

# Zamindar Houses of the Colonial Period: General Delineation of House Form, Spatial Organization and Design Considerations, a Case Study in Dhaka city

**Abontika Sara Israt**

Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

E-mail: [abontikasara@gmail.com](mailto:abontikasara@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The development of architecture has occurred with rapid changes from every socio-economical perspective in Bangladesh. In these versatile spectrums of colonial architecture, Zamindar houses were the striking subject in both of local and European concepts. The concept of Zamindar had evoked a new dimension by the 'Permanent Settlement Act-1793', which for the first time confirmed the ownership of land by Zamindars in Colonial Period. This paper present the discussion of the architecture adopted in Zamindar houses of Dhaka city in a particular framework of time, context and form which will help to study the development of Zamindar house and its architecture in a wider aspect of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** *Zamindar house, Spatial organization, Design principles, Cultural heritage, Conservation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Multiple styles of architecture were developed over the lengthy history of Bangladesh under a diverse range of power domains and cultural influence. The colonial era followed the mode of forming a colonial culture as well as architecture where Bengal faced a dramatic shift their culture with the arrival of Europeans in the Seventeenth century. A process of change began to take place in societies and a new class of feudalistic structure<sup>1</sup> was evolved upon

the dependent-dominant relationship between the European and the native.

*Zamindars* were the landlords in the colonial era. The *Zamindari* system was a way of ensuring that taxes were collected from peasants. The taxes were then handed over to British authorities with the Zamindar keeping a portion for himself. During the Mughal era, and after the permanent Settlement Act of 1793<sup>2</sup>, a great many changes were made that played a significant role in the socio-cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> Trade based elite and government-servant base middle class evolved during colonial period

<sup>2</sup> 'Chartered of Landed Aristocracy In Bengal' Regulation 1 22 March, 1793  
Mamun, Muntasir (Ed. revised) (2002), 'Chirasthayee Bandobasto o Bangali Samaz' Mowla Brothers, Dhaka, p. 73.

development of Bangladesh. These changes are still evident in various Zamindar houses, built in the British Colonial Period.

The Zamindar houses are still remarkable for their functional plans, structural system and aesthetic compositions; the Greco-Roman pediments, the Italian Renaissance style, the Roman and Venetian type of rounded arches and windows, a classical Roman dome, the double shuttered, wooden doors, parapets pinnacles of sculptured human and bird forms, and stairways of wooden balustrades. All of these are European concepts which were adapted to local climate and culture. Other elements like the *chattries* pointed arches, *jali* works in plasters and oriel windows are remarkable features from Mughal and other local traditions. Buddhists' influences are also found in some trefoil arches used as ornamentation. This paper only investigates aspects of the architectural dynamic structure as typical of British colonial Dhaka division of Bangladesh.

The river Buriganga, rightfully at the heart of the revolutionary Puran Dhaka with its bold existence of flowing freely and its abundance of greenery, was once the epitome of Puran Dhaka's philharmonic-orchestral living. While hiking the mohallas of Shutrapur and Farashganj (French for market) one notes the neoclassical style structures of French Rococo architecture lining the river. The mystical structures and mosques, some as old as 400 years, have left their mark of Mughal and the colonial era on the landscape of Puran (old) Dhaka. These buildings include; the Bibi ka Rauza (a splendid mosque, unique because it is named after a lady which is uncommon and extraordinary), Boro Bari and the Ruplal House, a 19th century mansion and during 1888 the dance hall of this majestic house was used to host a ball in honor of Lord Dufferin, the viceroy of India, during his visit to Dhaka.

Indeed, there are countries keenly aware of their cultural past as they protect their heritage sites with avid interest. Modernization and rebuilding activities are not allowed to infringe upon the sanctity of heritage sites. They fervently try to retain the original character of historical sites for heritage lovers and tourists. Recent observations of the Zamindar houses clearly show an active process of decay and destruction primarily because of unplanned

growth, random alterations, over-densification and poor maintenance resulting in dilapidated conditions. Proper restoration and sustainable conservation strategies are needed to protect the built environment from further decay and damages.

