The Post Colonial Public Spaces and its Cultural Diversity:  
The Case of National-Cultural Representative Public Spaces of Dhaka

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Cultural conflict and contestation is semiotically encoded in the built environment and provides material evidence that the public space and its spatial relations are a cultural production of these struggles (Low, 2000). The public space of Dhaka¹ is no exception and has been as much sites of contestation as of negotiation and mediation. From Indigenous settlements at the fringes of Old Dhaka demarcating land property, to create vast recreational open spaces by the ruling class people in Mughal or Colonial Period, to erased politically charged open spaces in post colonial period and building of monuments or restricting/controlling spaces- public spaces of Dhaka [fig 1] represents sites of power, identity and belief. As such the public spaces of Dhaka City reminds Mehrotra’s Kinetic City, “the South Asian Cities are characterized by physical and visual contradictions that coalesce in a landscape of incredible pluralism” (Mehrotra, 2009). Contestation over public spaces at Dhaka’s context are ever increasing due to its high population density, rural- urban migration, inadequate infrastructure and services, downturn or stagnant economies, pressure on land, security concerns, poor urban management.

In Dhaka’s dense urban situation [fig 2] with inadequate number of public spaces (Rashid 2003, Nilufer 1999, Mowla 1985), existing post colonial public spaces are intensively used in daily life, and also during the great moments that twist historical evolution. So as these spaces became a prerequisite for the expression, representation, preservation and / or enhancement of democracy. The City’s post colonial public spaces remained site of prolonged struggles and negotiated juxtaposition of public and sacred spaces. At the same time they all are essential for every day civic life. Evidently various indigenous, colonial and post colonial layers² give substance to

1 Dhaka one of the largest city in South Asia and the capital of Bangladesh, estimated 12 million people huddle in a space of 845 square kilometer. One-third of Bangladesh’s urban population lives in Dhaka. According to World Bank (2007), Dhaka is probably the fastest growing mega city in the world today.

2 Dhaka has passes various socio-political-cultural phases of urbanization that provides an unprecedented opportunity to look at this culture and political trajectories to investigate the use, meaning, creation, re-appropriation of urban spaces in its different layers. Settlement evolves as major trade routes and also as administrative centers in Dhaka, where topography and locational aspect played a major role in its natural defense. The capital gave rise to various urban settlements as found in the history “...largest town being Dacca city (90,543)… there are ruins at Bikrampur, at one time the head-quarters of the Sen Dynasty (9th and 10th cent. AD), and at Sonargaon, the first Capital of the Mohammedans in eastern Bengal; an ancient legend also attach to remains at Rampal, Durduria, Savar…”(Rennel, 1792). During the Hindu and later Muslim Sultanate period, Dhaka was an important trading centre. Dhaka was the provincial Mughal administration for about 100 years, and during British period (1765 to 1947), for few years it was the capital of East Bengal-Assam Province. After the partition of
the social and cultural production and reproduction of these public spaces. In turn, this influences the processes of in and exclusion, creation and re-appropriation of particular urban space in everyday life, but also in the history-making events that mark the young nation.

In this cultural-political background of Dhaka, public space with its spatial reality, human behavior or the processes generated between them, takes on diverse forms: The indigenous public space has its spatiality- i.e. its re-presentation of space in Bengali’s life; and the European culture, influences colonial urban landscape. Since partition, the indigenous-colonial space has continuously been re-constituted by both organized and spontaneous forms of public appropriation, re-appropriation and thus has responded to different conceptions of collective urban life. The study reveals that the post colonial spaces in-between indigenous and new part of the city - is loaded with dynamic socio-cultural, national-political collective actions, attitudes and symbols. The study also unravels the role of the post colonial public spaces of Dhaka as stages for and in the twists of history of the Bengali nation and its political struggle. The study also shows that as spaces of demonstration and mobilization, these public spaces of the capital played indeed a pivotal role in the democratization process and nationalist movements. With its long socio-political history, indifference in social status, wealth and access to political power, contestation at post colonial Public Spaces are inevitable in Dhaka.

