

Delhi : Imperial Capital in Making (1912)

Development Phase I
Gautam Chattopadhyay

In the midst of Political Turmoil, Colonial India was reeling under the British Rule. Since the dawn of Twentieth Century Activists had enlarged their activities to see India free. Bengal was divided in 1905 to counteract Activists' spirit for Freedom Struggle. Before long British realised that the act was short-lived then a historical decision was taken—a resolution was passed at a public meeting at Calcutta in 1911—transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi was announced. This decision had changed the course of Indian History and brought about many a change. Capital was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. The then Delhi was a few Cluster of suburbs which came under the Jurisdiction of Punjab Government. Planning and building of Imperial capital was obvious question for viceregal British India. The present study ponders over the British Strategies for town planning of Imperial capital—Delhi. Step by step tracing from old British archival records is undertaken to enumerate British Policies and their implementation.

It was 1912, just after the transfer of British Indian Capital from Calcutta to Delhi *Badshahi Dehali* was getting colour of British Jack. New Capital was yet to be built as city building process was getting shape in papers. Accommodation for Government Offices in "Temporary Delhi" posed a great problem. Old Delhi Railway Station was a shelter for Railway Board, thus was the shape of Temporary Delhi. This paper is an attempt to show what exactly British thought off before plunging into city building process of Imperial Capital.

South-East of the city was inhabited by menials who dwelled in hamlets. Most of the labourers and menials used to work in Sadar and City or elsewhere, working in their own hamlets facilitating all needs such as sweeping, leather work, Kankar, Lime-burning, brick-making, metalling thatch, transport so on and so forth.

Paharganj was one of the prominent suburbs; main dwellers of this suburb were the labouring and menial classes. H.C. Beadon observed that "...in fact the whole population of the suburb are menials except the

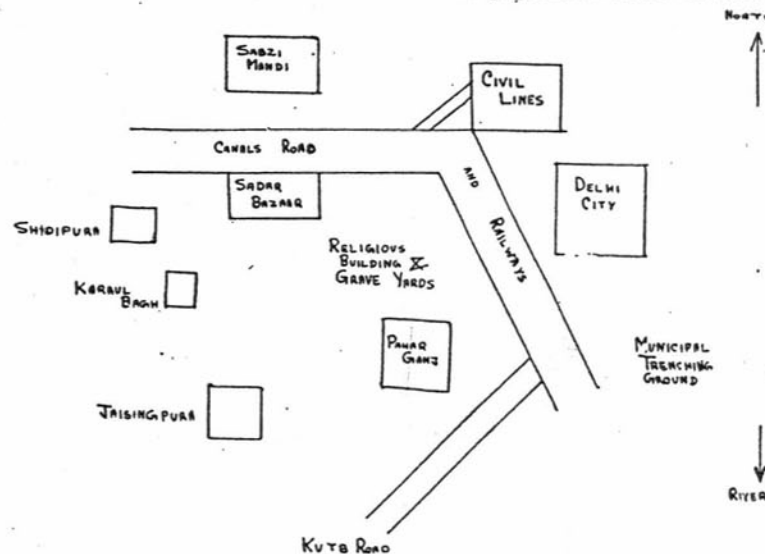


Fig. 1.

Delhi's population of 232, 837 (Year 1911) was scattered amongst the various suburbs. The city was hemmed in on all sides by the areas as shown in Figure. The

few shopkeepers, etc., who minister to their humble wants". Initially Govt. planned for acquisition of Paharganj, Jaisingpura and Karaul Bagh, wherein people

JUNE 1985

were engaged in very necessary trades and served the neighbouring suburbs. Mr. H.C. Beadon observed in his not on 4-7-1912 that...

"So when we eject them we must be prepared not only to find a proper residential quarter for them, but a locality where they can ply their trades of supplying building (and other) materials to the city and Sadar with convenience. It must be recognized that some-where close to the city there must be a squalid quarters with ample spaces for trade requirements, which include fuel drying, brick-burning, lime-making, storing and repairing country carts and *thelas* (which further necessitates stabling for cattle) stacking timber and such like".

Reception of ejected habitants was, obviously, a part of larger scheme of the town planning and the extension of Delhi. Government proposed to build Imperial City on what was known as the "Malcha Sites". About extension scheme, Govt. opined that "...it would not be right to leave this question of extension to the discretion of the municipality and its officials. Town planners with expert knowledge should be deputed to deal with the question..." To plan main roads and for fixing blocks for business quarters, habitants, menials or otherwise Govt. stressed that the extension must be towards village Khanpur Reah keeping a road between Sadar & Paharganj suburbs.

Mr. H.V. Lanchester of "Delhi Committee" was assigned the job of initial planning. In his first Report on Delhi he wrote that "...most suited for allocation to this purpose is that immediately to the west and south-west of Sadar Bazaar which would be healthier and less costly than any other land is such close proximity to the existing city". He further suggested to have a central avenue which would cater to the main traffic from Juma Masjid, thus the new quarters would have an intimate connection with the old city.

In Lanchester's plan the Westward extension of Delhi city was adjudged suitable for commercial and manufacturing purposes and would be bounded by railways along its northern side.

