

Sustainable revitalization of the traditional old urban mansion: Ruplal house

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Abstract:

Buildings are symbol of eminent achievement of human and some buildings with its surroundings cannot be destroyed without immense failure to all men both present and future. This can be compared with any great paintings, or any great works of art can be effaced. Hence the proposal to establish architectural continuum, which today is both a national and a global quest. In the 19th century Dhaka, Ruplal house is one of the significant structures which are characterized by neo indo classical style. It is a grand mansion situated at the northern bank of river Buriganga at Farashganj in the southern part of Dhaka city. It was built on the Buckland Bund. During the British rule Buriganga riverfront was aristocratic zone which was occupied by the rich and famous families'. But now a days both the side of the river and the road occupied by the hawkers, wholesalers, rice market, fruit market and other business center because of which Ruplal house is facing serious problems. Although government of Bangladesh has enlisted the building for conservation in the gazette of 1989 but due to the pressure of the present users, unauthorized squatters and some for some financial reason it is still not been conserved. The main focus of this paper will be to explore and analyzed the Ruplal house and revitalized the whole area by giving this project an appropriate use which will fit not only the building complex itself but also for the beneficiary of the entire community of old Dhaka. It is also a response to the malfunction to respect the experience of human living in our present day environment which is not infrequently insensitive to a community's and thereby a country's historical, social, cultural and environmental need. The concern for architectural conservation is seriously threatens by destroying historical sites and edifice in the developing country like Bangladesh in the name of progress, modernization and exploitation of rising land value particularly in the urban centers. But the present economic condition has also made it clear that we cannot afford to destroy old buildings that still have plenty of potential in them.

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Fig 1: Recent Riverside Elevation (source: internet)

1. INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION: RUPLAL HOUSE

"They are not ours to destroy; they belong partly to those who built them and partly to all man kind who follows us."-----John Ruskin

Conservation means all the process of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. It may include maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation according to circumstances and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

The Dhaka is the capital city of Bangladesh is one of the ten most populated cities in the world. It has a brief history and became important at 1610 when it was the capital of Mughal. At that time, it was famous for administrative and business center. But in course of time the capital was transferred to Murshidabad in 1708. From that time to till 19th century the city is bearing the history of erosion. In the year 1825 the municipal corporation created attention to the city for urbanization. C.T. Buckland, commissioner of Dhaka city, initiated to construct the Buckland bund in the year of 1864. After that Buriganga riverfront was aristocratic zone which was occupied by the rich and famous families.

From that time the bund became the recreational space for the whole city. Ruplal house is a very important example of riverside chain mansions in the 19th century Dhaka. The only building that could compete with the Ahsan Manzil of Nawab Abdul Gani in its splendor was the Ruplal house of Ruplal Das .It is a grand 19th century mansion characterized by neo -indo classical residential complex, situated at the northern bank of river Buriganga at Farashganj in the southern part of Dhaka city. This road runs through the northern side of the house and the entrance to the site which is very narrow but a major linkage between the eastern and western part of the city .But now a days both the side of the river and the road occupied by the hawkers, wholesalers, rice market, fruit market and other business center because of which Ruplal house is facing serious problems. Although government of Bangladesh has enlisted the building for conservation in the gazette of 1989 but due to the pressure of the present users, it is still not been conserved.

Architectural conservation is not an isolated phenomenon but related to the scale ,texture ,street pattern ,visual unity ,material ,construction method ,integration with the landscape .In other words the character of built environment is more important than the character of individual building Ruplal house which could have been , part of our cultural heritage and recalling memories of past Dhaka is dying . It should not be permitted to ruin for our negligence. It is our obligation to conserve its history and architecture

.Conservation of this house and locality will help to improve the whole area and provide an urban relief space.

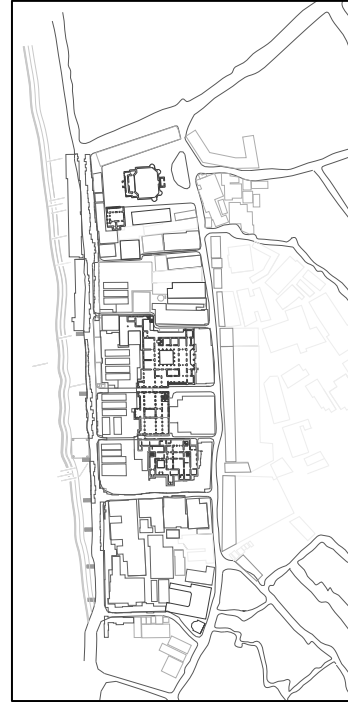
2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 OBJECTIVES

As I discuss before the main focus of this paper will be to explore the following-

- A survey of the Existing condition of the building and its surroundings
- A proposal for the restoration of the building
- Adaptive reuse of the building in relation to the surroundings.
- A proposal for up gradation of the surrounding area to improve the spaces between buildings.
- To gain the previous glory of the area as a recreational space.

The study also endeavors to clarify the roles of the public sector, private sector, and individuals and to evolve a concept of resources generation for the suggested conservation effort. Any redevelopment program needs elaborate information about the socio-economic, cultural and physical environment of the present and past of the areas. The types of existing structures, land use pattern, traffic volume, etc. are to be surveyed properly.



2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper will search the answer to the questions -

- First : why the Ruplal house and its surrounding is not been conserved
- Second: what could be done for its conservation?

In connection with this the project has been divided into two major phases-

- Analysis of the riverside traditional Architecture
- Concentration on the proposed site- formulation of the design criteria.

Fig 2: Site Plan (source: Student's report)

3. GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE BUILDING

i. 3.1 DATA OF THE BUILDING

ii. Place:

The Ruplal House is located in the south-eastern corner of old Dhaka near the bank of the river Buriganga and an embankment called Buckland bund begins from here elongated towards Imamganj in the north east directions. The Sadarghat terminal is just within 500 yards by the side of the river from embankment. On the north side there runs Farashganj road which is not very wide but a major linkage between the eastern and the western part of the city.

iii. Immediate settlement:

The building was surrounded by Farashganj, Shaymbazar, and Lakshibazar which were previously residential areas. But now a day, the area is under serious threat of unplanned occupations and created congestion to the mode of transportations.

3.2 DATA OF THE PREMISES

There are other structures surround the Ruplal house. These are

- i. Johnson Hall
- ii. Temple of Jeebon Babu
- iii. North brook Hall: Lalkuthi
- iv. Ruplal House

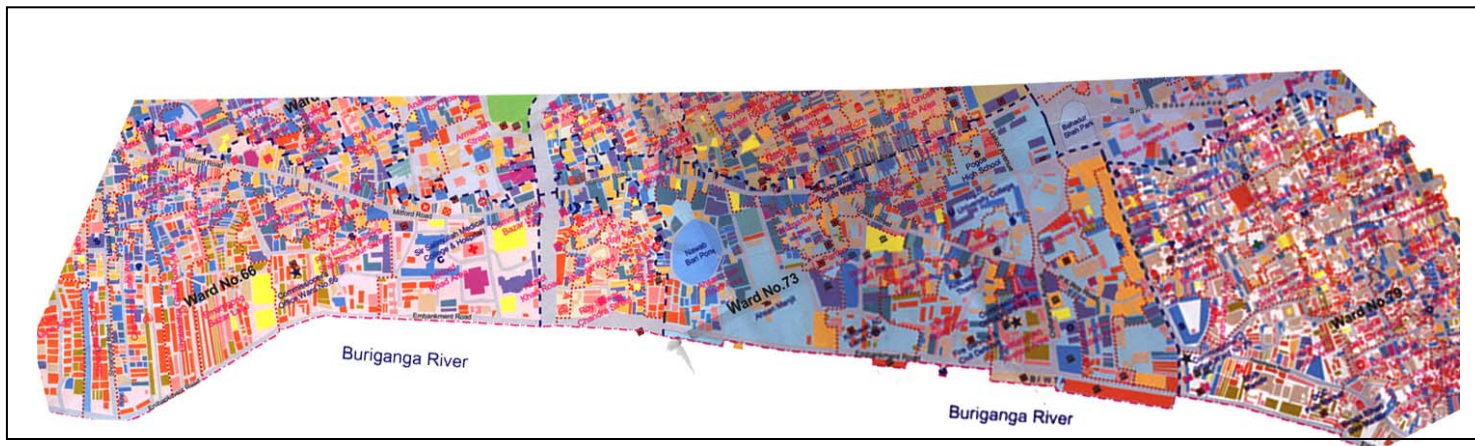


Fig 3: Ward map (source: Dhaka City Corporation)

Ruplal house has three distinct blocks of different architectural style; these blocks were separated in the ground floor, but related at the upper floor by arch way. Those three blocks were ---

- i. Ruplal block [western wing- around twenty five thousand square ft.]
- ii. Raghunath block [eastern wing- around twelve thousand square ft.]
- iii. Central block [approximately nine thousand square ft.]

LAL KHUTI / NORTH BROOK HALL:

North brook hall was built for the purpose of various cultural activities by the European communities .it is hybrid architecture of indo - Islamic and European style. The building consist of 300 persons auditorium with back stage facilities .there is a small public library ;which was possibly meant for the Europeans . The building was completed in 1879 and was inaugurated in 1880. During 1950 it was used as post office and latter as central women's college for a short period of time .then DCC took the owner ship of the building now it is under the dept. of archaeology, government of Bangladesh.

