



Qualities in Architecture

Aida Kesuma Azmin



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QUALITIES IN ARCHITECTURE

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A BENGALI HOUSE: THE DWELLING CULTURE IN BENGAL DELTA

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ABSTRACT

The unique landscape of Bengal delta has determined the dwelling culture of this region. The traditional dwelling in Bengal is true expression of the material culture of the people of the land both in terms of its form as well as use. There is certainly some variations in the dwelling pattern that is mainly because of the change of topography, microclimate and different religious practice. However, there is an underlying theme that ties them together into larger family. This paper is an attempt to reveal the character of that underlying theme that works as the major determinant for the dwelling culture in Bengal delta.

Keywords: Bengal delta, Traditional House, Dwelling Culture

INTRODUCTION

Rappoport (1969) has described “The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Because building a house is cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs. ...If provision of shelter is the passive function of the house, then its positive purpose is the creation of an environment best suited to the way of life of people – in the other words, a social unit of space.” Hence dwelling at any form is not only the fullest expression of material culture; it is the connection between man and nature which is perceived through the world view that exists in this particular culture. The architectural manifestation of this connection may vary in details, depending on the purpose that has to be served, the economic condition, availability of material as well as the microclimate. However, an underlying theme can be observed that brings all these variations into a common platform. This underlying theme is the spirit of the place, the *genius loci*, which gives a place a particular identity and its architecture a particular character. A traditional house is a tangible manifestation of this spirit into its most basic form.

Thus the vernacular architecture of Bengal is dominated by the very nature of the delta- the combination of land, river and agriculture. Here, “the cosmological and valorous concepts are generated from the riverine dynamics and agricultural rituals.” (Ashraf 1995) A