Coursing through documents a very important analysis on natural expansion of Delhi was found. It was Mr. G.F. DE Montmorency's report, which can be termed as the forerunner for town planning of Imperial city—Delhi. Before undertaking the survey Montmorency commented on 18.3.1912 that :

"We can not afford to allow cause for complaint that owing to the arrangements for the Imperial Capital the legitimate commercial expansion of Delhi has been checked. We must reserve land for the expansion of the present city of Delhi and fix its

limits, beyond these limits we must have some open space to separate the Imperial Capital from the present city. The limits of the extension of Delhi must therefore be ascertained before we can begin to fix the edge of the Imperial City and the Cantonment".

The city of Delhi was well connected with railway links like Delhi-Ambala-Kalka line, Southern Punjab Railway and the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. The main road connecting was Grand Trunk Road. Thus industrial concerns, factories, mills were on the increase. The city was largely surrounded by districts largely protected from famine by canal irrigation. A 30-year land revenue settlement was prevalent, as the land used to yield great agricultural results. Montmorency commented on this aspect that "Delhi city must continue to flourish as a trade centre and necessities to an affluent agricultural neighbourhood, we should allow for an increase every decade of at least 25,000 people".

To have a detailed analysis of then Delhi and its expansion trends a deeper understanding is required. In the northern part of city Garden like Khudisia & Nicholson was locable in the open space between walls, ridges and river. Alongside the gardens, bungalows of the civil station was situated. Beyond the area under Darbar jurisdiction relatively it was densely populated by local inhabitants. It is recorded that "...would endanger the purity of water supply, the intake of which is near where the ridge joins river, on the other side of the Jumna no extension has been made partly because there is one bridge and the land is low-lying". That land fell under the jurisdiction of Darbar and land was dealt by other judicial courts and treasury.

The Subzi Mandi suburb had developed along the side of Grand Trunk Road and the Delhi-Ambala-Kalka railway line, and it had tendency to expand towards "valuable garden lands". Nearby lands were water logged and drainage and Municipal amenities were poor.

The land locked between Southern Punjab Railway & Delhi-Ambala-Kalka line had scope of little expansion, as it was mainly garden lands, cut-off by two railway lines, and Jumna Canal—the Najafgarh cut. A single level crossing was the access but it was observed "...is hardly ever open for wheeled traffic".

Suburbs of Sadar Bazaar, Shedipura, Paharganj & Madhoganj were scattered with irregular slums sprang up at their own, had an enlarging tendency between the Kingsway railway station and Great Indian Peninsula (Delhi-Agra-Chord Railway).

DE Montmorency observed that "Between the Great

Indian Peninsula Railway and River I notice little or no expansion. The land here is covered with rich vegetable garden heavily measured (sic) with city sweepings and ordure (sic). I believe a lot of the land in this locality is *nazal* property and traces of that *nazal* for cultivation of any expansion in this direction. Some of the lands were low lying".

On the future expansion plan of Delhi, Govt. pointed out mainly four sites as follow :

- (i) —land across the Jumna
- (ii) The area along the Grand Trunk Road.
- (iii) The area between the Delhi-Ambala-Kalka Railway and Southern Punjab Railway.
- (iv) The area around the suburbs of Sadar Bazaar, Paharganj and Madhoganj. Explaining the fourth location, Govt. observed that :— We may take it that left unchecked, these suburbs would in time extend west and south. The sillage of these sites could probably be drained into the river. If we took no steps, these suburbs would go from the Sadar Bazaar to the hiki and from Paharganj down to Jantar Mantar and even in time to the edge of the Garden at Thal Katora where His Excellency the Viceroy inspected a site as a possible for Government House."

Further it is observed that some lands beyond those suburbs should be left to enable natural expansion of Delhi. And certain additional factories should be allowed "to those already there and to have more smoke". It was apprehended on those contemplated moves that Imperial City would be pushed out further towards Malcha direction:

In another context Government also thought of moving Southward as the cost of land was lower. Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, Major Beadon estimated that cost of land 4 miles southern Delhi was Rs. 150/- per acre. On this angle, planners noted "...we may have to pay much more than double this for the land with a mile or two of Delhi suburb". On making of Imperial Capital and its financing angle R.H.C. (RADDOK) recorded on 4.4.1912 that "Imperial Capital would be financed partly from loans and partly from grants and perhaps in some measure from municipal revenues".

Overall natural trend of Delhi city's expansion centres on development of railway system. This Railway expansion programme paved the path for establishment of factories, trades and basti settlement had taken place. From 1891 to 1911 Delhi encompassed 341 acres of land. Average annual increase of land was 11 to 12 acres. Recorded version says "...if Delhi

were to continue to expand at the rate only an area of 2000 acres would suffice for nearly 200 years".

On initiating plans for Imperial City, Govt. stressed that close proximity with the old city was difficult. To begin with it was thought to have ample market accommodation, for daily provision should be pondered over for Imperial Capital. City should also have accommodation sites for business premises and European shops (shops built and equipped in European style) and quarters for clerks and chaprasis of the army who could not be settled very long from their work.