JOHNSON HALL:

It was a public library built in 1882 for the Europeans. It was opened in 1886. The books of this library were collected from London. All the kings contributed for the library. After the renovation it serves as public library. (opcit)

TEMPLE OF JEEBON BABU:

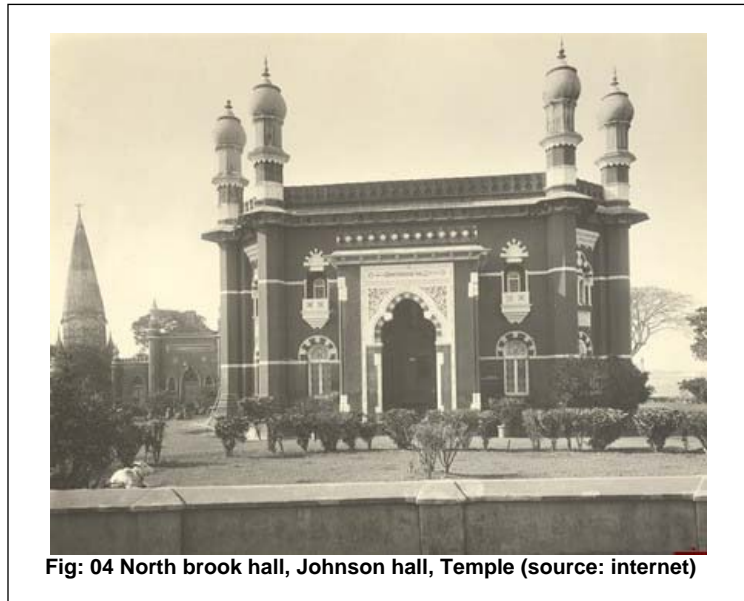
The temple was constructed before 1840 .Jagannath Roy father of Jeebon Krishna Roy was the *jaminder* of that time. The oldest and honorable family of Jeebon Babu was famous in east Bengal .In relation to their indigo and other business purpose they came here and built the temple. The beautiful ornamented *ghat* and the entry gate of the temple of single black stone are the important architectural features of this compound .The present condition of the temple is blurred .The black bathing *ghat* is under the earth on which the market and the ware house is developed . The black gate house is in poor condition.

3.3 LEGAL STATUS

The historical Ruplal house has a very complex legal stipulation from the very beginning. The building was handed over several times. As most of the owners illegally occupied the property so they are not eager to answer any question. Moreover no legal authority has the proper site map (the last map was of 1964). So it is difficult to identify the actual circumstances.

3.3.1 PREVIOUS LEGAL STATUS

Ruplal Das and Raghunath Das, the two sons of a prominent merchant Swarup Chandra Das who bought this building from Jaminder Aratun and commissioned it to the Calcutta based architectural firm Martin and company to renovate. Their families lived there for the next three generations. After partition, Ruplal house was left abandoned. At that time Siddique Jamal occupied the house forcefully and used the upper portion for his residence and the ground floor was used as police camp and revenue office. In 1973 Govt. took the ownership of the house from Siddique Jamal.



3.3.2 PRESENT LEGAL STATUS

The present condition of this site and surroundings are not in a good state. Traditional Buckland Bund has encroached by the vegetable and spice wholesalers which are under the ownership of DCC. The Archeology Department already conserves Lalkuthi and the repair is going on. Rest of the site is somewhere encroached by the illegal persons and somewhere under private owner but the flavor of the site is spice market and the historical Ruplal house is facing problem and the fact is Govt. enlisted the building for conservation and published gazette in 1989 but still there is no attempt. After asking archeological Department it is found that due to the pressure of the vegetable and spice wholesalers it is not possible to take any possessions.

And the interesting part is that there is a case going on between the Ministry of Land and Riverine Engineering since one year.

3.3.3 THE LEGISLATION

In Bangladesh the responsibility of protection and preservation of listed monuments are under the Department of Archeology and Museums of the Government. The architectural conservation activities of the Department of Architecture, Ministry of Works Bangladesh are more individual scheme rather than effectuation of a policy framework. Presently legislations relating to building and use controls in Bangladesh exist in the form of East Bengal Building Construction act (EBBC), the Pourshava Act 1977,

the Building Construction Regulation 1984, and Town Improvement Act (TIA) 1953 for different cities and towns. These legislations have no reference regarding architectural conservation. There are also a number of legal provisions and codes for archeological preservation like the Antiquities Act of 1964, The Manuals of Conservation of 1922 etc. None of these legislations mentioned properly how to meet the present need and cause of conservation. The most recent legislation act out is the Antiquities Ordinance 1976 which is simply an amendment of the Antiquities Act 1964. (Nipa-1992)

The Department of Archaeology have an act no xiv of 1968 regarding the selection and conservation of antiquities .Previously under the antiquity act of 1968 buildings created before 1857 only , were considered for protection .Amendment of this ordinance was done in 1976 . According to this ordinance

- Any object will be declared as antiquity having age at least 100 years.
- The department will only start the conservation work after they have the possession of the antiquity.
- The Government will finance the project entirely
- If Dept of Archaeology does not own the antiquity, and the owner wants to conserve the building he has to follow department's set guide lines.

[Dept of Archaeology, 1968]

Ruplal house had been enlisted for conservation and published in the gazette in 1989 but still no attempt has been taken. Never the less legislation alone cannot preserve and conserve a heritage. It needs the support of an enlightened public and financial assistance for restoration work.

3.4 THE OWNERSHIP PATTERN OF THE AREA

The site and the surrounding area has complex ownership pattern

- Dhaka City Corporation owns North Brook hall complex within which there are
 - a. Mainuddin Chowdhury memorial hall
 - b. Dhaka city corporation market
 - c. *Farashganj* sporting club
 - d. *Lalkuthi*
 - e. Johnson hall
- Though the Buckland Bund is owned by DCC, it is leased to the wholesalers for taka-- 15000 / year

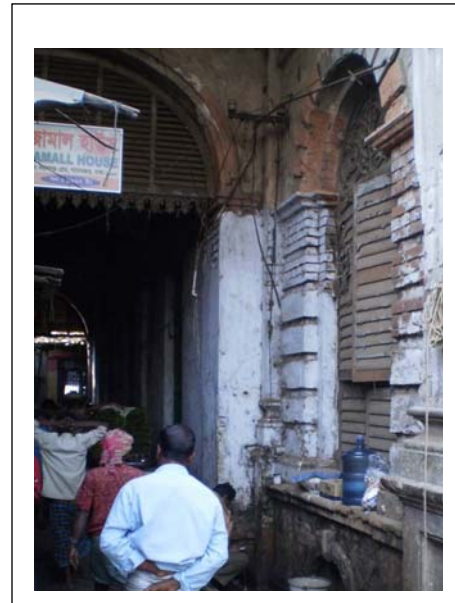


Fig: 05 & 06 The families of JCO/NCO army staff & The wholesalers (source: Authors collection)

- Rupilal block but presently known as “Jamal House” and half of the central block presently known as “Norjahan House” is declared as enemy property and hence is under the possession of Government.
- *Raghunath* block and remaining half of the central block (“Norjahan House”) is occupied by the legal owners for the last 35 years.
 - a. The property was divided among three sons and one daughter of Norjahan Begum.
 - b. But at present only one son Abu Jafar Mallik and his family live there.
- *Shaymbazar*, vegetable and fruit whole sale market is owned by DCC
- Historical temple, residential buildings owned by Naru Prasad Shaha and Shahabuddin who is a vegetable wholesaler; but previously Rupilal Das and Raghunath Das owned this.
- A trustee owns some of the area between Rupilal and North Brook hall.
- River side *Ghats* are under the authority of BIWTA. [nipa ,1992]

3.5 THE PRESENT USERS PATTERN OF THE BUILDING

3.5.1 RUPLAL BLOCK

Government has given the permission to the families of army staff for a short period of time who worked in Postogola which is within a convenient distance from this area. But they are living there for long time (from field survey).

- Total number of family- 32
- Family size- 5/6 people per family
- Total number of people- 200~250
- Maximum occupancy- 3 room/family
- Minimum occupancy-1 room/family
- Rent: taka 20~60 per month (Depending upon the rank)
- Occupation Status: Highest rank: Naik Subadar Lowest rank- Sipahi
- Educational Status- most of the army staff non matriculate but almost all the family sent their children to the school.
- Spouse Status- almost all the female members are house wife. They have no earning source.
- Services- The occupants made toilets by their own and cooking is done inside the room.
- Extensions- temporary extensions were made by material like bamboo, mat and brick. Previous occupants built two rooms on the roof.
- Emotional attachments- these families are not emotionally attached and concerned with the building because of their ignorance, job status. Moreover they want better living space and most of the time they deformed and demolished the part of the building as required.

3.5.2 RAGHUNATH BLOCK

- The Raghunath block has handed over to an Indian family at the time of partition. The owner of this block now becomes Norjahan Begum. She had three sons and a daughter. When her husband Mahmudur Rahman Died, she married a lawyer Gulam Rahman Mullik. When Norjahan begum died, Mr. Mullick got married again. The children from this marriage also live in this building and claim themselves as the owner of this property.
- One of Norjahan son’s Anisur Rahman lives in the ground floor and uses some part of it as a go down. The other son and daughter of Norjahan and the descendants of Mullick live on the first floor. Five families in total live in this building.

3.5.3 CENTRAL BLOCK

- Half of the ground floor of this building is under the ownership of Norjahan. This part is being used as wholesale shops. There are some wholesale shops at the back of Nojahan block also. All of these shops 14 in number pay rent to the descendants of Norjahan. In front of the central block, there are 7 to 10 wholesale shops of spices owned by some businessmen (aratdars) and occupied most of the front garden.
- A retired army person occupies two rooms on the first floor of the central. He has been staying here for 15 to 16 years. According to this person the encroachment within the property started after liberation.



Fig: 07 & 08 The wholesalers and their spice products.(source: Authors collection)

4. VALUES ANALYSIS

4.1 EMOTIONAL VALUES

4.1.1 Identity Value: This is one of the significant structures of neo-classical style of British period of Dhaka city. When approached from the river Buriganga it has a elevation of some 300ft long and has a strong identical value.

4.2 CULTURAL VALUES

4.2.1 Historical Value: Ruplal house is a historical evidence of 19th century mansions. It has given the testimony of merchant class of that period and also a very important example of a chain of river side mansions.

4.2.2 Documentary Value: The house is a majestic 19th century mansion characterized by neo indo classical residential complex. It has an immense documentary value to enhance the history of architecture of Bangladesh.

4.2.3 Archeological Value: This building having an age of 185 years old got the value of antiquity from the Department of Archeology and enlisted for conservation and published in the gazette in 1989.

