

DELHI
THROUGH THE AGES
Selected Essays in Urban History,
Culture and Society

Edited by
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PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

The story of this book and its construction is simply told. Some students of Percival Spear pondered what to do in honour of their old mentor. As his *chelas* or *murids*, they wanted to celebrate his fifty years of distinguished scholarship on India. No focal point seemed more fitting than the pulsating city which their guide had loved more than any other and in which he had spent the early decades of his career. He himself, captivated by the city's many pasts, as seen in ruins and shadow, had written two short books about Delhi: *Delhi, A Historical Sketch* (Bombay, OUP, 1937 and 1945) and *Delhi, Its Monuments and History* (Bombay, OUP, 1943 and 1945). Each was a finely crafted gem, serving to remind the general public of Delhi's historic importance. Spear's greatest scholarly work, *Twilight of the Mughals* (1951), was also centered on Delhi. It was not difficult, therefore, for the idea and the focus of this book to come together.

The enterprise began with an international conference. The event, a seminar-workshop held on 31 October and 1 November 1979 on the campus of the University of Wisconsin—Madison, was a public celebration of scholarship and of contributions to our understanding of India's past. Papers focusing on various aspects of 'Delhi Through the Ages' were presented and discussed. The occasion was enlivened by delightful and vigorous intellectual interaction, with Percival Spear himself at the centre. Among the twenty or more scholars who took part in this event were many of Spear's students; all who took part were, by their very contributions, giving tribute to the position among historians of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka), which Spear had occupied. He had become a dean of Indian History for his day, especially among modern historians of India in the West. Alas, Spear himself never lived to see the book which had been organized in his name. Swiftly and without warning, he passed from among us (after a short stay in hospital, on 17 December 1982). The volume was published as a memorial to his work, a tribute to the high ideals and scholarly standards for which he stood.

2. R. Russell and K. Islam, *Three Mughal Poets, Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan* (London, 1969), p. 65.
3. T. Fortescue, 'Revenue System of the Delhi Territories', *Selections from Punjab Government Records, Delhi Residency and Agency, 1807-57* (Calcutta, 1922), p. 252.
4. G. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern Part of India* (London, 1798), vol. I, p. 219.
5. Notes on 'respectable natives' of Agra, Magistrate of Agra to Government NWP, 28 February 1843, Agra Judicial, vol. 10, U.P. Central Record Room, Allahabad.
6. Minute by J. Thomson, 7 May 1841, in J. A. Richey (ed.), *Selections From Educational Records*, vol. II (Calcutta, 1922), p. 252.
7. Offg. Deputy Collector Govt Customs Agra, to Offg. Commissioner, 1 January 1835, Agra Customs, vol. 8.
8. Histories of artisan industries in Agra, Collector Agra to Commissioner, 11 May 1850, Agra Judicial, vol. 8.
9. Family histories from Sri P. C. Maheshwari, Ram Bakhsh, Moti Katra Agra.

DELHI AND ITS HINTERLAND The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

NARAYANI GUPTA

The dignified isolation of cantonments and government perambokes, although in sharp contrast to the congested confusion of old bazaar towns, are ... examples of a lapse in contemporary planning. ...

On the one hand the planner must strive to maintain the populous and gregarious nature of Indian life in village and town and yet abate its congestion and, at the same time, to lead more dwellings into garden villages without the town and provide more civil developments within. On the other hand, he must mitigate the Crusoe-like individualism of the scattered and formless bungalow compounds and endeavour to build them up into coherent communities.¹

At a very significant moment, Geddes, who had just come out to India, diagnosed a malaise and suggested remedies. It was a significant moment because a few years previously the first Improvement Trusts and some town-planning measures had been enacted for Indian towns. Had his suggestions been heeded, a major change might have occurred in urban policy, and the barriers between the races become less rigid. Delhi was a seventeenth-century town, which in the nineteenth century had acquired a major railway suburb and an extensive Civil Lines, and, at the time Geddes wrote, its future was already fettered by a political decision made in 1911.

