RETHINKING 'ISLAMIC HERITAGE': TWO CASE STUDIES TO PONDER

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ABSTRACT

Architecture played an instrumental role in spreading ideas of different civilizations around the world. Hence, through documenting heritage we could document the facets of different cultural Diaspora through time and spaces. The objective of the heritage study program at the department of Architecture of IIUM is to capture the facets of Islamic Diaspora around the world. As the very concept of Islamic architecture is problematic in today's architectural discourse, whether the buildings that the students are documenting during their visit are true representative of Islamic architecture is an issue to be discussed. During the Heritage Study trip 2011, the students of architecture of IIUM have recorded two interesting buildings, Haghighi house in Esfahan, Iran and the Diwan-i-Aam of Lalbagh fort, Dhaka, Bangladesh that are apparently 'secular' in terms of their function. Whether they could be able to elucidate the variegated expressions of Islamic architecture at two seemingly opposite geo-temporal locations is the central research question of this article.

By using these two examples, this paper critically reexamines the stereotypical but popular conceptions of 'Islamic Architectural Style' that obscured the historical processes of hybridization and its diverse morphological outcomes, and comprehend the process of resilience and assimilation through which architecture is shaped in a particular context.

Keywords: Islam, Architecture, Heritage, Process, Symbiosis

INTRODUCTION

The Heritage Studies course at the Department of Architecture, IIUM is expected to provide awareness on the history of Muslim civilization and architecture, the need for conservation of Islamic heritage and finally to familiarise students to the techniques of documenting historical buildings.

In the year 2011 the students of the Department of Architecture, IIUM, doing Heritage Studies course visited and recorded five interesting buildings that portray the variegated expressions of Islamic architecture at four different parts of the world. The first three are situated in the Malay-Javanese region of *Nusantara:* Masjid Sultan Abdullah, in Pekan, Malaysia; and the other two are Masjid Sunan Giri and Masjid Sunan Ampel both in Surabaya, Indonesia. These buildings may share some common historical narratives while capturing the facets of Islamic Diaspora in this region. The other two buildings, although situated a little further than the *Nusantara*, share the same link of Islamic trail of conquest into the Far East. The Haghighi House in Esfahan, Iran is an archetype of the traditional Persian courtyard house of the hot dry climate, the Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka, Bangladesh is a splendid example of the influences of Mughal in Bengal delta. These two buildings represent diverse expressions of the Persian as well as Islamic architecture at two ostensibly opposite geo-temporal locations. The Haghighi House was situated at the very core of the Persian Islamic culture and represents the true nature of the architecture of the heart land. On the other hand the Diwan-i-Aam of Lalbagh Fort is situated at the farthest end of the territory of Persian-Islamic influence, which was brought to Bengal by the Mughals. Situated at the two seemingly opposite ends as well as with radically

different cultural and geographical contexts these two pieces of architecture, however, share some interesting and common characteristics. The use of pointed arch, geometric pattern and screens on the windows and openings and the use *muqarnas* indicate that they might have some kind of historical association. There is no doubt that all these buildings that the students have studied have characteristics that make them to be listed under the categories of Islamic building. But whether they comply with the true definition of 'Islamic' architecture is an issue to be fathomed.

The question raised in this paper is theoretical and needs to be answered before delving further on Islamic heritage. Is it sufficient for a building to be situated in an Islamic land and constructed by the Muslim to be listed as 'Islamic Heritage'? Then what about the buildings constructed by the Muslims in a non Islamic environment, for example, the first mosque erected by the Afghan cameleers at the outback of Australia (Adelaide Mosque), which bears little or no reference in terms of its elemental expression to the so called 'Islamic' architecture. Should it be excluded from our list of 'Islamic Heritage'? For some scholars (Spahic 2002) this should not be the criteria to judge a building as Islamic. If so, then how does a building that truly bears the heritage value in terms of Islamic significance can be distinguished? In this regard, the focus of the current Heritage Study program of the department of Architecture of IIUM needs to be re-evaluated in light of current discourse.

METHODOLOGY:

This research combines extensive literature survey and limited fieldwork. The authors have visited and examined these two case studies during the fieldtrip in April 2011. Although short, the trip was a success because of the whole hearted efforts of the students and the staffs of the Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design and IIUM. Along with the documentations, interviews were carried out with different local experts to understand the context, culture and society, traditional architectural practices and construction methods of the particular region. The drawings and other visual materials that were analysed for this study were collected mainly by the students of 3rd year Architecture, IIUM. The primary visual documents were thoroughly studied and analysed by the authors in Malaysia along with theoretical review. This paper is based mainly on the resources in hand and data collected by the students during their two weeks field work. Hence it is not targeted to posit any assumption at the end. Rather it attempts to highlight some of the aspects to ponder that may instigate necessary potential for a discourse.

