

for many years till the early-1980s the official signboard showed the name as such! Many people were even not aware that Chummery and another popular Bengali word 'Chumcha' have the same origin chum or close friend.

The conservation of the Chummery House, completed in 1985, gave careful attention to restoring the building's original appearance. The walls used mud and lime mortar; the exposed walls were coloured red. Except the wooden shingles on the sloped and conical roofs that proved too expensive and short-lived for the local climate, almost every other detail of the older building was judiciously renovated/reconstructed. The corrugated iron roof of later period was replaced with specially made ash-coloured asbestos tiles mimicking the appearance of the original wooden shingles. The internal partition walls erected over the years were mostly removed.

There were few other buildings in its vicinity that deserved conservation; some of them had earlier been destroyed, for example the bungalow where Satyen Bose used to live, to make way for the new Press Club building and auditorium, a project for which I made my first professional model while I was in my second year of architecture study. Incidentally the next project of which I was making a model was the Dhaka Shishu Park, which too brought down some old dilapidated structures around its west boundary, and we were not aware of any of these.

In fact a recent project to erect a highrise building to the south of Chummery House raised controversy as historians and conservationists showed concerns, who nevertheless were silent when some other not-so-good-looking buildings were erected nearby at different times threatening the visual and spatial integrity of the area. The building to its north across the street that is used as the Foreign Ministry's office was built as the Ramna House, which too for sometime in the late-1920s was used to accommodate the Muslim students of Dhaka University, who couldn't be accommodated at the hostel set up on the upper floor of the Secretariat Building that then was being used as the Arts Faculty Building (current Dhaka Medical College Hospital).

The Chummery in fact was part of a large number of bungalows built in Ramna between Nilkhet and Fulbaria (Fulgari), which after the annulment (of the partition of Bengal) in 1911 were mostly given away to attract professors for the Dhaka University. These were all taken over by the provincial government for its ministers and secretaries after 1947. Known by numbers, some of these bungalows still exist, for example the Chief Justice house was the Commissioners office; the Collector's office was behind that which to some extent resembled the Chummery.

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ই সবাই, সাবধান!

স্র জানোয়ার খতম! ওয়াইল্ড ব্রু, সবচেয়ে নির্মম মল্ট ড্রিংক এখন শহরে।



Grey.AFBL.2008