There is little information about the historical relationship of Indian towns to their hinterlands. Questions which economists and sociologists ask about the hinterlands of towns in developing societies can be projected backwards for earlier periods. This will enable us to see continuities or otherwise between colonial and pre-colonial eras, between the post-railway years and the centuries before. Questions arise relating to the cultural colonization of the rural hinterland by the urban complex, the employment opportunities created by the

town for the hinterland and the effect of the colonial economy on the economic and political interrelations among groups of urban communities.

Though we are aware of the long history of urban settlements in the Delhi area, between Mehrauli and the Yamuna, we lack even a partial account of the relationships of these to the region. Also, in the last two centuries, the political status of Delhi has changed more frequently than that of any other Indian town or city. The Delhi Subah of the Mughals included the tract of Haryana west of the Yamuna, and the upper *duāb* and Rohilkhand to the east. After the British conquest in 1803 it was made part of the North-Western Provinces, in which Delhi District included the *tahsil* of Delhi, part of Ballabgarh and part of Rohtak. The following table will indicate the different designations of the Delhi region at different points of time, and its extent:

Year	Title	Area	No. of villages included
1638	Delhi Province	601,42,375 <i>bighas</i>	45,088 villages
1803	Delhi District		600 'deserted villages'
1819	Delhi Territory divided into districts, and Delhi District subdivided into 'Northern' and 'Southern' parganas		
1844	Delhi District	604 sq. miles	412 villages (of which 346 belonged to government)
1848-53	193 sq. miles of Eastern Parganah (east of Yamuna) added to Delhi District		
1880	Delhi Tehsil	425 sq. miles	288 villages (of which 30 belonged to government)
1912	Delhi Province	520 sq. miles (later 593)	307 villages
1952	Delhi State	577 sq. miles	304 villages and 10 towns
1981	Delhi State	573 sq. miles	

By 'hinterland' we do not refer to any of these administrative units but to an area roughly seven miles in radius around Shahjahanabad, the city built by the Emperor Shahjahan in the seventeenth century.

Local as well as regional geography determined the location of the many towns built in Delhi over many centuries. The politically and

economically strategic trunk road (important both for rulers moving into India from the north-west and for a conqueror moving up the Ganga from Bengal) crossed the Yamuna at Delhi. The city was a major entrepôt between the *duāb*, Panjab and Rajasthan from the twelfth century, and this function was reinforced with the construction of the railways in the 1860s. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Delhi was important for the East India Company as a frontier post. That Delhi was an important distributing centre for the region is shown by the fact that the roads linking the city with neighbouring towns were seen to be good in 1827,² suggesting past excellence rather than British improvements. There was a high volume of pack animal traffic daily between the city and trans-Yamuna Ghaziabad before the railway line was built.³ In the 1870s, by which time the roads were an adjunct to the railway terminus, the roads from Delhi to Gurgaon in the south, to Rohtak in the west, to Karnal in the north and Mathura in the east were all metalled. There were many elements of continuity with the past. The volume of traffic was not heavy, with one camel-cart plying on these roads every day.⁴ Transportation of grain from neighbouring villages to the city was by means of very large bullock-carts, drawn by teams of six oxen.⁵ Timber was brought to the city by barge on the canal from the Mughal period till the early years of the present century.⁶

The Yamuna, the Ridge, and the Upper Yamuna Canal defined Delhi's hinterland. The land sloped from north to south. There was a great variety of physical features in the Delhi area, and consequently an equally wide variety in the qualities of the soil. The land around Shahjahanabad fell into four categories.⁷ The old bed of the river north and south of the city, well-irrigated and fertile, was called *khadar*. The south and west, the uplands through which the canal passed, was *banjar* and *khandrat*. The term Khandrat Kalan was an evocative one—the Great Ruins, where people from Shahjahanabad dug perseveringly in the hope of turning up a hoard of coins.⁸ The hilly area of the western ridge, sandy and dry, was termed *kobi*, and in the 1840s accounted for one-third of the Delhi District being considered uncultivable. The land to the north around the Najafgarh Jheel, low-lying and water-logged, was *dabar*. Quite apart from the vagaries of the river and the canal, these areas in the nineteenth century underwent many modifications in land-use patterns because of the changing nature of political control and political policy.

