Regionalism in Architecture

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Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures
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Foreword

This is the second book in the series, Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures, that I have the privilege to edit on behalf of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

It has, once again, been a labour of love, for these papers transcribed from the tapes of the second regional seminar in Dhaka, Bangladesh carry with them a passion and a commitment which make the editor’s task akin to that of an archaeologist slowly uncovering a cultural treasure trove.

The enjoyment is in the revelation of intellectual ideas, of practical wisdom and historical perspectives which the wide range of participants brought to the discussion. Whilst the focus is on Islamic countries the ideas on regionalism are applicable in many societies throughout the world which have either a history of colonial intervention or are economically late developers.

One has the feeling that Regionalism is gaining momentum as an alternative to and as a rejection of International Modernism. Suha Özkan writes at greater length on this in his introduction.

One particular phrase in the book, from the background paper by Mulk Raj Anand remains in my memory. He quotes the Chinese philosopher Mencius saying “Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part of themselves which is little are little men”.

The issues discussed in this book are great issues, there are as William Curtis noted “major cultural transformations taking place... extremely interesting psychological and sociological phenomenon which deal with the question of human order...”

The seminar confirms that Architecture has a clear cultural purpose.

In editing the papers I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Iftekhar Mazhar Khan who was responsible for collating the proceedings of the seminar on which this book is based. For their patience and understanding may I also record my appreciation of the publishers, specifically Patricia Theseira and Lynda Lim.

Robert Powell
Editor
Introduction
Regionalism within Modernism

Suha Özkan

With the all-obliterating spread of Modernism, the efforts which were made to highlight regional and local concerns, were left without enough support to survive. Alvar Aalto, found a medium to exercise his own kind of regionalism which allowed it to exist within the parameters of modernism, but one can find few references to regionalism until the early seventies. There are notable exceptions for example the works of Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry, Hassan Fathy and Rifat Chadirji. One would have to go back to Sir Edwin Lutyens and Frank Lloyd Wright to find previous references.

During the first regional seminar of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in Kuala Lumpur, we discussed issues related to Identity in Architecture. As far as architecture and design are concerned, it is very hard to talk about identity — except the identity a particular architect brings to his designs — without going into regionalism. A geographical region defines many aspects of a society both culturally and environmentally. Culture includes aspects of life and prevalent modes of expression. Natural environment includes climate and topography. A region, when properly defined, represents all of these in a very complex amalgamate Modernism, through its sub-theme of internationalism proclaimed universality and world-wide applicability of certain values of architecture and over the past sixty years, almost totally discarded all the “regional” building activity. The schools of architecture, the building industry and popular ‘taste’, all united in the reinforcement of internationalism until it became an ideology representing the aspirations of all sectors of modern society. For more than half a century internationalism in style became synonymous with the representation of contemporaneity.

The main critical movement as a reaction specifically to internationalism or implicitly to modernism, is regionalism. The regionalist approach recognises the vernacular modes of building at the one extreme, and the rediscovery of Edwin Lutyens and Frank Lloyd Wright at the other. Even though it covers such a wide array of attitudes, regionalism has respect to the local culture, to climate and at times technology, at its core.

If one has to classify the approaches, the following are the categories to be observed in regionalism though of course the boundaries of separation are not too distinct.

a) Vernacularism;

b) Modern-Regionalism

Vernacularism

Bernard Rudofsky’s “Architecture without Architects” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Arts and the catalogue, which subsequently became an indispensable reference of vernacular architecture, pointed out an area that had been ignored for a very long time. By the mid-seventies, vernacular architecture distinguished itself as an important source where the basic components of design such as climate, technology, culture and related symbolism have existed and matured over the centuries of man’s involvement with architecture.

Paul Oliver’s contribution in “Shelter and Society” and “Shelter, Sign and Symbol”, cultivated the theoretical grounds of vernacular architecture. He brought together the research of defined geographical areas of shelter in Africa, Greece and Afghanistan which displayed remarkable examples of this ignored area, not only as sources of inspiration for architects-designers but also as a viable alternative for solutions emerging in Third World countries.

The research continued, especially in the academic and research organisations in the West, and has grown by leaps and bounds since the mid-1970’s onwards. There is now a fairly articulate stock of research covering the whole world. Both the vast research on vernacular modes of building and the culture which generated it brought back genuine interest and admiration. The building tradition that has existed and excelled over centuries has been credited and recognised as a design approach within
the realm of architectural design and its subsequent discourse.

In a very broad classification we observe two approaches to vernacularism: first is the conservative attitude and second, the interpretative attitude. While both kinds of vernacularism have the ideals of bringing a new and contemporary existence to vernacular forms and spatial arrangements, they differ in the way they treat technology and community.

The most important contributor to conservative vernacularism is Hassan Fathy. He devoted more than half a century of his professional life to bringing back to the vernacular mode, building tradition endangered by extinction due to the massive post-World War II building activity. The architecture employed in this activity was indifferent to the community, its inherited traditional technology, local materials and the natural environment. Fathy, single-handedly, strived to revive a building tradition and tried to grasp it on the eve of its disappearance. He was firm and uncompromising, in incorporating the societal forces but was at the same time, innovative in bringing architects' know-how and design expertise on to the scene. He cherished the materials, technology and art of building of Egyptian society and throughout his work brought a new life and meaning to them.

**UNESCO/BREDAR, Agricultural Training Centre, Nianing, Senegal, 1977**

A labour intensive building system developed to generate new and complete architectural language.

*Photograph Suha Özkan*

**Hassan Fathy, Village of New Gourna, 1954**

The most noteworthy attempt to bring vernacular back to existence

*Photographs AKAA, C. Avedissian*

**Raoul Sneider, Daara School, Malika, Dakar, Senegal**

A new intermediate technology developed to generate a new architectural language as an archetype for construction problems of a country with scarce building materials

*Photograph Suha Özkan.*
success of his regionalism varies. It did not work out well in the rural communities, whose distorted aspirations and values attached to their understanding of contemporaneity did not match the environment that Fathy offered them. Nevertheless, the meticulous and sophisticated architectural design executed solely from local materials and means, displayed qualities for the generations to come. When Fathy adopted the same approach, but in a more durable material—stone instead of earth—this not only increased the acceptability but also offered him the opportunity to incorporate the finest examples of revived building crafts. Of course, this category of building had to be private residences. While he displayed this design excellence in these buildings, the ideas he developed for the rural habitat echoed all over the world as a viable alternative solution for the action groups like Craterre, Development Workshop and ADAUA who employed his ideas. Architects such as André Ravereau, Nader Khalili, Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, followed in his footsteps in vernacular technology.

The interpretative version of vernacularism is referred to here as neo-vernacularism which has emerged as an approach to bringing a new life to vernacular heritage for new and contemporary functions. The widest area of the application of this approach is obviously the architecture for tourism and culture. During the short term experience when tourists take their vacation the regional vernacular becomes an integral part of the anticipated ambience. Therefore, tourist developments became the pioneering example of neo-vernacularism. Since modern comfort, ease of construction and maintenance are inevitably impor-
tant factors, they utilised levels of technology which usually had nothing to do with those which existed regionally. Similarly with the infrastructure, heating, cooling, and technical services. In these efforts more of a lip service was given to the regional components, and therefore, architecture became more of an expression of local shapes and forms where culture is also reduced to souvenirs and folklore. Like any other architectural involvement, these attempts met with the varying degrees of success, depending on the sincerity of the designer-architect; on whether they wanted to simply design a stage-set with pastiche or if they wished to create genuine spatial and architectural experience.

EPA, Holiday Village in Bodrum, Turkey, 1971–79
Local forms and settlement patterns revived in conventional technology and precast accessories to imitate the prevalent vernacular
Photographs Suha Özkan

A building in Jeddah, 1985
A typical clip-on regionalism exercised on a mediocre modern building to make an attempt to have it contextually relevant
Photograph AKAA, Ahmet Eyübe
Despite all the problems stemming from the preoccupation of image-making, these developments, being more in line with the local setting, created less oppressive environments. They also helped to develop a vocabulary of contemporary architecture which has its roots in the building tradition of a particular culture. In short, vernacularism and neo-vernacularism differ from each other mainly at the level of the user, labour for building, materials used and the construction technology employed. Obviously this means a lot of difference in reference to the societal context.

Neo-vernacularism approaches have dominated a vast amount of design activity to mainly accommodate habitation and tourism functions. It must be due to them being “taken for granted” or to their less innovative, more conformist nature that they did not generate any noteworthy or great architecture. The practitioners of this approach mainly became unknown or unnoticed architects.

The applicability of this mode of design has limited validity, however, especially when small scale units become a large building, e.g. a civic complex. The relevant guidance of vernacularism is limited, unless a reinterpretation is made or what has existed is stretched. Here the terminology has to be changed, as vernacularism represents only one, admittedly limited, section of regionalism.

Modern regionalism

It should be repeated here again and must be clearly pointed out that what has been rejected by most of the regionalist architects is not modernism but internationalism. Modernism demands a respect for inherent qualities of building materials, expressiveness for structure, functional justifications for forms that constitute buildings. These abstract demands do not contradict much, in essence, with anything done by an architect who wishes to adopt a regionalist approach. Internationalism however, demanding the necessity to reduce the building to skin and bones has a completely different line of discourse which is a well accommodated sub-theme in modernism. Therefore, it would not be wrong to stress that the polarity is between internationalism which demands a global relevance for its existence and regionalism which seeks meaning and content under specific local conditions. To achieve the goals of the latter, modernism provides tools and techniques to cope with the problems. Additionally it also offers a code of ethics and categories of aesthetics by means which the achievements can be assessed.

Unlike vernacularism, modern regionalism can be employed at all scales of building activity, since it derives from the monumental architecture of the past.
as well as to the civil architecture to which vernacularism has to confine itself. Modern regionalism in very broad terms can be handled by employing two categories of reference: concrete and abstract. Concrete regionalism accommodates all approaches to regional expressions which copy features, fragments, or entire buildings, in the region. When these buildings are loaded with spiritual values of symbolic relevance, they become much more acceptable in their new form, owing to the values attached to the original. Of course it brings a comfortable defence in support of the new, backed by the qualities of the old. In many cases, when the existence of contemporaneity in new is stressed, they become so well accepted that they are considered as being “ideal”. In this approach the mutual existence of rejection and acceptance of time has a “schizophrenic” mix. Contemporaneity is accepted by acknowledging the need to accommodate the requirements. This is further acknowledged by the use of contemporary materials and construction techniques. However the forms and spaces usually belong to the distant past.

The concrete replication of the motives and achievements of the past now has a very comfortable cover as they are interpreted as references to the past. There is however a wide spectrum of architectural involvement from a thoughtful eclecticism to a worthless pastiche. The ethos of both extremes has not been spelled out properly and it demands elaboration. Therefore the references for judgement remain vague, and seemingly, they will remain so for some time because a reaction to the Modern Movement and the achievements of post-modernism — which definitely covers what we call here concrete regionalism — has not yet developed its own ethos. To judge this against the ethics and aesthetics of Modernism would not be fair. The vacuum this creates is dangerous because it would lead to an “anything goes” situation which probably is what has been happening all over the world, especially in the Islamic world, in which many of the countries that are building nowadays are situated.

Abstracting elements from the past in order to derive building form from it constitutes what we call “abstract regionalism”. It is a very difficult and fine line to follow. It mainly incorporates the abstract qualities of a building, for example, massing, solids and void, proportions, sense of space, use of light, and

A novel expression of courtyards in a high-rise prestige building. Makes very abstract reference to the tradition by interpreting climatic determinant like sun, air draft and protected space.
Photographs AKAA, P Marechaux
structural principles in their reinterpreted form. It also endeavours to bring back to existence the cultural issues. An attempt is made to define in terms of design elements the prevalent culture of the region concerned. This is a long, tedious and sometimes endless devotion to an ideal. The line which separates a solemn, praiseworthy, regionalist achievement from a worthless pastiche or a potpourri of the past, is very thin and delicate. In the division of the two we still do not have any other criteria than that we have developed with modernism. To these, many of the contributors to regionalist endeavour have subscribed. These contributors to the regionalist modernism emphasised and developed certain important aspects of regionalism.

Charles Correa has put his endeavour into a nutshell by entitling his approach “Form follows climate” where he gives priority to the macro environment which determines many aspects of the built form. Rifat Chadirji generated an articulate facadism which refers back to the architectural heritage in Iraq. Mohammad Makiya, another eminent Iraqi, especially in his earlier buildings, searched for sublime regional expressions for modern buildings. Sedad Eldem has coupled a continuous search into sources of traditional architecture with a modern practice which derives from, and reinterprets, the findings in these sources. From the younger generation, Raj Rewal brings a contemporary existence to the traditional understanding of space and to its cultural implication. Rasem Badran, Doruk Pamir, Charles Boccara, and many other, have elevated the quality of the contemporary architectural environment, by employing the regional idiom, regional input and environmental determinants. Here in Dhaka, the efforts of Muzharul Islam, from Bangladesh, to develop an architectural idiom from limited resources and technology, is a noteworthy contribution to regionalism for generations to learn, explore and develop.

Balkrishna Doshi, Sangath, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, 1980
A series of simple vaults blending into the landscape.
Photograph AKAA Archives

Charles Correa, Kanchanjunga Apartments, Bombay, 1970–83
An attitude to bridge the imposing climatic and cultural factors with the inevitable reality of high rise building
Photograph courtesy of the architect
Mohammad Makiya, Rafidain Bank, Kufa, Baghdad, 1968
Corbeling arches, protected recessed windows and
cantilevering eaves subtly refer to the sun hit macro climate
of Baghdad and its architectural past
Photograph AKAA Archives

Rifat Chadirji, Tobacco Monopolies Offices and Stores,
Baghdad, 1969
An articulate facadism relating a contemporary function to
its Iraqi context
Photograph AKAA Archives

A distinctive example of using elements of traditional
architecture in contemporary context
Photograph Suha Özkan

An early example of contextual building in a sensitive area of Old Istanbul
Photograph AKAA, A Dundar
M. Doruk Pamir, E. Gümruk Islamic Centre for Research and Training, Dhaka, 1982
A campus planned to introduce Islamic civic scale with local material and technology
Photographs AKAA Archives

Charles Boccara, Assif Housing, Marrakesh, 1982
Low-rise apartment blocks integrated into the Moroccan way of life by use of elements from the architectural past.
Photograph AKAA, Säid Zulficar.

Muzharul Islam, Jaipurhat Housing, Jaipurhat, Bangladesh
A bold expression of brick construction in search for a regional identity in Bangladesh
Photograph AKAA Archives
Opening Remarks

Shah Alam Zahiruddin
Convenor — Seminar Steering Committee

On behalf of the Steering Committee for the Second Regional Seminar on Architecture at Dhaka, under the auspices of the Aga Khan for Architecture, I extend to you a most cordial welcome.

The South Asian Region, on which we are going to set our minds is not only the home of one of the ancient civilisations, a melting pot of cultures and people, but also the home of a fifth of present day humanity. This region not only has a common history of colonial subjugation but has been in the forefront in articulating local nationalism, of commencing the process of decolonialism and re-establishing each country in their rightful place in the community of Nations.

Today the region is seething with change and dynamism and taking bold strides towards the future. This is the setting for a challenging human drama of meeting great national expectations in a sea of deprivation and abject poverty. A brave new world is in the making and we are trying to be a part of an epoch. At this juncture we are setting up the “terms of reference” for the future, to alleviate poverty; to give dignity to the poorest of the poor, to house the landless; to plan and provide for a decent, healthy living environment for the future.

The drama of a civilisation is most vividly recorded in architecture. We have moved from magnificent temples and palaces to a wider and more relevant field of human endeavour and this change in the role of architects reflect the evolution of our society and the changing ideals of a dynamic region.

We, as architects, claim to be an ancient and respected profession but because of two centuries of political, economic and cultural subjugation and the technological advancement that has taken place in the meantime, there is some disorientation in the field of architecture and confusion in society regarding the role of architects. The term Architect is at its best confused with Civil Engineer and in most cases it is an unfamiliar term in the region. It is as much in our interest as to society at large that the rightful role of the architects be re-established.

With the background of our common heritage in architecture, I have confidence that through the papers on “Architecture and the role of the Architects in Southern Asia”, and through the discussions that they will generate, we will be able to profitably share each others experience. The participation of notable international personalities in the deliberations, I am confident, will greatly enrich the Seminar and there is no doubt that it will leave behind a wealth of wisdom for us to benefit from.

The timing of this Seminar could not have been better. States of this region have ushered in a new era of mutual understanding and co-operation through an agreement on the character of South Asian Regional Co-operation, at Dhaka, only recently and we are extremely grateful to His Highness, the Aga Khan for choosing Dhaka as the venue for this Regional Seminar.

As Minister for Works of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Prof. M A. Matin shoulders a special responsibility towards development of architecture and building of our towns and cities. The Ministry of Works has to spearhead the difficult and complex issue of human settlement through policy planning and programme implementation. We are extremely grateful to the Minister to have kindly consented to be present and to inaugurate this Seminar.

We are pinning great hope on the outcome of the deliberations of this Seminar and I once again welcome you and thank you all for your kind presence.
Said Zulficar
Secretary General — the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

On behalf of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture I welcome you all to our Second Regional Seminar on Architecture and the role of the Architect in Southern Asia.

I also take this opportunity to convey to you the warmest wishes of His Highness the Aga Khan, Chairman of the Award’s Steering Committee, four of whose members are present at this Seminar, for a successful meeting which brings together here in Dhaka architects from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and from the host country Bangladesh.

Allow me to set out to you briefly the background governing the Award’s objectives within the framework of which this Seminar on regionalism is situated.

Our epoch, more so than any other, is a period of profound and accelerated mutations, which is reflected in the radical change of the built environment. The developing countries have been experiencing the rapid transformation of architectural expression over the past three or four decades as a result of the influences upon them of economic expansion, modern technology and the mass media. This trend is reflected in the hegemony of unimaginative and repetitious forms of architecture, stemming from the adoption without critical analysis of the lowest possible common denominators of architectural conformity and banality. Standardization of architectural styles in turn leads to the loss of cultural characteristics and of authenticity in design concepts. Yet it is the fundamental authenticity and diversity of cultural life in each geographic region, of which the built environment is the most tangible and visible component, focused round the idea of cultural identity, which forms one of the basic demands made today by Muslim people. It follows consequently that economic and technological progress, urban expansion and building programmes should on no account be achieved at the cost of jeopardizing or sacrificing this identity. This assertion of an identity, which is essential to the development of endogenous architecture, that is an architecture which finds its inspiration in the cultural past and in the ecological reality of a specific region, should not be viewed as a romantic attachment to a vanishing or extinct past, but rather it should be regarded as a necessary phase in the reappraisal process of the forms of a culture. This phase can only be reached after a certain amount of experimentation with novel concepts and techniques has been attempted, in the course of which obsolete elements are discarded as no longer relevant to contemporary conditions. In this way, the real significance of asserting the cultural identity of peoples in the Muslim world will lie in the use of the past, of the accumulated experience of countless generations of traditional builders, as a source of inspiration for the use of appropriate techniques and for the development of imaginative styles in contemporary architecture. If it is conceived with sensitivity, this environment can constitute a cultural creation adopted to the real needs and aspirations of its inhabitants: a symbiosis of tradition and modernity. Unfortunately, in our part of the world, this sensitivity is just the factor which has been lacking. Up to now, the relationship which man has established with his environment can only be described as conflicting. In this respect, the options and directions that guide and determine the physical planning of cities always finish by affecting both the natural environment and ultimately human life. The results we see around us are seldom happy or successful.

One of the main dilemmas confronting architects and urban planners is how to arrive at a type of architecture and town-planning which is capable of revitalising lifeless settlements. These have often been abstractly designed by professionals lacking in cultural and social consciousness and their designs, be they banal or even sophisticated in form, may seem logical and orderly from an outsider’s viewpoint, but more often than not they are both culturally irrelevant, environmentally inappropriate, expensive to build and even more so to maintain and operate.

How can we counter the unimaginative uniformity we find in current architectural design and how can we create settlements and towns that are conducive to harmonious human relationships and to social solidarity? This is the crucial question to ask when one analyses the urban phenomenon today. Recent experience demonstrates that operations designed to improve the environment by what are regarded as purely technical methods do not succeed unless they take account of the interrelation which exists between men, political authorities, managers, users, and clients, and between these people, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other. Hence, architecture and town planning have reciprocal relationships with social structures, as well as with the cultural, intellectual, emotional, and moral development of individuals. Hence also, it is becoming increasingly recognised that sociologists, psychologists, historians, geographers, and others, have an essential contribution to make to the process of urbanisation, if this process is to lead to the enhancement of the quality of life and not merely to the summary provision of shelter.

The principal problem for those who are concerned about the deterioration of the built environment, is how best to help people at all levels, at the individual level, the corporate and professional level, and the
government level, how to help these people to make sound choices and decisions which raise the quality of life. In this endeavour, we are at a serious disadvantage since, in our part of the world, public awareness of environmental problems, awareness of the ugliness, of the alienating effect, and of the irrelevance or mediocrity of architectural expression, in particular, is still not crystallised.

In a number of industrialised countries, environmental problems have been brought to public attention and elevated to become community or national issues through the mass media, often acting in close collaboration with community and grass-root groups.

In Muslim countries, however, prevailing political structures do not allow for such unofficial groups to exist and even less to counter government policies which are seldom concerned by the problems of environmental deterioration and of the quality of life, since there are other development priorities monopolising government attention. Moreover, one has to admit that the inhabitants themselves give low priority to such problems, concepts such as the public good and civic responsibility being still in an embryonic stage and in some cases even in regression. Nonetheless, pioneering actions, unfortunately still very few in number, have been undertaken by courageous individuals or by some rare non-governmental groups and associations. These people are striving with great difficulty to win the interest and support of the media and of the governing bodies. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is one such pioneering group which seeks to generate and promote public awareness of the current problems of the built environment through its various activities, through the prizes it gives to exceptional architectural achievements, through the seminars it holds in various countries, and though the publications it sponsors and distributes. It seeks, above all, to demonstrate that progress and modernity in the field of building can be achieved by other means than just the passive adoption of design concepts copied from foreign models.

The Award aims to seek out architectural alternatives to the prevailing hegemony of a single standardised form of design in order to counter the adverse effects of this hegemony on the physical environment and on social and cultural values. It does not seek, however, to impose or even to favour a particular school of architectural thought but to awaken the dormant consciousness of the populations of Muslim countries by highlighting the originality and pertinence of the traditional architecture of their region, in the contemporary world. The Award does so by selecting, awarding, and publicising completed architectural projects that are culturally, socially, and ecologically responsive, have a potential for replicability, and demonstrate a design which is harmonious and relevant to the cultural and environmental context of the country or region where these buildings are situated. We hope thereby, that the Award will become an on-going process, both exemplary and promotional; a dynamic force aimed at influencing the transformation of the built environment and proposing culturally, socially, and ecologically relevant forms of contemporary architecture for the Muslim countries.

While the Aga Khan Award for Architecture is the only organisation in the Islamic World which is striving for a better built environment, at the same time it recognises and even underlines the particularities and specific characteristics and potentials within each region of the Islamic World. Hence, if the problem is global, the attempted solutions can be regional. With this idea in mind we held the First Regional Seminar in Kuala Lumpur in 1983 on Architectural Identity in South-East Asia, and we now feel it appropriate and timely to hold a similar event in South Asia, in Dhaka. In this same series, we hope to organise the next regional seminars in the Middle East and North Africa.

Mahbubul Haque
President — Institute of Architects Bangladesh

The seminar in Dhaka is the Second Regional Seminar under the auspices of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The event has great significance for the community of architects in Bangladesh. This is the first time that an international seminar is being held in Dhaka, devoted to Architecture. We have among us distinguished architects and participants from home and abroad. The people gathered here represent a unique concentration of intelligence and expertise in the subject that will be dealt with.

I wish to extend on behalf of the members of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh and on my behalf, our warm greeting and welcome to the delegates to this Seminar. It is a source of great pleasure and inspiration to us to have among us the gracious presence of Dr M.A. Matin, the Minister of Works and himself a distinguished professional. This amply demonstrates confidence in the dynamism of the profession of architecture and keen interest to see that architects play their role effectively in shaping the development of the country.

Dhaka is a historical city bearing imprints of many cultural cross currents over centuries. The city flourished during the 13th and 14th centuries but came into prominence for the first time under the Mughals who established their provincial capital here in 1680 A.D. Over the next hundred years the city prospered. The Lalbag Fort built in the last quarter of the 17th
century still stands as the monument to the prosperity of that period. With the advent of the British during the 18th century, the city went into decline. The architectural heritage of the earlier periods largely disappeared, to be replaced by the new colonial architecture with a brutal break from the culture and tradition of the land. More recent changes have not been too kind either. Dhaka is a city bereft of its glorious past. Today there is, however, a resurgence of the native spirit. We see a growing concern about the destruction and mutilation of the traditional values.

The profession of architecture is very young and very small for a country as populous as Bangladesh. We have at present some two hundred and forty architects in this country, or roughly one architect for every four hundred and fifty thousand people. 92% of the architects have graduated in the past 18 years from the only school of architecture in the country. The Institute of Architects Bangladesh functioning since 1972, is 13 years old. The role of architects as in most developing countries, is confined primarily to the urban situation. People in rural Bangladesh have from time immemorial shaped their own environment without aid and services of architects. Cultural values and social expectations are being modified at a quickening pace through contact with the outside urbanised world. It is being pushed by the exigencies of the development and industrialisation process, unguided by a compassionate understanding of the environment.

In Bangladesh the policy and strategy for the conservation of physical resources lacks firm long term objectives and the organisation, legal and technical instruments for management of land, water, energy and human resources are not adequately developed. Society is not sufficiently aware of the role of the architect and does not ask him to assume all the functions that he should rightfully do. Much work remains unattended at great social cost.

Since its inception, the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) has been trying to improve the situation and towards this end has set for itself as its main objective, registration of architects under law.

Bangladesh is one of the very few countries of the world which does not require registration for architects. Theoretically, anybody can practice the profession and society has no protection from unethical practice. The IAB presented a draft for an Architects Act for registration of architects to the Government in March 1982 for enactment as law. We hope that the Government will act soon upon this extremely important matter.

The Institute is also striving to achieve development of awareness of the need for legislative action and formulation of a total land use plan for the country.

The formulation of adequate building statutes for proper control of urban growth is also one of our priorities. Propagation of ethical standard for practice among the members of the profession and development of awareness about the profession and the architect’s role in society are also among the primary objectives of the Institute.

I believe, all of us here, myself included are looking forward to an enriching series of experiences at this seminar. Being a young community, with relatively limited experiences, we, the architects of Bangladesh hope to profit most from the wide range of issues that will be discussed.

I wish the seminar the greatest possible success.

A.M. Patwari
Vice Chancellor — Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology

It gives me great pleasure to be present at the opening session of the Second Regional Seminar on “Architecture and Role of Architects in Southern Asia” sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology along with the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh are co-sponsors to this important regional seminar. As the Vice Chancellor, I deem it a great privilege to welcome you to the inaugural session on behalf of the University of Engineering and Technology. This is the first time that such a seminar is being held in this part of the world.

The region of Southern Asia which includes some of the poorest nations of the world has about one fifth of the global population. Most of the countries in the region are in their early stages of development and as such each country has to undertake infrastructure development which involves a large number of buildings and other facilities. The need for schools, hospitals, office buildings and factories comes to a staggering figure. The limitation of resources, rudimentary technology, lack of skilled personnel and unforeseen delays at the implementation level make the task very hard for the architects and planners.

It is often mentioned that the architects shape the buildings and the buildings shape the men. The architects always have to keep in mind how the spaces will be used and the kind of behaviour that will be initiated by the nature of the spaces. Architects are to give embodiment to the hopes and aspirations of the people and as such they will have to catch the inner spirit of society and express goals and targets in society in physical terms which are otherwise very subjective. In this context I think our architects who have for so long been busy in developing the urban housing facilities must look towards the development of rural housing as more than ninety percent of our
population live in the rural areas. I am very happy to note that quite a few papers at this seminar have as their theme architecture and rural housing.

As the Vice Chancellor I have to oversee the Department of Architecture, Department of Planning, Department of Civil Engineering and the construction of the various buildings of the university for various other Departments and Faculties. I find, like all other creative people, the architects are quite concerned with creativity, honesty, purity of form and space and psychology of space which do not mean much to a layman. In my view architects, both teachers and designers, should not only look to these finer points of architectural creativity but also to the simple utilitarian points which people complain they sometimes forget, for architecture is a composite thing involving both liveability and interior design as much as it is a thing of beauty from the exterior.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology is the only institution in the country which imparts formal education and offers undergraduate and post-graduate degrees of Bachelor in Architecture and Master in Architecture. Architecture, as a profession is new in this region but the Faculty of Architecture has been successful in establishing the profession and making their impact felt by the people in general. Some graduates have produced significant works in and around Dhaka. These graduates find no difficulty in adjusting themselves when they go to advanced countries either for employment or for higher studies. I understand that the Department of Architecture is also introducing advanced computer technology which is being profusely used in the more developed countries of the west as a design and educational tool in architecture.

This international seminar is a big occasion in the architectural arena of the country. The presence of so many great personalities of eminence in their respective fields by itself is a significant event. I am sure they will discuss important topics and exchange ideas with local delegates, giving rise to the intellectual atmosphere which will benefit all by opening up various issues and helping generation of new ideas. On this occasion, I cannot but remember one of the world renowned Bangladeshi architects and planners the late Dr. F.R. Khan who was instrumental in generating some of the most significant creative ideas in this field.

I would like to draw your kind attention to two very important topics namely conservation of energy and pollution of the environment. In these days of energy crisis energy consumed by buildings deserves due consideration. Architects and designers have to look ahead and remember that the energy element can produce new concepts and designs. Appropriate technology in relation to shelter can also be an important point of discussion. Pollution of the environment is very much an important issue for the architects to be conscious of which I am sure they are and we must take care not to disturb ecological balance. Harmony between natural environment and built environment is as important as the harmony between cultural forces and the built form.

Dhaka has taken on a new look after holding the first SAARC summit and after basking under the winter sun I hope the delegates to this regional seminar will carry back pleasant memories of Dhaka which has some important architectural buildings including the Jatiyo Sangsad Bhadan.

I wish this seminar a grand success.

M. Abdul Matin
Minister of Works — People’s Republic of Bangladesh

It is with a feeling of intense happiness and immense pride that I address this Aga Khan Award for Architecture regional seminar. I am indeed very happy because this seminar has been convened at a very opportune moment. It is a moment when Bangladesh is looking for an identity and a common cultural platform amidst its diverse forces.

You will know that our people have chronologically gone through the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and neo-Christian influences. For centuries, Bangladesh has watched over this moving pageant of people and communities who came from different directions to this part of the world. This land has been visited by the Afghans, the Turks, the Mughals, the Iranians, the Central Asians, the West Europeans, the North Indians, making it a genuine melting pot for various cultures, but now there is the task of acquiring a common identity for all. I am proud because this regional seminar is a glaring testimony of the fact that we can always look beyond our borders towards the wider good of the region. The theme “Architecture and the role of the Architects in Southern Asia” has been very aptly and rightly adopted for the seminar.

There is no denying the fact that destiny has put one billion people of South Asia in such a close proximity that no matter how hard we try to delink ourselves from each other, we cannot override the compulsions of Geography; nor can we ignore the lessons of History.

So it is about time that we accept that regionalism should be and must be the tool for architectural identity and be treated as a source of inspiration of all living in this region.

This very fact has acquired a new dimension at this juncture of history after the successful culmination of
the first SAARC Summit Conference in this historic city of Dhaka.

Bangladesh is a country with a history that dates back to the pre-Christian era, to the time of Mohabharat. It is a country which is very rich in culture and heritage. The Buddhist Monastery of Paharpur is an architectural marvel of the past, the National Assembly building is an architectural monument of global repute of the present. Centuries have passed between the creation of these two diverse landmarks. We now strive for a complete homogeneity and a total cultural unity amidst so many diversities which prevailed in the past. This unity will be the driving force leading to the growth and establishment of the feeling of Nationalism in the minds of our people. Architects of our country can bring about this National unity and consolidation by their zealous and creative works.

This part of the world has a rapidly growing urban population. Agriculture cannot alone sustain the rural population. Today, urban infrastructure and employment opportunities are inadequate to encourage further increase of urban population and so we are in a temporary jam.

Architects have the tough task of giving ideas as to how to overcome this situation through formulation of proper policies with regard to creation of infrastructure facilities.

The present Government has in its wisdom established 460 “upazilas” throughout the country. This is a gigantic step towards urbanisation. Planned growth and creation of proper environment in the “upazila” will to a great extent be determined by the skill of architects in this country.

Bangladesh is a country with great beauty characterised by vast water bodies and luxuriant growth of lush green groves. A spontaneous harmony seems to exist between natural and built up environment in this country.

Architects must take care that neither the ecological balance nor the cultural balance is disturbed in the name of modernisation.

Conservation of agricultural land and prevention of environmental pollution are also two important factors, in my opinion, for the consideration of this gathering.

I understand that during the seminar there will be brainstorming sessions on various important issues. I would expect that you will make efforts to resolve them fully. The whole of the South Asia region having similar problems will definitely benefit from such an exercise.

To the participants who have come from abroad I would request that you find time to go out of Dhaka and see the real Bangladesh where the millions of toiling masses live through their joys and frustrations not with tears but with smiles, where in each summer the Monsoon sets into motion a pattern of life that is common to all of us in this region. Please go and see.

Year after year from planting of rice to the harvesting of wheat, our people through the ages have followed a cycle of events that gives them a harmonious rhythm of life.

Please do not, I repeat, concentrate on the plans of one city namely the city of Dhaka. See the whole Bangladesh that stretches from the peaks of the hills to the rolling waves of the sea — the Bay of Bengal. Above all, with the soul of a humane architect, try to feel the throbbing eternal Bangladesh by mixing with its indomitable people, the people of “Ruposhi Bangla” — “the Beautiful Bengal”.

In conclusion, I pray to God Almighty to let the thousand candles of creative architects of this region banish the darkness; the darkness of maldevelopment and pollution and bring us some light, the light which transforms a shanty town to a beautiful city; a backward village into an ideal one.

Let the thousand keys in the hands of architects open the doors for development of this bedevilled South Asian region.

Let a new era be ushered in — of enlightened self-interest and a common desire to widen the contacts amongst the architects of the region in a spirit of give and take.
Introduction

Bangladesh is a part of the Indian sub-continent and its history before 1947 is the history of India. It is located on the north-eastern extremity of the sub-continent bounded to the north by the Himalayas, on the south by the Bay of Bengal and to the east by the dense hilly forests.

From very ancient times, Bangladesh was known as one of the richest areas of India. Culturally and ethnically, along with West Bengal, it forms a unique unified national entity. Present Bangladesh came into being on December 16, 1971. A case study of the architecture of Bangladesh can be a partial one only as it cannot include the architecture of West Bengal for obvious reasons.

Due to the location of Bengal in the north-eastern corner of India, people invading India came to this area a certain period after entry into the sub-continent from the West Invaders, such as the Aryans, the Greeks, the Mongols, the Turks and the Afghans entered India from the West and their influence on Bengal was felt much later in modified forms. The only exception was the invasion of the British who first occupied Bengal and then took decades to occupy the whole of India.

People must have lived in this country from very ancient times, but dated history can be traced back to only the 3rd century B.C. Due to the migration of people from the West for easy living since ancient times there must have been cross-fertilisation of cultures. This can be clearly seen in the examples of architecture from ancient times to the present day.

Invasions of people from different cultures had both a positive and a negative effect on the culture of Bengal. Whenever the foreigners or invaders settled down here peacefully they identified themselves with the local people and culture, but whenever the invaders could not or did not wish to identify with the people here, the effect was disastrous on the culture of Bengal.

Factors Affecting Architecture

Certain physical and cultural factors not only act as constraints but also as the source of ideas for the forms and content of architecture in any civilisation.

Topography and climate play an important role in this region. The topography of Bangladesh is basically low lying, flat land, traversed by innumerable rivers and channels. Most of the soil is alluvium, deposited by the river and eminently suitable for agriculture and for the production of bricks and tiles.

The climate is marked by heavy rainfall during four months of the monsoon from June to September, with cool weather for four months from November to February, and hot-humid conditions in between. Except for the monsoon months, sun insolation is intense. The Tropic of Cancer, at 23°N passes through the middle of the country. Due to heavy rainfall, vegetation growth is intense giving a year round verdant colour to the whole country.

Since ancient times the predominant building materials have been the soil itself and timber, bamboo and grass which grow in abundance on this soil.

The economy depending solely on agriculture for thousands of years has always been dominated by rural life. The rural agricultural-economic relationship dominated all aspects of our culture.

A Review of the Architecture of Bangladesh

To clearly visualise the forces which shaped the form and content of architecture in Bangladesh, it is necessary to examine buildings from ancient times to the present day. In Bangladesh, as in any other country two parallel sets of activities in building construction can be identified.

On the one hand, we can see that the rural buildings were constructions (and even constructed today) of easily and cheaply available local materials subject to quick deterioration. The forms were comparatively
simple and changed very little through the centuries. Parallel to this, building activities also continued in the urban areas which quality-wise were different from the rural scene. In the urban context in Bangladesh many buildings were built in permanent materials, and logically the predominant material was brick. The most important buildings for society, that is the buildings for religious purposes, were whenever possible constructed in brick.

Due to changes of rulers from time to time, the urban scene changed comparatively more frequently and quickly than in the rural areas. Unfortunately, due to the destructive activities of man and the ravages of nature very few ancient buildings survived up to the present day. The destructive nature of the shifting river regimes must be realised to understand the reasons for almost total absence of ancient buildings. No traces can be found of the cities which flourished in ancient Bengal, such as Gange, Tamralipti, Karnasubarna, Kotibarsa, Panchanagari and Rampal. There are also many identified archaeological sites which have not been excavated yet for various reasons. We are left with a few monuments which can give a picture of continuity or rather discontinuity in the architectural traditions of the country.

The Ancient Period (3rd century B.C. — 11th century A.D.)

Present Mahasthangarh is the only existing remains of an ancient city. It is identified with Pundranagar, a flourishing city during the Gupta-Pala regimes. According to a copper plate excavated from the site, the city dates back to 3rd century B.C. From the existing remains it seems to have been a fortified city raised on a platform with a large number of brick built houses laid out in a comparatively congested urban pattern.

It is evident from Mahasthangarh that the technique of making and the using of bricks was already highly developed, though the disappearance of these monuments above ground level makes it difficult to visualise the total form and details. The city was rebuilt successively on the same site in three distinct periods.

The only remains of ancient structures in this region are religious buildings constructed between the 8th and 11th centuries. These include Buddhist viharas, monasteries and temples. Hindu temples of this period are conspicuous by their absence.

The sites of the Buddhist religious buildings extend from Paharpur in the north to Mainamati in the south-east. Of these few existing remains, the most famous and impressive is the Sompur Vihara at Paharpur. Measuring 922 feet (281 metres) (NS) by 919 feet (280 metres) (EW), it is probably the single largest monastery in the sub-continent. It had 177 monastic cells, gateways, votive stupas, minor chapels, water tanks and other structures around the dominant central shrine.

The central structure is cruciform in shape, and raised on three terraces with complex decorative walls with carved brick cornices and terracotta friezes built up with individual plaques. Bas-reliefs in stone covered the lower walls. The fascinating thing in Paharpur is the sophistication in the making of different types and sizes of brick and terracotta, and their use. Even in the present condition of the ruins, the quality of the bricks and of the walls and details make an architect excited about the ancient art and the tremendous possibilities of bricks and tiles even in our present day context.

The orientation, the geometric configuration of the structure, the proportions prove that in ancient times the people of Bengal were sensitive to the highest demands of the forms and techniques of architecture. The cruciform stupa on a square base, a unique feature originating in this region, inspired architects in countries far away from Bengal, such as Java and Kampuchea and of course it had a direct influence on temple forms in Burma.

Although the Hindu temple originated in other parts of India, in Bengal it was transformed into local forms which are typically Bengali. On the basis of roof-form, they can be identified into three basic types: a) Sikhara, b) Chala and c) Ratna.

The earliest surviving temple is a Sikhara-form in Barakar in Burdwan district (West Bengal) of the 8th century A.D. A later example is the Kodla Math near Bagerhat.

The Chala-form, clearly derived from the rural huts of Bengal, has been the more popular temple form, as is evident from illustrations in ancient manuscripts and plaques and existing structures. There are many variations of this form and the Dhakeswari Temple at Dhaka (early 17th century A.D.) and the Jor Bangla at Pabna are examples. It is interesting to note that in the 16th and 17th centuries, this roof form was used quite indiscriminately in Hindu temples and Muslim mosques.

The Ratna-type is an elaboration of the previous types. The form consists of a central spire surrounded by minor pinnacles. The most impressive example of this type is the Kantaji Mandir in Dinajpur (1692–1723 A.D.).

The Advent of the Muslims: the Sultanate Period (1204–1576 A.D.)

Muslims came to Bengal in the 13th century A.D. from North India and within quite a short period of time became the rulers of the country. Most of the
time for the next three hundred years the connection with Delhi was tenuous and the Sultans of Bengal behaved like independent rulers of the country.

After the initial disruptions, there began a period of great creative activity based primarily on the existing culture of Bengal — there were translations into Bengali of ancient scriptures, poetry in Bengali, research in medicine and sciences, and, of course, flourishing of a distinctive architecture of Bengal, all made possible by the direct patronage of the Sultans of Bengal through their sympathetic understanding of local culture. It was truly “the emergence of Bengal as a nation — with a distinctive language, architecture and literature”.

Architecturally, the important aspect of the Sultanate period is the synthesis of regional forms, techniques and traditions with the ideas and concepts of the foreigners. Although, new building types, such as the mosque and mausoleum, were introduced, they eventually found expression through regional forms and features. Some of these features, drawn from the same roots, were used interchangeably in mosques and temples. The specific features of the structures of this period are their form, the structural system, richness of surface decoration, use of traditional brick and terracotta, occasional stone-carving and glazed tile work, use of curvilinear cornice and the Bangla roof.

Examples are the structures in Gaur and Pandua, Sat Gambuz in Bagerhat (1459 A.D.), Sura Mosque in Dinajpur (1493 A.D.), Chota Sona Mosque in Gaur (1493 A.D.), Bagha Masjid in Rajshahi (1523 A.D.) and Atiya Masjid in Tangail (1609 A.D.).

The Mughal Period (1576 A.D. — 1757 A.D.)

The specific feature of the Mughal period is the idea of political centralisation, when all ideas and ideals flowed down from Delhi. This was an imposition of an imperial idea where everything grows and flows out of the concept of the central ruling power. Architecturally this meant the imposition of forms from Delhi by the Governors of Bengal. This was a break with the continuity of the architectural tradition of the region. The complete break came along with the advent of the British.

Mughal structures include mosques, mausoleums and forts. Although replicated from the North Indian forms, the Mughal structures in Bengal were more modest in scale and less articulated in execution. The traditional expression of brick was abandoned for a plastered surface. The three-domed mosque was adopted as a Mughal structure as against the variety of multi-domed mosques of pre-Mughal times. Also a few of the pre-Mughal innovations were continued or developed to suit Mughal intentions.

Examples in and around Dhaka include the Sat Masjid, Bibi Pari’s Tomb, the Lalbagh Fort, the Katra buildings, the river forts (all 17th century), Sangi Dalan in Rajmahal (1740’s), Jami Mosque in Rajmahal and the Zarad Mosque in Murshidabad (1740’s).

Even when the Nawabs of Bengal asserted themselves as independent rulers, from 1707 to 1757, after the weakening of Mughal power, they hardly deviated from the Mughal building principles. Only after the advent of the British, and when the ruling elites had succumbed completely to European influences, do we notice a growing fascination for European products, as seen by the hiring of a European to design the Nawab’s Palace in Murshidabad in the European style in the 1820’s.

The British Period (1757 A.D. — 1947 A.D.)

Imperialist cultural imposition, initiated mildly by the Mughals, was total in the case of the British. The British cultural domination was so thorough and devastating that it completely severed the continuity of Bengali socio-cultural and economic life, including the development of regional architecture. The impact of that devastation is felt even today. The activities of the British, cultural, architectural, or otherwise, must be reviewed in the frame of their overall attitude and intention. Their activities, guided by the sole intention of economic exploitation, totally disregarded the culture of Bengal. In fact, by their attitude and behaviour, they almost destroyed the existing socio-cultural scene totally. Sir Charles Trevelyan’s description of Dhaka in 1840 is worth mentioning as an indicator of the effect of the British activities: “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”. Similar descriptions of other towns are also abundantly available.

Meanwhile, Calcutta, a town developed by and for the British, began to flourish as a centre of the British rulers. Here, and later in other parts of the country, they put up their first buildings as exact facsimiles of buildings in Europe, visually executed in the Neo-Classical manner popular in Europe in those days. Examples include Calcutta Government House, Serampore College and Dhaka Old State Bank.

Climate was the first factor which forced a change in the imported European buildings. Locally used architectural elements, such as, overhanging eaves, wooden lattice and the verandah began to be incorporated in the British buildings and gave rise to a new type with a strange mixture of elements.
It is interesting, but not surprising, to note that the local elite, completely overwhelmed by the European economy and culture, accepted in totality the British buildings: The Palace Complex of the Nawab of Murshidabad (built in the 1820's), the Murshidabad Imambara, Ahsan Manzil in Dhaka are examples as are the many residences of the Zamindars and elites all over Bengal. Thus, both the Englishmen in India and the local elites contributed to create a 'hybrid style'—a pastiche of diverse and discordant elements. This trend has influenced the ideas of the ruling class up to the present day.

1947–1971 — Present

In 1947 the British had to leave India, and India and Pakistan emerged as two independent states. From 1947 to 1971 present Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. There were no formally trained Bengali architects in this region in 1947. The few architects who were employed by the government were foreigners. The first formally trained Bengali architect started practising in 1953. The School of Architecture at the University of Engineering and Technology produced their first batch of architects in 1966. The School was organised by American architects and the training process for obvious reasons is basically that practised in the U.S.A.

Between 1947 and 1971, the major portion of the design activity was conducted by people who were not architects, resulting in buildings which created a chaotic and undesirable environment.

Even in this adverse situation, two positive events occurred. On the one hand, two famous American architects were commissioned to design important public buildings, Louis I. Kahn to design the Capital Complex at Dhaka and Paul Rudolph the Agricultural University at Mymensing. Meanwhile formally trained Bengali architects began to practise.

After the independence of Bangladesh, a larger number of Bengali architects started working as independent professionals. The independence of the country provided the architects with wider opportunities to get involved in design activity. The visual result of these activities was however hardly better than what was happening before independence. Despite this there are indications that conscious efforts are being made to absorb the local spirit and aspirations and translate them into visual idioms and forms. Some recent work show that these efforts are enlightened and touched with sensitivity.

Conclusion

In this condensed survey of architecture in Bangladesh the rich heritage of this country can only be partially expressed. One feature which makes architecture of this region unique is its own forms with its special qualities. Whatever came to Bengal ultimately was absorbed in the culture giving a fresh and new dimension to the existing framework. Up to the advent of the Mughals whatever happened was ultimately Bengali with its roots deep in the tradition and culture of the country. The Mughals came with an imperialist outlook and created the first disturbance in the continuity in the field of architecture. The coming of the British saw a severance of all ties with the existing culture of the country.

Architecture sustains its life on living civilisations and living culture. Without roots deeply embedded in the culture and the people, architecture is a meaningless shell. Visual clichés and idioms without any reference to the local culture do not produce architecture, or even good buildings. This survey demonstrates a case for regionalism sustaining its vitality from the material and spiritual aspirations of the people of the region.

After 1947, the whole of the Indian sub-continent faced a crisis due to the almost total absence of architects in the country. Neither was there a viable and reasonable system of education for the architects in the sub-continent. The few architects who were practising were trained in England, and the English educational system had nothing to do with the Indian culture. Bangladesh, as a part of the sub-continent, faced the same problem. Almost all contemporary works are basically rooted in Western culture, though the architects, local and foreign, have tried to solve problems with local conditions in mind. Perhaps it is not possible ever to bridge the gap in a real sense between the Sultanate period and present day Bangladesh, or the ancient past and the present day scene.

The architects in Bangladesh are working under contradictory pressures. On the one hand the educational system and the architectural world outside are completely dominated by western ideas and western culture. On the other hand there is a tremendous urge to respond to local cultural needs and aspirations. Probably the situation is similar in all the countries of South Asia. There is no reason why any architect in our countries should have a view limited by the boundaries of our countries. It is obvious that technologically and culturally nobody can live in isolation. Then there is the question of pride in one's own work and that work can be the product of one's own creative activity. Without deep roots in one's own culture and the heritage of the people it is not possible to sustain a creative life. In this context, the regional manifestation of architecture and other art forms is inevitable. Regionalism can only enrich the idea of world cultures — without it the world becomes very drab indeed!
Background
Architectural Development in Bangladesh

Nazimuddin Ahmed

The peculiar climate and geography of this remote eastern land, more than anything else, have shaped the personality, art, culture, architecture, dress, tradition and the way of life. The land being essentially deltaic and riverine, a rich deposit of alluvium is readily available for the manufacture of brick. This cheap but excellent plastic medium logically encouraged the development of a terracotta art, which, in its variety and richness, can hardly be equalled by any other country in the sub-continent of India. This explains why brickwork has been the building material which dominates the traditional architecture of Bangladesh, often embellished with intricate terracotta art on the surface.

Other pliant indigenous building materials, abundantly available in the region, like timber, bamboo, cane and reed, greatly influenced the

Shah Muhammad Mosque (1680), Mymensingh
Background
Architectural Development in Bangladesh

evolution of a distinctive curvature of the roof and its cornice which when carried across its facade in a series of parallel curves results in the form of a bow. This is the typical architectural style, indigenous to the land, evidently derived from a bamboo framework, adapted to throw off heavy monsoon rain. This characteristic feature, often termed folk-architecture, never rose to classical heights. Nevertheless, the style often transformed into masonry is invested with a freshness and spontaneity, expressive of a rural people keenly aware of the elements of nature affecting their daily life. It is evidently the outcome of ingenious but practical minds.

The pattern of life in this land seems to have remained virtually unaffected over thousands of years. Numerous clusters of villages formed the bed-rock of society, the bulk of which depended on agriculture and cottage industries. The art and architecture of the land was therefore, essentially an expression of an agricultural society who eked out their living from the soil, which profoundly influenced their creations. The rural folk which included a large section of masons, craftsmen and painters, lived a simple life and dwelt in unpretentious mud, bamboo or thatched huts, which in the course of time have completely disappeared. The weathered urban people, largely depending on the villages, lived, however, a life of pomp and luxury, in substantial mansions and patronised buildings of artistic and religious character. The artistic and architectural development in the country, therefore, can only be studied from the surviving urban settlements and religious edifices.

The religious architecture of the Buddhist-Hindu period may broadly be classified under three main headings: the Stupa, the Vihara and the Temple. The only urban centre, so far partially excavated, is the extensive ruins of Mahasthan, identified with the famous Mauryan (3rd century B.C.) city of Pundranagar. The citadel was heavily fortified by an earthen rampart within which, closely packed dwelling houses of different periods, aligned the irregularly oriented streets.

Most of the pre-Islamic building remains in the country, except for a few groups of laterite and brick-temples of the north Indian Sikhara style in Bankura, Burdwan and 24-Parganas in West Bengal — ranging in date between 9th to 12th century — have disappeared in the course of time due to the destructive forces of nature and man.

The practice of erecting a *stupa* or a funerary mound over the mortal remains of the Buddha or his disciples appear to be pre-Buddhist in origin but the cult of *stupa* was greatly popularised by the Mauryan emperor Asoka, who erected a large number of these imposing edifices in various parts of his vast empire. The earlier simple form of it was globular with a slightly hemispherical dome which was the original form of the great stupas at Sanchi, Bharhat, Dharmarajika and Nagarjunikonda. In the course of time this simple form gave way to a tendency towards elongation and height. At the same time its various component parts also underwent additions and alterations and eventually the whole composition assumed a spiral shape, in which the original hemispherical dome lost its dominating effect. Few stupas exposed so far, in Bangladesh belong to this later stage of evolution.

Similarly the irregularly laid out simple monasteries of the early days, consisting of only garden-retreats for the monks during the rainy season, later developed into massively planned, systematic and independent structures under royal patronage. All monastic establishments exposed so far in Bangladesh belong to this late phase of development such as the Pajarpur Vihara, and the monasteries in Comilla, Dinajpur and Bogra, all erected between the 8th and 12th centuries. All these massively built self-contained monasteries resemble defensive fortresses rather than religious and education centres. The most spectacular of these is the 'Mahavihara' at Paharpur, erected in the 8th century by King Dharmapala. It is the largest single Vihara south of the Himalayas.

The extreme rarity of surviving early temples in Bangladesh makes it difficult to follow the various forms which evolved in the country. An idea of their general features can, however, be obtained by examining a few illustrated old manuscripts and reliefs on stone sculptures where the deity is often shown installed in a temple whose outline is carved around the divine figure. Together with these, a few groups of temples — ranging in date between the 9th and 12th centuries, still surviving in Bankura, Burdwan and 24-Parganas in West Bengal, convey an idea of their architectural form. From these it is evident that most of the early temples in Bangladesh belonged to the North Indian *Nagara* style. The first and possibly its earlier type, originating in the 5th century known as *Pida-deul*, consisted of a gradually diminishing roof composed of a series of horizontal tiers with a recess between the two tiers. No such example of this variety survives here today. The other variety, known as *Sikhara* or *Rakha* is distinguished by a lofty curvilinear tower, covering the cube of the sanctum. This later variety appears to have originated as an offshoot of the virile early Orissan style illustrated in the Bankura, Burdwan and 24-Parganas groups in West Bengal. Besides the above two types, a great variety of combinations and elaborations of the two, were later developed in the medieval period.

The few early temple remains discovered in excavation inside and outside the citadel of Mahasthan such as the Govinda Bhatta temple, Bairagi Bhatta temple and the imposing Lakhindar Medth, have only their substructure preserved, the
superstructure of all these have disappeared, which makes it difficult to place them in any of the above categories. The high podium of all these temples are built on a series of graded terraces around a high central shaft which is buttressed by innumerable blind cells, packed with compacted earth, resembling a honeycomb. This was, no doubt, intended to strengthen the foundation of a massive and lofty superstructure. The most spectacular of its kind, built in the 8th century, is the lofty Buddhist temple at Paharpur. Its tapering mass of three receding terraces rests on a ground plan which is laid out in the form of a gigantic cross. An imposing staircase facing the only entrance on the north, leads up to a corridor which runs all round the structure and communicates with the four large prayer chambers, placed at each of the cardinal faces of the four projected arms of the cross. These four supplementary prayer chambers are presumed to have contained four colossal bronze images of the Buddha, one of which has very recently been salvaged in excavation in a mutilated condition. This outsized torso of the bronze Buddha, broken below the naval, is over four feet high and, no doubt, represents the largest metal icon, in Eastern India when complete. Its exceptionally delicate modelling of the limbs, refined facial treatment and the diaphanous drapery, reminiscent of the Sarnath tradition, easily ranks it as a product of the ripest artistic creation of the Varendra foundry. The base of this stupendous cruciform shrine with projecting re-entrant angles between the arms, is richly decorated with unbroken bands of terracotta and stone sculptures. This singularly striking architecture, introduced for the first time at Paharpur on a grand scale, profoundly
influenced the later temple architecture of South East Asia.

Another indigenous style which developed in medieval Bengal during the Muslim period, under the patronage of various Hindu feudal landlords, was possessed of a freshness and spontaneity of its own which is rarely found in the earlier examples. This style is characterised by a cabin-like profile with sloping roofs, curved eaves and exceptionally stunted pillars, richly embellished with intricate terracotta art.

Excellent examples of the 17th century rekha-deul type of temples in Bangladesh are the Mathurapur Deul in Faridpur, the Kodla Math near Bagerhat, Sarkat’s Math at Mahilara in Bakerganj, the imposing Siva temple at Puthia and the Sonarang temples at Tongibari near Dhaka. The gently curved sikharas of all these temples are relieved with a series of horizontal brick mouldings, bearing floral tracery and mythological episodes from the Hindu Epics and exhibit curved cornice decoration, reiterated from the base to the crest.

The main features of the popular Bangla style are a square sanctum, often more than one storey, with a pronounced curvilinear elevation. The plan may be either on an elongated base with only two sloping roofs above, or on a square base with four pitched roofs. A singular hut of this type is known as Ek-Bangla while the two together are known as Jor-
Bangla. A four-sided roof with curved cornice on a rectangular sanctuary is called a Char-Chala but when a miniature duplicate is repeated on top, it forms an Aat-Chala or eight-roofed. Sometimes the receding series of roofs are triplicated, making it Baro-Chala or twelve-roofed. The facade of all these temples are invariably covered with a profusion of terracotta floral and figural art. Fine examples of the Ek-Bangla temples are to be found within the palace ruins of Bardbankuti in Rangpur, at Puthia near Rajshahi, at Handial in Pabna and many other old sites, while the remains of some elegant Jor-Bangla temples may be seen at Dakhin Raghabpur in Pabna town, at Raigram in Jessore, at Mulghar near Bagerhat and scores of others in Jessore, Khulna and Faridpur districts.