## AREAS OF STUDY

The main theme of this study, Zamindar houses in the Dhaka city, is to present a hypothetically process of developing a full-fledged restoration and conservation plan. These are the prime reasons to select Dhaka's 'colonial city' as the spatial context of the study. In order to conduct this paper, a detailed study has been made of three Zamindar houses as follows:

The Ruplal House is located in the south-eastern corner of old Dhaka near the bank of the river Buriganga. An embankment called Buckland bund begins from here and extends towards Imamganj in the north east. The Sadarghat terminal is just within 500 yards from embankment.

Rebuti Mohan House is situated in the Sutrapur area of Old Dhaka on Rebati Mohan Das Road. This Sutrapur Zamindar 's mansion was constructed on one acre of land by the Hindu landlord, Rebati Mohan Das, in the early 20th century. The building contains about thirty-five rooms of varying dimensions. There is another three-storied block on its northern side. After the demise of Rebati Mohon Das his elder son, Satyendra Kumar Das, retained the ancestral Rebati Bhavan; his younger son, Hemendra Kumar Das, constructed a new house on the north side. This new house was named Das Lodge and contains about the same number of rooms.

Shahid Samsul Alam Hostel is the Kabi Nazrul Government College. It was originally established as Mohasania Madrasah by a grant from the Mohsin Fund in 1874 and was modeled after Calcutta's Alia Madrasah. It was known as Dhaka Madrasah and in 1915 it was converted into Dhaka High Madrasah. In the following year its Anglo-Persian department was separated and became the Dhaka Government Muslim High School. With the establishment of the University of Dhaka in 1921, the school was

upgraded into a college and renamed the Islamic Intermediate College. It continued to operate as a school-cum-college until 1968 when the college section was detached to form a new institution named Government Islamia College Dhaka. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the college was renamed as Kabi Nazrul Government College in 1972, and in the same year, it was upgraded to a Degree College.

Zamindar houses are found scattered throughout the colonial Dhaka division. The houses were mainly developed on the estate-location of different *Zamindari*, either in town or in the remote rural areas.

## GENERAL DELINEATION OF ZAMINDAR HOUSES

The Zamindar house consists of several houses, reservoir, landscape elements and open spaces arranged within the territorial boundary or compound. A. D. King remarked, 'The enclosed ground area containing a single dwelling is termed as compound' (King, 1976). So it's been observed that Zamindar houses, whether in a rural or urban setting, contain

inter compounds. The field samples indicate the spatial arrangement is cellular in nature. The main structure stands at the center, often having inside courtyards and some are found to include a detached pavilion or bungalow structures.

## Compound

For this study the details of compounds are being discussed in relation to space and form. Most of the Zamindar house complexes were constructed on the bank of rivers for easy accessibility through water ways and in an urban context a preference to good road connectivity

The compound of all of these Zamindar houses (Figure 2, 3) provides the scenario of two distinct parts, the outer and the inner house. These two parts were generated according to the necessity of social, political, cultural and psychological essence. The outer house is generally dominated by the male while the inner house or the *andarmahal*, which offers more privacy, is especially demarcated as the female area. Most of the compound areas are constructed with entry, courts, landscape.



Figure 1:  
Map of Bangladesh showing the colonial Dhaka division (left) and Dhaka city and its surroundings (right).  
Source: Survey of Bangladesh (Source: <http://www.banglapedia.org>)



Figure 2:  
Compound plan of Rebutimohan House, Dhaka  
Source: Department of Archeology, GOB

Legend:

- 1 Public court/ front lawn
- 2 Semi-public court
- 3 Privet court
- 4 Service court