4.2.4 Architectural Value: This building has three distinct blocks with different architectural style. These blocks are separated in the ground floor but connected with an archway at the upper level. Of the three blocks Ruplal is the most imposing one with neo Corinthian capitals, several different types of window details, beautiful mosaic and stained glass works. Central block is very similar to Ruplal Block but Raghunath block is much inferior to that in others. It is a splendid piece of architecture of that period.

4.2.5 Townscape Value: As the building is located in the bank of river Buriganga, it got the value to serve as a landmark from riverside by giving a sustainable reuse.

4.3 USE VALUES

4.3.1 Social Value: This building witnessed the gradual rising of the merchant class in a society of land owners or zamindars who always wanted to exhibit their newly acquired status by building prominent town palaces. Ruplal house was famous for cultural activities. Many world famous musicians are performed regularly in this house; of them Ustad Alauddin Khan, Ustad Waliullah and Lakshi Devi were important. It was the secret meeting place of the party, which had an important role in the “Shwedeshi Andolon” or

4.3.2 Utility Value: This building is still in use and three blocks serve different purpose. Ruplal block is use as residential accommodation of the family staff of JCO and NCO army officers. Central and Raghunath blocks are partly used by its owner and partly as warehouse for wholesalers. So the structure has still the value to serve.

4.3.3 Economic Value: This building has an enormous potential to haul a number of tourists and can earn money as a tourist spot as there are other



historic buildings around it.

Fig: 09 Neo-indo classical complex: window & column detail (Source: Authors collections) Fig: 10 Window & column detail of Raghunath block (Source: Authors collections)

Fig: 11 & 12 Ornamented Kiosk & Corinthian



column

(source: Author's collection)

5. THREATS ANALYSIS

There are several threats that delayed the conservation process. On the basis of priority first comes the issue of land and property acquisition, then sequentially structural problem, accessibility problem, lack of open space, lack of services, and lack of public awareness and so on.

5.7 LAND AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION:

The multiple and complex ownership of Ruplal house is the main problem of land and property acquisition for conservation. The Ruplal house under going much legal and illegal ownership has now become the property of national Archeology Department of Bangladesh. But at present a large number of population who are the families of JCO and NCO of army are living there and they are reshaping the house according to their convenience. Also the traders illegally occupied some part of the property. Some private owners who own the ownership of this block some years ago from the govt. now occupy the Raghunath block. These owners have rented out the warehouses and wholesale shops and sold some shops to the wholesale dealers. As a matter of fact the encroachments of these wholesale shops are so severe that one cannot define the property line.

These whole shops do not all belong to the owners of Norjahan house, many of them are either illegal or privately owned or property of city corporation. This haphazard pattern of market growth is another obstacle; the conservation authority has to deal with.

Also the owner of Raghunath block is in dispute among themselves over this property. From a rough calculation, the value of Raghunath block is estimated 200 million taka. They earn over 1, 00,000 taka per month from the surrounding shops and warehouse. So if they are heavily compensated they may sale their property.

5.8 STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

Before considering any recommendation it is a prerequisite to understand the materials, their size and constructional technology, age and durability, uniqueness of design qualities as well as workmanship.

5.9 ACESSEBILITY PROBLEMS

The *Farashganj* road which runs through the northern side of the Ruplal house is only 16' wide, is inadequate .both side of the road is occupied by wholesale market .loading and unloading is done on the road which creates traffic congestion.

5.10 LACK OF OPEN SPACES

Since the total site and its surrounding is densely populated, virtually there exists no breathing space. This condition prevails through out the locality. Even there are no plantations in the road sides or by the side of the Bund.

5.11 LACK OF SERVICE PROBLEMS

Due to the fragmented ownership pattern there is no systematic drainage pattern in Ruplal house. No longer has the original disposal unit been used. The drainage pattern is not symmetrically arranged with the *Farashganj* road. Surface drainage system is used all through to dispose the waste water and with a concealed pipe connection to the river. The waste water, disposal of local small industries and the garbage of the market are also disposed in the river. [Student report]

Cargo and passenger loading and unloading on the Bund is inappropriate in both functional and environmental aspects. Cooking is done inside the room. Toilets are placed in the verandas.

5.12 OTHERS

Legal status of the Ruplal complex, ownership pattern and hostile attitude of local people and lack of interest in conservation and lack of funding from various government agencies keeping this department of Archeology away from taking any policy. Besides this there are also some other issues-

- Economic Problem
- Technical Drawback
- ~~Lack of coordination between various relevant bodies.~~
- Lack of public awareness and involvement.

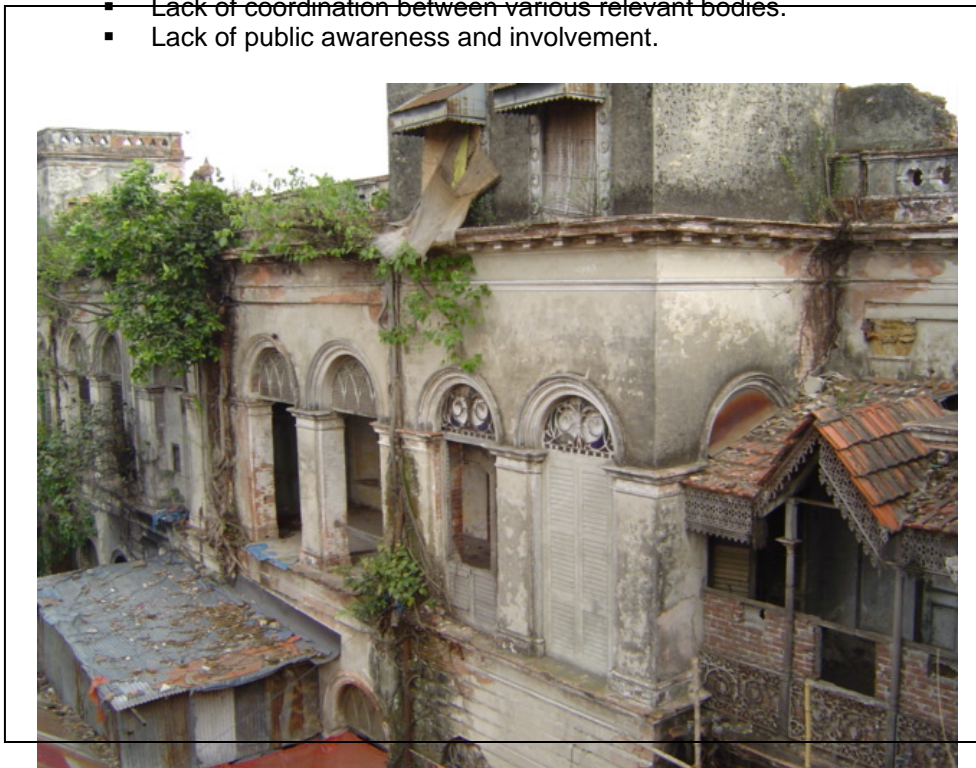


Fig: 13 Damage in wall surface and adjacent illegal structures(source: student's report)

6 HISTORY

To understand the characteristics of the proposed river block, we have to understand the characteristics of the old urban context of that area. Dhaka has a brief history from sixteenth century to the present day, six different periods and corresponding transformations can be distinguished in the urban settlement patterns of the Dhaka city. They are: (1) The Pre- Mughal Dhaka before 1608 (2) Dhaka city under the Mughal period after 1608 to 1764 (3) Dhaka under the East India company from 1764-1858 (4) Dhaka under the British reigns from 1858-1947 (5) Dhaka as the provincial capital of east Pakistan (1947-1971) and finally (6) Dhaka as the capital of Bangladesh since 1971. (website, DCC)

6.1 HISTORY OF THE AREA

Dhaka as many other old city of the world has two distinct parts. Old Dhaka which has developed along the bank of the river Buriganga is very distinct from the new part. Narrow streets, common walls, introvert houses reflects the socio-cultural quality of its people. A motorcar still alien here, though rickshaws have replaced the traditional horse carriages and palanquins. While passing through the narrow streets and lane of any part of the old city we can get an image of its characteristics from its façade of the buildings which are created right from the edge of the street. Although these buildings are constructed at different period and getting change to meet the changing demand of the society they all bear some similar architectural elements, scale and typescript which immediately differentiates them from the new part of the city.

Traditionally the Farashganj, Shaymbazar and Lakshmbazar areas are residential housing for well to do families. The common practice among these families is to house business and residence in the same place that has given the locality a touch of commerciality. But in the recent years the scenario has changed and turned the area into most congested part of the city.

6.1.1 Farashganj:

The name Farashganj came from Frenchganj the memory of French merchants in Dhaka. In 1730's "French east India Company" initiated business in Dhaka. They held whole of Farashganj and had their kuthi where the Ahsan Manzil exists. The French did not stay for a long time; the French khuthi had gone in 1784 but before this in 1740 A.D. Nayab Nazim Nawajish Mohammed Khan of Dhaka had permitted the French to establish a bazaar or ganj at Farashganj. From that time it became a business place and known as Farashganj. (Nahar, 2000)

6.1.2 Buckland Bund:

Shaista Khan erected a bund along the bank of river Buriganga in 1680's to protect the riverbank from flooding and erosion and to add a facelift of the riverside also to provide a recreational area along Buriganga. In 1864 Mr. C.T. buck land, the commissioner of Dhaka started to construct this bund. According his name the bund is named as Buckland Bund. (opcit)

6.1.3 Shaymbazar:

Shaymbazar one of the whole sale centers of old Dhaka is located here which has started from Farashganj road and gets overflow into the Buckland bund. At present the embankment is absolutely overcrowded with wholesalers primarily of vegetable and fruits.

6.1.4 Buriganga River:

This river is the biggest asset not only for the area but for the city as a whole. The riverfront of Dhaka once acts as the gateway of the city is now used as the backyard gutter of the city. The area along the river has become an image of the sharp deterioration of the Buriganga River and the river front. the river is being treated indiscriminately as a dumping location for major wastes and pollutants. While most of the river land edge is under serious treat of unplanned occupations.