The Indigenous Urban Open- Social Production of Space:
“There is a relationship between the circumstances of the production of public spaces and people’s experience of them” (Low, 1996). Without knowing the historical value, the places which at first glance appeared to be “left over”, may be charged with significant meaning. While the deigned places which seems visually successful, might have completely surplus value for the city people.

In historic terms, two attributes of the city’s indigenous pre-colonial urban space can be distinguished. The first one is characterized with compact and densely built areas with narrow and irregular street pattern in Indigenous Dhaka. The notion of urban open spaces (like uthan-mahalla-gali)³ is attributed to rural spatial layout (composed with baris-mahallas-bazaars) and emerged as successful public spaces with spontaneous participation, aspiration, and socialization by the city people. Historically Bazaar and the Chouk (squares) are the larger public spaces in Indigenous Dhaka and used for commercial propose as well as a central place for gathering. Chouk [fig 3]act as the central knot in the social fabric and was the nexus of a complex web of relations permeating all level of culture, a meeting point of economic forces, political power

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Indian Subcontinent in 1947, Dhaka became the providential capital of East Pakistan until 1971, with the civil war Bangladesh emerged with Dhaka as its capital city.

³ The basic module of open space for organizing key mingles at domestic level is Uthan. The Uthan adds a cultural dimension, by defining a minimum buildable land and offering logical house lay-out (Khan, 1985). Uthan concept results in formation of Mahallas at various hierarchies (Mowla, 1997). Mahalla, the residential enclaves were self contained with daily necessities, whereas the Gali (Internal spontaneous streets) of Mahalla act as an open public space. Here socio-cultural interactions, like face-to-face residential contacts along with household to community level activities add special values and meanings.
and religious patronage (Urban, 2001). *Chouk*, along with administrative (fort) and commercial activities around, was the indisputable place for enjoyment and acted as a magnet for the (Indigenous) City.

Other attribute of indigenous Dhaka was the deliberate creation of open spaces by the ruling class people. For defense reason, *Mughal’s*, high civil officers and landlords create vast garden houses to live at a distance from the indigenous urban core. Large pleasure gardens (*like: Bagh-e-Badshahi*) [fig 4] were created at this time.

These deliberate creations of open space persuades openness and comfort in the subtropical climate. Another creation was the ‘specialized areas’. For greater possibility for trade and commerce, large manufacturing center, artisans, craftsmen, manufacturers settled in Dhaka⁴. “The Mughal rulers encouraged these people by granting them rent free lands for habitation”(Ahmed, 2003)⁵. The internal roads of these specialized area connected with *Chouk* formed the specialized shopping streets and served as the outdoor civic spaces for the community.

**The Colonial Urban Open Space- The Territorial Apotheosis:**

The English colonial exploits ⁶ of eighteenth and early nineteenth century shows their rational and intellectual attitude (Mowla, 2000) towards Indian civilization. Firstly, by laying out colonial settlements in suitable place. Naturally the practices involved

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⁴ Various European powers- Portuguese, Dutch, British, and other foreign merchants, traders and bankers -Armenians, Pathans, Turanis, Marwaris, came to Dhaka, to do business and dominated the region-contributing to its cultural diversity ‘Many strange nations resort to this city on account of its vast trade and commerce in great variety of commodities, which are produced in profusion in the rich and fertile lands of this region. These have raised the city to an eminence of wealth which is actually stupefying ...’ (Ahmed, 2003).The architectural landmarks, mosques, temples, churches, neighborhood’s/ street name (Laxmi Bazar, Armanitola, etc.), indicate the rich diversity and the pluralistic culture that the city embodied.

⁵ *Tanti bazaar* (Weaver’s Market), *Shakhari Bazaar* (Shell Cutter’s Market), *Kumartoli* (Potters’ Area) are such specialized areas inhabited by trading communities. Within these settlements, the residential quarters were mixed with retail and wholesale outlets, workshops and ware houses (Mowla 2003, Khan, 1985).

