealthier after purchasing this property. In that time, French traders could do business here without paying any taxes by a decree from the emperor Awrangajeb. In that time, the French became very wealthy by doing business here in competition with the English and other European companies. They made a big palace and dug a pond for sweet water in the newly purchased property. The pond still exists in the compound of Ahsan Manjil which was called “Les Jalla” in that time. In the English-French war, French got defeated and all their properties were captured by the English. On 22 June

1757, the French left the trading house with a fleet of 35 boats from the river station of Buriganga in front of Kumartuli.

In 1785, the French transferred the property to a French tradesman named Mr. Champigni, and retaken it at 1801. According to Paris agreement of 1814, the French claimed all their left properties at Dhaka, and in 1827 the property was again returned to the French. For the increasing power of the English, the French was forced to left subcontinent. They decided to sell all their properties in Dhaka. So in 1830, the trading house of Kumartuli was purchased by the established landlord of Dhaka Khwaja Alimullah.

After some renovation work, the trading house became the residence of Khwaja Alimullah. In his time, a stable and a family mosque was added in the compound. After his death, his son Khwaja Abdul Gani made a great flourish to the property, and named it “Ahsan Manjil” on his son Ahsan Ullah. In the east side of the old building, he made a new building with a different design, and also done great renovation work to the old building. Since then, the old building was called “Ondor Mohol” and the new building was called “Rong mohol”.

In the evening of 7 April 1888, a devastating tornado hit Dhaka city causing great damage. Ahsan Manjil was severely damaged and abandoned. An English engineer from Kolkata arrived here to examine the palace. He gave opinion that except for the “Rangmahal”, all the other parts of the palace would have to be reconstructed. So Khwaja Abdul Gani and his son Ahsanullah turned their full attention to rebuild the palace. Both of the buildings were reconstructed during that time with a new design and supervised by the local engineer Gobinda Chandra Roy.

The old French building was reconstructed to a two storied building keeping similarity to the Rangmahal. A gangway was made with wood connecting the first floors of the two buildings. The most beautiful thing made in this time was the dome, which made the palace so beautiful.

After the death of Khwaja Ahsanullah in 1901, the glory of Ahsan Manjil was ended. His successors couldn't continue the glory because of the internal family quarrel. They rented different parts of the palace to tenants, who

actually made it a slum. In 1952, govt. acquired the property and left in supervision of the Dhaka Nawab court. In 1985, Dhaka National Museum acquired the property and made it a museum following a massive restoration programme which utilised historic photographs of the property.^[2]

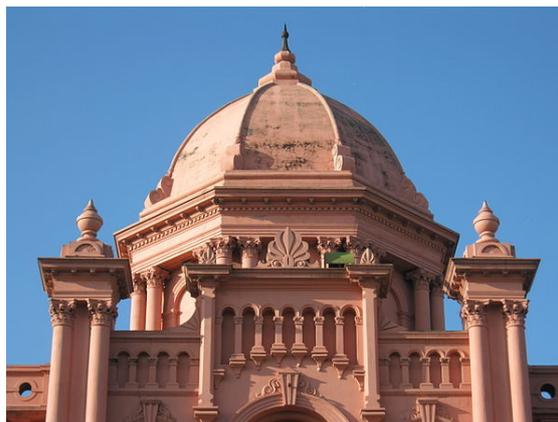
8.2 Description and construction

Ahsan Manzil is one of the most significant architectural monuments of Bangladesh. The building structure was established on a raised platform of 1 meter, the two-storied palace measures 125.4m by 28.75m. The height of the ground floor is 5 meters and the height of the first floor is 5.8 meters. The thickness of the walls of the palace is about 0.78 meters. There are porticos of 5 meters height on the northern and southern sides of the palace. The building has a broad front-facing the Buriganga River. On the river side, an open spacious stairway leads right up to the second portal and on their stands the grand triple-arched portals. There was once a fountain in the garden in front of the stairs which does not exist today. All along the north and the south side of the building run spacious verandahs with an open terrace projected in the middle.

The palace Ahsan Manzil is divided into two parts: the eastern side and the western side. The eastern building with the dome is called the Rangmahal and the western side with the living rooms is called Andarmahal. The high octagonal dome is placed on the central round room. There is a large drawing room, card room, library, state room and two other guest rooms are located on the east side of the palace. The ballroom, the Hindustani room and few residential rooms are situated on the western side. A beautiful vaulted artificial ceiling, made of wood, decorates the drawing room and the Jalsaghar. A splendid dining hall and few smaller rooms are placed on the west part. The floors of the dining and Darbar Halls are decorated with white, green and yellow colored ceramic tiles. The famous store room, where the valuables of the Nawabs used to be stored, was in the middle of the five rooms located in the western half of the ground floor. Along with those rooms a Darbar Hall or assembly hall and a chest room is also place there.