By adding decorative towers or ratnas (literally gems) over the central cella, another distinctive variety of temple architecture was introduced in the medieval period. Clusters of between four and twenty-four such decorative miniature spires, added at different roof levels in groups of 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, etc plus the central tower or sikara, created a wide variety of Pancha-ratna and Nava-ratna types of temples. Some excellent examples of Pancha-ratna or 5-towered temples are the Siddheswari temple at Naldanga and the Govinda temple at Puthia, while the Damrei and Sonabaria temples in Khulna and the Kantaji temple in Dinajpur are beautiful surviving specimens of the Nava-ratna or nine-towered style. The only surviving Satara-ratna or 17-towered temple in Bangladesh is the imposing octagonal temple near Comilla town. The other variants of the 21-spired temples have all disappeared now.

Muslim Period

The building art of the Muslim period, covering more than five centuries, beginning from 1204, may broadly be classified under two phases: the pre-Mughal and the Mughal. The period of its isolation and independence for well over two centuries between 1338 and 1575 is distinguished by the manifestation of strong regional elements on monuments, reflected in a luxurious richness of surface decoration with the traditional art of terracotta and occasional use of intricate stone carving or glazed tilework. Other characteristic regional elements are the curvilinear cornice and the adoption of the multi-domed roof rather than the open court. Most of the important monuments of this period are located in the twin abandoned capitals of Gaur and Pandua, which stretch along between the old course of the Ganges and Mahananda rivers for about 17 miles (27 kilometres) in utter desolation and ruins. The city ruins are now largely situated in the present district of Malda in West Bengal (India) while a small portion is included in the Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. During this period some beautiful monuments in Bangladesh evince a high degree of refinement in terracotta and stone carving and often their domes were gilded with gold. Among the surviving monuments of this Sultanate Period (1338–1575), the tomb of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Sonargaon, the tomb of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat, the Shait-Gumbad Masjid, the Mosque of Baba Adam near Dhaka, the Small Golden Mosque at Gaur in Rajshahi, the Bagha and Kusumbha mosques in the same district, are excellent examples. In this period however, a
homogenous group of buildings erected at the present site of Bagerhat in the south by Khan Jahan, in the mid-15th century, stand apart from the rest. The old city of Khalifatabad (present Bagerhat) was systematically laid out around the largest multi-domed mosque in Bangladesh, known popularly as Shait-Gumbad Masjid. The building art of Khan Jahan is characterised by its austere simplicity, massive tapering walls and bastion-like round towers which closely resemble the more famous Tughlaq architecture of Delhi.

Some of the monuments erected in outlying areas of Dhaka during the early Mughal period demonstrated a happy syncretism of the pre-Mughal features with the new imperial Mughal features which, indeed, characterise a transitional phase. The finest example is the Atia Mosque in Tangail where the cornice is deeply curved while the wall surfaces, except on east and the corner turrets, are covered with plaster panels. The eastern facade and the mihrabs are richly embellished with beautiful floral scrolls. Both the pre-Mughal and Mughal architectural features are fused here harmoniously to present a very pleasing appearance.
Small Golden Mosque, Gaur (Rajshahi), 1493 A.D.

Bagha Mosque, Rajshahi (1523)

Shait Gumbad Mosque, Bagerhat (C. 1459)
Background

Architectural Development in Bangladesh

Atia Mosque (1609)

Bibi Part's Tomb within Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka (17th century)
Mughal Period

With the advent of the Mughals in 1575 and enforcement of political centralisation, a uniform Mughal style in the building art was ushered in which largely discarded the indigenous elements. Chief elements introduced by them included dominant central domes and tall axial entrances, set in a central projecting bay for emphasis, while the entrances themselves were inset in taller half-domes. The fundamental change in the decoration of their buildings was brought about by discarding the age-old art of terracotta and replacing it by reiterated plaster panels. The typical curvature of cornice and battlements of the earlier phase was also abandoned in favour of straight horizontal parapet.

Important architectural legacies of the Mughal period in Dhaka are the Bara and Chhota Katras, the unfinished Lalbagh Fort, the unique tomb of Bibi Pari, Sat-Masjid, and a very interesting series of river forts in Munshiganj and Narayanganj near Dhaka. The Lalbagh Fort, built in the typical provincial Mughal style, contains within, a number of handsome buildings such as the Audience Hall and the Hammam of the Governor, a small, elegant 3-domed mosque and the striking tomb of Bibi Pari — the reputed daughter of Governor Shaisa Khan. The unique tomb of Bibi Pari is the only monument in Bangladesh where marble from Rajputana, black basalt from Rajmahal and glazed tiles have been used to decorate the interior of its 9 chambers, whereas the roofs of the chambers are spanned by massive overlapping courses of black basalt slabs using the principle of the corbel. The mortuary chamber is covered outside by a false copper dome in order to attain balance to the otherwise flat unimposing composition.

Among a series of river forts, built in the 17th century with the aim of protecting the river route to Dhaka against the recurring raids of the Magh and Portuguese pirates, the Idrakpur Fort in Munshiganj, about 15 miles south east of Dhaka, is a typical example. It is an oblong Fort, with a circular bastion at each corner, filled solidly with earth to the rampart level, above which runs the battlemented parapet, liberally pierced with loop-holes for musketry. A striking feature of this fort, common to others of the group, is an enormous circular bastion, facing the river, which evidently was used for mounting high calibre cannon and also as watch tower. Two others of the series on either bank of the river Sitalakhyana are to be found at Hajiganj and at Sonakanda in Narayanganj.

British Period

With the establishment of Calcutta by Job Charnock in 1690 it grew rapidly in importance around the moat-girdled Fort William during the initial period of British ascendency to political power in India. In fact, Calcutta was the British capital of India from 1773 until 1912. As a consequence, most of the grand monuments of the British period, covering about two hundred years, were erected in and around the great city. Some of the finest buildings of the Colonial period sprang up in Calcutta such as the Vice-Regal House, the Belvedere House, the Indian Museum, the Writer’s Building, the Victoria Memorial and a nucleus of imposing 18th century commercial and banking premises around Chawringhee, Dalhousie Square and Clive Street Bangladesh with its vast agrarian base and very little urbanisation or industry, drifted in isolation and neglect during this period, feeding Calcutta and its industrial belt along the Hooghly river as a rich hinterland of raw materials. Some monuments erected here during this period are however historically and architecturally significant.

The building art of the British period passed through a succession of phases. The European Renaissance Style appeared in the 17th century, initially in the churches of Dhaka, and later was applied to secular buildings. In the later part of the 18th century and 19th century another phase developed in which buildings with semi-octagonal or round corners and tall Doric Columns gained popularity. The revival of the Classical Graeco-Roman architecture, adopted in medieval Europe with its salient ‘Orders’ classified under Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite, became very popular in Bangladesh. This may be studied on a series of feudal palaces in the outlying areas and some buildings in Dhaka. One is impressed by the striking resemblance of many feudal palaces here, especially the Baladi, Pathia, Ahsan Manzil (Dhaka) and Dubalhati Palaces, with the famous Senate House in Cambridge (1722-30), although these have been considerably modified and enriched by local conditions. The new architectural elements introduced during the 19th century were the semi-circular arch, the triangular pediment carried over semi-Corinthian, Doric or Ionic columns and other folioted motifs in plaster. A typical example of it is the imposing Ahsan Manzil (1872) of the Nawabs of Dhaka, the Old High Court Building, and the unusual little Greek Memorial inside the Dhaka University Teacher-Student Centre.

In the late 19th and the early 20th centuries a new hybrid Mughal and European style emerged in the wake of the first partition of Bengal (1905), largely under the influence of Lord Curzon, a great admirer of the Mughal art and architecture. Notable examples of this elegant syncretic trend may be noticed at the
Ahsan Manzil, Dhaka (1872)

Mymensingh Rajbari, entrance facade (1905)
Northbrooke Hall, Curzon Hall, Dhaka Medical College, Salimullah Muslim Hall — all in Dhaka, and at the Carmichael College in Rangpur.

**Post-British Period**

With the Partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947, this region entered into a feverish era of building activities in order to fulfil the need of the expanding capital of the province. These were mostly of utilitarian type, common to all modern cities, without the splendour of the old monuments. These are characterised by the liberal use of reinforced concrete for high-rise buildings with straight horizontal vertical lines dominating the profile. However, there are a few silver linings in the new trend of stereotyped modern architecture. The Baitul-Mukarram Mosque, located close to the Stadium in Dhaka is one such bold concept given a masonry form. The main four-storeyed prayer hall has been set out in the form of an enlarged cube of the sacred Ka‘aba, while its ancillary cloisters and the elevated
The striking layout and architecture of the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka occupy a very important place in the milestone of architectural development in the country. Its master plan, prepared in 1965 by the American architect Louis Kahn, is often described as a township built with the *rhythm of bricks*. The whole scheme of planning pivots around the gigantic octagonal concrete block of the multi-storied National Assembly Building, facing south to a plaza. The outer octagon, rises to a height of 105 feet (32 metres) while the inner circular block, relived at 10 feet (3 metres) interval with continuous parallel bands of marble, shoots up to a height of 155 feet (47 metres). The nuclear block of this National Assembly, also known as the citadel, is encircled diagonally on the south-east and south-west by an artificial lake which gives an atmosphere of its floating in water — an atmosphere so familiar in riverine Bangladesh. Aligned on its banks are the ancillary blocks of residences of high Government officials. This unique building — the only solitary concrete block in the whole scheme of otherwise red brick buildings surrounding it — dominates the entire layout with its lofty height and imposing mass.

In designing various buildings within the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, this region's traditional brick
architecture has been uniformly and extensively used where stylised Islamic arches and vaults constitute functional elements rather than merely ornamental. Geometric forms such as triangles, rectangles, full and segmental circles and flat arches find free play in the architecture. The scrupulous avoidance of all sunshades and roof protections have created a monumental effect but their disadvantages have been effectively redeemed by the provision of core-walls with a small gap in between, in order to protect against the inclement weather. The fundamental character of architecture here is monumental, an adaptation of Islamic architecture, and in that sense, it marks a distinct departure from the rest of modern building and is deeply imbued with the age-old tradition of the land which springs from its climate and geography.

All photographs courtesy of Nazimuddin Ahmed
The words I speak here are of an amateur interested in Architecture, who wishes to connect with people, and hopes they will connect with others, by living on our newly freed earth together, in the spirit of live and let live.

I have come to this seminar as a self-conscious romantic, with the nostalgia of previous visits, during one of which I toured the whole landscape of Bangladesh, by motorcar, in ferry boats across the waterways, in carts drawn by bullock.

The total impression I carried away always is a feeling, sometimes a vivid emotion, crystallised into a mood, that Bangladesh is a paradise lost — which could be a paradise regained, by its people, if they connect with each other and share the fruits of its verdant earth, its flowing waters, its sunwashed air.

Maybe my nostalgia is coloured by the glimpses of Bengal life, which the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore gave us in his letters to friends, when he lived by the Padma River, in Kushtia district, in the middle years of his life. I can never forget the freshness of this earth, the greens (parrot bosom green, dense grove green, tender bush green, the dew spangled grass green), the sheen of its rivers under the sun’s glare, the hia! hia! of the fishermen. I have vivid memories of the palaces, the mosques and the forts of Gaur, built in the 13th century, of which the magnificent ruins still survive to show that some of the most highly talented craftsmen were there before Michaelangelo.

I cannot forget the thatched hut villagers, clustered together, constructed by the villagers themselves, in seemingly designless designs, but with adequate care to avoid wind erosion, soil erosion and the heavy rain. I have the recollection, of those settlements, built mostly on slopes, below bamboo groves to shelter the houses, following the contours of the land, near enough to the elixir of life, water, and fairly self-sufficient from the paddy harvest, the vegetables, the fruits of the groves, and the fish from the nearby waters, and the jute for commercial crop.

In Tagore’s days the Bangladesh peasants were tenants of the feudal gentry and the landlords helped to build the houses.

After political freedom, the folk themselves and their chosen representatives, had the reponsibility to look after themselves.

A search for a new socio-political order has come, at a time when the affluent world of the west, which has so far set standards for development, itself faces a deep crisis of pollution and even death, through the rapid advance of industries of the consumer goods civilisation.

The ecology of the dominantly rural world of Asia and Africa is threatened by the inevitable urge of the newly freed peoples to mechanise agriculture.

Nature, which has been beneficial, sometimes becomes a devastating destroyer, through cyclones, floods and earthquakes.

The folk here have themselves been the victims of a devastating war, when the will to live was rescued from genocide, with tremendous sacrifices.

How, then, are they to survive in the future, threatened by the fear of nuclear death which faces men and women everywhere?

Are they to become part of the machine life, which will bring more demands for luxury goods, or are they to live as parts of nature, growing the fruits of the earth and rescuing a modicum of happiness from a spreading destructive civilisation? Are they to live in congeries of human habitations, as so called ‘primitives’, who have not lost the habit of sharing with their neighbours, the work and the fruits thereof, as individuals in the group, or are they to be submerged in the cash-nexus civilisation of cities, in slums, below the multi-storey skyscrapers, without a tree, or a flower or a space to breathe the air near them?

In the face of the human predicament, brought by purblind pragmatists, the German poet Rilke cried out: ‘Is it possible that, despite our discoveries and
progress, we still remain on the surface of life? 'Yes, it is possible' he answered himself.

The implication is this: 'That we must make a study in depth of the human situation of folk, to ask what men and women want to be, how they wish to live, and breathe, and work, and have their being, before we build up their living space.

Maybe, we will find that there survives in all human groups, the herd instinct, a sense of brotherhood. Instinctively, men and women also have faith in a higher power, which is often their own exalted image of themselves. They have the appetite for fruitful activity in work and worship and perhaps they also have some sense of the quality of life, because, often, they have created marvels with their hands and their hearts. Only the march of the machine civilisation, with its surface glamour has now blinded them. They mix up good values with the greed for dollars. Important values have tended to get lost.

The need, then is for us to evolve a design for living, for those for whom we wish to build habitations, before we actually construct.

In the present transition from agriculture with organic manure to mechanised tilling with fertiliser and the coming of vast industries even in the countryside, there is likely to be chaos in the minds of men, because they will not know what to choose, how to evaluate the worth of the new gadgets against the old implements, which have been tried and trusted for generations.

I am not saying that the earth scratching plough is better than the tractor — only that the small tractor is better than the big tractor, and the combined harvester, when the holdings are small.

I ask that we try to understand the purpose for which we improve tools, and not beg and borrow implements for use in our lives, like the Sadhu who has bought 99 Rolls Royces through sheer greed to seem rich.

In the chaos created by the impact of the west, before we became free, we were not living, but drifting, from day to day, as a lumpen proletariat. Weavers perished when the export of Dhaka Muslin was stopped. Famines ravaged the sub-continent. Five generations survived, under the permanent stress of oppression. We were gifted with the word liberty, but were made slaves.

Emerging from that ruinous state, we have to look the new gift horses in the mouth and take what we really need. We must not be tempted by the bright colours of plastic goods to discard our terracotta earthenware, our brass and copper utensils. Stainless steel yes, but certainly not plastic. We can glaze our terracottas against grease.

The brown body in our sunsoaked tropics does not need a suit, boot, hat and overcoat; it needs only dhoti-kurta and kurta pyjama, from which the sweat can be washed off daily in the nearby stream after a bath, as do most folk. The Sahibs from cold climates thought our people uncivilised, because the aliens themselves wore too many clothes against their cold weather. But nudity permits a relative physical freedom, which nickerbockers don't, as Clive found out when he took off his coat and warm stockings during the battle of Plassey.

Our design for living, therefore, has to be in accord, with those of our good social and mental habits, which were established, from due consideration of compact with an earth. We did not fight nature to conquer it. We accepted the earth as mother, the sky as father, and invoked thunder and lightning to be merciful. Our millions of men and women have gone out in the dawn to look at the first smile of the sun. The Chinese philosopher Mencius said: 'Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part of themselves which is little are little men.'

There is, of course, no escaping the fact that men and women must have worldly goods. I believe that all genuine human needs and interests must be met but they should be basic needs and interests; not multiplication of wants; just enough. Small is beautiful, says Schumaker, repeating Mahatma Gandhi. What is given and shared is holy, to nourish life, which needs energy, to release more energy, and more energy still, for energy becomes life, when inspired by the will.

This kind of design for living is, anyhow, inevitable to the so-called developing societies. The inflationary world has nothing much to spare for the third world. As the English phrase says, we have to 'cut our coats according to our cloth.' This suits us, but can we make the effort to adjust our lives to the vision of the natural man?

Shall we build our houses in villages, in full view of the earth we have to till, the waters which intersect our land, the storms that might come in terms of the twelve seasons of the year, and not in terms of steel and concrete, because these are the latest materials?

I cannot, as an outsider, discuss here, the concrete realities of building and whether our villages should go on building houses with bamboo and thatch, or turn to baked brick and cement.

Our more affluent ancestors had their houses built in pucca materials. There is no dearth of the successors of those skilled craftsmen still and more artisans can be trained.

Of course, the old designs have been lost in the jigsaw puzzle of adding shelters to cope with increase of numbers. The craftsmen lost vision and became
stereotyped when they were reduced to labour. Therefore, the interaction of the trained architect designer with the craftsman is necessary to evolve basic habitations.

The layout of the village may, however, need the minimum requirements which the English architect, Jane Drew, worked out in her studies of village housing in the tropics. She suggests houses in shapes suited to landscape, wells, clean lanes, sewage, community centres, school, mosque, temple, church, shops, market, motor park, fuel reserve, children's park, rubbish bins, cemetery or cremation ground should all be incorporated.

These are matters for technicians in each locale, who know the actual conditions and available materials. I only urge that we see the current neglect of villages on our sub-continent and that we are inspired by this seminar, to a vision of what might be done through our love of people, even if they don't often want to be loved. To me everything is useless, unless we have this love I am sure that some of the people will receive it, if we go to them, and give it back.

It is true, as Rilke said, that people's 'lives run on, unconnected with anything'. And he added: 'each with the other' If this is so, 'then something must be done'. 'The first comer... must begin to do some of the neglected things...'

We must struggle against our self-imposed aloneness, our alienation from the people, even those who are reduced to myopia. We have to open those eyes which have looked at the wonderful landscape of Bangladesh, but have never seen its smile.
Architecture is one of man’s highest achievements, reflecting the culture of the times. Regional qualities are present but interestingly enough regionalism itself is seldom a prime determinant in architecture. Formal ideas are a much more important thing. Formal ideas incubate over long periods of time, sometimes centuries, bloom, speak for an age, often a very short-lived blooming period and are modified by the then known world, taking on their regional characteristics. Often regional characteristics contribute to a certain dilution of the formal ideas and in that sense you can say that regionalism has a negative side. There are people who would disagree with that.

Sometimes regionalism enriches and embellishes the formal idea but not always. For instance, Gothic architecture which was essentially formulated in Western Europe, in France and England spread to the South where it was modified to such an extent that it became almost decorative in Milan Cathedral. It lost its potentiality too in Seville Cathedral which I saw a few months ago for the first time. It’s the largest Gothic church in the world and it’s absolutely fascinating because it shows clearly the influence of the Great Mosque of Cordova, which of course is a continuous forest of columns. The essence of a Gothic cathedral is that the space flows at a very rapid pace down the central aisle to the intersection of the transepts and there is a real hierarchy of space. That is not really true in the Seville Cathedral, because it was very much influenced by other things.

This is a blending of streams and I use it as an example, to show that the formal idea with which a great period of architecture starts is sometimes diluted, perhaps only to take off in a new, more promising direction. The energy of the intersecting axes at the Seville Cathedral has, however, almost completely disappeared. It is a fascinating thing.

There are limits to regionalism. It is often limited by the industrialisation of structure. We cannot get around the idea that the industrial revolution, at least in the West, is still very much with us. The ease in travel and communication is a limit to regionalism. The rising cost of traditional material and skilled labour is another limit in the West. I have to emphasise that I am speaking as a Westerner of course where the proliferation of legal requirements, specially fireproof construction makes the whole simple business not so simple at all. Going from wood, which the villages of the world are built of, to fireproof construction is a huge architectural problem and it is very seldom solved in an eloquent way. The influence of the architectural press, the worship of fashion, and our desire to conform and belong, people have always wanted to conform and belong, it’s not new to the 20th century at all, it’s the human instinct and I would be the first one to applaud, but it is still a deterrent to true regionalism. In the West, one has the abstract qualities inherent in the 20th century concept of space. You can say, well, why don’t you do away with inherent concepts of space in the 20th century. I would say that that is quite impossible, that art is very much a part of architecture and you can never get away from that point.

On the other hand, contributing factors to regionalism are as follows: the use of material, the architectural form and so forth. Certainly the wood villages of the world are truly unique. Maybe this is a romantic thing but I am fascinated as everyone is, by the rural villages of Bangladesh. There is the spatial aspect of individual units being very close together, and built on higher land with the surroundings covered with fields under cultivation and sometimes with water. These islands in space give a unity to the land and a meaning to the land which I find truly poetic.

One understands that quite often there is no way of getting easily to such villages and that the plumbing is non-existent, and so this is purely a romantic notion. One would hope, however, that the social structure which produced that truly unique kind of a village, is not wiped out. Then it brings up many other questions about the efficiency of mechanical systems of all kinds, in maintaining these isolated villages as they are.
Of course the traditional use of brick in Bangladesh which is most clearly shown in your mosque, in religious architecture, is truthful and it is a beautiful thing. One thinks that because of the fireproof quality of it that it has great potential for you. It is also fascinating, for me that brick is used for infilling walls, because of the inferior quality of the bricks and the economics of the matter augmented by the structural frame of concrete. That gives a whole different aesthetic, if not a whole different way of building, which is not really in the tradition of this area I am not saying that it is right or wrong — I am saying that the introduction of the steel frame or the concrete frame into architecture has a profound influence on how it looks. Of course that is true all over the world. The Georgian buildings — what would they be without brick and limestone? Or Italian buildings in Tuscany without stone, or the Greek island of Mycenos without whitewashed masonry.

On concrete and steel in the 20th century, usually you do not think of a frame having regional qualities, although that is not altogether true. There are certain places in the world where the steel frame is very economic and because of its size and the method of detailing the connections it takes on certain regional aspects, as opposed to the more ubiquitous concrete frame which is used all over the world. The versatility of the concrete frame plus its plasticity plus its relationship to the forming material as well as the concrete itself gives it fantastic possibilities.

I would like to say in passing that the great innovators of twentieth century architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies, Corbusier and so on, were, with the exception of Mies very much influenced by the site and by the environment, by regionalism. Wright’s houses, for instance in Arizona or the southern California coast are very different from his houses in Wisconsin, both in terms of material and form. The work of Le Corbusier, shows somewhat less regional characteristics, but nevertheless it shows them. Mies was by and large content to show no regional characteristics and if it be a cold or a hot climate simply added the layers of glass where necessary.

It is often said air-conditioning is an enemy of regionalism, that it negates considerations of the climate, but nothing could be further from the truth. Orientation, shade, the changing directions of wind, humidity considerations can be as important for conditioning the air as naturally controlled space. The concept of controlled air with its impact on the use of energy in relationship to regionalism remains a rich theme for architectural exploration.

I come next to the idea of cities and their regional characteristics. Urbanism is the weakest part of 20th century architecture. Hong Kong is like New York for very good reasons. Traditionally the form of cities varied with the site, climate and traditional needs. The automobile has changed all of that forever. There is no such thing as a regional automobile. Much more important, there is no such thing as a regional configuration for what an automobile will do. Its turning radiuses and what it can and cannot do in terms of speed, stopping and starting, all of this is a universal thing. Cars and highways do not seem to be subject to regional considerations at all. The demands of the geometry of the automobile are immutable. One quarter of the space of Manhattan Island, which is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, is devoted to the automobile. I would love to know the figure for Dhaka. I tried to find that out and I don’t know but it must be considerably higher. My point is that if you are really interested in a city which shows regional characteristics it will probably not come in any way through circulation patterns in that city. It may come through the idea of what happens when you park the car, get out and you go into the building. This is a little element which the world over people do not know how to handle namely the transition between the two.

I come now to another question with regard to cities and regionalism and that has to do with size. It is no news that in the 20th century everything becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. What may be a somewhat different idea is that the city, because of its size, the sheer dimensions, the sheer bulk, has needs and rules which are very different from what they have even been before. An ant really is a different design from an elephant and we as architects have just begun to understand this. Until we truly understand that we are dealing with something which man has never dealt with before, we will get nowhere. I submit the thesis that the weakest thing about 20th century architects’ efforts is that we simply do not have a very clear idea about how to go about designing cities and that is a problem partly based on size, partly based on automobiles.

Regionalism is often called into service for political or religious purposes and there’s nothing wrong with that. Architecture is used for these purposes and many others, all of which is acceptable.

Religious architecture, which has contributed so much to the world has fallen on rather hard times in the 20th century. There are certainly notable exceptions. The history of architecture could be written in terms of religious architecture but certainly not in the 20th century. I deplore that, but I think that it is a true statement.

In conclusion, the timing of your conference is excellent. The architectural community is about to undergo in the United States and in the western world generally yet another change. We change very quickly and I don’t know quite why that is but it is true. The
ideal for some in the western world is pluralism but pluralism celebrating the fantastic variety of the human spirit, not the sentimentality of eclecticism. Usually people in the United States will define pluralism as eclecticism, which I define that as sheer sentimentality, at least at this point.

An admirable goal is the fusion of the great architectural models of the 20th century with a true regionalism based on solutions to human problems, not something which is superimposed from the outside.

If Southern Asia could demonstrate to the world a new humanity devoted to the variety of the human experience the world would be grateful to you and I agree that it could very well come about through the evolution of a regional architecture. In other words, we need you
Regionalism — Resource for Identity

Uttam C. Jain

The bounty of technological models and scientific knowledge from the past at the command of human beings has universal appeal for its fundamental similarity of derivation. There are however available many options in its application to a specific place, just as in the same way many languages and dialects have resulted from man’s primeval desire to communicate.

Jet transportation created for increased mobility is pregnant with possibilities of producing a global man. Concord-hopping man is universal, with a fundamental sameness of urge to move faster, but he has to modify his clothing at every landing. There is a specific response to a place and climate whether one’s destination is Alaska or Dhaka. Similarly man-made shelter has fundamentally global roots in the need for protection against the elements and yet the realisation of its form and content are in response to a given place, climate and time.

Man landing after a journey at supersonic speed or fashioning an elemental shelter has no option but to act differently in different locations.

We must commence with an interpretation of Man himself.

Man’s Make-Up

Man has a biological make-up. Rene Dubois has observed that, “Some of man’s deepest biological traits are governed by the movement of the earth around the sun, others are connected with the movement of the moon around the earth and still others result from the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. All these fluctuations in biological characteristics probably derive from the fact that the human species evolved under the influence of cosmic forces that have not changed. These mechanisms become inscribed in the genetic code and persist today even when they are no longer needed under the conditions of modern life.”

For man’s sustenance not only is it desirable but imperative that the biological functions of the human body continue normally. Efforts to protect the body must inevitably be orchestrated to the rhythm of the body’s metabolism. In fact it becomes an act of balancing, of constant modification, that determines survival.

In a hot dry climate, when the body is able to dissipate to the immediate surroundings all the undesirable heat it receives, it experiences comfort. In a modified environment, gain or loss of heat beyond comfort level to the immediate surroundings will not only depend on the air temperature of the interior and exterior, the mean radiant temperature, humidity and air currents, but also on clothing, physical activity, actual state of health, food consumed, age and mental status or psychological attitude at any given time. Interrelation of these factors is complex. Designing man-made shelter that takes into account the process of heat gain in warmer climates should be subscribed to. The same is true in reverse for cold regions. In freezing temperatures where extreme cold can terminate life within minutes, the preoccupation is to retain body heat and curtail its losses. Mechanisms for maintaining comfortable temperature levels differ and depend on extraneous factors but some universal rules apply and the response to climatic conditions whether in a hot or cold region is a major determinant, along with human activities, of human habitat.

Turning to Nature there exists an umbilical cord between man and his surroundings. Historically man lived on nature’s terms and in full harmony with it. When the sole criteria for man was to seek a shelter from undesirable elements, his rudimentary enclosures were of a simple form. The immediate surrounding were his source of construction materials; snow, stone, straw, reed, wood or mud were the indigenous materials for constructing an enclosure. Each component; base, wall, roof, finishes, all were fashioned out of what was available on the spot. In rural India on the Gangetic plains, clay was used for walls, cow dung for floor covering, reeds for the roof, tree trunks as raking posts and shutters were made out of tree branches. No importation of
any building material was required. Nature was the source and the supplier.

Tapio Periainen, director of the Finnish Society of Craft and Design has succinctly worked out a mathematical equation establishing a relation between the development of humanity and its alliance with nature.

\[
\frac{NATURE}{MAN} = \frac{1}{1} = 1 \quad \text{(value)} \quad \frac{M}{N} = \frac{1}{1} = 1
\]

This mathematical derivation suggests that when man and nature are in spiritual and material equilibrium, the ratio postulates the value of 1. In times where the lead is taken by nature with man's consent the ratio struck is.

\[
\frac{N}{M} = \frac{2.34}{1} = 2.34, \quad n
\]

with nature in command, deduction derives high integral values. Similarly when human beings take over, to rule or subdue or destroy and displace nature and thus disturb ecological equilibrium, the expression becomes

\[
\frac{N}{M} = \frac{1}{2.34} = 0.908079 \quad 0.000n
\]

indicating diminishing values lower than one. This is a warning signal for the history of mankind reveals that man does not, perhaps cannot, exist isolated from nature without loss be it tangible or intangible.

Alvin Toffler in “Future Shock” rightly emphasises the unchanged adaptability of man. “To assert that man must adapt seems superfluous. . Temperature, pressure, calorie intake, oxygen and carbon dioxide levels all set absolute boundaries beyond which man as presently constituted cannot venture.” The most modern man is the least changed man by this proposition.

Man’s biological traits and the equation with nature are paramount as the parameters of his environment but they are not absolute determinants and should be regarded as modifiers only. There are other equally relevant factors which have no less bearing on survival and growth of human species. For further elucidation focus is transferred onto India’s scenery.

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**Regional Traditions and Heritage — a source**

Traditional buildings in mud, brick, stone, thatch or other locally procured materials, be it a humble hut or a grand mansion, instantaneously becomes a part of the landscape. Nearly all such buildings consume appropriate and affordable building materials with similar origin of forms, all admirably fitting into the total ambience. Common benefit is derived from the folk-wisdom that is deeply rooted in society.

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**Indian Scene**

India inherits a tradition of built forms that have 5000 years of history. The treasure trove of varied cultural influences that travelled to the Indian region gave many moods and postures, some of a permanent nature, to India’s heritage. In order that this can be highlighted as a contextual backdrop, we can narrow down the focus to man-made forms and built environment in the western parts of India.

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*No wonder then that an adobe shelter with its utter simplicity and directness of approach as a response to the place and time is so well suited for living in the parched land of the arid region.*
In a hot and humid environment openness prevails all around the shelter. A simple roof supported on lightweight columns with negligible wall enclosure is the essence of built forms. In this way air circulates around the user while ventilating the interiors. The inside of a mud hut or thatched enclosure can be cooled by 3° to 6° celsius without artificial aids.

Similarly, reduced torso coverage by women in Kerala is a sensible response to climate since it produces comfort through constant movement of air around the body in an otherwise moisture laden atmosphere. Against this, in hot dry regions the first line of defense is created by decking the body from head to foot with loose fitting thick layers of coarse cloth that will hold cool air cushions in between the layers. The Saudi thobes (free flowing cotton robes) and ghutra (head gear) are perhaps the best example of a man-made kit for survival against inhospitable desert climate.

Response to Climate

In the hot dry region of western India, the response to climate coupled with social norms produces traditional masonry architecture of permanence. The architectural vocabulary of the city comprises weighty walls, good insulation through mud plasters and mud finished floors, sparsely done up interiors, large overhangs and small wall openings. The cellular core has ample openings to the internalised habitable rooms with a central court for light and ventilation, along with perforated screens which make an adequate environment for normal living.

It is the aesthetics of openness contrasted with enclosures that makes the local traditions pertinent and contextual. In fact it is the design of enclosure that gives meaning to the architecture of tropical India in the present just as much as it did in the past.

Medieval townscapes crowned by lofty citadels were climatically sound solutions and building craft was the accumulated fund of common sense adapted to the region with the purposeful exclusion of what had been found undesirable and the inclusion of means and materials that were affordable.

Lessons from Local Models

One example which picks up threads from the above thesis is Jaisalmer — a product of medieval India. This settlement sitting snugly on the sand dunes of the Thar Desert is a revelation. It is an amazing sight, never planned as a “Whole” yet retaining the flavour of a “Whole” and it surmounts every problem of survival admirably. It is an aggregate of parts and details that make it an organic “Whole.”
Old and not so old, new and not so new are woven into the vernacular of the city and held in balance. On closer scrutiny of the city fabric, two spatial configurations surface. At the micro level there is the detailing of building components whilst at the macro level the city’s arteries for movement such as lanes, streets, thoroughfares and bazaars reveal patterns determined by public functions. They are humming with activities of commerce, trade and public entertainment. As against these, places like chowks, shrine squares and the thresholds of domestic structures abutting the street edge are comparatively static in character. They are places to pause. The house front is an offering to the street for community living.

The street belongs to Man. It is for the man on foot. Standing on the streets of Jaisalmer Louis Kahn would have been surely delighted to say, "... Here the street is a community living room". This is an affirmation of the fact of the street being a response to socio-cultural and climatic — geographical parameters. It is also the result of their mutuality. Sauntering through the town one observes an irrevocable bond between commerce, trade, community activities, entertainment and housefront happenings, lamentably amiss in our present day planning. Rows of dwellings are sandwiched between common walls and with the outward overhang of successive floors narrowing the top aperture to a minimal, no penetration of harsh light is permitted. This ensures an active street scene at all hours on all days in every season of the year. Densely packed dwellings on both sides of a lane induce natural cooling through breeze tunnels built along the street.

The Haveli (house) in Jaisalmer reflects the designer’s deep understanding of the occupant’s living patterns. One senses an ordered sequence of space from public to private and on to very private. The house in Jaisalmer with its internalised living quarters arranged around a courtyard becomes an efficient machine to live in. There is a place for everything and everything has its place.
Water is in short supply in this arid region and a precious commodity for collection and conservation. Every drop falling is collected through appropriate water-management techniques. The exquisitely carved rain water spout receives as much love and care as the “Whole” for this reason.

The city is characterised by the indigenous stone as the dominant building material which over centuries has added to Jaisalmer’s ambience. What makes Jaisalmer contextually relevant is that this town of remarkable ingenuity recognises architecture is for the people and by the people.

**Indigenous Materials — An Appropriate Resource**

Preference for readily available materials from indigenous sources orientate the building activities at the regional level to self-reliance, energy saving, low production costs and minimum transportation costs. Employment of local building crafts practised with pride over centuries creates a sense of participation. Kinship amongst the community members is enhanced through shared experience and local human potential is boosted to the brim. At a mundane level in the process it enlarges the scope for employment since consumption of any indigenous material is labour intensive engaging many hands. This is very pertinent to India’s unemployment problem, turning her abundant manpower into an asset. The proliferation of small but localised employment opportunities will retard migration to the urban areas if not eliminate it altogether. It is mass-oriented rather than monopoly-aligned and the local market sector gets greater opportunities. This suits India well for every year the equivalent of Australia is added to her population without balancing it with resources. At this rate by the year 2000 A.D India will have overtaken China. In 2025 every fourth human head on earth will be an Indian (the present population of around 700 million will reach the figure of 1000 million by 2000 A.D.). India presently preparing for a quantum jump into the 21st century is in a way still programming for survival at some levels. As of today there are 320 million below the poverty line and by end of this century they will cross the 500 million mark. This will be more than the entire population of the Indian sub-continent at the birth of independent India in 1947.

Any architectural indulgence in India must be measured against the reality of many compulsive pressures, the burgeoning population and poverty being just two
Case Studies

The City Hall at Balotra, a small town in Western Rajasthan, is patterned to meet not only the demands of the democratic institution housed within the building but it is also the intention to pick up the threads from the region's traditional roots and respond to the climatic imperatives in working out the built form. Conceptually this design symbolises the institution of governance through participatory processes enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Hall of Arrival at the centre is representative of the collective presence of people. The offices are strung around this great hall, modulated with two storey, slender stone columns and permit every functionary to be accessible to the public to whom he owes his allegiance.
In this harsh regional environment established principles of oversized stone walls, deep set openings, double storeyed building columns, dimly lit interiors, two layered roof construction for insulation and full height free standing masonry screen walls on the east and west, are some defensive measures to combat the heat and the sand-laden surroundings of Balotra.

The use of stone from local and nearby areas, coupled with the fullest use of proven traditional building craft optimises indigenous manpower, the whole site operation becomes labour intensive.

In another case study of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences on the campus of Jodhpur University in its programming I came down to earth. The bitter pill of finance trickling in drop by drop without any knowledge about time, day or the season of its arrival had to be swallowed. Another reality that had to be faced was an acknowledgement of the fact that educational institutions get low priority with the decision making machinery when making financial sanctions.

To overcome these operational hurdles this design conceptually turns to an incremental approach. The plan is a kit of parts which can be suitably assembled and arranged responding to stoppage or progress of the work on site. Many phases of construction can be planned without its form ever appearing incomplete. Sufficiently tall service masts supported by a pair of parallel masonry walls also sandwiching flights of steps and water tanks are planted on the plan at intervals to take care of the future addition of floors. To combat the climatic rigours in this case the solution relies on a twin wall screen. The inner wall is structural with an inlay of glazed windows while the outer wall controls light and glare acting as a shading device. These two free standing walls are of stone masonry and are mutually complimentary.

The straight forward design approach plus its frugal facade make the design appropriately cost effective. In essence, this edifice abides by the dictum of ‘Less is More’. It is an affirmation of belief in traditional wisdom of a place or of the given locality. The architectural solution emerges from within and not from without. The use solely of stone in making this building relates it to its immediate surroundings without strain.
Jodhpur University, Faculty of arts and sciences
Floor plans

Jodhpur University, Faculty of arts and social sciences
West side entry

Jodhpur University, Faculty of arts and social sciences
Service modules based on increment approach
The third example is four lecture theatres for demonstrative studies on the Jodhpur University campus. It is an illustration of design decisions that are rooted in traditions, craft and culture of the locality. There is a magnificent ramp to climb, an elevated court paved with stone slabs, a ‘darwaja’ (gate) defined by a water hut on one side and a masonry bench on the other, cascading roofs, and pyramidal sit-out steps on the north and the south for summer and winter use. The robust forms intend to reinterpret the city’s architectural heritage without aiming at revivalism of architectonic forms or shapes. Philosophically, spatial configuration in this design is an attempt to invoke a spirit that will establish a symbiotic bond between the present and the past, between the new city and the old.

**Indian Predicaments**

The lesson of these case studies is that we address a forest of questions before any move is made. Here I am reminded of an analogy where the Third World countries like present day India are in a situation akin to a fatal road accident. When a life is about to end what is instantaneously called for is the administration of first aid with whatever is close at hand before an ambulance or a mobile recovery van arrives.

With a renewed faith coupled with the rejuvenation of local building traditions propped up by indigenous crafts and materials the architectural profession must aim at achieving self-identity for the region. The affirmation of regional traditions and the inherited cultural symbols must be articulated to people and merge with the environment and ecology of the place in an organic whole.

Through this ‘Dharm Yudh’ (moral fight) we must pursue the search for identity and retain it within our grasp for the well being of MAN
A Case for Indigenous Development

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Three years ago, we were huddled at Minette de Silva’s house Minette and Lochi Gunaratna from Sri Lanka, Ruslan Khalid from Malaysia, Anuradha from India, and I from Pakistan. Earlier, at the Arcasia Forum in Colombo, we had begun to feel a common bond, a sense of affinity during the formal paper presentations. Now, in Kandy, our discussions became charged with a rare excitement and tension.

The subject was architecture in our region. We were troubled and angry with what had been happening in recent times. We knew we had all the answers, but were frustrated by our environments which were unresponsive and un receptive to our ideas. We wanted an architecture which was contemporary and rational, not bound by the limitation of any ‘style’, not an extension of the international style but an architecture which would be appropriate to our own regions, our climate and our materials. We talked of launching a movement, of concepts and theories which would transform the environment, in the architectural profession to begin with, but ultimately, of course, the totality of our respective regions.

This scenario is, of course, a familiar one, equally familiar is the shadow in the wings: the Modern Movement, with its manifestoes and proclamations under its arm. The backdrop to the act is the projected image of Marx, proclaiming his dictum: “The point, (of all philosophy) however, is to change it (the world)! You will notice that every time this scenario is played out, the actors are always black, or brown, or yellow, and they always speak rather fluent English or French.

Indeed, “Regionalism” is NOT an issue in Europe or North America for the same reason that it IS an issue in Asia or Africa. Is it that so many professional architects have been schooled in a Europe-centred tradition and “Modern Architecture” is a product of that tradition? It “belongs” to the European, and by extension, North American tradition. Its theory was formulated by the “Modern Movement” in Europe, inspired by the materialist philosophies and “scientific” theories of behaviour, evolution and solution development provided by Darwin, Marx and Freud.

Rooted in the humanism and rationalism of the Renaissance, (which had placed Man, not God, in the centre of the universe and made him the measure of all things), the credo of the Modern Movement went something like this: “The universe is knowable, and, knowing it, man with his intellect and capacity for rational thought can manipulate it and change it. Man can thus redesign the world, but to create anew he must start, god-like, from zero. That is to say, he must reject all preconceived forms, precedents and traditions. Being purely based on logic and rationality, the new world will be composed of ‘pure’ forms. That is, undiluted, pure, elementary geometric forms, abstract forms, forms that exist in themselves, not dependent on external objects. The new forms thus created will be determined by the logic of ‘function’, they will be designed like machines for efficiency. Better still, they will be produced by machines. They will thus be perfect in their precision, cheap and abundant.

“Decoration”, the credo went, “was redundant, and must therefore be rejected. The materials of construction must be left pure, with no applied decoration. The finished colours and textures of the buildings must be those of the natural materials themselves. The structural system must be expressed externally as well as internally.”

The building that resulted from this new philosophy quickly established an aesthetic of bare, unadorned surfaces of glass, concrete and steel; crisp rectangular planes and grids, or deliberate asymmetries and highly sculpturesque forms which defied all established conventions and did not relate to any historical style. Indeed, the new aesthetic of the Modern Movement soon became one of the most recognisable symbols of modernity.

Inevitably, however the movement which at the outset rejected all styles became itself an identifiable style. The movement which had denied all symbolism in
architecture became one of the best known symbols of the culture and philosophy which had inspired it — the culture of the industrially developed West. The movement which had rejected all forms of historicism, historical references or allusions became the most frequently alluded to point of historical reference. The movement which had recognised no distinction between men or nations, became the most visible manifestation of the cultural domination by the countries of western Europe and North America over the less developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Le Corbusier himself had demonstrated that the strict adherence to the principles of the Modern Movement, when applied to the tropics, for instance, must result in correspondingly different forms, functionally appropriate to the peculiarities of the climates and materials in those regions. This concept of ‘regionalism’ within the framework of the Modern Movement was pursued by some other western architects working in the tropics — Fry and Drew, Echachiard, and by the more conscientious of the western trained architects from the Third World. Despite their best efforts at evolving a regionally appropriate vocabulary, based on careful analysis of the solar angles, wind movements and the thermal properties of materials they failed to produce an architecture that ‘belonged’ to the region. Their bris-soleils and louvres were simply added to the inventory of ‘modern’ forms identified with the west. Their undecorated concrete and brick surfaces appeared as alien as the curtain walls and straight lines of the international style. This is not to say that it was not popular but it was popular because it was ‘imported’, ‘foreign’, ‘western’. Modern, yes, but not indigenous. It was even imitated, but for the wrong reasons. Indeed, it is this very popularity which has occasioned not only some of the worst abuses of our built environment, but has contributed to the erosion of our own indigenous architectures.

Where, then, have we gone wrong?
I submit that in our search for an appropriate architecture FOR the region, we have ignored the architecture OF the region.

It is a sad reflection on ourselves that we, the heirs to Sigiria and Anuradhapura; Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj; Mahastangar and Gaur; Wazir Khan’s Mosque and the Shalamar Gardens, should be lamenting the lack of regional relevance and appropriateness in our contemporary architecture.

It is sad, but it should not be surprising. After all, how many of us ever heard these names mentioned in our architecture schools? History of architecture began with Greece, maybe Egypt, and Rome, and went on to Romanesque, Gothic and the Renaissance, and ended with Art Nouveaux and the Modern Move-
of the patronage of the elite and the intellectual leadership of the professional architects, they have been left out of the mainstream of 'legitimate' architecture. In the stagnant backwaters of our 'native' culture their art has tended to become sterile, stereotyped and vulgarised. Many a mason and carpenter on our building sites today is descended from a long line of building craftsmen and yet we have been blind to their existence, demanding from them absurd parodies of the machine aesthetic and high tech precision with totally incompatible processes, tools and materials or organisational framework. In the process we have had to make do with lower standards of workmanship. Thus at both ends, design and construction, the quality of our built environment has declined.

Fortunately, in our societies the process of transformation has not been thorough. The indicators of change, the islands of industrialisation, westernisation, may be more visible but below the surface, the dominant aspect of our societies is the survival of tradition, of traditional values, concepts, social relations and patterns of behaviour. Fortunately, because part of these traditions are the indigenous architectures of our regions, thus our indigenous architectural theory and design principles, no less than the indigenous building materials and techniques, have been, and continue to be an integral part, a product of our own environments. This is our total environment with its material, physical and climatic aspects, as well as its cultural, philosophic and aesthetic values. The traditional link however between the professional architect and our indigenous building craftsmen has been one of the casualties of the colonial experience. As a result, the process of continuous and parallel or complementary evolution of both architectural theory and building practice has been interrupted.

I do not believe that a meaningful and relevant architecture is possible unless this link is strong. I also believe that it is not too late to restore it in our regions. The task will certainly not be easy, it will be complex and demanding but it can be done. I suggest that a beginning could be made with a new kind of teaching institution. One that (a) reintegrates learning with practice; (b) encompasses all the building arts in a common framework; and (c) provides a forum for critical analysis and debate on the theoretical issues of architecture in our respective regions.

We could take as our model the traditional institution of the masterbuilder who was at the same time architect, builder and teacher. The 'faculty' would thus be practising professionals. The 'students' would be apprentices actively employed at various levels in the process of design and construction. The 'studio' and 'laboratory' would be replaced by the project office, site and workshops. The 'linear' sequence of prescribed syllabi would be replaced by a holistic approach in which the novice would be exposed to the totality of his art by immersion into the real world of building, and guided individually by his master in acquiring the skills and concepts needed for his profession. The formal 'lecture' would be replaced by spontaneous discussion arising out of real problems encountered on the job. The institution would provide a common framework for training in all the building arts: from masons and carpenters to building supervisors, and from draftsmen and architectural assistants to professional architects. By working together they would each learn from the other: the designer would learn from the builder the processes of his craft and the potential limitations of his materials, and the craftsman would learn from the architect the relationship of his work to the larger scheme and concept of the building as a whole. In this process much could be learnt from the numerous hereditary craftsmen, the last repositories of the grand traditions of building in our region. A prerequisite to the understanding of the underlying principles of design and construction would be a systematic programme of research and publication based on available documents and the monuments themselves. This will be a prerequisite also because in many cases we lack even the most rudimentary teaching tools and materials such as dictionaries of indigenous building terms; catalogues of decorative motifs and symbolic forms; manuals of traditional building materials and construction; traditional responses to climate; modules of measurements and proportioning; the sacred geometries and their relationships to cosmological doctrines, metaphysical concepts and the science of numbers.

Such an institution could be a first step in restoring the link between the architect and the builder, and in providing both a firm basis upon which to continue the process of evolution and development of the art of building in our regions so that it remains responsive to the changing material and cultural realities of its environment, yet is continuously nourished by roots which penetrate deep into its native soil.
Crashing through Western Modernism into the Asian Reality

Romi Khosla

Introduction

I would like to explain why it is possible, in Asia, for an architect to design buildings without any stylistic uniformity whatsoever. Asian architecture, like the Asian Reality must be totally pluralistic and open ended and the central concern is not intellectual clarity but clear consciousness. In using one’s consciousness as the central source for designing a building one is rejecting the Cartesian contention in Architecture that the solution can be perfectly determined by induction or analysis.

Modern Architecture is already being heavily bombarded all over the place and this may sound like another salvo but the basis is somewhat different. If we accept that the foundation of modern scientific thought was laid by, amongst others, Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon, then we can understand the basis of Modern Architecture in the west. They formulated the generally accepted basis for building knowledge, the making of experiments and drawing of conclusions. Descartes simply rejected all knowledge which was merely probable and decided that only those phenomena should be believed which are perfectly known and about which there is no doubt. He rejected all traditional knowledge and set out to re-build the whole basis of knowledge on deduction. The modern movement in architecture is based on creating buildings out of analysis and the breaking up of a problem into its constituent parts. Modern architectural solutions are absolute and logical. The breaking down of a building programme into its component parts means designing buildings dictated by the diagram of function. This is the process of intellectual clarity on which we were taught all our architecture.

The problem is that this fragmentation of idea and thought and solution is wholly alien to Asian thought. I am taking the luxury of grouping Asian thought into one lump merely because I believe that the Asian way of thought and the Asian reality is very different from western thought. My concern is solely to crack the shell of a western mode of thinking about architecture that seems to be encrusting Asian architects. In cracking this shell, two problems have to be overcome:

1. The complex of being an oriental.
2. The fragmenting of our intellect along Cartesian lines.

The oriental complex

Even today, the western view of the orient is racist, imperialist and totally ethnocentric. This is because the orient is weaker. I am using a pan term like “orient” as Said has used in his classic work “Orientalism”. The orient, in the mind of the west, remains a secondary source for the production of culture, knowledge and scholarship. An Asian architect will use his American training to feel superior to his own peers even though he knows that they, in the west, regard him as a native informant. It is an architectural dominance that is maintained as much by the pressure from the west as from the willingness of the oriental architect to be directed in such a manner. There is thus a vast standardisation of taste in the orient in contemporary architecture which in any case is a poor version of western exports. We cannot get away from the simple fact that the western intellectual is not willing to recast his thoughts about Asia. An entirely new generation of Europeans is being fed memories of the glorious days of British Raj through cinema (Jewel in the Crown and Passage to India, for example), pulp literature and even books on architecture (Splendours of the Raj, Stones of Empire, A Fatal Friendship).

Therefore the intellectuals of the orient will have to wrest themselves away from this dilapidated 19th century image of themselves and their work and break away from the ‘Oriental Complex’. Only then will there be a vast new opportunity available to us, that is unchartered. We must struggle for design solutions that have not been pre-empted by the developed countries. We must push through completely new experiences in architecture that go way beyond the limitations and simplicity of modern western ideas.
Fortunately for us, the latest developments in science in the west are going to help us break many shackles. Particle physics discoveries are beginning to dislodge the whole basis of classical scientific thought. Discoveries in Quantum Mechanics are dismantling the definitive basis of knowledge that Descartes and Newton gave to the west. We are on the edge of a storm that is going to disperse the hegemony of western thought as we know it. Quantum Mechanics is beginning to assert that the objective-subjective view of reality is inseparable. In other words, as soon as you begin to investigate a phenomena (particle) it may change into something else (a wave) depending on what the observer wants it to be. The deeper we penetrate into the essence of matter, the greater becomes the danger of objective observation. Observation interferes with the phenomenon. There is a growing belief therefore that phenomena may not exist as we observe them. In other words, it is possible that the physics of the particle cannot be understood any further through measurement and observation and that therefore what we see and observe in our everyday life may well be just an illusion of our perceptions and brain. It means that the latest advances in physics, in the west, are telling us that the intellect has reached its limits of understanding of phenomena and further cognition can only be done by a whole consciousness.

It would perhaps be dangerous for a practitioner to go deeper into this sticky area. My source of this rather incomplete knowledge is conversations with physicists working in this field and their deep interest in Tibetan thought.

Discarding Descartes

It is true, that an Asian mind that has not been ironed flat by the hot roller of Cartesian thought, reacts differently to architecture. The Asian is used to looking at architecture as a form that lends itself to layers of interpretation and symbolism. He views it as he does the rest of the iconography of his culture. As Asians we are more concerned with the consciousness of the work rather than the idea of it. Myths, symbols and reality are interwoven and historical facts are just one aspect of the truth. Whether mythical characters existed in real life or not is not relevant at all because it is the symbolic existence that is important and not proof of physical existence.

This is very different from the experiencing of architecture by the Modern European mind where clarity of space and the intellectual rationality of the building is most important. Much of western modern architecture is finally judged by its truth to the diagram of function and environment and not by its impact on the consciousness.

For almost the whole of this century Asian architects have felt the pressure of European rationalist thought on their approach to work. This has caused them to sever their links with their own instinctive feelings for their pluralistic cultures.

We must rethink the whole purpose of our architecture. A rational break up of problems, logical analysis, flow diagrams, functional charts and all those Cartesian weapons of analysis are not giving us successful buildings. It is valid that our part of the world should expect, from architects, some vision of the future from our work. After all if we were just bringing up the rear, there would not be any reason for us to be creative.

In my own work the concerns has been to move away from functionality as the basis of design towards a wholistic consciousness of the building in its own authentic sub-culture. I see, in this work, an Asian context a search in contemporary times for contemporary buildings that also reflect the collective aspirations in our part of the world. The source for the architecture is not the intellect but the consciousness. It moves through the web of sub-cultures that compose Asia. It creates its own inner order for a specific sub-culture and then moves on. It is not cast in any particular mould. There are many realities. Each sub-culture has its own reality and the architect’s consciousness journeys into them. This consciousness is in a constant state of re-adjustment. The building then is an expression at that given moment of time of that consciousness. Each building is a different centre of experience. The individual ego of the architect is renounced. We cannot see architecture through the pin point of a narrow and recent European culture. Our own civilisations have assimilated influences for centuries and rejected very little and our contemporary work must be based on this power to assimilate.

We must identify ourselves with all the living sub-cultures in our own part of the world. One is indeed free to reach backwards and forwards through history, one is free to wander in one’s quest from the pre-urban settlements of the Indus Valley right up to the space age colonies in orbit. Contrary images can be merged into a wholistic architecture which is outside the narrow stream of dreariness. I quote Rabindra Nath Tagore:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free and the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, where tireless striving reaches its arms towards perfection, where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert stands of dead habit into that heaven of freedom let my country awake."

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Community Mosque — A Symbol of Society

Abu H. Imamuddin
Shamim Ara Hassan
Debashir Sarkar

Introduction

Masjid or Mosque — an emblem of religious fervour and a veritable testimony of fraternal unity and solidarity of Muslim Ummah brings forth in a Muslim a host of feelings harmonising with his religious, social, communal and cultural aspirations. From the explicit words of our Prophet, “The earth has been created for me as a masjid and a place of purity, and whatever man from my Ummah finds himself in need of prayer, let him pray” (anywhere)\(^1\) it is obvious that a devout Muslim does not require a defined space or structure for divine worship since the whole earth is his prayer house. Yet we see that from time immemorial man throughout the Muslim world has painstakingly erected innumerable mosques. The reason is that from the very inception, mosques have been looked upon not merely as congregational prayer places but as a nucleus of other socio-cultural aspects, and a symbol of identity, strength, peace and justice.

It is evident that wherever Muslims went, they erected mosques to meet the fundamental religious requirements i.e. congregational prayers five times a day. In the very early days, the Prophet himself had used mosques to address his followers and to give sermons on spiritual uplift and socio-political aspects of life\(^2\). Thus the mosque became the symbol and the central feature of the Islamic way of life and it formed an inseparable part of their settlement in the course of time\(^3\). Irrespective of country and culture the norm set by the Prophet was ardently followed in all the Muslim countries of the world.

A community in the course of its development collects signs and symbols, belief, superstition, ritual and religion which find expression through a range of socio-religious and cultural institutions both at collective and individual levels\(^4\). Carl Jung in “Man and His Symbols” defined symbol as something which possesses specific connotation in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning\(^5\). Malinowski maintained that the symbol is the conditional stimulus which is linked up with a response in behaviour only by the process of conditioning, and symbolism — ‘the development of conventional art for the coordination of conventional human behaviour’\(^6\). The mosque being one such symbol provides an umbrella under which people of common belief may unite and interact for concerted human activity, acting as a catalyst to develop community spirit. The purpose and aim of mosque development is, therefore, multi-dimensional. It promotes collective strength, defines hierarchy and allegiance, resolves conflicts within the community, strives for social cohesion, imparts restrictions and controls of human behaviour and influences human dependence on and belief in the Almighty through spiritual enlightenment.

Mosques, all over the world bear glowing testimony to the prosperous Muslim and become the Islamic Socio-Cultural Centre for the community or the communities they serve. In that perspective all mosques can be termed as ‘Community Mosques’. In this paper, however, the term ‘Community Mosque’ has been applied to denote a specific mosque typology in the context of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The large number of mosques present in Dhaka, estimated to be about 1,907,\(^7\) has earned the city the name ‘City of Mosques’\(^8\). The Department of Architecture of BUET had categorised the mosques into four groups\(^9\), being;

THE EARLY MOSQUE, built by the Muslim rulers and about three to four hundred years old.

THE INTERMEDIATE MOSQUE (GROUP I), built by rich and influential individuals of different localities of Old Dhaka.