Figure 3:  
Rebutimohan House, Dhaka

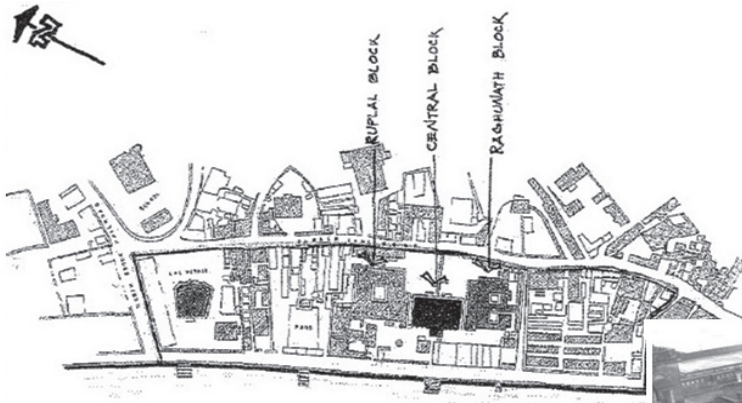


Figure 4:  
Ruplal House, Dhaka, has been established on the bank of river Buriganga, Plan (left) Arial view (right)  
Source: Department of Archeology, GOB



The cardinal direction of these houses had some major considerations; the Ruplal House, Dhaka, has been established on the bank of river and the Rebutimohan house and the Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel are mainly connected with the road communication.

The large Zamindar house compounds are found to contain several permanent and non-permanent structures. The lawn, temple, outer house (Figure 10) court (Figure 05, 06, 07), living unit, kitchen, services, lavatories (Figure 08) are the common components within the compounds arranged in different ways.



Figure 5:  
 Court of Ruplal House,  
 Dhaka



Figure 6:  
 Court of  
 Rebutimohan  
 House, Dhaka



Figure 7:  
 Court of Shahid  
 Samsul Alam Boy's  
 Hostel, Dhaka



Figure 8:  
 Adjacent lavatory,  
 Rebutimohan House,  
 Dhaka



Figure 9:  
 Out house block of  
 Rebutimohan House,  
 Dhaka

## House block

In these compounds of the Zamindar houses, there are various types of house blocks which are varied in size and shape depending on their different functional needs. The outer house, the main living unit, is the prime block that is used by the Zamindars. In addition, most of the Zamindar house block consists of; an 'atithisala' for relatives and guests, a portico (Figure 12), a hall/lounge, various bedrooms (Figure 14), a dining area, the bathing area, toilet, verandahs, stairs, corridors (Figure 13), terrace, and other household activity spaces.

It's been observed from the field survey that both the Rebutimohan and Ruplal houses have identifying porticos (Figure 12). The portico is a typical colonial feature found in these Zamindar houses. It gives the sense of access and accommodates the hackney carriage or motor cars. Porticos are usually rectangularly shaped and supported by columns, beams or arches. The hall or lounge is the main space for the entertaining guests and for official works. It is situated in the outer section of the house. Bedrooms are the resting place or sleeping area of the occupants in the Zamindar houses. The Verandahs and terraces are the intermediate spaces between the rooms and the courtyard or exterior



Figure 10:  
 Ground floor plan of Rebutimohan House, Dhaka. Source: Department of Archeology, GOB



Figure 12:  
Portico of Rebutimohan  
House, Dhaka



Figure 13:  
Corridor at Ruplal House,  
Dhaka



Figure 14:  
Rooms at Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's hostel,  
Dhaka

and are usually colonnaded or an arcade. The Rebutimohan house has several terraces connected with each other at different levels. The corridor provides a sense of privacy in Zamindar houses, and are used for circulation in both lower and upper story. Stair cases are one of the indispensable parts of multistoried Zamindar houses. It is found from the survey that all these courtyard type houses have adjacent staircases placed near the court for vertical movement. Some of these staircases are made of timber with brick or steel joist supports.

### Service block

Generally the service block is placed in the rear of the Zamindar houses. It is observed that the large courtyard houses have a service court within the compound (Figure 10, 11). The bungalow style Zamindar houses have arranged the service block in the backyard of the compound (Figure 15). Most of the service blocks consists of kitchen, food store, fuel store and servants' rooms. All these are grouped and located in the female domain area of the house. A chimney is a common feature for the outlet of smoke from the kitchen. There is always a water source, an *indara*, placed near the kitchen. An attached kitchen is rarely found in the Zamindar houses that were researched.