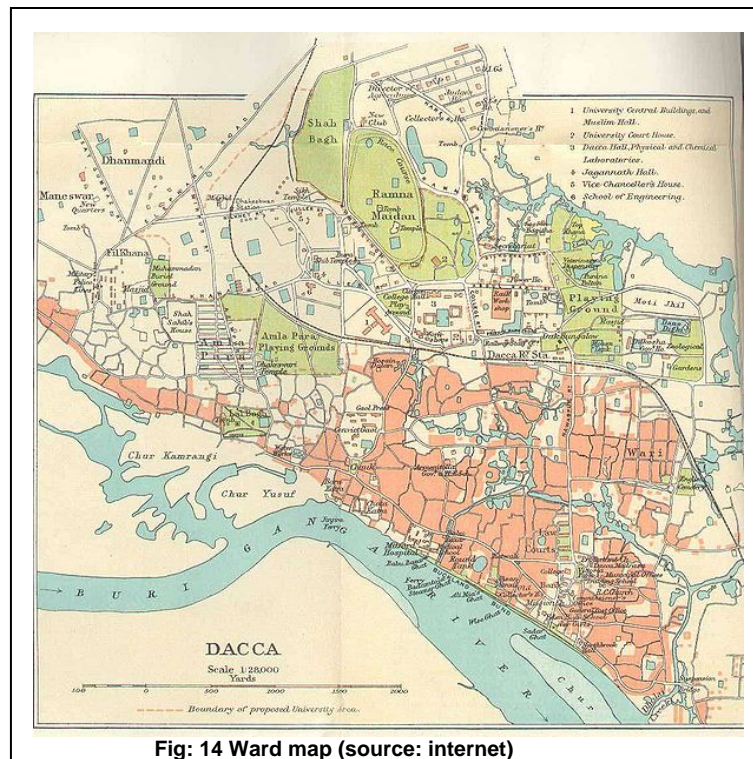


Fig: 14 Ward map (source: internet)

6.2 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

Ruplal house is situated on the northern bank of river Buriganga at Farashganj road in the southern part of Dhaka city. It was built on the Buckland bund which was mainly in the possession of rich and elite family. It has a characteristic of old Dhaka with houses of varying height. After 1947 Ruplal house has become an abandoned house.

At that period Mr. Aratun an American was an influential person in Dhaka. He was also a Jaminder of south Shahbajpur (Vola) and Hossainshahi Pargana at Mymensingh. He built a large mansion in Farashganj in 1825; was known as "Aratun Houser". After his death the jamindery was divided between his two daughters. But they did not continue to stay in Dhaka; they settled in Calcutta after selling the property. The two brothers Ruplal and Raghunath Das purchased the land with an existing building (Aratun's House). Ruplal then commissioned Martin and company of Calcutta to renovate the house which would appropriately declare their status in the city. Their families lived here for next three generation.

After the change in the ownership the importance of the building was not declined. In 1888 lord Dafrin came to Dhaka in an official visit; for his entertainment two mansions were in selection, they were Ruplal House and Ahsan Manzil. At last Ruplal house was selected for its beautiful Ballroom. It was hired for two days at the rate of two hundred taka. But for interior and exterior decorations the owner spends 45,000 taka. Ruplal house was famous for cultural activities, secret meeting place of the political parties. The mansion had a watch tower, which helped the river travelers to know the time. In the earthquake of 1897 AD it was broken.

After partition it was left abandoned. Siddique Jamal occupied this house claiming that he had the power of attorney. He lived in the 1st floor and ground floor was used as police camp and revenue office. Later it was used as primary school, Prince Karim Aga Khan Preparatory school. In 1973 Siddique Jamal and his son Daud Jamal left the house and GOB took over the ownership from them. The house was converted to a college but it only lasted for 16 days. Later it was used as the residential accommodation of the family staff of JCO and NCO army officers. The Ruplal house became govt. property in 1947 AD. The Raghunath block is possessed by private ownership since 1959 AD. [Nahar, October 2000],[Mamun]

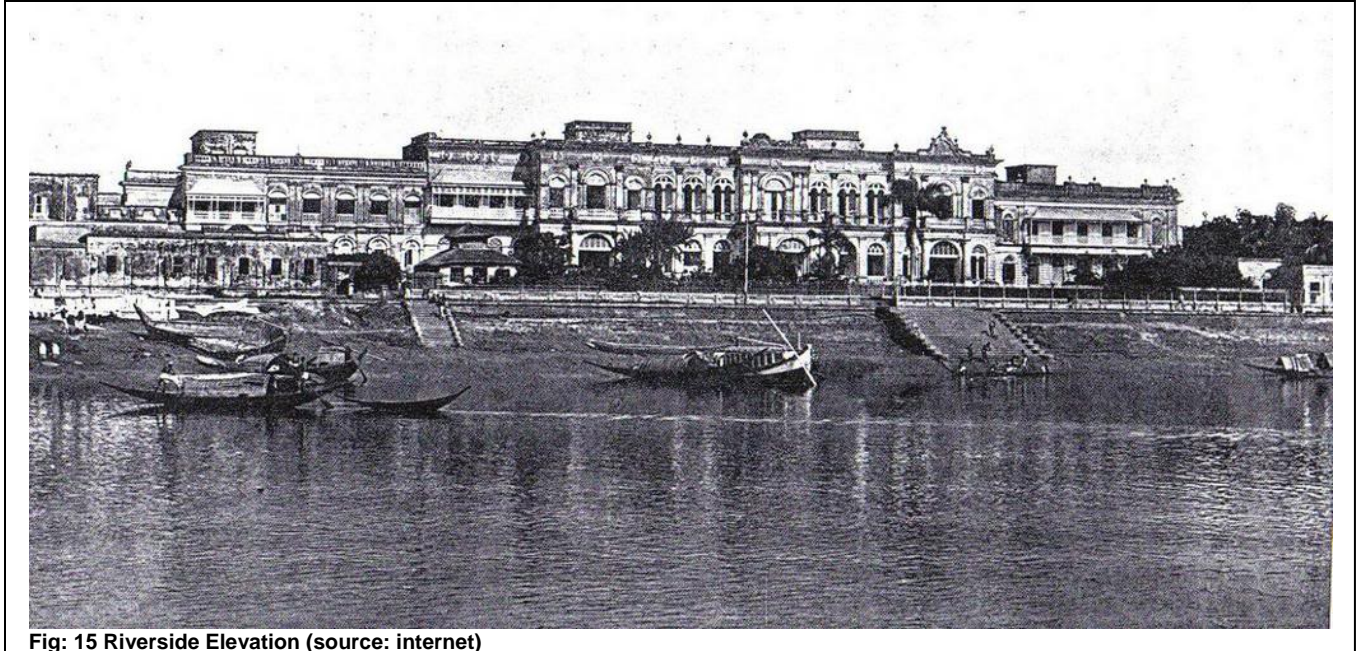


Fig: 15 Riverside Elevation (source: internet)

7. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUILDING:

7.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:

The complex known as Ruplal house had three distinct blocks of different architectural style. These blocks are completely separate in the ground floor but connected to each other at the upper level. The interconnections are supported by archway spanning the ground floor. For ease of identification and for ownership those three blocks are referred to as-

- a. Ruplal Block
- b. Raghunath Block
- c. Central Block

7.1.1 RUPLAL BLOCK

ii. Architectural Features:

Ruplal block was designed in the Neo-classical style. This grand wing was square in plan with a square central courtyard. The lighter plain columns give the court sense of light and proportions. The rooms were arranged around this central courtyard in order to give privacy. Its main entry is from the northern portico with a triangular pediment over fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, which emphasizes the entry and its secondary entry from the front court through the series of archways which is also inviting. Service block lowering height is slightly detached from the main block.

iii. Structural Features:

- **Foundation:** load bearing brick masonry foundation is used as the superstructure without using any reinforcement. There is no crack or sag seen in the foundation. Plinth is 2' high from the ground level.

- **Walls:** Load bearing 25" thick. Brick masonry is layered in walls. Lime concrete is used as the mortar and plastering materials.
- **Columns:** Three types of columns; Neo-Corinthian, circular, squares columns.
- **Arch:** Serve as lintels made of bricks over the doors, windows, and also on the circulation passages.
- **Beams:** Steel I beam. For wide span double steel beams are used.
Steel I beam of Size- 3"x6", 4"x8" and 6"x12"
Wooden beams: Traditionally called Karibarga; size 3"x3" (student's report)
- **Floor:** 11" thick layered floor of Red oxide, Brick masonry Tiles, Lime Concrete, Karibarga.
- **Roof:** As same as floor.
- **Stair –case:** Wooden stair cases. One stair is partly reinforced. Wooden stairs are used with iron-joists.
- **Material:** Bricks are used as the main building material. They are varied in size and shape. Brick tiles are used in the cornice.
- **Plaster:** Lime concrete. No blister is seen in the walls and columns because of using glue.
- **Finish materials:** Marble tiles, Terrazzo, Red oxide, colored glass.