⁶ Colonial phase in Bengal began in 1757. When the British—after the Battle of *Pallassey*—gained military control of Bengal and in 1765 took over the right to collect revenue of the country. Dhaka declined rapidly... as Political, administrative, and military power shifted to Kolkata, the new capital—the base of the East India Company (Ahmed, 2003). Between 1801-1840 many dense localities in Dhaka (like Narinda, Wari ) became largely abandoned. As describe by Clive in 1757, “Extensive, populous and rich as the city of London”, by1853 became ...“the jungle...Dacca, the Manchester of India, has fallen from a very flourishing town to a very poor and small town” (Mowla, 2003, original sources Trevelyan, 1853). After the mutiny of 1857-58, the British Government took the rule of India from the East India Company.
European theory rather than the native culture. Secondly, they followed the general principal of the English system of colonization—"indirect rule". They used the local elite and existing institutions of power, rather than imposing European authority for management and control. Physical changes happened rapidly in response to the political and economic demands placed on Dhaka (as new regional capital). By establishing power (military and administrative headquarter) at the center of the town (on and around the Mughal fort), British made it one of its central tasks to take the control and regulate the market place- the prominent public place of Bengal. Indeed, the bazaar was in a sense an epicenter in the struggle for colonial rule (Urban, 2001).

In 1825, Mughal's abandoned garden Bagh-e-Badshahi were rapidly appropriated as "racecourse"7, introduced by British colonials' as a means to spread (Victorian) elites values', to establish cultural familiar landscape and also a way of situating in-between indigenous and colonial area. With regard to specific design, Ahmed (2003) stated “Some features of that urban environment with which they were familiar at home, who turned their attention northwards to the higher ground which had been a favored area under the Mughals”. Ramna Race course away from the urban core became a splendid open space and a popular recreational site for the English and elites of the city. With the linked to the notion of English commons, this kind of development might be considered as or demonstrate cultural superiority.

New cantonment area was established by Magistrate Charles Dawes at the northeast of the city (beyond the Nawabpur and Thatari Bazar area). The layout was formal with barracks, officers’ quarters and parade ground. Due to the site’s unhealthiness, it was abandoned in 1853 (Haider, 1967). The cantonment (Present named of the area is Purana Paltan or Old Platoon) establishments then shifted to the Old Mughal Lalbagh Fort and Pheel Khana military area. Then the purpose and agendas were laid out by the municipal committee to preserve the Purana Paltan as an Maidan8. As stated by Geddes, an outspoken critic of British colonial planning practices "When transplanted abroad, as in the British cantonment, the successful effect is rare, the failure is frequent"(Tyewhitt, 1947). Despite it unhealthiness, the old cantonment area had become a very beautiful place after years of constant care, one of the most picturesque in the town(Ahmed, 2003). This space9 then functioned for parade ground, field as shooting rangers for the army, cricket grounds/ playing fields -the familiar elements of English design and the landscape park tradition.

Formation of European sector in Dhaka basically began with the dismay of Cecil Beadon’s visit and recommendation in 186210. 100 yards strip land was selected by

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7 In 1825, Magistrate Charles Dawes takes the abandoned Mughal’s garden Bagh-e-Badshahi and laid out a spacious green space at the northern side of the city. A large oval in Bagh-e-Badshahi was cleaned and enclosed with a wooden railing, and round its perimeter a race course was laid out (Dani, 1962, Ahmed 1986, 2003, Mowla 1997,Mamoon, 2007).

8 A Maidan is commonly described as large plain an open field or a vast ground the word Maidan itself is of Persian origin and in Bengali it is the term for ‘open plain’, ‘park’, ‘square’.

9 After partition, Pheel Khana remained as the cantonment of the Border Rangers, while part of Purana Paltan area was assigned to the Police line.

