

## Dynamics of Mofussil Delhi 1858-1911-31

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**Abstract:** From the early thirteenth century to the present Delhi has been the capital city of empires and independent India. There were three short and long periods of interregnum when the capital was shifted elsewhere and yet Delhi continued to be a place of cultural expressions and tangible developments. Post- 1857, Delhi was regarded as a 'mofussil town', yet many typologies of structures made here indicate the gradual changing cultures of the people and the increasing dynamics of the city. These structures enabled the introduction of new pedagogical methods, financial institutions, rapid transportation, new forms of entertainment, use of old sites for new ones and newer ways of treating the sick, as can be gleaned from the voluminous work in Urdu titled Waqiat-i Dar-ul Hukumat-i Dehli.

**Key words:** Mofussil, Qila-i Mu'alla, Mandi, Barah Pula, Qadam Sharif, Shahr

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### Delhi- Capital: Hiatus between 1325- 1530

From the early thirteenth century to the present Delhi has been the capital city of empires and independent India. There were three short and long periods of interregnum when the capital was shifted elsewhere and yet Delhi continued to be a place of cultural expressions and tangible developments. The first time it happened was during Muhammad Tughlaq's reign but then the break from Delhi was incomplete and very brief to cause no rupture in the urban fabric even though some sources speak of jackals roaming the streets and no person left to light a lamp at night.

When Sikander Lodi shifted the capital of the Lodi Empire to Akbarabad, he chose to be buried in Delhi, a Moth ki Masjid was also built and both structures introduced architectural and aesthetic marvels which could not have happened without the presence of people. The mosque could not have been built to stand in isolated splendour. Capital or not, Delhi always attracted large scale building activity suggestive of continuous interest in the city. Jamali the saint- poet- nobleman built his mosque and tomb here in 1528.

## **Delhi- Capital: Hiatus between 1556- 1648**

While Akbar chose to shift his capital to Akbarabad in 1556, yet the first grand mausoleum of the dead ruler Humayun was made here which set the tone for subsequent such structures. A habitation of Arabs was established close to it. Abul Fazl described Delhi as one of the greatest cities of antiquity. Delhi was important not because architectural activity never abated but because of its location, wealth and context, which made construction viable. A sizeable complex of palaces and tombs associated with the larger family of Akbar were constructed in the vicinity of Humayun's tomb. Maham Angah built a masjid/ madrasa complex complete with a bazar opposite Din Panah/ Shergarh/ Purana Qila. Murtaza Khan built a big sarai opposite Kotla Firuz Shah and several palaces inside Salimgarh and the canal of Firuz Shah was cleaned and repaired for the water to flow again in the same location where later Ali Mardan Khan's canal flowed in Chandni Chauk and its long street opposite the Lahori Gate of the Qila-i Mu'alla. Jahangir, given more to epicurean delights and the dexterity of strokes, colours and themes of art rather than architecture, built a bridge to span the Jamuna at Salimgarh fort, either renovated or remade the pleasure pavilion called Nili Chhatri at the Jamuna and several other structures were made such as the mandi gate of the Arab ki Sarai, Barah Pula, a bridge over a fresh water runnel, the tombs of Abdur Rahim Khan-e Khanan, Saiyid Abid, Mirza Aziz Kokaltash and his father Shamsuddin Khan Atga Khan along with others, a Khas Mahal or a palace complex, the royal mint, seminaries, mosques, wells, step- wells or baolis, and arrangements for continuous pilgrim traffic as Delhi was an important route of Sufi/ Chishti pilgrimage. Shahjahan's master builders could draw, for the construction of the Taj Mahal, on the services of some of the best masons, sculptors, stone- cutters and inlay workers from Delhi. These master craftsmen would have had some reason to live in Delhi. Subsequently, and in spite of the Taj Mahal, Shahjahan preferred to inhabit his capital, once again in Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