THE TRUE NATURE OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE:

The use of the term 'Islamic' to describe architecture, urbanism, and art is problematic. Moreover, discussions on Islamic influences on architecture and urbanization in different countries are sometimes loaded with simplification and generalization. It has been a well debated question for a long time among scholars as to what they actually meant by putting the adjective 'Islamic' in front of art and architecture. Is it the style, culture and religion? Or something else? Moreover if there is some architecture that could be coined as 'Islamic', there must be one that is non'-Islamic'. If so, then how are we going to differentiate between these two? Unlike other religion Islam does not have a system of iconography or symbols that represents the religion and its core values. It neither prescribes any building code nor any norm based on rituals.

For other religion like Christianity or Hinduism the religious architecture is confined only within the architecture of the place of worship. The other structures, regardless of the use, are considered as 'secular'. However, as the true Islamic belief is wide encompassing and

penetrates every aspects of life of a Muslim, Islamic architecture cannot be limited into mosques or place of worships. While a mosque could be safely distinguished and associated with the religion, albeit mosques architecture throughout the world has different morphological outcomes, distinguishing the other 'secular' structures of Muslims, such as houses, offices, schools, hospitals, banks etc especially in this age between Islamic or non Islamic is perplexing.

The way the architecture of Islam was portrayed in the different European or rather western scholarships earlier was well affected by the problem of historicism. Dynastic categorization of the art and architecture of Islam and an undertone or relating them with the Arab origin was highly emphasized in some of the major scholarships. The term 'Islamic architecture', became synonym of the Arab and Middle Eastern architecture and their derivatives in the other regions. Although scholars like Hillenbrand (1999) attempted to capture the diversified expression of Islamic art and architecture around the world, their structured dynastic categorization could not exceed historic time frame. This notion of historicism further complicates the issue and entrapped the discourse on Islamic art and architecture in antiquity that hardly has any impact on modern days problem, other than just mimicking the past to add some Islamic flavour. However, a Muslim believes that Islam has nothing to do with historicism, it is always modern and contemporary and it always provides solutions for the people of all the time. Hence the architecture of Islam must be contemporary and modern and be able to address the issues of the time.

Drawing reference from linguistic, Jaques Berque (1978) has made an interesting model for Islamic architecture. For him the architecture of Islam (or any architecture) can be dissected into two parts: the morphology and the rhetoric. Like language the rhetoric might be in common and shared between cultures, regions and contexts, but the morphology that combines the rhetorics together in a system, should be constant for a particular architectural vocabulary. This morphology is the system of the invariables (*thawābit*) and the variables (*mutahawilat*) are the rhetoric. As long as the invariables remains with the original system, the identity exists. Islamic architecture must have a morphology that goes beyond its history, geography, culture and all other boundaries.

Based on this linguistic model of Berque the scholarships in Islamic architecture can be divided into two major paradigms. The first replaced the morphology with the rhetorics as the main determinant and confined Islamic architecture within the elemental domain of forms and styles based on dynasty, local tradition and building typology. These presuppositions about Islamic influence, artefacts and cultures are baffled in a situation where supposedly 'Islamic' elements have no precedents in the other part of the Islamic world. Hybridized forms and shared architectural narratives that arose during the Islamic period in a particular region and which are unique to the material culture of that place sometime remain elusive by the myopic but popular perspective of 'correct' forms of an 'Islamic Identity'. These stereotypical conceptions of Islamic architecture obscured historical processes of hybridization and its diverse morphological outcomes and hence failed to identify true character of the buildings like the Adelaide mosque mentioned earlier. This paper is intrigued by this very problem.

This stylistics categorization has not only failed to truly identify the architecture of Islam through time and spaces, but sometimes attributes a pseudo-Islamic notion. As it is not possible to prescribe a common forms for mosque all around the world, it is simply not possible to identify certain styles or elements as Islamic. The focus of the Muslim scholars should be shifted and concentrate on prescriptive codes of conduct as outlined in and interpreted from the Qur'an, Hadith and previous juridical decisions on how human being should build and live. The nature of Islamic Architecture should be determined by the morphological elements of architecture that facilitate these codes of conduct within the multiple regional and historical contexts of the Islamic world. It necessitates a close

observation of the process by which diverse peoples across the world integrate cultural-historical contexts, regional styles, functional needs, and environmental possibilities within that system.