7.5.2 RAGHUNATH BLOCK

i. Architectural Features:

This block has different architectural style which lies in the eastern part of the complex. There are no arches in the façade which faces the entrance court in the north. The capitals are no longer Corinthian, but seem to be more Indian origin. These columns are mostly circular brick columns with plain square capitals. Workmanship of this block is in fact much ordinary to that in Ruplal's Block. This block also consists of two rectangular courtyards. The rooms are rather elongated.

ii. Zoning and Hierarchy of spaces:

An attempt of zoning is noticeable. Service areas are grouped together and located at the rear side of the building and stairs are at corners. A gradual sequences of spaces unfolds as we go up to the stairs on the transitional space- the verandah, across the living room to the bedrooms and beyond that the open interior court and then to the service blocks.

iii. Lighting and ventilation:

The two interior open courts act as light wells and allow enough light and air to the rooms of both floors. Each room has a considerable number of doors and windows.

iv. Structural features:

- 22" Load bearing brick masonry as Ruplal Block.
- Brick and lime mortar are used here.
- Walls are finished with lime plaster and paint.
- Floors were constructed with burnt clay tiles covered with lime concrete finished and red oxide.
- Ceiling supported on wooden beams which run along the length at one tile length apart. This frame is fixed in the walls with steel plates.
- Absence of steel I beam.
- The roof has a layer of lime terracing.
- Brick arches are used. (student report)



Fig: 16 Raghunath Block (source: student's report)



Fig: 17 Central Block (source: Author's collection)

7.1.3 CENTRAL BLOCK

i. Architectural Features:

This block has similarity with Ruplal Block but in plan this is very alike to Ahsan Manzil, a building of its contemporary period. Two archways connect this to the Ruplal and Raghunath block which are treated differently. The western archway is topped by an essentially oriental gabled detail which seems to have a later addition. The eastern archway, on the other hand, continues in the same style as the central block. This block consists of recreational facilities, such as ballrooms, classical music hall etc. There are double verandahs on both the sides of the block which makes the place airy and create indoor outdoor relationships. Because of huge openings in every wall the rooms are adequately lit naturally. The immense thickness of the wall protected the building thermally.

ii. Structural features:

- This block is constructed of load bearing walls; columns are used in verandah and the portico.
- 2'6" thick wall and entirely constructed of brick masonry because of 22' high dance hall.
- Floors made of brick tiles that rest on the wooden cross beam system, and then a thick layer of lime concrete is applied over it.
- The most attractive feature of the dance halls is its wooden floors which are made of wooden planks, rest on thick wooden beams.
- Circular Columns are constructed of circular bricks
- Most of the openings are arched and made of brick that exclude the use of lintels.
- Wooden staircases supported by crossbeam system.
- Brick as the main structural material, all are load bearing walls. Brick tiles are used to construct the floors.

- Lime concrete as bonding material also used in the floor of dance hall.
- Wood in the construction of beam system. Wooden planks are used in the floor of the dance hall.
- Steel I beams are used as the reinforcements in the beams.
- Bricks of different dimensions are used in constructing the columns, arches etc.
- Mosaic is used in the intricate decorations on the ceiling of the dance hall and other decorative places.
- Marble slabs were used on the floor of the verandahs.
- Colored glass was used to create the dramatic space quality.
- Mirrors were used on the ceiling of the dance hall.

7.2 ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

The uniqueness of the Elements used in three different blocks is the major characteristics of the house which was probably they were not built in the same time. Different types of columns, several types of window details, arched opening, railing made of iron, wooden jail, balconies, triangular pediment, corner treatment to appear a soft edge, as well as the scale of the building is reduced to a human scale, false column for aesthetic purpose, shading device, parapet, beautiful mosaic work, stained glass, floral motifs, kiosk, cupola floral geometric pattern on the ceiling of ball room and use of mirror makes the ballroom majestic.

7.3 COMMON FEATURES

On the southern side the Ruplal house has some 300 feet long elevation with the riverfront. However there seems to have an agreement in construction of this riverside facades of the three blocks, all in the Ruplal style with slightly emphasis on the central block. Indicate that the main entry from the riverside at that period. There is a unified appearance from the riverside among the over hanging balcony of the three blocks. Overall the thick wall building materials such as lime, surki, wood, ghol, lime surki, plaster are used similarly among these three blocks.

7.4 HIERARCHY OF SPACE

The approach of the building is done sequentially. Open space leading to verandah (transitional space), then to the proper room. Use of verandahs on both sides of the building also makes the building climatically positive.

7.5 CLIMATIC PORPUSE

In respect of climatic point of view, the three blocks are well ventilated and lit naturally. The huge openings and the court gives the space natural thermal protection.

8. PRESENT PHYSICAL STATE

Due to lack of maintenance the form of the building is in worst condition. It is necessary to determine the degree of physical damages of the three blocks to realize the conservation process according to priorities.

8.1 STRUCTURAL DAMAGES

- The roof was found to be leaking in many parts of the building. One section of the roof has caved in. Roof repair is obviously the first line of action. [Ahmed & etal , 1990]
- The timber beams are slowly decaying and are termite- ridden. Also the I beams are rusted.
- There appeared to be fractures in the fabric of the building at certain points ,either caused by earthquake or by differential settlement .If this is found severe, under-pining of the foundation may have to be under taken.[opcit]
- Plaster and mortar of columns are deteriorated.
- At several places bricks have been dismantled.
- At the 1st floor level the floor and ceiling of room no 3 has broken down.



Fig: 18 Vulnerable Wooden Stair



Fig: 19 Ceiling with I beam and decorative column



Fig: 20 Decorative Door & unplanned electric line

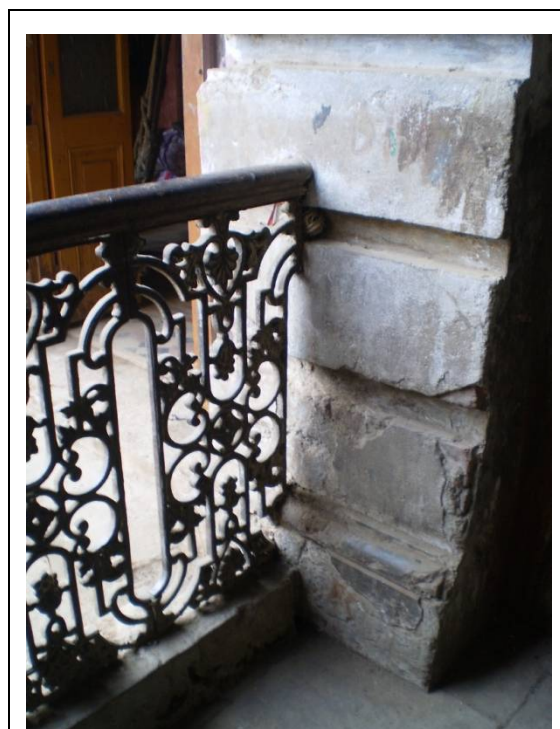


Fig: 21 Verandah Railing (Iron Work)

(source: Student's report & Author's collection)

8.2 DAMAGE IN WALL SURFACE

- Insertion of faulty rain water pipe caused much deterioration on walls.
- Heavy jute gunny bags of the whole spices are stocked against the walls with little thought given to the structure .[ahmed & etal , 1990]
- Moreover the brick work also causes problems like ---- (a) water penetration (b) crystallization of soluble salt (c) cracking / surface defects.
- Plasters have peeled off from the wall; marble slabs have come off the ground.
- Stair at the north -west corner of Ruplal block is totally destroyed and the stair connecting the central block with Ruplal block is also in a dilapidated condition.

8.3 DRAINAGE AND DAMPNES PROBLEM

- Open drains are major drainage problems.
- Drainage system is not sufficient; as a result brick work becomes damp up to about 10' above the ground level.
- Direct penetration of rainwater, rising damp and condensation causes the basic damping problem in the building.
- In some places shrubs or orchids has grown on the façade which is harmful for structure.

8.4 INTERIOR CONDITION

- Make-shift toilets have been added at random around the building which changes the morphology of the building and also leakage from this pipes causing damage in the internal surface.
- The old door and windows that are considered original are found in poor condition. Color, Polish and most of the iron grills have disappeared.
- Glasses have broken down and the present users covered the area with poly bags to protect from rain water and sunlight.
- Decorative part of railing and windows causing acute deformation due to the overloading in the past.

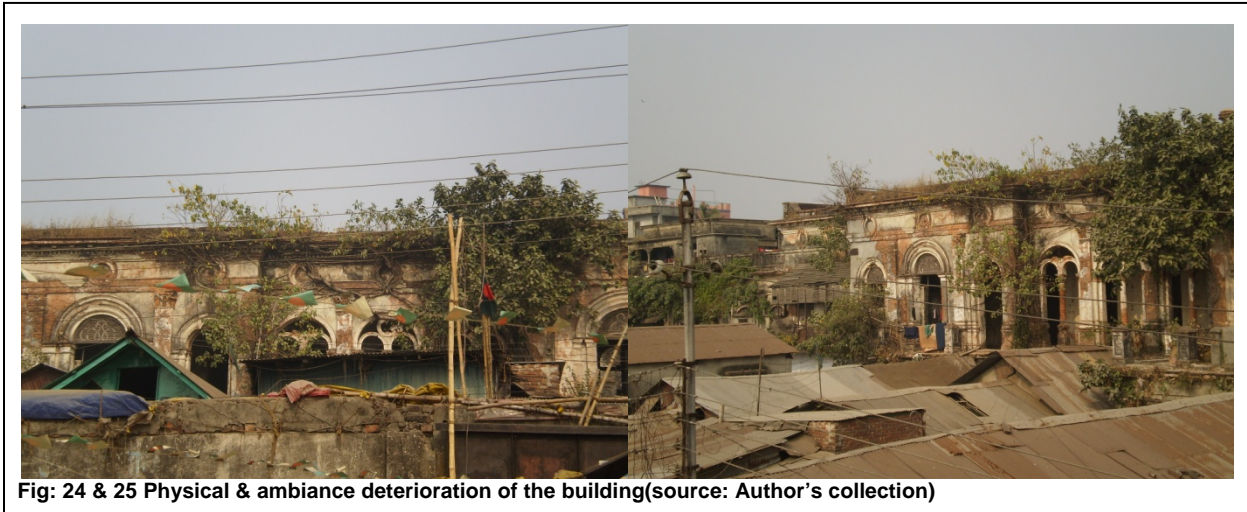


Fig: 22 & 23 Decorative Ceiling work & color Glass (source: student's report)

- Deterioration of wooden surfaces are a common feature.
- Most of the decorative portions are disappeared and others are in poor condition.
- Electrification is done by surface wiring without proper planning. So, it is difficult to identify the original fitting and fixtures.
- There are additions of service block time to time so it is also difficult to note down the original features.