THE INTERMEDIATE MOSQUE (GROUP II), built by inhabitants of different localities in their own area.

THE NEW MOSQUE, designed by trained architects.

It is the third of these, i.e. INTERMEDIATE (GROUP II), which is the topic of study in this paper and the term ‘Community Mosque’ is used to refer to them.

The study is based on the author’s research as well as on an empirical survey of a randomly selected twenty
five mosques in various communities of Dhaka by the second year students of architecture, BUET, under the supervision and guidance of the authors. A great diversity was observed in the design, form, use of material and ornamentation of the community mosques. This indicates a wide range of variations from community to community in the perception of mosque architecture. As such though each mosque follows a common matrix in its development pattern the end results are always different. Moreover, as the community in most cases directly participate in the decision making for design, organisation and management of such mosques, significant information regarding ‘popular architecture’ can be obtained from the community mosques. These mosques have however so far been ignored as a topic of study, not being considered a significant piece of architecture. The purpose of this paper is two-fold; firstly, to identify the growth pattern and architectural characteristics of community mosques and secondly, the response of the community mosque vis-a-vis the community and people at large.

Growth of community mosque

The growth of innumerable community mosques in Dhaka City may indicate the scarcity of congregational prayer space. But the existence of more than one mosque within the walking distance of another reveals the dedication of devout Muslims in mosque building activities. Though such activities in the past were confined to individuals only, such as rulers or influential nobles, the concept of community mosque has now provided the public with the opportunity to share the pride and sense of achievement of mosque building among a greater number of people.

There is also a general notion that the conception and growth of community mosques is a relatively recent phenomenon. The reason is that after independence (1974 onwards) a great number of mosques came into limelight with newly constructed tall soaring minars and elaborate ornamentation as funds were available through the informal foreign donation. Many of the old mosques of Dhaka however ranging from 50 to 150 years in age started as community mosques. For example, construction of Baitul-Noor-Jam-i-Masjid, Dholaikhal (1860-70 A.D.) and Jam-i-Masjid, Azimpur (1885 A.D.) initially began as small prayer halls with the financing and patronage of wealthy individuals, Haji Md. Yousuf and Nawab Salimullah respectively for the convenience of their particular communities. The subsequent stages of their growth, development and expansion was done by their community people.

It may be seen that over the years each community mosque has developed in its own way, yet a common growth pattern can be traced to all community mosques from the survey done. It is evident that once the land is available for the mosque, the concerned community then takes up all the responsibilities of constructing and developing it on that land. In most cases the land is donated by an individual family or a group of people. For example, Zinda Bahar Masjid, Zinda Bahar, Tarique Jam-i-Mosque, Monipuripara; Pyara Bag Jam-i-Masjid, Mog Bazar; Amin Bag Jam-i-Mosque, Amin Bag. Another means to obtain land is to construct a rudimentary makeshift structure for prayer on an abandoned or unused government or disputed plot and subsequently on repeated appeals and persistent efforts of the people, the concerned authority allocates the land for future construction of permanent mosque, since there is an unwritten law that once a mosque is built on a site it cannot be removed from that space. Examples of this are Dhanmondi Residential Area mosque and Tejgaon Station mosque. There is yet another type which develops along with a popular shrine or tomb (Mazar). Examples of such mosques are Motijheel Colony Jam-i-Mosque besides the tomb of Hazrat Peer Jangee Shah and Syed Shah Jam-i-Masjid at Dhakeswari, adjacent to the tomb of Syed Shah. There may be some other isolated instances of growth but they cannot be grouped under an identifiable category.

Origin of form

The abode of the Holy Prophet consisting of sahn, liwan, qibla, mimbar and mihrab undoubtedly provided a spiritual guideline of form and spatial organisation for all later mosque architecture. Within the guidelines ordained, however, enormous flexibility prevailed to form the ultimate structure of an individual mosque. This flexibility, in fact, has been used to its best in community mosque architecture which is evident in the diversity of their design and spatial organisation.

A retrospective look at traditional pre-Mughal mosques shows the existence of four fixed patterns: (a) the vault- and dome type; (b) the square domed type; (c) the ablong multi-domed type; (d) the curvilinear type. Of the old surviving mosques in the city of Dhaka, the Mosque of Binat Bibi of Narinda (1457) is an example of the square domed type, having a cubical prayer chamber with a dome placed flatly on the roof, octagonal corner minars, mihrab projected on the western wall and simple arched opening on three sides.

In the words of Mortimer Wheeler, “The arrival of the Mughal did not at once make itself felt in architectural form, but by the middle of the 17th century something approaching a standard imperial pattern had
begun to emerge in the architecture of the vice regal capital at Dhaka."\(^1\) In the Mughal period a number of mosques were erected in Dhaka including Sat Masjid (1680), Lalbagh Mosque (1679), Mosque of Haji Khanaja Shabaz (1679), Mohammad Mirida Mosque (1706). Each of these demonstrates the principal Mughal style of architecture characterised by three domes over a rectangular hall with the facade composed of panels, pierced with triple archways — the central archway is slightly bigger, in proportion with the central dome. The central archway is sometimes projected and the corner towers are crowned with plastered kiosks.\(^3\)

### Physical organisation

In the context of India, Conde described the mosque thus: "It is of various and almost any shape. It is in fact a wall; and in poorer villages, the people dig a ditch, white wash it, ornament it with flowers and convert it into a mosque."\(^4\) In the context of Bangladesh it begins with a shelter where a roof is an essential element for climatic reasons.

The nucleus of the generic pattern of community mosque development, is a simple rectangular shelter having a solid wall on the west, the direction of qibla. The rectangular chamber is elongated in the north-south direction with shorter walls usually pierced with windows. The eastern wall having one door in line with the central axis gives access to the chamber. In cases of more than one door, the number is always uneven to provide one door definitely at the centre of the wall. At the very initial stage the mosque premises remain unidentified and there is no definite system of placing the mosque structure. Sometimes it may be placed at the centre of the plot on which it stands and sometimes its western wall is placed right on the western boundary. However, the general tendency is to keep more space on the eastern side in order to accommodate large congregational prayer. The inevitable subsequent extension is a verandah along the eastern wall providing both a transitional space between the mosque proper and outside and at the same time additional prayer space if needed. Gradually some temporary structures come into view, loosely built within the mosque premises to cater to some immediate needs like ablution space, toilet and Hujra Khana (Imam's Quarter). Similarly no specific relation is found between the approach from the road and placement of mosque structure.
Mosque designs perfected in North India during the Mughals, have a strong east-west axis starting at the main entrance gate moving through the central fountain of the salm, the entrance portal of the main sanctuary, the centre of the main dome and finally ending in the mihrab. A secondary axis developed by two gate houses on the north and south intersects the main axis at the centre of the fountain. The idea was to bring people into the mosque through a designed sequence of experience. These mosques were ambitious projects whose surrounding developments could be modified according to the design requirements of the mosque. In the provincial Mughal style the mosque was one composite building structure providing access mainly from the eastern facade. So the ideal site condition for a mosque would be a plot extended in an east-west direction with reasonable width having the provision of access from the east to fit the perceived model.

For community mosques there is hardly any scope of site selection and interestingly enough there is no conscious effort in design to drive all people along the central axis through the sequence of approach, unless it happens as a matter of chance. The main entry to the community mosque is primarily determined by the importance of the adjacent roads to the premises.

Even in Baitul Mukarram, one of the landmarks as well as the largest designed mosque in the city, the main entry is not along the main axis but from the south, that is along the Bangabandhu Avenue.

When substantial physical development takes place increasing need for identity, self expression and supremacy over the surrounding environment is felt. A minar is then added. At the same time, for further construction and maintenance, shop construction is important as part of the mosque complex to provide it with a permanent source of income. This pattern of association of religion and commerce is not peculiar to community mosques alone, for by tradition, there is a linkage between bazar and mosque, one is complementary to the other. A mosque gets financial security from a bazar and the bazar accrues psycho-religious support for flourishing business from the mosque. The largest mosque in the city Baitul Mukarram and its shopping arcades shows the influence of the same pattern in a professionally designed development.

There are numerous other examples of simultaneous growth of mosque and bazar in the Old Dhaka. This pattern is symbolic to the fact that people do not consider religion as an isolated phenomenon, but as an integrated part of their daily life and activity.
Classification and phases of development

Most of the traditional mosques, with very few exceptions, are single storeyed, designed as a composite whole with or without a verandah in a free relation with the surroundings. They do not require minars as a symbol. In the community mosques, structures are loosely built along with the only distinctive element of identity — minar, but fairly integrated with the surrounding developments. Traditional mosques are generally classified according to their form and design. For community mosques such classification is indeed difficult as the shape and form of community mosques are greatly influenced by the available site and other constraints. All mosques surveyed show a fairly uniform sequence of development which can be classified into three phases e.g. PRIMARY, INTERMEDIATE and FINAL Phases.

PRIMARY PHASE. In most cases the mosque is started with a simple shelter of temporary or semi-permanent nature with the exception of some small permanent structures having stark simplicity. This phase may undergo a number of expansions of temporary nature but actually serves as a real scale study for the design of the intermediate phase.

INTERMEDIATE PHASE. A development plan is usually drawn up and carried out in a desired manner. It usually involves substantial reorganisation and restructuring of the forms, spaces and activities. Provisions are made in foundations for vertical
expansion; this is why most of the community mosques in their intermediate phases have flat roofs. The majority of mosques studied here, are at present in their intermediate phases of development. This phase can take a long span of time having subsidiary stages within it with perspective for development in the final phase. A few identifying symbols of mosque architecture like kiosks at the corners, arched openings as the entrance and windows and decorative grills, are added and sometimes ornamented with costly terrazzo and glazed tiles in the interior.

FINAL PHASE. This is marked by the desire for identity and supremacy over the surrounding structures and the addition of a tall minaret is an essential part of the final development. A dome is added in some cases to delineate the roof and to define the ultimate shape of the structure and decorative works are applied both inside and outside to give a complete look.

The mosque at Khilgaon Chowdhury Para built in the first quarter of this century on the outskirts of Dhaka City is considered to be the oldest mosque in New Dhaka. This mosque had its beginning from a ‘Bangla Ghar’ the outhouse of a rural dwelling of a local leader. The structure was built with mud and thus called ‘Matir Masjid’ (Mosque of mud) a name people still prefer to use. In the course of time as the number of devotees increased an extension verandah of a temporary nature was added and community participation began right from this stage.

In its second phase of development, Matir Masjid, Khilgaon Chowdhury Para.

Ablution area, in its second phase of development, Matir Masjid, Khilgaon Chowdhury Para
In the next stage the owner donated the land and shifted his house. The original structure was then dismantled and rebuilt in the same manner placing the structure towards the west to create ample space on the east for large congregational prayer. This time a mihrab was added with a tin-roofed main hall and a toilet within the premises. The existing ditch was developed with pucca steps for ablution. This development took place during the 1950’s.

The following decade was marked by the defined compound with a bamboo fence, a tube-well, shelter for the Imam and an entry point on the east.

Conspicuous change in form, material and layout plan in 1970’s can be considered as the beginning of the intermediate phase of development of the mosque. The mosque proper was enlarged substantially with masonry construction and reinforced concrete roof. New additions comprised of an improved terrazzo floor, decorative iron grilles in windows, a pucca tank for ablution and housing for the mosque-staff. For a constant source of income, shops were designed on the road front and bachelor accommodation (Mess) arose within the premises.

At the beginning of 1980 another verandah was added and the original one was merged with the main prayer hall. The remaining open area was finished with patent stone developed as sahn. At this stage all other secondary structures were rebuilt with permanent materials and a stone room was added by the side of the mihrab.

Substantial physical development led to the desire to earmark it as a mosque and efforts were made to add some external decorative features such as cupolas and turrets at the four corners of the main structure. Glazed tile decoration to emphasise the mihrab, doors and windows was added to the interior.

It is quite evident that once the mosque committee decides the plans for development, resource mobilisation from the community starts automatically and comes in all forms e.g. labour, material and money. Donations from the people are considered to be the primary source of funds other than the regular subscription made by the community members and rents from shops, if any, for a permanent source of income. The development plan may also include additional facilities like madrassah, library and orphanage attached to the mosque.

Towards the end of the intermediate phase the entire premises may turn into a built-up area leaving vertical expansion as the only possibility for the future. The upper floor is then punched above the mihrab area to keep continuity with the hall on the ground floor. Azimpur Jam-i-Mosque, Azimpur; Baitul Noor Jam-i-Masjid, Old Dhaka; Masjid-e-Baitul Mamur, Dhanmondi, Zinda Bahar Jam-i-Mosque, Zinda

Extensive minar decoration of final phase, Baitul Noor Jam-i-Masjid, Goal Bhat Lane, Old Dhaka

Oddly placed minar on roof top, Baitus Sajid Jam-i-Masjid, Moghbazar
Bahar, are all examples where the main mosque together with its ancillary activities forms a consolidated mass.

The addition of a gate structure or a minaret marks the beginning of the final phase. These two elements are in most cases designed as an afterthought and almost never located in suitable places within the total complex in terms of architectural composition. Minars sometimes springing from the roof, are visually completely isolated from the remaining structure or sometimes are located right beside the entry where usually little space had been left in earlier plans.

The application of decorative art intensifies at the final stage. Geometric and formal designs with calligraphic patterns are very common. Crescent, star and different kinds of fruits with paint, mosaic, glazed tiles and broken glasses are extensively used in compositions.

It is interesting to find out the source of decorative design, facade treatment and symbolism associated with community mosque. Intricately detailed traditional mosques serve as the quarry for decorative inspirations and at the same time professionally designed modern mosques with their streamline design and clarity of formal expression influence the facade treatment of community mosques. In fact we find a fusion of the traditional decorative features with modern light and slender construction techniques.

Our survey shows that there is a definite order of preference for decoration starting from the mihrab, followed by the entry door panels, columns and so forth. Externally, preference is from minar to entry gate and finally the main mosque building. As the shops, an integral part of community mosques, are placed at the road front the overall facade treatment shows a fusion of local commercial art and Islamic design.

Curiously enough, sometimes the symbols used in decoration convey different meanings. The popular symbolic interpretation of the model of an aeroplane placed on the minaret of ‘Aeroplane Mosque’ at New Market is that it is a vehicle to heaven, whereas it was the desire of the local people to symbolise the modern era through the model of an aeroplane as they believed that there was an air-field in the Second World War where the mosque stands today. The minar of Zinda Bahar Jam-i-Masjid extensively decorated with fruit motifs appears to have symbolised heaven. Nonetheless, the purpose was to satisfy the donor who was a fresh-fruit dealer and donated generously for the mosque.

Inspirations for decoration may sometimes come from different countries and cultures. In Zinda Bahar Jam-i-Masjid the upper floor facade is decorated after
a mosque of Tashkent, in the U.S.S.R. The mason copied the whole facade from a photograph in a magazine.

The final phase may have a beginning but there seems to be no final completion or end of a community mosque. It is an evergrowing dynamic building type. The time taken for a mosque to reach the final phase from its inception varies widely and largely depends on the economic mobility of the community to which it belongs and their aspirations with the mosque. 'Matir Masjid' took nearly seventy years to arrive at the middle of the intermediate phase whereas Cantonment Central Mosque developed on private initiative since 1972 has almost attained its final phase. In the final phase in some cases very ambitious plans are often taken which require professional assistance.

Community Mosque — A symbol of Society

Our urban societies are undergoing a phase of transition from a traditional to a modern way of life with first and second generation urbanites and new migrants. People inheriting diverse sub-cultures look for new identity in an urban setting. They require a common language to communicate and a common place to interact within the community. Here religion provides the common language and the mosque the common place. The community mosque is, therefore, much more than a place of worship. In the process of religious activities the community feelings, goals, desires and aspirations are expressed which eventually help to shape the community by specifying the parameter of socio-religious control and order and by defining the code of conduct and behaviour.

The growth and the physical transformation of the community mosque have a dynamic relationship with the growth pattern and development of the community. In the formative stage of the community the mosque is founded with a humble structure and it expands as the community consolidates itself. In a flourishing community the mosque is enriched with design, material and ornamentation and conversely in a decaying community the mosque quickly fades and loses its lustre.
The aesthetic preference of the community finds distinct expression in the ultimate design and form of the mosque. In the tradition based societies of Dhaka—old town in particular, the desire for extensive ornamentation gives secondary importance to the overall form of the mosque structure. The use of colour pattern and decorative elements reflects the general taste of the community. In the new city ornamentation is relatively unrefined and in some cases immature compared with the mosques of the old city where ornamentation sets an unwritten guideline of what is to be looked at and what not. In the posh residential areas it has been observed that the community mosque in its final phase undergoes a complete transformation into a professionally designed modern mosque where prime importance is laid on the overall form of the mosque structure with complete rejection of redundant ornamentation.

Conclusion

The genesis of the mosque as a building type in the region of the sub-continent goes back to the 12th century when Muslim rule was established for the first time. Since then the design of mosques has been one of the prime expressions of the study of architecture. The traditional mosques bear the testimony of a glorious Islamic heritage, and its advanced building art and technique. During the European and post-colonial period, up to present times, the need and creation of other type of buildings has made mosque-building activity relatively insignificant. The task has been transferred from the rulers to the common people. Mosque designs seem to have reached a turning point now. While the professionals were deeply engrossed in adopting western architecture in their own local context, the lay people of the community, left to themselves, were actively seeking an architectural identity for their mosques within the available technology and material.

The community mosque thus became a product of participatory design by the people of the community. The designs borrow elements from traditional and modern architecture, no doubt, but architecture becomes a matter of conceptual experience and hence meaningful to the extent that people themselves establish the setting for individual social relationships and their relationship to their environment. The real architectural merit and importance of community mosque can only be understood if we search for the meaning it conveys, the purpose it fulfils and the response it receives. These mosques being the symbol of the society become the lively expressions of people's architecture in this region.

All photographs courtesy of Abu H Imamuddin
Shamim Ara Hassan

It is quite clear that our modern buildings are not being produced in the tradition that we dearly love and I have suspected that perhaps this tradition is being continued in some remote corner somewhere. The very interesting paper that was presented on the architecture of the mosques perhaps gives a clue to where we should look for the continuation of the indigenous building tradition.

It seems that Hasan-Uddin Khan believes that perhaps this is the surviving part of the tradition and this is what shows the way to our future. I find this quite acceptable but I am a bit uncomfortable with the buildings that I have seen and with the architecture that I have seen.

Then again I ask myself why I am uncomfortable. Is it because I have been conditioned by magazines and books on modern architects? Even though I am not very comfortable with the architecture of the mosques that I have seen here I am still very comfortable with the architecture of the Sultanate mosque and even with the temple architecture of this country, Mughal architecture. I am not comfortable with the popular architecture, or the non-architectural architecture, although it is quite obvious that architecture also comes from our long tradition. Now this is a question I am posing before all of you. I also wonder whether regionalism is something which is to be consciously strived for or is it something which grows into the architecture of a region without any conscious effort.

For example, in a country like Bangladesh we cannot ignore the local imperatives. We cannot build with imported materials, we cannot ignore the weather, so if we keep all those things in mind how can we create an architecture that is not regional. In fact in this region, in the Third World probably the only countries which can afford to build a non-regional architecture are countries like Saudi Arabia where they can afford to import foreign materials, foreign architects, foreign air-conditioning systems and everything. In this country we cannot do that. We have to take into account the local conditions and if we do that wouldn’t our architecture automatically be regional architecture?

Hasan-Uddin Khan

I think it is true that we are uncomfortable with popular architecture. I am uncomfortable with it too, but I do believe that there is something of a seed there from which the new architecture will develop. It really is a populist architecture. We may never live to understand it, but I think our children will.

Another thing is that looking consciously for a regional architecture, it’s rather like asking the question: do we look for an identity? We have an identity, we don’t need to look for it. We need to look for ways in which we can express that identity. I don’t think we need to look for regional architectures but we do need to find ways and means that express some of these feelings within us through the built form.

Syed Zaigham Jaffery

I think one of the reasons why we feel uncomfortable with that sort of architecture is that it is beyond our control. We as architects are not part of it, so we think that anything that we don’t do may not be the right thing. When you examine the situation what you find is that it is really architecture without architects. The society has a certain need and it is fulfilled by a group of people working for the people, for the taste of the people. The paper on the mosque shows us the direction in which the identity crisis is leading us. We feel uncomfortable because we are not part of the process. There are many more community-designed mosques than architect designed mosques and they are fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the communities in which they are being built. The mosques that we as architects get to design do not seem to have
the same impact. Therefore the question that then arises from the topic of this seminar is, what will be our role — are we needed? We feel uncomfortable when we realise we are not needed. What will be the role of the architect in our communities? How can architects fulfil the aspirations of the community? How can we make ourselves useful to them and give them the identity that they want?

Hasan-Uddin Khan

In fact they were actually built by architects, not the professionals we normally call architects, but by local builders (mimars/mistreries) and craftsmen who specialise in differing building trades.

Kenneth Frampton

I tend to agree with Mr. Jaffrey that the discomfort caused by these manifestations is that they lie beyond professional practice of architecture. When Robert Venturi said “mainstreet it is almost all right”, I felt like responding “If it is almost all right why does it need Robert Venturi anyway?” I think this is a hard fact for architects to accept, when they are forced to question what is the best level at which they can intervene in the society.

We can also easily sentimentalise this phenomenon of apparently popular architecture. Let us take the kind of spontaneous housing that came into being out of dire economic conditions, for example around a city like Caracas in South America where the ‘fevellas’ or ‘barrios’ look from a distance like Italian hilltowns. As you get closer you realise they do not have the cultural depth of a true vernacular. If you think of Bernard Rudolfski’s “Architecture without Architects”, which documents a very deep vernacular, we are obviously in the presence of something very different. We would really be deluding ourselves if we thought that people who have been uprooted and who have been cruelly urbanised under the rule of a rather brutal economic condition are able to create a true folk culture out of a process of sheer survival. In looking at this seemingly spontaneous richness we should not commit the error of thinking that there isn’t a price that has to be paid for all that. You can very well delude yourself into thinking that this massive uprooting can take place without cultural loss. There is a cultural price and you can see it in the work itself. People’s expressive capacity is reduced by virtue of the uprooting.

You could find it in many different levels for example English cuisine is well known for its dullness and I feel this is in part due to the 18th and 19th century uprooting of the agricultural population. Packing them into the mill-towns of Manchester and Liverpool destroyed it once and for all. Traditional cultural communities are extremely delicate and when you urbanise people it is often an act of violence.

Mohammed Arkoun

I would like to add one observation to this discussion on the feeling of being uncomfortable about what we heard about the mosque. A growing number of mosques are built in all parts of the Islamic world today either by the state or by the local communities. In North Africa we find many examples of this strong tendency. What is happening? Why are we uncomfortable? You know that an anthropologist would make a difference between oral culture and written culture. Oral culture has its own coherence, its own system of education, its own ways of transmission. It has been very efficient as long as written culture has not imposed on it its own ways of educating and socialising people, its own criteria to explain, to analyse and to judge. Today, in our societies, we are forcing the whole society to be converted to written culture and the oral culture doesn’t function any more as it did for centuries. All the cultural productions of people belonging to the oral culture before its deterioration were original and integrated in a coherent system. That is why we admire its harmony, its expressions; it came from the natural coherent function of oral culture as a system, a whole system of education maintaining a vision of the world This has been and is being destroyed day after day in our societies. I am myself from an oral culture. Berber language in North Africa has never been written. I know what it is. I don’t speak as a scholar about this. I speak of it according to my first-hand experience, passing from an oral culture via two written cultures successively, the French and the Arabic cultures. We don’t pay attention to this important historical phenomena which has an anthropological dimension. We take for granted that all the societies should be converted to this written culture with its own criteria. When we speak about the clash between Western culture and Oriental culture we forget the real issue which is the anthropological struggle between oral and written culture. In Muslim societies today there are still very large groups perpetuating a marginalised oral culture. I would like to add one remark also about the demographic aspect which has been underlined by Mr. Frampton. This demographic pressure in our societies makes the situation I have just described worse, because more than half the population of all societies in the Muslim world is less than thirty years old. This generation of twenty to thirty year olds have not been at all educated either in the oral culture or in the written culture. They receive the ideological culture expounded by the official mass

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media and teaching in the public schools. What can they produce? They produce what I would call a semantic disorder.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

I would just like to confirm some points made by Hasan-Uddin Khan and Professor Arkoun, and partly to respond to some of the points raised about spontaneous architecture, or architecture without architects. I have been looking at this phenomenon in my own country. I used to think that this is a kind of spontaneous community product but I discovered that this is not so at all, that this is the work of highly skilled professionals, who are the descendants of a long system of education and craftsmanship. I did not say in my paper that the British destroyed our traditions. The point I was making was that inspite of the very radical upheavals the significant aspect of our culture is the survival of tradition and one of the examples that I did give was that of this body of craftsmen in whom we have an example of a continuity and a continuing tradition.

In response to another point — in these craftsmen we have an example, a living example, of the model that I put forward for education. They do continue the traditional institution of teaching and training apprentices. Professor Arkoun is absolutely right, it is an oral culture. The knowledge, the wisdom is passed on verbally, orally, so it’s not an impossibility. One can cite certain other examples of more modern institutions where some of the ideas that I have been talking about are in fact practised. Earlier this morning I was reminded that Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesan West exercise was precisely such an experiment. We have in the medical profession, as someone pointed out to me, a profession which is very largely based on learning through immersion in actual work. There are others and so it’s not an impossible or a completely fantastic model. I think it is practical and it is possible.
The issues that are being grappled with here strike me as seminal, that is to say that they are the beginning; if the solutions are profound ones, they will have a lasting impact.

I have to tell you quite frankly, not out of politeness or flattery, but it's much more interesting for me to grapple with the problems of your region than it is to be involved with debates as to whether or not coloured keystones should be stuck on skyscrapers in New York or whether modernism or post-modernism should triumph in architectural schools, or the other things that seem to preoccupy the media in so many Western milieu. I feel there are major cultural transformations taking place. We use words like “identity” and “regionalism” as a sort of short-hand to talk about extremely interesting psychological and sociological phenomenon, which deal really with the question of human order in relation to the earth's crust. We are discussing territoriality, a new kind of politics, matters of belief, how religious structures are to be integrated with secular schemes of organisation, and so on. Architecture is in the middle of these predicaments.

Regionalism to me, then, is not a marginal phenomenon. In fact it is bang in the middle of present cultural transformations in the Third World and it's going to become more so but only if the whole thing is approached on a sound philosophical basis. The ultimate test is the form of the building, the quality that it has, something that is elusive, difficult and leaps beyond simple ideological categories into the realm of art. Nonetheless I feel there is a requirement for cleaning up the house of ideas and for laying the basis for theory.

I will say a few words about what I understand regionalism to be. Three weeks ago I wrote a piece called 'Towards an Authentic Regionalism' which it just so happens is going to be published in MIMAR. I want to refer to a few passages from it because they do, in a reasonably succinct way sum up my present reflections on the subject.

I use a motto from a thought written in 1922 by Marcello Piacentini an Italian architect, who said something which to me is still an issue. "It involves," he says, "basically resolving the debate between impersonal, international, standardised architecture and localised vernacular architecture. Are the two tendencies really antithetical? Is it possible to arrive at a vision of sane architecture, which will be neither old nor new, but simply true?" I think that it is worthwhile to reflect on that specially given a certain style of thought, which insists on opposing modernity to tradition. This opposition arises from a false understanding of both ideas. The best within modernism can be profoundly rooted in tradition; and the best in tradition is to do with a dynamic process of rethinking certain central kernel ideas. Therefore the problem of continuing a tradition is not one of a fossilized reproduction of old forms, it is on the contrary a question of penetrating the underlying, generating principles of the past, realising where they are relevant and irrelevant, and then transforming them into present circumstances. That is my view of what tradition is, when it is alive and well. Allow me to quote from my MIMAR piece:

"It would be misleading to speak of monolithic regionalism operating in the world of architecture today, since by very definition, regionalism is committed to finding unique responses to particular places, cultures and climates. There is certainly however a mood gathering momentum, which rejects the glib reproduction of international formulae, and which seeks out continuities with local traditions. No doubt this reflects, increasing self-confidence in the Third World after colonial occupation but it is also part of a wider reaction against simplistic models of modernization. At its worst it may degenerate into a skin-deep, instant history, in which ersatz images of the vernacular combine with pastiches of national, historical prototypes. At its best regionalism penetrates the generating principles and symbolic substructures of the past and then transforms these into forms that are right for the changing social order.
of the present. It is a matter of sensing beneath the surface, the memories, myths and aspirations that gave a society coherence and energy and then providing these with an authentic expression in architectural arrangement. The hope is to produce buildings of a certain timeless character, which fuse old and new, regional and universal.

‘Authentic regionalism’ stands out against all hackneyed and devalued versions of culture, whether these come from the international economic order, from nationalistic propaganda, or, more recently, from pan-Islamic clichés.

The irrelevantly employed glass box and the tacky version of the Arabian Nights are both architectural enervies. So are all those ideological manipulations of religion that have reduced the Faith to platitudes and slogans. Regionalism looks for sustaining spiritual forces and refuses to accept that a tradition is a fixed set of devices and images. It sees the past as a series of superimposed layers, of inventions, from the earliest nomadic forms, to villages and towns to later imperial and even colonial frameworks, because colonialism is part of the national experience, and has to be integrated even if it is an unpleasant memory. It identifies many of the most relevant patterns which deal with climate, local materials and geography in epochs before the arrival of Islam. The aim is to unravel the layers, to see how indigenous archetypes have been transformed by invading forms, and in turn to see how foreign imports have been adapted to the cultural soil. The present task is to keep the process moving, to find the right balance between the local, national and international.

Region is at best a hazy notion. It may refer to the distribution of racial or ethnic groups, common geographical or climatic features, the political boundaries limiting a tribe or some other federation. Rarely does it make sense to make a direct equation between the region and nation or between the region and religion. In these circumstances it is necessary to beware of deterministic arguments and of jumping automatically from one region to one set of forms. The grass-root idea of culture is useful so long as it forces attention upon basic patterns in the traditional architecture of the region, the climate or the landscape, or to ways of handling materials. It is misleading the moment it ignores the role of exterior sources. Most vernaculars are in fact hybrids of indigenous and imported types and these types also change and adapt. To pretend that a peasant culture contains some immutable essences has an obvious romantic appeal and has actually been used in support of myths of national identity. The authentic regionalist acknowledges that conditions alter drastically and that the present world is one of increasing interchange and inter-dependence.

When it comes to reading local traditions there is obviously no set recipe. Every architect will have his favourite village, mosque, city or view from a window. Beyond the particular, the regionalist tries to see the type, the general law, the originating principle. The vernacular offers numerous lessons for dealing with extremes of climate, but these can be translated into quite different building functions and modern technologies. Monuments are studied not just for their superficialities of style but for deeper lessons of order. The fabric of the city yields many secrets of scale, in handling open spaces and transitions. Tradition is penetrated for lasting humane and artistic value, not as a source for the merely picturesque scenography. Fossilization and pointless modernity are equally to be avoided. To reduce a tradition to still-born recipes is actually to kill it. To ignore it altogether is also the height of folly.

Regionalism is inevitably involved in struggle between city and country, industry and handicraft, peasant values and the uprootedness of the metropolis. Just as traditionalism is a reaction against loss of continuity, so regionalism is a restorative philosophy in favour of supposed raw harmony between people, their artifacts and nature. Regionalism is not likely to appeal to the blatan technocrat, nor to the parvenu who recalls that working in fields for twelve hours a day in exchange for virtually nothing may not be the ideal life. Regionalist yearnings are especially appealing to sensitive intellectuals who are troubled by the fragmentation that seems to come with industrialization, but who also wish to maintain the mobility, complexity of viewpoint and even wealth that industrialism affords. It is for this reason that some of the most beautiful regionalist experiments are undertaken for the rich, cultivated collector of handicrafts. Another obvious outlet is the sophisticated hotel where the battered souls of the advanced industrial nations can be soothed by a swimming pool and a little piped folklore. Here the recipe is of course mud-walls without fleas, village clusters with parking underneath, air-conditioning and one or two wind-catchers.

Pieces of farm equipment and tribal rugs appear on the walls of the well-to-do, at about the same moment the shabby plastic sandals and cheap nylon shirts hit the lower end of the souk. The bigger picture is one in which the culture of the rural base deteriorates as the poor rush away from their roots towards the promise and desolation of the city, with its jobs and the money economy. The new urban landscape is not uplifting and has a banal similarity from one place to another in the Third World, all the way from the glossy consumerist cliches of the rich to the squatter settlements and the instant concrete and brick houses of the ex-poor. Gradually the same ugliness is carried back to the village like a prized motor-cycle, a sign.
that one is ‘making it’ back in Cairo or Casablanca or Islamabad.

If regionalism means the creation of a handful of arcane essays and aesthetic provincialism it will obviously have only the slightest impact on these living conditions. Perhaps the whole matter can be put on a much broader footing. A philosophy might be articulated that addresses the whole range of building types from rural and traditional, for example village houses and mosques, to modern and imported, for example international airports and skyscrapers. The former needs preserving or, when new conditions emerge, re-investigating as in the case of mosque typology. The idea of fixing on one cluster of images as the key to tradition is often a false one. Modern building types need to be regionalized but at a level that is much deeper than stylistic or ornamental adornment. In any case the architect might use each problem as a chance to demonstrate a rural or an urban ideal, a generic set of forms transcending the particular case. It is best that this procedure results in a sort of equivalent to the pattern languages and common usages or vernaculars, as they are called, of the past. In short a historical imagination of sufficient range and depth may realise that the architecture of the past, now called Islamic, had precisely such generic vocabularies for their own epoch and that these blended together, international formulae with regional ones. It is necessary to dig up these substructures and blend them with the best rather than the worst in the modern tradition.

To mention modern architecture is to immediately raise the bogey-man of the so-called ‘international style’, or at least that thoroughly debased version of modern architecture that was peddled around the world by multi-nationals and planning bureaucracies during the 1950’s and the 1960’s and which often took the form of banal boxes for housing and offices. It seemed as if the concrete frame and the air-conditioner were together conspiring to demolish local identity from architecture altogether. Understandably such buildings have been targeted as instruments of neo-colonialism and urban destruction, the opposite of traditional values of any kind. This may be true but the answer does not lie in just changing the historical clothes of industrial buildings or in just pretending that modernization will go away. Nor will anything of lasting value be created if Third World architectural beliefs simply pick up the latest fashionable tricks from the United States and Western Europe. Post-modernism is part of the disease, not the cure since it reduces the problem of tradition to a trivial manipulation of signs and references and since its trendy aestheticism masks a cynical and reactionary cultural stance. Even if the Third World could afford such confectionary it would soon tire of an import which gave so little sustenance. The moment is right for the assertion of an architectural value-system that eschews the aridity of off-hand utilitarianism and the bogus remedy of phoney historicism. This is true everywhere in the world. Authentic regionalism tries to penetrate to what is of lasting worth in the present culture and in tradition. Arbitrariness and superficiality are its enemies.

The architect needs schemata of today if he is not to produce a debased version of yesterday and this is where the best rather than the worst in the modern movement can still provide lessons. It is quite misleading to lump the whole of modern architecture together as a rootless, functionalist and anti-symbolic phenomenon. The best buildings have been based upon fundamentals extracted from the past, some even provide valuable signposts towards an authentic regionalism. One thinks of Frank Lloyd Wright’s south-western houses of the 1920’s with their translation of principles from adobe, from meso-American and even regional forms; of Alto’s reliance upon Kavalian villages and prototypes, of Le Corbusier’s investigations of folk cultures in his domestic designs of the 1930’s and of his attempt, admittedly flawed, of translating basic Indian typologies for dealing with climate, rhetoric and space, in his buildings in Ahmedabad and Chandigarh in the 1950’s. (I recently published on Corbusier’s attitude to tradition which is for the moment only in French. It deals with the sketches he did of Diwans, of temple forms, of the use of fundamental organisational patterns of Indian architecture, and the profound influence these were in the buildings in Chandigarh.) Again one considers Kahn’s no less penetrating understanding of Indian citadels prototypes in the Indian Management Building in Ahmedabad, or of Mughal centralised examples in the Parliament in Dhaka.

In the 1940’s and 1950’s the Mexican architect Luis Barragan fused together modernist simplicity and spatial conceptions with echoes of Mexico’s Hispanic and ancient past, in an evocative language of plain walls, water tanks and coloured planes. In Japan in the 1950’s the task was to link modernism with the national tradition and such architects as Kenzo Tange explored the parallelisms between the concrete frame and timber constructions. These are all examples of buildings combining a sense of ancient value with rigorous modernity.”

Well, I am not going to go into all of that in this paper. That is the broad position. In my MIMAR article I went on to say a few words about much more recent, to my mind successful, attempts of regionalism. I refer to the philosophy of Hassan Fathy. I also look at its debasement into a kind of instant Islamic identity-kit being cobbled together from one end of the world to the other. It looks also at the question of what is actually happening to the vernacular and in my scheme of
things of broad regionalism one has to at one end somehow have the country doctor architect who helps to maintain what is worthwhile within the village structure while allowing the appropriate modernization to occur and maintain the rural base, and at the other extreme we have the problem of the airline terminal or the rethinking of the skyscraper in terms of tropical architecture or desert architecture. I also wrote at some length about the cold climate, we sometimes tend to forget there is such a thing as a frigid cold climate regionalism, for example Ralph Erskine in Scandinavia, and as Mr. Frampton suggested there are pockets of regionalism in the United States that are quite active. Now however I wish to come to the question of India because I believe that there are some parallel questions between the Bangladeshi predicament and the Indian one.

"Regionalist ideals are bound to function quite differently in countries with a weighty architectural past than in countries with little visible tradition. Attitudes toward modernization also play a part. Mexico accepted modern architecture as part of an aggressive and liberal mythos after the revolution and they imported prototypes in the international style. The story of ensuing architecture was of adaptation of these models to indigenous tradition. Today the process goes on with architects like Gonzales de León, for example. With India the entry of modern forms occurred after independence primarily in the form of Le Corbusier and to a lesser degree Louis Kahn, who had long since left behind any reminiscence of the "international style" and were in fact beginning to explore archaic and primitivist values. Le Corbusier's Indian works evolved a sort of modern Indian grammar of protected roofs against rain and sun, monumental louvres and deep-cut verandahs for air and shade, water-tanks, sluices, shaded porticos and halls. He drew many lessons from diverse periods of Indian architectural tradition.

The problem for inheritors of Le Corbusier in India has been to hang on to the lasting values in his architecture but without doing weak copies. At the same time it has been necessary to reject some of his climatic solutions as inadequate and his urbanism as too rigid. To follow the career of such Indians as Charles Correa and Balkrishna Doshi is to witness the struggle for emancipation from forceful examples and a search for solutions more truly suited to the complexities of the contemporary Indian experience. Yet this very struggle with a figure of such dimension lends their work a cosmopolitan tension that distinguishes it from the product of an artist who just starts with home-grown material. Surely the reason that Correa's work has attracted so much attention is because it seems without effort to demolish the barriers between old and new, monumental and folk and because it is based on consistent strategies directed to the outdoor room, the ambiguous edge, the shaded platform, the meandering route and so on. In other words he has tried to work out a viable modern language that draws upon past eras but without mimicking them. More than that Correa had to adapt his solutions to the wide range of Indian climate, from the dry heat of the north to the damp tropical conditions of the south.

Raj Rewal has also been preoccupied with the idea of modern buildings as an analogue for traditional urban fabrics. The Asian Games Housing in the south of Delhi amounts to a critique of point-block planning. The individual units are a limited number of types that are designed to maximise privacy and cross ventilation, but these are combined with a rich variation that also enlivens the spaces in between. These are handled in hierarchies through public to ever more private zones of transition. In effect Rewal succeeds in translating the broad principles of desert towns like Jaisalmer, which he began to study about twenty years ago. In this example the 'Haveli' courtyard houses of complex sections, are locked together with streets, squares, gates and doorways in a single system. But the result does not revert to a cute townscape. The results are disciplined by geometry and controlled vistas. The recent Institute of Immunology in Delhi reveals his passionate attachment to Mughal examples.

The scheme is composed of a sequence of outdoor rooms with linking galleries and steps. If the archetypes for the hot, dry climate are the tent and the thick-walled courtyard dwelling, the basic form for the tropics is found in the wooden hut on poles, with a steep and overhanging roof against rain and a thin membrane wall for the passage of damp air. Variations on the scheme can be found in South and South-eastern Asia from the tip of India to the islands of the Pacific. The general type informs the range of functions from house to bungalows, to palaces and temples and over the centuries many accretions have been brought by Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch traders.

The colonisation absorbs and is absorbed and creates mutations of the basic system. In Sri Lanka white washed walls and tiled roofs blended with the system and it is this vernacular which has been the point of departure for the architecture of Geoffrey Bawa. His studio in the Colombo suburb, originally I believe designed as a house is a work of a high order which celebrates the poetics of the bungalow in a tightly-controlled sequence of indoor and outdoor space. The moment one enters the precincts one is drawn along the main axis by the alluring rectangle of greenery to the rear and by the reflecting pool at the heart of the plan. This borders one side of a court and forces one to a parallel line of movement prior to discovering lateral expansion into rooms that are linked to the outside by verandahs. Above the pool there is a gap.
between the tiled roofs through which the monsoon can cascade. The device recalls the Southern Indian palace of Mahaballipuram and even a Roman impulvium. The ambiguities of space engendered by slight level changes, water and light would not, however, be out of place in the Alhambra. What appears to be a subtle exercise in abstract control of the vernacular emerges as an erudite microcosm, a richly allusive vocabulary based on simplest of means but a broad range of sources. Bawa has used local craftsmanship to the full — stone capitals, wooden columns with slight entics, the details, only serve to emphasise the building’s generating ideas.

“In the Kuwait National Assembly Building the Danish architect Jorn Utzon also has the difficult task of giving shape to a unique governmental system combining regal, tribal, oligarchic and bureaucratic elements. At a practical level it was a question of making all the departments visible and available from the entrance and it was this that led to the idea of a central street with the main assembly to one side and a vast hall open to the sea at the head. Individual apartments were restricted to two-storey height and arranged round their own courtyards. These cells could be gradually added to so that the plan is like a bazaar with amorphous edges extending towards the rectangular boundary. The entire complex was covered by a spreading roof and in the case of the main chamber hall there’s an uncanny echo of the billowing forms of the tent. Utzon referred to the ‘purity of Islamic structure’ and his handling of concrete, light and space also echoes qualities of Le Corbusier’s parliament in Chandigarh. The conception of the sheltering roof involves tribal memories to do with the princely tents as Utzon explains, ‘The dangerously strong sunshine in Kuwait makes it necessary to protect yourself in the shade. The shade is vital to your existence and the hall which provides shade for the public meetings could perhaps be considered symbolic of the protection the ruler extends to his people. There is an Arab saying ‘when a ruler dies his shadow is lost’.

Uton’s Kuwait National Assembly rests upon archetypes of its local society and translates these into a building that is of its time. If fuses new and old, regional and universal, and extends both modern movement and middle-eastern traditions. In the same way Kahn in his National Assembly Building in Dhaka extended both the modern movement and local regional tradition of the Indian sub-continent and Bangladesh. It touches those chords that transcend styles and conventions and through the direct impact of light, space, materials and proportions realises an institutional framework of general societal importance. (The programme is the centre of the thing — programme understood as something deeper than a list of requirements, as a societal impulse, something with a certain profundity.) This is what monumental architecture has always aspired to do by giving shape to communal ideas. Instead of aping the past the authentic regionalist looks beneath the surface to the basics and these he attempts to transform Enthralled by the mosque of Ibu Tulun, the harmony of Fez or the majesty of Humayun’s tomb, he asks himself “How would these masters build today?”

I would like now to turn to Louis Kahn’s building in Dhaka. Discussions of modern architecture are bedevilled by simplistic categories such as ‘international style’ Works of any depth draw upon many eras simultaneously yet still belong very much to their own time. It often seems to me the Assembly building in Dhaka represents quite extraordinary insight into, on the one hand, the heritage Kahn bought with him, which took him back through modern architecture to the fundamentals of organisation in the classical system going back to things like the ancient baths, the great niche-forms and approaches. At the same time it touched a realm of what we might call archetypes within architectural thought, of basic forms. He carried these with him when he came here and he very quickly understood the parallelisms, if you like, the deep structural links with the fundamentals of the local tradition. What he read, I believe, is a pattern which is very very deep in Bangladeshi architecture which occurred rather early on even before the arrival of the Mughals. It has to do with the fusion of two centralised traditions, one from Islam and one ultimately from Buddhism. The thing that intrigues me about the architecture of the Sultanate in Bangladesh is that process of transformation, of underlying structures that are already there; when another force comes in, absorption takes place in both directions, and so the process goes on. In Kahn’s planning organisation of the building, his image of the state, reads through Mughal schemata (I believe that the building is based very substantially on the tomb of Humayun in its organisation) to the more ancient centralised traditions. The question of how you put the centralised form together with a polygonal form, with cross axes, with movement around recalls certain ancestral memories of architecture in this region. Yet the result is not a pastiche, the result is a translation into a thoroughly modern building. The result is also timeless, in a hundred years one will not bother to consider when it was made. That to me is the mark of a real work of architecture; one quite forgets the problem of style altogether and one simply says, well, this is a major addition to the stock of cultural memories. That should be the ambition of regionalism not a trite thing, simply to do with Romantic peasantism but to do with what I would call cultural excavation. That to me is the challenge in the present Third World circumstances — how to be modern and, ancient at the same time.
Housing and Space Standards:
Human needs and regional factors

Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury

Introduction

A shelter provides people with functional, social and spiritual needs. The life of an individual and family unfolds in the space within the shelter. Any attempt at formulating housing and space standards should start by recognising the quality of space that have to be provided in the family home to satisfy these needs.

This paper attempts to define housing and space standards in a regional context. It takes into consideration the nature of human needs and examines how these needs are influenced by social and regional factors. The paper indicates the importance of socio-cultural factors in the formulation of housing and space standards. Since the economic ability of the people is also one of the main determining factors for achieving the standards, suggestions are made to adopt a flexible as well as comprehensive approach towards formulation of space standards in Bangladesh.

Space standards

Space standards for dwellings for any particular society may be defined as a measure of acceptable intensity of dwelling occupation in the context of cultural, social, climatic, economic and technological conditions prevailing in that society. They establish a relationship between people and the amount of space they occupy. Various authorities on space standards are of the opinion that they are only one of the many indices of measuring housing quality and not an end in themselves. They indicate the amount of space available to a person or family, but by themselves do not reflect the exact conditions. Living conditions, in fact, will be affected by the way these spaces are arranged within the dwelling for different activities.

Space standards are expressed in a number of forms and units of measurement. In the western countries they usually connote the size of floor space and of the number of rooms in the dwelling in relation to the number of occupants in order to ensure a certain degree of privacy and comfort in family living as well as to maintain health requirements. The trend in the formulation of contemporary standards is towards amenity and a broader concept of human requirements and health. The units usually adopted to reflect this concept of space standards are ‘floor space per person’ or ‘number of persons per room’. Space standards according to this concept tend to rise with national wealth, they are far higher in the developed countries than the developing ones although household sizes in the developed countries are invariably smaller.

Atkinson is of the opinion that if for social and economic reasons the so-called floor space rate has to be lowered (compared to the western standards), then this lack of indoor space can be compensated for by ensuring a reasonable private outdoor space. He extends his support for Stevens in his introduction of the concept of total living space, which includes all the spaces available on all floors of the dwelling and the open spaces within the curtilage of a housing plot or a group of housing plots. In the case of a country like Bangladesh, where many household activities can and do take place in open spaces inside as well as around the dwelling during at least some part of the year, the concept of total living space rate may provide a more useful basis for design of dwellings.

The nature of human needs

Design of housing is one of the most difficult tasks in the field of architecture. A proper understanding of the nature of human needs is of crucial importance in the formulation of housing and space standards. The thresholds and coefficients of these needs may vary from one society to another as a function of the economic data and the different ways of life. The range of temperatures for example to which man can adapt is too wide to offer any guidance as to optimum thermal conditions on which a standard might be
based. It is possible to construct a comfort scale for thermal conditions, but even here it is not possible to reach a universal agreement among different societies as to what constitutes a reasonable temperature. It is interesting to note the range of temperature at which office workers in different countries said they feel comfortable. It ranges from 18°C to 28°C, the response being affected by local climatic conditions, dress and expectations. So it appears that even in straightforward physical matters, needs are influenced by social and regional factors.

Again, if we consider the human needs in terms of public health, then it is also found that the range is very wide. During the early part of this century, maximum occupancy of dwellings in Britain was set at two persons per room considering the oxygen consumption of an individual and measured rate of air exchange in a room of normal size. Regulation of space standards in most of the western countries is still partly influenced by the concept of overcrowding and its possible association with ill health. Places, like Hong Kong however with densities up to 5000 persons per hectare of 8 persons per room have not given rise to epidemics. Of course, there is still the question of whether high densities have other detrimental effects on human behaviour or mental health.

So, it seems that human needs with reference to housing and space standards are directly related to social and regional factors. A useful approach for formulation of such standards is to look at the way space is socially defined, patterns of living, concept of privacy and other socio-cultural traits.

Socio-cultural factors

A house-form, according to Rapoport, is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors seen in their broadest terms. Societies differ in their definitions of concepts such as privacy and density and their response to these concepts.

Rapoport has cited the example of the Yaguar from the Amazon valley who achieve privacy involving a social convention of someone being 'absent' or 'invisible' by turning his face away from the centre of the house. He will not be disturbed by anyone no matter how urgent be the need. On the other hand, even in an Arab tent a curtain separates the private family space to which the women can retreat when males from outside the family circle visit the tent. This wide range of variations means that standards to be formulated for different societies will vary in concept, magnitude and terminologies.

One particular factor that has affected the living pattern of a Bengali family is the concept of dwelling unit as an undivided structure, at least in rural areas.

A typical village house is a group of undivided structures where the concept of 'room' is unknown. The separate structures are built to meet social and functional requirements such as separation of sexes, accommodation of more people as the family grows and to cater for ancillary services such as cooking. All these structures are used for more than one activity.

Influence of this rural tradition is also observed in the urban areas. Multi-use of spaces in a Bangladesh house, as such, cannot be termed as only a function of over-crowding; it is rather a socio-cultural attitude towards space.

The relative ease with which different functions can be accommodated in the same space has been made possible by the practice of having less furniture in a Bangladesh house, which again is an effect of socio-cultural patterns related to some major activities. For example, the traditional way of having meals is by sitting on a mat spread on the floor, which eliminates the use of furniture like dining table and chairs. Sleeping on the floor is also the usual practice. The requirement for these functions is a free floor space in an area which is sufficiently private and climatically comfortable.

The position of women and the attitude towards privacy also affect the use of family space in a home. In Bangladesh, even though seclusion of women is not as rigorously practised as in some other Muslim countries, it is the usual practice to maintain the privacy of women of the family from male visitors and passers-by. This necessitates, in traditional rural houses, a broad division of different spaces in the home, a formal zone and an informal zone. The separation is clearly identifiable by the location of different zones. The informal zone is a courtyard with three or four different structures including the kitchen, facing into it for privacy, while the formal zone consists of another separate structure with its entrance facing away from the informal zone or inner house.

Approach towards formulation of housing and space for Bangladesh

The foregoing discussions show that space requirements in dwellings — both quantitatively and qualitatively are not only affected by functional needs but by other social and regional factors. Different social and climatic situations may require the same activity to be performed in altogether different spaces.

The socio-cultural attitude of Bengali people towards space within and around the house provides an opportunity for producing reasonably modest solution, the most favourable being the multi-use of space. The majority of household activities in
Bangladesh, and for that matter in most tropical countries, require no specific space for their pursuit. The same space accommodates different activities at different hours of the day and different seasons of the year. So, living spaces here should be tailored to accommodate different functions at different times. This calls for prescribing overall space requirements instead of making specific space recommendations for specific functions (except, of course, for cooking and personal hygiene facilities). These spaces may be broadly defined as Habitable Roofed Spaces for Multi-use and should be provided both in the form of enclosed (i.e., room) and semi-enclosed (i.e., verandah) spaces. They have to be designed to accommodate different functions with least possible inconvenience.

Apart from climatic comforts, these spaces will have to fulfil the following major design requirements:

a) It should be possible to divide these spaces into at least two separate areas for sleeping at night by adults of different sexes.

b) It should be possible to divide them for formal and informal use.

c) The spaces should be neutral in terms of form to allow the variety of uses to be made of them.

d) There should be scope for possible future expansion.

The requirement of roofed habitable spaces is found to be less at any other time of the day than what is required for sleeping at night. So, overall requirement for these spaces may be calculated on the basis of night functions.

Apart from socio-cultural factors, housing and space standards are also a function of the economic data of the country. If the standards are assessed in relation to family, social and functional requirements only (even when a multi-use of spaces is prescribed), then a vast majority of the people will not be able to achieve the standards. Such people or a family may be provided with a plot to start with, and be allowed to build a dwelling to a standard lower than what is considered socio-culturally and functionally acceptable; the dwelling can be raised to the acceptable standards with the improvement of the family’s economic conditions. The user may also be allowed to choose from a range of different construction standards that satisfy minimum health and safety requirements.

Standards, as such, cannot be absolute. They vary with changing family and society needs. Standards, once formulated, have to be reviewed from time to time. A recommended set of standards can only be used as a guideline for formulation of policies and programmes to suit the needs of various economic and social sub-groups in a particular society.
Traditional House Form in Rural Bangladesh
A case study for Regionalism in Architecture

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Introduction

'Regionalism in Architecture' is a concept of architectural design based on such determinants as the Culture, the Climate and the Resources. In the early days of civilisation, architecture was very much regional in character because it evolved purely in response to these regional determinants. The history of civilisation shows that over centuries man developed through trial and error a fine tradition of region and culture-specific architecture which still persists in the rural habitats in different parts of the world. In contrast to that the urban centres, following the technological revolution, came under the onslaught of the so-called 'International Style' with its utter disregard for the socio-cultural and environmental contexts. Consequently, urban centres all over the world experienced arbitrary and indiscriminate activities of 'form generation' which tended to perpetuate the erroneous notion that a building as an artifact was an end in itself. In fact architecture is essentially a means to certain ends and it has such far reaching social implications that it may well be conceived as a social phenomenon. In rural Bangladesh, the patterns of pastoral heritage evolved through countless generations and affected the evolution of the traditional house form. The traditional house form in rural Bangladesh, thus, offers a fine example of an essentially culture and region-specific social product.

Location, nature and climate

Bangladesh is located approximately between the 20°N and 27°N latitudes and the 88°E and 93°E longitudes. The landscape is basically a flat delta plain formed by the confluence of two mighty rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. It is also criss-crossed by numerous other rivers and rivulets with over one-third of the country flooded every year. In such a
landscape, the abundant waters forced the settlements to be poised on high ground stabilised and enriched with the lush banana plantation, numerous other fruit trees and rich vegetation.

The climate of the region is warm-humid. The Mean Maximum Temperature during the Summer and the Monsoons months starting from March and continuing up to October varies between 29°C and 32°C. The rainy season begins with the advent of the Monsoon in June and lasts until October. More than 70% of the annual rainfall (as much as 2000 millimetres) is received during this period. In the Winter months, from November to February, temperature may occasionally fall below 7°C or 8°C but the Mean Minimum Temperature remains in the region of 12°C to 15°C throughout the Winter months.

The rural housing scene

House building in rural Bangladesh is a seasonal event which is usually completed before the onset of the Nor-wester and the arrival of the Monsoon and carried out in periods of low agricultural activities after harvest and rice planting. The act of homesteading starts by creating a ‘land’ or a ‘mound’ for the house which is gradually stabilised and enriched with vegetation. On this stabilised ‘mound’ the first house structure is built. The homestead is then gradually enlarged by adding new structures, creating ponds, tanks, canals and drains. These are the ecological bases of the house and they also play significant roles in ensuring privacy by creating barriers from the next homesteads and thereby generating the loose distributed settlement pattern.

Rivers and rivulets of Bangladesh.
Generally speaking, the traditional rural houses in Bangladesh are fairly well adapted to the local culture, environment and resources but nonetheless they also suffer from serious deficiencies. The traditional rural dwellings are usually small, insanitary and suffer from the absence of many of the basic amenities of daily life. Owing to the very low incomes, employment and severe poverty that prevail in the rural areas of Bangladesh, the rural populace has little choice but to continue to stick to the indigenous materials, methods and designs not only because of their low costs but also because of their familiarity and acceptability. A very pertinent question in this context can be whether the indigenous materials, methods and designs have the potential to be improved and adapted to meet the growing needs of tomorrow. This paper discusses this question through a review and analysis of the traditional rural house structure in terms of the form and the materials and the techniques of construction which have evolved to their present state over centuries.

**The form and the materials and techniques of construction**

A traditional rural ‘Bengali House’ in its basic form is a cluster of small ‘shelters’ of ‘huts’ around a central yard, locally called the ‘Uthan’. The huts are usually single roomed, detached and loosely spaced around the central courtyard. Extensive landscaping is done to define the house in the larger landscaping and the surrounding environment. The house interior accommodates a number of different uses side by side.

The house is organised with respect to two broad categories of functions:

(i) The family functions i.e. the functions pertaining to the family itself such as sleeping, cooking and eating.