The built environment and structures of Delhi did not endure in isolation. An entire habitation existed around them of people who conceived, designed, executed, provided materials, constructed and finally looked after the structures. Subsequently, more people made habitations around them. Many a times these structures became an essential part of the urban fabric around which the cultures of the people emerged and revolved. For example, the Qadam Sharif, which was constructed in the time of Firuz Shah Tughlaq and a footprint of Prophet Muhammad was placed on it. However no contemporary works or of later times suggested anything that happened in this space, till 350 years later it emerged in the pages of the writers as a vibrant expanse of structure and culture, an integral

part of the calendar of events of the people of Delhi in the 18th and 19th centuries. Vivid and extensive descriptions of the engagements of the people in and around the structure were given in the writings of Dargah Quli Khan<sup>2</sup> and Mirza Sangin Beg<sup>3</sup> even devoted several pages to the miraculous deeds of Makhdum Jahan Jahanian Gasht to apprise the reader of how he came to acquire the footprint.

### **Delhi- Mofussil: Hiatus between 1858- 1911-31**

Post- 1857 Delhi was subject to tremendous admonitory punishments, affecting people and their psyche, habitations, structures and certain ways of life. In fact, from an exemplary city it became a 'mofussil' town whose identities shrank and dwindled. Not only were the Mughal Badshah and his family punished by exile, many nobles and commoners executed for their role in Ghadar 1857, but a large segment of the populace of Delhi left the city out of fear of being implicated by the British systems of justice. This damnation was not confined to the people, even the habitations and structures were brought within its scope. Barring the outer wall of the Qila-i Mu'alla and a dozen structures all the others inside it, over 300, were destroyed at the orders of the British Government. The two congregational mosques, of same vintage as the fort, the Akbarabadi and Fatehpuri mosques were levelled along with large habitations fronting the western, city side of the fort. The esplanade road was laid out to join the Jama Masjid to the main street of Chandni Chauk just prior to the bazar of Dariba. Subsequently, the Begum's sarai in Chandni Chauk was brought down to raise the building of the Town Hall and many habitations north of the Begum's Bagh and parts of the Bagh itself were wiped out to make the Railway Station.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, more of the Bagh was alienated to establish fancy clubs for the officers and the crème de la crème of Dilliwalas who hobnobbed with the government officials. Mofussil town notwithstanding, many typologies of structures located between 1858- 1911-1931<sup>5</sup> suggest a continuous interest in Delhi both of the government and the people and how reflective and indicative these were of the gradually changing cultures of the people of the city. These structures enabled the introduction of new pedagogical methods, financial institutions, rapid transportation, new forms of entertainment, use of old sites for new ones and newer ways of treating the sick.

### **Dynamics of Mofussil Delhi- 1858- 1919**

The Waqiat- i Dar- ul Hukumat- i Dehli of Maulvi Bashiruddin Ahmad<sup>6</sup> published in 1919 is the only book which intervenes into the past and the living culture of Delhi through structures and people

covering particularly the period between 1858 1919. Through this work changes can be accounted for most vividly. It was written in Urdu and has never been translated in any other language.

### **Forms of Entertainment**

Favvara Lord Northbrook<sup>7</sup>: Across the Kotwali at the Tiraha<sup>8</sup> there is a high, stately and graceful fountain, which was made in the time of Lord Northbrook (1872- 76) at the cost of Rupees 10,000. On top of it there is a very heavy metal bowl and has beautiful flower and leaf motifs etched on it. The fountain is plastered with cement. From here a road goes along the Malika's Bagh<sup>9</sup> past the Kauriya Pul to the road of the Railway Station and the other one goes straight from the Fort to the Fatehpuri Mosque. Many Christians and Hindus gather at the steps of the fountain in the evening to pass their time. A large crowd can be seen here.

Rama Theatre<sup>10</sup>: on the east of the Fountain is the elegant building of Rama Theatre. It was a very big structure built by Rai Bahadur Ram Kishan Das Sahib<sup>11</sup> in which a mix of excellent, colourful pictures have been made. It has electric lights and fans and everything of convenience and enjoyment is available here. Often theatre companies hire this for their plays. This building is ideal for plays especially since it is within the thick habitation inside the city.