10 By 1820, the discomfort of living in Mughal’s old fort area prompted the British establishment to move towards the east near the river closer to their factory site( Ahmed, 2003, Mowla 2000). Henceforth, the Sadar Ghat- Bangli bazaar area and its northern localities grew up as the new city center. But in 1862 Cecil Beadon, The Lt. Governor of Bengal, expressed his dismay on his visit to Dhaka over the chaotic and scattered situation and ordered Buckland for new location for whole establishment.
C.T Buckland (the Commissioner of Dhaka) to concentrate and accommodate colonial administration at the northern side (along Johnson Road) of the city. By 1866, District Judge courts, Magistrate, Collector and their subordinate offices along with other public and private organization were shifted to this new location. The construction of this new development called Civil Line or the European quarter of Dhaka. By 1885, the introduction of the railway left the ever lasting impression on Dhaka’s urban fabric [fig 6]. By then the center was shifted from old indigenous core to the new functional zoning space (i.e.: Civil Lines, Civil Station and Cantonment). New offices and courts triggered the whole series of this development and completed a fundamental change in urban fabric. The rail line practically demarcated the indigenous and new European developments (Dani, 1962).

The urban open space system (ie, park, river front) developed rapidly not only for the sound environment, but also as a means to create familiarity and instill socio-cultural values through recreation. As noted by King, “culturally familiar and easily recognizable environment which …..was a formal and visible symbol providing psychological and emotional security in a world of uncertain events”(King, 1976). “Changing needs and changing pattern of trade and commerce changed the morphology of the business districts. Chouk Bazaar remains the main center for trade and commerce, while Rai Shaheb Bazar near the civil lines grew up as a new market place” (Mowla, 2003). In 1905 Dhaka was made the East Bengal –Asam Province’s capital. At that time another important morphological evaluation was the establishment of a new Civil Station (Mowla, 2001, 1997), at the north of railways line and around Mughal garden Bagh-e-Badshahi (Ramna Area). The Governor’s house (present High Court), the Secretariat (present Dhaka Medical College) and Town Hall/ the Curzon Hall (Physics Department of Dhaka University) formed the core of the new Town Ship. After establishment of Dhaka University (1921), most of the buildings erected in this locality were handed over to the university (Later after partition in 1947, the East Bengal Government took two-third of the civil station or Ramna Area).

Post Colonial Space as the Precipitate of Social Conflict:
Since Partition in 1947 the open space has been continuously re-constituted, modified by both organized and spontaneous forms of public appropriation, reapprropriation and thus responded to different conceptions of collective urban life. Due to economic differences, political disagreements and socio-cultural stratifications; a tensed political relation developed just after the partition in between two wings of Pakistan. The common beliefs of Islam could not subsume the tension, rather the aggression reflects on the colonial open spaces of Dhaka. In such adverse situation the declaration of the Pakistani rules as Urdu- the state language resisted intensely by the Bengalis. The colonial space (Old platoon, civic station near Ramna Racecourse and Dhaka University Institutional area) became battle field [fig 7].

11 British left the Indian Subcontinent socio-culturally-geographically partitioned in to two different states- India and Pakistan in 1947. The main basis to unify two different nations (East and West wing of Pakistan) separated by thousand miles was religion.
On 21 February 1952, the police force opened fire on Bengali protesters; who were demanding equal status for their native tongue—*Bangla*. A number of students and participants were killed, injured, and thousands were arrested. To commemorate ‘martyrs’ of the language a small monument ‘*Shahid Minar*’ was erected instantly by the students of University of Dhaka and other educational institutions at the premise where ‘martyrs’ were killed. This place was continuously re-constituted by the then state in a destructive way and by its people in making the place [re]appropriated the place as the symbol of protests and a focal point for the city.