Once this linguistic model is accepted, then focus should be given on identifying the system and its working principles. There is no doubt that for Muslim this system should be based on Tawhid or the unity and also upon the teaching of Quran and Sunnah. As there was no direct guideline in Islamic religious texts regarding its architecture, the interpretation remains subjective and discursive. However, presumably the system should be pragmatic and conceivable enough so that it could be applied in any context at any time, as Islam is all encompassing and always contemporary for all the ages.

For Muslims this world is a transient space; they must be aware of the *la* of the shahada which reduces everything to nothingness before the immutable majesty of Allah. Man has to identify his role as vicegerent (*Khalifah*) of Allah in this universe of creation and "in every action of his - including building-man tends to express consciously or otherwise his outlook on life and the whole of universe, Islamic architecture is then nothing but a medium of Islamic doctrine" (Spahic Omer, 2002). A Muslim is reminded many times that while he is allowed to enjoy the normal and serene pleasure of life, excess and grandeur in any form is contrary to the will of Allah. That means the architecture of Islam although might have variegated expression in term of the rhetorics or elements but it must be in line with the principles of the teachings of Allah. It must express the harmony, respect and interdependence to the other elements of the creation. It should respect what is around and does not abuse the environment by overruling it. As Allah depicted,

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and (yet), do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corruptors. "[Quran 28:77]

Fathy (1978) argued that the subtleties of the nature must be addressed by the architects and designers from Islamic perspective. Drawing the parable of glass box with a conditioned environment as an epitome of modern architecture he once remarked about the truth behind any architecture. According to him the truth is to acknowledge and reminding us whatever is around us and relating them with the relation of greater universe that Allah has created. This only how architecture can be responsible to the doctrine that Allah has prescribed.

The architecture should be considered as an extension of the environment around and hence it should respect the constraints posed by the locale, respect the form that derived in particular climate and local materials and technology, whether modern or traditional. Anything in excess and imposing not only makes the architecture non-Islamic but also gave an amorphous character that cut off itself from its surrounding. If we examine closely, the commonalities of architectural attitude from the beginning in the seventh century until today, especially the traditional mode of constructing Islamic architecture, some interesting facets would be revealed. The willingness to adapt local materials, images and identity, to respond to local climate and at the same time hold on to the thread of basic principles of Qur'an and Shariah, which affect the overall Muslim life, ultimately shaped the traditional Islamic Environment (Khan 1978).

Hence Islamic architecture should be brought out of the trap of historicism. It is no longer a representative of a particular dynasty, culture, region or period. Rather Islamic architecture could be aptly described as 'symbiotic Architecture'. The process of symbiosis with context is the most important thing that provides the inherent morphology of Islamic architecture. The other material expressions of the buildings remain as rhetorics, susceptible to time and space. It is now clear that a building that is constructed by the Muslim in a Muslim country is not a guarantee to become a true Islamic architecture. Rather the process of symbiosis becomes instrumental in determining whether this particular architecture complies with the Islamic

principles. In the following section the compliance of the two case studies would be examined from this perspective of Islamic architecture.

THE HAGHIHI HOUSE, ESFAHAN, IRAN:

General Description

The Haghighi House is situated in a highly dense residential quarter of the city of Esfahan, Iran. The building was constructed by two rich merchant brothers during the end of the Safavid and early Qajar periods (circa 1800). It is an example of typical courtyard house design of that period. Currently it is owned by the Art University of Esfahan. In terms of geometry the house could be described as a simple rectangular with courtyard inside (Figure 01). While the outside of the house is barren and with almost no openings on the exterior facade, the inside of the house is opened towards the courtyard through meticulously decorated openings.

Concept

The design of Haghihi house was based on the concept of "Veiled Architecture". It means that the exterior facade of the house is simple while the interior of the house is rich with detail in ornamentation. In other words, the beauty of the house lies inside the house, not the outside. According to the Persians, the internal layout of the house is more important than the exterior of the house. The internal spaces must be able to provide good comfort and security for the inhabitant and should be hidden from the public's view. The whole idea is to protect the inner part of the house and the family, from the outside world. The bipolar concept of male and female become dominant in determining the arrangement of spaces within the house and their uses. The only door and the little seating area at the entrance is the only portal that connects the outdoor world to the house.