### **Pedagogical Methods and Syllabi**

Indraprastha Bengali School 1899<sup>12</sup>: only the boys of the Bengalis are educated here. It [the school] is affiliated to Calcutta University. There are 50 to 60 boys and 5 teachers and they are also Bengali. It was constructed by Dr. Hem Chandra Sen who was a member of the Board that supervised the school. It was here that the above-mentioned Doctor Sahib had an Imperial Medical Hall, which was very popular in the Doctor Sahib's lifetime. Now, his relatives run it but the popularity that was because of him and is lost.

Hindu College 1899<sup>13</sup>. In the vicinity of St. Stephen's College is a capacious mansion. This college is a living memory of the great courage of the Hindu Sahibs<sup>14</sup>. On the door of the mansion is written, "Hindu College Established 1899". This structure was not built to house the college. This mansion belonged to Col. Skinner Sahib<sup>15</sup> and it was bought from him by Lala Sultan Singh Sahib<sup>16</sup> and he sold it to the college. In its forecourt there is a very fine boarding house with 20 doors and 4 very big and open rooms in which the boarders stay. On the front of it [the building] is an inscription, "Shri Ram Ashram. Built by the sons of the late Diwan of Alwar 1917".

### **Banking and Finance**

Bank of Bengal<sup>17</sup>: It has been shifted to different places earlier, to Mori Gate, then to Kashmiri Gate, then it was moved to a terrace [structure] in Chandni Chauk. Finally, the Bank bought the building of the St. Stephen's Women's Hospital which is of red sandstone. It is of three storeys and it is made most beautifully.

The building of the hospital was made in remembrance of the wife of the rich priest, Victor Sahib. This was also associated with the SPG Mission<sup>18</sup>. The hospital has now been moved outside the city in the Tees Hazari Grounds<sup>19</sup>. No consideration was made for the sick of the city, especially the women who maintain purdah. For such women [the hospital] it is as good as not being there.

Similarly, there are other banks in Chandni Chauk, amongst which the names of the famous banks are the following: Chartered Bank, Allahabad Bank, National Bank of India, Commercial Bank of Upper India, Punjab National Bank and Mercantile Bank.

### **Rapid Transportation**

Railway Station<sup>20</sup>: Actually this station is of EIR.<sup>21</sup> Earlier it was Sindh- Punjab- Delhi Railway and now it is called the NWR.<sup>22</sup> Its station was on Hamilton road where its warehouse is located and the Rajputana- Malwa Railway Station was near the Mori Gate. There were three railway stations here. As there were three railways stations here at a distance from one another the travellers were put great trouble. Now, there is a joint station for all the lines. Other than Bombay's Victoria Terminus Station there is no station bigger than that of Delhi. Since 1903 there is constant brightness here because of electrification. There are large and open platforms and day and night are both the same. The tickets are available at all hours. There are large waiting rooms for passengers. Its [Railway Station's] length extends between the Dufferin bridge and the arched bridge and the width is from Malika's Bagh to Hamilton Road.<sup>23</sup> There is a booking office in Chandni Chauk which is very convenient for travellers. They receive their parcels from here as well. The station at this time is the open field for the shrill tones of the trains. EIR or the Eastern line was from Delhi to Calcutta. NWR or Punjab line which was earlier called Sindh- Punjab- Delhi Railway, the Ghaziabad and Muradabad section of the Rohilkhand Railway, the GIPR<sup>24</sup> or Bombay Line, BB and CI- CIR<sup>25</sup> was Broad Gauge or wide line called the Mathura- Nagda Line and Meter Gauge or small line, which was earlier called the Rajputana- Malwa Railway and extended between Delhi and Ahmedabad, Southern Punjab Railway. There is no bigger junction than Delhi in all of Hindustan. There is a half anna<sup>26</sup> ticket to get on to the platform of the station. There are very big, spacious rooms at the Delhi Station and retiring rooms as well in which passengers of 1st and 2nd Class can stay at night. The Refreshment Rooms here are also on a grand scale. There are several book- stalls where latest newspapers and English novels are available. In short, there are many things for the entertainment of the passengers and travelling that was earlier a burning scorching travel has now become easy.