(ii) The formal functions i.e. the functions pertaining to the family as it reacts with the larger community such as socialising and receiving visitors.
These two functions separate the house into two distinct parts, the ‘inner house’ and the ‘outer house’ respectively. The culturally defined social codes, customs and norms recognise two distinct domains in the house namely, the ‘female domain’ and the ‘male domain’ which correspond with the ‘inner house’ and the ‘outer house’ respectively. 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. These include behaviour pattern, willful avoidance and time zonings. Hence the boundary between the male and female zones are flexible and varies according to time, period and occasion. In the traditional houses in rural Bangladesh, distinction between the ‘inner house’ and the ‘outer house’ is also made on the basis of their functional as well as their symbolic values. Spaces with the functional values remain in the inner house and those with symbolic values prevail in the outer house. Religious beliefs seem to exert decisive influence in certain aspects of the house form. Thus Muslim house structures are normally laid out following the cardinal directions so that it is convenient to establish the direction of the Qibla (i.e. the ‘Kaaba’) for prayer. The direction of the Qibla also determines the orientation of the sleeping mats and the toilets which in turn affects the organisation of the spaces and their use. Unlike the Hindus, the Muslims do not identify particular places of ritual purity within the house or the homestead. The ‘shelters’ or ‘huts’ and the ‘open spaces’ or ‘yards’ receive varying degrees of importance depending on the hierarchy of their use only.

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, the available resources, the social codes, customs and norms. The introvert layout of the house around the inner court might appear not to be suitable in the warm-humid climate and yet this is the pattern that has evolved through time in this region. The adverse effects of the sun on the huts with wrong orientations are considerably reduced because of the low height of the house structures, their projected roof overhangs and the availability of abundant vegetation for shading the house structures. The porosity of the roof of the house structure, the inherent coolness of the shaded mud walls and the insulating capacity of the thatch roof contribute to the excellent thermal character.

The construction of the rural house structure may be discussed with reference to the major elements namely, the plinth, the walls and the roof. The plinth is almost always made of rammed earth on which the superstructure of the house will stand. Except in the case of mud houses where the walls are built over the foundation trenches, the plinth is the first element of...
the house structure that is to be built. The walls of the traditional house can be of two basic types, the mud walls and the bamboo and reed walls. Mud walls are thick and monolithic while the bamboo or reed walls are formed in panels. These panels are fastened to the structural framework made of quality bamboo poles or timber logs erected vertically on the periphery of the plinth and tied together with horizontal cross members. The roof structure is framed in bamboo, the members being tied together with ropes or GI wires forming close rectangular or square grids. The roof slopes at an angle, usually on each of the four sides to facilitate the flow of rainwater and reduce the risk of a leaking roof. In some cases, to reduce the cost of roofing, the roof is sloped only in two directions along the shorter span. The roof frame is then covered on the surface with a thick layer of thatch woven carefully and skillfully completing the basic form of the rural house structure in Bangladesh; a structure that has all the ingredients of a regional architecture.

Discussion and Conclusion

The review and analysis so far of the design, materials and methods of construction of the traditional rural house form in Bangladesh clearly establishes its regional character. The indigenous materials, methods and designs have the potential for improvements to meet the growing needs and it seems that these offer the only viable choice for development of the rural habitats of Bangladesh from the viewpoints of both the cost and the performance considerations. Two examples from the study of Rural Housing in Bangladesh by M.P. Chisholm of Newcastle-upon-Tyne University U.K who spent about two years in Bangladesh in 1976–77–78 may provide an insight into the appropriateness and potential of the traditional rural house structure. On the cost aspect of the traditional house structure, Chisholm writes that the cost of an American camping tent (4.8 metres × 4.8 metres Stg £160/1978) used in the 1970 cyclone affected southern Bangladesh was the equivalent in cash terms of a bamboo thatched house together with two cows and a plough in Bangladesh1. On the performance aspect, Chisholm writes that in Kamalgang in the district of Sylhet, two Dutch volunteers, Dirk and Nel Frans and their newly arrived baby preferred to live in a traditional thatch house after a few modifications such as a concrete plinth and security mesh on windows and they had much better night’s sleep and consequently they were in a much better physical condition than the rest of the team living in the nearby masonry (pucca) houses. The actual cost of their traditional house even with modifications approximately equalled the cost of the constructional improvements to one pucca house.

From the review so far it has also been seen that the geometric ‘form’ or ‘design’ of the traditional rural Bengali house is introvert in layout and consists of small detached ‘huts’ around a courtyard which exists as an extension of the indoor living areas of the huts which are characteristically inadequate. The courtyard not only maintains a direct and convenient functional relationship with the huts around but it also provides for seclusion of the women folk from the passers-by and male visitors. Further it responds well to a number of activities such as outdoor cooking, paddy threshing and grain drying, which are characteristically common in the life of an agricultural community in rural Bangladesh. These functions can be performed conveniently and with a sense of security in a protective courtyard layout. These advantages were considered more important than the disadvantages of poor orientations and the irregular and haphazard growth of the rural settlement pattern induced largely by the courtyard layout pattern. It is interesting, however, to note that many of the conditions dictating a courtyard form for the traditional rural house in Bangladesh are in the process of change. The rural women folk, for example, are gradually coming out of their seclusion through such programmes as mass literacy, family planning and women’s cooperatives. Agriculture is being
organised on a cooperative basis eliminating the need of a courtyard for every house for paddy thrashing and grain drying. Moreover, paddy thrashing is now done using locally made small mechanical devices which do not require large spaces. The traditional joint and extended families are also being transformed into nucleated families. All these are perhaps indicative of the possibility that the traditional courtyard layout may eventually be transformed in favour of a more appropriate layout, maybe a linear one, which will not only conform better to the socio-climatic requirements but which will also ensure convenient and efficient layout of utility services and better utilisation of land. The geometry of the house structure may remain basically unchanged although the size may be increased and the interior may be sub-divided into more than one space and utilities added.

It is unfortunate that architecture, as we know it, does not serve the vast majority of the populace who live in the rural areas. This is a common concern not only in Bangladesh but also in most developing countries with vast rural populations. Various ideas have been discussed from time to time for extending the role of the architect over the rural settlements. It is now widely believed that formal architectural education, as we know it, cannot be appropriate for the rural scene, even if we supplement the present curricula with enough of a rural bias, for the simple reason that such architects cannot be attracted to the rural scene because of the lack of economic opportunities commensurate with their expectations and professional standing. A viable alternative is perhaps to create a different type of architect to be drawn from the rural scene and educated and trained exclusively in the rural contexts. The required investments for such an education and training can be much less and consequently the level of expectation of economic returns from the practice of the profession can also be much less. It is believed by many that such ‘para-architects’ or whatever they are called, can make tremendous contributions towards the social and environmental improvement of Third World countries.

If ‘Regionalism in Architecture’ has to be more than a mere slogan, then architecture, in the Third World countries in particular, must concern the overwhelming majority of the populace who live in the rural areas.

All photographs courtesy of Mohammed A Muktadir
Cultural Continuum and Regional Identity in Architecture

Balkrishna V. Doshi

Introduction

The last few years have rightly witnessed a growing debate among the developing countries, particularly those which experienced intense colonisation about the state of architectural design and planning practices. The realisation that Western models of architecture and urban planning introduced by the colonising agencies, as well as the subsequent developments in the West, were not very suitable to their own resources and climatic circumstances and socio-cultural well being has led to lot of healthy questioning. This has also required them to look into their own past heritage to understand the architectural and planning practices which evolved over centuries of adaptation and in few cases adoption.

The theme of this Seminar, some of the recent publications like MIMAR, and a shifting emphasis in research areas among academics are indicative of a very subtle beginning in an extremely crucial aspect of built environment design: that of seeking beyond mere visual aspirations dominated by and large by International Modern Movement, and exploring the abstract, cultural undercurrents which nourish society, using the built environment in its dual cause and effect role.

This paper discusses two major parameters of this role of the built-environment. It begins by dealing with more tangible issues, reviewing current design practices vis-a-vis the traditions and resource situation in India. Later it deals with the intangible parameters, which seeks to explain built-form as a manifestation of socio-cultural institutions which are looked into a dynamic relationship nurturing and complementing each other.

Search for a ‘Post-Modern’ regional architecture

Pre-industrial architecture of any given region had the strength to serve the physical and spiritual needs of people, from a single family to the entire community. At the physical level, it embodied centuries of learning with regard to orientation, climate, building materials and construction techniques. At the spiritual level, the built-form conveyed total harmony with the life-style in all its daily as well as seasonal rituals, unifying the socio-cultural and religious aspirations of the individuals and the community.

To achieve this unity and to integrate physical and spiritual needs, due importance was given to nature and its basic laws. Nature was accepted as it is. Life-style and activity followed in consonance with nature and architecture with nature. Concern for resources and conservation of energy was reflected in all rituals, social actions and very clearly in physical planning.

The compactness of the town plan, building using thick walls with niches, and a variety of in-between elements like balconies, incorporated both the symbolic as well as social meaning. Jaisalmer, old Jaipur and old Delhi are testimonies to such thinking.

The application of such realistic and yet value oriented attitudes, gave society a sense of confidence and a much needed feeling of self-sufficiency. External considerations were accepted under duress and were gradually absorbed to facilitate the continuance of the envisaged life-style. The transformation of the Mughal architecture to suit India is a case in point. In this process, the role played by everyone including the architect was that of shareholders in an enterprise. While the roles of each discipline may be demarcated, the final outcome expressed the multiple considerations that went into making it. That is how all different forms of art in India have, over the centuries, given birth to a vernacular idiom, sustained the culture and in the process, sustained itself.

The transformation

Unfortunately, during the last two centuries, our concepts and life-styles have undergone considerable changes. Initially, it was the internal strife, then the
Cultural Continuum and Regional Identity in Architecture

foreign rule, then the destruction of small-scale home based crafts which affected the nature of the social pattern. Subsequent emphasis on industrialisation, the advent of new building materials, and a desire to ‘modernise’ gave rise to different patterns of building and community-city planning. The models for such development were neither conceived on the basis of our climate, nor social needs, nor life-style, nor did they incorporate the attributes of the process mentioned earlier. The consequence was an increased use of resources, of energy and subsequent degradation of the environment.

Today, our situation is even worse. We have a large and growing population below subsistency level, the natural resources are depleting, the forest cover is being used as fuel and the metropolitan cities are expanding. Our physical environment is desolate, without trees, with isolated ‘modern’ buildings surrounded by slums and pollution is on the increase. Another disturbing factor is the high-technology oriented industry in the metropolis and the neglect of cottage industry in the rural area. The rural-urban harmony and interdependence is broken in this process.

All this is occurring in the villages, towns and cities, which have a rich cultural heritage. What we constantly realise is the apparent contradiction between what we had and what we have now. Thus, we live in an atmosphere of contradictions because, we like what we had, but do not yet know how to improve the present and ensure a better future. As a result, we attempt superficially, certain measures in town and city planning, house designs and housing layouts. The cultural heritage does not appeal to the heart of the younger generations, they do not wish to retain it since it does not symbolically or culturally belong to them. They look towards the new world which they witness through the ever expanding communication media. The young generation’s image is that of the outside world, because they do not have any clue of our own heritage.

The confusion we face today

Since Independence, either due to an urge to keep up with a rapidly modernising economy, or lacking a societal concern, the profession has followed a different path. As against the traditional solutions which responded to the local resource and climate, the designer has opted for techniques and forms propagated by the new technology. The hot, impersonal bee-hives of flats, in concrete, in isolated locations, separated by unsuitable public spaces have led to social disintegration and environmental degradation. In settlement planning similar things followed. As against mixed land use which promoted economies of various types, the single function zones were created. This not only wasted space but also added strain on energy in transportation of goods and people.

This situation, coupled with an irrelevant academic curriculum, and lack of professional leadership, developed a breed of professionals whose main interests revolved around the real estate developers needs. Social responsibility and cultural values were too dangerous to seek for fear of losing the commission.

Because of tempting commissions to build for an elite group which responds to an alien ‘modernity’, the professionals and the academic institutions failed to advocate the achievements and the essential order of the dynamic design process of the past. In the absence of this, a formal character of design was repeated without hesitation as the only solution.

The cultural shock is even greater. It even makes the uninitiated question the basis of earlier life-styles and the worth of past architecture and city planning practices. The conflict is between the ‘old’ which was one’s own and the ‘new’, which though alien, is apparently impressive.

A case in hand, at national level, is our more than half a million villagers with about 580 million population. Even today, after 38 years of independence, our rural economy is faced with the problems of shortages in food, clothing, shelter, educational and health facilities. This is the result of our initial emphasis on heavy industries and not on developing small and medium towns as integrated communities providing opportunities for a wholesome life.

We have today extremes of development without proper links. We have sophisticated technology including the atomic power plants, and jet air-transportation on the one hand, and bullock-cart on the other. A few cities are becoming over populated with the concentration of industries, and the smaller towns and villages are becoming depopulated due to lack of basic needs and work opportunities. In such a state of unbalanced development, what should be the priorities of architecture and planning? What is the so-called ‘true’ architecture? Which end of the stick should we grasp first?

Such a state of affairs, once it has set in, is difficult to correct. In such a situation, the technologies for production of basic needs are in great demand. The mass media, radio, television and films, have brought to the mostly uneducated population an awareness of the life in developed countries. As a consequence, the growing number of people dependent on a limited developed land area, aspire for a new world; a world of plenty and comforts. New gadgets that are seen through the mass media become a fascination. The choice open to them is to search for a place where the happiness of their dream can be realised. The reaction
naturally is to move to a better place. Thus movement from less developed to developed places takes place. No one is able to control this exodus.

The emerging issues

We note that this situation is an unavoidable consequence of industrialisation. What solution do we have for either the urban or the rural areas? Since the technological benefits should be given to the masses, irrespective of their location, what are we, as architects and planners doing? Are we really developing a technology for orderly and contented living conditions for many or are we generating through education and planning some ways of helping the rural population to have a better place or well conceived industrial activities for lean periods, or better tools for farming?

In such situations, what kind of role can be expected from architecture and community planning? Since the entire development has depended on uncontrolled circumstances and has discounted ‘man’, what style of buildings can we expect? What can be taught to the coming generations? What professional services can we offer? Where do we really begin?

The effects of such uncoordinated development has had more disastrous effects in developing countries than in the developed countries. For where can the poor nations find additional resources to rectify its ever growing mistakes of blind imitation?

The Indian cultural heritage and community environment

Over the centuries, Indian culture, through its socio-economic ramifications has given a sense of security and yet allowed wide choices. In the traditional Indian society, one is not alone, but part of a community. Buildings are not built in isolation, but in groups leading to a total environment, merging buildings, spaces and culture in a unified whole. The community shares everything, be it an economic activity or a festival. Unless this socio-cultural tradition is understood, the organisation of buildings, streets, spaces and their forms cannot be the desired fabric wherein the community wants to live. It is, therefore, necessary to talk about physical environment in terms of culture rather than only in terms of buildings, space, technology or economy.

The house form which has evolved in India, say in Ahmedabad can be cited as an example. This form has behind it centuries of tradition, which not only ties the community of one generation together, but also the successive generations within the house. In the house plans, it is difficult to perceive this immediately, but seen through the minute activities and functions carried out in the house, it can be felt that there exists a strong sense of identity. This must be incorporated in designing new environments and, to do this, it is necessary to understand the socio-cultural patterns.

The illustration of a simple village well, as an element representing a socio-cultural pattern, has often been quoted. The water well is an institution which binds the community very strongly because this is where people meet each other daily, discuss their problems, find solace in their griefs, and feel socially cared for. The village well over centuries has grown as a very prominent social institution. There are a large number of such manifestations in the old and existing institutions which tell us about the socio-cultural tradition of the community. Detailed study of these can provide us with a genuine understanding of the real community needs, which must be given importance in architecture and design.

Therefore, institutions became the primary design elements in creating an environment. Religious institutions particularly the temple, through the ages have greatly influenced the community environment. There are temple cities in India which have survived for centuries because the religious institutions have provided the community with cultural stability, occupation and guidance in its behavioural patterns. These also helped in establishing value systems and a strong conviction in continuous community belonging.

For the institutions to survive, grow, expand and be a part of the culture, there was an organisational structure evolved by the society. In the Ajanta and Ellora caves, while the building activity continued over centuries, the quality of execution and the craftsmanship continued to grow better. Today, the work assigned to an assistant or to a contractor cannot achieve the expected quality if the designer is absent for even a few months. In the case of these caves and temples, the chief architect or the ‘sthapati’ would come, spend some time and then go away. He perhaps would not come again, but the work went on through generations, with the quality remaining constant and often improving. This process had within it the built-in mechanism of community commitment and convictions passed down through generations. The generations of designers, builders and craftsmen would continue to build the institution, each excelling the previous one, motivated by their commitment to remain true to the major principles, and guidelines, established by the sthapati with regard to the location, the materials, the technology, the design of the carvings and the sense of depth. This suggests that within a main concept, an organisational system and a method must be developed to continue the work, to provide choice for participants to identify themselves with the work and thus generate excellence. This
quality of transition, of commitment to the community, and the ability and sanction to interpret principles by individuals are very much in contrast to contemporary practices. There, perhaps, greater importance is given to the individual and his role, and not to the organisation. People today, presumably believe that when the individual dies, the organisation also comes to an end.

It is interesting to see therefore why Indian culture has survived through many centuries and why it is good in some ways. This is because, through centuries, institutions have evolved along with the living environment and provided a broad flexible structure which an individual has the ‘choice’ to interpret in his own way. As a result, the commitment to the concept of community has been deep-rooted and this has tended to provide for total harmony. The built-in variations in all aspects of Indian life, and activity-creation always provide an ‘open end’ with regard to growth, evolution and change. This is another very important aspect to remember. In our modern attitude to development planning, building and designing, these issues, though basic are often ignored when preconceived or alien strategies do not work and hence planning and designing becomes totally inefficient.

Such attitudes to organisation, structure and design can be discovered in past Indian architecture, particularly that of the temples which have served as the most important catalytic institution to preserve the culture. In Indian architecture, the creators, the designers, thought about many functions other than just simply the basic functions the buildings should perform. The idea of a staircase performing only the function of movement, a window that of lighting and ventilation, or a roof that of providing shelter from the weather, are basically alien to Indian culture since such cannot satisfy the diverse needs of diverse groups. A staircase can mean many things, a place to sit or if bigger, perhaps a place to sleep.

All elements were considered as multifunctional. That is what Indian culture has grown with, and that is how the Indian temperament is built. Growth of buildings are not just additive but are basic to the balanced life. Therefore, all elements of the environment must be designed to satisfy more than one situation.

This reminds one of Charles Eames’ description of a ‘lota’, the traditional vessel for fetching water, and also a conversation recorded in ‘Vishnudharmottar Purana’, a 12th century treatise of arts. In the example of the lota, Charles Eames, with his highly developed sense, saw in it the total process of not only its making, its form or its use as a container, but also in it the users’ various postures when carrying it from the well or the river, on the head or on the waist or in the hand. He also heard in it the sound of water, and therefore, regarded the form of the lota as a demonstration of one of the most essential process of design which is neither time nor space bound. How its design came about or who was the designer is not clearly known. The fact that it has so many attributes, gives it a place in the history of design.

In the other example from Vishnudharmottar Purana, the King asks Lord Markendeya how to build a shrine for Him so that the Lord is available for daily worship. In His reply, the Lord explains to the King, the process of design and how to learn this process.

Here, phonetics, poetry, literature, art, music, painting and sculpture are mentioned as basic and successive tools of learning without which a designer cannot fulfil his task of building a temple cohesively related to the symbolic and functional aspects.

It is apparent from the above that a good design must include several tangible and intangible functions: what Louis Kahn called the measurables and the unmeasurables, the physical and the spiritual or the symbolic.

Directions for the future — the possibilities

With today’s technologies, it should be easy to build a new world, a world which can be linked with the past by building on the basic values, and with the future in terms of the well-being of a larger number of people. Planning will only succeed, provided uncertainties about ‘values’ are reduced to a minimum and not subject to pressures of immediate circumstances.

Fortunately, we are becoming aware of the consequence of our present day actions and we are dissatisfied. We realise that it is necessary to accept technological advances and explorations of new avenues for growth. It is of great importance to harness resources and energies to support the ever increasing population. What we have not, perhaps, understood properly is a place for the technology. It is really a tool but the tool has become a hammer which we can’t wield. Technology is not an end in itself. Unbridled technology can lead to overproduction resulting in wasteful consumption. Essentially, technology should be utilised in relation to man’s welfare.

Our main aim should be to become industrious not merely industrialised. By becoming industrious, that is, through skill and healthy competition and choice, we can have a better rapport between work that one enjoys doing and leisure as its counterpart. Our approach should be based on using life, time and space more fruitfully. With this the problem of quantity, that is, the needs of the large number of
people will be interlinked with quality. This will improve the values since, quality will convert the quantity into an expression of life’s desire and will not belong to the realm of competition, because, it will not be superfluous but inherently essential.

To this end, what sort of planning and architecture is most helpful? What considerations should the professionals have, so that its expressions have a bearing on the history and the culture of the people? Should our architectural and community planning focus on social expectations, religious faith, aesthetic outlook, or only an economic affluence? It is accepted that we as professionals, with a limited field of control, cannot directly provide for the amelioration of economic conditions. We may however be able to decide on courses through which, economic growth not only becomes possible but progressive. This we can do. On the other hand, we may not be able to change the social customs and manners of a people, but we can plan in a manner that provides for a healthy accommodation of these. The architect-planner, naturally cannot preach any religious doctrine, but whatever the religious form, he can plan and provide for the individual or for the community, choices for prayers, for meditation, for ceremonies or for festivals.

In terms of operation and management for balanced growth, we need to discover scales which are self-sufficient in certain respects and, at the same time, inter-dependent for certain operations.

We should define, at least to a close approximation, the scales of various operations for an individual, family and community in villages, towns and cities so that their mode of living is in relation not only to a cycle of 24 hours but also in relation to weekly, monthly and annual needs. In this way every individual, who ultimately constitutes the community and the city, has his own choices for work, rest, reflection and creation.

Quality will naturally emerge in time, provided the entire process is nurtured with this faith. This should be the basis of planning or architecture. This is what we call culture, and the structure around which people like to throng are the ‘institutions of man’. We should search for our cultural ‘catalysts’ which become the institutions of man and which give life its meaning. In planning practices and in architectural expressions, this is what we have to look for and build.
Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration for Architects

Habib Fida Ali

When I commenced to put my thoughts in order, to be able to start writing my paper, which was to be titled, “Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration for Architects”, I realised that the first operation to perform would be for me to understand precisely what I know “regionalism” to mean. On the surface, it seemed very clear. Do not look at lovely photographs in the latest issue of Architectural Record but look to the environment that you are part of and find clues in the building traditions of your own culture. Though such a change of attitude would have been laudable, the operation is not quite that simple as any such change in strategy would have to take into account the complexities and contradictions of such a regionalist approach in today’s world.

When we talk of regionalism as a source of inspiration, we must make the distinction between regionalism as an ideology opposed to universalism, and regionalism as an objective analysis which focuses on specific demands on architecture.

Regionalism as an ideology is gradually asserting itself among intellectuals of the Third World as well as a lot of Western thinkers thinking about the Third World. Brian Brace Taylor writes, “The culture of many Third World countries is, and has been becoming, more and more part of a universal culture. This has often transpired for the wrong reasons — imitation for the sake of imitation would be one since the economic, social and even political structures of these societies are different from the Western societies they have taken as a model. In some instances, countries newly independent from colonial rule pursued a philosophy of modernisation as a strategy towards cultural identity”.

Although this may be true in some cases, there obviously are scores of other very valid reasons for modernisation such as economic survival in a world totally dominated by Western economies where one must modernise or starve. All the factors that can today allow an even moderately respectable existence for a nation, such as health, education, agricultural and industrial development, defence and communica-

A lot of middle class Pakistani families rely on the motorcycle as their sole means of transport. It was not very uncommon to hear of a couple having hurt themselves because the ladies’ “dupatta”, a long, scarf-like garment which is an essential part of the typical Pakistani ladies’ attire, got caught in the rear wheels of the motorcycle. This has resulted in ladies either avoiding the dupatta, or when on the motorcycle, tying it around their waists in a totally novel manner. This is a classic example of the adaptation or modification of a tradition to make it compatible or practicable with a technological development, instead of rejecting totally either the tradition or the technology.

Such examples are legion and I feel we should learn from them how people all over the Third World have reacted to and in almost all cases, absorbed and assimilated a cultural and societal exchange brought about by almost a century of change and transformation in exponentially greater proportions than mankind has seen in the past. This change and transformation will lead to major modifications in lifestyles, cultures, traditions and customs, and societies who do not prepare themselves for it will suffer the fate of obsolescence and decay. The aficionados of Indian classical music lament their dwindling audiences and blame the erosion of a cultural heritage to Western influence, yet choose to ignore the fact that in all the tea stalls and roadside cafes, as well as in trucks, buses, rickshaws and taxis, and in most homes throughout Pakistan and India, the music blaring out is, in most cases the popular music of today which
Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration for Architects

derives as much from informal folk music and western rock groups, as it does from the raqs of Amir Khusro. The electronic synthesizer is now used a lot more than the sarod or tabla.

Why then, this hue and cry about reviving our cultural values and heritages? Have we really lost anything, or have we simply changed and modified what we had in order to retain it in a useable and practicable state? Our homes still have the private family area but this is now known as the TV and video lounge because that is their major function. Our windows are still oriented towards the breeze to suit our climate, but these are often made of steel or aluminium as wood is more expensive. We use aluminium blinds to keep the sun out of these windows as we cannot afford the old wooden screens now. There is no doubt, of course that the glass curtain wall, and then powerful airconditioning to overcome the heat gain, in a city like Karachi is not sensible, but the answer is not the Taj Mahal. The answer, in my humble opinion, is provided by the nowadays much maligned philosophy of the International Style. What I understand the International Style to be, is or was, a reaction to the Classic Revival and the Art Nouveau by introducing the rationalism of "form follows function" and "brutalism". The interpretation is in its name, "International Style". Unfortunately nowadays, too much has been said about the "Style" and too little appreciated of the "International".

It was truly international since it was in essence only a philosophy, which said that form must follow function, and which took the art of architecture out of the hands of the 19th century aristocracy and brought the science of architecture into the mainstream of 20th century life by embracing, accepting and glorifying the powers of the machine. The protagonists of this movement simply proposed to use the best of the materials and structural systems that the technologies and industries could give them, and use them they should be used, not merely to produce Parthenon clones. The embodiment of the International Style in the glass box of Mies Van der Rohe, glorified the freedom that the steel structure gave him. This philosophy is indeed universal, and need not be foreign to any part of the world, as long as it is the "International" that is stressed, and not the "Style". To me, this philosophy simply says use what materials and techniques are available to you in the manner they are meant to be used, and attempt to fulfill whatever function your building is meant to perform, and strive to react favourably with the climatic conditions of the area where it is located. How I combine these basic ingredients determines the level of my competence as an architect.

It may surprise a lot of us to realize that in just about every rural village from Morocco to Mongolia, precisely these same principles are applied. The design of a house in Morocco is of course totally different from that in Mongolia. On a smaller scale, the house in a village on the plains of the Punjab is equally radically different from one in the Chittagong hill tracts, although Pakistan and Bangladesh are classified as belonging to the same region — but do they? When a region gets very large it loses its perceptual cohesiveness. This is, in my opinion, one reason why it is so difficult to come up with a valid and workable definition of Islamic Architecture. Different conceptions of what should constitute a valid region is part of the problem of regionalism which architects from Third World countries have to resolve. A search for common characteristics in a vast transcontinental region will inevitably lead to quite generalised conclusions whose design translations run the risk of appearing trite and superficial. How will we define "region", if we are to use regionalism as a source of inspiration in our architecture?

Regionalist strategies are best left to individual architects to develop themselves. The desire to develop a brief for a regionalist approach, based on cultural or political motivations, is elitist for by definition it will result in prescriptions and proscriptions. The pragmatic aspects of regionalism should be primary over the cultural ones, for in essence a regional architecture is the common sense response to regional factors.

An architect attempting to build buildings which respond to regional considerations will do best to think of the region in a contextual sense. Every architect when designing a building attempts to respond to the particularities of the site. Some, more sensitive to the way buildings affect the surrounding fabric, pay attention to contextual issues as well. What I propose is that the region should be seen simply as an extension of the context, the wider or widest context of the building. If this were the case, then buildings more at home on Wall Street could never ever be conceived of sitting on the Streets of Jeddah. Designs that are made using the ingredients that I mentioned earlier, and addressing the requirements of the particular locale and its inhabitants as directly and as faithfully as possible will be appropriate for that particular application.

All sets of ingredients having a similar character will produce an architecture having a similar character, and this will be as Regional as it will be International or vice-versa. How well the design responds to the dictates of those ingredients will mean the difference between good and bad architecture.

In the end, I would like to cite an example which amply demonstrates how regionalism or historic traditions, when imposed on a building for the 20th century, can result in a work where the historic and
traditional is drastically separate and distinct from the actually useful part of the design I refer to Henning Larson's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Although I confess it is a beautiful piece of work, a look at the plan reveals that roughly two-thirds of the area of the building is devoted to the "Street!", courtyards, light wells and fountains, which give the building its traditional "feel", while the remainder of one third, or probably less, of the entire constructed area of the building is left over for the offices of the people who occupy the building.

Since Larson can by no means be termed a bad architect, perhaps all of us would be bound to come up with a solution similar to this if we were to use regional traditions and heritage as the chief overriding design criterion.
Regionalism and Nepalese Architecture

Ranjan Singh Shah

Introduction

When we speak about Regionalism in Architecture, we are trying to find out the very root of Architecture at the macro scale. Architecture being a product of climate, social customs, social values and norms, need not be identical between two countries within a region. A glance at the architecture of a country may give tentative idea about the architecture of the region in which that particular country lies but the study remains incomplete unless we study the regional issues of which it is ultimately a product.

In the architecture of the Indian sub-continent region, we find some resemblance in architectural character, style and constructional techniques, but if we study in depth the architecture of each individual country we find quite a new picture. To some extent, architectural concepts derived from the point of view of the climate are almost identical but socio-cultural tradition and behaviour are reflected quite differently. Architecture is dynamic, continuously adopting new science and technology to fulfil the changing demand of mankind. In the past science and technology remained confined to a particular region where they originated, whereas with the present pace of development in communications, they cannot remain confined and are adopted in various parts of the world. If the architectural style of one country or region is adopted in another country or region, it is modified according to the local environment, socio-cultural background, and religion. Therefore, whilst regional issues create a cohesiveness local issues are embodied in architecture which create uniqueness. If we wish to know why Nepalese architecture is, what it is, we can find answers only in Nepal’s geography, climate, social customs, values and norms.

Architectural issues of Nepal

Nepal is roughly the shape of an uneven rectangle measuring 800 kilometres east to west and 170 kilometres on average from north to south. It extends along the Himalayas between longitude 80° and 83° east, and latitudes 26° and 30° north. Nepal is a land-locked country between China on the north and India on the east, west and south. It exhibits a wide range of terrain with more than 80% of the country covered by hills and mountains. The country is divided into three distinct physical regions running north to south namely the Himalayan Region, the Midland Region and the Terai Region.

The Himalayan Region ranges from 5000 metres to over 8000 metres and contains Mount Everest, the highest mountain peak in the world. This region accounts for about 23% of total land area, and is influenced by Buddhist culture embodied in Lamaist philosophical thought from Tibet across the border to the north. Architecture and other works created under the influence of Buddhist culture have not lost any of their original integrity or intensity of thought and expression. On the contrary, the innate integrity in Sherpa architecture can be traced to the principles on which it is based.

In the valleys of the Khumbu regions architecture is influenced by climate and environment. The roofs of houses however are different from those in Tibet. For whereas in Tibet roofs are flat on account of light rainfall, in Khumbu, as in other regions of central and southern Nepal where rainfall is heavy, they are of the ridge or sloping type. Roofs of houses in Khumbu, though differing from those in Tibet resemble more closely those of houses across the border in Bhutan, south-east of the Himalayas.

Throughout Khumbu, Sherpa villages are the inevitable result of a conscious choice of the sites on which they are built, as well as of a deep respect for traditional and religious principles. An important feature of the villages, which does not strike the onlooker at first sight, but which gradually emerges on further analysis, is the invisible though definite link existing between the scattered groups of houses. Here again the origin of the link is to be found in the Sherpas’ common religious tradition; the link is so strongly...
forged that it has given rise to social integration and firm spiritual unity, which not only permits day-to-day village life to be lived to the full, but also enables the villagers to endure the rigours of an exceptionally harsh environment.

Embedded in the precepts of Tibetan Lamaist tradition and civilisation, the Sherpa villages of Khumbu, despite recent social and political upheavals, are still in the main unspoilt, though the danger of their being spoilt by so-called innovation in the future is ever present.

The Midland region with an altitude from 1000 metres to 5000 metres covers about 60% of total area. The temperatures usually vary from 7°C (mean minimum) to 24°C (mean maximum) with average rainfall of about 1300 millimetres per annum. Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal lies in this region.

For long periods in the past, the Kathmandu valley alone signified the entire kingdom of Ancient Nepal and is very rich in culture, art and architecture. The main originators of the cultural heritage of the valley are the people now known as Newars, an amalgation of ethnically diverse peoples interacting within the environment of the valley, whose cultural achievements over several centuries have become expressive of the contemporary integrated nation as a whole.

With two religions flourishing in the land from early times, Brahmanism and Buddhism, the people of the valley constitute two main religious communities, the Shiva Margis and the Buddha Margis. From earliest known times, Nepali religious life had a spirit not only of toleration but of mutual respect among sects. The religious harmony and sense of mutual respect between the two different religions, Hinduism and Buddhism exists today.

The division of society into these main groups did not interfere with most forms of social activities, although interdining and intermarriage did not occur. The social customs and behaviour of the two religious communities did not deviate seriously.
The rich and unique culture and high religious moral of the people of this valley helped to create unique Art and Architecture. The impact of Tantrism in the valley's religion first manifested itself in the creation of awe-inspiring deities having ferocious forms which resulted in new centres for the worship of certain female divinities among which the Ashta Matrikas were prominent. They included Kumari, Rudrayani, Chaumunda (also Kankashvari or Bhadrakali), Vaishnavi, Indrayani, Brahmayani, Mahalaxmi and Varaki.

In some areas, goddesses worshipped, did not have any sectarian colour, many others did not carry any iconographic form and were represented solely by lumps of stone or symbolised by water vessels. Such goddesses were Vajrajogini, Vajravarahi, Buheshvari, Raktakali, Naradevi, Talaju, Sankata, Ugratera and Annapurna.

Religious festivals are often highlighted by masked dancing in which people wear masks and costumes to represent the divinities and enact tales of their exploits. Some of the noted masked troupes in the valley are those of Navdurga of Bhadaon, Mahakali dance, Bhairab and Bhakhu of Kathmandu.

The towns of the Kathmandu valley are liberally interspersed and beautified with religious architectural features such as the temples, Viharas, Chaityas, water conduits, monolithic pillars holding aloft the statues of the kings and patis or public resting places, which were all intimately associated with the everyday socio-religious life.
Settlement pattern

Based on geographical, socio-cultural and religious factors the early inhabitants of the valley reached a relatively unique and advanced stage of urban culture. The man-made environment we see in the valley today can be considered largely the work of man on nature during the last three hundred years.

Centuries of habitation in the valley have illustrated that religious and rich cultural impact on man is an important factor in the creation of the existing physical setting. Most of the prominent settlements of the valley date back to the beginning of the Malla period (13th to 18th centuries) and have remained in the compact forms that were established then. Closely spaced houses with narrow streets and small courtyards are located mostly on upland, plains between or along rivers and are uniformly built of burnt and unburnt clay bricks.

In spite of variations in size, geographic location and economic activities of their inhabitants, the settlements are not radically different from one another irrespective of whether they were called towns or village. They are far from merely smaller or larger conglomerations of single housing units designed to provide shelter, they form institutional and social units for performing the various functions involved in the life of the people.

Settlement pattern of Kathmandu city core.
Aside from the historic necessity for defence and the need for proximity to cultivated fields, the compact form of vertically oriented living is motivated by a strong concern for preserving the rich agricultural land and avoiding its inefficient use.

Most towns and villages have some direct association with gods or temples. The central area of the town is marked by an open space upon which streets and roads converge. Often the space is the site of the temple to the village god, forming along with the water pond(s) the nucleus around which the settlement grows. This association of the settlements with the physical structures dedicated to the gods is very important to their organisation. There are two major patterns. The temples may be within the care of the settlements, set in extensive open spaces, as the temples in Kirtipur dedicated to Bag Bairab and in Bungamati dedicated to the Machhendranath, or they may be outside the settlement, as Vajravarni at Chapagaon or Vajrajogini at Sankhu.

This layout is not oriented toward horizontal expansion so population growth occurs vertically. Naturally, the detailed settlement plans differ according to the geographic characteristics of the site. Generally, the streets of most settlements are more or less straight, often forming fairly rectangular patterns. The streets are mostly brick paved and the houses, of rather uniform height, seldom over three and one-half storeys, built on either side and have at least the brick walls of the compounds adjoining. Those enclosing a courtyard are sometimes secular outgrowths of earlier monastic units and are termed bahals — this is particularly true in the cities. In most courtyards there are small free-standing shrines called chaityas, and particularly in bahals there is a shrine within the ground floor of the building. Of functional and visual importance are the open ponds and water tanks existing in each settlement. They are found either in partially or totally enclosed courtyards or frequently as twin ponds at either end of the main road; often near an archway or gate. These factors coupled with a lack of utilised housing spaces within the compact settlements create a generally homogeneous character throughout.

Of distinctly different character are the habitations and settlements of the people who came to the valley after the Gurkha conquest. These groups of people were not generally as well integrated or as closely knit as the Newar society. Families, representing a variety of castes and occupational groups, were more independent. The resulting settlements were dispersed rather than a compact grouping of houses. Traditionally mountain people, these newcomers settled mostly along the mountain rim in areas of differentiated slopes. Soil quality and fertility were insufficient to support large concentrations of people. Development patterns show major differences between the Newar settlements, where primary considerations were defence and social continuity, and the later dispersed settlements where there was little concern about defence and less social unity to maintain.

The Terai region is the plain in the southern part of the country and covers approximately 17% of total land area, averaging only 300 metres above sea level. The climate is tropical with temperature ranging from 11°C to 41°C. This belt alone produces 60% of the total agricultural production and supports about 33% of the total population. This physical division of the country does not have uniqueness in its culture, art and architecture. It has architecture which is derived from and similar to Indo-Aryan peoples of northern India. This group includes Brahmin, Rajput, Tharu, Rajbansi, Dhimal, Satar and Muslim.

Regionalism and Nepalese architecture

Nepal is a divine nation in view of its art and architecture and harmony between man, religion and nature, under diverse ecological settings.

The Kathmandu valley is considered the museum of Nepal's culture, art and architecture. The city of Kathmandu was famous as a city of temples and festivals. The essence of her richness in culture and architecture one can still experience. Nature has played a primary role in shaping Nepalese architecture. The unity between different ethnic group has enabled this country to remain a place of peace and safety. The country remained virtually cut-off from the outside world until the middle of this century.

The unique architectural features of the Kirati, Lichhavi, and Malla period are a reflection of the civilisation up to 7th century B.C. and there is much evidence of architectural progress in that period. The city called Devpatan was established along the bank of Bagmati river in that period and brick houses with tile roof were constructed.

The description of buildings given by Chinese traveller in the 6th century A.D. shows the advanced development of architecture achieved by the people of Nepal of that period.

From the historical point of view Kathmandu city was planned in the form of the sword of the goddess Manjushree. During the Malla period the art of making wooden carved windows flourished and at the same time the soil of the valley being suitable, many houses were built of brick.

With the fast pace of modern development, new cheap materials have been introduced in building construction. These days traditional materials cannot be afforded by common man, and have become a status symbol. The haphazard import of modern
technology, ignoring economic and social factor and the effect of the mass media has had quite an adverse effect on traditional architecture.

If we don’t take it seriously then in the future we may have identity problem. We are accepting all the new developments in the name of modernisation. Our main problem is to explore our need first and to develop ideas acceptable to our socio-cultural and economic background. How far it is practical to import ideas or technique is a subject for architects to explore.

Different parts of the world have different identity and that is due to geographical condition. Geographical and climatic conditions are the factors which cause the evolution of the life-style of society and their food habits for example. All these factors ultimately influence the development of an architectural style. Architecture develops according to the regional conditions and Nepal in this case cannot be an exception. One can see the environmental effect clearly in the Nepalese architecture, whether it is medieval or modern architecture, whether urban or rural.

The developed countries of the world are experiencing a big technological leap. Importing technology or borrowing new ideas without thinking often proves to be a costly affair both socially and economically.

If we do not analyse problems and make our needs clear and if we blindly follow this may lead to hazards which underdeveloped country like ours cannot sustain. Technology should always be adopted in such a way that it should satisfy our regional or local needs. We should not dream of high rise building or skyscrapers when there is much space still left to be utilised.

Rural architecture mainly involves shelter problems. Architecture in this situation should be down to earth and does not require high sounding principles. It does not believe in monumentality or sculptor or costly additions. In the solving of such problems the use of locally available materials and technology should be encouraged. Rural architecture should be very practical. This is clearly visible if we study any rural houses in detail anywhere in the world.

Local builders have almost left behind their old traditional architecture and use the new technology whether good or bad. This is because of the communication of ideas and new cheap imitations which have arrived. Even the technocrats of the developing countries imagine high and think about American and Europe. Thus our architectural style and heritage have been endangered and this tendency should be checked if we really want to keep our identity alive.

Most of the developed or semi-developed countries of the world offer training and education in architecture to students from developing countries. They only teach irrelevant history or new technological development unsuitable for the student’s regional situation. As a result, a student faced with the practical situation, designs or solves the problem as he was taught. He is often incapable of judging the prevailing values and needs of the region. This just adds one more complexity to the existing problem. Architectural education should emphasise the regional problems and appropriate technology, better still institutions should be established within every region to study architecture in the regional situation.

I wish to conclude that Regionalism in Architecture must be respected, for, it is the foundation on which architecture stands. It seems worthless to talk about architecture without considering its origin and simultaneously consider the preservation and modernisation of Regional Architecture. I feel that architects should be sincere and honest in their profession, respecting the regional factors which I have outlined.

All photographs and illustrations courtesy of Ranjan Singh Shah
Old Dhaka — A Case for Conservation

Khaleda Rashid
Haroon Ur Rashid

Introduction

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, has grown from a small trading centre to a metropolis. In the process of growth, shifts in importance of sub-areas have occurred, but the old part of the city has never really lost its importance. Despite the loss of official and political patronage Old Dhaka has continually adjusted to its new role. It serves important economic, social and cultural functions not only for the whole city but for the hinterland as well. Notwithstanding its importance, Old Dhaka conjures up images of squalor, filth, deteriorating structures, inadequate services and congestion of all kinds. Deterioration continues unabated.

Need for redevelopment

Apparently appalled by the deplorable state, public officials, politicians and even conscientious citizens assert the need for action, but there is an absence of clear policy or direction to be followed. The critical questions of redevelopment as to ‘how’, ‘where’ and ‘to what purpose’ remain unresolved.

Nature of redevelopment

To the satisfaction of ‘physical determinists’ and the consternation of ‘conservationists’ some recommendations of the Master Plan are being implemented in Old Dhaka. Most officials and politicians are firmly wedded to the belief that physical ordering is the panacea to all urban ills. A ‘good’ environment (if ever the judgement is value free) is no doubt, an asset but by no means the only one necessary for a good life: physical environment alone, has little effect on human behaviour or welfare. Can we seriously expect that the position of a wall is going to make us happy rather than unhappy.

The problems of Old Dhaka are rooted in social, economic, political and administrative complexity. They can hardly be corrected by ‘surface scratching’ in the name of physical ordering. Programmes and projects for redevelopment must be framed; ... keeping the needs of the ultimate “client” in mind. Prescriptions that violate the social, cultural, political and organisational traditions, simply will not work.

Unfortunately most literature on urban development and redevelopment in Bangladesh advocates physical solutions alone. Little is the realisation that it is the so-called ‘unplanned’ environment that has given Dhaka its sustenance from time immemorial. Old Dhaka has an innate character and strength similar to that found by Fonseca in Old Delhi. The excitement and life found in Old Dhaka are to a great extent due to the cheerful chaos randomly built into it. The fact that Old Dhaka still serves vital social and economic functions tells of the vitality and strength of the culture that produced it.

Cities which do not conform to western concepts of design and planning are not aberrations. It is the circumstances, culture, society, politics and economy, of their origin and growth that make them different. They are in no way obsolete. Such cities have to be understood and evaluated in terms different from those used in other cultures. There is more to a city than the eyes can see or the ears can hear. The dynamic elements of movement, activities, culture and life-styles are as integral to the composition of the city as are the physical elements. Cities cannot be studied on a preconceived notion of adequacy and standards. Time, culture and context have to be recognised. How else can the difference in morphology of occidental, middle eastern or oriental cities be explained? Cities are products of unique situations of their origin. Cities are not only physical but social, cultural, economic and political entities as well. It is in this sense that Christopher Alexander has equated city planning to ‘design of culture’. Old Dhaka has its own culture, tradition and problems, all peculiarly its own. Its transformation into the illusive
and not too clear phenomenon called, 'modern' is as unrealistic as the attainment of Utopia.

How do we improve and preserve the services, activities and structures that give life and character to the community and at the same time control them sufficiently to maintain the social fabric of the environment? A rigid 'master plan' or an 'urban renewal' programme cannot serve the purpose of urban design in which change and growth are essential determinants of order. Urban design cannot be 'form' alone. Social and cultural commitments must precede the design process without concern for the technique or shapes through which the community may finally be translated into physical entity. Environments are products of a dynamic order.

Technology with its accompanying complexities, increasing knowledge and lagging wisdom casts great doubts on our ability to comprehend the destiny of a community. In the face of such dynamism can we synthesize all the dimensions of change, predict, and design the future? Perhaps there are architects and urban planners who lay claims to a clear vision of the future. Such confidence, however, has failed to produce 'desirable results'. Paul Rudolph's comment says it all:

The 20th century has not built great cities (not even workable ones) but the idea of recreating the monuments of the past will not solve any problems at all, not even aesthetic ones.

Master plan for the future have let us down. Evidence is not hard to come by. The adverse effects of the Master Plan for Aleppo in Syria are well documented as being disruptive of the community fabric and links with the past. Contextually speaking, 'physical' solutions to problems rooted in the dynamics of socio-cultural growth and change can only bring misery and hardship to the community. They seem efficient in prospect but prove ineffective in retrospect. The social, economic and human costs of such actions are much too extensive to be ignored:

... for the people involved, urban renewal is no rosy dream. It is a hair-raising, long-drawn out nightmare, disrupting home and community.

Urban redevelopment cannot be premised on the assumption that communities of urban poor are cancerous growth on the social body. The problems lie in poverty. Physical environment is important but less pressing than job security, work satisfaction, adequate income, family life, avoidance of social isolation, peace of mind or social mobility. Social, economic and urban planning are different aspects of the same story.

If preservation of community is our aim, links with the past our dream, and conservation our tool, then Old Dhaka can reassert itself in word and spirit as a city precinct, truly pleasant, humane and proud of its heritage.

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**Conservation**

Conservation is not used here in a narrow sense to describe redevelopment of older areas of cities and towns by a process of rebuilding, preservation and adaptive use of old buildings. The wider context of the term includes the conservation of life-style, community relationship, man-made and natural environment and the sustainable utilisation of resources. This is not to be construed as an advocacy of maintaining the status quo, but as letting the community adjust to changes on its own, with minimum necessary external intervention.

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**Perceived problems of Old Dhaka**

The problems of Old Dhaka as perceived by the users, community leaders and trained experts match closely with what is obvious to an unobtrusive observer. There are some points of deviation. This may be assigned more to lack of exposure to the planning process than to ignorance or apathy. The problems of Old Dhaka are:

a) Inadequate Services:

The population of Old Dhaka has increased enormously but there has not been a commensurate increase and improvement in the public service delivery. About 42% of the premises in Old Dhaka have no sewer connections. Pit and service latrines are common. Though Dhaka Municipal Corporation is responsible for the maintenance of the latrines, they are ill-serviced. Most surface drains are in a bad state of repair and maintenance. Clogged drains with stagnant water is a rule not an exception. Most low income groups depend on public standpipes, while high and medium income groups have piped water in their premises. Bathing and washing in dirty, filthy water is common. The streets are mostly dark at night. Garbage is strewn all over — into sewer pipes through open manholes; into surface drains and the river; and even on the streets.

b) Congestion

Traffic: Streets designed for horse carriages, elephants and foot traffic are now being used by pushcarts, rickshaws, cars and trucks as well as pedestrians. Public transportation is under-developed and mal-administered. Traffic jams in Old Dhaka are a way of life. The narrow, tortuous roads and alleys are further constricted by public standpipes, hawkers and spill-over of business onto the streets. Pavements are literally absent. To be a pedestrian in these parts is a precarious experience.
Structures and People  The residential density of Old Dhaka is 313 persons to an acre⁹. If the number of people working in the area is included the gross density will be much higher. A conservative estimate of person-room ratio is 7.5 in the residential quarters of Old Dhaka¹⁰. Most of the structures stand shoulder to shoulder without the minimum of open space necessary for light and air. The area seems very dense in terms of population and buildings but this is more apparent than real. The average FAR in Chawk Bazaar was found to be only 0.85¹¹. Old Dhaka lacks open spaces and parks. There are only 17 acres of open space for over 6,000,000 people. These too are being impinged upon by hawkers and unscrupulous groups of individuals.

c) Deteriorating Structures:
Old Dhaka has an intimate mix of uses and building types: Permanent, Semi-permanent, Temporary structures and Jhupris stand side by side*. On an

*Permanent: Walls of burnt bricks, cement or stone and roofs of reinforced bricks, concrete, tiles or asbestos sheets
Semi-permanent: Walls as in permanent structure, but roofs of galvanised iron sheets (GIS) and timber
Temporary: Walls and roofs of materials such as unbuilt bricks, bamboo, grass reeds or thatches
Jhupri: Squatter huts usually made of reeds, thatches or even scrubs

Source: Bangladesh Housing Census, 1984.
average 71% of the structures are given to residential use, 17% to commercial and the rest to other uses. Of the structures 45% are permanent Generally structures along major thoroughfares have a predominance of commercial use. The taller and permanent buildings tend to cluster along transportation arteries. Permanent structures vary from one to three with occasional four, five or even six-storeyed buildings. The distribution of use and building typology are conclusive evidence that most commercial uses are housed in permanent buildings.

Old buildings in dilapidated condition and very bad state of repair are still in use. Deaths from building collapse are known to occur. Old Dhaka is replete with buildings of great architectural beauty, historical, religious and cultural significance. They are an eloquent testimony to our history, culture and tradition. In more ways than one these buildings are ‘image’ of the past with which people still identify Old Dhaka. Sadly enough much has been lost and if the present conditions persist many of these structures will be lost forever.
Recommendation

Old Dhaka represents a vibrant environment in the process of dilapidation and decay. It is neither self-evident that redevelopment programme should follow community desires nor that activities of Old Dhaka be completely disrupted to fit in what architects or urban designers may believe to be the inevitable future. A balance between the two points of view based on the past and partly on future prospects would appear to offer a viable policy to be adopted in the present.

Spontaneous construction

Cities are in a continuous process of change. With or without government intervention changes in use, renovation and rebuilding takes place. This is the original and the most normal form of redevelopment. The owner at an opportune moment undertakes the action himself. This is still the case everywhere. Old Dhaka is no exception. The trend however, presents a paradox, it is both encouraging in the sense that private initiative and capital are being used for redevelopment, but unfortunate because there is little evidence in the history of land development that the private decision maker, left to his own devices, can be trusted to act in the public interest.

Private redevelopment efforts have created pockets of intensive activity and density leading the way for other sub-areas of similar potentials to follow suit. Such actions erode open spaces, neglect community needs, destroy historic environments, disrupt traditional, functional and physical linkages not to mention the exacerbation of the existing problems.

Bangladesh, a land hungry country, cannot afford the luxury of considering property owner’s freedom to build as being innate and inviolable. The right to build is designated. Steps have to be taken to:

a) Formulate and enforce controls and regulations which encourage redevelopment responsive to community needs and conducive to the promotion of a viable environment. Essential as the tool of controls are, caution must be exercised. Both the carrot and the stick must be used. Over zealous controls stifle creativity and initiatives which we seek to encourage and guide.

b) Prepare a register of buildings of architectural, historic, religious or cultural interest and assure their continued use and maintenance through adaptive use, such as community centres, libraries or offices.

c) Prepare a list of buildings in extreme dilapidated conditions which pose a danger to safety of the inhabitants. These buildings should be demolished without delay.

Congestion and density

It is widely accepted that judgement on density and congestion is not value free. For the moment they may surface as problems but given the bleak alternative; the poverty of people and government, and the dynamics of social change, community perception may change for the better. Old Dhaka still has a density below many Asian cities. Congestion per se is not a problem, but a manifestation of poor management. Widening roads or relieving population pressure may temporarily ease the conscience, but may not cure the disease. Huge investment alone cannot ensure enhanced quality of life. Attention to small things coupled with imagination may substantially enhance vitality and strength of old areas without necessitating huge capital outlays. A series of low-cost improvements may bring greater benefit to more people at lesser cost than would a few well-intentioned high investment projects.

The economic climate and lack of political commitment make it necessary to achieve urban redevelopment and improve people’s everyday environment by means which must be economic in use of resources and sustainable and less disruptive of communities. Low cost improvement to the outdoor environment fit the circumstances of Old Dhaka. They have the advantage of flexibility and can easily be tailored to suit local needs. They can be introduced on an experimental basis and withdrawn if not found to work. Low cost improvements are a sustainable programme aimed at continuous enhancement of the quality of urban life. The role of an architect, urban designer or the planning agency in such programmes will be guidance and co-ordination. The ward committees and citizens should be encouraged to participate in planning, implementation and maintenance of such improvements. With proper motivation the local organisations can pool their financial and human resources to improve their environment. The focus here is on outdoor environment, the open spaces, the street and alleys.

a) Open spaces, parks and playgrounds are essential to the life of a community. Resource constraints and high value of land make it virtually impossible to provide more spaces in the near or distant future. As an alternative the existing open spaces can be improved, if necessary landscaped. There are small alleys and roads which are seldom used by vehicles. These roads and alleys can be closed to vehicles, landscaped and converted to beautiful parks to the benefit of everyone.

b) Roadside standpipes and garbage bins are hindrances to circulation. They can be recessed in nooks and corners. It should not be difficult to find such spaces. The present condition is a result of
indifference and thoughtlessness of the concerned officials.

c) Traffic congestion is an off-shoot of lack of management. Area licensing, separation of traffic by modes and direction, and strict adherence to traffic rules should improve Old Dhaka considerably. Even in places of high car ownership pedestrian circulation is emphasised, but in Old Dhaka, where a large number of the population walks, pavements do not exist. Investigation into creation of pedestrian malls may be worthwhile experience.

Public utilities and services

Provision of adequate public utilities and services is generally expensive. Even developed countries are finding it hard to cater to the increasing demands. A comprehensive plan for water supply and sewerage of Dhaka was shelved in the 1960s not because of technical faults but because of high cost. Viewed from a wider perspective it is evident that inadequate services are chronic to Dhaka as a whole. An adequately serviced Old Dhaka may remain a dream, but there is scope for improvement. Instead of aspiring towards attainment of an idealised state of services, appropriate solution may be designed and innovative management tools tried out. Even relatively primitive methods of waste disposal and water supply, if properly established, maintained and monitored can bring benefits to the community.

Conclusion

Where constraints are many and competing demands on finance numerous, ingenuity, imagination and creativity are our only hope. In the absence of basic necessities of life idealised dreams of the future are a luxury. We have to come to terms with reality. The architectural profession is in a unique position to spread the message of conservation. We can further the cause of sustainable environment by being economic in the use of resources and by conservation of both natural and man-made features. The interest in conservation must be kindled and upheld. Unless this is done by local and national administration, by the people and interested organisations, future generations will only learn about old cities through books and documents. Lost forever will be our link with the past, our tradition, culture and heritage. Preserving and improving on what we have is the key to a viable future for old cities and communities.
Introduction

‘Old City’ conjures an image of dilapidated buildings, narrow twisting lanes and traffic congestions. To most people, it has long ceased to be a desirable place to live. Is this image representative of all areas of the old city? An outsider would mistake the bustling bazaars and chowks for the old city, and apply a uniform palette indiscriminately. He cannot be blamed for it, for his only interaction with the old city is because of the goods and services it offers. The residential mohallas on the other hand are hidden behind the bazaar facade and pass unnoticed. There is little point in measuring the bazaar in terms of ‘liveability’, whereas the mohallas — the residential enclaves, are the only indigenous urban model. If the old city is measured as ‘a place to live’ it should be done here and this paper concentrates on this area.

To term these mohallas static would be far from truth. Whilst a few socially destablised mohallas such as Shankari Bazaar and Tanti Bazaar may fit this picture, they are the scars left behind by the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and the exodus of national minorities. Most mohallas have participated in vigorous rebuilding. Early this century records show most houses were of mud, topped with thatch, which have long ago given way to brick and concrete. A walk through these mohallas will show brisk rebuilding activity.