Fertility was also affected by the course of the river. There were

three means of irrigation—the river, which was not always reliable; wells, some of which were brackish; and, from the reign of Feroze Tughlak, if not earlier, a canal (the ancestor of the Western Yamuna Canal) from the Yamuna at Karnal. This was repaired during Akbar's rule, and reopened or realigned by Ali Mardan Khan in Shahjahan's reign, to irrigate agrarian land, to provide the hunting-lodges with water, and also the city.⁹ Sujan Rai in the late seventeenth century said that the canal 'conferred benefits upon the cultivation of many *parganas* and irrigated the gardens near the Capital.'¹⁰ Its chief purpose seems to have been the latter, with irrigation being a side benefit. But Francklin who saw it in 1793, spoke of it 'fertilizing . . . a tract of more than 90 miles in length'.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, at least, it was also used for transportation and for working mills. The revenue from the canal considerably enriched the person to whom it was farmed out, Nawab Safdar Jang being said to have earned twenty-five lakhs from it. (A sceptical British official commented that 'the amount of the revenue . . . must be deemed fabulous'.)¹²

After the 1770s the canal remained largely neglected for half a century. After the British conquest, tales about the riches to be had from the canal led at least two enterprising individuals to put forward proposals beneficial to themselves and to the government. An engineer, Mercer, offered to open up the canal at his own expense provided the income for twenty years were given to him.¹³ Kishen Lal, the *diwan* of the Nawab of Jhajjar, offered to drain the Najafgarh Jheel [the hollow 52 square miles into which the Western Yamuna Canal flowed] at a cost of Rs 70,000 if he were given half the profits anticipated when the surrounding area became more fertile.¹⁴ In both cases the government was too astute—'a work so dignified, so popular and so beneficial', it was decided, should not be left to stray individuals. The officials were also alive to the commercial possibilities of the canal. Three small mills for grinding flour by water-power were erected in Delhi. When these were found successful, larger mills were set up at government expense. It was estimated that the value of the produce of flour would be about Rs 30,000 a year. Saw mills and oil and sugarcane mills were also planned, since much timber was exported from Delhi to north-western India, and sugarcane cultivation was increasing with the renewal of canal irrigation.¹⁵ There is no indication that these last plans were ever carried out.

The repeated siting of towns in the Delhi area was the reason for the pattern of land-use there: 'a close cultivation and . . . the sinking of many wells, to cope with the demand for grain, fodder and garden crops.'¹⁶ The ground around Delhi was excellent where it was not neglected, said Thevenot, adding that in many parts it was.¹⁷ Most of what was produced in the Delhi region went to feed the city, and a small portion could be regarded as having been a commercial investment. When Bernier lived in Delhi, the neighbouring countryside was very fertile, yielding corn, millet, pulses, rice and indigo.¹⁸ Wheat and tobacco were grown in the *khandrat*, irrigated by wells. The land under wheat increased when the embankments made in the *kobi* tract in the 1880s led to its cultivation. All the foodgrains were consumed in the city. The *gur* from sugarcane likewise was bought by the city.¹⁹

In the agricultural land to the south, fertility was increased from the 1880s by a realignment of the Western Yamuna Canal, and by the regular trenching of fields.²⁰ As a result, by the early years of the present century, Bernier's picture was again recognizable, with the difference that the produce of the re-invigorated Firozabad and *khandrat* was entirely horticultural, vegetables being grown for the increasing population of the city. In the 1920s, wheat cultivation increased by as much as 30 percent but essentially the area remained a horticultural one.²¹ Other needs of the city which were met from the adjacent countryside were *khoa* (concentrated milk for making sweetmeats) from as far as the Qutb and Serai Ruhela, where the producer had a monopoly of this item; *dhak* leaves for making disposable plates, tamarisk for baskets, brushwood and cowdung cakes for fuel. From the city the farmer bought cloth, salt and iron implements.²² The neighbouring *qasbas* were Sonapat, Narela, Najafgarh, Mehrauli, Faridabad and Ballabgarh, whence traders transmitted their produce to the central market at Delhi.²³

