

HERITAGE STUDY OF MUSLIM WORLD

ALI RAZA SOOMRO



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DR. ALI RAZA SOOMRO



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CHAPTER 1:
THE MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE IN BENGAL DELTA: A CASE STUDY OF
‘DIWAN I AAM’ OF THE LALBAGH FORT IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The unique landscape of Bengal delta has strong influence on its architecture. Whatever styles or influence of architecture came from outside had to compromise with this landscape of water and soil, the wet condition and humidity and the people of the land. In the early 17th century, when Mughal first arrived in Bengal and started their grand building activities they also have to look for a new architectural expression that commensurate with Mughal idea of monumentality and at the same time respond to the local condition. The Diwan i Aam (Audience Hall) of the Lalbagh fort in Dhaka is one of the best examples that demonstrates the attempts of the Mughal builders. This paper would delve deeper into these aspects of this particular building to understand the process through which the Mughal has realized their architectural ideas in this unique deltaic condition.

Keywords: Bengal Delta, Mughal Architecture, Lalbagh Fort, Diwan I Aam.

INTRODUCTION

Lalbagh fort is one of the most important Mughal monuments in Bengal, currently Bangladesh. The fort was visited earlier in this year (2011) with a group of students from third year architecture of International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) as part of their Heritage Studies program. The author accompanied the team as an advisor and noted his personal observation on different buildings of this monumental complex, especially the audience hall or the Diwan I Aam. In comparison with Mughal buildings in Indian sub-continent and South Asia, the architecture of this particular building, poses certain interesting features that are worthwhile to study. This paper is an attempt to illustrate those aspects. The deltaic condition of Bengal and the commissioning of Dhaka as the Mughal capital played an instrumental role in determining the architecture of this monument. It necessitates a back ground study of the context before we delve further.