Concluding Part

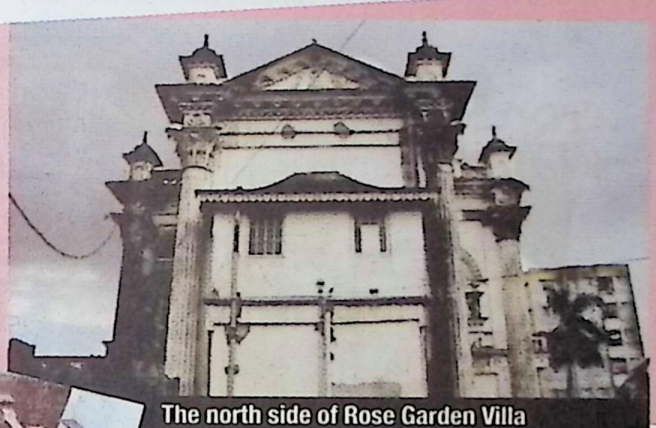
An Architect's Dhaka

Dr. Mahbubur Rahman

DHAKA has created glorious heritage despite ups and downs in its status and fortune. The events are recorded in history, but the places are not. Travellers and settlers from Europe, Asia Minor and Arab, attracted by its wealth and fables, gave accounts of Dhaka's rich architecture. The rulers brought artisan and technique from their land which contributed in making civic, royal, military and religious structures. The treacherous river, flooding and other environmental ravages threatened the longevity of these buildings. More destructive were the years of neglect and misuse, incompatible uses and commercial pressure. Lack of appreciation of heritage and conservation needs, and an indifference of the policy makers and professionals put the last nail. Very few of the artefacts were preserved; most of them in deplorable condition are gradually deteriorating in oblivion.



Tikatuli Ansar Camp



The north side of Rose Garden Villa which is not usually pictured.



Two North South University students and one from the University of Toronto (on the roof) studying Zinat Mahal

Architectural heritage is formed by handful of splendid forts and mansions, walls and gates, mosques and mausoleums, temples and churches, institutional and commercial buildings that survived the time and tension. The riverbank attracted many marvellous structures. Beautiful palatial mansions like Ahsan Manjil, Weis's house, Ruplal House, Reboti Mohon Saha's house, Jatin Saha's house, Prasanna Babu's house, Mathura Babu's house, Uma Babu's house, Ashu Babu's house, Basanta Babu's house, religious buildings like Amiruddin Daroga's mosque and Shaista Khan's mosque, and civic buildings like the Lal Kuthi, Jeo, Radha Govinda and Sitaram Mandirs, Bibi ka Raoja and Beg Murader Killa, Gol Talab or Lohar Pul were raised along the water. Collector D'Oyle captured in sketches the grandeur and beauty of some of those that made up the riverfront, where half a century later Buckland Bundh was developed.

Rose Villa, Chandra and Sushila Kutir, Sur Sudha, Sankhanidhi, Katras, Lalbag Fort, Joy Kali, Lakshminarayan, Dhakeswari and Brahmasamaj temples, Gouri Math, Binat Bibi, Farrukh Shiar's, Tara, Dayra, Kamranga, Beg, Vatt, Kazi Nehal, Mirdha, Kusumpatti, Dakhini, Anandabazaar and Begumbazaar mosques, St. Thomas and Armenian churches, Dufferin hostel and Mohsinia Madrasa, Pogose and Collegiate schools, Hussaini Dalan and St. Gregory school and church were not far from these. Many other edifices have perished; a few that survived are in disrepair; often illegally occupied and used deleteriously.

Further north and to the west there are many more ornate historic structures like Bardwan House, Chummery, DU VC's house, Ramna bungalows, Shahbaz Khan, Ambar Shah, Shahi Bibi, Gore, Mariam Saleha, Bogdadi and Satgambudj mosques; Eidgah, Nimtali Deuri, Peer Yemeni mazaar, Guruduara and Greek mausoleum, Holy Rosario church, Sidheswari and Ramna Kalibari, Dholai and Begunbari khals, Baldah Garden, Narinda Cemetery and Victoria Park.