

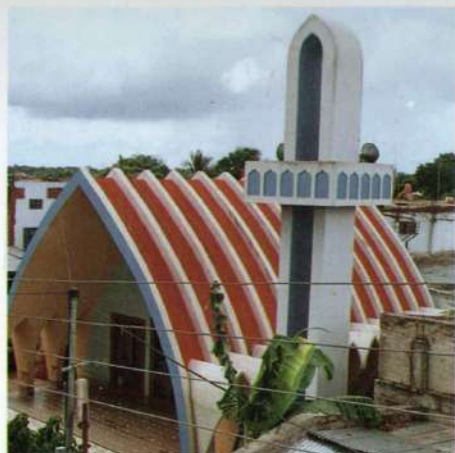
CONTEMPORARY
ARCHITECTURE
BANGLADESH



INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS BANGLADESH



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4

1. Gulshan Mosque, Dhaka.
Architect : Mizanor Rahman Khan, Mesbah-ul-Kabir, Prasthapana Ltd.
2. Mosque at Damra Factory.
Architect : Mobashsher Hussain, Asso-Consult Ltd.
3. Sobhan Bagh Mosque.
Architect : Md. Matin Chowdhury.
4. Mosque at BARI, Gazipur.
Architect : M. Mohiuddin Khan.

Modulation of spaces, both inside and outside the main built form are improvised in some of the mosques. In earlier days mosque had never been more than one storey high but now upper floors are being added and in some cases mezzanine floors are introduced to allow the space to flow and add new dimensions to the spatial experience.

But this added number of floors might have disrupted a major intention of Mosque architecture i.e. to create a space vast enough to scale down and subdue the participants. In other words, the scale of a religious building should be overpowering enough to make the devotee feel humble and create in him a sense of awe and reverence for the Creator. A large space sometimes heightened by domes in traditional mosques was created to attain that quality of space.

Established notions about mosque design have somehow proved to be complementary to our climate. Say, the blocking of west facade to signify the mihrab; the notion of openness is complementary to the demand of cross ventilation and lighting in the interior space; the introduction of verandah again reflects climatic sensitivity. Even then, climatic demands are so pressing in our country that architects have to think about mechanical devices for air circulation, like ceiling fans. Lowering the height of the roof may be the result of such demands because the air circulation from the ceiling fans has to reach the working plane. But introduction of such elements in the interior space seem to be aesthetically incompatible and incongruous.

In the earlier days building construction was limited mostly to flat roofs on masonry walls. But designers are now exploiting the plasticity of concrete; using vaults in place of domes which provide a unique lighting condition in the interior, separating roof plane from the surface plane to give it lightness and a floating effect.

In a mosque, the relationship of form and facade or their manipulation has always been restricted by the demand for identity, easy recognizability and above all by symbolism. It was thus necessary for designers to use elements to which people, in general, respond easily. Manifestations of form, somewhat different from traditional norms, create confusion and loss of identity.

Present endeavours of the professional thus show simple but rational approaches to the formal interpretation of mosques. They are much concerned about the totality of a mosque rather than concentrating only on the surface ornamentation and face 'value'. Now they are much more responsive to human scale, and careful enough to avoid a monumental or over-imposing appearance on the exterior. Fragmented exterior surfaces designed with elements

SECTION TWO
CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE





1



2



3



4

1. S.O.S. Children's Village, Chittagong.
Architect : Mozaffaruddin Chowdhury.
2. Mosque at NIEAER, Dhaka.
Architect : Constantine Doxiadis.
3. Residence at Baridhara, Dhaka.
Architect : Meer Mobashsher Ali.
4. Pharmaceutical Factory, Tongi.



Shena Kalyan Bhaban, Dhaka.
Architect : Mizanor Rahman Khan, Mesbah-ul-Kabir, Haroon Ur Rashid, Prasthapana Ltd.