Haghighi House was built with tall and wide walls surrounding the house and the courtyard to provide the necessary privacy for the Muslim family. According to many Quranic instructions, such as

"It is Allah who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet."(16:80)

That means a house should be a protected place for a Muslim family to rest, relax and enjoy the bounties of Allah. The separation of male and female, *muhrim* and non *muhrim* is important in a traditional Persian-Islamic house, which is reflected even in minute details like the use of two different types of knockers; one for male and another for female, at the main entrance to alert the member of the inner household about who is coming in. The house was divided into the public (*birooni*) and private (*andirooni*) areas or quarters. The *birooni* quarters consisted of formal living area, which is a double volume hall. This also includes the bedroom for the parents and the room for the unmarried son. Usually the rooms in this quarter are much decorated with the main hall having a more formal form of decorations and ornamentations. All other bedrooms and a family living room in the summer house, the kitchen area where even men of the family were forbade entering and a secondary courtyard meant for the women, children and servants, consist the *andirooni* or the interior core of the house.

The courtyard is designed with water bodies and gardens as the Persians believe that courtyard should be a representation of paradise. Referring to the verses of the Holy Qur'an,

"The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! - Beneath it flow rivers: perpetual is the enjoyment thereof and the shade therein: such is the end of the Righteous and the end of Unbelievers in the Fire." (13:35)

Hence the garden and the water body played a vital role in the overall design and construction of the house.

Response to the Environment:

The house is divided into two parts; the winter house and the summer house as a response to the climate of that region. This was ingeniously done to take advantage of the warm sun in winter and to avoid the harsh summer sun. The people and activities in the house also migrated with the seasons, evoking the nomadic culture of ancient Persia.

The winter house is where the public area of the house is usually located. This is where the guests are entertained. Activities such as religious ceremony or family gathering are held in the winter house. The winter house is oriented and designed to maximize the use of sunlight to provide heat to the interior of the house since it is facing the south and will capture the heat of the sun. The decoration and aesthetic treatment are more intricate in this area of the house. The spaces in the winter house are divided into different parts. The north part is the main area where the parent's room are located. The east and west side of the house is for the married sons and their family to live in. In addition, the kitchen is also located in the winter house.

On the other hand, the summer house is designed to provide shade and coolness inside the house. The *andarooni* area or the summer house is the main activity centre for the household functions. It is the place where the domestic animals, fruits and vegetables are planted. The inhabitants of the house usually spend most of the time of the year in the summer house, on average for about nine (9) months when the weather is warm.

In general, a passive design strategy was cleverly employed in this house to minimize the use of energy by designing it according to the site and climate. The hot summer air passes through the courtyard and the pond, and thus lowered the temperature through evaporation before circulating through the courtyard of the summer house. The green courtyard at the centre of the house also helps in stabilizing the temperature of the house. The location of the windows, doors and openings which are facing the courtyard provides a good way for the air to pass through and removing the hot air through the holes at the top of the walls. The stained glass windows on all the four sides of the courtyard provide a muted lower level of radiation during the harsh summer conditions that is associated heat and glare as well. However, The Haghighi House use a lot of natural lighting in all of the spaces inside the house. All the windows in the house are facing towards the courtyard which provides sufficient lighting to all of the interior spaces in the house