True, even in these mohallas buildings have an unfinished, uncared for look, but the reasons are more earthly and universal. The municipal rates are fixed on the basis of an assumed yearly rental value, a difficult exercise in a non-rental, owner-occupant society. The rates had been fixed decades ago and passed on without adjustment and by today’s standard are extremely

Fig 1 Old Dhaka showing the malitola mohalla
meagre. Residents take undue care to keep the rates unchanged and depressed. Even when new additions are built efforts are made either to hide it or pass it off as old. Complete rebuilding would result in a drastic jump in rates and in such cases the building exterior is left unplastered allowing for negotiations on whether the building is under construction, completed or commissioned.

While the look, finish or care bestowed on physical built-up areas is important, it would perhaps be wise to skirt the issue by differentiating between 'beautiful' and 'good'. The values of 'good' have greater aesthetic content among architect and the value may not be equally shared by the residents of the mohallas. In this paper, house is measured on the level of form, i.e. lay-out, arrangement of rooms, open and covered spaces, privacy, and the pattern in the collective housing form, the arrangement of houses.

The misconception, of identifying old city with 'Old' may be simply a case of improper labelling. After all, what is 'old' in old city, is definitely not its buildings. To a large extent the population can be termed traditional and because of their longer urban history have distinct life-style, language and mannerism. All this gives a definite but undefinable 'milieu' peculiar to that area. What definitely is 'old' is the urban fabric, the pattern of streets, the arrangement of houses. If we replace 'Old' for 'native' we are on firmer conceptual ground and can view old city as a contemporary native city. (In colonial period it was called so, but 'native' then had a derogatory connotation and was later abandoned in favour of 'Old City'.)

Urban house in transition

The paper concentrates on a centrally located area (Ward-22) comprising of mohallas Malitola and Purana Mughaltuli and attempts to chart the development of urban house-form in different epochs. The field work (1980) is supplemented by the following documents.

- C.S. maps 1912–15 (8" to a mile)
- S.A. map 1958–63 (8" to a mile)
- Unpublished map 1974 (80" to a mile) (Directorate of Land Record and Survey)
- Aerial photo 1957–58 (1:10,000)
- Aerial photo 1974–75 (1:20,000) (Survey of Bangladesh)

The map of 1974 shows 2 distinct patterns. A third pattern is emerging, yet to make its mark on official maps. In the understanding and explanation of these 3 pattern it may be possible to decipher the essential cultural demands on house-form, the changing physical articulation and isolate future trends.

The first pattern is perhaps the oldest (or earliest)
urban residential form and reached its present built-up area in pre-colonial period. The house/land is elongated and of extreme configurations such as 10 feet × 100 feet (3 metres × 30 metres) to 14 feet × 180 feet (4.5 metres × 60 metres). The built-up area is extreme, almost filling the land, 2 to 3 storey in height. The house-form is as enigmatic to us as it was to early European travellers. Under such land shape a house could only be a series of rooms connected by a narrow passage, with no openings on either side.

There are one or two small courts, for air and light but in general, the interiors 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 ad hoc and cumulative.

Fig. 4 The oldest pattern, Golakpal Lane

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Fig. 5 Houses in the oldest pattern, 34 and 38 Golakpal Lane
Two questions are posed; why such unliveable houses and secondly, why such extreme sub-division (and densification) in an otherwise declining town?

Native towns grew with total dependence on water bodies, — rivers, canals and ponds, and a complex network of water channels, natural and man-made. Urban form took advantage of the topography and was dependent on it for drinking water, waste disposal, transport and communication. In the Bengali house privacy dictated an autonomy, both in access and service. As such in the scheme of things, sub-division in that era had to take account of the street (front) and service (back) progressively creating the pattern. An initial stage of this sub-division (plots of 10 feet × 100 feet or 3 metres × 30 metres) did not create unliveable houses. The ‘house’ was a distribution of huts, only the ‘out house’ having a public appearance. The contract between the house and land was violated when greater build-up nullified these ‘liveable’ qualities.

Why such pressure on land in a dying town (the population had been diminishing and reached the lowest figures of 51,000 in 1838)? Mohallas were caste/craft enclaves, closed compartments with specific groups residing in specific sites. The social order allowed little physical mobility and one could find a loosely built, low-density neighbourhood next to a dense one with only a tract of water, a ditch or waste land separating them.

With the decline of native towns and the passing of the ‘ancien regime’ the canal based drainage system decayed. The picture drawn by a sanitary inspector can only be slightly exaggerated when he says, “since I have been a sanitary engineer I have seen a good deal of the filth of the big municipalities of Bengal, but never has it been my lot to have to inspect anything so revolting as I have seen in Dacca” (1899).

The municipality (1864) was created because of the threat to public health and organised service was slowly introduced during this period. Till recently human waste was collected from privies, hand carted to collection points and disposed to out-fall areas by underground sewer mains. Individual household connection to water and sewers are even more recent.

With organised service the house reverted to traditional form — the second pattern. This pattern is popular and persistent, the house is built around an uthan (court). In a few affluent mohallas it attained a pucca and multi-storied build-up.

Organised waste disposal was the enabling factor and sub-division created a complex network of front access lanes and back service lanes, absent in earlier patterns.

Euphemistically put, the much denigrated lanes and by-lanes were produced to create ‘good’ houses.
Greater pressure or demand on land meant greater built-up area or more crowding. The uthan adds a cultural dimension, by defining a minimum buildable land, by offering a logical house lay-out and finally vouching for its quality. Put more simply house qualities were pegged on the uthan and made apparent the close ties between land and house.

The field work shows the pattern of today, the third pattern. Sub-divisions now are in lots of 20 feet × 30 feet (6 metres × 10 metres) or less. Is it merely due to the pressure on land or a belief that any land, even this small, offers a house. The flats, patronised in New City (mostly as accommodation of Government employees) may have inspired the pattern. The downward definition of house as vertical multiplication of ground lot has made all land buildable. Individual access to piped services may have helped in bringing a discrete and loose Bengali house-form under a single roof but it has released all constraints on land sub-division.

Flats have been projected as a panacea, most people believe it to be so, but the question here is not the qualities or advantages of flats but its appropriateness and place in the historic fabric of the native city.

Flat is another colonial legacy, to it we owe the bungalows, the civil lines and the cantonments. They appeared in the post-colonial period, locally termed as Colonies*. Flats, as units of urban-form, need large chunks of land, large set-backs, a centralised sponsorship and lastly a more complex design skill, all of which are absent in mohallas. Where such a pattern exists can this new house-form be accommodated? Further sub-division is going on however and the process is irreversible.

The new flats that are built, show a very inefficient lay-out while the house proclaims an illusive standard of ‘liveability’. If such rebuilding becomes widespread it will nullify whatever benefits it lays claim to.

An historic parallel can be drawn, between the first and last pattern. Both were induced by an unknown house-form, a house not conceived around the uthan. Without the safe hand of tradition, house-building goes out of popular competence and the resultant residential form is oppressive and redundant. Field study shows that a large land parcel does not necessarily result in a ‘good’ house. ‘Bad’ houses were built even in larger plots in earlier eras only when the lay-out grew without the reference of a court.

**Conclusion**

In this paper house and land has been used synonymously, not inadvertently but to highlight the close connection between them. Culture dictates such close intimacy and interdependence. Bengali house is conceived on land a structured arrangement of open and covered spaces, ‘good’ land yielding ‘good’ houses. Here ‘good’ has cultural dimensions, the only worthwhile measure in housing. Sub-division imbues these values and only results in smaller such houses, setting its own limit.

Against this, the present-day sub-division has delinked the close ties. The new house-form (flat-typology) has meant the effective demise of the uthan. In larger houses for the affluent, westernised population group this may create little problem but in minimal houses it is of far greater importance. The uthan makes up for many of the inadequacies of the covered spaces.

In sociological terms, the uthan is the only open space at domestic level a domain created primarily for females and children. There is no equivalent or substitute for this space in the old city mohallas.

Finally, this pattern if it ever reaches maturity by gradual build-up will ultimately create the much dreaded ‘permanent slum’, and unlike the past build-up, it will not be restricted to a few old mohallas but representative of the whole of the ‘Old City’.

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*Interestingly, the cheap rental tenements, (usually of bamboo and cast iron sheet roofing) present throughout the old city mohallas are also locally termed ‘colony’.

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**Fig 8 Organisation in the mohalla — second pattern houses supported by front/access and back/service network.**
Fig 9 Present-day sub-division for minimal houses. The lot (parcel) measures 16' x 30'.
The house measures 20'x27' of covered space/floor. 2 rooms (16'x15', 10'x10')./floor kitchen, toilet in first floor.

Fig 10 Sub-division for minimal houses, 'flats' in mohallas, 25 Malitola Lane.
Fig. 11 Houses without uthan, 7/8 Parana Mughaltuli Lane
Session III
Panel Discussion

*William Curtis — Chairman*

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**Raj Rewal**

It is very important that we try to bring back some of the qualities of Old Dhaka into the run of the mill housing schemes and buildings which we are doing today. In that context the courtyard becomes an important feature though we have to consider all the other elements of design. We know very little about *mohallas*, how the *mohallas* in Lahore vary from those in the Punjab or Rajasthan. Do all these *mohallas* have a cohesive culture? They are dying out as new parts of the cities are being developed and I feel we should give the community life a chance once again. It's a very important thing where there are perhaps thirty-two families who live together they begin to have an affinity with a certain kind of space and feel part of it, they begin to defend it, they want to keep it clean, they attach values to it as their own common space.

**William Curtis**

I think the point on tradition could be called a “critical” one. One approach would be to see what the “standard” Delhi housing was like, say, fifteen years ago. One could argue without too much trouble that it was problematic sociologically not to mention formally and urbanistically. Then one looks back further at housing that is better and says why not get back to this but in a reasonable way that transforms it. History is used in a totally irrelevant way, either by hanging onto a type for dear life on the grounds that it’s a cultural index of some sort even when it is climatically wrong or it doesn’t suit a programme. The more obvious kind of abuse of history is reduction to a play with motifs. There is a difference between a profound transformation of ideas from the past and that kind of “light play” with images and motifs which often leads to inappropriateness in design. I don’t think that this problem is going to go away when addressing the question of regionalism in Bangladesh. I would like to know what you think about your heritage, and also how you are teaching it in the architecture schools.

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**Meer Mobashsher Ali**

I would like to come back to Louis Kahn’s building which is very significant in architecture in Bangladesh. I wonder if he was familiar with this area or if he took regionalism as a principle. The administration at that time looked for a very big architect. It could have been any of three or four architects who were big names in the world at that time. The building is definitely an imposition, it is western, foreign and it did not grow out of the social or even physical conditions. The form came to his head and I think his background was more important than the local conditions. Secondly it is overpowering by its size, it is overpowering by the big name it has. A form of this dimension has to make an impression on the minds of the people and that’s why our local architects imitate it and you find all over Dhaka, that efforts have been made to in some way relate their buildings to this. I’d like to make another point, that here was a tremendous chance to enjoy liberty. He had a free hand to do whatever he wanted to do and I think he wanted to create great architecture and not regional architecture at all, he wanted to make history.

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**William Curtis**

Are they contradictory?

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**Meer Mobashsher Ali**

He tried to explain as his justification that Bangladesh is dependent on water, so he put water around the building. Then he said the rural buildings are made by making mounds, so he made the platform. I think this justification is a bit trite. It is not exactly a very strong bond to relate it to the local culture.
William Curtis

This raises the question again; is the Louis Kahn building any more foreign than the Mughal buildings? How much is it a matter simply of time: it seems to me one paradox about all regional discussions in the architectural world today, is that the really fortunate nations are those who have been run over by the most cultivated empires early in their history! Then it's called heritage. If it happens recently it's called colonialism.

Meer Mobashsher Ali

No! No! I'll try to answer that. In Mughal buildings the buildings motifs are identifiable, the arch, the small openings, the various articulations with which people are familiar. The scale and the proportions of Kahn's building are such that it has a local bias, but it is still more difficult to call it regional than a Mughal building.

William Curtis

This may be so. I'm certainly not wanting to promote Kahn. What it does however raise is another question about tradition. Consciously or unconsciously, more than 90% of the architects working in Bangladesh are in some manner or another coping with Kahn. This raises the question of transformation of a major transfer, that has come and placed itself here. It seems to me there are parallel problems with Corbusier. I agree exactly with some of the content of your analysis, but not all of it because it seems to me that Charles Correa and Doshi in particular are two people who learnt a little bit about architecture from Le Corbusier. One is reminded that architecture doesn't have to fit into a national boundary. It might just have certain qualities as a medium which are international and (dare I use the word) universal. Their problem has been to take onboard some of those qualities and reject others. That is how traditions are formed too and I think there is a real distinction between Dhaka airport for example which has little circles stuck on the outside of a concrete frame and really getting into the guts of Kahn. You don't have to go all the way with Kahn's form. You get to the level of his transformation and you can use him as a gateway to the past, not as a block against it. That paradox, which is an artistic paradox needs to be recognised. If you want to avoid him that's fine too. There is still the problem of where the modern schemata will come from. Do you let them passively arrive from the constructional system or from programmes or bubble-diagrams or something like that, or is there a level within the transformational apparatus which comes from somewhere else? That is why one cannot get away from the problem of the international architectural culture in defining regionalism.

Meer Mobashsher Ali

I agree with your assessment but I conclude that Louis Kahn's building is becoming a symbol to people. Are we happy that this architecture is being accepted by people and it is gradually becoming a symbol?

Jamel Akbar

We talked about the multi-use of space and spaces. That raises a question that I have had in mind for a long time. Through observation in the Middle East I find that names of spaces are always positional and it is not like Western culture where they give names for functions like bedroom, living room, and so on. The names in the Middle East are often in vernacular and positional, like frontyard, backyard, attic space, basement and so on. They are used differently for different functions. Almost all elements are positional and not functional. I don't know if such an investigation has been carried out but this could lead to a typology of vernacular spaces. This would hopefully clarify or explain the value judgement of society and could make the question of regionalism much clearer to architects when they intervene. Through observation of traditional environment certain elements are recognised like the courtyard and so on. We should not forget the traditional environment was not designed by the architect, it was made by people through pragmatic decisions over time, through trial and error and we cannot simply look at the result and try to imitate it. For example take a gate, the gate is traditionally one of the signs of territory and a gate which gives into a courtyard is totally controlled by the users. They clean it, they own it, and to design an environment that resembles the traditional without giving the user the ability to control the space or to totally own the gate suggests to me a problem will arise. I don't know the answer to that. That is a problem for all of us and the question of process versus a finished product. We are looking at the traditional environment as a finished product, but somehow neglecting the process behind it.

William Curtis

I think that's a very good point. What one is seeing operating in a vernacular is really crystallised in a set of forms, type-forms, on the basis of which an extraordinary variety of particular conditions can be
handled with great elegance. By 'elegance' I don't mean beauty, I mean constructional elegance, economic elegance, all sorts of refinements of that sort. Given that the building process is now a very different one that usually involves some degree of industrialisation of elements can there not be a way of reading the underlying type-forms of the vernacular, of reading the generic forms of the present day and then of making a happy marriage between the two.

Kenneth Frampton

All over the world the professional architect is bound up with the enlightenment in one way or another. For this reason the legacy of Utopia still wanders around the profession like a ghost. One of the big issues here is the hope that we can, if we try hard enough, effect a kind of reconciliation through architecture. We somehow have the idea that we can reconcile the irreconcilable. It would perhaps be better for us if we learnt to accept from the outset, a certain level of perennial contradiction. It would be better for us, in the end, to try to do something contradictory, which is, on the one hand to use certain kinds of typologies drawn from history and also to reflect on these typologies by modifying them. We should somehow make manifest the competition between the process of hyper-modernisation and the need for stability and at the same time not kid ourselves that in some particular work or at some particular moment a reconciliation can be finally achieved. In short one should try to make an environment which is critical but which provides at the same time for the survival of culture. We must try to get rid of the idea that we can somehow overcome the split that runs through the modern figure. I don't see this split being essentially very different whether it runs through the culture of the Occident or the Orient.
Our subject is "Architect and Government relationship". We generally agree that the methodology of building has a lot to do with the ultimate product. The kind of patronage and the building system helped to create the form of the great cities of the world — the complexes of Fatehpur Sikri, Jaisalmer or even Venice and Florence. Now, what has gone wrong? What are we building today? Many people might agree that there has been a general decline in urban values, at least in our part of the world. This decline was noticed by Havell a British art and architectural historian. In 1906 he wrote a long paper about how the Indian craftsman, the master-builder, the mistry, was being eliminated from the building scene and his place taken over by the engineers who were being imported from England.

Initially the public works department's responsibility was building canals, roads and bridges. Slowly they took over the design and construction of buildings. They prescribed how the building should be built and in a way they laid the foundations of what we have today in the entire sub-continent, i.e. the methodology of building through the Public Works Department, and the culture of the Public Works Department. In around 1918-1919 when there was a great debate going on about how to build New Delhi, Havell sent a petition to the British Government suggesting the inclusion of Master Craftsmen in the Design Team. The petition was signed by about a hundred British and Indian intellectuals including Bernard Shaw and Kumaraswamy. They opposed the P.W.D. methods of building which depended on sterile standard type designs devoid of any feel of regional values or craftsmanship. That led to the situation today, where the architectural professional in the sub-continent is generally shabbily treated by departmental engineers. The profession is not fully recognised. It has serious problems in terms of training of architects through the educational systems and it has serious problems in terms of dealing with the Government which is the major patron throughout the sub-continent. The architectural profession is not recognised by the Government and is not assigned the pre-eminent role. This is obviously a situation we need to discuss. Meer Mobashsher Ali will explain what is the position in Bangladesh today.

Meer Mobashsher Ali, Co-Chairman

The situation in Bangladesh is that the Government plays a very important role in all the construction that goes on in the country. The bureaucracy is so strong that nothing comes off the table unless it has the seal of the government in one form or other. Whatever the procedure the sanction of the money, the approval of the drawings, the procedure of tendering; in every stage government has a very strong say. If we take a typical project, the government usually do not give a very detailed programme and the architects usually have very little say in the preparation of the programme if the brief has been prepared, and it has not been done correctly it is difficult for the architect to proceed with the work. Decision making becomes difficult unless you have a very detailed programme to which the architects have contributed.

The selection of architects is another important matter for ensuring a project is done well. We do not have a standard selection procedure or indeed any procedure at all. Architects even today are considered in line with engineers and contractors and often architectural projects are tendered out and given to the lowest bidder. We have not yet been able to convince the bureaucrats that an architectural project or any work of art cannot be done on that basis. You may be surprised that the Foreign Office even called a tender for buying paintings for different offices! So we have not been successful in evolving a method by which the selection of architects can be carried out.

The Institute of Architects Bangladesh, initiated architectural competitions and through competitions some good projects have come about. Competitions have now become a fad and all the rules, regulations and principles are difficult to follow. The majority of
work however cannot be done through competitions. The degree of independence that the architect is allowed also raises questions.

A further problem is that after the design work is completed the method of contracting is fifty years old. It still continues unchanged and I do not think any respected contractor will sign a contract with the Government agencies as it is being done today. In fact when a foreign agency comes to do work or an international tender is called for, the contract forms and terms of agreement are different from those used when a local contractor tenders. No significant effort has been made to change this. So from the very beginning to the end of a project the role of the architect has to be clearly defined and he should be allowed to play a significant role.
Planning Aspect of Upazila* Shahar

Lailun Nahar Ekram

Introduction

The Bangladesh Government’s administrative re-organisation policy resulted in the formation of the Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Re-organisation) Ordinance, 1982\(^1\). This Ordinance was later amended, whereby the word “Thana” was substituted by “Upazila”. According to this Ordinance, the national government retains the major development activities on a national and regional scale, while other local developments of public institutions, and infrastructures will be performed by the upazila administration. The objective of the Government’s policy is

- to reduce dependence of the rural people on the national government for meeting those needs which can be met locally and to develop self reliance in the process
- to mobilise and utilise local resources which have until now remained under utilised.
- to reduce the direct involvement of the national government in planning and implementation of projects which are purely local in nature\(^2\).

* Upazila means sub-district
With these objectives, the government decided to reorganise the administration at the upazila level thus making the upazila the most significant tier of administration. The upazila centre would plan and develop all social, economic, administrative and infrastructural services for the upazila region.

As such, administration in the upazila town was a critical point in a well articulated system for linking urban and rural functions, and providing facilities for administrative, judicial, economic, social and infrastructural services. The town would therefore provide the locations for residential, administrative, judiciary, cottage and small scale industries, education, health, social and utilities services, commercial, cultural and recreational facilities.

In these circumstances, it was felt that the upazila centre should grow up expeditiously and the preparation of a landuse plan/masterplan for such centres was and is of the utmost importance for better utilisation of the region's land, people and natural resources. With this end in view, the government planned the preparation of the landuse plans and masterplans for some of the upazila headquarters of Bangladesh, which would be called the upazila shahar (towns).

The subject of this paper "Planning Aspects of the Upazila Shahar" describes the criteria of designing such upazila shahar and presents Chirirbandar Upazila in Dinajpur district as a case study.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the preparation of a landuse plan and masterplan of the upazila headquarters were

- To serve as locational and spatial guidelines indicating places of work, residence and recreation.
- To facilitate public and private development at the upazila centre through physical planning
- To serve as a technical backup for planned growth of human settlements in the country specially at the upazila level, so that a significant segment of rural migrants to cities are induced to work and live there.
- To prepare a detailed landuse plan of the upazila headquarters that will help in the formulation of spatial and design standards and to illustrate the methodology of designing the planned centre.

**Scope of the Masterplan**

The masterplan covers all the major aspects related to the landuse of the upazila headquarters. Particular attention is paid to the following:

- Delineation of the masterplan area based on future potential development, expansion capacity and other ancillary local factors and conditions in and around the centre.
- Detailed existing landuse survey encompassing, among other things, existing built-up area, topographical and flood characteristics of the area, existing drainage channels, alternative plans for development of drainage and determining the location for flood protection schemes.
- Determination of the hierarchy of settlement within the upazila based on population, economic activity, social infrastructure provision, transport links and related characteristics. The range of service concentration within the upazila determines the hierarchy of settlements. The range of services will include the markets, banks, hospitals, schools, post offices and any other urban services. The revenue income from markets, electricity and transport, for example plays an important role in determination of the hierarchy.
- Identification of the upazila headquarter’s socio-economic sphere of influence or catchment area, considering the attractiveness of other centres. The catchment area is the basis of population forecasting and determining the extent of social services and other landuses that will be provided in the upazila headquarters.
- Forecasts of population and employment based on past trends, with allowance for the induced attraction of the government’s upgrading commitment, to 1985, 1990 and indicative, to the year 2000. Forecasts include High, Medium and Low projections and urban landuse requirements and plans are based on the Medium projections.
- Preparation of landuse zoning plans for the upazila headquarters, which identify suitably locations for residential, social, administrative, economic and circulatory uses.
- Accommodation of major investments and activities of the various development agencies and ministries. The plan indicates the stages of development through a 5-year programme of the Government. The plan indicates an outline framework and strategy for management and development control and institutional arrangements for effective implementation.

**Detailed methodology**

A methodology evolved from the requirement to prepare landuse plans of the future upazila headquarters. It was addressed principally at the following aspects:

Determination of the hierarchy of settlements: Settlement hierarchy is related to the landuse planning purposes in so far as distribution of future urban population in the upazila subregion is concerned. The
hierarchy of various types of settlement was identified on the basis of:

- Population concentration over time (in the last few decades).
- Status of the settlements in terms of various services being rendered.
- Transportation links with settlements immediately above and below in the level of hierarchy.

Physical Survey of Existing Landuse Patterns: The physical survey had two components: Firstly a landuse survey of the study area. Secondly an engineering survey of about 200 acres of the central zone around the existing built-up area. The emphasis of the survey was on: (i) assessment of the availability of high land, (ii) flood characteristics of the area, (iii) river erosion problem, if any, (iv) availability of open land for future expansion of the upazila centre, and (v) existing physical infrastructure. Topographic maps along with settlement maps were used in the study.

Socio-economic Survey: Survey teams with a comprehensive questionnaire were sent to the study area to conduct a survey to determine the socio-economic parameters related to landuse evaluation. The survey, along with data from secondary sources, was the basis for the formulation of the population growth scenarios as well as the size and the details of the masterplan area.

Interview of Public Agencies: The purpose of the interviews was to note the programmes of various development agencies, such as the Water Development Board, Power Development Board, Agricultural Development Corporation, Roads & Highways Department, PWD, Social Welfare Department, Shilpa Bank, the UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) office, and other concerned departments.

Review of Documents and Publications: A review of documents and publications on demographic and socio-economic data was done to supplement the field surveys and interviews.

Data Base: A large amount of data was utilised in the course of the preparation of the masterplan. Some of the data was obtained from available reports and from various public agencies. A substantial amount of data were also generated through the surveys. The data base was used in the forecasting exercise.

Forecasting: A quantitative estimate of future population size and composition, income level, industrial and commercial activities in the upazila centre and its surroundings was crucial to the formulation of the masterplan.

Three socio-economic aspects, agriculture, industries and population were the focal point of the exercise. Both agriculture and industries were the primary determinants of income, living standard, employment and urbanisation. The projected growth of industries also influenced landuse allocation in the masterplan, while the projected population size, more than anything else, determined the size of the upazila shahar, requirement of space for housing, parks, markets, hospitals, as well as demand for electricity, water supply and other services.

Planning provision standards

In order that plans for upazila headquarters are prepared on a uniform basis the following guidelines on landuse provision standards have been formulated by the Urban Development Directorate, Ministry of Works.

The standards are based on the total amount of land required for selected urban purposes, expressed as acres per population threshold, served by the upazila headquarters; this involves:

- Identifying the total population to be served by the socio-economic facilities proposed for the upazila headquarters by 1990. This serviced population will usually extend beyond the boundary of the headquarters area itself.
- Incorporating existing urban landuses into the totals forecast to be required by 1990, and identifying areas which are unsuitable for urban development.
- Including an allowance of 10% as "urban deferred" i.e. land reserved for urban services that will be required either to service a population which turns out to be larger than that forecast and/or to accommodate the needs of a growing population in the 1990's.

Overall Proportions:

In general terms the proposed urbanised (including existing urban landuse) part of the upazila headquarters area will be subdivided into the following broad categories of landuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>10–15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social, Administrative, Cultural and Urban Services</td>
<td>20–30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads (including local)</td>
<td>5–10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>35–45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban deferred</td>
<td>about 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserves</td>
<td>about 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100%

Specific Provision Standards: All provision standards except residential will relate to the whole catchment area of the upazila headquarters. Residential landuse allocations will be for the headquarters population only.
a) Commerce and Industry:
- Market
- Shop
- Office
- Small Scale Industry

Total area of 1.5 acres per 1,000 served

b) Social, Administrative, Cultural and Urban Services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total area of 2 acres per 5,000 population served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 acres per 20,000 population served</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total area of 1 acre per 5,000 population served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity/child care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total area of 5 acres per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration/Judiciary (including officers residences)</th>
<th>12 acres per upazila headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks, open space</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 acre per 1,000 population served.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema, closed space</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports stadium</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 acres per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-cultural</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community centre</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious facility</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5 acre per 5,000 population served.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 acres per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Services</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post office</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone exchange</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police station</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 acres per 20,000 population served</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus/ghat/rail station</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 acre per 20,000 population served</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

c) Roads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Type</th>
<th>Surface</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>60'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>40'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>24'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Type</th>
<th>Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>30'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>12'-0&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d) Residential:
An average of 100 persons per acre net of roads and other facilities will be provided. Local access road system will be included, and will be sufficient to provide access to all plots (applies to headquarters population only)

e) Reserves:
Identification of areas within the built up area which will not be used for further development purposes, for example, ponds, land of agricultural importance, land liable to flooding, government reserves
The Master Plan

The masterplan is primarily a landuse plan. The basic objective of the planning exercise will be to determine the boundary of the area that will eventually grow into a functional town, so that legal and administrative measures can be taken now in order to facilitate the growth in an orderly manner.

The local conditions in terms of physical conditions imposed by normal land features and conservation of residential and urban functions, and inter-upazila transportation network will be considered in making the landuse plan.

Another consideration will be to identify urban communities, which will be integrated into the urban structure in order to ensure maximum utilisation of land and to create conditions for recapturing the potentialities of land as an important urban economic resource. The approach will also induce private owners of land to use their land lots for effective and profitable purposes other than agriculture. This will help public authorities to avoid acquisition of private lands in the proposed planning area.

The Upazila will serve not only as the administrative headquarter but also as the economic and cultural centre of the surrounding area. The masterplan will have to provide for these developments and space will be allocated to the following functions:

a) administrative and judicial (upazila complex)
b) commerce
c) industries including small and cottage type industry
d) hospitals and other health services including upazila health complex

Major landuse zones of the proposed master plan of Chirirbandar Upazila Shahar.
e) education
f) culture and recreation
g) transportation, including stations
h) religious and social welfare services
i) electricity water and other utilities
j) housing.

The first task will be to determine the total space required for each function. The population and other projections as well as the Guideline on Planning Provision Standard, prepared by the Urban Development Directorate, Ministry of Works will be the basic input to this analysis. The upazila shahar will centre around the upazila complex. An area of twelve acres has been allotted to each upazila complex in the country. The plan must be pragmatic therefore, assumptions as regards type of housing, mode of transport within the town, spatial requirement and uses will be based on existing norms in the country.

The total size of the masterplan area will depend on the population and other socio-economic projections. The boundary will be delineated on the basis of landuse survey, in order to minimise land development cost. The criterion of land suitability will decide as to what extent radial growth can be planned. The next major step is the zoning of the land. Distribution of the population and economic activities need to be spread evenly to avoid unbalanced transportation and other infrastructure.

The masterplan of the upazila will be implemented in phases of 5 years commensurate with a 5 year plan of the Government. Development control of the masterplan will be enforced through:

a) Preparation of detail plans with zoning proposal for all areas proposed for development.

b) Legal and institutional measures for enforcing control over all public sector developments in the planning area.

The upazila parishad as the local authority will monitor project implementation. All sectoral activities will be performed on the basis of the masterplan.

**Case Study: Chirirbandar upazila**

Chirirbandar in Dinajpur district is one of the 460 upazilas of Bangladesh. The total population of this upazila is 1.84 lakh (1981) and the population growth rate is 2.80 (1981). The total area of the upazila is 120 square miles (311 square kilometres) which holds 145 villages.

Located at the north eastern corner of the country, Chirirbandar is well connected by roads and railways partly because of its surplus food production and also because of the location of Parbatipur, an important railway function.

Chirirbandar upazila headquarter has a strategic location. The river Kankra flows on the western border and the Atrai on the east. The boundaries on the south and north are bordered by the railway line and the regional road respectively. The presence of these existing features delineates the shahar boundary of Chirirbandar upazila which has an area of 840 acres (340 hectares). Growth pattern depicts a linear settlement along the railway road in the south and along the river on the west. However, the location of the newly constructed upazila complex in the central area will act as a catalysing force for developments in the central area.

Survey results show that existing landuse in the upazila include 77.7% of agricultural land and only 7.9% residential, 1.9% administrative and 0.4% commercial land. The projected masterplan proposes the future structure of the upazila shahar estimating the land requirement on the basis of the population projection to the year 1990 and the space standards given by the Urban Development Directorate.

According to the projections the population of Chirirbandar will be 2.78 lakhs in 1990. Urban communities consisting of 5,000 population are integrated into the urban structure in a grid-iron pattern in order to ensure maximum utilisation of land and its potentialities thus forming zoned residential, administrative and the central business districts.

The population projection and the economic performance on the basis of which the plan is drawn up may not hold good in future. If such is the case, the upazila parishad in implementation of the masterplan will carry out planning studies concerning socio-economic and physical changes and make a review of the masterplan at intervals, say every 10 years. In this respect, the masterplan is not rigid, it is flexible in terms of accommodating changes.

In conclusion it is anticipated that the spatial organisation of the masterplan will reflect the culture and heritage, desires and aspirations of the people of Chirirbandar, as the upazila parishad is constituted from the local population.

The masterplan of the upazila shahar is a long term strategy of the government to the year 2000, indicating major activities, trends, provisions, constraints and possibilities.

The preparation of this masterplan within the National Physical Planning Project has been instigated by the Urban Development Directorate, Ministry of Works and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme.

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* Lakh equals 1 million
Role of Government in Architecture

Shah Alam Zahiruddin
A. Mohaiman
Qazi A. Mowla
A. K. M. Helaluzzaman

Introduction

Architecture has been created by people, by communities and by the state to fulfill the needs of the various aspects of life. The purpose, scale and level of achievement, varied greatly with time, place and people. Social conditions, political will, economic considerations, climatic demands, availability of materials, technological limitations and aesthetic demands, all played a decisive role in the creation of the end-product.

There was a time when state-patronised architecture was limited only to the architecture of the palace, fort and some religious buildings and, in fact, traditionally architects were very little involved with architecture of the common man. Today housing for the masses has assumed important dimensions for architects and the state.

The concentration of people in urban areas and the complexity of the urban situation virtually precludes any major role of the private sector without direct or indirect involvement of the state and the traditional role of the architect has been modified as he is called upon to solve large urban design projects requiring coordination and synthesis of activities of many disciplines.

It is interesting to note that present day involvement of the state, in the realisation of architecture and built forms of our cities is not just limited to the commissioning of an architectural project but has many aspects. The activities of the state, in our part of the world involves education and training of architects, research activities in the building field and adoption of policy and programmes on architecture. In addition to the traditional role of the state as client for projects, the Government has in many cases expanded its activities to act as architectural consultant, executing agency for building projects, financier, manufacturer of building products and even at times traded in construction materials to ensure realisation of the programme of development according to the national goal.

This wider role of the Government has been necessitated in this part of the region more so than some of the economically and technologically advanced countries of the world mainly because of the lack of entrepreneurship in private sector financing and the complexity of the problem which, it appears, only the state can handle.

A case study of the Bangladesh situation, a country showing a common heritage in the not too distant past with other countries of the region and with similar present day problems of over-population, under-employment, rapid urbanisation and resource constraint, is made in this paper. The aim is to throw some light on the role played by the Government in the development of architecture in our part of the region and it begins with the major problem facing our nations, namely financing.

An overview of the situation and assessment of Government’s role

The statement that political freedom has no meaning if people do not enjoy the fruits of economic freedom, could not be more appreciated anywhere than in Bangladesh where 80% of the population live below the poverty line. Of the “National Budget of Tk* 67,735 million for the financial year 1984–85 an amount of Tk.27,384.2 million” or 40% of the total budget came from foreign aid and assistance. “Out of a total of Tk.38,257 million for the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for 1985–86 an allocation of Tk.25,310 million is from foreign aid. The amount constitutes 66.16% of the total ADP allocation”3. Given this serious financial problem, the major concern and effort of the Government has been on efficient management of this meagre financial resource.

* US$1 equals Tk 30.00
In this respect a National Economic Council (NEC) has been set up to approve policy, plan and take decisions on economic planning, including investment in architecture and other physical planning activities which accounts for about 30% to 50% of the total budget. NEC is the highest executive body and the President of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh is the Chairman of this Council.

On the basis of the availability of resources and national goals, priorities are set and policy guidelines are prepared by the National Planning Commission for development of the various sectors of the economy. Within the above guidelines the Commission then receives suggestions on sectoral plans from the Development Agencies throughout the country. On the basis of these suggestions, five-year plan and Annual Development Plan documents are prepared and the Commission offers advice to the NEC in this respect. In matters of discharging its responsibilities, the Commission is organised on a sectoral basis. Although development plans in most of the sectors involve investment in architecture and physical infrastructure, there is a separate division in the Planning Commission looking after the Physical Planning and Housing (PPH) Sector “In the PPH Sector, allocation of funds in ADP 1984–85 had been Tk.1,220 million out of a total ADP of Tk.38,960 million. For the current fiscal year, it is Tk 969 million out of total ADP of Tk.38,260 million”93.

Besieged with the problem of increased population pressure (annual growth rate: 2.5%2 and the deteriorating economic condition of the country, the NEC and the Planning Commission have been obsessed with the task of economic growth alone with the result that there has been unplanned concentration of economic activities in and around a few large cities like Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna This has not only created associated problems of unplanned growth and discontent, but because of regional disparities and lack of economic activities and job opportunities in other areas large section of the unemployed have flocked into large cities, thus taxing the services and infrastructure and leading to deterioration of the physical environment of these areas.

It is heartening, however, to note that there is an increasing awareness in the Planning Commission and the higher level of bureaucracy that economic development without relation to a national physical plan could create more problems, rather than solving existing ones. A national physical plan is now under preparation and simultaneously with a Government decision to decentralise administration and distribute development activities for balanced growth, a programme has been embarked upon so that by 1987, physical plans for development of all the 64 districts and 460 upazilas (sub-districts) will be completed. This is an encouraging sign towards realisation of decent planned urban centres to be spread across the country, which could make a much easier transition to the inevitable urbanisation of the vast rural mass. Since this process would create smaller urban centres, it would not only arrest dehumanisation of the poor rural immigrant in the big metropolis, but because of closeness of these areas to his village home, this would allow him to keep touch with home and hearth and hopefully prevent degeneration of social values which are so much the root of the evils of the urbanisation process.

The task of completion of these physical plans has fallen on the shoulders of the Urban Development Directorate and has given this organisation a new boost. Funds for development of infrastructure in these areas has gone up from 4% to 11% of the total budget during 1982–86 for sub-districts, which is about 20% of the share of directly productive investment42.

The organisation created in the year 1965, in the wake of the urbanisation process, with the task to look after and identify potential urban growth centres and plan ahead for development of these areas, in reality, did not get the proper administrative or financial support previously to do the task for which it was created. The Directorate is now involved in the preparation of a national physical planning project, urban housing policy and programme development documents, the design of urban area development and environmental improvement programmes and also zila and upazila planning documents. It is hoped that the long-voiced advice of architects and physical planners has been heeded and the importance of planned development realised.

The four major urban areas — Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi are, however, not under the Urban Development Directorate. Realising the importance and magnitude of the problems associated with these large metropolises, development authorities separate from the UDD have been created. These development authorities were created several years ago indeed Dhaka Improvement Trust, the oldest one, was created in the year 1953. These areas need special attention in preparation of plans and programme. The development authorities under their jurisdiction could be more effective and carry out their task more efficiently. Experience of their performance, however, indicates otherwise, as these authorities are bogged down with financial problems, do not have development-oriented legislative support and have never been geared to an organisational structure which can concentrate effectively on planning activities. A master plan for Dhaka prepared in the year 1959 with a projected population of 2.5
million still remains an unrevised planning document in the year 1985 when the present population of Dhaka city is about 4.5 million and is expected to reach the 7 million mark in the year 2000. The result is evident all around. We are faced with traffic congestions, housing shortage, lack of civic amenities, deteriorating urban service facilities, inefficient use of land and sky-rocketing prices in a speculative land market creating serious cost constraints on development projects due to the cost component of the land.

City improvement authorities need to be properly manned and they are required to meticulously follow the task of revising and updating their plans for development of areas under their control. They need to be given the legislative support required for implementation of development plans and to be encouraged to take up self-financing schemes without depending solely on grants from the already meagre Government exchequer.

In view of the financial constraints under which they operate the authorities should also concentrate on innovative ideas which will lower project cost and encompass participation of people likely to benefit from the project. In this respect, the Senpara-Parbata township development project of Dhaka city may be cited. “It involves 1500 acres of land largely residential, in the heart of Dhaka. For the last 20 years, numerous proposals were put forward to acquire this land and develop it as a township of Greater Dhaka. The land acquisition proposal itself, at present market rate would be Tk.5,000 million besides the cost of infrastructure and service facilities” ⁴. The financing part alone has always stood in the way of implementation of this proposal and the area in the heart of the metropolis acquired slum condition day by day. A recent decision, on the basis of which a structure plan has been prepared for this area, through joint pooling of professional resources of the Dhaka Improvement Trust and the Department of Architecture of the Government, is an example of how through judicious policy decision problems of financial constraint can be overcome in certain situations. Here, land required for the road network and community facilities only will be acquired in phases and the area will be allowed to develop entirely on private initiatives according to the structure plan.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has been the mainstay of the Government to look after the construction and maintenance of all Central Government buildings across the country. Initially set up to provide for accommodation of the administrative machinery and accommodation of the officers who manned them, construction was carried out on type plans received from Great Britain. These examples of architecture account for a phase of our national history. Plans being received from abroad, there was no need of architects, construction was carried out from these drawings by a competent batch of PWD engineers. A set-up created for efficient execution of construction of buildings from standard type plans was soon faced with the task of planning and execution of an increasing number of offices and residential accommodation for the expanding administrative machinery. In addition, responsibility for building of schools, colleges, hospitals, post offices also came on their shoulders subsequently as the policy on welfare was liberalised during the British rule. Although not trained for the task, the engineers nevertheless shouldered the responsibility of planning and execution of the works. Few posts of architects were created in the PWD, under the Chief Engineer, and basically the services of architects were more advisory in nature than mandatory. The result of this arrangement is the creation of buildings coined as “PWD Architecture”. This architecture, done by the civil engineers-turned-architects, is an example of confusion in the field of architecture of a particular period of our history.
Lalkuthi Community Centre at Old Dhaka  Character of architecture of important buildings of the British period

Chamari House at Segunbagicha, Dhaka  Plans being received from abroad construction was carried out by engineers of PWD
Architects in the Government voiced strong resentment against this arrangement. They were supported by an enlightened section of the Government machinery and eventually from 1978 onwards a loose arrangement was made through which architects started to function independent of the engineering interference until in 1982, the Government recognised the full importance of architects as a distinct and separate professional group and created a Department of Architecture headed by a Chief Architect. This event is a milestone in the history of development of architecture in Bangladesh as it now allows free play of the creative talent and ingenuity of the architects in Government service.

The Department of Architecture

This is now an attached department of the Government on the same footing as the Public Works Department. The department prepares architectural design and layout plans for all Government buildings and also for public housing schemes across the country and it advises the Government on policy matters relating to human settlement and land-use planning. The implementation of projects is done through the Public Works Department and the Housing and Settlement Directorate. It is pleasing to note that the Department of Architecture is located in close proximity to the Housing and Settlement Directorate and in the same building as the Public Works Department.
Works Department and a cordial team spirit has been developed with the engineers of these departments. It is also encouraging to note that recently while a major effort has been made to tighten the belt and reduce revenue expenditure of the Government through reduction of the size of most offices, recognising the role of the architects in the national development programme, the Department has been expanded with a promise for further review and expansion in future. The Government has the single largest architectural office in the country with 72 sanctioned posts of architects in the Department. During the last fiscal year, building projects of various sectors, worth about Tk 1,400 million were carried out through this Department. Some of the examples of architecture of the Department are Bailey Officers housing, Roopnagar housing, Senpara Parbata Township development plan, buildings for new sub-districts, Usmany Memorial Hall, 10-storeyed Secretariat building, National Monument for unknown martyrs at Savar, 3-Leaders' Mausoleum, cyclone shelters in the coastal areas, Rajarbagh Police Line Barracks and the new Dhaka District Court. The incomplete work of Prof Louis I. Kahn of the National Assembly Buildings at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar was also completed by architects in Government service.
As mentioned earlier the Public Works Department, responsible for the construction and maintenance of Central Government buildings across the country up to Upazila (sub-district) level, is manned by an experienced, qualified and competent group of engineers, capable of shouldering projects of any size and magnitude. The completion of the National Assembly Building, the Usmany Memorial Hall and the cyclone shelters in the way out coastal areas of Bangladesh are indicative of the technical and managerial capabilities of the Government set-up in the PWD.

The Housing and Settlement Directorate

The Housing and Settlement Directorate created initially to tackle the problem of refugees settlement after the partition of India, is now responsible for the preparation of policy and implementation of programmes for public sector housing in the country. With the help of the Department of Architecture and the Urban Development Directorate, it has created some Housing and ‘Sites and Services’ schemes. However, as of today, it has never really been given the organisational set-up and the financial support it deserves to provide for this important sector of our national life. The small allocation of the “1985–86 ADP of Tk.66 million out of a total of Tk.38,260 million” or 0.2% of the total for the housing sector is an indication of the low priority it has been given in the National Development Budget (8.9% for Agriculture and 3.7% for Education). The deteriorating housing situation, a manifestation of this low priority given by the Government to this sector, is evident from the low-efficiency, dissatisfaction and unrest among the low and middle-income people of urban areas. There is an urgent need to programme a national housing policy and to carry out the programme before the already alarming situation goes completely out of hand.

Although not covering the low-income group, the Government, in its effort to make some dent in the housing shortage, has opened an arm of public financing of housing through an organisation known as the House Building Finance Corporation. The Corporation makes long term advances at concessional rates for financing housing projects in urban areas across the country. With an initial seed capital from the Government it is re-rolling and financing public housing projects. It usually encourages housing schemes in newly identified areas of rapid urbanisation where there is very little housing stock. The rates of concessional interest vary. For multi-storeyed houses (4-storeyed) of small 75 square metres per flat with a loan amounting up to Tk.85 million per building, the lowest interest of 5% is applied in Upazilas/town centres and 10.5% in metropolitan areas. The general interest rate is however 13% for the first Tk 0.4 million and 16% for the next Tk 0.2 million loan or for housing of 76 square metres and above. The repayment period for both the cases is 25 years. Through their present programme the Corporation has created some definite impact on the public sector housing as can be seen from the private sector built projects. The repayment situation is also not discouraging. Large numbers of loan applications are pending with the Corporation. In the fiscal year 1982–83 and 1983–84 Tk.810 million and Tk 1,530 million respectively had been disbursed which was much less than the actual demand. It would be advisable therefore, for the Government to increase the seed capital and tie up this programme of public financing with a national housing policy.

In a country like Bangladesh, with scarcity of resource and the public shy of capital investment, the Government, recognising the importance of its role to
National Memorial Monument at Savar, Dhaka. Landscaping done by Government Architects, which in the past was left to be solved spontaneously.

Usman Memorial Hall. Built under direct supervision of Government Architects to cater to the needs of socio-cultural activities of Metropolitan Dhaka.

3-Leaders Mausoleum at Dhaka. An expression searching for the glories of the past using modern materials and techniques of construction.

Bailey Government Officers Housing, Dhaka. A marked improvement can be noticed in the built environment created by qualified Government Architects.
Role of Government in Architecture

moderate the free market economy in the building industry and assure a steady supply to meet the market shortage of construction material, has assumed in different situations, the role of manufacturer and even trading house. On the Government initiative, steel mills, cement factories and timber extraction and seasoning plants have been established in the country. In addition to the import of materials through the private sector, the import of items like steel, cement and other construction materials are made by the Government through an organisation known as the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh. This practice needs to be continued until the private sector can be encouraged through an appropriate policy towards the building industry to shoulder the responsibility and to ensure a stable market for the supply of construction materials.

The Government in its effort to carry on research on indigenous materials, to concentrate on problems associated with local building industry, to develop new techniques, to compile techniques developed in other parts of the world, to test their suitability in local situation and to help the building industry adopt new materials and methods, has established a Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI). The Institute works in close co-operation with the architects of the Government. In recent times, it has done some public housing projects and administrative buildings have been erected using ferro-cement channel floors resulting in some cost saving on the projects. In addition very recently a prototype of a nucleus house has been developed for the offshore islands and coastal areas of Bangladesh using precast elements by the HBRI. The HBRI has left its door open for the private sector to take advantage of its facilities. Established in the year 1977 the Institute has to go a long way yet and because of low budget allocation (Tk.4.00 million for 1985-86 fiscal year) and unattactive terms of employment, it has not been able to organise its physical facilities and create an effective organisational set-up. It is important that this organisation be given adequate financial support to put it on proper footing. Through dedication and hard work, it could be turned into an effective organisation to make a valuable contribution in the building field.

To rationalise and maintain uniform standard of materials and products, the Government has set up the Bangladesh Standards Institution. Thus far, however, the Institution is only a name as far as the building industry is concerned. There is no standardisation of products or quality control in the country. This is resulting in wastage and bad quality work and is having an adverse effect on the architecture of the country, particularly the works of the private sector. There is an urgent need for the formulation of building codes, specification and standards of materials and standardisation of various building components for efficient and economic use of the already meagre national resources.

Education and training is a major task of the government. Through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, policies on education and training are implemented at universities, colleges, polytechnics and trade schools spread over the country. With a population reaching the 100 million mark, physical planning and architecture is taught in only one university in the country, the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. The annual intake at the undergraduate level in Architecture is only 50 students and the country has only 200 qualified architects or a ratio of one architect for half a million people. This is low by any standard and, therefore, education facilities for architecture must be extended. While in this paper, emphasis is on the need for an increase in the number of architects, the actual situation is that young entrants to the profession are on the threshold of unemployment. This situation has arisen not because architects are not needed in the country or that they are in large supply, but because agencies, such as local government and Pourashavas and other institutes, which should be benefitting from the services of the architects in their development works are still running on the system which the PWD was running some 25 years ago doing architecture through civil engineers turned architects. This situation cannot continue for long and is bound to change. This change has to be brought about quickly.

Review and recommendations

From the review made in the earlier section of this paper, it appears that the Government has the basic institutional and organisational arrangement to carry on the building activities, yet because of the missing links the scenario in the field of architecture and human settlements is far from satisfactory.

Bangladesh which is struggling for economical survival, finds it difficult to allocate adequate resources for its various sectors. Because of this resource constraint, it is all the more imperative that the meagre financial resources should be managed efficiently through an interlinked national economic, housing and physical planning policy. The human settlements issue is an important and a challenging problem confronting the country. There is an urgent need to formulate and implement comprehensive human settlement policies and programmes.

For integrated and planned development of architecture and the built environment, activities of development and planning agencies in the country
have to be coordinated and close cooperation has to be established among them to mutually benefit from available human and material resources.

Institutional and development-oriented legal support has to be provided by the Government to the various agencies. Framing of building codes and standardisation of materials, components and techniques in the building industry at national level is necessary to improve the quality of construction and to reduce wastage of resources.

If the quality and efficiency of the built environment are to be improved, the role of architects and physical planners has to be correctly recognised and their services to be utilised in the various agencies connected with planning and execution of projects. Architects have to be associated from the policy planning stage at national level to the municipal and local government at sub-district level. Once this awareness and demand for good architecture is created there would be great shortage of architects in the country and educational facilities for training and education of architects would have to be expanded.

It should be understood that professional societies can play an increasingly important role in helping the Government in formulating and adopting correct policies and programmes on national issues. The role of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh, the national forum of practising architects could, therefore, be properly recognised by the Government and their opinion sought on national issues regarding architecture and the built environment.

It is a matter of concern that there is no legislation in the country requiring registration of architects and there is, therefore, no bar to non-qualified people posing as architects and offering their services to the public. Pakistan and India have in recent years, enacted legislation requiring registration and, thereby, banning malpractice in architecture. It is high time that the Government of Bangladesh acts on the proposals from the Institute of Architects made on that issue and now lying with the Ministry of Works.

The forces acting and shaping the present day society are so complex and enormous that solving problems of the built environment is beyond the capability of an individual and in many cases beyond that of the community, although participation of the community is considered essential for successful handling of specific programme in many cases. The role of the Government, therefore, is recognised more than ever before in the development of architecture and the creation of a decent healthy living environment for the people in our part of the world.

All photographs courtesy of Shah Alam Zahiruddin
Government vis-a-vis Architecture

Muzharul Islam
Kazi Khaleed Ashraf
Saiful Haque

Introduction
The relationship between Architecture and the profession of Architecture with the Government of the country is of crucial importance for everyone concerned in countries like ours which have become independent within the last two or three decades. The countries of South Asia, excluding Afghanistan, have all been colonies of Britain. Problems affecting our profession are similar in all these countries and have roots in the common past.

The countries of this region have some of the oldest cultures of the world, and are immensely rich in architecture. The contribution to world architecture and culture in general, by this region has been of tremendous importance. British colonisation of this region resulted in a break in the continuity of this rich tradition in architecture. The profession of architecture has yet to recover from this break.

History of the development of the architectural profession in our country
Since ancient times our people have cities and villages as did other people in other civilisations. Ruins of ancient cities still exist dating back from 4th century B.C. to 2500 B.C. Through centuries of practice the craftsmen and architects have used materials in forms which are still the pride of our nations. It is true that during certain periods of our history due to inner struggles some of our regions suffered temporary setbacks, but the worst disaster was the advent of the British in our countries. The British came as traders and soon converted themselves into rulers through conspiracy, treachery and murder. For their own purpose they changed the fundamental laws of a country, the economic system, the administrative structure and even the traditional cultural pattern of a society. Although we are not very much concerned with the overall cultural problems, we feel that without giving this background it would be irrational to deal with the problems affecting our profession.

In ancient times, the practice of architecture belonged predominantly to people who developed and modified materials, structures and forms through generations of use. In the rural scene forms developed through the participation of the whole community. In the urban situation some strong ideas or the personality of some creative genius prevailed. In ancient times too the requirements of architects were not that vast or immense, and the need for building new towns and villages was also comparatively slow to develop in our societies. The situation now has, changed drastically. We are some of the most underdeveloped countries of the world and we want to develop our countries in the shortest possible time.

The utilisation of natural resources, manpower and national wealth requires meticulously worked out plans. Wastage of a single paisa is a national crime. In this context, the profession of architecture becomes not only indispensable but also absolutely essential. There is no other profession which can plan physical structures and the physical environment for the present and future welfare of the society more economically and rationally. Though it is needless repetition, we are forced to mention that the British ignored or were ignorant about this specific requirement.

Unfortunately, the situation did not change very much after independence. The government of the time took over wholesale, the economic system, the political system and the administrative system created by the British. The administrative system included the department of public works which dealt with large-scale construction of buildings. The need for architects in the public works was always ignored. When the British left, there were no proper schools for training of architects in the country. The bureaucracy of our country had always had little understanding about architecture, physical environment or large-scale physical planning.

In our country, the largest quantum of building activity is, as in the British times, controlled by engineers. Engineering education has never been
sympathetic to any fine art form, including architecture. As a matter of fact, for some reason, the profession of engineering has always tried to ignore the need for architecture and physical planning. From 1947 to 1971, the profession of architecture had a slow growth in our country. The first handful of architects came out of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Engineering and Technology in 1966. Although we have a population of 100 million, we have only about 400 architects, mostly trained at the Faculty of Architecture here and out of which a large proportion are working outside the country. (Note the previous paper indicates 200 working in Bangladesh-Ed).

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**Education, professional organisation and government legislation**

The particular aspects of the profession which ultimately produce a viable and imaginative group of architects are the educational system, professional norms and conducts supported by the legal system of the country, and the attitude of the government and the society as a whole to the problems of physical planning, both large-scale and small.

The educational system for architects in our country should take into account the culture, specially that part of the culture which affects architecture directly, social aspirations, economic problems and constraints, limitations and possibilities of contemporary materials and structures, and specially the development of the form of architecture. In our country, the education system in architecture is totally based on practices in the West and rooted in western culture. Due to the system, architects come out of school with no deep feeling for tradition and culture. In other words, the system does not have deep roots either in the culture of our past or in the living culture of the present. Absence of knowledge and understanding of this aspect is a hurdle in the process of creative endeavour in our discipline. Any form of creative activity needs an educational system which emphasises an understanding of the people, culture, traditions and history; a system which probes deeply into understanding the unique national aspirations.

For the practice of architecture, it is essential to have guidelines for professional practice and professional fees. In any country, at the initial stage, these develop through mutual cooperation, ultimately achieving form through the collective will and obligation of the profession. For any country which has a developed architectural profession, all these details are defined through legal means. As architecture involves creation of an environment for individuals and communities, both small and large-scale and involves resources, it should be mandatory for the architect to define the scope of his work to the client vis-a-vis his professional fees. Although the main responsibility for creating the legal framework for the practice of architecture lies with the government, the professional institutions of a country also have to share a part of the responsibility. The Government of Bangladesh does not at the present time recognise our Institute. Though the Institute has tried for many years to convince the government of the need for laws for the practice of the profession, nothing positive has happened so far.

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**Proposals for establishing a viable profession**

The negative attitude of the government up to the present day has created conditions encouraging unprofessional and unethical practices. It is essential that this situation be remedied urgently and immediately. The role of architects and physical planners in the development and growth of the country has to be recognised. The profession of Architecture can no longer be ignored in our country. The first step towards a healthy profession is the official recognition by the government of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB). The next step should be the working out of a legal base for professional practice through the combined efforts of the government and the IAB.

Though at present the IAB is not recognised by the government, there is no reason why its rules, regulations, code of conduct and recommended fee structure cannot be strictly followed by the members by mutual consent. Professional malpractices may enrich a few individuals temporarily but the profession as a whole suffers immensely.

For many reasons, Bangladesh is considered far remote and detached from the rest of the world. We have very little cultural interaction even with our neighbouring countries. The Aga Khan seminar is one of the unique exceptions which has provided a forum for inter-communication of ideas and interaction of personalities from the countries of the region and some leading architects in the world. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture has helped in initiating the process of this communication and interaction but the responsibility in the future for such cultural exchange lies with the government and the institute.
Session IV
Panel Discussion

Raj Rewal — Chairman

Raj Rewal

The ‘Upazila Shahar’ brings to mind immediately the urbanisation problem throughout the sub-continent. The story of the sub-district centres which are now being planned may be very typical of what’s happening all over India as well as in Pakistan. The introduction of a few pukka houses the metalled roads and electric wires, are all becoming part of this region now.

Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury

One point that I would like to raise. The ‘Upazila Shahar’ that is being developed or rather that is planned, is I think a piecemeal development and is if I may draw an analogue, like designing a building without really taking into consideration the urban pattern in which it really fits. In Bangladesh, we do not have any overall strategy or overall physical planning for the country. Without that we are going for this piecemeal development and planning of the ‘Upazila Shahars’. To my mind it seems to be very dangerous if we do not have any overall national policy for physical planning.

Lailun Nahar Ekram

My paper was quite long and because of the constraints of time there was much I could not mention. The preparation of a Master Plan incorporating national physical planning has been taken up by the Urban Development Directorate and the Ministry of Works. The Upazila complexes are really urban inserts in that plan. I really do not know the role of architects vis-a-vis the common village people and their homes and we really have to wait to see the pattern of growth. There is extensive socio-economic survey work involved and there is a methodology which I did not cover in detail. If I might just mention some of the headings, such as the physical survey of existing land use patterns, a socio-economic survey and then the interview of Public Agencies. There is also the review of documents and publications and ADAB has prepared a forecast of population. There is a quantitative analysis and there is much more that could not be covered in the time available.

Abdur Rab

I think Mrs. Ekram should explain more fully what an Upazila is. A lot of architects and planners do not know what an Upazila is.

Lailun Nahar Ekram

Upazila means sub-district. A district is called ‘zila’ in the country and there are numerous upazilas. A certain number of villages make up an upazila, which previously used to be the thana headquarters. It is now called the upazila headquarters.

William Curtis

I have a question in relation to this, which comes back to some of the general ideas discussed in this seminar concerning the role of the architect. I don’t understand the economic problems of Bangladesh with regard to its rural base but it does seem fairly obvious that with the kind of population growth that has been taking place there is a need to generate some other kind of economic structure in the villages if they are to survive. With this comes initially, two kinds of intervention, either a brash, centralised intervention, without sensitivity, perhaps from the Engineering department or another kind which is money from the outside, either supplied by some international organisations or by what we could call transient labour — the situation of people leaving villages, going abroad and sending money back. This too can lead to the despoiling of an environment.
This seems to be happening in Egypt for example. Villages are obviously going to change. It needs to be thought through how they are going to change and what is desirable. Aspirations need to be given an image and the labour of the rural base, on the spot, should be involved in it, otherwise we will have a totally split-up situation as has happened in many other places in the Third World.

Raj Rewal

I have a question to ask of Mrs. Ekram. Do the Governmental agencies in what she called the “urban inserts” consider at all the role of the local mistry or the local craftsmen who might have been building in a specific region for centuries? Are they considered at all, because obviously the new hospital or the new government buildings, even a school, have a totally alien look — they do not appear to fit into the surroundings at all. Can’t we trust the local craftsman to handle some of these works?

Lailun Nahar Ekram

It is possible but they are Government buildings which the local craftsman in the villages do not usually build or they do not know the kind of process, maybe they do not even know how to read and write.

William Curtis

Yes, but this raises the question whether the architect can be useful as a communicator between the two sides, as somebody who can handle the implementation within a housing programme. The co-operative or a school or a central Government agency or whatever is just plonked down in a village, but perhaps this can be done in a way which is regionally sensitive. This is “regionalism” in the real sense, like being a good country doctor.

Raj Rewal

Referring to the paper by Shah Alam Zahiruddin are there any comments?

Khadem Ali

In the Chairman’s opening remarks the comment was made that the new structures that have been erected in the upazila somehow don’t seem to fit into the total landscape and I wanted to make some comments, but I wanted to make them after the whole range of the problems have been put forward and I think that has been quite well done in Mr. Zahiruddin’s paper and I wish to raise some issues. As Mr. Zahiruddin has pointed out we have got a National Planning Commission which prepares the policy and strategy for physical development in the country. What seems to irk the professionals here is that there is not sufficient dialogue between the government and private professionals or sufficient input into the government’s policy and strategy planning by the latter. There are very limited forums in which this dialogue can take place and one of the forums is a National Physical Planning Panel. Some members from the profession have been included in that sector planning panel. I happen to be one and we private members have touched on some of the points. It seems to us that the government has been progressing on the thesis that government can only undertake constructions which are permanent, but as we all know in the whole of Bangladesh, specially in the rural set-up, which constitutes about 90% of the population, all the structures are at best semi-permanent or temporary. We have tried to impress the government that it should try to concentrate its efforts and try to invest its resources on this great mass of rural population but the government is of the view that investing in temporary and semi-permanent structures is a waste of money and they are totally not prepared to do it.

We have done a study which was sponsored by the Commonwealth Association of Science and Technology to examine appropriate rural housing technology. We studied a village near Dhaka where 148 houses were evaluated. We surveyed all the houses, did financial calculations and we came to the conclusion that the best kind of rural house will cost you about 15 to 20 percent of the cost of the lowest standard of a pukka house. The Government is concentrating on fulfilling housing demands and the Government says “whatever we do we will build only good houses — good houses mean pukka houses. We will build pukka houses and since our money is limited, our resources are limited, we can do every year only so many”. Our position was that it is not a Government’s job when government does not have sufficient resources to fulfill housing demands. The Government should try to take a strategy of equitable distribution of its resources and the Government should put an input into housing needs, that is to say Government can go into the infrastructure, utilities, fresh water, waste disposal and flood control. The Government can also go into public facilities, providing assistance, be it financial, be it technical or be it personnel to the rural people to develop their own resources.
Raj Rewal

I notice that there seems to be a little divergence of views about the situation of the architect in Bangladesh. I must point out that in India the architects and engineers have been at each others’ throats for thirty years.

Bashirul Haque

I would like to discuss the first two papers by Mrs Ekram and Mr. Zahiruddin. I felt that primarily the discussion was about the way government approached decisions in architecture and in Mrs Ekram’s paper she dealt with guidelines and criteria which are already decided by the Government which is all very well, I suppose, but I am a little disappointed because there is no specificity. Mr. Zahiruddin talked about poverty in the country and mis-handling of finances. This is presumably the reason the government is handling the major building works. This point would have been much better made if he had taken a specific example of a building and how this has been done efficiently. The major problem is this country in the building industry is the financing of building. It is not on the national scale purely a problem of poverty. There is poverty but whatever money there is, it is not available for us to build. If someone has a piece of land and he wants to build he has nowhere to go, there are no financial institutions or mortgage companies, which will give him a loan to build something which will be in terms of investment and return a viable project.

It is very difficult in a developing country to overcome bureaucracy and arrive at a building solution which is financially viable because my experience is that if a project is approved by the Government, by the time it is implemented, the time lag is about 3 to 4 years. By the time the architect is designing it, already 2/3 years have elapsed and fixed budgets are overtaken by inflation so there is a tremendous problem of controlling the budget. This area of bureaucracy and bureaucratisation of decision making is, very harmful to the building industry.

William Curtis

I have found a lack of particularities but many generalities have been mentioned. I don’t think I understand what they add up to in terms of a true picture of Bangladesh but it seems to be a description of different bureaucracies jockeying for positions.

The situation that I want to talk about is the one relating to people’s needs and the availability of materials. The very beautiful vernaculars that we have seen in a number of the presentations have been made of wood. Now, presumably the wood stock is dropping quickly and therefore the question of materials arises and with it the form the architecture of the future will take whether in the country or in the city? I am really interested particularly in the countryside in this case, what will future rural buildings in Bangladesh be made of and therefore what vocabulary in relation to that material will be evolved? This leads to another point. When we talk about centralised bureaucracies making these decisions we are all assuming that the architect is going to get into the act and that this is a good thing, that is underwritten in what we have heard. This leads to the question of what type forms, what vocabulary, what ‘quasi-vernacular’ is going to be worked out. Behind all this I have the assumption that brick and concrete will be the materials which are going to rush into the breach. If these things are going to be controlled with any sensitivity there has to be, it seems to me, a dialogue between the intelligence of craftsmen, and professional architectural intelligence I just can’t see these discussions going on without some discussion of form and of a vocabulary and I haven’t seen a single image in this seminar session that shows me what’s wrong or what’s right, so this I want to throw right into the middle because I think it is crucial. Presumably the wooden vernacular is destined to become a curious craft object in another forty years for tourists to go and look at in little villages — maybe they’ll even be in hotel lobbies. This is what is happening to wooden crafts in many parts of South East Asia so I would like some real nitty-gritty answers from the Bangladeshis here. How are you thinking about this? Is it going to be a brick architecture? What does it look like? What is its relation in appearance and scale to tradition?

Bashirul Haque

There are a lot of constraints on architectural expression when one starts designing. The primary thing is probably the availability of materials in this country and what you can do within the kind of budget which this country can afford. We have to design something that people can build. Now in this respect brick is the cheapest materials you can work with. Wood is becoming very expensive. The kind of architecture that will be evolved is primarily by using brick. We don’t really have any other materials. As a matter of fact if you go into more details like floor materials the only thing we have in this country, and that has to be imported is terrazzo. We have tiles, brick tiles, though that has not yet been developed. We have to develop terra-cotta tiles for floor. We have to create a market for the manufacturers, tell them, look, if you start manufacturing this product there is a market.
for it. As a matter of fact I have discussed with various manufacturers and maybe it will come about. The only floor material we have today is terrazzo which is becoming terribly boring.

William Curtis

It seems to me this is a problem of enormous international dimensions and political dimensions. It concerns the ownership of resources and even why they should cost anything. You have an able labour force that can do things for itself, put them together with the materials and the right ideas and you do away with a lot of people who get in the way in between. Another aspect of this is relevant since you’ve just had a major political meeting of South Asian countries. There are certain countries in this region which have got too much wood. One of them is next door Burma and it is really a question of very intelligent international agreements on resources—you’ve got enough brick to build the Tower of Babel forty times, as you know. This has to come into the thinking really early or otherwise what is the alternative? The alternative is the wrong buildings costing too much, built with the wrong materials and sometimes very ugly too.

Syed Zaigham Jaffery

Basically what I would like to do is take a certain section from the theme ‘Architect and Government Relations’ and deal with two sub-items therein, which are, the effectiveness of the professional organisations in professional control, and the expected roles of the professional organisations. I wish to deal with the subject in the light of the two papers presented by Mr. Zahiruddin and Mr. Islam and make it into something personal by describing it in terms of the role that the Institute of Architects, Pakistan has played in the process of the recognition of the profession in Pakistan and where we are today. Mr. Zahiruddin’s paper is a record of the current and recent efforts and it ends with the hope that since the status quo cannot continue change has to be brought about quickly. How this change will happen has not been defined. Mr. Islam’s paper gave the historical perspective and analyses the reason for the current state of the art. The disruption of historical continuity that has been mentioned I agree with completely. The paper Mr. Islam presented points out that there is a definite need and rationale for change. The situation described is akin to what is found in most of the countries of this region, whether it is Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan or India. We are at various stages and various levels but the factors that have affected us are more or less the same.

On a very personal note, I would like to point out that today you have a Chief Architect in the Government of Bangladesh, and there are seventy-two architects working with the Government. That brings back memories of 1969 when I graduated and went for an interview with the Public Works Department and I was told that my degree was not recognised. The Government did not equate my degree to the Civil Engineers degree. It was then, I believe, that the struggle began for the recognition of the profession here and if you pick up any newspaper from that period you will find a record of what happened and how it began. At that time the professional Institute, that was the umbrella for all of us was the Institute of Architects, Pakistan, but that institution seemed very far away. It was like a cloud which would shower rain when it was goaded and not when it was needed. It was then that the young architects of Bangladesh—or then it was East Pakistan—formed what was known as The Architects Action Committee (TAAC) and much was done by this group. Perhaps that also became the kernel for the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh.

The role of the professional organisation in shaping the architectural outcome of the process of development is to my mind very significant. Much has happened both here and at the Institute of Architects, Pakistan and we at the IAP seem to be slightly better off but believe me the struggle is the same and the problems are the same. It might be useful to mention how we mess up things there, and there might be some lessons for all of us here. Within the IAP when I returned in 1980 there was a process of change. The first thing that was done was to decentralise it and establish chapters in the important cities. This was done consciously in order to develop not only a second tier of leadership among architects but also to deal with local issues and to monitor the local architectural scene. In the ensuing five years that they have been active, significant achievements have been made politicising the architects within the city and waking them up to issues which are of concern to us about the built environment. One of the significant things that has happened is that now together with the senior architects and practitioners, there is a group of younger architects who are very consciously and directly involved in what is happening. Those on the periphery who have more work have also been politicised by various means including social and peer pressure within the architects community. One other thing that has happened and was part of the strategy of the professional institute in Pakistan was that during the period 1980 to 1983 it was decided by the National Council IAP that we would concentrate on only one issue that was to have the profession of architecture recognised and the title of “Architect” protected. We thought that if we were to make an
impact it was necessary to protect the profession from both outside and from within. It is also very interesting to point out that this process actually began in Dhaka in 1969. During that period architects from Dhaka and from the rest of the country journeyed several times to Islamabad. That was in 1969, 1970 and 1971. Then the events of time took over and the whole thing was shelved. The draft that we had prepared had a simple comment on it and it was "File". Below this there was a small initial by a Deputy Secretary and the file lay there for about six or seven years.

Something significant happened in 1980 with the staging of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. In the architectural profession and its contemporary history in Pakistan that was a turning point. The Award ceremonies were held in Lahore and architecture, suddenly became a fascinating subject and the press and the media picked it up and we cashed-in on the issues. The draft which was lying around was redone and many people contributed to it. I must take this opportunity to thank the gentleman who initiated most of the work and that is Mr. Muzharul Islam. Thank you Mr. Islam for your pioneering efforts, for what you are struggling for here, for the thoughts you shared with us and for the people you trained. Now the idea that was germinated in Paribagh came back to us from Islamabad in the form of an ordinance recognising architecture as a profession and protecting the title Architect. One of the things that I have to point out, and maybe there is some lesson in it, is that the ordinance itself became a monster, it became a sort of a Frankenstein and tried to eat up the Institute which created it. Those perhaps are mere teething problems and the Institute is dealing with them. There was resistance but the registration council was set up and out of the fourteen members who formed the registration council which registers architects in Pakistan, there are six planners because the council that was formed was with the help of planners and it is now called the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners. Besides the six planners, there are nine architects, eight of whom are from the Institute of Architects, Pakistan. Then there is one individual who considers herself an institution unto herself. There are lessons to draw from this that unless we keep a vigil on democratic principles individuals can hijack professional institutes for self-projection to the detriment of the profession. The Institute organised several seminars and architects from various cities got together and we decided to do a self-critique on our role and what we had been doing and what was the direction that had to be taken. These sessions, I believe, produced amazing results because everything we have done after that has been, somehow or the other, inspired by the thought that came out of the young architects and the elder professionals who were there. These ideas have been now synthesised into policies and may roughly be called the strategies that the Institute of Architects, Pakistan follows.

Among them is something which can happen anywhere, the establishment of a regular lecture series through the help of sponsors. This was one of the important events because it served as a regular forum where architects could get together from all age groups and all backgrounds together with students and share the knowledge of their peers and discuss and arrive at a certain consensus. Most importantly we consciously involved other professionals like artists, painters, planners and almost every month we held these lectures and the gatherings were large enough to attract the attention of the media. Regularly we had something appearing in the press and on radio. The effect was not only to sensitize the decision-maker about what the architect could do, but also tell the public what we are about. Another important effect of this was the involvement of teachers and the students of the faculties of architecture in both the cities of Lahore and Karachi. The lecture series helped to supplement the classroom education of students and bring them closer to the practising architects so that they are more aware of the problems that face us. The most important effect was the cohesiveness of the group for when you meet you discuss things and get to know each other.

Another event was the honouring of the founders of IAP, then the establishment of awards for students through the Institute of Architects, Pakistan and with the help of the Institute from other sponsors. What came out directly from the self-criticism sessions was the definition of the role the architect should play in our country and how he should get down from the ivory tower and go and work with the people. In order to show the direction we should really be taking, we, for the first time, honoured a man who has spent his life working with poor people and has been involved with the work of the squatter settlements in the Orangi area of Karachi. The gentleman is well known because he has worked here in Bangladesh. He is Dr. Akhter Hamid Khan.

Much seems to be happening but there were various failures that we have still to contend with. One of them was that when the legislation came in, the Institute of Architects, Pakistan was not recognised as the only professional body which represents the architects, though there is a clause within the law which states that the registration council, the governing body, will assign the task of holding examinations to a professional institution among planners and among architects. There is also the fees structure and although it has been defined, the bylaws have not been implemented yet nor are there clear-cut rules or regulations on who is going to run the architectural competitions in the country. We still have a long way to go but
recent promises made by the Government include one in which the provincial government of Punjab have stated publicly and through a policy statement that architects shall be employed at all municipal levels. The provincial Government of Sind has made a similar announcement. Furthermore, the inputs from architects on all issues effecting the built environment will be at the highest level. The Institute has been assured that it will become the professional institution representing the architects of the country. The struggle is not over from within as well as from without. There is a strong lobby of engineers which has been trying to have the ordinance withdrawn but there is not much that we cannot handle if we continue in the way we have.

What this shows is that the profession of architecture in our country has to deal with several dimensions and at many levels. Among them are the assertion of itself as a profession and as a body, the question of identity, aesthetics and organisation. Now that we are recognised as a profession by the government and the title is protected we have to prove our national utility as a profession. Are we really needed? If the people through the government protect our title, what are we doing for the people?

If the national utility of a profession is to be recognised, then we have to determine the ways in which we can serve the nation. For this we must work in an area or in a method which means something to the people, otherwise, the government recognition will not mean much and we will be rejected by the people whom we are supposed to serve. Historically we have always served to edify the ego of the Emperor or the rich patron. Today the Emperors have turned into states and rich patrons have turned into entrepreneurs. If we want to continue to serve them all well and good, that could be one role, but it has to be consciously decided.

We have to recognise, the fact that we have to become the facilitators of the development process rather than perhaps intervenors in it. Our new role should then be to satisfy the needs of the people and if we don’t do this we will be discarded. How this is done, with or without the government’s help is one dilemma which we must solve ourselves. One thing is very clear; that our role must change and we must understand first ourselves and our region and we must draw inspiration from each other and from within the sub-continent rather than from abroad. For this we need to know ourselves, our problems and our aspirations. We must build a base of understanding among the architects within this region and the problems that face us. We share many similar issues and we have similar problems.

My hope is that this seminar, which comes at an appropriate time, will give us as an outcome, the close cooperation between the architects of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As a delegate of the Institute of Architects, Pakistan, I put forward the idea that maybe an Association of a South Asian Institute of Architects could be formalised with the objective on the lowest level of exchanging information from the common backgrounds that we have. Maybe we can come up with a directory of the professionals who are available within the region in order that we could be of assistance to each other rather than seeking aid from outside. At the other end we could become a lobby for the betterment of the professional as a whole within the region.

Ranjan Singh Shah

I think the discussions and the papers are really very much about regional issues but so far as the country of Nepal is concerned I would like to highlight a few points which are a little bit different from the characteristics of this South Asia region.

Nepal, from its prehistory, was an independent country and due to its political policy it was closed to the outside world until 1950. The country was developing by itself, creating its own regional character in its architecture. If we look at the regional setting of Nepal we find it is very much different from other parts of the South Asia region. Nepal has got different settings. The Himalayan region, which is located from 5,000 to 8,000 metres high and which covers at least 23% of the country has certain architectural and geographical features. The Midland region which is located at about 1,000 to 5,000 metres occupies at least 60% of the country’s area and have different architectural features again. Finally there is the Terai region, the lowland area which has further architectural variations.

In totality the country has harmony in its diverse geographical religious and cultural setting. I can say that the country has regional characteristics and yet its architectural character is essentially Nepalese.

I would made the point that Nepal is one of the few countries in this region which has a living architecture of vernacular construction which have not been disrupted by any colonial intervention. We have seen such intervention and how architecture was disrupted and how in particular the vernacular has been totally wiped out in some cases. Actually this was noted very much by British art and architectural historians themselves and they have written quite a lot about it. Nepal, where they were able to safeguard themselves by not allowing anyone to enter until 1950 to disrupt the architectural development, has some interesting features.
Panel Discussion

Raj Rewal

I can see two diverse tendencies in the discussions, one is to keep the discussion going on the role of the architect and the government — and the other one prompted by Mrs. Ekram is about the potential of and even the problems created by government intervention when they go to the rural area. It might be good if we return to the subject of Nepal later because it would be very useful to see a natural heritage in terms of design and construction which has carried on uninterrupted. In the meantime we will hear the comments of Mr. Ali

Meer Mobashsher Ali

I'll start with the comments made by Dr. Curtis on the form in the rural areas. I think he has very rightly pointed out that the brick buildings that we see and the bamboo huts we see have a link between them. I don't think any serious efforts have so far been made by the architects to make a link between these two. There are certain sociological points also, the brick built building has a certain amount of prestige associated with it. It is very difficult to break that image and to go to some other form when this form is already accepted.

Dr. Curtis also asked where the financing for the planning that has to be done in the Upazila is coming from. It is being financed by foreign agencies. UNCHS is providing the planning content. The money for the execution part has not yet been found. When we go into details a few points come out which are political and which are possibly below the level of sophistication that we are discussing here. I must raise one point — the local firms that are doing the planning of the Upazila are paid a fee of $3000 only for the master plan, and I think nothing can be done with $3000. One might even speculate that it has been done deliberately. After the projects are submitted, and all the documents are submitted, they will not be up to the quality that was expected and it will be said that somebody from outside should be brought in to do a proper job. So before we expect quality work, the procedure, including fees, should be properly laid down.

Coming to the Government vis-a-vis architecture the various institutions have been outlined in the papers and there is a serious lack of coordination between these institutions. Whenever the question of coordination arises the Government forms a top level committee and top level committees do not facilitate co-ordination and so everyone is going along his own line. In Dhaka city, three agencies own land: Dhaka Improvement Trust, the Municipality and the Public Works Department and there is very little coordination between these three groups. It was mentioned that Improvement Trusts are being done in other cities. Dhaka Improvement Trust was established in 1950 and if you ask anybody in this city they will say it has failed miserably in its purpose. Why is this failure being repeated? There is a very specific reason for this. The Municipality could have taken on the job of looking after the Dhaka city but the Municipality is supposed to be an elected body and the Government did not want to give the decisions into the hands of the elected bodies. DIT is an agency of the Government, though it has some degree of autonomy. The Government wanted to keep it in its hands because DIT gives out land and this is a big subsidy for the richer groups or a particular group of people and they want to keep it in their hands. The same thing happened in Calcutta. The Calcutta Improvement Trust also did the same thing and it was done with a deliberate purpose. Take for example, the question of the cost of land. All the architects who are sitting here have a piece of land and I, for one, will not like the cost to come down. So the cost cannot come down. These are the areas where the government can make real policies that will make changes but nobody is interested. Even people sitting here are self-interested. So what we are saying is that we are paying only lip service for whether you like it or not we are an elite group.

I take as another example a project in Senpara Parbata area. Various committees have been formed and I am in more than one of the committees and I have tried my best to convince them that it is not possible to acquire the land immediately. For the last ten years it has been said that more power will be put in the hands of the authorities so that they can acquire the land. It is never understood that acquiring the land is not a solution. The participation of the people is absolutely necessary and now that the area has totally been destroyed and the groups that are living there become very big and attained some political force, they have now come up with a structure plan, which I am sure will never be implemented because there is no source of financing and no thought of financing. There is no development tax. The people who will benefit from the structure plan are not paying any money at all. So if the government has to do it or implement it, they will have to pay cash from their pocket which is not possible in any planning procedure. So no matter how good the plan is, it will never be implemented. If somebody from outside comes and pays the money then and only then can a project like this be undertaken. There is also a lack of bureaucratic understanding of any planning process. The government's effort in housing, which is a major sector, is almost zero. There is no national institution in the country to take up housing. The PWD, and we have seen that they are doing some good jobs, is in-
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involved only in some forms of housing for Government officers or Government employees. The government has nothing to do with the private sector, nothing to say in the form of construction, in the form of setting out or in any other matter. For government employees however who are already in the privileged class maximum effort is being given to housing them. We lament that only fifteen percent of them are housed by the government and, that we want one hundred percent of them to be housed. You will have an administration located in the city and people living in the city who are all government officials. Since the client is the government and the designing authority is the government, the standard is very high in comparison to the general housing standard of the country. This has a very bad demonstration effect and people who want to build, wish to build in that manner too. The real standard, if we talk in terms of the investment that is being done to house a person and the interest on that would be more than his salary. By any economic principle this investment is not justifiable. Government has to do something to house the people in general and we have to suggest some institutions. In many countries, indeed in many Asian countries, there are national housing institutions and we do not have such housing institution. The small organisation we have, the Directorate of Housing, is totally insignificant in the national perspective.

I would like now to comment on Mr. Islam’s paper where I’ll skip the colonial bit because a lot has been said about it. I think we have a little bit of misunderstanding, about colonisation not only the British colonised, the whole of Europe went out to acquire colonies. It was a total victory of technology. They knew better and so they came and they conquered and we were vanquished. It’s no use blaming them any more, we just lost. We could not sustain ourselves, so they came and they had the right to do whatever they wanted to and definitely some things wrong were done and this is the time to correct it but it is no use blaming them any more.

Something has been said regarding this school, the school of architecture. I will agree that the graduates we have produced do not in their work represent the culture in a way some people would like, but this is blaming the product of the school for the work they are doing without judging if they are given the opportunity to work, or the environment to work, in a way they would like. We offer our training through a curriculum and we have made sincere efforts, even asking society what they want at various levels, to change the curriculum, to suit the need of society. Any suggestion you have will be appreciated and I would request people concerned to make comments on the curriculum.

Raj Rewal

I would like to talk a little at this stage about the architect and government relationship and the experience in India. About 25 years ago I had the bad luck to win an architectural competition. The negotiations about the fees went on for 5 to 6 years, about what should be paid to the architect, how he should implement the work, and what agencies should actually carry out a large urban design project. I stuck to the position, that we should be paid the fees as per the Royal Institute of British Architects, which were more or less accepted at that time by the Indian Institute of Architects. No bureaucrat wanted to agree to that at that particular time and the thing just dragged on and on. Eventually when it was agreed to pay the fees a loophole was found; apparently the building site couldn’t be given to the architect to carry out the work. Some legal problems were identified with two or three houses which were in the area. I presumed it was all deliberate and another 10 years passed in between.

What I want to tell our friends in Bangladesh is that if they hope for some cooperation from the government agencies or the engineering part of it, which has a great vested interest at this stage then I think they would be misleading themselves. In India we had tremendous problems about this and even now the Chief Architect of India works under the Chief Engineer. The Department and the Engineers have a complete say in the entire building activity. The result is the kind of ‘intervention’ that was illustrated in the public school and the government house in Mrs. Ekram’s presentation. The ruin of the entire region can result from this kind of intervention. Even the few architects who get a chance to work in these organisations either leave very quickly or follow the trends formulated by the Departmental engineers and this is a dilemma which has serious implications. Maybe the ideal thing would be that there should be no architectural departments within the Governmental organisations. Maybe we should have only a section which formulates the programmes and then private architects should be allowed to carry out the works. I am sure the private architect would make serious mistakes, they are after all the product of the same institutions, the same cultural background, but I think the mistakes would not be so colossal. Once a centralised government agency takes over the job of doing a major project throughout Bangladesh the same type designs will be seen from one end of the country to the other. In India we have seen that often type 4 quarters are built, whether it’s Hyderabad or Srinagar, whether it is South, East or West. There is absolutely no consideration given to the local vernacular, the local building techniques, the materials, or even the local building traditions.
On another related subject, that of the Architect’s role and government patronage. The Architectural profession has a major role to play in the process of rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh. This seminar should wholeheartedly recommend that the Bangladesh Institute of Architects, should be recognised by the Government. The Institute’s recommendation for professional ethics, fees structure, code of conduct and responsibilities should be well defined and accepted by members and official organisations.

The Indian Institute of Architects had an uphill task to be recognised by a Bill of Parliament. Even now the fees structure and methodology of building through some of the Government agencies is far from satisfactory. Architects are allowed to design but not trusted to carry out their design on site. The divided responsibilities between Architects and Engineers has resulted in poor buildings.

How should the Government select Architects for the design of public buildings? Architectural competitions may still be the best answer. It allows the young Architects a reasonable chance to design major buildings. It stirs up new ideas, perhaps controversial, but it is still the best way to choose a good design.

However, for specialised projects like mass housing schemes, hospitals or educational buildings the Government agencies should give a chance to selected experienced Architects through limited competitions or through outright commissions.

In no case should the Architects be selected on the basis of the lowest quotation.

William Curtis

I want to say a few words about history and the teaching of history. It is crucial to avoid simple-minded myths about the national past. I feel especially with respect to the built environment that what is needed is a historiography which instead of simply looking at the 15th or 16th century past through its monuments, considers the entire infrastructure of the country. This would have to consider the role of peasants in earlier phases of history. Whilst not wanting in any sense at all to excuse the excesses of British colonialism, I would think that a delta peasant’s life in the 17th century was not exactly a life of honey. It is a situation, which properly spelled out, would do a great deal to explain the temporariness of the architecture, the vernacular, not only with respect to the dangers of the river rising and falling, but to do with the landlord system under Muslim rule.

I am saying these things because I think there is a danger sometimes in the rhetoric about post-colonial circumstances that one identifies one’s scapegoat, normally the European colonising phase, and then blames everything on that. This becomes a convenient way of avoiding discussion of neo-colonisation by the technologically superior nations but also what we might call Mandarin neo-colonisation, from city to country or what Prof Arkoun called the Jacobin state. As a professional elite you are liable to be in the middle of that scenario. Once upon a time the models came from outside to the countryside. The outsider might have been a designer in Bombay or in London. Now they may come from Dhaka. As far as the receiving end is concerned, is it really so very different? I really feel that if you wish to have a sensible assessment of these questions you have to have a model of historiography which deals with the role of the entire population in the past, deals with the role of the peasant in relation to the class structure, in relation to creed and so on, and that looks at the built fabric of the entire region in relation to these categories. Otherwise one falls into a kind of higher-minded mythology, usually directed by the needs of present-day nationalism, which puts together a handful of stupas, works its way through one or two mosques and then you go into a bump around 200 years ago! In this scenario one ends up ignoring some of the actually quite intelligent architectural solutions brought by the European colonialist. Then one comes to a new phase where somehow one picks up the pieces. It leads to a very simple idea about roots, unless there is a proper explanation of the entire evolution of the built structure in the country. This is a plea for a historiography, a way of doing history which in turn concerns architectural teaching, because the architects need to understand why buildings, even field patterns came about. Not through simple-minded myths but by real explanation, by real documentation and real hypothesis in the historical sense.

Roni Khosla

I’d just like to make one very minor correction for Dr Curtis. As we understand it, in this part of the world we refer to the British period as the colonising period because it was the result of a metropolitan culture which was located very far from here and which was using the Asian countries for extracting resources and for marketing their products. The presence of the Buddhists, the Hindus and the Muslims in this part of the world was very different because they came to settle here and they were assimilated. There is a big difference between this and the kind of marketing and resource extraction that takes place and the culture of the colony gets transformed in a very dramatic manner. I don’t think there is any chance of assimilation then. The British culture was in direct confrontation at an economic level with this part of the world, so there are some differences.
While I have the opportunity I'd like to make one or
two other observations. We have three specific
characteristics of government which I believe give
direction to our architecture here. One is that the
government and the bureaucracy are authoritarian
and centralised. Secondly, that our institutions are
not very well developed. Thirdly, that the government
uses resources to project the image of state power.
When PWD buildings are erected in remote areas it
really is a reflection of the extension of state power
and architecture we know has often been used to
express the power of the state. These are questions
that we have to consider as architects and we enter
the realm of welfare economics, not budget econo-
metrics. What are the opportunity costs? There is a need
for architects to be aware of the difference between
putting a lot of money into a building which is then
not maintained at all and putting in much less and
then maintaining it regularly. Most architects in this
part of the world are not really worried about the
maintenance costs of the building and that is why they
happily raise the specifications of the building hoping
that it will last forever. We know that the historical
buildings, the colonial buildings are all in a state of
neglect and the new buildings that are put up have to
be photographed within a year before they are taken
over by the weather. It is very important for us in Asia
not only to lower the cost of buildings but to raise the
level of maintenance of buildings. Louis Kahn's
assembly building is absolutely spectacular but we
must remember that it cost 53 million dollars. Is it a
maintenance free building? These are things we must
address ourselves to.

Mohammed Arkoun

This discussion and specially the remarks of Dr.
Curtis on colonialism and colonialists highlights the
problem of the struggle between the three forces
operating in societies, especially our Muslim society
today — these are the state, the nation and the region.
When I came here I was very eager to discover this
part of the world, as a Muslim originating from the
Far West part of the Islamic world. I was interested
to hear something new on common issues. Arab Islam
is different from Asian Islam because the cultural
backgrounds are very different. Pointing out this
difference does not ignore the common teaching of
Islam as a religion, but we have to distinguish in our
approach religion and its cultural, historical
expressions.

The words in Muzharul Islam's paper are just the
same as those used by North Africans and especially
by Algerians when we come to deal with any problem,
be it architectural, social, economic, political or
cultural. We always look to the colonial impact on us,
what colonialism did with us, and we spend a lot of
time describing again and again about the colonial
legacy, pushing away, forgetting totally the main
task of all intellectuals, architects, economists and all
citizens of our societies today. The main task for us
is precisely to create a space of freedom, to exercise an
intellectual responsibility so that we can think afresh
our problems, solve them and create the possibilities
for everyone to be an emancipated citizen. Then we
can truly face the challenge of the present era, instead
of justifying or hiding by our criticism against colo-
rialism, our own inability to build a modern state.

The struggle between the West and us is for our
independence on an intellectual and cultural level. We
are not there yet. The struggle between classes for
power has replaced the struggle against colonialism.
We have experienced independence for thirty years
and we have achieved some results at a very high
human price. We know that we have no freedom to
tackle our political and cultural problems in our
societies, not because of colonialism but because the
political structure imposed in our societies by external
and internal forces prevents us making progress. Our
elites do not receive social and political support. The
more we reject the responsibility for our present
backwardness, placing it all on colonialism and
imperialism, the more we are unprepared to face the
real issues. That is why we appreciate more the chance
given to us to approach the problems of Muslim
societies through architecture and urbanism. The
originality of this approach is that we are obliged to
consider technical, cultural and economic issues
related to architecture before we consider political
questions which lead us to ideological and polemic
attitudes. The Aga Khan Award is a forum for
research and exchange of ideas; it is not in any sense
an ideological trend; it is not even a particular school
of philosophy or even architecture. Through intel-
lectual confrontations, the participants in the Aga
Khan Award create something precious, badly
needed through the Muslim world — a free space
from which could emerge a new Muslim culture and
thought, open to the rich legacy of the past, able to
take over the demands of the present, ready to face the
challenges of the future. This 'miracle' is possible
because we avoid the empty ideological discourse and
favour all enriching, intellectual, cultural, artistic and
spiritual initiatives.

Shah Alam Zahiruddin

The title of my paper is "The Role of Government in
Architecture" and what I have tried to do in the paper
is to examine the role the government is playing, what
are the organisations and institutions the government
has for what purpose and what are their
shortcomings In a reference made by Dr. Curtis, he stated that in the paper, the jockeying of different departments has been highlighted, but it is important here. I do not know how it is in his country but something being written down somewhere is not enough, it needs great efforts to make things effective. There are institutions with specific terms of reference and objectives, but the institutions are not functioning as they should be and it is important that we identify where they are not functioning properly. For example in the Public Works Department, engineers are there and the architects are there and I am sure engineers are supposed to do the engineering work and the architects are supposed to do the architecture work. But it’s not happening. That is very important if we can identify a problem then work towards a solution. As Mr. Jaffery has said, in the late 60’s his degree in architecture from Dhaka University was not recognised by the Government of Bangladesh to qualify for a job in the Ministry of Works. This was a problem that was identified and many methods were used, not one, to get the degree recognised by the Government. We just cannot go and hit the government on the head and say that here is the degree and you take it. We worked in different forums at different levels and then finally the degree has not only been recognised, but virtually the entire government architects office, at least 90% of them, is now manned by architects with degrees from this university. I do not think I can give you a solution to anything but it is important that we identify where things are going wrong, where we are lacking and then work to remedy it.

If you had asked me 5 years back, 10 years back, or maybe 15 years back, about the relationship of architects and engineers in Government, I would have confirmed the same experience as in India, but things have changed a lot in the government’s engineer and architect relationship in the last few years. I am, however, not talking about the state of affairs of the entire country. There are private architects working in other organisations, besides the PWD. There are many autonomous bodies, the Dhaka Improvement Trust is one, the Power Development Board is another and the Agriculture Department is doing a lot of work through private architects. Engineers still dominate and in the name of design competition they actually, without any award, get a design from you. The architects may or may not be commissioned. It is up to the architects in private practice to respond or not respond to this. For the architects in Government Department the position is now very much consolidated. If the Chief Engineer goes with a proposal to the Ministry of Works, the Minister of Works will ask him “Have you discussed the matter with the Department of Architecture?” So much so that during the SAARC conference, concerning the city decora-

In response to the issue raised by William Curtis on
what is traditional and vernacular and the possibility of easily obtaining timber for traditional construction from Burma, I would say that Burma is not in the South Asia Regional Cooperation Programme. Burma is not interested and wants to remain isolated, so our problem of obtaining timber to use as a traditional construction material is not solved. Timber is now like gold in this country. If we want to do something expensive, we go for timber, it is not cheap, which used to be the case. As for timber, bamboo or thatch, the traditional materials of construction in rural Bangladesh, architects can always work in this area if there are enough dedicated architects in private practice as the Government is not working this sector.

I would now like to dispel some misconception, which has been voiced in Muzharul Islam's paper that the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh is not recognised by the Government. If the Institute of Architects' recognition means the registration of the Institute through normal process, like Institution of Engineers, then we may say that the Institute is not registered. It is for the Institute to take the initiative to get it registered with the Cooperative Societies or registered as a Company as I see in the case of Architect's Regional Council of Asia which is registered as a Company in Hong Kong. As for recognition by the Government, I am pleased to point out that during my term of office as President of the Institute, we have been able to get recognition by the Government and we received a grant from the National Budget as a learned Society just like the Institution of Engineers, the Medical Association and others. The Government recognises the Institute only as a learned Society, and in the case of important architectural projects, wherever the Government has a design competition organised, there is a representative from the Institute of Architects on the organising body. The remark made by a member of the Institute that the Institute of Architects Bangladesh is not recognised is not correct. It is true that there is no registration of architects to practise but we are trying hard to bring in a registration act. Certain ground works have been made and we hope we will be able to pursue it further.

Nurordin Durkee

As a Muslim from the farthest West or the farthest East, that is the United States, I was very interested in the remarks of my brother, Mohammed Arkoun. What I have found in my travels is that it's not really a question of colonialisation because the people of today are colonising themselves by a wholesale importation of western ideology or the northern technological nation's ideology. This conference would have been quite different had it not been held in a compound about 50 miles outside of Dhaka, where the real problems exist. The role of local builders and craftsmen was brought up twice, it was totally passed over for a discussion of a type of organisation which is only a colonial organisation. The whole idea of the architect and the engineer and this department and that department and the royal this and the government that, all of which has been taken over wholesale by the developing nations has nothing to do with institutions which existed before colonialisation, you have essentially colonised yourselves into his model and have neglected the people who really need you.

You spoke about the government building houses and these houses were for government employees, so what you have is this constantly spreading government, all of which is operating off the same particular type of intellectual colonisation. The poor people who cannot attain to that level of housing see it and then of course because everybody is greedy, they want that kind of housing too. You soon have an instant Poland or instant South Chicago or instant Heliopolis in Egypt with rows and rows and rows of concrete flats. They are not maintenance free as has been suggested, but turn into instant slums about 7 years on as the concrete begins to rot, because some contractor put the money in his pocket and didn't actually provide the standards and then the steel begins to corrode from inside. Really the question which hasn't been addressed, and nobody seems to want to address, is instead of all these learned bodies and instead of all these commissions, what is the real role of the local builder and the local craftsman? This idea of informal structures, of barefoot architects of course takes dedication and most people don't want that.

I've heard I don't know how many discussions about the fees, because really people are seeking to enrich themselves through this thing so that they can then attain a particular level of living which is again a part of the same phenomenon. People don't really care enough in spite of the rhetoric about what the conditions of the people are. Somebody said when asked about the role of local builders and craftsmen, that they can neither read nor write. Well, I suggest that building has nothing to do with either reading or writing, it has to do with the ability. There is in people's hands and people's minds the ability to build and this question has been constantly gone over and glossed over here in favour of these other things.

Raj Rewal

Thank you very much. I think the role of the craftsmen and the potential of, if I may say so, counterculture or culture which comes not through colonial patterns has been very well made.

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Kenneth Frampton

I just wanted to say that I think the last 2 or 3 interventions have been extremely revealing and I have come to appreciate the clarity of Professor Arkoun, but I just want to caution against short-circuiting certain problems. It is possible, obviously, for a very strong-willed people and strong-willed communities to make sites of resistance where they may with certain sacrifices, be able to maintain some kind of other life-style, as a sort of interstitial freedom. At the same time you also have to recognise, that modern nations faced with the problems of international power have to come to terms with appropriating in some way or the other the instruments of that power. They can't just renounce power and become an economic and political non-entity in the face of the competition between nations. I do not think they are going to take that decision. Then I would like to touch on the conflict between written and oral culture. The thing that has impressed me is the question about the scarcity of materials even at the lowest level of survival. I agree that professionalism could be linked with colonialism and to internal self-colonisation but when I ask about the alternatives to professionalism at the level of oral culture, I am told that bamboo is also becoming scarce here, because bamboo is being used for producing paper. It is exactly at this point you have a direct conflict between oral and written culture coming into being as a by-product of modernisation which is related to the desirability of creating an educated nation state, able to compete with other nations. Here at the global level you run into fundamental contradictions faced by all modernising societies and not just by societies as poor as this.
The Architect and the Changing Environment
Session V

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

In this particular session we are getting into the more practical, you might like to say, the more real problems facing the profession and the more technical aspects of design. Before we get on to these more earthly matters I would like to, very briefly, give a few of my thoughts about the preceding two days and some of the issues that have arisen.

Two of the main issues which have generated quite a lot of interest and perhaps have not yet been fully resolved are regionalism and colonialism. Some of the problems have arisen because of the use of certain definitions. Regionalism, has, by a number of speakers tended to be defined or equated with anti-development. Somehow regionalism is equated with ruralism, but a romantic notion of ruralism, a kind of primitivism or Rousseau-esque Romanticism. There has been another current where regionalism or the heritage, has tended to be appreciated purely in terms of architectural motifs and forms, motifs like courtyard and arch, or the use of a particular material. This I think has been caused by some of the presentations of our regions' architecture and architectural traditions. Some presenters have actually shown one aspect of our very varied and wide spectrum of traditions, that is, the rural building traditions, which have been presented as the regional heritage and tradition of architecture. I would like to suggest that this kind of confusion might be overcome if we were to look at the totality of the architecture of any cultural entity, not as a single homogeneous unit or category but rather as a number of coexisting areas of activity, each valid in its own right. I find in my own region or area in my own country that it's very convenient to divide up our architecture into the rural craft base or the regional, local building traditions of the country-side as quite distinct, from at the other end of the spectrum; the monumental, the mainstream and official or the kind of architecture which enjoys state patronage or the patronage of the ruling elite. In the middle there is yet another distinct category, which forms perhaps the bulk of our urban buildings and I don't know what would be an appropriate term for it.

I call it urban vernacular. It's the kind of buildings which are designed and built by a whole kind of underworld which often remains invisible to us, but is made up of professionals in their own right, who are not recognised. We have been talking about the recognition of our profession but let me tell you there's a whole substratum of the building and arts related professions which have received even less recognition, and yet they account for a very large proportion of buildings, particularly in our urban environments. If we were to recognise that there are these discrete and independent categories then we would be able to appreciate each by the criteria which are applicable within those domains. The problems arise when we are schooled in one tradition or one level of activity. Most of us being professional or recognised architects, come with a certain training, a certain schooling, a certain background set of values and ways of evaluating buildings. We bring these values to an area of building and design where the builders themselves or the designers themselves did not design or build them with the same intentions. This often leads to a lot of mis-appreciation and taking the rural building tradition and stretching it to claim that this is the regional or national heritage of architecture. It is just one aspect of the region's heritage or building traditions. That was one thing I thought I would discuss, or, rather, I leave for further discussion.

The other, which I wanted to talk a little bit about is colonialism. I am sure a lot of you will have noticed that this term is like a red rag which seems to immediately excite reactions and responses from both ends. I agree very much with what Romi Khosla was saying earlier, "there is a difference between the experience of the European colonialism and the other histories of invasion by another culture or people". Romi Khosla mentioned, the question of assimilation. All of our histories are full of alien invasions but the difference is that in most of the other examples the invading or alien people have adopted the invaded country. The invading Turkish tribes, the Mughals, Pathans, or Afghans became Indian or they become
Bengali. There is that very basic difference. The Europeans did that too, in other places. They become Australians or New Zealanders or Canadians, but they did not become Indian or Bengali or Pakistani. There’s that very big difference. The other aspect of course which is equally important, and it’s related, is the transfer of resources. If the home base remains outside the country in question or the region in question there is inevitably this massive resource transfer and this continues to happen, as somebody mentioned with neo-colonialism. There is a common characteristic between this and current manifestations of colonialism where resources continue to be transferred in a number of ways. The invasions of course are much softer nowadays but the effect is the same.

A third very basic difference, I believe, between previous historical examples of cultural upheavals as a result of invasions and the colonialism we are talking about is that this happened at a period when Europe was undergoing a very fundamental transformation itself, that is the transformation from the medieval or traditional world view into the modern, materialistic philosophies connected with the whole question of scientific, technological and industrial development. This experience was different because it affected our traditional cultures which up until that point were not all that different from European traditional culture and exposed them for the first time to a fundamentally different world-view and that is something which is, I believe, very basic and important to understand. What it has created in our situations are little islands. It started a process of change, of fundamental transformations for us too, but whereas the process in the other country, France or England, had already become total or thorough or complete, it introduced in our cultures, little islands of modernisation. By and large our cultures and societies remained actually very traditional and linked up with our own traditional concepts. So we in our societies have a kind of dual culture. In Pakistan we refer to them as the Urdu-medium and the English-medium. These are really two worlds apart. So there is for us also this difference and we are at a crossroad. We are in a position which is very different from our western friends. We have to make a choice and I think this question underlies a lot of the discussions and debates that we have been hearing. This is why a lot of the basic questions are being asked at all. This is why we are concerned about the survival of traditional values in our culture.

Then coming to the more immediate issues, that is the architect in our changing environments; while there are these more philosophical or more abstract issues that quite understandably we are concerned with, we have at the same time to address ourselves to the more immediate, very real problems. These include maximum utilisation of very limited resources, the changing rural and urban patterns in our countries, the very large, ambitious, unprecedented programmes related to education, school buildings, health and hospitals, facilities of housing and infrastructure development. We have also to consider what our roles will be under these new and changing circumstances. Can we continue to practise, work and think in the ways that we have been doing in the past, or do we need to re-think our own attitudes towards our profession? You will find a common concern as we face these very real and pressing problems. The intention is to predict or forecast what may happen and to try to be prepared in advance of actually having to deal with a problem. Now this is something which other professions are very good at doing already, the medical profession for example! Doctors don’t wait for a patient to come, for them to start designing a cure for him. They have, very sensibly for a long time decided what kind of possible ailments you could suffer from and then before hand worked out the cures. We need to do some kind of preparation too. There are a whole range of problems which can be predicted and we can prepare for them. We can at least have tentative solutions and not have to wait for the client to appear before we start thinking about the solutions. Incidentally this has always been an aspect of our traditional ways of designing and building, that the designer and the builders worked within largely preconceived or agreed, predetermined conventions, and this is something which is also done by industry all the time. Consumer products are designed by trying to predict what kind of demands will be made and you design a commodity not for a particular user, who asked you for it but you do your own forecasting as a designer. Do we continue to see ourselves as technicians in a new environment or is there still a valid role for the architect as an artist or interpreter and a thinker?
Architecture in Rural Areas of Bangladesh

_Meer Mobashsher Ali_

Bangladesh has a large population, over eighty million live in slightly over fifty five thousand square miles. Only twelve percent of the population live in hundred and forty urban centres. Five of these have populations over a hundred thousand, housing seventy percent of the urban people. Dhaka, has a population of over three million, thus housing over one quarter of the total urban population with a gross density of less than one hundred persons per acre. Small urban centres have densities less than fifteen persons per acre. The total urban area of the country is slightly over six hundred square miles or about 1.2 percent of the total area. These urban centres are primarily seats of administration with courts and various regional government offices.

In recent times a very significant change has occurred in the rural-urban scene of this country. The present government in an effort to take the administration closer to the people of the rural areas has installed over four hundred Upazilas with limited administrative and service facilities. These Upazilas are administrative regions previously known as Thana or Police-Station. Under the colonial government the basic unit of administration was the police-station. The name has been changed, the status has been uplifted with the expectation that the Upazilas will have growth potential to develop into townships. With an annual effective economic growth rate of slightly over two percent chances are very thin that these centres will rapidly grown into townships. The people are readily drawn towards larger urban centres adding to their existing problems.

The major problem in urban areas of Bangladesh is by no means density of population. The major problem is lack of proper planning, infrastructure and utility services. The policy makers are very concerned about the expansion of urban areas encroaching into the surrounding agricultural land. In recent times regulations have been passed requiring that all public sector buildings, residential or otherwise should have foundations capable of carrying up to four storeys high. All buildings above five storeys, will have to have ground floors empty for parking cars. While the policy makers are busy limiting the boundaries of urban areas which occupy only 1.2 percent of the total land, rural homesteads are proliferating by leaps and bounds eating up valuable agricultural land.

Eighty percent of the population live in villages. A conglomeration of homesteads is called a village. Villages do not have recorded boundaries but a few villages together forms a Union. A Union has defined boundaries often demarcated by colonial rulers for revenue collection purposes. Bangladesh is said to have sixty to seventy thousand villages. Each village has a population of about fifteen hundred with about five hundred acres of land to live on, to grow cereals by agriculture, proteins by dairy and pisciculture, and building structures to live and work in. According to the Second Five Year Plan document for the 1980–1985 period, about eight percent of the rural land is being used as homesteads and by the turn of the century this might increase to fifteen percent. The situation is very alarming. At present there is no land assembly system and no planning policy or regulation exists for the use of rural land. Anybody may change the landuse from agricultural to residential if he desires to do so. Usually the area is raised above the flood level by making an earthen mound by digging ponds. Loss of agricultural land is doubled due to the raising of the level and digging of the pond. The rural landscape of Bangladesh is dotted with mounds and ponds scattered all around. For the conservation of agricultural land and regulation of indiscriminate use of rural land, a proper planning policy and legislation regarding rural landuse is an immediate necessity. Since the rural areas hardly have any community structures the architecture constitutes mainly the homestead with its traditional layout, form and structure.

The census reports show that over 75% of the houses in rural Bangladesh are kutcha (non-permanent), 20% are unclassified meaning worse than kutch. So there are a negligible number of permanent houses in rural areas. There are very good reasons for this.

A Bangladeshi peasant never felt secure in his land. During the Muslim period the king was the sole owner of all the land. The king’s agent might come one
morning and ask the peasant family to leave without showing any reason. During British colonial rule some rights of land were recorded in favour of the Zamindar (Landlord). He took permanent lease of the villages, both homestead and agricultural lands, for fixed yearly taxes. He, at his sweet will, could dispossess any farmer of his land holding. This lack of security of land tenure historically discouraged rural people from building permanent structures. After independence the right to land has finally been recognised under a very complicated land tenure system. Ironically by then a large number of families had already been dispossessed of their land. The number of landless families is still on the increase.

The second reason for not building permanent structures is natural calamities. This region is frequently visited by floods, cyclones and tornadoes. With available materials and technology it was very difficult and expensive to build structures totally immune to these severe calamities. Rural people accepted the fact that natural calamities would take their occasional toll and they would have to rebuild from the bits and pieces left over after the calamities.

The third reason is poverty. Rural Bangladesh is a classic example of exploitation of the masses by a limited few for a prolonged time. Bernier, a French traveller, came to this part of the world during the rule of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (16th century) and mentioned that the land was very fertile and rich crops were harvested and handsome taxes were sent to the capital. The cultivator never had more than two square meals and a loincloth. Abject poverty still continues in the rural scene and income distribution is lopsided. The majority of families are below subsistence level. An average family cannot have the human dignity of possessing a reasonable shelter with existing income distribution.

### Percentage distribution of total rural households in Bangladesh by income (1978–79)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly household income group</th>
<th>Percent of total household</th>
<th>Percent of total members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 300</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300–399</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400–499</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500–749</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750–999</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000–1499</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500–1999</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–2999</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000–4999</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 and above</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled from data of Table 15.24 (p 716) in BBS (1984), Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh (1983–84), Dhaka.

Bangladesh, a vast plain of green and water crisscrossed by rivers like silver laces, has always intrigued the visitors. The rulers and the ruling class throughout history consisted of immigrants from Turkey, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan and North India. These people became totally integrated with the region and lost their identity. Their culture never prevailed over the local culture. The local culture seems to have had the upper hand. Specially in rural areas these external influences had very little impact. The rural house form has remained unchanged for centuries.

Local building materials also helped in maintaining the vernacular form. The import of building materials has always been extremely difficult. Even today transportation of building materials poses a serious problem. C1 sheet has been very popular in rural areas primarily because of ease of transportation. Reuse and easy transportation have always been the major criteria in the choice of materials.

The rural houses are usually very small and have less covered area; the size of the building being customarily indicated by the length of the perimeter. Rooms are primarily sleeping quarters, most other activities taking place outdoors. The layout of different units housing different function is meticious. The layout gives a strong emphasis on privacy and separation of male and female zones.

Rural areas rarely have any physical infrastructure of utility services. This encourages random growth and a scattered disorganised settlement pattern. This scattered pattern of layout has made the planned location and growth of community buildings extremely difficult, though most villages have a school and a mosque. These two public structures have failed to work as a focus of the pattern of growth.

### Statistics on mosques in Bangladesh (1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Mouza</th>
<th>No. of mosque</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With mosque</td>
<td>Without mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45,996</td>
<td>14,587</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Total number of primary schools in the country 44,000

As mentioned before, rural homesteads did not have any services such as drinking water, sanitation, electricity or even access roads. All waste water ran into the pond or other nearby water body where digestion of the sewage took place without seriously disturbing the ecological balance although dangerously exposing people to all sorts of disease. With the increase of
population this natural balance is being disturbed and the total environment is being seriously polluted.

At this stage, after fifteen years of independence, the rural environment has to be improved and certain changes have become imperative. Unrestricted drainage of human wastes to water bodies cannot be allowed any more. Shallow tubewells for the supply of drinking water to groups of families have become a necessity. The administration are taking steps to provide health and family planning facilities to all the villagers. Efforts are being made to meet the energy requirement of the rural masses by modern means. The process of building roads connecting all the villages to the Upazila headquarters is already in progress. Appropriate technology in the field of agricultural production has made some headway. Rural infrastructure and institutional development is gaining priority and the demand and preference for permanent structures in Rural Bangladesh is ever increasing.

In the rural scene the stage for skilled personnel like architects to play their role is well set. It is up to the architects now to take the opportunity to make their contribution felt by the vast majority of the rural populace of the country. On the other hand, the architects might choose to keep their activities limited to a few urban rich as they have been doing so far.

Today Rural Bangladesh is on the threshold of radical changes; because of need for land conservation, need for services, need for nucleation of homesteads, need for community facilities and need for properly designed permanent structures, so the need for architects has also become imperative. In the rural scene the architect will not work on a given brief. He has to analyse the existing situation, synthesise, bring in new liberal ideas, use modern technology and harmonise it with old traditions.

A new environment has to evolve which has to be well thought out, rationally and socially acceptable. Social acceptability is the challenge architects have to face. The success of the designer lies in the analysis of the situation and evolution of a solution which will not only be technically superior but socially acceptable, properly suited to the genius of rural people.
An Appraisal of Architecture in Dhaka with Reference to its Thermal Performance

Qazi A. Mowla

Introduction

Architecture responds to the geo-climatic environmental variation from place to place. Dhaka is in the Tropical climate-zone with a warm humid climate. The architecture here has naturally been moulded by the climatic characteristics.

This very brief case study on the architecture of Dhaka attempts to identify design-features evolved through the ages due to the particular local climate. The vernacular architecture which is less durable has suffered little change in style through the centuries, and therefore is considered to be the most efficient architecture. It is taken as the basis for the study and its reflection is traced through colonial architecture which represents a period of transition leading to contemporary architecture. Samples for study were picked out at random in order to understand the basic criterion of thermal design.

In the case study, besides taking direct performance-observations from buildings, these observations are supplemented with information from published sources and the author’s professional experience, relating to the thermal performance of buildings in Dhaka.

Vernacular architecture

The study of indigenous architecture reveals two typical vernacular elements that contribute to thermal comfort.

- elements facilitating ventilation.
- elements protecting the building from sun

Roof-form, roof overhangs, openings in roofs, lattice work and low walls, together have contributed towards achieving thermal comfort in the interior spaces of dwellings in this region. This observation is true for local architecture of other places with a similar climate and architectural pattern.

