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Dhaka architecture

Dhaka (Dhākā, formerly Dacca) became the capital of the newly conquered Mughal province of Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the early eleventh/seventeenth century and remained the provincial capital for most of the time until 1129/1717, when the administration moved to Murshidābād. Its foundations, however, predate that period. It has again been the capital of the independent state of Bangladesh since 1971. Its strategic and commercial importance was and is due to its location on the north bank of the river Buṛīgangā (near its confluence with the Lakhyā, Meghnā, and Padmā rivers) and its command of a network of canals.

The earliest monument in Dhaka is the much renovated Bīnat Bībī mosque, dated by inscription to 861/1457, consisting of a small square domed building with corner towers. Notable Mughal monuments were built along the Buṛīgangā, the banks of which have since receded. The brick and plaster buildings reflect the imperial Mughal style of North India, albeit on a smaller scale. The Barā Katrā

caravanserai (1055/1645), with its three-storeyed south gate with *ūwān* (vaulted hall opening to the outside or into a courtyard) and *pīshṭāq* (monumental entrance portal) facing the river, and the Chhota Katrā caravanserai (1074/1663–4) reflect the growing volume of trade. They still exist today but are much altered in appearance. Many mosques survive, notably the mosque and tomb of Hājī Khwājā Shāhbāz (1089/1678), the Mriddhā mosque (1116/1704), and the Sātgumbad mosque (late eleventh/seventeenth century), all with polished plaster exteriors articulated by rectangular panels, prominent entrance doorways, high domes on drums, and straight cornices with merlon decoration.

The best-known Mughal site in Dhaka is Lālbāgh fort, centred on a *chār-bāgh* (four-part garden) attributed to Prince Muḥammad Aʿzam, governor of Bengal (in office 1089–90/1678–9). The complex, only portions of which survive intact, has a three-domed mosque (1059/1649 and 1194/1780), the tomb of Parī Bībī, a two-storeyed audience hall with a bath on the ground floor, and a monumental gateway facing the river on the south.