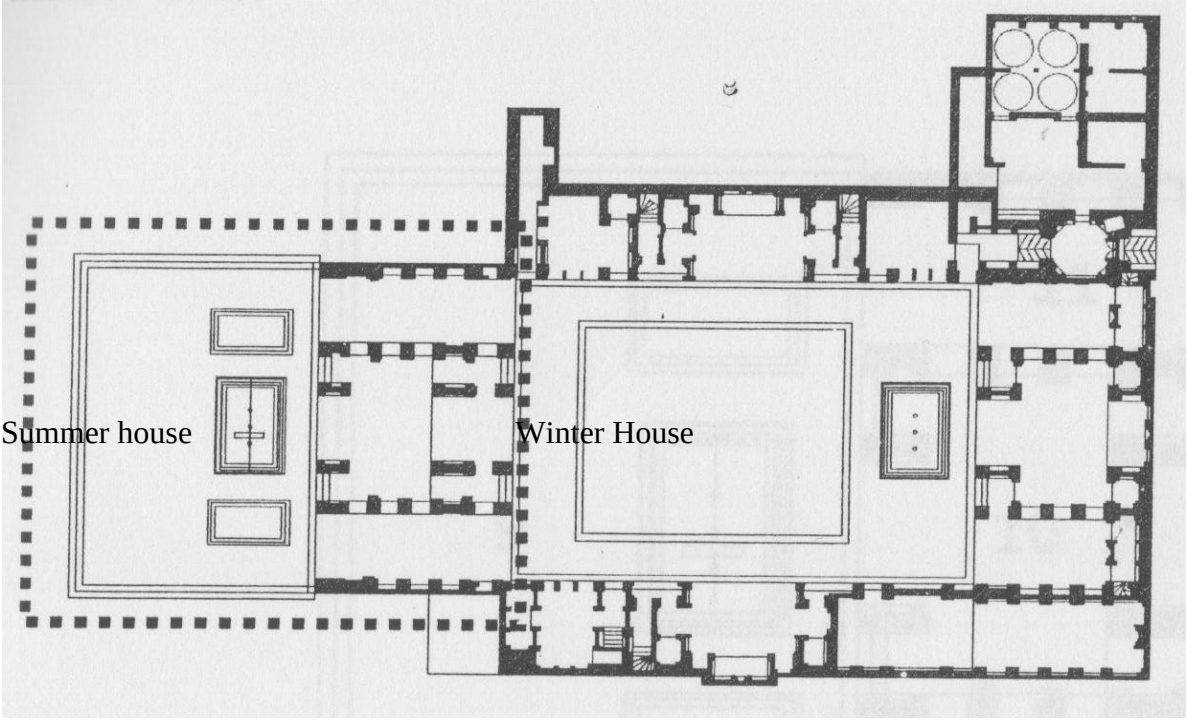

Figure 01: Ground Floor Plan of Haghighi House, Esfahan Iran
*(**Source**: Unpublished Long Report of the Heritage Studies 2011 , Esfahan Group)*

Response to the Locale:

Hasan Fathy (1978) once commented about New York that "The tree is wiser than man, because every leaf is placed where it can take the sun, the wind and everything else, but in New York you stacked everything over the other". With reference to the quote the Haghihi house can be described as the tree. It might not be a unique piece of architecture in terms of exterior appearance. Rather it is unique as how it blends subtly with the urban fabric of Esfahan and being an epitome of traditional Persian dwelling. The building was constructed in load bearing system using the local mud brick as the main building materials. It also used timber for flooring and for windows and doors. The construction technique was simple using the technology available at that time. It uses the local material, mud and straw construction technique in a subtle way. As explained earlier the spaces within the house are arranged mainly as response to two major aspects of the region. Firstly it is the climate and the natural conditions, and secondly the value system of the people. Hence this building is like a tree that knows how to place its branches and leaves, as Fathy commented.

Symbiosis:

The Haghighi house is a true interpretation of the Persian-Islamic concept of family and the interrelationship between its members. The Persians value and honour private life and never intrude to the private life of the others. Traditional residential architecture of Persian Muslim's always looks inward. A traditional Persian house is built around a central courtyard which is protected for the private use. At the same time it acts as the heart of the house through which necessary light and ventilation occurs during the two main seasons of the year, with all rooms opening up towards this inner space. It is as if the whole house protecting the family looking inward, and shunning the outside world. The inward-looking space resembles the warm embrace of the family.

The bipolarity of *andarooni* (introvert) and *birooni* and their juxtaposition in terms of *Muhrim* and non-*Muhrim* in Haghighi house conform to the Islamic idea of veil or Hijab. The use of local mud as building material and the plain appearance of the outside facade was purposely done to promote humility notwithstanding the wealth and status of the owners. Interestingly, the enclosure is not actually cutting off the connection of the house to the surrounding and does not make it an amorphous creation; rather it works as an interface by creating a dialogue between the city and house. Through the use of its courtyard, passive ventilation, natural lighting and most importantly saving the energy, the Haghihi house is not only sympathetic to the nature but deeply rooted itself strongly with climate of the region.

DIWAN-I-AM, LALBAGH FORT, DHAKA , BANGLADESH:

General Description

The construction of the Lalbagh fort was started in 1678, by the Mughal prince Azam as a seat for the Governor of the province of Bengal (*Subah e Bangla*). However, due to some unexpected situations the construction was ceased and the fort was abandoned within ten years of construction. The existing part of the incomplete Mughal fort of Lalbagh covers around 18 acres of land and originally situated by the river of Buriganga, which was currently shifted further south. The fort is mainly a combination of three buildings: the mosque, the tomb of Bibi Pari, and the Diwan-i-Aam, comprising two gateways and a portion of the partly damaged fortification wall.

This Diwan-i- Aam or the audience hall was generally used by the governor, to give the audience to his subjects and meet his officials. It was the place where the citizens put their concerns in front of the decision makers.