Thermal performance of a colonial residence

A typical colonial building design, makes use of locally developed responsive mechanisms for thermal control. A typical double storeyed residential building would have an area of 275 square metres per floor. This plan has an aspect ratio of 1:2.5 (width to length) with offset. Massive exposed brick walls, asbestos shingled pitched roof and long verandahs are characteristic features of such houses.

Traditional Bangladeshi architecture (house) employing modern materials Ventilated roof removes heat, there are high branched trees to shade the structure and an aspect ratio of more than 1:1.3

A Colonial residence making use of rural Bangladeshi architectural features
The south, east, north and west facades of the example are about 280 square metres, 154 square metres, 240 square metres and 136 square metres respectively having 28%, 21%, 14% and 17% openings respectively. The building fabric takes care of the solar geometry. Massive walls and the creation of a thermal buffer zone in cold wind direction, used in this particular building, is not a requirement for Dhaka’s climate but blindly followed temperate architecture of the U.K.

Observations were taken on a typical July day with minimum and maximum temperature of 25°C and 33 5°C. Relative humidity was about 87% and a typical summer wind velocity blew from the south.

A Tropical Summer Index (TSI) range of 24–30.5°C was recorded indoors on that particular day. According to residents, early nights in summer are thermally uncomfortable, otherwise it is quite comfortable throughout the year.

Although the ventilation condition is not satisfactory due to the northern thermal buffer, yet its acceptable thermal performance arises from the ideal orientation and the generous and controlled shading. Uncomfortable early nights in summer may be attributed to the timelag characteristics of the envelope the absence of exposed walls to the north, the orientation of habitable rooms and of course poor cross ventilation.

Vernacular architectural features for thermal control
Sun control at Dhaka Art College office buildings

The wing under study here is the administrative block of the College. It is a two storeyed building with art gallery and open spaces at the ground floor and common facilities and offices on the first floor. Each floor has an area of about 595 square metres. The whole of the first floor southern facade of timber and glass construction has an area of 56 square metres with 42% of openable glass windows. The remainder 30% is timber and 28% fixed glass. Similar construction is followed on the eastern and northern facades with areas of 104 square metres and 67 square metres respectively. On the southern facade, the sun is controlled by adjustable vertical wooden louvres. A projecting 180 millimetres thick reinforced concrete roof provides shading to all the facades. The building has an aspect ratio of about 1:1:5. Most of the year, no mechanical heating or cooling is required. Opening and closing the windows in summer and winter respectively brings comfortable conditions indoors. During summers without winds, the fans are enough and users are satisfied with the thermal performance of the building.

The study was carried out on a representative July day with minimum and maximum temperature of 28° and 33°C, a relative humidity of about 84% and a typical summer breeze from the south-east. A TSI range of 25°–30°C was observed in the shade outdoors while a TSI of 24°–29°C was recorded indoors with windows open. Thermal performance was found to be quite satisfactory despite unfavourable orientation. Its success probably lies in the use of light weight and low thermal capacity enclosing materials, generous adjustable shaded openings and perhaps most important of all the control of sun in the occupied zone.

Performance of some of the other buildings surveyed (subjective)

Some of the other buildings surveyed are climatically efficient with special architectural elements, derived from traditional concepts and modern techniques for better thermal performance of buildings. Some of them were studied subjectively and the findings are given below:

Teacher-Student Centre (D.U.). Designed by Doxiadis Associate this is not a solar building but a contemporary design on climatological basis which includes a responsive mechanism for the absorption or rejection of solar radiation. Reflective south and north facades with more than 50% shaded opening and shaded roof perform well, both in summer and winter. Temperature can be maintained as low as 25°C without fans but mechanical ventilation is required to remove sticky conditions.

· Home-Economics College (HEC). A multi-purpose hall and an administrative building both designed by Doxiadis Associates have performed well for over 20 years almost without any auxiliary heating and cooling. The following approximate temperatures have been maintained: November–February (14–20°C), February–April (18°–22°C), April–July (24°–30°C) and July–November (20°–25°C). The users are satisfied with the thermal performance of the buildings.

· HEC-multipurpose hall is a single storey block which is 1.5 times normal height, with north and south facades having more than 50% openable glass windows, which can trap heat in winter and ensure cross ventilation in summer. The 180 millimetres thick domical pitched reinforced concrete roof and 225 millimetres thick east and west white-washed solid walls perform adequately.
· HEC-administrative building is a reinforced concrete frame construction with brick walls. The outer north-south skin has more than 50% glass windows having outer shades and moveable inner curtains. The 225 millimetres brick wall and 180 millimetres reinforced concrete shading roof, perform well thermally.

· Residential buildings in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar (Dhaka). A feat of contemporary architecture is seen in its purest form at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar (Dhaka) design by Prof. Louis I. Kahn. The residential buildings utilise natural forces to achieve maximum internal thermal comfort. The concept of trapping the sun is used with a solid wall on the east and west (with the only windows in toilets) and manipulating the summer and winter sun by large openable glass doors and windows on the south and north. This also gives efficient cross ventilation.

Although Kahn selected red ceramic brick and reinforced concrete as the basic material for construction which are not recommended by experts for warm humid places, yet by his judicious design and appropriate construction details he made these dwellings thermally quite efficient.

The author stayed in one of these dwellings for more than six years and observed that only in extreme hot months (May–July) a small active aid is required for cooling the indoors and for the remaining months the interior environment is quite pleasant. The inefficient direct rain control is a serious drawback of the design.
Library building (D U) Using jali in the east and west facade and louvres on the south and north

A building of Dhaka University with self shading projections

For the last 15 years, the following temperatures have been maintained:
- March-April: 18-24°C
- May-August: 25-27°C
- Sept-Oct: 17-21°C
- Nov-Feb: 15-18°C

Performance:
Complete passive system, making use of seasonal solar angles, thermal property of material & cross ventilation. East & west walls shaded by adjacent buildings. Most of the time in the year, TSI remains within comfort range. During peak summer, fans is required and in winter wind is to be restricted. Sun is controlled by the design of exposed brick facade.

Thermal performance of a typical residential building, SBN, Dhaka (author)
Summary of the case study

- In warm-humid regions, such as the area of Dhaka, the adverse heat impact of the sun from the east and the west ends of a house, forces it into an elongated low rise structure. This shape would also provide the advantage of beneficial wind effect under high vapour pressure. The volume effect of building shape is not very significant in warm humid regions.

- The review of vernacular architecture, reveals that openness, shading and a low thermal capacity building enclosure are the characteristic features of the architecture in Dhaka. It is also seen that the indigenous methods of achieving comfort are employed successfully in its urban architecture.

- The thermo-physical properties of the enclosing material do not greatly affect the indoor thermal comfort. It is observed in general however that light weight and low thermal capacity materials contribute more to comfort conditions indoor.

- Though for total control of comfort conditions, each of the influencing climatic elements; solar radiation, sunlight, wind, relative humidity and rain, must be fully controlled, yet it is observed in the study that near comfort conditions can be arrived at by efficient sun control design and by following the general design criteria for warm humid regions. It is also observed that by an efficient sun control design, the rain factor is automatically taken care of to a large extent.

- An ideal building for Dhaka, is therefore, a south oriented, rectangular, single room deep plan with more than 30% opening in each wall facing windward and leeward sides for cross ventilation. The construction material is normally brick with or without cement plaster on the outer face.

- The study reveals that architecture in Dhaka should be oriented against the sun and exposed to wind, although this need not be restrictive to the designer in terms of plan and shape.

- The optimum plan is a rectangle with proportions 1:1.5 (width to length), whereas a good proportion is 1:3. It should be elongated in east-west direction. A plan and elevations with offsets and staggering is even better for Dhaka.

- Low rise buildings in a row, to shade west walls of adjacent units, are thermally more efficient for Dhaka.

The projecting balconies, high ceilings and large windows of mansions in Dhaka, Calcutta, Colombo and perhaps Male, the deep verandahs and post and lintel houses of rural planters of this region, and thin paper, thatch or bamboo mat walls of houses in humid zones are all, therefore, designed to admit breeze and keep out sun. It may be inferred, in brief,
Health Facility Planning and Design: Priorities of the Profession and Urgencies of Local Needs

Shaheda Rahman

Introduction

Planning and design involves choosing between alternatives so as to achieve the best possible result. In health facility planning and design where change is rapid in every area of knowledge and demand increases faster than the possibility of response this is an extraordinarily difficult thing to do. The difficulty further increases if constrained by limited resources, or inadequate data, or paucity of necessary expertise; all of which are present in Bangladesh.

The situation prevailing in Bangladesh is not uncommon in the region. In fact the current trends in developing countries present a common pattern. Although the present difficulties in these countries appear in the form of shortages and inadequacies, these are not simply problem of providing additional resources. The difficulties will not be solved if existing patterns and types of solutions are repeated.

This paper attempts to review the problems in this field now faced in Bangladesh, the priorities of the profession, and urgencies of the local need. The aim is to identify some of the pitfalls that lie in the path of the planners and designers, to draw attention to the common errors, and indicate as far as possible the conceptual network within which health facility planning and design should take place. Many of the issues discussed here are not all within the control or domain of architects but they directly or indirectly affect the profession. Some of the things stated may appear naive or self-evident but in fact they are not, as is proven by the existing situation.

Existing standards

The general standard of health care facilities in Bangladesh, both in terms of service and physical amenities, is poor. One factor responsible for the poor standard is that in Bangladesh the health care facilities, with a few exceptions, are not purpose-built. This does not imply that existing buildings cannot be utilised for health care facilities which perhaps is a necessary option for countries like Bangladesh. The harmful practice is that the conversion is usually taking place almost without any modification of the existing building necessary for the new purpose. Such a practice necessarily precludes the possibility of rational planning and achieving high standards. The Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research (IPGMR) hospital would serve well as an example. It may be noted that this is one of the biggest and best equipped hospitals in Bangladesh.

The IPGMR was founded in 1965, and lodged in the old Shahbagh Hotel in 1970 which had then recently gone into liquidation. The hotel was converted into a 250 bed teaching hospital almost without any modification of the existing structure. The new hospital, consequently did not embody the established planning principles, nor meet the expected norms of a teaching hospital. The planning is irrational and the sub-standard arrangements can be well illustrated by the use of the hotel’s single accommodations. Thus 6 metres × 4 metres (approx.) rooms with an attached bath and balcony have been in use as 2-bed cabins, 4-bed ward compartments, nurses stations, treatment rooms, offices and varied other functions as need arose. A ward, normally, consists of a number of these basic requirements but without the functional and rational basis of a ward layout. Whether it be at activity level, or departmental level or whole hospital level the rationale of this hospital’s planning is questionable.

A consequence of the existing poor standard, other than poor patient care, is that it results in what might be termed as the ‘disorientation of the users’. The users, because of their intimate knowledge of the institutions, are pivotal factors in planning and design of health care facilities. In Bangladesh, however, by working under stressful conditions in sub-standard facilities the users tend to become apathetic and often lose their ability to identify and define what are the desired and/or optimal conditions. Hence, they fail to make a positive contribution to the design process.
The process and the product

Presently in Bangladesh there appears to be a general nescience in the planning and design of health care facilities. The decision-makers, owners, users, and the design professionals are apparently insensible to the particular need and nature of the problem and the related principles of planning and design that are well established today. At the core of the designer's dilemma are two related problems. The first is getting comprehensive information on the project to which he is assigned or engaged. The second is having the support of necessary functional and technical data. To this are added his own limitations of not being a specialist in the specific area of concern.

The apathy and ignorance of the client (owner and/or user) to his own role, and his responsibility to the designers are to a great extent responsible for the first encumbrance. The absence of necessary expertise in the relevant bodies is perhaps responsible for this situation. More importantly the concept, the intent, and content of an individual or type of health care facility specific to the country's need and socio-economic context is yet to be defined and quantified on a rational and pragmatic basis.

Health facility planning and design is a specialised field. The expertise and special knowledge that complex medical buildings require are held to be beyond the competence of most architects in general practice, unless specially trained or sufficiently experienced. In Bangladesh there is a paucity of such expertise. The country's health facility planning and design programmes are of too recent origin to present the opportunity of learning through practical experience to the designers. The absence of a comprehensive development programme for health care facilities also disrupts the continuity of skill and negates the possibility of learning. Moreover, the uncoordinated structures and irrational techniques followed with the resultant unhappy solutions offer little to further professional experience or knowledge.

Another handicap experienced is the absence of good documentation of information on the projects at the different stages of planning and design. Programmes, policies, and design decisions their rationale and results are never properly recorded at any point. This leads to a waste of information gained in a project.

The inadequacies of the present system may be summarised as follows:

- Health care facilities are being built, often as a direct response to an immediate need, without proper planning or programming.
- The programme, if any, is based on arbitrary priorities and an irrational basis with minimal forethought to organising and scheduling, and to the methods and means of running the facility.

Briefing and design are separate processes performed by separate bodies namely, the Ministry of Health and the Public Works Department. The link between these two responsible bodies and thereby between brief and design is weak. The only existing link is the 'P-Form' (brief) which is basically an incomplete schedule of accommodation and of little value as a basis for design.

The design is an uncoordinated process. A health facility project, like any other development project, is looked upon as a collection of independent design components viz. architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical, and each is assigned to the corresponding specialists without the desired collaboration between the different disciplinary groups at the various stages of design. Thus the final outcome is anything but satisfactory. The absence of norms, standards and regulations on hospital construction and equipment further impedes on the rationality of design.

In the absence of a proper briefing method it becomes necessary for the consultant architect to restructure the development programme through discussions with the client. While discussions are necessary even if a proper brief is provided, the present mode of communication has several disadvantages. For instance, the programme developed is deficient with omission of important facts which later result in serious design deficiencies. Secondly there is overlapping of planning and design activities with waste of valuable time and energy of all concerned.

The above situation applies to the profession in general. What is important to realise is that these inadequacies, while not critical for many building projects viz. offices and flats, are a serious handicap in the health facility projects. This is particularly true for hospitals which are among the most complex buildings with stringent functional and technical requirements.

An example

The new development scheme of IPGMR is a typical example of the hospital planning and design process described in the foregoing. As the existing IPGMR hospital, discussed earlier, was functioning at great cost and inconvenience a decision was taken to construct a new nursing unit and a proper operating theatre suite. Ten years after its inception approximately two-thirds of the project has been completed. The completed sections have been commissioned and functioning since December 1984. As the new purpose-built hospital units are coming into use several irrevocable design deficiencies are coming to light. For example, in the ward to reach a patient's bedside with a trolley it is necessary to move the
adjacent bed as well as the two on the opposite side. There are many other patient areas in this building where the doors and passages are not wide enough to allow movement of patients on trolleys.

The design of the whole unit i.e. the grouping of beds, the design of the wards, and the design of the operating theatre suite, all reflect a lack of comprehension of the hospital functions, the design objective and the principles of planning and design of hospitals. For instance in designing operating theatres it is advisable to centralise all theatres for flexibility and efficiency of use, better management, and economy in deployment of staff and thus reduce running costs. By improving utilisation it can lead to savings and avoid duplicating ancillary accommodating. The operating department should be designed so that, with few exceptions, any theatre can serve any purpose. ‘One-off’ design should be minimised in the interest of long-term flexibility. It is also usual for theatres to be designed in pairs. In this particular case the operating department called for 13 operating theatres. These have been provided distributed on different floors, at different ends attached to different specialties in different combinations viz. one, two, three and four. Moreover the separation of clean and dirty zones which is a primary consideration in design of operating theatres has not been successfully achieved in all the theatre suites.

While the design professional’s responsibility must be admitted in any design deficiency it is equally important to acknowledge that the final outcome of the project is not solely dependent on the design or on the efficiency of the designer. Much of the present difficulties can be attributed to the fact that the planning organisation, decision making and information system required to meet the need of the client, planner and designer is non-existent.

A principled approach

If progress is to be made in this field then three things need to be done with utmost care. Of primary importance to the success of health facility projects is effort, time and consideration given to organising and scheduling, development of programmes and development of design.

- The first task in a health facility project is to describe the conceptual network in which decisions are to be made. It needs to be ensured that policy, management and design decisions will be made in a logical sequence at appropriate levels and at the time required. The establishment of an organisation and system for making and communicating decisions involves definition of roles and responsibilities, it is sometimes assumed that these are self evident when in fact they are not. It is also very important that all members i.e the owner, users and the design and construction team, are aware of their responsibilities and the schedule. Health care facilities can become obsolete, at least in part even before they can be built. Hence relevant to successful projects is agreement to and achievement of a starting and completion date.

- The danger and pitfalls of incomplete and improper programming hardly needs to be emphasised. Even a hospital architect with previous experience cannot be expected to solve the multifarious details of a hospital without a proper brief. The thoroughness with which a programme is prepared determines the success of the project. A programme as the very basis of design should be completely comprehensive, anything less is baffling.

The preparation of the programme is the responsibility of the owners, in most countries the government and as such a public matter. The development of programmes for health care facilities is a tremendous responsibility, and too complex to be left to amateurs. Ideally this should be the responsibility of a multidisciplinary planning team composed of the representatives of the decision-makers, users, and the members of the design and construction team. The proposed team, to function smoothly need a common frame of reference and, to attain a common orientation the members of the team should be educated and trained in this discipline.

- In designing health care facilities it is important that the design team works under the guidance of an expert. Health care facilities are complex projects even if no greater technologies are concerned. Health facilities, particularly hospitals, deal with most stringent functional and technical requirements which if not satisfactorily met can seriously cripple the hospital system.

The responsibility of the designer is to design an efficient shell to enhance the smooth functioning of the facility and to account for the future growth and change. A hospital is always a conglomerate of different departments that have their own internal character and very delicate interrelationships which the designer needs to take into account. To make a hospital work in parts as well as a whole is the essence of hospital architecture. This further demands an approach to the design of a hospital as the design of a system rather than a building. Thus the dictum ‘form follows function’ still holds good in hospital design.

Today the identification of growth, change, and development has the highest priority in hospital design. The need to design for change stems from two inevitable conditions:
· Increase in demand for health service.
· Progress in medical science and technology inducing change in techniques and procedures

Both at the whole hospital level and departmental levels radical change of functions must be expected within the life time of the facility. These changes in our low technology hospitals may be slow but are inevitable. One approach to the problem is to have loose-fit, open-ended plans with room shapes and sizes which accommodate a greater range of activities, and an open modular structural frame, rather than frozen finite shapes tailor-made to the particular need of its first users.

As changes in a hospital involve not only the building fabric but also the services the hospital engineering should also be designed to accommodate growth and change. It is important, therefore, that the design is an integrated continuous process with the professionals working together as a team and all aspects of design being developed in parallel.

In designing hospitals it should be remembered that it deals not only with stringent functional requirements of medicine, which is a highly involved and specialised complex of scientific disciplines but that physical facilities are expensive tools. Not only the initial investment is important but the operating cost is an ever increasing burden which has to be borne year after year. In developed countries the initial capital investment is equalled in three years by running cost. This period may be somewhat longer in our low technology hospitals but considering that the physical facilities are built for some hundred years they need to be planned and designed with more rationale. The aim of the design in health facility projects should be efficiency and economy.

In view of the country's limited resources and urgency of the local need, it is advisable to develop 'a core multi-professional planning and design team' in the Health Ministry either to undertake the work themselves or to scrutinise critically the work of others commissioned to do it on their behalf.

It must be understood that the planning team and the planning machinery can perform well only when the necessary data is available. It is necessary, therefore, first to identify the scope, the intent and content of the health care facility on a scientific and pragmatic basis before proceeding to plan and design for it. This would be possible only after the existing facilities are properly evaluated with the objective of creating realistic criteria for the development of the much needed 'local model'.

Architect in the changing environment

It may be wondered why architects need to be concerned with multifarious details of planning and programming when the complex design of health care facilities is all absorbing. The obvious reason is that design is but one albeit important phase in the total process. What precedes or follows influences the final outcome. Since it is the architects who have to shoulder the responsibility of the building designed it is important that they understand not only the elements which make a hospital or a health centre but also the forces which shape and mould these institutions. Thus to design the health care facilities it calls for an area of knowledge which is not necessary in other design projects.

In health facility projects the role and responsibility of the architect is not confined to design only. The participation of the architect in the development of the brief is considered to be a basic necessity. In other words the involvement of the architect should begin with the very inception of the project and continue till the commissioning i.e. until the facility is put into use.

In planning and design of health care facilities the role of the architect, in the local context, is even more involved. The classical mental process, analysis (programme) followed by synthesis (design) is not valid. One does not occur before or after the other, they are intermingled together. The architect, of necessity, has to create to least some information by his own research. A wealth of information exists in the world today on health facility planning and design. It is possible to draw on this and to adapt it to suit one's own requirements.

It needs to be stressed that the architects are not mere technicians. They have a key role play in the design process Today they are in a unique position to
influence the health apparatus through design — what it is, what it could be, and how it can change. If architects wish to live up to the role of the leader and coordinator of the design process then they must avail themselves of the knowledge and experience from the most diverse fields and apply it to the problem at hand.

Conclusion

In conclusion it may be said that the present issues on health facility planning and design are not merely problems of today. Health is a basic human right and the demand for health services never slackens. Consequently, the demand on and for physical facilities will never decrease. The responsibility is therefore to design a system that can grow and change with time. The urgency is to understand the specific situation, the limitations and the possibilities that exist in this field. It is important to realise that health care facilities are complex buildings and call for special knowledge and expertise which must be made available and desirably through training of local experts.

Many of the current problems can be mitigated within the given resource base through better planning and organisation. However by and large any change has to be a deliberate one and cannot be left to chance. Bangladesh cannot afford the continued luxury of haphazard planning and design. Her resources are very limited, any mistake is usually very expensive for the country.

To reach the ‘health for all by 2000’ target there is a great need to expand the development projects. This calls for the concerted effort of all — decision makers, users and professionals. Now is the proper time to organise the effort and the architects have a key role to play in this process.
Session V
Panel Discussion

Kamil Khan Mumtaz — Chairman

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Can we hear comments then on how we see the role of the architect confronted with the issues that have been put before us? Firstly on the issues raised by Professor Ali

Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury

The paper read by Professor Ali is really stimulating and I for one would like all of us to rush into the villages and do something for the teeming millions. On the other hand I do not think I am capable enough to tackle the numerous problems which are there. The real issues which have evolved out of this paper, show that rural housing is a very insignificant factor in the whole scheme of things. The real issues which have emerged are problems of population explosion, employment generation, improving health, setting up community organisations, improved water supply and sanitation, irrigation and innumerable other tangible and intangible issues which influence not only quality but even the very existence of life.

This demands all the skills that architects possess and a lot more. I do not know the way forward but definitely to attack these problems requires a drastic change in the profession and approach of architects. Maybe the change is really coming. We have to learn to perceive the needs and the opportunities, or else we as professionals might prove to be very inert in any attempt to improve the lot of the poor.

Muzharul Islam

I would like to say a few words on Professor Ali’s paper. When he cited the reasons for the negligible number of permanent houses in rural areas it would be proper to list another reason here, which is the unavailability of durable materials, which in fact makes it impossible for the rural people to make permanent houses.

Meer Mobashsher Ali

I did not blame colonialism as such, it was just a comment, it was not exactly blame and as a matter of fact I said that they were the only ones who measured land properly, prepared ‘mouza’ maps and for revenue purposes gave some sort of ownership rights to the people. I would say the ownership rights were better during the British time than during the Muslim period for the peasants.

Regarding the availability of materials there can be a host of other reasons and that’s why I pointed out just three. As to the availability of materials, well, throughout history people make material available, for example, it has been mentioned that brick is a material which is available. They could have used brick and in fact brick has been used in rural areas. Brick is a permanent material and it could have been used but I agree that there was lack of readily available material in rural areas.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

I’d just like to add a brief comment to the discussion of permanent materials in our rural settings. You are absolutely right. It’s not that permanent materials are not available or technology and skill to use them is not known. It is curious that, for a variety of reasons, in the rural setting where these permanent materials are known they are nevertheless reserved for a very special area of building. In general houses will be built in impermanent materials except of course the big landlord’s house, or a mosque, a shrine or a temple. Buildings of this kind are usually built in permanent materials, so it is an interesting point to consider why, although the techniques and the materials are available, they are used for one category of building within an area and not for another category.
Muzharul Islam

On this particular point I think our history tells us something. actually at a certain period in time ordinary villagers were not allowed to build in permanent materials. Only the zamindar or the big landlord could build in such materials and nobody else could build anywhere else near him. The only buildings which were allowed in permanent materials were religious structures.

Syed Zaigham Jaffery

I have a question for Professor Ali. He has mentioned three reasons why the houses or the homesteads in rural Bangladesh were not permanent, and these are the lines of his first paragraph, "The Bangladeshi peasant never felt secure in his land". The second point was about the climate and the calamities that visit them and the third reason was poverty. At the end of the paper he says that the architect must now rush there and do something about it. My question is, have those three conditions which make the house non-permanent changed, and if they have not changed, will the architect once he gets there be able to do anything better than what the peasant is doing now?

Meer Mobashshar Ali

I think I have highlighted, or I have tried to touch on too many points. An awareness on the part of the architect of their contribution in one field can definitely help. I have touched upon the encroachment by the homesteads onto the agricultural land, which is really a very important point for a land-hungry country like Bangladesh where there is no land regulation. For a change of land use you do not require any permission. So if the architects could be conscious of this and if homesteads can be restricted or the layout can be such that further proliferation into agricultural land is restricted, that will be a big help. I made the comparison that 8% of the land area is taken up by rural homesteads, and 1.2% of land is taken up by the urban areas. So much is being done in the urban areas, for example you must build multi-storeys. Many regulations have been made, but in rural areas where the danger is greater, nothing has been done. At least in this field which does not require any drawing paper or anything whatsoever, it is just making a policy or a regulation, in this area architects can make a contribution and what is more a very significant contribution.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Mrs. Rahman has dramatised the problems the architect faces in the area of Health Facility planning and design. I would welcome comments from delegates.

Abdul Rahman

I wish to thank Mrs Rahman for giving a very enlightening paper. It definitely indicated the difficulties we are going through in the planning process, specially in the important field of health facilities. The IPGMR Hospital has taken over the old hotel building. The whole hotel was converted to a hospital and Mrs. Rahman has very intelligently shown slides where the Professors have their office and where wards have been converted and how the hospital is functioning. As a hotel building we can all understand that it was mostly a conglomeration of small rooms and when the hospital moved in all those rooms were converted into either private wards or cabins and each room was given to 4 patients. I personally think this was a very good idea because at least that building has the plumbing facilities to hold 4 people in each room.

You indicated that the doctors have to examine the patients on the verandah. Perhaps they should throw away all those beautiful sofas in their offices and put the examination couch inside and examine patients there. There is nothing wrong in having an examination bed inside a doctor's room.

You showed the crowded corridors and patients sleeping outside the Operation Theatre. Only a few walls were demolished to convert hotel rooms into Operation Theatres, so there is no other place where the relatives of the patients can wait besides the corridor. I do not know whether you are encouraging relatives of the patients to be there or even inside the post-operative rooms. They should not be there whether sociological aspects allow it or not, the patients are supposed to be kept in the Intensive Care or Post-operative wards, where the nurses are supposed to take care of them.

Regarding the new hospital building which you have shown, the programme, as you have mentioned, was already a very tight programme and floor areas which were allowed to the architect were also very tight. Therefore regarding the future expansions, I don't think there is any possibility, though it has already taken many more patients than it was initially designed for.
Mrs. Shaheda Rahman

The point was not that it was the fault of the designer but of the total process. In planning and programming, these things have to be accounted for and they never are. Without proper planning it’s never possible. In health facility planning and design the role of the architect is somewhat expanded and of course it is up to the policy maker to do it or not, but unlike other building projects where possibly the architect begins with design, in health facility planning and design the architect should be involved at the very inception of the project. This is because in the elaboration of the brief, the participation of the architect is a basic necessity, because that is where he can contribute, where the clients are mostly doctors. In some instances they may be sociologists, who are not capable of thinking in terms of space or spatial requirements.

Mulk Raj Anand

I am an amateur and I owe much of my interest in architectural problems to the invidious fact that I happened to edit a magazine for many years founded by Minnette de Silva and later I have had the courtesy and consideration of many architect friends who are in the modern architects research group. Amongst them was Charles Correa who did a fairly important intervention in regard to the building of Bombay. He and his colleagues published a book on the future Bombay, which had a significant influence on the design of the new Bombay.

That contribution towards the new architecture emboldened me to think that we could have similar discussions in which it may be fruitful to collaborate and think out, without too much emphasis on one’s prejudices, contemporary problems in the world of architecture. You know there was a world as you remember, a hundred years ago where there were no architects in India, in the sub-continent or in Southern Asia. The craftsmen build everything and I remember when I went through Bangladesh thrice in the 1930’s and again in 1971 and 1972 on a three month tour to produce a Bangladesh Heritage book, I found that from Paharpur downwards through Gaur and the rest, until the British came, the architecture was without architects. I remember vividly the great thoughts of the poet Tagore who lived in Kushia district on the river Padma in the mature years of his life and wrote of the peasantry and the way he himself lived as a big landlord looking after his tenants.

When he came to build Shantiniketan he built it from the point of view, of life in Kushia district and some of you who have been to Shantiniketan will have found he left the villages untouched. Within half a mile of the centre of Shantiniketan there are peasant huts, tribal people live there. Obsessively since then our thoughts, the thoughts of a generation which was inspired by Rabindranath, have been always of the people among whom we live and to whom we turn always for our inspiration. As you probably know the finest poems were written under the influence of the Baul folk singers and it was from them he got the love that he gave to the world.

I feel after the Bangladesh Heritage book the same as our inspirer, that we must think beyond the big towns we’ve built for the needs of an urban population. We must think of the countryside, the 20 million houses we need to make up the backlog in India, probably another 10 million in Pakistan and another 5 to 7 million in Bangladesh. By sheer accident I happened to see Minnette de Silva in Bombay recently and she has done some research and she can articulate professionally what I cannot say. You people talk about ‘low-cost’, housing and how to appropriately design for living or for the people. Now this consideration becomes very important.

We have just recently seen the giving away of Chandigarh designed by Corbusier, to Punjab for which state it was built and now there is the problem of building a capital for Haryana state. I know this area for I was born here and it is where I spent my childhood. I realise that the people are predominantly rural people with rural consciousness. It is the collective unconscious of those people who aspire to an urban living and who want to build all kinds of buildings, such as have been erected in Delhi through the black market economy, vast houses, of all shapes and sizes and forms according to the vanity of the builder, of the owner. How to build an integral capital for Haryana? My very loose thoughts went on to the idea that first of all it may be situated in the area of Kurukshetra. You may have heard that 3000 years ago the battle of Kurukshetra was fought, the Mahabharata war was fought in Kurukshetra, for right against wrong. Speculating on the past I felt, why should not this big legend be inherited by people now?

There is road nearby, the Grand Trunk Road going from Delhi to Peshawar. The river Jumna is 16 miles away. There is rural landscape by the Kurukshetra township, in all about 20,000 square miles. Why not think of a capital which could be decentralised? Why should the Ministry of Industries be in Faridabad which is one of the few townships where they have built industries, small scale industries, and even some big industries? Why not think of the Ministry of Agriculture going to Hisar which has a flourishing University of Agriculture and where the people have learnt a good deal from the new teaching and technology of agriculture? Why not the Ministry of Culture in Kurukshetra itself, which is connected to
the past to take from it the relevant ideas of the war of Mahabharata — against war? Anyhow, with these loose thoughts arrived at with the help of some four or five architects I have been speculating about the possibilities of Kurukshetra as a capital for Haryana. It seems that if we think honestly about the people who are coming into this area of development we should not think of them as people who are going to imitate the skyscrapers of Bombay. I don’t think that will be appropriate. Any high rise building would be very inappropriate in this vast land which you can occupy, vast in the sense of a jungle in which there can be a clearing.

Would it be possible to go back in one’s consciousness, in spite of one’s bad imitative education, to take a few very eminent architects on a tour of this area and ask them to see the possibilities in view of the fact that this rural population will take a hundred years to develop urban consciousness. The collective unconscious of these people is rooted in the soil and the introduction of machinery — machine life — will take time because it is not possible in less than 50 years to industrialise the population. In their rural habits, these people have a very good awareness of ecology. They say in their own language, God has given the earth, the water and the air and we use it, so that we don’t have trees in the fields as the birds there will peck all the harvest away but we have jungle around. I want to supplicate that eminent architects and young people, who are into these psychological problems, please always keep in mind that 90% of our population is still rural. It is a return to thinking of people for whom democracy is meant, that may bring about the transformation into a possible basic economy — which somebody referred to, quoting from Gandhiji’s teachings, as ‘small is beautiful’.

I don’t want to go any further into this, I only want to direct your minds to the idea, this idea that we have already forgotten in our sub-continent, of the people. I would mention that I have just been on a tour to see primary schools in the village in various parts of India. They don’t exist. 80% of schools have no buildings. 60% of schools have no blackboards. 40% have no books and 90% have no toilets. We are launching now on the plan to go into the 21st century. I ask that we go into 21st century altogether from a firm base and not go ahead, some of us, into the 21st or 22nd century, and forget that many of our people are in the 4th century A.D., the 18th century and the 19th century. They are however, human and it is human concerns alone in my opinion that justifies your profession. If you forget human concerns, we are lost. We will go wrong and we will build for glory and vanity and fake splendour but not for use and function. I beg you to return again and to the idea of building from below.

Ranjan Singh Shah

After listening to the papers presented by two of our colleagues it has highly impressed me and inspired me to say something. We in the South Asian region countries, say that we are very poor, and we have got very limited resources. What we see is that we are not able to utilise those resources in the right place in the right manner and this causes many financial problems. Referring to the presentation, of the hospital project which is a social welfare project, this involves a lot of money as well as high degree of skill. It is a very complex project and when such a project is designed without proper consideration given to the specialist advice or architectural expertise we are not only committing mistakes but the government is creating a maintenance problem and also creating a problem running the hospital. A hospital is a project where the services are very important and it has a functional aspect. When a hospital is designed without proper correlation between out-patient, in-patient and central service areas I think the whole project costs might double. I highlight this point because this type of thing is happening in every part of our world, where we do not give importance to the professional and we do not realise the role of different actors.

I will give you a very relevant example from Nepal. The problem in my country is also becoming acute these days because of migration of people from the rural area. To solve the housing problems and other financial problems the government decided to let the private sector play an active role. One of the private enterprises, to take an example, came in to solve the housing problem and they simply consulted some of their relatives or local “experts” who are easily available in Kathmandu and then they constructed apartment buildings, investing, I think, more than 10 million rupees. Afterwards, when the project was completed for the higher middle income group, they wanted to sell this project to local people but no one was ready to buy an apartment. It is not because they cannot afford to buy the apartment for they are ready to invest double the amount that it is costing for an apartment to build their own house by themselves. I don’t have the time to explain the social cultural aspect, but the reason behind this attitude is very simply that people are familiar with single-dwelling units, with a little garden and a little backyard, that sort of settlement pattern is everywhere in rural, even in urban area, still available there. So they feel that this is not part of our cultural and social heritage and the whole investment has been wasted.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Thank you very much Mr. Shah for confirming the value of taking into account social and economic
factors and the role of the architect in your situation. Can I now ask Charles Correa to make his comments?

Charles Correa

These comments will be a bit spasmodic but I will try and cover some of the issues raised today, which means covering a lot of territory. To simplify it I think the issues are to do with what we do and how we do it. When I say what is it we should do as architects, I detect a kind of dual attitude to this business. If I just go back to Professor Ali’s paper, which I thought was very good, he mentioned all the things wrong in the villages, many of these things beyond the skills or the competence of the architect, like generating jobs for example. He ended with a passionate plea to the architect to step in and do something. That’s a highly motivated activist, don’t you agree? We see the architect therefore, as a social changer, as a social engineer.

We also see him as a very mild and tradition-clinging craftsman, the kind of craftsman who doesn’t question anything, starting with the Rajah or the Nawab. He certainly wouldn’t rearrange the scenery the way that say Mao Tse Tung restructured China, or Gandhi tried to change India. So what is it that we are expecting — a kind of mild little person who does nothing and yet suddenly jumps up and changes and saves the villages? My point is that these two attitudes are both important in the Third World. I think we should have better craftsmen and I think we should rearrange the scenery. It’s not either/or and I think we are emphasising one all the time and forgetting that we are also implicitly expecting the second thing. We are expecting architects really to be in the forefront of change.

The second issue is, how do we do it? This refers to what I think was said about whether we work in mud or we work in marble or different materials. Again, I don’t think it is an either/or situation. If I take India, for instance, there are village crafts, there are court crafts and these co-exist. Some are very beautiful, made of fantastic brocade, these things co-exist in life and they co-exist in our lives, in our minds. I think a great musician like Mozart, who didn’t design any squatter housing, improved the lives of millions and millions of human beings more than any of us will do. That’s a fact of life, beautiful things are part of our concern as architects in the Third World, it seems to me, if we are honest about it. So then these things are equally important; the village crafts, the temple crafts and the court crafts.

The next thing that came to my mind is that there is a lot of talk about colonialism and of course one of the worst aspects which was discontinuation, but there have been other discontinuities. I am trying to say discontinuities aren’t all bad. They sometimes bring in a new life. Islam coming to India was a discontinuity. You know it was. I would say, furthermore, the presence of Islam in Hyderabad, Deccan, has produced one of the most beautiful things I know — Golconda. Yet it was in no way a deliberate oriented building. It was a hot house culture which produced a masterpiece. We must understand, architecture exists to my mind simultaneously as a moral issue, as human issue, and as an issue of art. We have somehow, in the Third World not to forget this very important thing, of producing beautiful things like mud architecture and the Golconda or Fatehpur Sikri.

This brings me to the last point mentioned, which was ‘change’. I think it was William Curtis who said that these villages are going to change and the issue is, how do they change? That is central and the difference is in just two words, one is ‘transformation’ and the other is ‘transfer’. When these changes come about, they may be changes where we are affected by ideas from somewhere else. If I may go back to Mao, he was affected by ideas he heard from a German called Marx. Gandhi was affected by ideas he heard from Thoreau and Emerson, but they were transformed, they were done in such a way, they were so internalised, that they could change themselves and therefore change their environment. Another great example of transformation is the way Akbar the Great Emperor in Fatehpur Sikri, transformed a lot of the elements, including the mythic elements in Hinduism. To my mind his Diwani Khas is a mandala, it’s a double axis of Central Asia but it’s also a mandala, which means a model of the cosmos, and in the centre of the centre, which should be nothing, which is all energy, the Emperor Akbar was seated. It is an incredible political statement he is making, using the myth of that area. As opposed to that I would say Lutyens transferred some Buddhist images. He didn’t bother to try and understand what are the mythic values of a column in Buddhism which goes to the centre of the universe; he just used some of the images. I could give you other examples — the railways coming to this sub-continent, including Bangladesh, in the last century, have become a transformation of railway culture. At every level and I am sure it is manned here by Bengalis as it is in India, all the way down to the man at the railway crossing, who waits for a bell to ring and opens that gate and closes it, these people have totally Indianised or Bengalised the railways.

In that sense, there is a tremendous lesson to be learned from the presence of a man like Corbusier in India, he represented modernity, to the extent that we internalised that and it transformed our lives. To the extent that we used him as a pastiche, we changed nothing. If we don’t see that difference I fear we will
even use our old crafts as a pastiche. Lots of people and lots of living-rooms, in India at least, are using the crafts as pastiche. For example a beautiful anklet from some tribal woman ends up as an ashtray. You know that happens so let’s not think ourselves very holy. When we look at the past, the transformation is important, the internalisation in doing this Mulk Raj Anand mentioned the new capital of Haryana and then Kurukshetra, the battle-field, and I was thinking that in former days the building of a city or a structure was really based on the mandala. This model of the cosmos is also part of our past, and to me the incredible mind-blowing idea is that when you build you don’t just put something where the colour works nicely, but because you are making a construct of your central beliefs. The shape of this room would actually reflect what we believe about the universe, the cosmos, everything in our beliefs. That is also part of our heritage, in the same way that simultaneously villages and great conceptual ideas are also part of the heritage and of being an architect. I am emphasising this because otherwise I feel we are making our ideas very, very small, and then suddenly asking the architect to do something impossible.

In saying that architects can be agents of change they can also look at crafts. Let us put it this way, if you are an agent of change you are seen as some sort of very pushy person. On the other hand if you say that you only look at crafts, it looks like you are very mild and you are not an activist. Both these roles are necessary in the Third World. People have to be activists and they have to be mild also. There’s a third role, one I reject, and that is what modern architecture has come to mean and what we have imported to this part of the world. Of course we must reject that. In rejecting the kind of silly glass building which doesn’t work, we should not reject also the role of the architect as activist, even if it is not central in our past, indigenous in the past. Someone has to be an activist and I would rather it was a humanist such as an architect than someone who didn’t have that kind of background. In fact to my mind there’s no doubt that this activist part is very important to our architecture. This is why a great leader who changes a country, like Gandhi or Lincoln in America is called the architect of the nation. It means just that, he is not called the historian, the engineer, or the dentist, but an architect. Why? Because as an architect he knows what might be and how the pieces could fit together That’s part of our mandate and specially in the Third World where we are going to see great changes and we need great changes.

Habib Fida Ali

It’s very difficult to speak after what Charles Correa has just said. What I’m going to say relates in general to the architect in a changing environment. We talked a lot about the master-craftsman and the dying arts but nobody has yet suggested how do we rescue them, what do we do about them? Have we ever tried to produce a list of what master-craftsmen we have in the country? What are they doing? How do we use master-craftsmen? They just don’t drop from the sky and rescue our buildings or rescue architects The point is we really have to study how a master-craftsman works and how do we, in modern times, assess them and use them in our work. This is very important and it is too easy to romanticise a master-craftsman’s role in architecture? To me this is very important and this directly relates to the role of a contractor in our work. We design, but our designs have to be constructed and they have to be constructed by contractors, not by architects. Architects are not master-masons. I wish they were.

I wish there was less of a contractor’s role and more of a master-mason’s role. Even on small projects like small houses we have to satisfy our clients, so we have to get bids and we have to go through all that red tape to prove a point. If we want to bring in a master-mason sometimes we can’t because we are tied to a lower price from a bad contractor. We then justify the poor workmanship by saying it is not our fault but the contractor’s, because he did it. This is very mundane, but this is what we live with, at least in the Third World. It is very much the case in my country and whatever little success I have had in my work, I am now speaking from experience, is where I have fought to bring the master-craftsmen into my work and into my buildings. It is a difficult process. It was very evident when I saw Louis Kahn’s work here in Dhaka. They are masterful designs, but there is a big question mark regarding many things. I wonder if he were alive and if he could see this building today, what would his reaction be to a lot of the finishes and a lot of his details. I think there must have been something lacking on the part of the government or on the part of PWD who failed to employ people who really understood what he was trying to say in his work. It is a very simple work, it’s not at all complicated, it has very simple finishes. It is just concrete and marble and very simple terrazzo floors throughout the building. I wished that it had been put together slightly better. It is no reflection on his design I think but it reflects a lot on how it’s put together.

The other thing that I would like to throw light on is architectural workshops. We talk about the devastation of our rural life, and we keep on pressing the issue that architects should play a role on the rural scene, but how can they? It is a very difficult question and I think one way it could be answered is by some sort of workshops organised by government agencies. We have heard that there are 72 architects working in
the PWD in Dhaka. I wonder what they do in their ivory towers? Have they ever been on the rural scene? A question mark again.

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**Jamel Akbar**

Firstly my apologies; just to give you an idea of myself, I have no practical experience. If you like, I am professionally a student, all the time studying, studying, studying, also, I don’t know this region very well. So you may accept or reject what I say because I am still trying to develop my thoughts.

I will talk about the majority of people who are living in the rural areas. I want to talk also about architecture. The question that was raised, and was very important is the question of colonising ourselves. To explore this a little bit, I found, through studying ancient legal documents that an organisation of architects or any profession of this sort did not exist in the past. The principle was very simple, the central authority controlled the quality of the building materials, the quality of putting them together and they forgot about, or they didn’t care about, how they were composed to form a space. They only controlled the physical elements and how they are combined. They were more interested in how wide is the staircase, how thick the wooden beam should be and so on. How big the room is, how wide it is, where it is, in the front or at the back, they left that for society to decide. Society over time through experience managed to develop simple principles to build their environment. This we observe and try to understand. This brings me to the question of beauty raised by Charles Correa, in that in the traditional environment beauty was decided by society as a whole. Someone tried something. If it succeeded it would be copied and repeated again and again and society decided, not one taste but millions of tastes decided what is good. If taste or beauty was good it prevailed, if not, it just folded.

To clarify the architects’ role I will raise a question about a basic human tendency, or the basic human innate in everyone of us. It is the tendency among users often to reject what authority asks them to do, or not to accept what others tell them, unless they find out that it works. For example, if you tell them it is necessary to raise your land in a certain way, they may reject that unless they see it work. This is a very important issue and if architects want to intervene in the physical environment as professionals we have to prove that the thing we do, does work. The authority often wants to impose regulations. For example we all know that the road from the airport to the city centre is well paved, well lit and so sophisticated that we can see squatter settlements on both sides of it. One lighting column would cost 5/10 houses in this region. This tells us that society’s wealth is really thrown into the the street. Why? It is because of the intervention of the central authority, or centralisation. The attitude of the authority, the basic tendency of any authority, is always to improve, and when they want to improve they select the shortest cut and the shortest solution. If they have the capital they do it, as in the Gulf region. If they don’t they devise rules and regulations. A regulation in simplest term says don’t trust what you do and we will give you some regulations to be followed, or at the least the philosophy is paternalism or ‘I know what is good for you’.

I will give a simple example of how regulations or centralisation by the authority affects the peasants of the rural areas. I don’t know this area very well, but let us take an example where an authority makes a regulation that between two neighbours there should be a wall and the wall has to be 2 or 3 feet high, neighbour A should build the front half, neighbour B should build the back half, and the authority lays down the specification of the materials. In this way they clarify everything to the extent that the two neighbours need not talk about it, and they just go ahead and build it, because the authority clarifies the responsibility of the two parties. On the other hand if there is no regulation, what happens? The first decision the neighbours have to make is whether they should have a wall or not. Then they continue, how high is it to be, and so on. This raises the fundamental question that I think is lacking and that is the dialogue, the agreement, the consensus, the conventions. There are many terms for it and they differ in different societies. I think this is very crucial in society because if you look at, for example, a simple boundary between two neighbours in the rural areas where it rains and the water level rises I am sure the boundary will be fuzzy or disappear. I am also sure that there is sophisticated convention in the society, that people understand these things, and how to resolve these issues. Research is needed in that field to clarify those issues before any intervention by us as architects can take place.

If there were no conventions in society, we would not have seen very similar organisations of spaces, or organisations of physical form in the rural areas. The presentations showed us typical floor plans or typical organisations of spaces. This basically has to do with convention.

What is really striking, that I have learned from this seminar, is that this region varies very much from the Gulf region. It is exactly the opposite and that’s not bad, there is advantage in it. In the Gulf region the government has the capital to intervene and do whatever it likes, because they are subsidising everything, while in this region the government doesn’t have the capital to do that and the people have more
roles or more capability of doing things. Intervention by the central authority sometimes leads to unexpected results. A good example is the Great Dam in Egypt, where the consequences are that there is no mud because there is no flood and agricultural production has declined.

Thinking of the role of the architect, which comes up again and again in the seminar I think there is something wrong in our profession, not only in this region but all over the world. In Mexico architects are working as taxi drivers, in this region there is the argument that there is insufficient numbers of architects yet those who graduate cannot find jobs. What is wrong? I had an experience once when I saw a small basin put upside down and used as a step to enter a house and it was very slippery. I asked the owner, “Why don’t you build a step, don’t you have the money?” He said, “Yes, I have the money”. I said, “Then why don’t you build it? This is dangerous”. He replied, “Well, I need the money to buy a bicycle for my son”. Although the step may break his son’s neck he never cared about that. What I am trying to say is that we as professionals or we as architects have a certain way of defining what is good for people, a way that the people may not share and will not share. So how do we go about it? I think our role is not clear or there is something wrong with our role. We need to define the level where we would be accepted by society. We need to have a broader awareness of what is going on in the society in order to intervene.

If there is one architectural problem that has to be solved in this region it is housing. In this case if we want to go about it we have to be patient, for the tendency among us is that we want to see quick solutions. The attitude should be, we put down the seeds and wait for a long time to see the results. We may not see them during our lifetime. Another problem is that of hygiene in this region. I think that’s a very important problem and intervention should be started through research of the problems. To build a good society we have to solve these problems.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

And for the last comments, Shah Alam Zahiruddin.

Shah Alam Zahiruddin

I wish to respond to Habib Fida Ali on one or two points. Mr. Fida Ali made some comments about the workmanship of the National Assembly Building in Dhaka and he was wondering what Professor Louis Kahn would have thought if he saw the building finishes by the PWD. I would just like to draw his attention to the floor of this room and to the wall of this room. Take note of the details that have been worked out on the floor and the broad shapes that have been worked on the walls with Rajshahi silk. Each one has two aspects, one is the form and colour, and the other is the details. Louis Kahn saw most of the concrete works and things that were visible he wanted deliberately not to highly finished. A sample building was constructed early in the project and samples of all the materials were made by the Bangladeshi craftsmen and Bangladeshi engineers. He set a standard for various works and this was approved and then the work was carried out to that standard. There is no detail which the Bangladeshi craftsman could not have done. I could take you to many other buildings where the PWD has been involved and where other craftsmen have worked under their supervision and where the emphasis was on details and finishes, like the Shishnabah or Mehrab in the Mosque; these have been meticulously worked out. I want to say that I know Professor Louis Kahn even if it was not finished could perceive it’s final appearance. Most of the concrete finishes were done in his lifetime and he accepted them. The concrete work of the roof of the Assembly Chamber was done after his death and it has been done extremely well. Any apprehension that Professor Kahn would have been worried is not correct, he would have been very happy if he had lived to see it.

I will make a little observation on Mulk Raj Anand’s idea about the Haryana capital. All of us still want a third of an acre of land and to live on the ground and be attached to the ground. It is very nice to be within the landscape and at one with nature, but with technology coming in, rapid communications and the vast machinery of governments, the automobile and even the computer, it is extremely difficult. What we see then is that once the capital is established that these modern technological means have to be integrated. We can no more think of it as a village setting, the urban setting is a modern creation and has its own demands. However Mulk Raj Anand’s concerns should be attended to, we should try to learn lessons from the monstrosities of urban cities which we have created and infuse our future cities with elements of human values and create a more liveable city.

Regarding the role of the architect in changing the environment I would say that in earlier days when patients were really sick and in a critical condition they would come to the doctor and in most cases the patient would not survive and the doctors were blamed. Then doctors to avoid this situation prescribed that immunisation had to be done, what care people should take to stay in good health and to have regular check-ups. Then people started coming to the doctors even before they were really sick. We as architects have now to think. Should we be sitting here and waiting for the clients to come to us or in
the changed circumstances should we take a more aggressive attitude and in different forums tell people what is wrong in our physical environment and even initiate projects and proposals for a better place for our people to live in.

Coming to the rural setting where we architects have made very little contribution to change and improve the housing condition of the rural mass — we must not think of it in terms of an architectural problem alone. It is as much or more so a socio-economic and political one. Given the choice they would opt for a big and pucca house. They cannot afford it. So the architect has to work within the existing system, with available material and introduce minimal change in the existing system and effect improvement. People from rural areas will not come for help to architects. I think the role of the architects has to be changed here. As stressed in Professor Ali’s paper a great contribution can be made on the land use pattern through planning use. Land is wasted and the way the population pressure is increasing spells an automatic annihilation process. The people in the villages are poor and there is great wastage of land through unplanned use. There is a way we can help, we must not just concentrate on the shelter itself, but possibly give planning guidance and work with them through other specialists from health, family planning, agricultural and other financing agencies.

As for the urban areas, of about 200 architects now in the country, 4 or 5 are in Chittagong area and the rest are in Dhaka. They don't want to move out of here and yet the time of the priests and kings as clientele has gone. Architects must realise, they must make themselves available, otherwise engineers and others will take away the work in the smaller towns, in the smaller areas. If you don't want to move out of the capital, the metropolis, then somebody else is going to take your job away. Somebody else is taking it away! In the changed environment, we have to reorient ourselves and go out of the capital city. The building process has become so complicated and engineers and some builders offer the whole range of service. They provide the structural design, architecture, the quotation and the contractor in one package and they give it to the client, whereas architects don't yet want to take on the whole thing. I understand in Pakistan, architects are doing turnkey projects now. In Bangladesh we don't do it and it is only the builder or the real estate person who is doing this. In the changing circumstances it has become so complicated for the client that architects have to offer the whole range of services.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Thank you, Shah Alam Zahiruddin, for your comments and I must thank all the other commentators for their valuable contributions and also of course the presenters of the papers.
Session VI
Panel Discussion

Syed Ali Ahsan — Chairman

Syed Ali Ahsan

One point came to my mind while I was going through the papers specially in the paper by Romi Khosla. An interesting point is raised, about the Asian consciousness in architecture as against western logic and western rationale. This has not been properly clarified in the paper. What is his Asian consciousness? Can we relate it to certain forms? Can we give it a certain identity? This has not been explained in the paper and I would like this to be fully explored for it is important.

Secondly, a point has been raised during the discussions regarding religion and its relationship to architecture. The question of Islam arose and Buddhism also came up. Is there anything called Islamic architecture? That has not been properly defined. Besides the mosques, can we identify a dwelling house as an Islamic house or as a Buddhist house? Why are we talking about this Islamisation or Islamic representation in our houses? I remember in Pakistan just prior to Bangladesh, there was a governor who actually thought that the dome is synonymous with Islam. So he wanted to place domes on the top of all government buildings. Therefore we find that on the Bangabhaban there is a dome and on the High Court Building there is a dome. Some people I remember started arguing that in Islamic architecture there is the vault and there is the arch, not lintels and not pillars. These are opinions but certain clarification is needed on this issue.

Number three is vital and it concerns the rural population and rural housing. What have we done about the rural population, those people living in the villages in the South Asian region? Big cities have been developed and big cities are vying with the important cities of the west, for example Manila in the Philippines. These are very important cities, very big cities but if one goes to some of the rural areas, Mindanao for example, one notices that the rural areas are not looked after at all and the government is not interested in the development of the rural areas.

Government is interested to project itself to the outside world, therefore they are laying emphasis on Manila. Similarly in Bangladesh most of our people live in the villages. What role can the architects play in the development of rural housing? What role could the Government play in utilising the services of these architects? This is very important and should be discussed fully.

Fourthly, there is the question of the architects vis-a-vis the Government. This has been discussed at length and there is a notion prevalent in our country, as in many other countries in the Third World, that the Government is not paying due regard to architecture as a profession and they are not properly utilising the services of the architects. What should be the role of the Government? Finally, what should be the socio-cultural role of architects? In some countries of the world, for example in China, we hear of barefoot doctors, or barefoot architects and engineers. They are moving from one place to another and helping the rural population in designing their buildings and helping them in various other ways. Our architects have been in isolation for a long time. Can they now be brought in contact with the ordinary people? Have architects any social role to play and if so what should that role be and to what extent can the architects respond to the situation? Now I have raised these points I would ask Paul Rudolph to make his comments.

Paul Rudolph

I appreciate very much your four points because they reflect very accurately what has been discussed during this conference. To take up your points in the order in which you mentioned them, it seems to me that you know perfectly well the western attitudes towards architecture. What isn’t so clear to me is your own attitude towards architecture. That is perhaps most evident with regard to Dhaka itself. I think that a capital city needs to be a capital and fortunately you
have a very wonderful one. You have an infrastructure consisting of a fantastic road system built very quickly, but what is the real character of Dhaka and what is it going to become? Any city which adds a million people to its population every decade has a fantastic problem.

As I understand it, Dhaka started with a centre and then it grew a little and then there were slums because people came into the city and then beyond that ring of slums squatting housing and so forth. So it became a number of concentric rings and that is juxtaposed to a drainage system that is unique, I believe because you are in a delta. In the long run one can't help but wonder if what is a necessity cannot be turned into something really quite fantastic. It seems to me that comes in part from the drainage system, strange as it may sound. You have these huge tanks and they need to be interconnected in order to drain properly and so that which is already started, could be integrated or, though I hate to use the word, 'planned'. That however implies a few master-strokes which can constrict as well as be a wonderful thing, but these large bodies of water, interconnected and related to the transportation system, and specially related to important institutional buildings could finally give Dhaka, I believe a unique character.

I am fascinated with the idea that the social structure, helps to determine the form of the city and your built-up area and the squatters' housing in the long run, is very much a key. The squatter housing eventually must disappear, I mean must be taken care of in other ways. That is all very easy to say, but it can be coupled with landscaping and though I have heard almost nothing of landscape in this seminar, architects know perfectly well that many a blemish, many inhuman area can be transformed if it is thought of in terms of landscaping. You have one of the most fantastic landscapes in the world here, with the vegetation and the flora, but I wish one would see many more tree-lined streets. I hesitate to say many more 'parks' because I don't know whether for you parks are breeding grounds for crime, but I wish there was much more utilisation of defined exterior space. I have to emphasise 'defined' and by 'defined' I really mean by buildings that in turn leads to the notion of minimising free-standing building and utilising buildings which are literally attached one to another, so that as time goes by the built-up area becomes a kind of boundary for the open space.