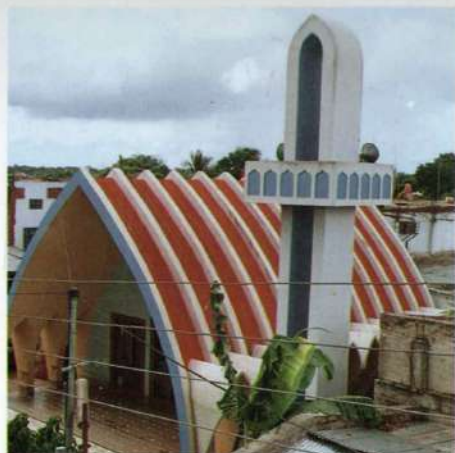
COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The 'indigenous' or 'old' parts of towns and cities predate the colonial era. Here a variety of uses and functions are inextricably woven into a complex pattern of interdependence. This has been the traditional pattern of urban development. Times have changed. The colonial rulers brought in 'civil lines', 'cantonments' and single-use designated areas. These have had a tangible influence on the growth and composition of cities. Areas given exclusively to residential, commercial, recreational or institutional uses emerged. The 'indigenous' towns referred to as 'native' (a term used with derogatory connotations) survived and flourished inspite of development inspired by new ideas.

'New' towns, as opposed to the 'indigenous' scorned traditional '*galis*' and '*bazars*', aspired towards modernity. Commercial areas were the preserve of offices, shopping, hotels and restaurants. The buildings here were conservative in layout and restrained in provision of services. Double or single-loaded corridors, identical rows of undifferentiated rooms, stacked one atop the other were essential features of commercial buildings. Such were the design paradigms for posterity to follow. The post-colonial development perpetuated this trend. Little, if any, attention was bestowed on support services such as toilets, circulation systems, fire or emergency escapes or the need for spatial flexibility to meet changing needs. Maximisation of profit rather than economic optimisation was the prevalent bias. The shopping centres too harped on the same theme—rows and rows of shops separated by corridors. Creativity and innovation were confined to shop fronts and aesthetic sensitivity of shop owners.

The architectural expression of commercial buildings were decadent, dominated by superficial visual elements that neither helped aesthetics nor function. Louvres, shades and screens were used without exploring or exploiting their potential. However, even in this milieu, some buildings of excellence or near-excellence were designed. But, being exceptions, good buildings were rare and far apart.

Break of cultural continuity and absence of architects were perhaps responsible for the *impasse*. Post-colonial architecture was in doldrums and there were no architects to face the challenge. Builders were designers and so were civil engineers, surveyors and draftsmen. Buildings were designed by people of doubtful competence. It was only in the late sixties that architects started making their presence felt.



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1. Ershad Army Stadium, Dhaka.
Architect : Mizanor Rahman Khan, Mesbah-ul-Kabir, Prasthapana Ltd.
2. Ershad Army Stadium exterior.
3. National Stadium II, Mirpur, Dhaka.
Architect : Mizanor Rahman Khan, Mesbah-ul-Kabir, Prasthapana Ltd.

to make significant contribution to the promotion of games and sports. This type of social impact is again enhanced through some successfully held international competitions. They uphold our national image and spirit and provide a scope for fostering unity and brotherhood among neighbouring countries.

Although changes are evident in the sports arena, yet the development of facilities for sports and recreation is still lagging behind. In the past, there was a great shortage of professionals with adequate and relevant expertise, to design physical facilities. But the appearance of architects on the scene has brought about a change for the better. Recent developments in sports and recreational facilities speak of the continuing competence of the new generation of architects. But despite the increased activity in this sector and the involvement of architects, much remains to be achieved. Funding is still a major problem. Excepting the metropolis and some centres for holding specialised games, the development in this sector is really slow. The gap between the level of amenities desirable and that which is affordable is wide. But this is a national phenomenon which will challenge the ingenuity and creativity of architects and their ability to devise appropriate and cost-effective solutions for our newly emergent nation.