That fertile land was quick to recover even after major political devastations was borne out by the fact that route maps of the 1760s and 1790s showed Delhi (and Agra and Allahabad) to have been surrounded by eight to twelve kilometres of high cultivation.²⁴ In 1819 John Lawrence had a graphic description of 'riding for miles as through a highly cultivated garden.'²⁵

Rice and indigo cultivation tapered off in the nineteenth century. Cotton cultivation south and south-west of the city was tried under official encouragement in the 1820s (part of the raw cotton boom

from the 1780s to the 1820s) and again in the years of the American Civil War, to decline permanently from the 1870s as the railways brought cotton from longer distances into the town.²⁶

Since it prevented erosion, the Ridge must have been a factor in the choice of the site of Shahjahanabad. Its terrain discouraged cultivation. The area between the western city wall and the Dehlia Nallah was known as Jahan-numa (there is no evidence for the antiquity of this name—one possibility is that this was the name given to Ferozeshah Tughlak's hunting lodge on the Ridge, as Jahan-panah was his hunting lodge near Siri). Shahjahan was said to have given 2,700 *bighas* (562 acres) to a grain dealer, Prahlad (who called his domain Chandrawal) and another 2,000 *bighas* (416 acres) to Sukh Ram Jat and Mir Ali (who called their land Banskauli, within which was contained the *qasba* of Paharganj, anterior to Shahjahanabad).²⁷ Here, in the nineteenth century, lived the Gujars who provided milk to the city, and who grazed the flocks of cattle owned by the city butchers on a share-profit basis. The great increase in the demand for arable land near the city was caused by the increase in the number of goats from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, indicating the growing consumption of meat in the city, and marking a change in food habits.²⁸ In Paharganj lived the *chamars* and the *rengbars*, who needed running water for their tanning and dyeing, as well as ice-makers.

The Mughal town achieved an ecological balance by swaddling a densely-populated area with large expanses of carefully-tended woodland (cf. Geddes' phrase, 'to lead . . . dwellings into garden villages without the town'). To the north-west of the city, the canal had over the decades gradually deprived the soil of much of its original richness by impregnating it with soda. But the land use here, till the close of the nineteenth century, continued an old pattern. Along the Grand Trunk Road lay the 'garden village of Sadhaura Kalan'²⁹ containing the extensive gardens and orchards laid out by Begum Roshanara, linking Shahjahanabad to the township that lay adjacent, Mughalpura ('nearly three miles in length', according to Francklin in 1793)³⁰ where was located the big wholesale vegetable market (Sabzi Mandi), surrounded by rich orchards. A visitor in 1827 spoke of 'the verdure of the forests surrounding [Shahjahanabad]' as seen from Purana Qila.³¹ Other than this, there is no evidence of forests south of the city, but to the north-west they extended in an area for over two miles. It has been stated that there was extensive

deforestation in the Delhi-Agra region in the high Mughal period,³² and we know of the whim of a Jahandar Shah who ordered the trees on the road between the palace and the hunting lodge at Jahan-numa (i.e., the Grand Trunk Road) to be cut down.³³ This occurred again. An official in the 1830s confessed that the forests in the Delhi District had been 'nearly destroyed from indiscriminate cutting, since they fell under our authority; any one is allowed to cut what he pleases, and where he pleases, on payment of a merely nominal duty, and the whole country resorts here for supplies. Formerly it was not so.'³⁴

