



View of the grounds inside the Sybele half of the Garden.



Relaxing by Shankhanidhi pond.



Gustavia Gracillima, listed as endangered in its native Colombia.



Nagalingam petals on the ground (*Couroupita Guianensis*.)



Panthopadop in bloom (*Ravennella Madagascariensis*.)



Flower blooms in a cactus.

CHARMING BALDHA GARDEN

I have heard about Baldha Garden when I was just a kid. But since I spent three decades abroad, I did not visit it until early this year. During the visit I was unimpressed by the apparent jumble of trees, plants and shrubs and wondered what the fuss was about. But I found myself wanting to return and soon realised that this is the kind of place that does not completely reveal itself on the first encounter. Those with patience, however, are amply rewarded.

Baldha Garden is a miniature botanical garden in Wari, Dhaka. It was created over three decades (1909-1943) by Narendra Narayan Roy Chaudhury, a wealthy landowner, philanthropist and poet. It contains over 800 species of plants and is an oasis of peace and serenity. Among many exotic floras here are the Amazon Lily, *Gustavia*, Baobab, Bhujpatra, Papyrus as well as numerous cacti and aloe plants. Sadly, its famous century-flower (sugar palm) tree died recently after flowering. The garden also contains a large pond (Shankhanidhi) and a sundial.

In 1962, descendants of Mr Chaudhury transferred the garden to the government. Since then, the Forest Department takes care of it. A lover of nature, Mr Chaudhury was also a connoisseur of art and antiques. A museum containing the Baldha Collection was once located at this garden. Its contents can now be found in the National Museum in Shahbagh. Most items in the "Weapons Room" of the National Museum - as well as a lovely miniature doll collection and a piece of original muslin -- come from the Baldha Collection.

Photo: IHTISHAM KABIR



Schefflera Arboricola flowers.



Mr. Roy Chaudhury's tombstone:
"Passer by! Drop me a flower - good bye!"

Profile of photographer



Ihtisham Kabir is an amateur photographer who has been photographing Bangladesh since 1984. He writes the acclaimed web blog Back to Bangladesh (backtobangladesh.blogspot.com) and posts a daily photo-blog on Bangladesh (www.bangladeshimages.com). In 1996, his Web Exhibition, "Discovering the Children of Bangladesh," was recognised as one of the Web's ten best photo sites. In professional life, Ihtisham Kabir is a software engineer who worked in Silicon Valley for over two decades. His work revolves around digital image processing. He is the author of several patents and the book High Performance Computer Imaging. Readers can contact him at ihtishamkabir@yahoo.com.



Leaves of Minjir tree (*Cassia Siamea*.)



An archway graces the Garden.