The biggest convenience is that the luggage can be sent to different platforms through trolleys operated with an underground apparatus and which has eased the process of carrying and transferring luggage. There are clocks on every platform connected to one another with an electric wire and because of this the time in all of them remains the same. Tickets for all classes are available all the time. The ticket counter is open every day, buy a ticket whenever you wish and journey without worry.

Preparing for the New City within the Old

Shahr Mubarakabad<sup>27</sup>:

‘Jawani se zyada waqt piri josh hota hai

Bharakta hai Chiragh subah jab khamosh hota hai’

The enthusiasm of old age is longer than that of youth

Akin to the lamp that blazes most at dawn just before it goes off

Sultan Mubarak Shah II (1421-33) laid the foundation of a city along the bank of the Jamuna on 7 Rabiulawwal 837 AH/ 13 October 1432 AD<sup>28</sup> and named it Mubarakabad. He gave a lot of his time and concern to its construction. After spending some time in Tabarhind<sup>29</sup> the Badshah in the company of good fortune and soundness of health returned to Mubarakabad. On his return to Hindustan he had a big army with him. He rested for some days at Chabutara Sargah<sup>30</sup> and then entered Mubarakabad to inspect the work of the construction of the city (from Tarikh-i Mubarak Shahi). The Sadr-ul Mulk, the Hindu wazir of the ruler intrigued with a Hindu of his own region and had the Badshah murdered in the Ramzan of 837AH/ 1433 AD. This new city was on the bank of the Jamuna and probably near Khizrabad. The dead body of the Badshah was brought to Kotla Mubarakpur and buried there. That is why we will write about the condition of Mubarakpur which is now commonly called Mubarakpur Kotla by the people.

In the centre of the fifth and sixth furlough of the 6th mile from Qutb Road, on the left there is a board. “Ishwar? Kishan Rai Sinha- Pandit Amar Nath Bhaskar B.Sc., C.A. Glasgow”. Beyond that is a manufactory for making glass. This land is of the village Bibipur, Khairabad. All the bricks for the construction of buildings of New Delhi are supplied from here. Beyond this is the Mubarakpur Kotla. Now the status of the village is of an ordinary one but at one time it seemed as if it was a very important place with its fabulous boundary wall, luxurious gates, a big, heavily built mosque and numerous and extremely majestic domes.

### **Dealing with the sick**

The Chief Gastroenteritis Hospital, a Government Hospital, 1868<sup>31</sup>: from Jama Masjid on Esplanade Road is the grand, large, red sandstone building of the Chief Hospital built on the Mughal style with domes on halls. The main gate is towards Bazar Paiwalan<sup>32</sup>. This hospital was made in 1868 and gradually, considering the need of the large number of patients who kept coming, it [the hospital] kept increasing. There are 2 associated dispensaries, one in Lal Kuan Bazar and the other in Sadr Bazar. In the Sadr dispensary there are all kinds of facilities and care is taken for the ease of the patients. There are capacious and airy rooms for the patients and iron beds with adequate facilities and beddings, arranged side by side. The cleanliness of this place is worth beholding. Now and Eye India Hospital has also opened in which ailments of the eyes are treated. The expense

of the treatment of the patients and other costs included is?. the annual expenditure is looked after by the municipal committee. The gastro- surgeon comes daily to check-up the patients. Several experienced doctors are always present here.

Lady Dufferin Hospital, 1903<sup>33</sup>: In 1903, a wing of women's hospital was opened in this hospital [Government Hospital], the foundation stone of which was laid by Lord Dufferin, the Governor- General of India, (1884-88) with his own auspicious hands. There is no dearth of private medical practitioners in the Government Hospital and their practice also flourishes. Many Muslim, Hindu and Bengali doctors who have studied medicine in England work here and some amongst them are such good mortals [doctors] that many people are under their treatment.