Consumable goods for new population was to be imported rather than manufactured. It is observed in record that :

"...the place and the location of new capital is not any more likely to bring trade i.e. commerce into Delhi that its removal from Calcutta takes away commerce from Calcutta. The trade in wheat, cotton and oilseeds depends not upon the Capital, but on the production of the surrounding country (places) which it attracts as a collecting and distributing-centre".

To sketch-out sites for Delhi's expansion, certain areas figure in records. For the Southward expansion, areas were listed as follows :

Main Delhi (South Delhi)

Mahroli, Babripur,

Indrapur (it was a largely low-lying area but was Nagramackhi) essentially controlled)

Sadhora Khurd (adjoining Kishanganj)

Chankra, Nimbi, Sidhorakallan were mainly under gardens and Govt. planned to have control over the constructions of building.

Wazirpur (it was observed half of it was garden and half was fit for building Main Delhi (West), fit for buildings too).

Certain areas were listed which were to be kept under strict regulations and control regarding building and to prevent *bastis* springing up in abandoned places in scattered way. Extension would be permitted only under licence so that strict town-planning programme could be implemented. Areas were Basaidapur, Shakurpur, Yakuthpur, Silaipur, Pipoltalla, Barhola, Azadpur and Malikpur.

Furthermore, Mr. H. Wheeler, Secretary to the Government of India (Home Department) noted in his despatch to Chief Secretary of Punjab Government on 25th May, 1912 that some more areas could be listed which had tendency to get expanded. Areas were (a) Manza Delhi (this was already built and owned by Government), (b) Nasrhaula, (c) Barbarpur (d) Nagla

Machil and (c) Sadhora Khward.

With these basic analysis on natural trend of Delhi's expansion and pointing sites for Imperial city, Government called for strict regulations regarding constructions of building to suit a planned development. In the words of RADDOK "....any extensions permitted under licence being strictly planned". Authorities had also asked for mapping all demarcated areas and should be recorded & disposed of under strict rules, on a leasehold tenure with a reasonable premium, and fixation of annual ground rent liable to revision every 30 years so that State would have secured shares & increment in future.

It was also recorded that "It must be borne in mind that a proper agency for maintaining the record of these lands, detecting encroachments and maintaining the accurate statutes of demand and collecting the revenue, is absolutely essential to the success of the scheme". These were the basic thinking of British for building

Imperial Capital—Delhi, which was considered during initial planning. To cope up with situation & streamlining the process of building Capital many plans were evolved like formation of Town Planning Committee & Delhi Enclave, etc. which will be our point of discussions in subsequent articles.

REFERENCES

1. NAI, HOME, Delhi—Dec. (1912)—I Part B.
2. NAI, HOME, Delhi—July (1912)—No. 11-Deposit.
3. NAI, HOME, Delhi—May (1912)—No. 52—Part A.
4. NAI, HOME, Delhi—Sept. (1912)—No. 33—Part B.
5. NAI, HOME, Delhi—Dec. (1912)—Nos. 4 to 9 Part B.

(Access to National Archives of India is gratefully acknowledged)

Council further pondered over and noted that United Provinces should be included in the Enclave so that Imperial Government would have control over the development of the country with the purpose to control milk supply of the new existing city to afford facilities for grazing etc. But it was noted that these needs were future needs of the Delhi Enclave, and would be taken care in future.

Thus the idea of Delhi Enclave had its say finale. With a population of 391,828 encompassing around 557 square miles were made over to the Chief Commissioner who was also an ex-officio member of the Imperial Legislative Council during its sitting in Delhi. C.A. Barron noted that '... consists of the Delhi tahsil & the Mahrouli Thana of the Ballabgarh tahsil. . . the some part of tahsil to the Rohtak district' also brought within the jurisdiction of enclave under Chief Commissioner.

In our next chapter we shall discuss how mercantile population were planned to be accommodated in the Enclave and some other legislative questions regarding control over land in the environs of the new city.

References :

1. Delhi No. 52—53 Proceedings Part B., 1912.
2. Home Deptt. Delhi—August Nos. 74-86 Part B. 1912.
3. Home Deptt. Delhi October, Nos. 100—114, Part B. 1912.
4. Home Deptt. Delhi Proceedings July, Nos. 38-41, 1912.

[Access to National Archives of India is gratefully acknowledged.]

“Indian Planner & Builder”

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

One Year	: Rs. 72/-
Two Years	: Rs. 130/-
Five Years	: Rs. 300/-
Life Membership	: Rs. 950/-

ADVERTISEMENT TARIFF

Special Positions :

Cover-front 20 cms. × 20 cms.	: Rs. 3,500/-
Cover-back 25 cms. × 18 cms.	: Rs. 3,000/-
Cover-inside front	: Rs. 2,000/-
Cover-inside back	: Rs. 1,500/-

Ordinary Positions :

Full Page	: Rs. 900/-
Half Page	: Rs. 600/-
Quarter Page	: Rs. 400/-

Series Discount :

3 Insertions	@ 5%
6 Insertions	@ 10%
12 Insertions	@ 15%

Colour Ads. 25% Extra per colour.