The movement gained momentum (Uddin, 2006) and after long struggles *Bangla* was given equal status as *Urdu*. The language movement is believed to be the starting point for the Bengali’s struggle for a nation; where spaces of the colonial cityscape of Dhaka fiercely played the central role. As Haque stated, Bangladeshis continue to commemorate *Ekushey* (Twenty First February), which has come to represent the launching of a struggle to celebrate Bengali language and ethnicity as well as a symbol of resistance and the beginning of the struggle for independence (Haque, 2009). The monument stood until 1971, when it was demolished completely by the Pakistani Army, with a signboard of appropriation “Mosque-to be built here”. The Monument was rebuilt again by the State (Public works department) in 1973, and from then on the *Shahid Minar* Plaza with its institutional surroundings acts a pre-eminent symbolic space of Dhaka to show demonstration, condemnation and cultural assertion round the year.

Post partition (Pakistan Period) also brought complex-contradiction and frustration in the society. Urbanization faces challenges and open public spaces were adversely controlled. Later the tendency went through by rapid construction of functional structures rather than creating or preserving open spaces. Part of old civil station, Old Platoon (*Purana Paltan*)—the abandoned British cantonment area, and Motijheel area was made the hub for new provincial administration and business activity center. Dhaka’s 1st stadium also established here. Until very recently the *Paltan Maidan* (a part of Open Space besides the stadium) has been a major site for political activism and rallies. In active political circumstances, *Paltan* Street and the existing open of *Paltan Maidan* blocked by the public and actively used for political speech or for demonstration. Another contested space used for political gatherings—especially after Friday Jumma prayers, was the yard of National Mosque—*The Baitul Mukarram*. Later it was also closed off (Haque, 2009) or [re]appropriated with Mughal formal / symmetric Landscaping concept by military rulers. In 1990 the military regime of the country ended, following mass protection and demonstration especially on the *Paltan Maidan*, Streets, Shahid Minar and Ramna surrounding Institutional public spaces.

*Ramna* [fig 8] is another example of post colonial contested space and provides material representation for the three great societal powers since the time of the Mughal

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12 Several times it was demolished by then police force (Mammon, 2000), like first in 1952 just after the edifice were erected and once again on 21 February 1953. A replica of the memorial in red paper (covered with a black cloth) was installed then on the previous spot by the students. From that symbolic monument, students launched their *prabhat pheri* (morning pilgrimage) for the first time (Banglapedia). The foundation stone was laid on 21 February 1956 (Mammon2000, Banglapedia). Simultaneously, on the same day it was formally declared Shaheed Day (Martyr’s day) and also a public holiday. The Martial Law in 1958 once again forced the Monument’s construction to a halt. The design was changed in 1962 and construction was completed in 1963.
The historic-cultural importance of *Pahela Baisakh*\(^{13}\) in *Ramna* began in 1965 when in an attempt to suppress Bengali culture, the Pakistani Government had banned poems of *Tagore*\(^{14}\). Protesting this move, *Chhayanat*\(^{15}\) opened their *Pahela Baisakh* celebrations in a historic move at Ramna with *Tagore’s* song welcoming the month. The day continued to be celebrated in East Pakistan as a symbol of Bengali culture and from 1972 the day being celebrates as a national festival. Before or after Independence the Ramna area especially race course was prime site for political rallies. Here *Father of the Bengali Nation “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman”* delivered his historic *1971-7th March* speech (Mamoon, 2007, V-1). At that time the oath for Independence of Bangladesh was taken before a crowd of tens of thousands Bengalis (Haque, 2009). It is here again in *16th Dec 1971* that the commander of the Pakistan Military force surrendered to Joint India-Bangladeshi Forces (Mamoon, 2007, V-1)[ fig 9]. Shortly the part of Race course, was made as a place for a grand reception\(^{16}\) for Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India- a war time friend of newly independent Bangladesh.

\(^{13}\) The first day of Bangali calendar day (Bangla New Year’s day) connects all ethnic Bengalis irrespective of religious and regional differences. Celebrations of *Pohela Boishakh* started from Akbar’s reign. On this occasion there used to be fairs and festivities. In due course of time the occasion became part of socio-cultural life, and turned into a day of merriment.