Vandalism resulted from a more deliberate policy when in 1828 the cantonment was moved to Majnun ka Tila below a spur of the Ridge near the river north of the city. The tamarinds and cedars planted by Shahjahan were cut and so were the mango trees lining the road to the north when a new road was built from the cantonment to Kashmeri Gate.³⁵ After 1858, the orchards of Tis Hazari Bagh were felled to provide a shooting range, as the fruit trees of the adjacent Qudsia Bagh had been cut by the besieging British troops in 1857. From the late 1870s, when the Civil Station north of the Qudsia and as far as the Ridge became a permanent British enclave, the barren Ridge was afforested by making irrigation embankments, canal water was extensively provided to the bungalows' huge compounds, and the Municipality was made to spend as much as it could spare on the upkeep of the sixty-seven acres of the Qudsia and Jafar Khan Gardens, and the 158 acres of the Roshanara. As against this, much levelling of ground and felling of trees was also done in the 1870s in the lush agricultural area north-east of the Civil Lines, where the three durbars were held, so that this was described in 1912 as the only extensively barren area in the Delhi *tahsil*.³⁶ Amends were to be made in a different area—the south—when New Delhi was planned. 'Imperial Delhi will be in the main a sea of foliage,'³⁷ a plan so well-executed that the very climate of Delhi changed as a result.

In periods of political security in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the inhabitants of Shahjahanabad were not confined to the walled city. Bernier located the 'dwellings of the *omrabs*' as being 'mostly on the banks of the river and in the suburbs . . . yet scattered in every direction'. He went on to speak of 'two or three small suburbs . . . interspersed with extensive gardens and open spaces'.³⁸ The remains of this were noticed by Fortescue in the 1820s. 'Brick-built towns and villages, numerous stone edifices of ornament and worship; spacious walled gardens; costly and airy pleasure houses; the

expensive and lasting masonry of deep wells, reservoirs and lengthened conduits; large, safe and convenient *surraes* with the *cos-minars* for the accommodation and ease of travellers and, above all, perhaps, the bold and stupendous undertaking of the several grand aqueducts which fertilized many thousands of *beegabs*, brought crores into the public treasury—these are amongst the many irrefragable demonstrations of former abundance, population, security, wealth and happiness.³⁹ Contrast this with the bald, but equally telling, picture of an observer in 1776: 'The suburbs . . . are now a heap of ruins, a resort of wild beasts.'⁴⁰ From the mid-eighteenth century it appears that the people of Shahjahanabad chiefly lived within the walls of the city but in times of peace frequented the country-houses, hunting-lodges and gardens in the neighbourhood. Shalimar Gardens, seven miles north of Kashmiri Gate, Serai Sita Ram six miles west of Lahore Gate ('In the great days, perhaps the Hampstead or Putney of the great capital'),⁴¹ Qutb and Mehrauli to the south and Patparganj to the east, across the river (the *duāb* canal from Saharanpur passed through the grounds of a royal preserve before rejoining the Yamuna opposite the city), these marked the extent of the townsman's hinterland. The *sarais* round the city—the inner ring of Sita Ram's, Hafiz Banna's, the Idgah, the one used by the British as the Jail, then the outer ones of Arab Sarai, Sheikh Sarai, Yusuf Sarai, Badarpur and Badli, indicated a large traffic of pilgrims and traders. (Seven miles was the average distance a man could travel with a cart-load of goods in a day, as is seen by the location of *sarais* in different parts of India.)

Fortescue in his report in 1820 wrote of fifty-two bazars and thirty-six *mandis* having existed outside the walls of Delhi. With bazars and the Idgah to the west, gardens and country houses north, south and east, with populous Paharganj and Mughalpura beyond the walls, the Fort and the city appear as two inner walls of defence, with much of the activities of the inhabitants—trade, recreation and cultivation—taking place in a large area beyond. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many of the dwellers beyond the walls retreated within. But in the subsequent years, there was again a growth of the urban population of the suburbs. A Census of the suburbs in 1847, at the high point of the 'British Peace', listed thirteen pockets of population outside the city walls, of which only three—Mughalpura and Sabzi Mandi (adjacent to each other) and Jaisinghpura, had populations of cultivators—261, 371 and 327

respectively; but as against this the same suburbs' non-cultivator population was 2,298, 3,200 and 1,030. The other suburbs were Kishenganj, Trevelyanganj, Teliwara, Shidipura, Pahari Dhiraj, Sarai Idgah and Kadam Sharif, all in Jahan-numa; Banskauli, Paharganj and Rakabganj. The total number of agriculturists in the suburbs was 1,204, the non-cultivators 21,098. The 'castes' which were in a majority were Sheikhs and Banihs. The former were numerous in Sabzi Mandi and, taken with the evidence of the length of tenure there, it shows Sabzi Mandi—Mughalpura to have been a considerable township.⁴²