8.5 AMBIANCE DECLINATIONS

- Previously there was a garden which is now encroached by the spice and vegetable sellers. They occupied the space and built illegal structures.
- The mansion had a great watch tower to help the river travelers but it was broken in the earthquake of 1897. This was not built again.
- Due to the congestions created by the water-vessels upon the river Buriganga as well as by the encroachers in the bank impenetrable the much of the once picturesque vista of this huge mansion.
- The surroundings locality has fully transformed into a commercial zone which also distress the individuality of the residential complex.



9. LAPS AND GAPS IN CONSERVATION PROCESS

The city of Dhaka became important at 1610 when it was the capital of Mughal .but it was transferred to Murshidabad in 1708. From that time till 19th century Dhaka became a city of erosion. It became unhealthy and unhygienic and for this it was neglected for a long time. In the year 1825 the municipal Corporation created attention to the city for urbanization, and in 1864 the Buckland Bund was constructed as a famous recreational space for the citizens. The Ruplal house although constructed on the Bund lost its glory with the passage of time. The bund area was developed as rich residential area which was occupied mainly by the high class European officers and merchants. But in course of time by 1930 the river front lost its residential quality and was developed as a very congested commercial area. As a result of this commercialization it became pretty difficult to conserve /carry on the character of that area. Moreover people of this area along with the authorities for conservation are not concerned enough in preserving the flavor of this place.

[PRATHAM ALO, 6th May, 2001], [questionnaire]

The main reason for not conserving Ruplal house along with conservation area is multiple ownership patterns. According to the present resident of the Raghunath block, whenever new government gets the power they take initiative but in a very short period they step back in their proceedings due to the --

- Economic problems
- Lack of coordination between different bodies.

10. MAINTENANCE PLAN

To take any conservation process to a building the team should monitor certain matter-

- The condition of the building must be fully recorded before any intervention is begun
- The materials and methods used during treatment must be documented
- Historic documents must not be destroyed or removed
- Any intervention must be the minimum necessary. It should be reversible or at least repeatable.
- Any intervention must be governed by unswerving respect for the aesthetic, historical and physical integrity of cultural property.

Recommendations on conservation of Ruplal house can be subdivided into three phases. ----

- Phase one -- policy level
- Phase two -- planning level
- Phase three -- implementation level

In the preliminary stage of conservation we could consider the following steps.

10.1 POLICY LEVEL

- Segregation of the boundary of the area to be conserved
- Demarcation of the boundary of the site.
- Recognition and listing of historical monuments and other facilities in the area.
- Categorization of buildings in the area
- Rationalization for conservation
- Rules and regulations
- Motivation (opcit)

10.1.1 Segregation of boundary of the area to be conserved:

This will help to implement any policy regarding area conservation of Ruplal house and its surrounding.

10.1.2 Demarcation of boundary of Ruplal house:

It is necessary to demarcate the area of the Ruplal house which is approximately 8.3 acre that runs from Farashganj road to Buckland bund in the north-south directions and Shaymbazar to Northbrook hall in the east-west direction.

10.1.3 Recognition and listing of monuments in the area

This is very important step in any conservation work which is done by the Archaeological Department and Museum in our country. But the principles are guided by the century old legislation formulated by John Marshal and the considering facts are as follows:

- Architectural excellence or style of any particular period
- Socio economic or cultural history
- Proximity to any historically significant structure
- Potentiality and suitability for adaptive re use

So in this site the significant structures are:

- Lalkuthi/ Northbrook hall
- Johnson hall
- Temple of Jeebon Babu:
- Ruplal house (including three blocks)

10.1.4 Categorization of listed monuments and area:

The aim of the following categorization is to identify and classify different structures and areas recommended for conservation. These are

- Religious buildings -- temple of Jeebon Babu
- Isolated individual buildings, relatively small buildings and detached structures Lalkuthi.
- Buildings in rows, road side linear structures forming an integrated pattern of development.
- Palatial large building complexes --- Ruplal House.

10.1.5 Rationalization for conservation:

Archaeological conservation assume prolonging the life of a historic built form or environment, arresting all the man made and natural elements causing decay and erosion. [Imamuddin]

Architectural conservation includes all aspects like maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction or adaptation according to the need and circumstances without destroying there historic value. The basic advantage of these concepts is the adaptive reuse, i.e., preserving and maintaining old structures in modern, urban, economic and development context. Also this specific concept does not stand for preserving individual building but also maintaining the original character of the area as a whole. It does not freeze the original character rather it can retain the original architectural environment and accommodate present demands and activities. [Husain, March 1997]

10.1.6 Rules and regulations:

There should be a local authority that would be entitled to control land use development. This authority must be empowered to enforce different conservation laws and bylaws. A specific design guide lines should be prepared for the considered area regarding building height , bulk ,set back , public health , safety etc to blend perfectly with its surroundings .The authority should also be responsible to deliver the repair and maintenance notice to the owner and occupier of the listed buildings .The implementation will be easier if there are adequate provisions of financial assistance in terms of grants and loans , public awareness and motivation .[Husain , march 1997]

Ruplal house had been enlisted for conservation and published in the gazette in 1989 but still no attempt has been taken.

There are two main bodies to initiate the process of conservation,

- The Department of Archaeology under the ministry of cultural affairs
- RAJUK (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha) or DIT

Also IAB (Institute of Architects of Bangladesh) can take steps for conserving the site.

10.1.7 Motivation:

Objective of motivation should be intended at:

- Making the general public conscious of their heritage through the historic built environment and awakening an active interest in its cultural, social and economic importance.
- Making the public aware of their responsibilities in the process of conservation, preservation and maintenance. [Husain ,1997]

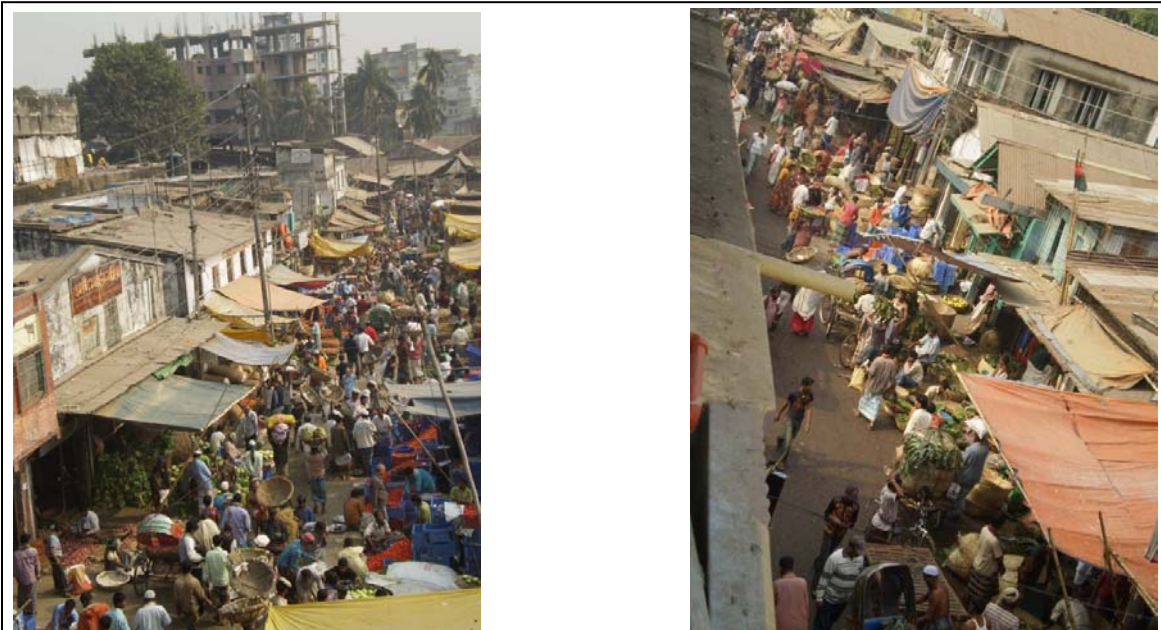


Fig: 26 & 27 Present situation of the surrounding area of the complex (source: Author's collection)

10.2 DOCUMENTATION LEVEL

For the execution of this phase the following stages may be recommended -----

- Preparation of a master plan
- Determining the causes of deterioration of the listed monuments with probable solutions.

10.2.1 Preparation of master plan:

A map shall be prepared where the listed monuments and structures shall be located with the major routes connecting the different monuments and structures. The purpose of a new master plan is to develop a view to provide better accessibility and interconnection between the different monuments.

Area in the master plan should identify the following categories of spaces ----

- i. Conservation area
- ii. Design zones
- iii. Surrounding area
- iv. Road network

- i. **Conservation Area:** The immediate surrounding, i.e. 100 meters radius of the listed building and monuments of archaeological and historical importance shall be designed as conservation area.
- ii. **Design Zones:** The areas where new development is permitted by keeping the original character shall be considered as design zones. Regulations of height, color, material, texture, distance and function should match with the old.
- iii. **Controlled Surrounding Area:** The areas beyond the conservation area can be considered as surrounding area. The built forms, street façade of this area may not harmonize with the conservation area .future development of those areas are to be controlled according to the needs and demands of the conservation area. Since Ruplal house is an old structure, for its conservation we need to identify some problems.
- iv. **Road network:** The road network should be change according to the conservation process without hindering the city traffic system.

10.2.2 Determining the cause of deterioration with specific recommendation:

Before considering any recommendation it is a prerequisite to understand the materials, their size and constructional technology, age and durability, uniqueness of design qualities as well as workmanship. We already discuss earlier about the physical damage that occurred in the building. So In case of conservation we need to consider several aspects of probability.