There are attractive wooden stairs in the room that is attached to the north of the domed room. The balusters were ornamented with vine leaves made of iron along the railing of the stairs. The wooden ceiling of the room, decorated with geometric designs, is very elegant. The verandas and rooms are covered with marble. The doorways are placed within semicircular arches. The inner doors had multi-colored glasses. Wooden beams supported the roof of these rooms. The architecture and the decoration is one of a kind in whole Bangladesh.

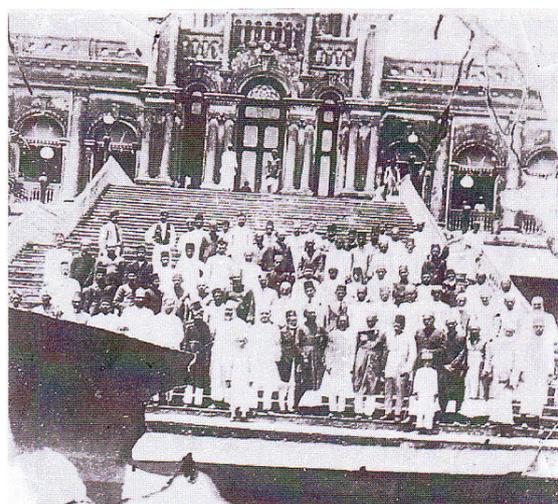
The construction of the famous dome of the Ahsan Mazil,



Dome of Ahsan-Manzil

which is at the center of the palace, took a lot tedious planning. The square room on the ground floor was built with a round shape and brickworks were done around the corners. To give the room an octagonal shape, squinches were given around the roof corners. The eight corners of the octagon was slanted gradually to make the dome look like the bud of a lotus (kumud kali). The peak of this dome is 27.13 m above the ground. Ahsan Manzil was severely damaged during the tornado that occurred on 7 April 1888, the western block of Andarmahal was completely demolished and later it was entirely rebuilt. The present day dome, which is situated on the top, was built during the time of reconstruction. This place was also damaged during the earthquake of 1897 but Nawab Khwaja Ahsanullah repaired the whole place again.

8.3 Glory days



Nawab Sir Salimullah with his family in front of Ahsan Manzil

In 1874, Lord Northbrook, Governor General of India attended an evening function in the palace when he came to lay the foundation of a water works installed by Nawab

Abdul Ghani. In 1888, Lord Dufferin also accepted the hospitality offered at Ahsan Manzil. In 1904 Lord Curzon, on a visit to East Bengal, stayed in this palace on 18 and 19 February to win public support for the proposed Partition of Bengal.

Ahsan Manzil, an architectural treasure, is a witness to many historical events of Bangladesh. From the last part of the 19th century to the initial years of Pakistan, the Muslim leadership of East Bengal emerged from this palace. The nawabs of Dhaka used to conduct their court affairs here as chief of the panchayet (village council) everyday. Many anti-Congress meetings were held here under the patronization of Nawab Ahsanullah, a staunch believer in Muslim identity. Almost all the Viceroy, Governors and Lieutenant Governors of British India who visited Dhaka spent some time at the Ahsan Manzil. Almost all political activities of Nawab Khwaja Salimullah centred round this palace. Ahsan Manzil was the cradle of the All India Muslim League. With the decline of the Nawabs of Dhaka, Ahsan Manzil also started to decline.

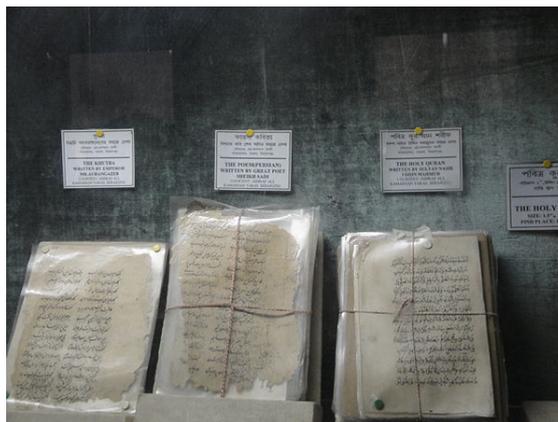
8.4 Decline

In 1952, the Dhaka Nawab State was acquired under the East Bengal Estate Acquisition Act; it became impossible for the successors of the Nawabs to maintain the palace due to financial constraints. Nawab Khwaja Habibullah started living at Paribag Green House soon after the acquisition of the zamindari. The palace was soon on the verge of collapse as successors rented out rooms without considering its dignity. Over the years illegal occupants turned the place into a filthy slum. After the independence of Bangladesh, most of the nawab family went to abroad in search of a better livelihood and work. On 1974, the owners of the palace decided to put it up for auction.