Besides the above functional block in Zamindar houses there are several other spaces like the dancing hall, a library, a treasury, a garage etc. In case of religious spaces, the identical features of the compound layouts under study are similar for both Hindu and Muslim Zamindar houses.

### Elements of Zamindar houses

The Zamindar houses of colonial period still contain grandeur columns, decorative arch, arched opening, pediment, crest and other decorative elements. These elements are the integrated part of the buildings' form which is extensively used with grandness and a variety of decorations from the early stage of development until the colonial period. As the style matured it became less in volume and quantity.

The key structural elements are the wall, arch, column, dome, vault, lintel, rafter, and bracket. All these elements are not only used as structure but also are quite decorative.

From sample collection surveyed, the walls of the Zamindar houses are found as load bearing brick masonry. Usually the thickness of these walls varies from 15 to 20 inches. Walls are usually finished with



Figure 15:  
 Brick wall, Ruplal house,  
 Dhaka



Figure 16:  
 Semi-circular arch with iron frame,  
 Ruplal house, Dhaka



Figure 17:  
 Venetian arch with iron frame,  
 Rebutimohan House, Dhaka

lime plaster both inside and outside. A definite type of common and English bonds was developed and practiced in the walls (Figure 15). Different types of arches have been used in these Zamindar house. The round arch, semi-circular arch (Figure 16), segmented arch, trefoil arch, multi foil arch, Venetian arch (Figure 17), and flat arch etc. are found in the study area. The arcade supported either by brick

walls or columns or piers make the façade illustrated and void. From field survey, the top of the arches are filled with decorative glazed and iron works, which are found at Rebutimohan house and Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel, Dhaka.

During the colonial period columns added a new dimension to Zamindar houses. Doric, ionic,



Figure 18:  
 Corinthian Column, Ruplal  
 house, Dhaka



Figure 19:  
 Pre cast steel column,  
 Rebutimohan House



Figure 20:  
 Decorative column, Shahid  
 Samsul Alam Boy's hostel,  
 Dhaka



Figure 21:  
 Wooden column,  
 Rebutimohan House,  
 Dhaka

Corinthian (Figure 18), composite and hybrid style of column are found in Zamindar houses for both structural and decorative purposes. Sometimes pre-cast steel (Figure 19) and wooden columns (Figure 21) were used in the houses.

A flat roof construction system had been introduced during the colonial period where rafters and beams were used to cover the span in Zamindar houses. It is popularly known as *ganga-yamuna system*<sup>3</sup>. Generally the rafters are made of steel I- section joist (Figure 22). The timber purlins are placed upon the rafters to support the roof tiles and lime concrete.

The design elements of these Zamindar houses are, the plinths, doors, windows, steps, balustrades, parapet, spout, railing, grille. All these elements are assembled for different desires of purposes.

Usually the plinths are high and perceptible. The height varies from one foot to five foot above ground level. It is observable that the plinths are projected from the main surface of the wall and are decorated with moldings, horizontal bands, floral and rural (Figure 21) and occasionally rustication running all through the plinth.

Various sizes and shapes of doors are found in the study area. The sizes vary from 3'0" x 7'0" to 10'0". Commonly double, wooden shutters are used for these doors (Figure 22). Sometimes single planked, battened, paneled, louvered, ordinary shutters are observed in the study area. The doors exhibit ornamental panels of decorative wood curving and various colors.

Windows are the openings in walls used for light and ventilation. Usually the windows of flat headed or arched type are supported by the lintels, steel angles or brick arches. French windows with flat or semi-circular arch headed and bifurcated tracoidal type windows (Figure 24) are a stylish feature seen in the survey. Double layer openings and Palladian windows with triangular pediment (Figure 21) are also found in these Zamindar houses.

Some decorative elements of these Zamindar houses made them more classic and attractive. It is been observed that the pediment, kiosk, vase, corner, and sculpture are prominent elements.

