It was the time when the General asked all boundary walls on important city streets to use arch. Ironically it was this same dictator's personal interest that saw some of the major architectural conservation works being undertaken by the government. It was also the time when we were doing our thesis project besides rallying on the streets against the military dictator and his newly announced Shikkya Neeti, as in charge of the Engineering University Central Students Union (EUCSU) which he allowed to continue despite suspending the Constitution. We fought with the government forces between the Curzon Hall and old High Court building, took shelter for sometime at the Mughal mosques, and gathered again in the afternoon at Battala, but the from very next morning had to go in hiding for about a month. Gen. Rahman, the Zonal Martial Law Administrator and Gen. Rahman, the DG DGFI, occupied some colonial period buildings opposite the National Museum which had just opened, to detain and torture the so called 'anti-state' elements, and take-over a historic part of the city permanently.

Coming back to the thesis, one of our friends selected a topic to develop the riverfront in old Dhaka and connect it with the new city through an area that also included the Ahsan Manjil. He prepared a scaled model in wooden blocks of that entire part of the city of narrow winding lanes and bylanes, encircled by the Dholai khal. He also drew the facades of some of the building on the blocks that we had not till then heard the names of, such as Ruplal House, Ali Mia's Gole Talab, and Shankhanidhi Lodge. He was talking about in his proposal creating axis, widening vista, connecting pockets and doing infills. That the issues of urban design and heritage conservation were connected was just evident. He was passionately describing way of life and familial spaces, history of a place and spatial essence, many things that appeared Greek to us then.

But things were so romanticised and I was so mesmerised that few years later when I received Commonwealth Scholarship for higher studies in the UK I chose to study urban design. And these ideas of area conservation, not just preserving an isolated building, had such an imprint in my mind that when I participated in a European Urban Design Competition titled 'Regenerating a Degraded Urban Area', held at Seville in 1987, the proposal which saw me being short listed as UK-finalist, was about taking some historic buildings in the Roman town of Stamford, and convert them for various uses related to a university so that 'the town and the gown' were integrated. That is also when I learned about university planning and campus design, and how a private university, as there was only Buckingham University in the UK, could be sustained.

It was exciting time too! Efforts to create an architecture sensitive to the needs of the country received a forth from the Aga Khan's Regional Seminar held in Dhaka in December 1985 in association with the Institute of Architects Bangladesh of which we had just become a member, and the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology where I had started my teaching career.