\(^{14}\) *Rabindranath Tagore*, the most famous poet and writer in Bengali literature is revered widely - regarded as the *Bengali Shakespeare*. He is also the composer of both the Indian and Bangladeshi national anthems.

\(^{15}\) *Chhayanat* is a cultural organization Founded in 1961 in Dhaka to promote and nurture the cultural and musical heritage of Bengal and from then on remains one of the most influential cultural groups in the country.

\(^{16}\) The reception was memorable; as with her announcement the Indian troops were withdrawal within three months from Bangladesh.
In post independence period (especially from 80’s to 90’s) the open spaces of the city become critical sites for negotiation between two different forces – the military backed government and socio-culturally-politically charged citizens. The relationships between these two classes in that period are quite different from those that existed in Indigenous or British Period. The power of certain spaces had decided to transfer and make fragmented by the state. Ramna Area has also been modified, re-appropriated. First it was turned into a landscape park lined with trees by the military rulers. The Ramna Race course (Later named as Suhrwardy Uddyan 102 acres) where Father of the Nation gave his historical speech has been converted into a Children Amusement Park (32 acres). Memorials may be considered as much the precipitates of conflicts as can be less direct spatial consequences of conflict situations. This children’ park (Shishu Park) is the precipitates of what was basically a strategic measure designed for a moment of conflict. Of course, in the course of time, the nature of occupation changed and today the space is of children’s play and unspecified leisure. In 1996 a Shadinata Stambha (Freedom Monument) was planned in Suhrwardy Uddyan (65.68 acres)( a part of Race Course), to commemorate the father of the nation’s historical 7th March speech. The space selection creates controversy as a part of the general people thinks it’s destroying the only big open public spaces in the heart of the city. With the then elected government, the construction was abandoned in 2001. In 2009 once again new elected Government, the execution work of the monument once again has started [fig10].

The quotients of “fear” on post colonial public spaces also have increased in Dhaka. It starts when the traditional Bangla New Year celebrations turned into a gory tale of deaths on 14th April 2001, with a devastating bomb explosion left several people killed on the spot, and many other injured at Ramna Batamul during celebration by the activist Islamic organization. The quotient of “fear” once again have dramatically increased after the Grenade attack in 2004 21st August on then opposition’s rally. It allegedly inflicted 24 people death and many others injured. Again in August 2007, on a reaction of Government’s imposed curfew on Dhaka and five other cities amid
violence occurred between police and students demanding an end to emergency rule (BBC, 2010) once again the public spaces of Dhaka was actively charged. The police presence on Dhaka’s streets is much greater in the last ten years than before, and this are along with memories of the demonstrations, the bomb blasts as well as of the ever possible outbreak of petty violence, has released a space of relatively greater anxiety and insecurity into the same streets of Dhaka.

Contested territories- the significance of public space in Dhaka today:
The battle for land in Dhaka is ruthless. Consequently, land prices are sky rocketing and every vacant square feet becomes subject to speculation. Nevertheless, Dhaka’s few numbers of public spaces [fig 11] especially Colonial creation of space- acts as a hiatus in dense urban situation. Due to its location, shape and cultural-historical significance, this space is used intensively for daily activities and a privileged site for staging socio-cultural and political events. As such stated by De Meulder and Heynen, the spatial patterns built up over the centuries, which allowed exclusion and inclusion to co-exist in a unique way, are more persistent than recent attempts at gentrification and exclusive normalization (De Meulder and Heynen, 2006). In the context of Dhaka, this historical spaces act as intangible realm for expression and reproduction of Bengali society’s culture and identity. And In the case of National political-cultural circumstances (like, 21st February, Bangla New Year day etc.) this place became fluid and shows no neat boundaries between place and events (between space and time).