Pediments of Greek, Roman and Renaissance architecture are incorporated into these examples of Zamindar houses. The pediments are usually placed



Figure 22: Steel rafter & flat bar purlin, in both Rebutimohan house (left) and Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's hostel (right), Dhaka

<sup>3</sup> Local craftsman used this term. Ganga is used for the main support (rafter) and Yamuna is for secondary support or purlin.



Figure 21:  
Floral window,  
Ornamented plinth,  
Rebutimohan house



Figure 22:  
Arch headed door,  
Rebutimohan house



Figure 23:  
Palladian window with pediment,  
Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's hostel



Figure 24:  
Tracoidal Rebutimohan house

on the portico and parapet level (Figure 25). Both the triangular and round pediments are decorated with racking cornice, molding and other decorative bands. This ornamentation is popular in Zamindar houses because this crown like architectural element reflected the royal image of the Zamindar class.

The projection and molding are used at floor levels to define the floors. These are seen at the plinth, floor and at roof tops (Figure 26) and act as cornices. Carved moldings are enriched with rosettes, buds and flowers, swinging creepers, flower with tendrils and other floral decoration. Also beautiful grille works with iron bar (Figure 27) are found, which enrich the features of Zamindar houses.

## Zoning and spatial arrangement

Based on a review of literature, this study has identified the function and zoning of the Zamindar houses. The concept of zoning for these Zamindar houses are; *kachari* (outer house) and *andor* (inner house), front and back, male and female domain, serve and service, built area and open area, clean and dirty area, circulation and linkage.

The *kachari* or *baithak khana* or the outer house are always kept separated both physically and conceptually from the *andor* (inner house). The functional and symbolic value of the activities, use



Figure 25:  
Occidental ornamented Pediment



Figure 26:  
Projection at crown



Figure 27:  
Ornamented

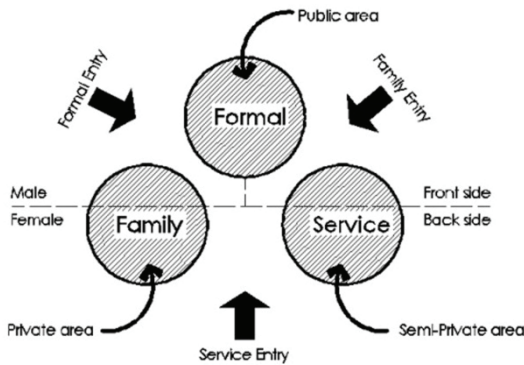


Figure 28: Zoning aspects in Zamindar houses

and culture are the determining factors to developing the outer house and inner house of Zamindar as well as the zoning. The main entrance of the outer house is enhanced by monumental columns, which gives grandeur in its disposition. The *kachari* or outer house areas are defined as the formal or public part of the house. The courtyard located within this part acts as public courts which possess more accessibility and less privacy. The inner house is identified as the private zone of the contained courtyard houses. This inner court shields many domestic and family activities related to privacy from the outsider. It is synonymous with the informal court or the female domain.

The service court is usually placed at the rear; this follows the layout of the rustic houses surveyed. The backyards are mainly used as services areas while these spaces are sometimes utilized as the private domain of the female members of the families. It is to be mentioned that there are some transitional spaces found in these houses, which gives a degree of privacy and creates a sequence of space in the houses. The public court leading to the private court ends in a space with maximum privacy. At the same time the hall rooms can be marked as a controlling mechanism between the private and public zones.

The front and back of the Zamindar houses are determined by two parameters, physical and climatic. The physical front of the house indicates accessibility to the site. The climatic front refers to the direction of summer wind that flows from the south and south-east in this region. Built south of the road, the access in both Rebutimohan house (Figure 2)

and Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel made the frontal space south with an outer hall. The services, stores, servant's quarters are identified as the back of the house.