Diwan-i-Aam is a simple rectangular double storied building with an attached, single-storied bath house or *hammam* on its west (Figure 02). At the ground level it consists of a central hall which is flanked by two chambers. The main hall was designed mainly for private use which was accessible through three (3) arched entrances located at the centre of the building. At the central hall, contains a sunken ornamental fountain. The hall is flanked by two small chambers and staircases leading to the first floor. The first floor plan is similar to the ground with main hall to meet the audience. A separate staircase was placed for the access of the citizens and the commoners directly from the outside. The square *hammam* includes an open cruciform hall, a boiler, preparation area, heating room, cold water reservoir, a masonry brick bath-tub, a toilet, a dressing room and boiler room or kitchen.

Concept

The Diwan-i-Aam was basically conceived as an integral part of the whole complex that was designed as typical Mughal garden. The complex coined the name ‘Lalbagh Fort’ because of its huge fortification walls and gateways. However, the master plan and the layouts of the buildings that still exist suggest little or no similarity with the other Mughal forts either in Bengal or any other parts of India. The elaborate defense system, the intricacy of the entrance and the layering of the fortification walls to protect the emperor’s residence, of the forts in Agra, Lahore and Delhi, all are absent in this complex. However, the layout of the gardens and water features following the typical Mughal *Chaharbagh* concept, the pavilion like audience hall (Diwan-I-Aam), tomb, mosque and the terraced garden along the river side resemble closely to the Mughal gardens or the tomb complexes. The concept of *Chaharbagh* was basically imported from Persia by Mughal emperor Humayun and practiced widely across the Mughal territories in India. This concept basically demonstrated a symbolic representation

of the paradise on earth with colourful garden, flowing water channels and strategically located pavilions within it, based on the Qur'anic depiction of paradise.
"Allah hath promised to believers men and women gardens under which rivers flow to dwell therein and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss." (9:72)
In terms of morphology the Diwan-i-Aam of Lalbagh fort resembles more like garden pavilion than a typical Mughal royal building. Although, the strict geometric pattern, symmetry and majestic proportioning system of the Mughal based on the human scale are still evident.

Response to the Environment

For the Mughals of Central Asia, the Bengal delta was never a very attractive place due to its hot-humid climate and topography. However they devised their own system to adopt their architecture with this climate. The Mughal dwellings in Bengal can be best described as an antithesis of the typical house of central Asia with protected courtyard and indoor garden. The subtropical climate and heavy monsoon lead the Mughal builders to build their houses as a pavilion in the garden to provide enough light and ventilation for comfort (Ashraf 1997). However because of the privacy the whole garden was enclosed with walls to separate it from outside. The concept of *Chaharbagh* seems best suited for this kind of climate where there is no chilly winter and harsh summer, like their homeland.
Light, ventilation and evaporative cooling played an important role in determining the architectural character of Diwan-i-Aam of Lalbagh. The huge archways on the main facades virtually open the Main halls on the both levels to the surrounding garden. However, the screens between the columns known as *jalis* allow natural ventilation and lighting to enter into the building and the same time protect the privacy of the indoor. The geometric designs of interlocking octagons in the screen with delicate honeycomb patterns 'soften' the regulating geometry visually and filter the harsh sunlight. Whereas the thick wall and the water channels inside the building and the lotus fountain played significant role in keeping the indoor environment cool during the summer. The wide projected eaves on all four sides is a response to the torrential rain of the tropic to protect the structure as well as the indoor environment. The elaborate water supply system of the whole complex with the huge reservoir on the east, the water channels with fountains, the colourful gardens within the complex and the breeze from the river create and ambience of coolness and peace that muted the adversity of the climate. Instead of creating a protected courtyard or garden that works as the climate control element as observed in the earlier case study, the Diwan-i-Aam is like an open pavilion that is protected by the surrounding garden. This ponds or pools were used to create reflection of the magnificent building as well as the solution for the climatic condition, heat. As the building was only used during the day time as a royal office and the governor has to spent long hours there during summer, the addition of the *Hammam* or the bathhouse at the ground level was an interesting response to the climate although seems quite unusual.