Historically, the city occupied notion of spaces under different rulers from Mughal to British colonizer, to pre or post independence periods military rulers. The creation is whether for social, economic or cultural but the aim was to control and minimized conflicts between its opposition (King, 1976). Also the re-structuring of open spaces reflects not only British concepts of urban planning and land use of functional zoning but also the local agency’s (like: local administration, elites, missionaries etc) involvement in appropriation of those spaces. Public spaces in those times were also co-production with the local agency.

Nevertheless today the same spaces are used far differently in everyday life by the city dwellers. Even at present time the ongoing dialectic between the everyday public space users and government appropriation continuously being played out there. Like - Ramna, Paltan Maidan surroundings, continue to be the rallying ground at post-partition period for public gatherings- demonstration and symbolic emancipation. Ramna area today not only constitutes as recreational space but also large/national cultural events and activities are concentrated here and appears with a variety of forms, fashions
and colors. In those occasions the entire city people join in celebration with great elate and fervor. On the other hand the Shaheed Minar Plaza and surroundings has become a symbolic space where major political parties, public-private organizations, state-political movements, insurgent indigenous movement, local-urban or civic organizations have literally found ‘common ground’. The institutional setting allows mass gatherings, massive flow of people for political cultural or ceremonial activities and acts for Bengali nationalism and identity.

The social climate of a space- has always been between the continuing culture of contingently, regulated appropriation of public space for private and personal purposes (Burte, 2003). This evident in the indigenous urbanism. With its particular ‘local’ logic of intricate hierarchized open space network- stretching from uthan, mohallah, gali to ghat-bazzar and Chouk of the hinterland. The patterns of occupation, activities determine its form and perception. Temporary spaces were set up here to serve a purpose17 and then ‘dismantled’. It is much more reflective of Indigenous Dhaka in its function—multiple land uses, simultaneously serves for domestic propose, commerce or as place of employment. This traditional attitudes of occupying space, encourages city people’s (street vendors, hawkers, shopkeepers or householders) interests to push the envelope of private space but were criticized adversely 18 for blocking access to public space, while pursuing private ends.

Surprisingly, the battle for urban land and of the (global) urban tendency towards control is expressed in existing public spaces of Dhaka. Fear of crime, fear of victimization- fear of the other- instigated by harsh urban inequality. So the space is fenced, entry is regulated and people’s behaviors inside permanently monitored by remunerated guards under the guise of ‘protection’. On the other hand at different occasions Government control religious, socio-cultural and political demonstrations - as the case with many other important public spaces and often found to be “enclosed spaces”. Resultantly, large crowded public places of the city were transformed into spaces of exclusion, where any appearance, behavior and presence had to follow a pattern, consisting of bans and permissions. This control of public spaces seen as a reasonable step by the state and the elite. By restricting the settings in which protest can be voiced, the state has clearly revealed its understanding of the strategic importance of particular public spaces for the management of power relations. This appropriation was able to change the daily functions intensively; even the identity of place and space for a certain time.

The significance of open spaces for cities today found in Kevin Lynch’s “city sense and city design”. “It refers to large areas in public or quasi-public ownership, or to ‘natural’ area, or urban voids, or to places of outdoor assembly. Open spaces in this sense are all those regions in the environment which are open to the freely chosen and spontaneous actions of people” (Lynch, 1990). In Lynch’s behavioral definition, space is “open” and free for act. “Open space.. appears less structured to the human eye, it is a place of relaxation , of stimulus release, in contrast to the intense and meaning loaded communications encountered in the remainder of the city” (Lynch, 1990). This statement is the main sources of criticism of exclusion and controlled public spaces in Dhaka. Controlled, monitored, regulation and irritations of everyday urban life make impossibility for the un-expectation and the spontaneous activity to take place and ultimately leads to the exclusion of certain groups and behavior. At present , the post colonial public spaces of Dhaka shows more like a multi-layered spatial structure- where exclusion and inclusion exist alongside and in among one another- but is being put under pressure by the most recent regulating mode and currently affecting this environment.