The residential expectations of the Zamindar class are determined partly by the norms of the rural culture and partly by the techno-economic perspectives. This conflict and collaboration between the local tradition and western philosophy forced the Zamindar class to assume dualism in their lifestyle. The permeability into the private areas is determined by the degree of relationship of the visitor with the internal users. The sense of privacy is also synonymous with the demarcation of male and female domain. In general women have universal admittance to the internal family courts whereas men have only selective admittance. Privacy, male-female distinction, segregation of functions are long lasting values and symbols which are found expressed in the demarcation of different zones. In this region, females have generally been kept and confined within the boundaries of the house where their court is their breathing space of their universe. Therefore, the inner court meets more socio-cultural purposes to provide interactions as well as privacy rather than other physical demands.

The open areas in Zamindar houses are several times larger than the buildup areas. The courts, gardens, and tanks take up most of the space in the compounds (Figure 2). In the studied compound plans, a competitive observation shows that the built areas of the houses occupied a vast open area. The openness and grandeur of Zamindar house represent their splendor of power. It is mentioned that the compounds of these houses are known according to the number of the buildings situated inside the boundary.

From the field survey it is been observed that, the circulation and linkage pattern of most of the rooms are arranged beside the verandah or double loaded corridors. A continuous verandah running around the court set the access primarily from the court to verandah and secondly verandah to rooms. Stairs are well connected with the verandah for vertical circulation. Sometimes shaded corridor and bridges are used to connect the different masses and functions. Bridges are used to connect the different spaces in Rebutimohan house and Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel.

## Design considerations and space organization

The Zamindar houses are the distinctive architectural development in the soil of deltaic Bangladesh having a hidden matrix of culture and customs. The Zamindar desired to establish their own thoughts and preferences in the form of these permanent structures and using them to show their social status and power within society with the economical stabilities of their estates.

The design considerations depend on several factors which guided development and environment. The physical, socio-cultural and emotional essence along with the economy, environment, communication, available technology and surrounding context had impact on the formation of the houses.

Environment and culture clearly influenced the Zamindar house design. The planning strategy, scale, outlook and style of the house complex depended on the attitude, prejudice and capability of the owners. The layout pattern of the houses also reflects the attitude, cultural beliefs and prejudice of the Zamindars. In general, the open-to-the-sky court promotes discharge of summer heat from the structure and simultaneously permits sunlight to illuminate the darker interior areas. As well as the high ceilings, construction techniques associated with ventilators were used to facilitated a cool environment in summer. The window openings are kept at minimum distance from the floor to allow sufficient amount of air flow. A great many technological advances of the colonial period influenced the design considerations of Zamindar houses.

Religion and culture have been an integral part of the domestic architecture of Bangladesh. The main religions practiced in this region are Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism. All of which favored the inward, defensive courtyard form in their philosophies of dwelling design. From the field survey, it is been observed that the sense of enclosure and privacy were highlighted in the Hindu courtyard houses as noted in the Ruplal and Rebutimohan houses. Here the orientation of different spaces in the house is very important. As an example, the temple must located in the northern area and its courtyard is generally distinguished by a *tulsi* (basil) used for religious ritual. Though the Muslim Zamindar houses bear a resemblance of the private and secluded courtyard form, there are some basic differences from Hindu

Zamindar house that arise from Muslim religious ideologies. Unlike the Hindus, Muslims houses are not so rigid about orientation. The Muslim house contains multiple entrances separating the male-female domains in the house.

The principles of space arrangement depend on the geometric or organic pattern. It is observed that the plan of the Zamindar house blocks reflects occidental geometry or organic development to accommodate the needs and arrangement of functions. The organic style plan is observed at the compound plan of Ruplal House (Figure 11). Proportion is the prime concern of the renaissance building which followed the Vitruvius, Alberti and especially Palladian systems of proportion. The Ruplal house has good proportionate rooms arranged in plan. In case of indoor-outdoor relationship, plenty of openings like series of windows and verandahs in front living spaces create the scope of void in mass in a relationship with the nature.