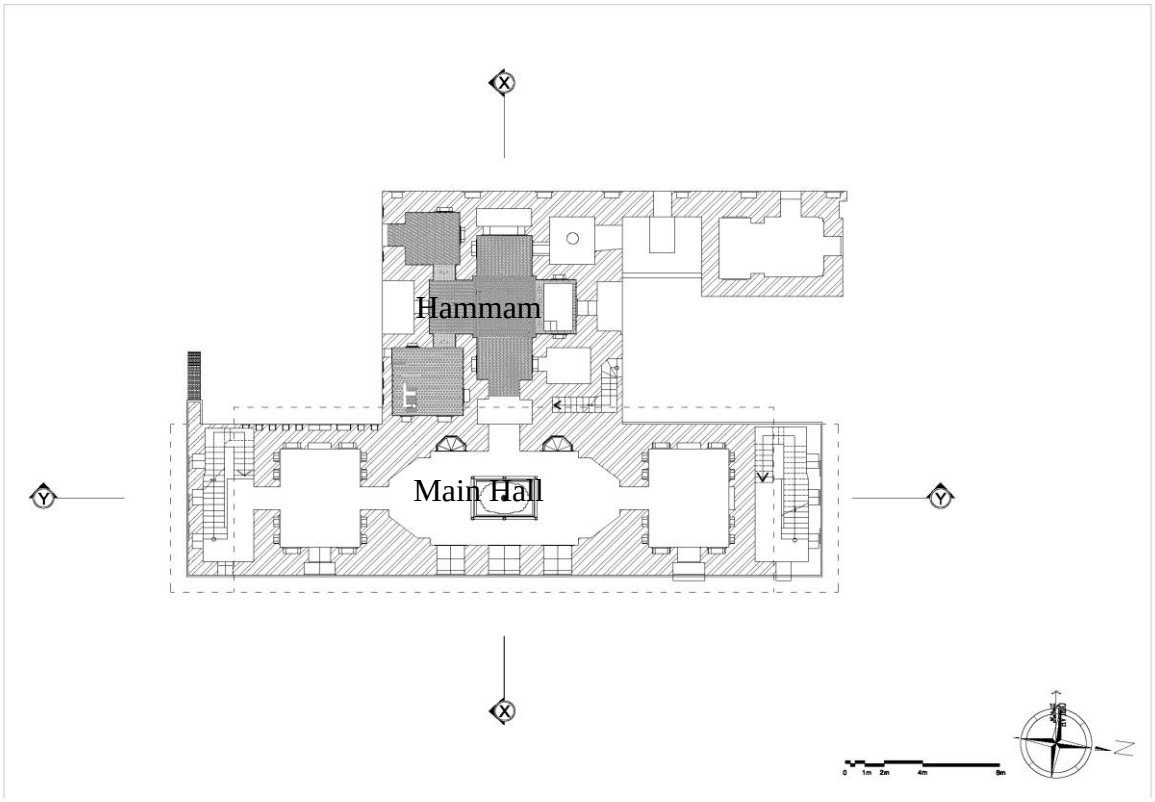

Figure 02: Ground Floor Plan and Arial View of the Diwan-i-Am of Lalbagh Fort
*(**Source**: Unpublished Long Report of the Heritage Studies 2011 , Dhaka Group)*

It might seem that the building is not addressing the local climatic conditions in terms of orientation as it is faced east-west to maintain the axial symmetry of the overall planning. Nevertheless, one thing should be remembered that the building was not designed as residence;

it was a royal court to be used for several hours a day. The overall master planning was done emphasizing the direction of the qiblah, which was west in this case, and the first building that was erected in the complex was the mosque. The other buildings were designed with respect to the mosque and the qiblah. According to the Mughal administrative system, the leader of the community was also considered as the religious leader and hence the seat of the governor, the Diwan-i-Aam, was placed in such a way that the governor should always faced towards the mosque or the qiblah while meeting his peoples. There might be debate regarding this manifestation, but there was no doubt about the strong religious inclination of its designer.

Response to the Locale

The combination of Mughal concept and local technology and materials has made the building unique in its own way. The design of the Diwan-i-Aam was based on the form and concept from the village hut. The Bengal village hut is a small humble unit constructed of mud or woven bamboo with a thatched roof (*chala*) and curved cornice. The adaptation of typical Bengal *chala* roof to address the problem of monsoon rain is probably the striking features of this building. However, rather than just grafting the roof outline as a response to the locale the Diwan-i-Aam is imbued with the essence of a typical Bengali hut. The humility of the scale, the plain and sombre facade without any decoration, and the little openings on south and northern facades suggest that this building is a successful translation of traditional bamboo and thatch architecture into more permanent material like stone and brick (Hasan, 2007).
Clay was the basic material that was found in the delta at that time. Hence brick and terracotta has been used for long time as the only permanent building materials in Bengal. While the Mughals in Delhi and Agra expressed their fascination towards the red sand stone and white marble, the builders in Bengal had little choice but to work with bricks. However, they did not continue with the pre-Mughal tradition of brick and terracotta, but to protect the brick from the wet and damp climate they introduced lime plaster as a solution. The reddish colour of the lime plaster mixed with brick dust became the trademark of Mughal buildings in Bengal. To keep the building simple and more humane the Mughal builders in Bengal emphasized more on proportion using the plastered wall with recessed panels, while the pre-Mughal builders emphasized on the terracotta ornamentation to dematerialize the solidity of the wall. The Diwan-i-Aam can be described as one of the best examples that demonstrate the Mughal masonry of brick and plaster.