- As the structure is still in a good condition [foundation has much high factor of safety] different alternation or addition may be possible.
- To maintain its traditional structural system the dimension of the I - beams could be increased according to the increment of load. Welded steel I -beam can be used in this purpose. [nipa,1992]
- Columns and walls must be reinforced. Ferro - cement can be introduced to treat it. [opcit]
- In case of replacement of bricks, the new brick should match in color, texture and size of the rest of the brick work. [Husain ,March ,1997]
- In order to introduce new walls a beam will have to be constructed, and for the removal of any load bearing wall a beam with steel props close to the walls are placed very densely to carry the load. [student report]
- The plumbing line, electrical wiring, water supply pipes may be concealed without hampering the structure. [opcit]
- The dilapidated wooden stair cases could be replaced by steel or RCC.
- The fungal and insect attack requires whole scale destruction and sterilization by means of smoke. [Husain , March ,1997]
- In case of replacement of old timber consistency of the new timber with the original timber should be maintained considering grain and moisture content. [opcit]

- Any unplanned rearrangement, removal, addition or repair of historic glass is not acceptable. The treatment of glass requires full documentation and recording as a precaution. Best possible measure should be considered for their protection.
- To avoid deformation of iron railings addition of plates, doublers or strengtheners can be recommended without causing any visual change.
- Dislocation of joints can be solved by welding with expertise
- Installation of adequate sewerage and drainage to prevent the water table from rising further and creating more structural damage. [Ahmed &etal ,1990]

10.3 IMPLIMENTATION LEVEL

Implementation of conservation work involves the following phases ---

- Development of detail design for execution.
- Selection of a professional team of planners, architects, engineers, supervisors, contractors etc.
- Appointment of skilled labor and craftsman etc
- Availability of appropriate material and technology.

Management of construction, regular supervision, assessment of accuracy of the reconstructed part

10.4 MAINTENANCE COST

Conservation work of Ahsan Manzil was undertaken due to the interest of various government authorities. It takes taka 12 cores in 1985 and as museums it income 70,000 taka per month. Lalbagh Fort, Mughal fort Complex income approximately 1 million per month. The both the monuments are thriving public interest for participation and have attractive revenue income to carry maintenance cost. So, it may be heated discussion that such scheme to conserve "Ruplal house "has got economic and contextual possibility. In fact it will connect these two heritage sites and enhance each one's individual revenues.

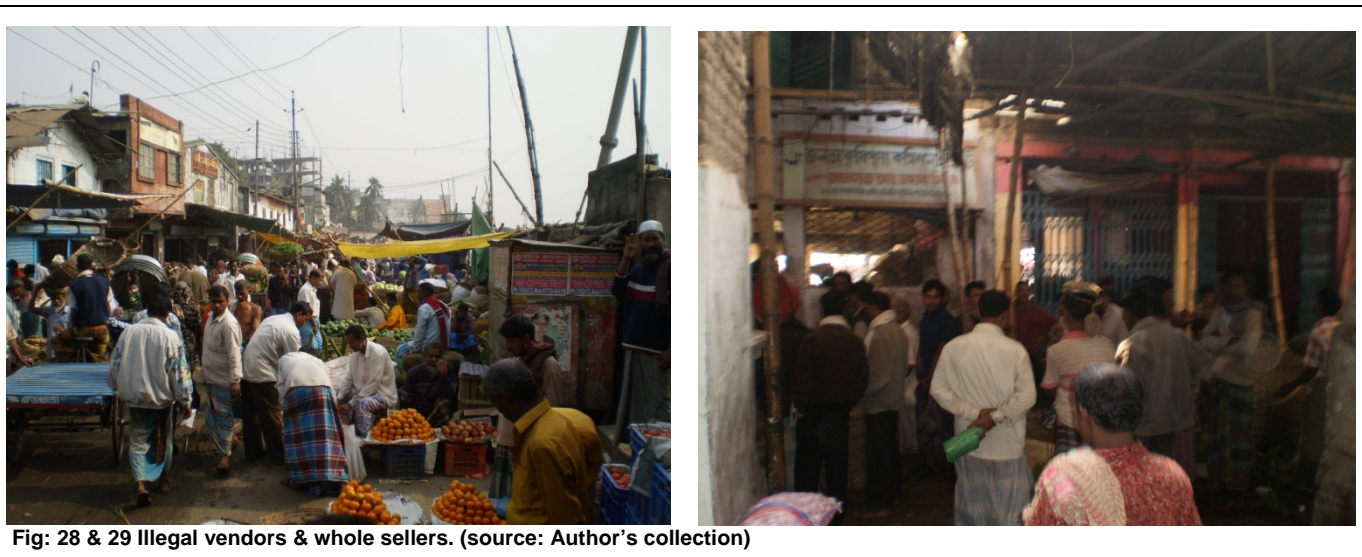


Fig: 28 & 29 Illegal vendors & whole sellers. (source: Author's collection)

11. GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

To achieve the conservation, preservation process and to modernize the traditional river front architecture the following aspects should be noted down:

- Restoration and preservation of Ruplal house with incorporating suitable function.
- The area can be redeveloped as a tourist spot to project our historical events and traditional life style of Dhaka. [opcit]

- The space between the Ruplal and Lalkuthi should be open space for performing local or traditional music or performing other activity by the community people.
- Restoration of other structures along this stretch such as Farashganj sporting club can again use by the local people.
- Treatment of the Buckland bund stretch from Shaymbazar to Babu Bazaar as a historical zone. [ahmed &etal , 1990]
- Improving the accessibility through water way can be a good solution. BIWTA has passed a proposal for circular water way around Dhaka by which one can come from Ashulia to Sadarghat, which would reduce the pressure on road. [nipa ,1992]
- To ascertain the relationship with the river integrating some functions beside the river and bund.
- Some of the loading and unloading point can be established within some of the pockets beside Farashganj road. [nipa, 1992]
- Complete pedestrianization of this embankment can be feasible. If not possible at least stretch from Shaymbazar to Lalkuthi. [opcit]
- Installation of green areas, benches, gas lamps, selected vendors, horse carts etc, anything to give the place a feeling of history.
- The owners of Norjahan and Malik house can be offered compensation by negotiation or rehabilitated to other place of similar property value. If they are not willing to agree with the deal proposal can be given, that the building should be conserved by giving them chance to live there. [dept of Archaeology]
- Rehabilitation of the present inhabitants either recompenses them by money or rehabilitating them elsewhere.
- Owners of the whole sale shops can be rehabilitated to the nearby location like Shaymbazar or Sadarghat or across the river. [student report]
- Installation of adequate services like electrical, thermal, sewerage and drainage for better enhancement of the site.

12. DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR ADAPTIVE REUSE

Often it is necessary to find an appropriate use in order to prevent a building's decay or destruction, this being one of the hardest problems to solve in the practice of architectural conservation. The practice for adapting buildings for new uses is as old as time. There are so many examples of conservation of building with new use such as Castle St. Angelo, Bath of Diocletian etc.

Any type rehabilitation has social, cultural and economic values. So to retain these values, the conservation of old buildings on Farashganj road can be a tourist orientation proposal. The history of socio-cultural structure of the past is to be gained by creating a sense of old pattern of Dhaka on the road. For this project Ruplal house has given and thus we provide a physical emotional continuity by fitting the best of our old buildings to the need of the 21st century and beyond.

In the proposal of reuse of Ruplal and central block due to its historical significant and architectural style is proposed as

- Civic center with hotel accommodations.
- Ruplal block will serve as accommodations and hotel service.
- The central block with the facilities of lobby, lounge, banquet hall, and restaurant.
- The Raghunath block will remain for hotel administration, maintenance office, library function, exhibition space and so on.
- The whole area should be pedestrian zed and the bund should treat like recreational space for city dwellers not only for the old Dhaka but also for the entire city.
- North brook hall can be converted into a permanent theater by incorporating facilities like workshop, rehearsal and others.
- Johnson hall can again use as Library by preserving the present books and providing with new library facility for the people.
- The location of mosque can be removed and relocate at other point by conserving its spirituality and present demand as its present location is illegal and obstructing the long elevation of Ruplal house.

- Spaces between Ruplal house and Lalkuthi is kept open introducing some activities like traditional music, festivals like 'Baishakhi mela', 'Boi mela' ' Pitha mela' etc, space for art and craft shops.
- The bund should be design for boating, cruising, fishing and other public recreational facility to encourage people to come here and feel like as it is built for a long time ago.
- To create link between Ahsan Manzil and Lalbagh fort as a historic path.
- Ensuring that the new additions made to the historic spaces and apparent from the old existing elements while maintaining a stylistic blend and physical harmony in design.

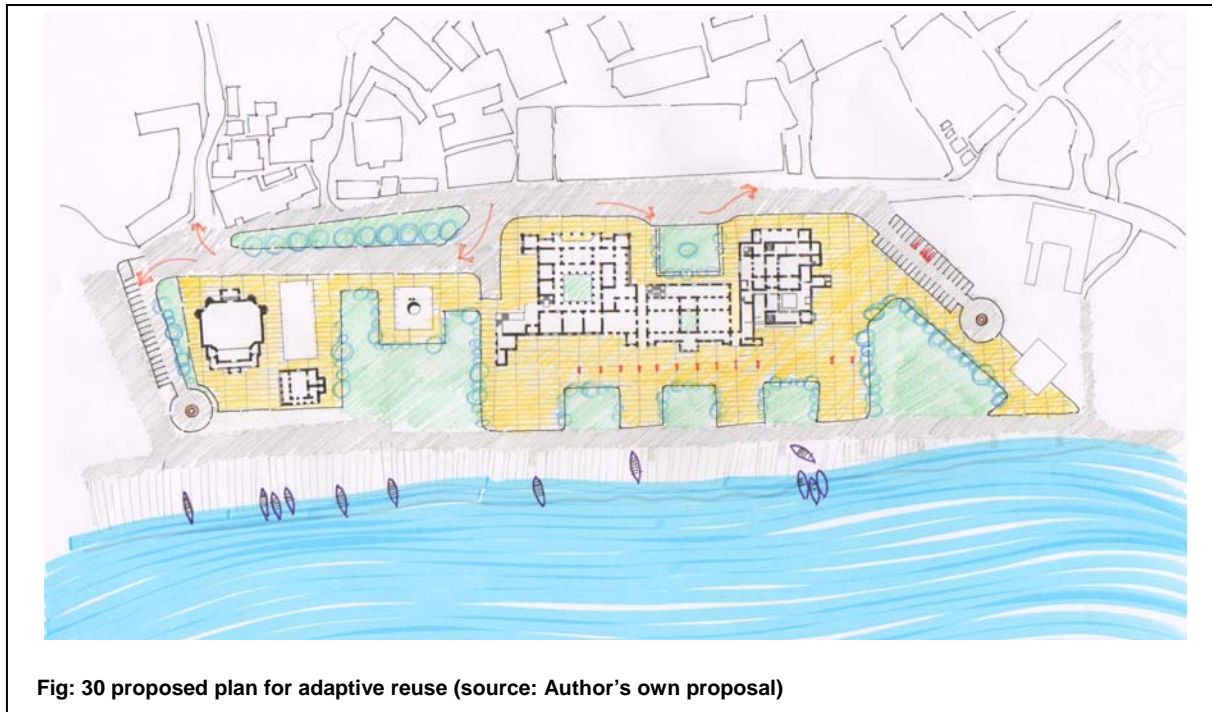


Fig: 30 proposed plan for adaptive reuse (source: Author's own proposal)

13. CONCLUSION

In this fast moving world, man passes into unconsciousness and becomes a thing of the past. But it lives behind some relics of the mode of life, which gives to present generations some idea about the civilization, culture, and socio-economic condition of the predecessor. Tradition of the past is the cultural heritage of the present day future life that is why it is required to look back to our art, literature and architecture of past heritage. Our heritage recalling the memories of our past Dhaka should not be ruin for our negligence. Ruplal house one of the examples of old Dhaka which is a valuable asset for the urban heritage.