So much for Dhaka. I would like to talk for one moment about the villages. There are three papers which I will remember forever. One of them had to do with the mosque and I would call 'vernacular mosque'. I found that very touching and full of spirit. It doesn't really matter whether you call that architecture or vernacular architecture. For me it's a thing of the spirit and there are many ways of looking at it. I think architects become brain-washed far too often and we do not include enough of what the human being naturally feels. Those things have their natural expression and I personally applaud that a great deal. The second paper which I'll remember forever is the description of your rural housing and as you all know much better than I it's a spatial thing. It's a group of huts grouped around a court and I would emphasise 'court' because the author of that paper thought, quite properly as a matter of fact, that if a whole simple thing like plumbing was taken into consideration more, that it would probably become no longer a series of huts but a linear design. From a national, and, I suppose you would then say the western viewpoint, that would be a much better arrangement of the plumbing. Is the human being however evermore to be dependent on the plumbing arrangement? I think not, that's putting the cart before the horse. For me, the spatial aspects of the village, that courtyard, that outside living-room, specially in your climate, is much more important thing. I emphasise that because finally all architecture is very much based on the relationship of the human being to space and the psychology involved in that. As a matter of fact that's my definition of architecture. I would hate very much to see technological demands transforming village housing and the loss of the courtyard. It's one thing to look out from your dwellings, all oriented beautifully and facing the same direction. It's another thing to look into your own courtyard and I think that that is a magnificent thing. In many ways the rural housing is far superior to the Dhaka housing.

I was also fascinated by the construction, which I had misunderstood I must add. The use of clay and the fact that the people of the rural areas know perfectly well how to make those walls and they have been making them for centuries and though they need to be repaired from time to time, they know perfectly well how to do that and they don't have to go out to buy cement to repair them. My understanding is that the roofs leave a great deal to be desired and maybe that has to be rethought. One cannot understand really why the technology of building the clay wall is not augmented by a somewhat better covering. I do know that the whole idea of prefabricated housing, which of course comes from the west is not at all the answer, not even the answer for us quite often. We have been through forty years of thinking about prefabrication in various ways and there are elements which are prefabricated, of course but the totality of prefabrication has been a snare and a delusion. I cannot believe that in a country which has the particular problems which you have, that that's any kind of answer. The rural housing is not only one of the most beautiful things in the world, but it is unique and it has grown over centuries and I don't see why it can't be helped.
to survive. Of course it needs pure water. My understanding is that there are many more wells than there have been and there's much more electricity. These things evolved slowly but the important thing is for architects and for the Government to help to tap the energy which made these villages in the first place. What I'm trying to say amongst other things, though it will sound a bit strange, is that if the whole environment were designed by architects it would be a terrible place. That is something which is true all over the world and I believe it to be specially true here. One of the roles of architects is to try to tap the energies which are latent in society and give them 'direction'. Interventions of various kinds would be a better way of saying it.

In terms of their own housing, people can do it themselves, at least in rural areas. It is impossible for architects to make rural villages. We are brainwashed in too many ways. We don't understand, we never could understand, but they do need certain things. It has been said that villages are too small and they cannot, for whatever reason, have a school of their own or even a shop. I don't know a better size for villages but I'm sure that with some experimentation that could be more clearly determined. How does one group this housing? There are many things that architects or planners can be very helpful about, but the actual execution, I would insist, can never be done by architects and contractors, and should not be. Architects can never make vernacular architecture. It always ends up being rather 'cute' and has little to do with the real art of architecture. In other words there are many things that architects cannot do. They can help direct or point in certain directions and the government obviously can and must intervene in the whole question of land ownership and how you transform the villages into a larger village and then still larger ones.

This brings me to the third paper, which I found in some ways the most terrifying of all and the most disturbing of all, because of course Government tries to give some direction to the urbanisation of certain areas and how that may be done. I'm sure much of that is very beautifully done and very much to the point but when one sees what is finally built and how alien that is to the villages, then you really want to get off the boat. There is something truly wrong about that and it's too much of a break from what has gone before. The whole evolution of vernacular architecture has tremendous possibilities, but architects cannot do that. There are exceptions of course but you are a relatively small group of people and you have a fantastic population and a tremendous need for rural housing.

The fact remains that the rural housing is unique in your country and perhaps I am only talking about an intermediate step, but the rural housing has been around for centuries now and no matter how much repair it requires the people who utilise it can do that and know perfectly well how to do it. It's my understanding that it's very economic for them to do it. If you are really interested in that which is of your country, and whether that is Muslim or not I do not know, I believe that the rural housing has great possibilities.

I want to say, before you think that I have abandoned architects and the notion of architecture, that that isn't so at all. People are very much surprised when I say that somewhere between 15 to 20 percent of all buildings in the United States are done by architects, not more, and it is that way all over the world. It is wrong to think that architects will ever design everything in sight, and I am happy about that because it would be far too tense and the environment is the product of what many people think, not just what architects think. That is the way it's always been and that is the way I hope it always will be and the closer one comes to the habitat the closer one comes to what people think.

With regard to the Government and architecture, this is always a double-sided question. You have to have the support of the government but you cannot legislate for and you cannot plan beauty, or even that which is organised, very well. The great places, the great European squares, for instance, were not planned as we know planning today. Planning is a new thing. The best urban spaces grew because people felt a certain way about things. That included their rulers and intellectuals and the governing organisations. I'm always impressed with great volumes of plans which are published and then comparing them with the reality. In some ways the more extensive the planning is, the more you can be assured that the results will be negative. As a matter of fact because I am essentially a maverick I feel that very strongly. It is the opposite of humanism which is the great goal.

You are fortunate, I think, because in some ways you have such huge problems but you don't have such a huge backlog of enormous mistakes either and so in that sense I envy you a great deal. The human imagination is finally the most important thing and I don't pretend to understand the difference between Eastern thought and Western thought. I do think that I understand a little bit of your attitudes as shown at this conference and I want to tell you that finally it is a matter of spirit, it's a matter of the will and it is also a matter of insight, and I think you've shown all of those things in great quantity during this conference and I feel privileged to have been a part of it.
Habib Fida Ali

I will take up the question of the role of the architect vis-a-vis the Government. A few things come to my mind and it relates to my city Karachi and how an architect either can destroy or can make things wonderful in conjunction with the Government. I am talking about the urban fabric and it relates to nothing in the abstract but to something very positive. It concerns a very large urban settlement in which the government thought they would upgrade the standard. This is right in the heart of Karachi, a scheme which is known as the Lines Area where different communities came and settled at the time of the Partition in 1947. It was open land right in the heart of the City and people came and made establishments. They were ‘Kutchi Abadies’. This relates to the rural and urban scene because these were people who came from rural areas and settled there, or they were refugees who came and settled there. They made their own habitat, their own dwellings and there were no architects involved.

What I’m relating is how an architect can destroy or make a city. What the settlement lacked were the services like drainage, electricity and water but those were secondary. The major issue was a roof over their heads, which they did and which they did beautifully. The Government however and the architect in charge thought otherwise, that this was black spot on the face of Karachi and they wanted to change it and to improve it. They planned a scheme in which an architect was involved, not even a planner, and started to upgrade the whole. What they provided was a grid-plan destroying the old fabric. Paul Rudolph mentioned landscape; here there were one hundred year old trees which were chopped down and grid plans were made with pedestrian streets 10 feet wide or 12 feet wide with 2 or 3 storey high structures with no regard or thought for ventilation or breeze directions. I am trying to drive home a point on the role of the architect when dealing with the masses. I am not talking about private homes but when you are dealing with the lives in lakhs of people right in the heart of the city. There was a public uproar, and rightly so, I believe and the government thought better and stopped before it destroyed it further. Now there is a question-mark on the role of the architect vis-a-vis the people.

On the rural scene the question has been raised, what role can an architect play? We all know that a man in the village can build very well for himself. We go to the villages and admire their work. They know the material, but when we architects arrive on the scene we introduce different things. We design schools, hospitals and clinics for them. What do we produce? We have seen presentations that were very thought-provoking and frightening about the role of the architect. Do they need architects? Do we have to really go and destroy their pattern? Yes we are experts and we must build in cities and we should build beautiful buildings but when we go to the rural areas we fail miserably because we transplant our urban thoughts on to them and educate them in a completely different way. We introduce alien building materials, like concrete and cement, concrete blocks instead of their mud-bricks and their mud-plastered walls. Are we needed there? Again this is a question-mark.

These are the things that trouble me all the time and I think a forum like this is a place where we will get an answer, hopefully.

The second point was about religion playing a role on an urban scene or on a rural scene. I have seen mosques in villages which are a thousand times better than those I see in cities. How this works, I don’t know, but when you go to a village mosque it’s much more honest, in a way very Islamic. This brings me to one of the Aga Khan Award schemes, a mosque in Mali, done by a master-mason. It answers the questions of the community very humbly, very honestly. If you bring the same sort of thing into the urban scene will it work?

Syed Ali Ahsan

I was in Karachi for 7 years. What about the development of Karachi in certain areas, for instance the Drigh Road slum area and the Manghopir area? What has been done about those areas?

Habib Fida Ali

There are certain slum areas where very dedicated people are working. We have just honoured a gentleman who was in Bangladesh and now is working in Karachi on a slum clearance area. He is working in Orangi Township on the upgrading of it but frankly, very little has been done. The slums have taken on a sort of permanency. The ‘Kutchi Abadies’ or rather the majority of them, like Lyari and Orangi, have been made into pukka settlements. They will not be removed, but a lot of thought has been given to upgrading them and giving them the services they need like roads, sewerage and water. I have been into Orangi myself and a lot of good work has been done. But still it’s like a drop in the ocean.

Syed Ali Ahsan

Has the authority of the K.D.A. extended up to Manghopir and Orangi area?
Habib Fida Ali

The K.D.A. is very much aware now and they are now going into these areas and trying to upgrade them, but it's a mammoth task and the question arises again about the role of an architect. What can he do? The architect needs support from the community, he needs planners, sociologists and others to assist in this sort of a programme.

Syed Ali Ahsan

This raises a question. Are the architects there destroying the pattern of living in the slum areas? Is there any reaction?

Habib Fida Ali

There is a reaction. This is what I was referring to in the Liness Area. There was a wonderful pattern there, and the government or rather a few individuals thought they could improve it but on the contrary they destroyed it. Text-book theory did not work. Luckily the Government has stopped to reassess the situation. It is a wonderful thing that an awareness has come to the government because they have appointed a committee to look into this. I think something good is going to come out of that.

Bashirul Haque

This seminar has left an impression on me and I notice certain contradictions. The basic contradiction arises because as architects, we are used to a certain vocabulary and initially we start with abstract thoughts which are then translated into built-form. This contradiction emerged specially when we discussed regionalism in architecture. A vocabulary may be required which will come out of the merger between our emotion and our intellect. We deal with feelings, we deal with essence. When we talk about our history, as an architect these are feelings within us. It cannot be expressed in terms of visual objects. We live with our culture and we feel our culture and this is steeped into us. These impressions have been in us for thousands of years and so when we were trying to describe our history, when we say 'courtyard' for example, we have to ask why have they come about? What is the reason behind a courtyard? How to express them? This is very important in the sense that when a building is done in Bangladesh or in India or in Pakistan, an architect who has understood the spirit and the essence of the culture, will produce a design that will be automatically Bangladeshi. It cannot be Pakistani architecture. The moment we deal with visual objects in terms of expression, instead of really taking the essence of it, then it becomes very difficult.

Another problem that disturbs me is the role of architects in rural and urban architecture. The way architects are trained today they are primarily trained to take up urban problems and their training doesn't deal with rural problems. Maybe architects should be more involved with politics, with social problems and economic problems, because when discussing rural architecture it brings in many aspects. It brings in the politicians because architects can only handle a problem as it comes to us. It requires our involvement with the politics of the country, with the decision-making and how the rural housing should be done.

Geoffrey Bawa

So much has been said and so much thought has been let loose in this seminar, abstract thoughts and clear thoughts and every sort of other thoughts but my thoughts concerning regionalism lie in the actual instance of building and the chairman mentioned western thought as opposed to Asian thought. I don't think there is any dissimilarity when you are in fact creating an architectural solution for a site and there is a need and there are people concerned with it. The thought processes when doing any building to me have always been centred on the site and with the people who are concerned and I think regionalism grows from this. Good building also stems from an appreciation of an immediate need, and an immediate purpose and immediate sensation. I find it very difficult to talk about architecture. I think each architect solves a problem differently and it must come from his innermost thoughts or his subconscious or wherever it comes from. It comes from him in an effort to reach a solution, an architectural solution at a given spot for a given people.

I'd like to touch on architectural education, which I think ought to be extended over a few more areas. People are taught the techniques of building and are taught the current theories and dogmas but they should be also told to go round and travel as much as they can and look at buildings and when they look to, actually see what they are looking at. So many people look at things and don't see what is there. If that is incorporated in an early stage of an architectural education I think people would then find solutions much closer to the human need they have to support. I'd also like to reinforce Paul Rudolph's plea for landscape because I don't think a house or building stops at the external wall. You go from somewhere into the building and come out of the building into something. That relationship is enormously important, and I think it is very close to the essence of good architecture.
In this seminar we have seen architectural expression which ranges from rural housing to the Parliament Building. It's a huge range of experience, and somewhere between them is an answer and each architect has to find one. If they can find it collectively then that would be good but ultimately it becomes a personal solution and when one considers the relationship with the site and the people who are concerned with it, function plays a very large part. I think an attempt at beauty as well is worthwhile because it is just as important as function, and I think enjoyment is also an important aspect.

Charles Correa

I think the question put by Romi Khosla is a very good one about the consciousness. I don’t know if I’d put it in such wholesale terms as Asian or Western. I think it’s more specific than that. I would think it would have to be not just Asian in the case of India, it would have to be Indian, which could be quite different from, let's say, Chinese. If I look at India I can see tremendous variation. It has to be placed specifically within India. If one looks at the handicrafts in Rajasthan, it's totally different from let's say, what’s produced in Madras, in terms of sensibility. So obviously whilst I agree with the thrust of the question, I think it should be made far more precise for it to be meaningful, otherwise we deal with too much generality.

The second thing is that we mustn’t overload ourselves. What’s great about James Stirling is that he is not trying to speak for Britain. Mrs. Thatcher speaks for Britain. He doesn’t, he just does a very good building Paul Rudolph doesn’t speak for America. He tries to do a very good building, and we must remember that. We should keep in mind that we have to be specific to the place where we are from and where we are building and we don’t have to overload the whole of Asia on ourselves.

Having said that, what is common to our part of the world is the deep structure of it, and that is what we share in Asia. In this climate, like India, like again in South East Asia, we have quite a different need for built form. We don’t need really the kind of big buildings which we are building today, because the climate is so pleasant. In fact in the past our big buildings, at least in India, were the temples which were really places of ritual. They were quite different from buildings which try to protect you, and this means such a different attitude to built form that, for instance, if I jump all the way to Mexico, the pyramids are not the architecture, it’s the spaces between the pyramids that are the sacred places of the temple. If I look at Borobudur it’s the ritual pilgrimage round and up over the sacred mountain, the open-to-sky space. That is a constant, the deep structure of all these cultures and the relationship with built form. In the courtyard houses, the most important part of the house is the space where there is nothing, where you are under God's sky, which you have in the Alhambra for example. This has great implications because in these other situations, in Western climates or countries, the need to protect the person is so strong that you always end up with the kind of rooms, that we are discussing in. As I quote often the symbol of education in the West is a school-house whereas, in Asia, it would be the guru sitting under the tree. It’s a totally different attitude to enlightenment, and I think it’s not only cheaper, you are more likely to get enlightenment sitting under a tree than in this room. There’s no way in this room we could discuss meta-physical things, not because it’s an ugly room but it’s just that it’s a room.

The second, which follows from that, is that when you are looking at the deep structure of a society in Asia the real key to it is in the rural areas, because that’s where the majority of people live and because that’s where the culture really developed.

We really shouldn’t try to design housing for rural areas, there is no need to do this. Housing has the lowest priority on their list. What they need, even before a water supply is jobs, is work, and all kinds of things such as health and education. Architects will only go in there and ruin the villages. What we can do, I think by looking at the villagers, is understand the way space is used, including the open-to-sky space and then when we work in the cities which is where we actually can make a contribution, it would seem to me that if you can make analogues of those spaces, of those systems, you will achieve good housing for people. In the kind of models which I would support, the people themselves do a tremendous amount of the building, not through self-help housing but through what I would call vernacular housing. It is what the bazaar economy produces anyway. It is what made Udaipur, Jaisalmer, and it is probably what made Mikonos. It is the way of building developed over hundreds of years. Only very marginal improvements can be made on it. Those systems are so marvellous, they recycle the waste and they do fifty different things. They are a perfectly balanced eco-system. The only tragic thing about those systems is that they are not viable in what we call cities today. Our cities are such that those solutions become irrelevant. We have to change our cities, so that those solutions can be made to work. That involves restructuring the city to some extent, opening up some urban land, changing where the jobs are. This can be done and it has been done in certain places, and it all has to do with the fact that you are learning from the rural areas and trying to make an urban analogue of that.
I will just touch on one thing, that all this urbanisation comes from a distressed migration from the rural areas, and we have to understand that people are not coming for housing, they are coming for work, and if you make the kind of analogue I am talking about you will actually generate more jobs for those migrants. So what I’m saying has got to do with economics as well. It’s got to do with the fact that you are really in building buildings like the one we are sitting in for this seminar generating wealth for a very few people who can build it, while the other kind of pattern, the analogue I’m talking about, gives the migrants jobs, which I think is very important.

Then I come to the third issue of architects vis-a-vis Government. I think there are two or three questions there. One is protecting the role of the architect. I thought it was ironic that somebody said that now that the architect’s role has been protected we must do what we want to do. I think that sums it up because the architect is doing two different things. I see the architect as a very highly activist person in society, living in a city like Dhaka, or living in Bombay, I think it’s part of our responsibility to see these bigger issues. It doesn’t matter if no one commissions you to do it; it’s part of the architect’s role in society to see what restructuring can be done in the terms I was talking about. No one is going to protect you in that role, I think you’ve just got to stick your neck out and come out with whatever ideas you feel can help the city. On the other hand, I would say that what I would expect from my government is support for new ideas. I think that is very important. People were critical of the building of Chandigarh, but Chandigarh was the catalyst which changed many things in India. Even if it didn’t have the answers it brought many issues to the forefront, and I must give full marks to Nehru for making that kind of catalytic change. I can think of other changes, in Canada for example, when they had Expo ’67, that was a big watershed. Canada which to me used to be a suburb of America, I realised suddenly had a tremendous direction. The big difference between Britain today and, say, American is that there’s no one in Britain, no client, leave alone the Government, who will stick his neck out to be on the forefront, to be on the cutting edge of architectural issues. America has such people who will commission someone to do a house. It can be a very small thing. What is important about the Third World is that you do get people, willing clients, very often the governments themselves in this role. We should make them see it because the changes needed and the issues are so big, that someone has to really do it. On the theme of architecture and Government I would put a tremendous weight on what I expect the Government to do as a catalyst in society.

The last thing that the Chairman mentioned is Islamic architecture. I think this is a very important question to discuss here. It seems to me that everything I call Islamic architecture and the images which come to my mind, is the architecture of a region which starts with Algeria, the Maghreb, and ends in Agra. It is a region with a great deal of continuity of climate, of desert conditions and dry hot climate, conducive to courtyards, to a particular typology of building form. Now, I find most Muslims live east of Calcutta. They don’t live in a hot, dry climate, they live in a hot, wet climate. The last thing you could do, the most silly thing you could do is step into a box without cross-ventilation. They don’t use masonry, they use tiled roofs. They don’t have the typology of an oasis town, which is marvellous, highly-packed buildings, like Isfahan Bazaar, which is so romantic. The typology has to be totally different. Lastly, not being urban people, like the Arabs were and by that I mean the oasis towns, but being rural people, what you are looking for is the Islamic farmhouse or grain silo, for instance. The whole need is so different, and this has never been articulated. It would therefore be quite possible to take your question and say, how do we make in this climate, equivalents of that architecture? Or you could say, let’s put that architecture aside and let’s invent an Islamic architecture for this place, the way it was invented in the first place. This takes me to what William Curtis said that change is going to occur, and the main thing is to re-invent or to invent for the first time for our situation here.

Mohammed Arkoun

I shall try to answer the questions raised by the Chairman, from the point of view of a historian of Islamic thought. I underline two words, ‘historian’ and ‘thought’. I am a historian of Islamic thought, which means that I am interested in history, but not in a history which only collects facts and events, and says that it happened in this way or that way in the past. This is the kind of history which we used to learn and to teach. It is a linear chronological history which avoids asking how and why events happened as they did. This kind of history is not relevant to our discussions; it cannot enlighten us about all the issues related to architecture and urbanism today. This I learned from the architects and I thank them.

The historian we need is the one who is informed about the past and asked always two questions, How it happened and Why it happened? Then the historian becomes a sociologist, an anthropologist, and even a thinker, because the thinker has a role to make explicit links which are implicit in our individual and collective behaviour. There are many links to make explicit in the global act achieved by the architect when he produces a building, because he touches to use Charles Correa’s expression, “the deep structure
of society”. This deep structure of society is working inside each of us. It is working inside architects of course, but it is working implicitly, according to the unconscious forces shared by the community to which we belong; then the historian should make these forces explicit by appropriate analytical methods.

On the question about “Islamic architecture” it is not so simple to speak about “Islamic” architecture because in the deep structure of each society we find three levels of culture; the first, deepest level is the level of oral culture, of the masses, of people. We are always speaking about people, “building for the people”, “building with the people”, but we don’t know who are these people, because we don’t know their history and we neglect not only by principle, but we are cut-off, in fact, by our education from the deep structure of the culture of these people. This rupture with the culture of the people started not with what we call modernity, what we call industry and all our material civilisation today. It started from the day societies passed from the oral culture to the written culture. That is why in all our Muslim societies we have a second level of culture which came after, historically, which will be above and which will cover the deep structure, the oral culture, which is yet living. This second layer of culture, is the Islamic culture.

Islamic culture is based on a book. This book has two meanings here. Firstly as a heavenly book, as a revealed book, and this gives a whole conception about the world, a whole feeling about the world, a whole structure of imagination about the world, which will be a transcendent vision of all that we do. You said that you are more moved, Habib Fida Aili, by mosques built by people in the villages than by mosques built with money, such as those in Brussels or Geneva or in our capitals. It’s true because the first ones but not all of them are built with a reference to transcendence and are built spontaneously with reference to these two deep levels of culture, the oral level and the Islamic level not yet converted to the written culture because there is an Islam which is expressed orally, not by written culture but the culture of the ulama, the theologians and the jurists, which is totally different and refers to different expressions (schools) of Islam.

There is a big difference between this level of written culture in Islam and the oral culture and the third level, which came afterwards and in which we are fighting now. This is destroying the first two levels and this is the secularised, materialised level, of the “material civilisation”. This is the biggest issue, because this issue is structural and the answer to the question about Asian consciousness or Oriental consciousness is it is not a relevant question. Seen from the point of view of the “material civilisation” in which we are fighting and producing our thoughts, our culture, our buildings and our environment and everything, the true question is to show how deeply the classical concepts of transcendent sacred, religious values have been broken, changed or eliminated by the secular civilisation.

The difference between Asia, or Orient, Far East or Middle-East and what we call the West is not a difference of culture, it is a difference of ‘look’, how we look at the world, how we look at the human condition. Do we look at it vertically, with a reference to the transcendance, to the Absolute of God, as it has been taught by the revealed books, or do we look at it horizontally, as we have learned to look at it since the Renaissance and the Reformation, since the 16th century, which was an intellectual event which touched not only Western societies but all human condition. This is the deepest structural change imposing a gap, a definite gap, a mental gap between the traditional theocentrist look and the secularised humano logocentrist look; between two processes of thinking, of producing any form of culture, any form of architecture, any form of urbanisation. This change affects our relation to space, our relation to time, which organizes the way we insert ourselves into this world. This reference can be vertical, according to all the cultures developed up to now by all religions but specially those based on a written tradition marginalising and finally eliminating so-called primitive or polytheist religions based on oral tradition.

That is why, today, if you go to Africa, to the South of the Sahara you find conflictual situations between the written religions, the religions of the book, and the other religions, and many Africans are converted to these religions because the book is there, because writing is there. Writing is power and when you know how to write and to read, you have the power in society. Writing is related to political power. This deep rupture in culture concerns us all. The difference between Asian or Islamic societies and Western societies is a difference of rhythm of evolution. By this I mean that when we come to Bangladesh, when we go to India, when we go to Indonesia or North Africa, in all these so-called underdeveloped countries we find many references still alive of the first two levels I mentioned — oral level and the so-called Islamic level.

In Western societies this evolution started around the 16th century: there are four centuries of progressive, not brutal evolution. The references to oral culture, to religious culture has not totally disappeared but the rationalist approach and the horizontal look to all human issues is stronger in western societies. We are coming to the same attitude in the Muslim world in spite of the resistance by all the militants for an “Islamic” revolution. We are engaged in the same process of industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation, the resistance opposed is ideological not structural. This is the true issue that we have to face. Are we able to invent another way of developing
societies economically and politically without creating this gap, this rupture in the historical evolution and the sociological structures.

The Architect is engaged in this complex process, not all architects but some architects, and this will depend on their education, which will be able to chart another way forward. There are creators who have inside them, operating at the same time, the three levels I mentioned and there are others, like teachers in the secondary schools, who are just repeating some procedure and devices building something without inspiration coming from the deep structure. They are without this momentum or *elan*, which is inside and which comes from this intermingling of all the symbols, the myths and the collective hopes related to the three levels of culture.

I wish to add something about "Islamic" architecture. In all our discussions we consider only architecture as it is produced by architects. We don't speak or we speak very little about the users of the buildings produced by architects. I think that the qualification 'Islamic architecture' or 'Christian architecture' or 'religious architecture' can come from both sides, from the architect when he is inspired by the deep structure and from the perception of the users, who will project values into the space created by the architect. These may be religious or cultural values and this is the perception which creates a sacred place, a religious place or a secularised space. It will depend on the feelings of the user. It will depend on the culture of the user, just as the forms produced by the architect or any artistic work depend on the perception of the user.

When we say that a mosque has an Islamic character or not it will depend on the user, on the one who will perceive this mosque. I was struck, for example, in the great assembly building here in Dhaka by Louis Kahn by one thing. You have noticed that he put in a rose-window, a big rose-window, such we find on the top of the main door of cathedrals, but he didn't use the function of the rose-window. The function of the rose-window in the cathedral is to show the story taken from the Gospels or taken from the Bible. He took only the form, which he put very high on one of the walls. This raises two questions; how Louis Kahn came to put this form in this building? What kind of importance did he give to this form here? Has he been inspired by the rose-window such as has been used in cathedrals? He is a Jew by culture but perhaps it has some meaning for him. This raises the question of the deep structure of the architect when he creates forms. This is one aspect to understand.

The other aspect concerns the people who enter this building. If they have no reference, no knowledge about this very important form used in cathedrals, in Christian architecture, what feeling will they have? They will not project on this rose-window detail all the meanings with which we are familiar in Gothic architecture. It will be just a form for them but if they are used to Christian culture and to Christian architecture they will ask the same questions as I have raised here.

I think it's exactly the same with Islamic architecture. The perception of the buildings will depend on the education that we have received, whether it is an Islamic education or a secularised education. Today in Muslim societies when secularised education is becoming more and more important than the so-called Islamic education; what would be an Islamic education? How mosques have been produced in the classical age of Islam, from the 1st century of Hijra to the 9th century? The mosque has been linked not only in some reference to prayer, and references to beliefs, taught by the Koran, and the Prophet, but it was also linked to the whole structure of society with its political institutions, its law, its culture, its theology, it was all these elements at the same time. The builder and the architect were involved in this global structure. Today this is no longer valid. Today there are ruptures at all levels of the traditional society. We are immersed in a secularised culture. The architect is trained in a secularised culture cut from this classical age of Islamic culture, he can only refer as he does all the time with slides to the minaret, the dome, the courtyard, the horseshoe arch — the conventional attributes of the monumental classical architecture in the Muslim world. We must think about this very big difference between the global structure of Muslim societies up to 19th century and the brutal change and the destruction of societies since material civilisation has been imposed by the western economy. We are then obliged to look to the religious quality of our environment in a different way. We are not however duly equipped intellectually and culturally to interpret correctly the present evolution of Muslim societies.

Kenneth Frampton

It's an honour and also somewhat daunting to follow Professor Arkoun, but perhaps there is some correspondence between what I have to say and what he has presented. In my earlier comments I tried to introduce the notion of universal civilisation in opposition to national cultures. In response to the Chairman, particularly since he began with Romi Khosla's paper and those aspects which refer to an anti-Cartesian development I thought I would return to this theme and respond to a number of points which have been raised. The first thing I would like to tackle, and I do it obviously from a very conditional standpoint is this issue of Occident versus Orient.
I am aware of specific qualifications which Charles Correa has just alluded to, the need for specific differentiation. We can nonetheless think in terms of general issues and then pass on to specific things. The primary difference in attitude vis-a-vis Orient and Occident resides for me in the fact that the Orient has always had a less violent attitude towards nature. The Occident has always since the Renaissance, maintained a very Promethean attitude towards nature. The consequences of this are of course on the one hand the Western triumph and on the other the heavy price it has paid. I am not going to go into all the details of these triumphs and failures, but medicine seems to be one of those fields in modern secular practice, where one can point to a certain disjunction in relation to nature. Naturally, medical practitioners of a positivistic kind do not like to hear such comments, particularly from laymen. Nonetheless there is a growing body of critical opinion in the West, and I suppose here also, with regard to the abuse of antibiotics for example, an abuse which leads to the destruction of the capacity of a drug like penicillin to remain effective. There is now a whole species of micro-organisms that are completely immune to the impact of penicillin and other drugs. The abuse of high-tech surgery that is very fashionable and highly expensive in the United States would be another example of Western medical violations as would be the common use of Caesarean operation in childbirth. It is a fact that most doctors in the United States today would prefer to administer childbirth through a Caesarean operation because it speeds up the process! The fact that the American Medical Association is categorically against midwives, and in a way relates this to the Orient, means that it is against paramedics which happens to coincide with being against more gentle and traditional ways of giving birth to children. The midwives are loosing this battle since they are not a strong union when compared with the power of the American Medical Association. It is perhaps unfair to pick on medicine but medicine is surely one of the models of applied science in western society. I mention these things because they indicate a disjunction and the presence of a generally assumed violent stance towards nature in the Occident. The second point is the relation to western architecture. Going back to the Renaissance there is the enormous emphasis placed by the Occident on the 'visual' and while sight may be biologically privileged, it is not the only sense and it is arguable that one of the results of this emphasis on the visual is, eventually to distance Western Architecture and Western Architects from the concept of direct experience in the tactile sense. In one of the papers given here Indian paintings were shown where the relative size of the figures depended as in pre-Renaissance European painting, upon the value given to the figures and not to their recession in rationalised space where everything is determined according to the mathematical distance from the observer. The over-valued western scientific notion of value-free enters exactly here, and I think this question of visual versus tactile has critical and political implications of great importance. The idea of value-free has a logic of its own although this logic is not always appropriate.

Your own difficulties in being able to accept that architecture might have to do with feeling, already shows the domination of Western thought which puts all the emphasis on information and logic and not upon experience and intuition. There is however a price to be paid for acceptance of this view of architecture.

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Charles Correa

I would like to pose a question that comes out of the various statements people have made, in particular Professor Arkoun and Kenneth Frampton. I accept totally the distinction made of the three levels of culture beginning with the deep structure at the oral level. I mentioned in my own comments this question of what is an Islamic architecture and I tried to answer that question in the context of Bangladesh. Given the oral tradition of Bangladesh and if we could skip the whole history of Islam and say that Islam started here, for instance, you could possibly then find an Islamic architecture which was relevant to this place. If Christianity which is so identified with Europe, and which started in Asia had stayed in Asia then maybe a church wouldn’t be a Gothic box but would be an open courtyard like a mosque. The issue is really an important one because later on when Kenneth Frampton mentioned Islamic architecture it seemed to me that we were back to the images of the hot, dry climate. Those are basically a minority version of what is Islamic architecture statistically and it has other implications which are cultural. In a sense we are a colony of Isphahan, an architectural colony. The images of Isphahan dominate even the buildings of Kahn. I love Kahn’s buildings, but it’s the images of a hot, dry climate. The issue is really, and as an architect it’s not just an issue but an incredible responsibility, indeed the stimulation of being an architect in Bangladesh is to go back to that deep structure level we were talking about. Then one can participate in the invention, in the creation or the re-invention of an Islamic architecture, or a relevant architecture for this place, for this culture, for this climate, for this moment in time. That is a question I would like us, if possible, to refer to next.
William Curtis

Fortunately that's something I wanted to address. I feel that the framework that has been set up by the Chairman of this session is a very relevant one, in dealing with this question I wish to say just a few words about my own interests in the question of the so-called 'East'.

I have spent a great deal of time between the Thar desert on the borders of Pakistan in one direction and Taiwan on the other end investigating the architecture of Asia. I have tried to do this extending the imagination over 4000 years, thinking about villages at one extreme and modernisation at the other. I have tried to immerse myself in understanding what a Buddhist tradition might be, what a Hindu tradition might be, what a Muslim tradition might be and the inter-relation between them. I am troubled by the use of the word 'East', because it's an entirely colonial invention. 'Orient' is related, to Orientalism and it is related, to a division of the world created by the Western colonising mentality which describes brown men, starting approximately in the eastern part of Turkey going on as far as tea plantations and paddy fields. It is not a particularly useful idea. It is adorned by 19th century romantic thought and a tendency on the part of the western thinkers to identify oversimply earlier phases in eastern religious thought with a monolith, which is called the eastern culture. It is a profoundly misleading construct in the present world and certainly in the past world for understanding history, because it leads to a number of immediate misunderstandings about the relationship between centres and region in the earlier cultural system. It leads to a perception of architecture in, for example India, as a sequence of stylistic nomenclatures that are tagged one by one by their religion, whereas in fact, one has to penetrate the underlying ordering system and principles of these architectures and see them as a series of stratifications. This involved absorption of Buddhist typologies into Hinduism, and their translation into new fields of meaning and the arrival of Islamic invasions and their abstraction and gradual absorption by what was there already.

This relates, immediately to the construct that Professor Arkoun has given us, because within the whole thing there is what I would call, and I mean nothing superior by this remark, the aboriginal memory. I have been involved in my work with the aborigines of Australia and their mythopoetic view of the universe and its expression in art and in artifacts. The aboriginal memory contains within it extremely primary modes of adjustment, to the landscape, to its translation into mythical form, to practicality, to the economic use of material in a conceptual sense, but in a much deeper sense than that, in terms of defining place. The vernaculars that we have been looking at and talking about in the village architecture are from a much later phase which has to do with pushing nomads out. Before we erect archetypes too simply around just one phase in a culture we should stand back and think of culture as a dynamic matter where certain strands come through, others are cut and absorptions and transformations take place. This process is going on, with new models intervening over these substructures.

One thing that struck me on the first day I arrived in Bangladesh, upon looking at the map and thinking of past experiences of Asia and looking at the people, looking at the way they carry themselves and the way they dress, was that this is the fringe between two worlds. One world is India, and all that that means, and the other is the beginning of the world that populates my imagination a great deal, the jungles of Thailand, the tropical systems of adjustment in clothing, in architecture, in tools, objects, of the South-East Asian peninsula. What do we mean by region in these circumstances? If we approach culture in a monolithic way we have no way of answering the question. We have simply to say that it's there and have no way of pulling the levels apart, examining their inter-relation, looking for the clustering, the connections, the points at which ideas come through or get cut off. If however we look at it through a level of stratification we can begin, to see overlaps, points where lessons can be learned laterally from one place to another.

On my second day in Dhaka I went to see one of the mosques of the Sultanate. What struck me about it, is a mosque of about 1519, was the way in which it combined so completely three levels of continuity. One, the deepest level perhaps, was a reference to that aboriginal memory. I knew that I was looking at, just as I know in certain of the vernaculars in North Africa or early Egyptian architecture at a transposition into more solid material, of the hut, of something which had that first sense of adjustment to nature and possibly that first sense of religious mystery. These are the forces of nature, the rise and fall of the waters, the necessity to somehow define against natural chaos, a sense of relation between the inner recesses of the mind and the natural order of things, which perhaps is one of the source areas of all religions. This was present, the ancestral memory was in that building in the bowing form, in its character, in its stance, in the way it stood on the landscape. Then I looked at it again and I said, but is this a mosque and in terms of Islamic typologies it seems to me to say more about tombs. It is a basic type form which one finds in variations in tomb architecture all the way in one direction towards North Africa — the square, or more or less square, base; the dome; some sort of squinch system or pendentive system; a mihrab; a very intriguing transition of spaces from outside to inside, and so on. Then, between these two thoughts there
was another one which interposed itself, which took my memory back to a number of fourteenth century monuments in Thailand, and I realised that I was also looking at the edge of another culture, which was a Buddhist and Hindu culture, combined together. I saw it in the mouldings and in the centralised geometry and in many other features of the building.

That set me to thinking about region, and the culture, that is a fringe between many interlacing, interflowing worlds, and what does this mean in the 20th century. It is clear that we are all talking about some of the same things. We are talking of the feeling of the loss of the sacral, about the feeling of a world populated by useful but alienating objects, about a certain kind of instrumentality, a power over things and people, which gives one a sort of freedom but with certainly a sort of loss. In the present world order we cannot go back and if we do go back we will sacrifice an enormous amount in the process and so the problem is how to live with the rift.

We have always lived with rifts and it is quite wrong to think there ever was a paradisical period. When it comes to architecture, it is coming back to what I call cultural excavation. It is an ability in architectural and artistic terms, always with an eye on absolute relevance to the present to go back through those levels and reincorporate them into a formal expression which is to do with our times. I do not think that it is automatically more easy to design a mosque than it is to design a skyscraper in regional terms but the effort is worth it and it should not lead to a pastiche of these past forms but to a penetration to the underlying principles of organisation.

A point that has been on my mind since looking carefully at the building by Louis Kahn in Dhaka is that it is a building which I understand is highly problematic in a societal sense here. I perfectly understand why even ideological blinkers might not permit one to experience the beauty of it. It will sit there, for a long time and it will gradually enmesh itself in the public imagination and certainly in many private imaginations. This is what the objects of culture do and then they translate and then transform and then turn into something else eventually, and that is what tradition really is. A tradition is a gradual accretion of wisdoms which are drawn upon and then projected forward into the new situations with the new adjustments that are necessary.

This brings me then to two points. One is to do with education and the other is to do with what I understand by universality and since the larger term is the more grand one it promises more epic opportunities. Let me start with education. What should education be doing? Education conceivably should be teaching people to think critically, it should also be, teaching people to feel, to sense, to see and to understand. I am immensely sympathetic to Geoffrey Bawa's observation that to learn architecture probably one of the best things is to go and look at a lot of architecture. One should ask always why did they do it this way? What is the general principle at work here? How can I draw on that? Is that relevant to me now? What can I do with that? How did it get there and so on. If you stock your mind with these things, vocabulary gradually looks after itself. That's what we call, the incorporation of a tradition. Schools are notorious at stopping people from doing that. Without getting into a squabble with fellow educationalists let me just say to any educationalist in the room that we should leave enough slack in the system for people to go and get their own education, give them a little help to do so, but don't impose on them too strongly. There are all the tools and knowledge that you need to be an architect but if architect means merely being a slave to doctrinaire concerns then the possibility of anything like a high architectural culture is liable to be extremely limited. If you want to blame that on occidental materialism I could suggest you think more carefully about it and look nearer home at the forces at work.

Now I come then to the larger question of a certain character of universality in the objects of art, in the quality of thought. Here I am simply stating a certain view of the world, a view of architecture which comes from years of being profoundly moved by certain great works. It has been part of my endeavour in the past four or five years to investigate the architectures of Asia, not as a scholar might but as a person of sensibility who wants to understand why things were the way they were and to see the underlying pattern. I take my mind back now to the profound mood I felt in front of the stupa at Sanchi or in the caves of Elephanta. These are works of extraordinary profundity which were involved with many levels of meaning, involved with making invisible forces tangible to a degree, involved with celebrating state, and the authority, the order, the drama of their times, the sense in other words of the order of society and crystallising it in monumental form. I am not about to put Louis Kahn on the same level as that but I will say that that ambition has been there in a deeper cultural sense.

What we have when we look at Louis Kahn's Assembly Building is not just an illustration of the politics of 1966, but a work which cuts through to the deeper strata of imagination. When one looks at the vernacular in its profound manifestations, that is when one is looking at it in unbowdlerised or unmanipulated form, one senses that presence as well. There is, I think, an animist present in great vernacular building, if I can use the word 'great' in connection with something which is sometimes rather humble. It has to do with that deep intuition of
the connection with nature. The problem for the regionalist is this: he is severed for ever from that connection and removes from his imagination the real difficulties of peasant life, but he nonetheless tries to reincorporate that aboriginal wisdom, those basic patterns of adjustment into the architecture of the present.

Leaving aside the functions of the architect working in the rural base, I wish to talk about the vernacular as inspiration. The 'vernacular as inspiration' is in so many words the common usage Professor Arkoun is talking about in formal terms. We are alienated from it and we cannot be within that system of conventions, nonetheless we can be inspired by it in an artistic sense. This then brings us back to the three levels and possibly to what is underneath the levels. We are at the fringe of one cultural realm, dare we call it the Islamic one with a series of elements, attitudes and forms which come with that. Then we are at a fringe of another world, the South-East Asian world, meeting in some curious, aqueous way in the deltas of the Ganges. If therefore a profound work is created, what other levels does it touch? Is it right just to speak of it in terms of regionalism or a region? I think there's a paradox about profoundly regional works, that is, that they manage to be absolutely right for that place in terms of climate, in terms of landscape, in terms of the elements of their moment, the place, the needs, but the profound work has a way, I think of touching a much deeper level, a substratum of some kind.

I see this in two ways, I see it in terms of the medium of architecture which to me is a medium which has, conceptually speaking, many levels to it. It has the outer casing of style and works through to the formal order of architecture, through geometry to space, to articulations to the fundamental levels of platform, walls, of sky, of landscape, and architectures use these in one way or another. There are within the medium of architecture itself, certain elemental conditions which can be translated into numerous worlds of meaning. A proper and deep understanding of architectural tradition, including something which does not exist yet, a proper history of Asian architectures, would show the way that certain of these basic elements keep emerging and they are cousins of one another in a different system. A true penetration reveals the way these deeper levels are interconnected with one another.

The other aspect of a certain quality of universality has to do with the spiritual presence of architecture. T.S. Eliot once said that great poetry communicates before it is understood. I would say the same about architecture. Great architecture communicates before it is understood. It has a capacity to grip us immediately through rhythm, arrangement, form, proportion and to touch some very deep chord in the tactile imagination, perhaps even in an ancestral memory of some sort. This quality, is if I can be so romantic, a certain timeless quality, that great works of art in tradition have. The problem as I see it is to release the imagination from doctrinaire concerns to the point where it can deal relevantly with the conditions of the present, and it is to try and reincorporate those timeless qualities in works of today. That is why when I began I spoke of a certain ability to find the regional condition of a place but also to look for those more lasting, universal characteristics of architecture.

Mohammed Arkoun

I would like to add some remarks about the question raised by Charles Correa. When we speak about Islamic architecture today we are using an ideological concept. We are not using at all a scientific, working concept. We are pushed by the great ideological force which has been imposed in Islamic societies in the last 20 years. There is this necessity to speak about these societies or what is related to these societies in term of Islamic reference. The Islamic revolution for example as it is referred to in the recent events in Iran since Khomeini, is a translation of this great ideological force which is working in all Islamic societies today. It seeks to translate everything happening in these societies through Islamic qualifications, Islamic language. We must be aware about this. I don't know how far it is clear in countries like Bangladesh or India, but in Pakistan it is already evident and when you come to the Arabic part of the Islamic world it is even more evident. We must make a distinction between Islam, when it is used as a historical, scientific reference and Islam when it is used as an ideological reference.

Our language in societies in the nineteen-fifties was totally different in its structure to that of today. This is an important distinction. When you refer to the special conditions, for example of Bangladesh, I think in history Islam didn't impose any constraints to the deep structures of societies Islam has spread in different societies like Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Arabic societies. Why? Because Islam left people free to create their culture, to create their environment according to the deepest level of their own culture. This worked in this manner until Islam was used as an ideological weapon to answer the aggressions of the West. Since the colonial period and the necessity to start wars of liberation in our societies we have been bound to refer to Islam as a flag to fight ideologically. We have been obliged by history to use Islam in that way and we have transformed Islam from its historical, ancient function, which was a religious function, to a political function, an ideological function.
This is what has happened but the architects working in Islam societies must be totally free from the ideological pressure of Islam and they must look deeper and that is why history is so important. They must look more to Islam as it worked, as it functioned during 14 centuries in societies as diverse as Indonesia or Morocco. This must be very clear, but unfortunately in our education of architects, in the schools of architecture, the history of Islam is not taught scientifically for the simple reason that it is an unknown land. Historians have not explored Islam in its productive, richest period, which is the first 5 centuries of the Hijra. We don’t know how to teach it? I know very well how Islam is taught in Western universities as well as all Islamic universities. This is very important.

Kazi Zahedul Hassan

I would like to talk about a matter which is of rather a superficial nature, a matter of form. As an architect practising in an Islamic country I find myself in a dilemma. What we have been talking about in the last few days are really two approaches to regionalism in architecture. The first is what might be called functional regionalism, which derives directly from the modern movement, this is very beautifully illustrated in the work of Raj Rewal. His work is not only functional to the full satisfaction of our great modern movement masters but it also is very close to our traditional architecture, or to the traditional architecture of India, in that it seems to recreate the overall formal quality which we have in the traditional architecture as well as some of the deep structure which we have been talking about. I see the same thing in some of Uttam Jain’s work in India and the philosophical position for this functional regionalism, has been stated quite adequately by William Curtis, but the majority of the work that falls in this category is again uniform, impersonal, standardised international architecture which has no specific identity. When I talk of identity I mean national identity rather than broad regional identity because today I think we are more interested in national identities than in a very broad, vague regional identity.

This leads to what I see as the second form of regionalism, which I will call formal regionalism, this is obtained by adding formal quotations to a functional building. The demand or the need for this type of architecture has not been explicitly mentioned in this conference but there is a strong undercurrent which was quite evident when someone said Louis Kahn was trying to create great architecture, not regional architecture. This is a remarkable statement which I understand to be the speaker’s preference for a regional architecture, within quotes, rather than a great architecture. He is saying, give me regional architecture even if it is of a lower quality than great architecture. This is also evident in Kamil Khan Muntaz’s proposal for a new type of architectural school which will have a stronger relationship with our building traditions and less interaction with western models of architectural education. William Curtis has called this ‘light-play regionalism’. That is a very understandable phrase because if we are trying to quote forms either from the past or from the vernacular architecture the whole thing becomes arbitrary and it is light play. There are of course two poles in this. There is the nameless, what we see all over the Islamic world now, formal quotations of a very low order but there is also this formal regionalism of a higher order and to give an example I would like to refer to Geoffrey Bawa’s work. My question relates to Geoffrey Bawa’s work, which is functional and also has non-functional items in it, like carved capitals. I also want to refer to Abdel Wahed el-Wakil’s work in Jeddah which revives traditional Egyptian architecture in a totally different situation. What is the feeling about this type of formal regionalism?

William Curtis

I would not quite put it in that way as a distinction between functional regionalism on the one hand and formal on the other. The issue is not unrelated to all the things we’ve been talking about and maybe we can bring these grandiose conceptions down to the strategy of design, because surely the issue always in architecture is the difference between a work which is very light and merely arbitrary and a work which is in a very deep sense appropriate on all levels and which avoids arbitrariness. That seems to be distinction. We can look at this along a spectrum, there will be certain works that are able to penetrate in a region, in the way Barragan did in Mexico. He understood all the basic principles of order from the architecture of his region, and I believe that in quite a different region Geoffrey Bawa is trying to do this in his work in South-East Asia. I really think that some of his works may be seminal, because tropical South-East Asia, is waiting for some sign. Most of the best regionalisms which have happened so far have been desert regionalisms. The most interesting ones are in India and in the Middle-East and even in Mexico and they are hot and dry. Geoffrey Bawa is one of the few people to really have got under the surface of the hot, wet region and there have been a few other touches here and there in that direction. The issue surely should not be made one of form versus function but form and function working together. I think the edge of your question finally is at what point can identifying features, images in a very real associational sense play a part without falling flat on their face?
A very inventive architect may succeed in having an allusive level in architecture, a very legible characteristic in his architecture that is easily understood by all and yet keep functionality, and have a strong sense of form. One should not exclude that possibility, and one of the reasons Geoffrey Bawa’s parliament in Sri Lanka, is successful as a communicating symbol is because he is lucky enough to be in an area where the same basic house form occurs from the very small to the very big, so you have a convention which is in place. He has used that convention sensibly and made it into a big house, the Government house. It’s a simple mood that a building can communicate and yet have those associated characteristics. It depends on what is in place in the culture already in any one region, if there are conventions that are very clear you can work with them, if they are not clear you have a more difficult task, of invention. A number of architects in their different ways, are trying to say this too. The point with the history part of the equation is to get under the surface. If you do that, then why not have at certain points a degree of allusion, but it is when it turns into the total faking of a culture, and the reduction of the world to just signs then we are in the area of complete cheapness again. We are possibly even in the area, as Kenneth Frampton would perhaps agree, of the new kind of instrumentality, of just information, not culture, just bombardment of information. There is a danger to cultures across the world of this kind of reduction. I wouldn’t put it the way you do, but I think the edge of the question is very well put.

Nawzuddin Ahmed

Paul Rudolph’s comments on regionalism in architecture were very illuminating but at the same time it was very disquieting for us to be enlightened about what he feels regionalism stands for. How do we define regionalism? It remains vague and obscure and to me it appears that the term is arbitrary and elastic.

Enamul Haque

How did we land in this discussion on Islamic architecture? What is an Islamic architecture? What are the features of Islamic architecture? This was not very clear to me because I understood the scope of the seminar to be the architecture and the role of architects in Southern Asia. We must not forget that Islam when it arrived in Bangladesh was already half a millennium old and according to Professor Arkoun Islam was most productive in the first 5 centuries and it was declining in architectural terms. I would request the Aga Khan Award for Architecture to organise a special conference on what we understand and would like to understand by Islamic architecture in a particular region and then we would be able to discuss in a meaningful way what is the legacy of Islamic architecture in a particular area.

Regionalism is something that has intrigued me. As far as I understand this word it cannot mean anything else but a horizontal stratification. The changing connotation of region has intrigued us all and I think we are far from reaching a consensus. Lastly I would like to compliment architect Muzharul Islam for presenting the rural picture to this assembly of architects. To supplement his presentation I would say that the profession of architects is as old as civilisation. We have literature of many centuries from before the Christian era, in many languages and related to many regions on which we can draw for inspiration.
I will not try to retrace the sequence of events nor present a summary of the last three days of deliberation. I will instead try to define regionalism with the aid of different papers presented here. I will do so by arranging it on three levels — first, on the level of concept, mostly with the help of architectural historians and critics among us. Secondly on the level of 'modus operandi', that is how practising architect see and build 'regional architecture'. Thirdly I will look at regionalism as a solution to the specific problems of this region through the factual papers presented here.

Firstly, on the level of concept we find regionalism identified as an immunological system, a series of decisions taken before a building is built, a method of rejecting or accepting models and solutions. This is important since architecture unlike culture cannot react to new additions, there is no built-in control for evaluating and accepting or rejecting in architecture and regionalism offers this self-discipline.

For Kenneth Frampton, 'critical regionalism' is a group of architects representing a regional constituency and like country lawyers producing architecture for a set regional constituency. For him they will act as pockets of resistance against the onslaught of value-free internationalism.

For William Curtis, 'authentic regionalism' is a dynamic architectural solution drawing inspiration from deep regional structures but also 'international' and relevant to all times and societies. He differentiates regionalism from purely vernacular. The architecture should be non-arbitrary and contemporary and not a pastiche of styles and forms.

Practising architects did not try to define regionalism but tried to say what it means to them. Presumably they do not question the validity of the concept even when a precise definition cannot be attached to it. It is interesting to note that Paul Rudolph started the proceeding of this seminar by saying, 'I am not against regionalism' and 'some buildings are more regional than others'. He identified building types which have to have regional character such as housing and those which are difficult to regionalise such as an airport or modern technical facilities. He identified forces that work for regionalism, for example culture, social needs, habits and norms and those which work against it, for example technology and automobiles.

Habib Fida Ali sees little contradiction between regionalism and so-called 'International style' if we do not see them only as 'styles'. The content and the rationale is the same and the specific demand of a specific site in a specific culture will produce regional architecture!

Kamil Khan Mumtaz, sees regionalism as a link between modern architects and 'traditional' builders — a school of thought aspiring for a new type of architectural training and professional practice. His ideas and those of B.V. Doshi are almost parallel, both demand changes in curriculum and practice before we can link up with traditional roots and produce genuine regional architecture.

Uttam Jain sees the biological reciprocity between man and nature as the raison d'etre for regionalism. We operate within this interdependency and if we acknowledge it we will produce relevant forms.

Most intriguing has been Romi Khosla's assertion that the most important tool for the architect is a 'consciousness' as against western rationalism. He does not mention 'regionalism' once in his paper. It is more intriguing since he ends with a quotation from Tagore. As Professor Ali said Tagore was a completely western Bengali and the 'consciousness' in that poetry is European.

The 'definitions' and 'positions' can be tested against the factual papers presented here. The paper of Abu H. Imamuddin et al. on community mosques in Dhaka was a random selection of vernacular corner mosques. Though we were touched by the spirit of community participation we were left 'uncomfortable' in the words of Hasan-Uddin Khan. How do we deal
with them? Is ‘regionalism’ merely architecture of the people? Are these edifices, in their unfinished state, what the community want? Are they representative of the community and not just the spirit of co-operation and religious sentiments? Do these answer the complexities of our urban scene and have a series of ad-hoc decisions resulted in a fruitful and desired mosque form? As the paper concludes, in the urban scene design and building has gone beyond local competence. Architects ought to play a role, taking into account the complexities of the urban situation and vouch for the end product.

The problems of this region were identified in the papers of Professor Ali and Professor Muktabir. The abject poverty of the rural areas may have clouded the architectural and planning issues but primarily they are land management and reorganisation of rural homestead. We were all at doubts as to what architects can do, what contributions we can make and many felt we can do more harm than good in the rural setting. It is not only urban bias in our training and curriculum but also the problems in rural areas are not ‘architectural’. On another level, the problems that have been identified by architects and experts may not always converge with those identified by the rural folk — where we see a ‘house’ they may see only ‘land’.

This self-doubt will not keep us away from rural or small ‘mofussil’ towns. Architects are preparing plans for re-organising and re-developing ‘upazilas’, a thought that terrifies Paul Rudolph.

In our discussion over these days, we saw a general lack of precision, mainly due to the under-development of architectural vocabulary, amorphous semantics and definitions.

We saw past in ‘Architecture’ and the present in ‘Buildings’. This perennial fixation tilts everything in favour of past edifices and robs us of critical insight when viewing contemporary forms. It is like comparing an ‘urn’ with a ‘chamber pot’. Debates ended by making reference to the glorious past but without giving direction towards workable, evaluative methods to measure present-day buildings.

Though we did not evolve an agreed definition of ‘regionalism’ perhaps the problem is not definitional. We generally agreed that ‘regionalism’ exists. It might not be apparent to one who is operating within it but is obvious to an outsider. We sometimes mistake culture to be a fragile flower, which needs nourishing but it is a dynamic and living body of thought and values. It is also hard, intractable, imposing a set of rules for us. It mediates and we do not and cannot design anything we want. We operate within the rules of what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and these values are essentially cultural.
Charles Correa, during the closing remarks, invited Syed Zaigham Jaffery to expand on his proposal made earlier, for the establishment of a South Asian Regional Federation of the Institutes of Architects Syed Zaigham Jaffery said such a co-operative effort between the architects of the region could be established to exchange expertise, scholars, teachers and students within the region. It could avoid duplication of research effort, share common experiences and enhance regional co-operation through establishment of regional banks of craftsmen, architects, and expertise in various aspects of the profession. From this pool all the countries of South Asia could benefit. Such an association or forum, Mr. Jaffery, pointed out could also become a pressure group for the general improvement of the profession in the region as a whole. It could also act as a promoter of the role of architects in national development and also urge legislative protection for the recognition of the title "architect" in the entire region. Although Mr. Jaffery favoured such a forum on the institute level, he said senior architects from the region could individually form the initial core group to launch the programme with the active support of the national institutes.

The initial meeting of the group consisting of Charles Correa, Uttam Jain, Romi Khosla (from India), Muzharul Islam, Rabiul Hussain, and Shamshul Wares (from Bangladesh), Geoffrey Bawa (from Sri Lanka), Kamil Khan Mumtaz and Syed Zaigham Jaffery (from Pakistan) met in Dacca to formulate the modalities of the proposal. Said Zulficar, Secretary General of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture was also present and offered to sponsor on behalf of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture the first meeting of the group in Fatehpur Sikri, India in March, 1986. This meeting was held and as its first project the South Asia forum agreed to set up a two-week workshop of students, architects and craftsmen in Lahore in early 1987.
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