It has been observed that the façade of the Zamindar houses was treated in an European manner in most cases. Especially the front façade of the houses or the outer houses were in the European style. In Shahid Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel, a blend of hybrid styles is observed and the rear of the house bears a simple and plain facade. The front façade is grandiose in scale with use of decorative orders, beautiful arch opening, pediments and other renaissance details. The front facades are treated with double height colonnades, lavish porticos, large pediments. In the organization of vertical and horizontal members, creation of void, and the bold projection of the roof mass give the Zamindar houses an imperial and colonial grandeur. The central axis regards the symmetry as a theoretical requirement in design that was practiced and widely followed in the development of Zamindar houses.

The development in road and water ways contributed in many ways to design considerations and planning. This is especially true in the completion of the railways. Not only did it put Dhaka closer to Kolkata but also generated intense collaboration in society and culture. The developed transportation encouraged the local Zamindars to frequently travel abroad and thus gain new ideas for importing materials like glass, marble, cast iron details.

The context of a house setting depends on the location, availability of transportation and security concern. Both the Rebutimohan house and Shahid

Samsul Alam Boy's Hostel are surrounded by roads and boundaries. On the other hand, the Ruplal house is located in the south-eastern corner of old Dhaka near the bank of the river Buriganga and on the north side is Farashganj road.

## Stages of development

The transformation of the Zamindar houses was derived in two phases of development. The early phase or pre-colonial architectural, is a tradition of Mughal and Sultanate; the later phase is

transformation and development during colonial period.

The fortified, secured and apparently solid houses were built by the Zamindars in the early phase (Figure 29). But during the colonial period the Zamindars were highly influenced with the bungalows of the British and its occidental elements which were boldly present in the houses studied. The blending of introvert and extrovert characters, lavish use of colonial elements, and grandeur scale all dominated the planning and imaging the house (Figure 30, 31, 32) during the second phase of development.



Figure 29:  
The oldest part of Ruplal House, was built by an Armenian Zamindar, Aratun, in the 1700s



Figure 30:  
Front Rebutimohan  
View of Shahid  
Samsul Alam Boy's  
Hostel



Figure 31:  
Front view of Ruplal house



Figure 32:  
Front view of Rebutimohan house

These contributed to a variety of results when included in the plan and layout, like enclosed and detached courtyard house or the composite bungalow style. This contribution continued from 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The gradual declines in prospects of *Zamindari* due to various political and socio-economical issues seriously effected the feudal culture and lifestyle along with the architecture. This stage started from the beginning and lasted to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently the decorative use of tiles, lime mortar lattice work, glass and glaze works emerged in the declining stage of previous style. The remarkable layout evolved in this stage is the compact and condensed type of Zamindar houses.

## CONCLUSION

All the samples from the field survey describe the development of distinctive and diversified house-forms under the patronage of Zamindars in colonial Dhaka Division. In this urban context, the houses have been constructed beside the road and river for easily accessibility. Various zoning aspects of the houses are guided by many components, which made a comfortable compound. It is observed that the ordering principals of Zamindar houses derived from traditional architecture evolved and resolved through occidental values towards a new formation during the colonial period. Zoning and space organization reflect the traditional mode while façade articulation, detailing and ornamentation of the Zamindar houses are mostly derived from the European origin.

From the study, it is ascertained that the architecture of the Zamindar house is a fusion of occidental form with oriental nature of spaces. Zamindar houses studied are prominent examples of secular structures in the architectural history of Bangladesh. The present research shows that the core norms and values of the rustic hut has been transformed and developed during the colonial era into new forms of permanent architecture which include European style elements and aesthetic which was popularly known as 'zamindar bari' during the colonial era. The space organization, expression of form, construction technology and stages of the development of the house-form along with all architectural principles and pattern have been considered to identify the typology of the Zamindar houses as a significant local architectural archetype.