The dynamics of the 'mofussil Delhi' remained unabated. Hospitals were set-up to treat the various ailments of the populace and people started going abroad to study medicine. More schools and colleges came up in Delhi. They imparted education through a different pedagogical methodology. A tram was introduced from 1907/08 onwards, covering main arterial parts of the city. With the introduction of formal theatrical performances within a specified structure rich Khatri made a beeline to open theatres in the large plots of land that they owned in the city. Several hospitals were opened, and new localities came up in the environs of the walled city. The financial health of the city was excellent as testified by the large number of banks that vied with one another to open branches in Delhi. There was a showcasing of deeper sense of religiosity through the establishment of Ram Lila Societies. The British Government felt such a pull towards the 'mofussil town' that it held three Durbars in Delhi in 1877, 1903 and 1911<sup>34</sup>. The last one was attended by the sovereign, King George and Queen Mary, where the declaration of the transfer of the capital of the British Empire from Calcutta to New Delhi, close to Shahr Shahjahanabad, was made.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Shahjahanabad, A City of Delhi 1638-1857*; Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 1998; pp. 18-40
2. Dargah Quli Khan, *Risalah- i Salar Jung*, Persian text, Muzaffar Husain ed., *Muraqqa- e Dehli*, Hyderabad 1926; annotated English translation, Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Muraqqa- e Dehli The Mughal Capital In Muhammad Shah's Time*; Deputy Publication, Delhi, 1989; pp. 2-3
3. Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Delhi in Transition 1821 and Beyond Mirza Sangin Beg's Sair-ul Manazil*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 2018; pp. 73-78
4. See Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*, OUP, New Delhi, 1981; H.K. Kaul, *Historic Delhi: An Anthology*, OUP, New Delhi, 1985; *The Delhi Omnibus*, OUP, Delhi 2002
5. After Ghadar, and before the formal shift of the capital of the British Empire to New Delhi. The announcement was made in 1911 but the shift took place in 1931

6. Maulvi Bashiruddin Ahmad, *Waqiat- i Dar- ul Hukumat- i Dehli 1337- (1918- 1919)*; Urdu Academy, Delhi, 3 Volumes; This edition- 1990. Henceforth, *Waqiat*
7. *Waqiat*, vol. II, pp. 220-21; [Translation Mine]
8. A space where three roads meet. There was a three- arched masonry gateway here, called Tripoliya and it was removed in the aftermath of 1857
9. Sahibabad, Begum Jahanara's Bagh
10. *Waqiat*, vol. II, p. 221; [Translation Mine]
11. He was a descendant of Lala Chhunna Mal, the richest Khatri of Delhi in the mid- nineteenth century who owned many properties in Delhi and wielded immense clout with the British
12. *Waqiat*, vol. II, p. 221; [Translation Mine]
13. *Waqiat*, vol. II, p. 297; [Translation Mine]
14. Founded by Krishan Dasji Gurwale in 1899 in a building in Kinari Bazar
15. Of Anglo- Indian ancestry Col. James Skinner was born in Calcutta and served under the Marathas of Sindhia and then under the English East India Company
16. Lala Sultan Singh was a rich Jain businessman and a highly respected member of Delhi society. He had a mansion in Kashmiri Gate close to Hindu and St. Stephen's colleges.
17. *Waqiat*, vol. II, p. 226; [Translation Mine]
18. Society for the propagation of the Gospel. Later the Cambridge Mission also came to be associated with it and it founded the St. Stephen's College in Delhi in 1881.
19. Grounds outside the wall between the Kashmiri and Mori Gates, more towards the latter
20. *Waqiat*, vol. II, pp. 223-24; [Translation Mine]
21. Eastern Indian Railway
22. North- Western Railway
23. Behind Old Delhi Railway Station now called Zorawar Singh Marg
24. Great Indian Peninsula Railway
25. Bombay- Baroda and Central Indian Railway
26. Equivalent to 3.13 paise
27. *Waqiat*, vol. III, pp. 81-81; [Translation Mine]
28. Should be 1434 AD
29. Bathinda
30. ? probably Chabutara Dargah or the platform of a Sufi saint's cemetery
31. *Waqiat*, vol. II, pp. 180-81; [Translation Mine]
32. Bazar Paiwalan is located to the north of Jama Masjid and carved and bedposts were sold here
33. *Waqiat*, vol. II, p. 181; [Translation Mine]
34. J. Talboys Wheeler's account was followed by many other works on the Delhi Durbars