17 Such spaces serves verity of activities: like small work-station, place for selling goods or vegetable gardens, a place to congregate and socialize or recreation, household uses and other necessary functions in Bengali life that make them vital parts of the urban fabric.

18 This phenomenon cause great irritation to upper and middle class interest groups in the city and they consequently, demand the removal of these ‘marginalized’ people This is also beyond the state's culture of spatial production, and strict understanding of boundaries between private and public space and often found to be controlled and appropriated by the state.
Concluding Remarks:
From 52’s language movement, 71’s liberation war declaration, the surrender of the Pakistani troops, 90’s demise of military regimes or in the subsequent re-establishment of democracy - the post colonial public spaces of Dhaka continuously reproduced the people’s *struggle for the right to their land*. The struggle illustrates the significance of these symbolic spaces for the formation and maintenance of Bengali National-cultural identity. It also shows the historical meanings that are encoded in its built environment and manipulated through special representations to create the socio-political present. Simultaneously however, the lack of public space in Dhaka’s dense urban context shown temporal colonized space for different proposes to celebrate outlet for ostentation.

In a memorable phrase, Henri Lefebvre, the French philosopher, suggests that each society “secretes” its own space (Lefebvre, 1991). In Dhaka, the conflicts at the heart of its public space are very directly secreted by the city as a social system into its very physical fabric. The demographic, economic, political, religious and cultural state of affairs of Dhaka is almost literally translated into its spatial surroundings. As such fair and festivals infuse and govern Dhaka’s popular culture on everyday post colonial public space. These festivals create a forum through which different ideological or political groups can came together in public space. For example, the popularity and growth of celebrating “Pahela Baishak” or spring festival in Ramna and its surrounding area has been phenomenal. People from all sorts of the city came together in one space to celebrate. The space in Shahid Minar area is reinterpreted by different users, and displays an incredible resilience. These spaces became fluid when thousands of people from all walks of life participate, affirming the area as the most active cultural spot in the city (Nilufer, 1999). On the other hand during the Ramadan time, in and surrounded neighbourhood roads (especially those with bazaars and shops), are month long temporarily decorated by lighting. During this festival period, family, neighbourhood and city events mark the celebrations. In fact these public spaces always filled with people are a kind of quirk in the fabric. Along with National Cultural aspects, the post colonial public space of Dhaka also shows the temporal articulation and occupation of space. As such these spaces are consumed, re-appropriated, re-interpreted, reused and recycled adversely.

As mentioned by Mehrotra in *“Kinetic City”*, the increasing concentrations of global flows have exacerbate the inequalities and spatial divisions between social classes.....where an architecture or urbanism of equality in an increasingly inequitable economic condition requires looking deeper to find a wide range of places to mark and commemorate the cultures of those excluded from the spaces of global flows (Mehrotra, 2009). The strength of the post colonial public spaces of Dhaka is precisely their non-determined character that allows everyone to enter the grounds on ‘equal terms and lets the social relations take shape through daily use’. This not only creates a richer sensibility of spatiality, but also suggests how spatial limits will expand to include unimagined uses in dense urban conditions. These public spaces even resist misery and hardship, ‘representing leisure and pleasure in a city where everyday lived is another round own in the battle of life’. Such as a place of every day urban life activities or as a center for political power, confrontation of state with secular-liberal-citizens and their religious opponents and the cultural artifacts; the post colonial public spaces of Dhaka post eventually a contested space.

Note:
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19 In a dense urban fabric public spaces of Dhaka are used for processions (political speech), festivals, cultural activities, leisure, pleasure, relaxation, religion (i.e for Milad Mahfil, temporal Worship place for Hindu Gods) or a place for hawkers, street vendors or slum dwellers.
References: Book:


Trevelyan , C.E(1853). Evidence of Sir C.E Trevelyan on Indian Territories before Select Committee of
the Two house of Parliament'.