Conservation work is multi-disciplinary, involving many skills that contribute in balance solution. The values of an historic buildings and the message therein must be assessed and put in an agreed order of priority before the architect undertaken any projects. So, as an architect and academician it is my duty to built consciousness and prepares proper guideline for the enhancement of further development that required conserving, preserving and restoring the past evidence.

From this it is obvious that, in this critical situation of our decaying heritage , it should be the primary concern of all, to conserve the area starting from Ruplal house and preserve the socio- cultural and architectural glimpses of old Dhaka .

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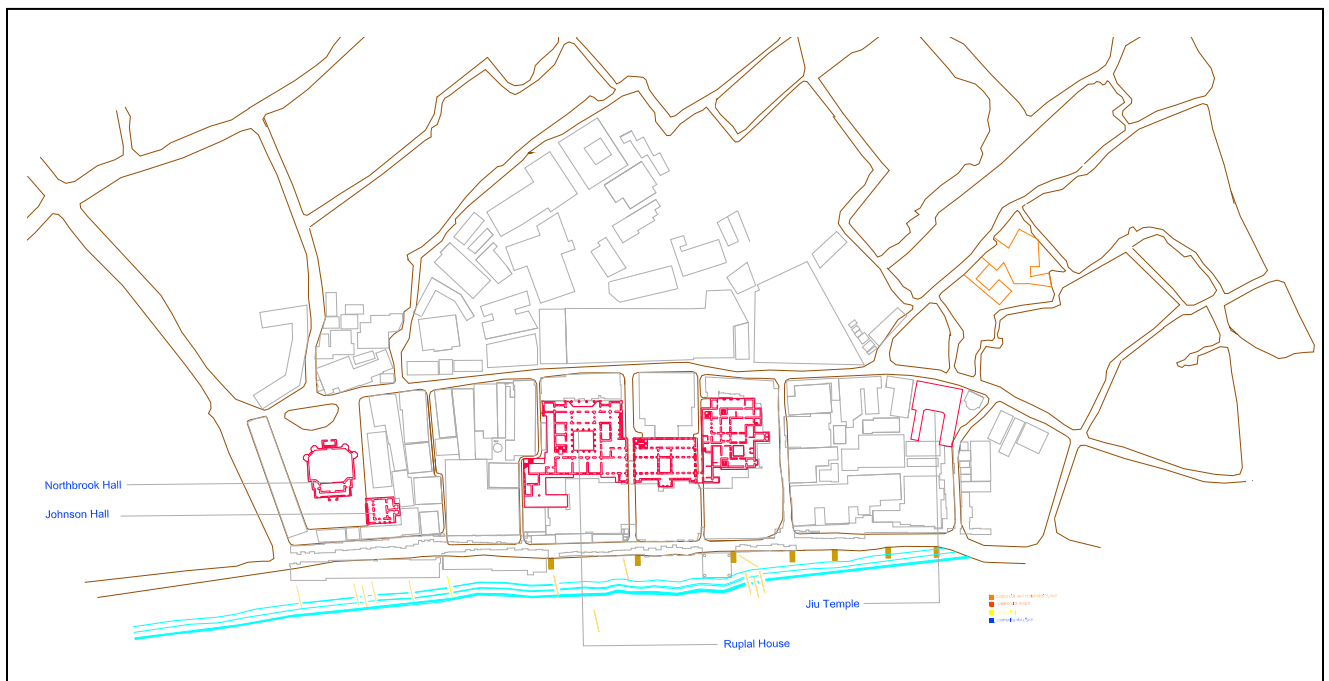
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14. I am grateful to Mosharraf Hossain regional director, Department of Archaeology.
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Nesfun Nahar, Lecturer of University of BRAC.

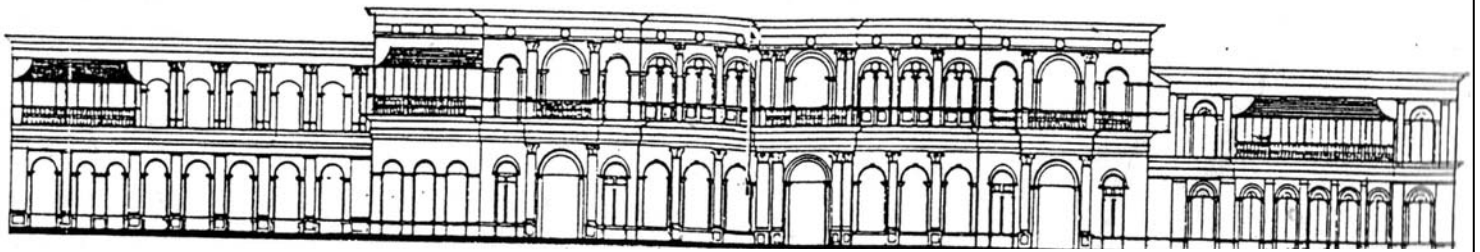
Annexure

Site Area plan of Ruplal House

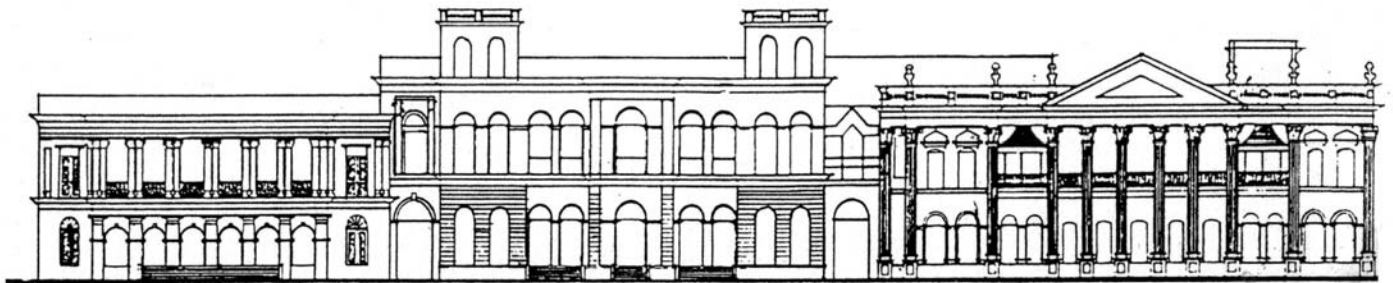


Important Structures:

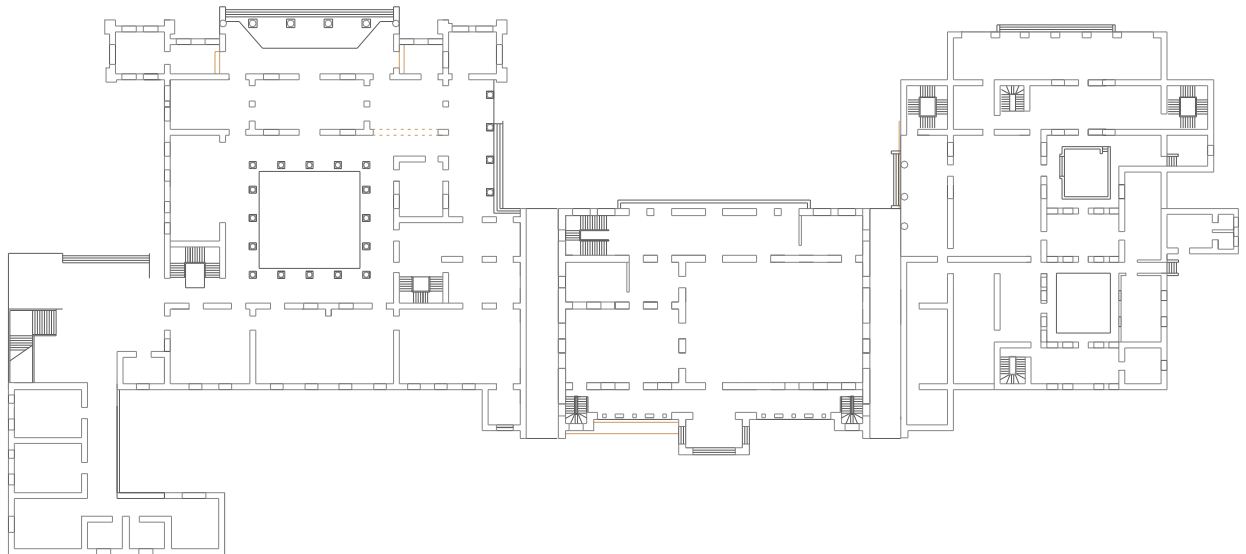




River side Elevation



Front Elevation



Plan of Ruplal House

Proposal for adaptive reuse:



View: 01



View: 02



View: 03