



Rose Garden, Dhaka

Testimony to past glory

Hrishikesh Das Lane in Old Dhaka, named after Zamindar Hrishikesh Das, is well known. The same zamindar built a gorgeous house and a garden of roses at the end of the 19th century, which is popularly known as Rose Garden.

Rose Garden is a testimony to the forgotten history of so-called low-caste Hindu Zamindar Hrishikesh.

At the time, the garden and house of Baldha's landlord, now known as Baldha Garden, became the centre of cultural activities for

the elite. The zamindar of Baldha was a playwright and used to arrange *jalsas* (parties) at his house.

Some historians say once Hrishikesh went to enjoy a *jalsa* there. But he was insulted by the high-caste people as he belonged to the low-caste. An irate Hrishikesh promised to make a house like the Baldha Garden as a counterpoint to the insult he suffered.

Hrishikesh bought 22 bighas of land for his garden. He planted different kinds of roses in the

garden. He dug a pond in the corner of the garden. Different stone statues add to the beauty of the rose garden, and bear a witness to the past glory.

Lots of mango trees line the boundary. Hrishikesh constructed the gorgeous palace at the centre of the garden, where he had arranged *jalsas*.

The two-storey house was a prime example of ornamentation as well as architectural indication of 19th century.

The spiral staircase, ornamentation of plaster walls, pillars,

tombs, iron laceworks and stain glass remind visitors of the past glory and the architectural values of the house.

The luxurious life of Hrishikesh did not allow him to pay full attention to his business. His business was heading for a nosedive and all his property was lost in paying the loans back. He was reduced to penury.

Hrishikesh sold the Rose Garden to Kazi Abdul Rashid, a resident of Brahmanchiran. The rest of his life is still unknown.

In the 1970s, the Rose Garden

was leased out to the Bengal Studio.

Roses no longer animate the garden, but the house still looks gorgeous. The Department of Archaeology declared the house protected under the Antiquities Act.

Story: **Pinaki Roy**
Photo: **SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN**