This paper has been conducted to make a comprehensive and interpretative analysis on the

evolutionary process of architecture of Zamindar houses in respect to social, economic, political and cultural contexts of the region and their influences. The study also tries to show the gradual development of the Zamindar houses. The architecture of Zamindar house has emerged and flourished in the soil of whole colonial Bengal including present Bangladesh after the 'Permanent Settlement Act 1793'. The development of this architecture was patronized by local elite Zamindars and continued through different phases until 1950s. In the light of architectural phenomena, the development of Zamindar houses clearly denotes the socio-cultural and political environment of prevailing society which achieved the expression of contemporary art, aesthetics, techniques and philosophical ideas of colonial era.

The study, which has limitations, is only confined to the area of the colonial Dhaka city and does not evaluate all the Zamindar houses. But the studied Zamindar houses represent the successive development of architectural norms and values of colonial era.

But lack of renovation, natural degradation, the overloads of population and fabricated loads of the newly constructed upper floors and unplanned modifications are the major threats for these houses with heritage value. Although aluminum window replaced the wooden ones in these houses, the basic structure, layout and appearance of the houses remains intact to this day. The owners are adding new front facades with newly constructed walls or plastering old walls to avoid demolition by the government authorities thus destroying the original façade. In other cases the original façade is maintained but the significant part of the inner areas is demolished and sold to the developers. No architects, engineers or conservation experts have been consulted during this process, and the work has been executed by the owners with aid of local masons. In this way the area is gradually losing its architectural character and the unique urban form. To sustain the living heritage, which includes the people and the government; some initiatives are essential. The conservation process can only be successful when the people actively participate in the process. Zamindar houses can be saved by adopting a comprehensive approach combining participatory conservation process and cultural tourism. Through conservation of the built forms of historical and cultural significance, a sense of pride and a common purpose in the community can be established in old Dhaka.

In this fast moving world, man passes into unconsciousness and becomes a thing of the past. But he leaves behind some relics of a previous mode of life, which gives present generations some ideas about the civilization, culture, and socio-economic condition of the predecessor. Traditions of the past are the cultural heritage of the present and future life. That is why it is required to look back to our art, literature and architecture of past heritage. Our heritage, recalling the memories, of our past Dhaka should not be ruined by our negligence. It is obvious that, in this critical situation of our decaying heritage, it should be the primary concern of all, to conserve the Zamindar houses and preserve the socio-cultural and architectural glimpses of old Dhaka.

Revising Redundant Buildings Good Practice in Urban Regeneration-HMSO Act xiv 1968, Department of Archaeology.

Reza, ATM.Met. al (2007), '*Legacy of colonial feudal architecture in the perspective of Teota Zamindar Palace*', published in 'Pratnatattva', journal of department of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University, vol 13. June

Roy, J. (1319 Bangla, reprint2007), '*Dhakar Itihas*' Boipatra, Bangla Bazar, Dhaka.

## REFERENCES

Ahmed, N. (1999), '*The building of British Raj*', University Press of Bangladesh.

Fletcher, B. (1987), '*A History of Architecture*'. Publisher-Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 19<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Hunter, W. W., '*Imperial Gazetteer Of India*', Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908-1931, v. 11

Imamuddin .H. A. [ed], 1993, Architectural Conservation, Bangladesh.

Imamuddin. H. A. and Longeteig, K.R [eds], 1990, Aga Khan Trust for Culture [publisher], Architectural and Urban Conservation in the Islamic World,

King, A. D. (1976), '*Colonial Urban Development Culture, Social power and Environment*', Rutledge and Keg an Paul Ltd, London.

Mamun, M. (Ed.revised) (2002), '*Chirasthayee Bandobasto o Bangali Samaz*', Mowla Brothers, Dhaka.

Mamun, M , *Smrity Bismritir Nagary* [Bengali]

Mowla, Q.A (1997), '*Evolution of Dhaka's Urban Morphology*', Ph.D. thesis submitted to University of Liverpool, UK

Rahman, M. & Haque, F.A. (1997), '*Form and Context of Multiple Courtyard houses of Old Dhaka During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century*', Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (humanities), vol. 42

Rapport, A. (1960). '*House Form and Culture*'. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall, Inc.