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## City-River-History: Conserving the Heritage Structures for Cultural Survival- Issuing Problems and Opportunities in Old Dhaka.

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### Abstract

The historic architecture by the river ‘Buriganga’ in Dhaka, Bangladesh is full of splendour in contrast with the rapid urbanization throughout the city. The city structures in old Dhaka is simple and had an orientation of involving infrastructure and an imaginary that is reflective of its ruler. The culture unveils its true identity through the footprints of heritage structures and the nearby river which has transformed over the decades. The paper discusses the problems of such majestic structures and opportunities that results from its conservation and finally comes up with proposals of expanding to the edge of precious landscape of wetlands and terrains by ushering a conception of a city that integrates urbanism and heritage to yield greater economic prosperity.

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### 1. Introduction

Five thousand years of urban history unveils drastic changes of cities radically transformed and in some cases transformed into a more chaotic form. The social norms also got intertwined as part of the changes within the cities. Life followed the surrounding perspectives became molded within the various forms. History supports the fact that the origin of civilization sprung up by few of the river valleys based on the geographic provenance of water: the River Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, the Indus and Hwang Ho serve as testaments to such occurrences.

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The need for multiple usages through the river creates a great networking system where the settlement grows. The construction of the channels of canals and the development demanded greater need of social intercourses, cooperation and long ranging planning orientation. It was the natural and the social environment system that the today city environment is superimposed. Within the urban context the basic unit of society was integrated in to larger communities. Commercial exchange, trades through river brought different communal background in to same platform. The segments of religions and religious festivals were also a fact to form the localities in a certain pattern. The ancient cities represented a new paradigm of human concentration and lead to a new magnitude of metropolis. In this process the mixed trend of social, cultural diversities formed the shape of the city entity. Along with the divisiveness of growth pattern, another development is more common in Asian cities. That is the ongoing flow of the rural people in to the inner metropolis which turned the age long rural poverty in to the urban poverty. The demographics, economics, globalizing forces and their interactions are reinforcing this nature of urban growth (Amin,1996). Similarly the misuse of resources, uncontrolled market led to the devastation of the quality of living environment and cause social and ecological imbalance. It is unfortunate that cities in general are not so discussed with rational historical analysis and genome codes. In the developing countries, the cities are much overwhelmed with current globalization trend with little or almost no reading on its generic past. The layers of different segments of urbanization are overlapped and the historical ruins give an occasional clue to the institution and the social, cultural life which accompanied them. Many metropolitan cities are thriving for the development in next level while demolishing their heritage to nourish themselves. There is believed that the urban development and heritage conservation are incompatible. Yet many others have used cultural heritage to continue with and improve upon their livability. (M.Rahman) but in most cases modern out scaled structured take away the grandeur of heritage structure and damaged the very quality of social life. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh is not out of the system. Overall the country has seen phenomenal urban growth in the past decades- resulted in chaotic form. From Sultanate period to Mughal-to Pakistan, all these which were structured were mitigated by ongoing migration, unplanned settlements and incoherent built form. This ongoing transformation has changed the city in to rather strange but familiar images. In contrast the historic architecture in Bangladesh was splendidous. The city structures were simple and had an orientation of involving infrastructure and an imaginary reflects to the ruler. The traditional cities were the diagrammatic representation of an explicit identity. The physical structure has orientation towards the future and coherent with architectural language. However the physical form of Dhaka confined with the myth, illusion, divisiveness, aspiration and even a nightmare of an imaginary. These all corresponded with the ongoing unplanned development, ruining the precious historical gems by altering, adding or modifying according to the individual choice and change the spatial land use pattern. The demographic change in Dhaka, specially the old part is highly concentrated due to the fact that living is comparatively cheaper than the new one. The ongoing migration of non locals creates a new layer of texture not necessary shows the economic strength but also causes serious damage of the cultural identity.

The following paper discuss with the problems and opportunities of conserving the heritage in the old part of the city. The culture reflects in the fabric of the city that holds its true identity through the footprints of heritage structures and the river which has transformed over the decades. A proposal has been rendered by carefully analyzing the problems and simultaneously considering the opportunities. This has been incorporated in the proposed scenarios by giving an attention to the heritage structures, water and the wet land area. An ambitious yet practical vision of old Dhaka has been proposed where the revitalization of the historic gems can be a part of planned settlement by considering heritage as a place making element within the urban landscape.

## **2. The Growth and Shape of a City- Dhaka**

Bangladesh is vulnerable to the global climate change. The rapid urbanization and the misuse of urban land show floods during the monsoon season and drought in dry season. Research shows that the melting of glaciers and snow in Himalayas, along with the rainfall attribute to the climate change, will lead more floods in Bangladesh, esp. the cities located near to the coast line and in delta region. This includes Dhaka and suffers from excessive heat

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