8.5 Renovation

Recognizing the historical and architectural importance of the Ahsan Manzil, the government of Bangladesh took the initiative to renovate it. In 1985, Ahsan Manzil and its surroundings were acquired. After the completion of the renovation work in 1992 under the supervision of the Directorate of Public Works and Architecture, it was brought under the control of Bangladesh National Museum (20 September 1992). A museum has been established there.

Considering the historical importance and architectural significance of Ahsan Manzil palace, the government was trying to conserve it since the later part of the Pakistani rule. The father of nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman canceled its auction proposal option. On November 2, 1974, he ordered to establish a museum and



Rare Exhibits inside Ahsan Manzil

tourist center after its proper conservation.

After the implementation of the work on the museum started, most of the nawab's house area along with the half of the portion of the Andarmahal remained beyond acquisition. The total area of acquired land was 5.65 acres. Out of that 0.68 acres from northern side was given to Dhaka City Corporation to establish a super market and 4.96 acres of land with the palace buildings remained for museum purpose. In 1986, the work began according to the above order keeping the original structure undisturbed and reconstructing the old environment as far as possible. After the completion of the renovation work in 1992, under the supervision of the Directorate of Public Works and Architecture, it was brought under the control of Bangladesh National Museum (20 September 1992). A museum has been established there.

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Chapter 9

Shankhari Bazaar

Shankhari Bazaar is one of the oldest areas in Old Dhaka. It stretches along a narrow lane, lined with richly decorated brick buildings, built during the late Mughal or Colonial period.^[1]

9.1 Location

Shankhari Bazar is located near the intersection of Islampur Road and Nawabpur Road, a block north of the Buriganga River. The place especially belongs to the Hindu peoples.



Temple Gate

9.2 Background and the name

The area belonged to the Shankhari Community, who borrowed their name from Shankha, a decorated bangle

crafted from slices of Shankha or conch shells. Shankha is the symbol that indicates that a Hindu woman is married. In the 17th century, the Shankhari people were brought by the Mughal emperor, who allotted this place to them for living which later known as Shankhar Bazaar.

9.3 Lifestyle

The Shankhari people are an artisan caste. Most belong to the Vaishnava branch of Hinduism, and some to the Shakta school; many are vegetarian.^[2]

9.4 Houses



Statue of Deity Durga

Shankhari Bazar was very famous and expensive during the 18th century. The Shankhari people were allotted with places to build houses. Shankhari Bazar is a long narrow street lined by brick buildings which are very old. The widths of buildings were about 12 ft, 70–100 ft in length and 2-3 storeys in height. The highest height of the buildings was four storeys. Every house used to have a temple room in it.

9.5 Temples and Durga Puja

The Hindu temples are one of the major attractions of Shankhari Bazar. There are many temples on this narrow street. Over the ages, Shankhari Bazaar has been elevated to the level of the most popular center for religious festivities. As one of the most densely populated areas in the world Shankhari Bazaar also has the largest concentration of the Hindus in Dhaka. The temples are small in size but well decorated with ornamental motifs on the entrance and on the walls of the temples. The temples contain the statue of goddess Durga, Ganesha, Shiva etc. Durga Puja is the major festival of Hindu people. During Durga puja, people gathers in Shankhari Bazaar to worship and view goddess Durga. Besides Hindu, Muslims also attend the Puja. In Durga puja, Shankhari Bazaar looks quite nice because of colorful feston, banner etc. Small and temporary food shops are also built during Durga puja. People from different places come to Shankhari Bazaar to see the Puja.

9.6 Pannitola



Pannitola

Pannitola is in the Rakhai Chandra Basak Lane of Shankhari Bazaar. The name Pannitola basically came from the first settling area of the Panniwala, people who used to make the foil of tin. The living style of the Panniwala's was similar to the Shankhari people.

9.7 References

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Coordinates: 23°42′36″N 90°24′35″E﻿ / ﻿23.709995°N 90.409683°E﻿ /