Symbiosis:

Mughal royalty and local architecture; the blending was done ingeniously. While the Sultani (pre-Mughal Muslim) builders tried to interpret the local architectural language into their mosque and other architecture through a process of adopting the already existed brick and terracotta architecture, the Mughal builders took a different approach. They were more inclined towards blending their Delhi centred imagery of architecture. To certain extent the building respond well to the climate, the scale, volume and architectural character of Bengal. However there are some grey patches in the process how the architecture was actually materialized that needs further discussion. Whether the plain plastered wall was an honest attempt to blend the local construction technique and material or simply mimicry of red sandstone and marble buildings in Delhi and Agra is an issue under debate (Ashraf 1997). It is true that the Mughal were particularly fascinated about the beauty of red sand stone and white marble, which was reflected in their ample use of these two materials for their royal buildings that were mostly grand in scale. However, when they started using brick in Bengal, the scale of the building was noticeably toned down. It seems an apt response for modular material like brick. Further, this

modest Mughal building of Diwan-i-Aam actually contains far lesser geometric and spatial complexity, although referring to the precise proportion and intricate ordering system of the Mughal buildings in the west. After scrutinizing the Mughal architecture and their variations in different parts of India, it can be observed that the Mughals were keen to blend their architectural ideology with the local conditions and sometime it became so successful that eventually these local forms were included into their vocabulary of royal architecture. Abul Fazal (circa 15th century) in Ain-I-Akbari, mentioned that the Architecture of two regions, Gujarat and Bengal was very popular to the Mughal royalties of Agra. The best example could be the use of Bengal roof for the marble canopy of the emperor's throne. This particular roof form was also used in other important buildings like of the Shah Burj kiosk in Delhi and the roof of the emperor's audience hall, and emperor's private mosque in Agra and Lahore. In summary it could be said that the architecture of the Diwan-i-Aam is the result of the process of hybridization where the Islamic principles, local architecture and royal values fused together for a purposeful creation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The paper tried to analyze these two examples of architecture without looking into the elements, motif or decorations that provide hints to the so called 'Islamic' character. Rather attention was given more on the innate quality of organizing space and forms and using them to connect the microcosm of architecture to the macrocosm of the world. It investigated more on how the factors like the religious beliefs, social and economic structure, political drive, aesthetic motivation and artistic sensibility were expressed in these two buildings. In terms of beauty, both of these two buildings are beautiful in their own way. However beauty and utility are never separated from Islamic perspective. The art of making is equally important with the product (Nasr, 1978). Hence the focus was to discern the process through which these two pieces of architecture were shaped and materialized.

In the case of Haghighi house it was the profound sympathy and respect for the people, culture and contexts that engendered the form and its architecture. It is not just a mud brick structure with elegance and refinement in details; it was rather an instrument for expressing architecture in its local and regional context to ensure both relevance and authenticity. It is a true example of symbiotic architecture that encompasses the aspects of Islamic value as well as local and regional characteristics.

The architecture of Diwan-I Aam of Lalbagh fort is hybrid in character. Three major factors work together to manifest its architecture, firstly, the axial planning and orientation was a consequence of adopting a higher order system of religious metaphor. Secondly, the precision of geometry, proportion and scale demonstrated the Mughal ingenuity of architectural practice. Finally there was the realm of the vernacular that was reflected in the articulation of form, space and detailing of individual building. Nevertheless, most importantly this building elucidates the process of continuous resilience and assimilation between these three.

In terms of 'rhetorical' expression both of these buildings have some similarities, while using the arches, *Iwans*, *Muqarnas*, *Jalis*, different motifs and particularly the concept of *Chaharbagh* ,which are very common in different buildings in the 'Islamic' world. Highlighting these 'rhetorical' aspects of 'Islamic' architecture pose the danger of putting 'Islamic Heritage' to retreat in antiquity. Hence it is felt that this might not be enough to draw a conclusion and listed them as 'Islamic' heritage. Rather it deems that the 'morphology' of the building should comply with the spirit of Islam that has the capacity to decode the past legacy and transcend the time. It necessitates the emphasis on examining the process of making than the product, during the heritage studies. Only then the correct message will be conveyed to coming generations.

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