The ecological balance of woodland and habitation had another equally sane facet—the policy of keeping the walled city free of activities that involved heavy traffic and numerous vehicles. Rejoicing and ritual took the inhabitants out of the city at specified times. Every week there were wrestling matches in Jahan-numa, and *melas* on the banks of the Yamuna.⁴³ But the more elaborate activities took the inhabitants further—to the small *qasbas* of Nizampur, Indraprastha, Mehrauli and Jaisinghpura. Indraprastha and Mehrauli had a population of over 3,000 in the 1880s. On these townships were billeted large populations during certain festivities. Since Mughal times that attendance had been bi-communal. A feature of the fairs in the Delhi District was that, in contrast with most Indian fairs, they were not occasions for commercial transactions, but only for social and religious activities.⁴⁴

In the territory of the Raja of Ballabgarh lay Mehrauli, where every autumn was held the *Gulfaroshan*, the festival of the flower sellers, a syncretic festival linked with a Hindu temple and a Muslim *dargah*, which had originated in the 1720s. In the 1820s this attracted a crowd of 100,000 (from Delhi, Ballabgarh, Gurgaon and from Faridabad); this number dwindled to 30,000 by the 1900s⁴⁵—perhaps to be explained in terms of the rival attraction of more parochial and para-political cults. Before 1857, the Mughal Emperor and the Raja of Ballabgarh were eager to contribute to improving the roads and bridges between Delhi and Mehrauli.⁴⁶ The way to Mehrauli was through the estate of the King of Awadh, where, at Safdarjang's *Madrassa*, were held the Mohurrum celebrations and the *Chharion ka Mela*, which attracted a few thousand visitors from the city.

To the south-east, Humayun's tomb was the venue for the

celebrations of Mohurram and Basant (another syncretic festival like the *Gulfaroshan*) where the royal princes were the chief guests. The *urs* was held twice a year at Nizamuddin Auliya's shrine in Nizampur, and attracted over two thousand visitors from the city and elsewhere. Individuals made an earning out of the *tebbazari* rights at stalls put up for the fair—Nawab Hamid Ali Khan of Kashmiri Gate was one such.⁴⁷

The Id celebrations took the Muslims, as prescribed by Quranic decree, out of the city to the Idgah on the western Ridge. Large numbers of people took part in the major Ram Lila at Shahji's Tank outside Ajmeri Gate. A separate and smaller Ram Lila was held in the cantonment by the soldiers who were non-Delhi *purbiyas* (easterners). Every Tuesday many Hindus went to the Hanuman Mandir Fair at Jaisinghpura. Also in Jaisinghpura, in the villages of Talkatora was the Jain temple which was built by the minister of Raja Jai Singh in 1724. (Later generations of Jains, in the early nineteenth century, built the other temples at Patparganj and Shahdara, an index to the Marwari movement eastward.)⁴⁸ This was the focus of the annual *Rathjatra* procession from the city which attracted thousands of visitors from beyond Delhi. Fairs were held twice a year at the temple of Kalkaji, which had been built by Akbar's minister, Kedarnath. In the pre-1857 decades, about twenty-five *raths* carrying visitors from the palace were a common sight. At the turn of the century, when rivalry between the Sanatanists and the Arya Samajists in Delhi was at its height, the Bharatiya Mahamandal held a show of strength at the Kalkaji temple, with many visitors specially brought from Rajasthan, the North-Western Provinces and Kashmir, for whom carriages had to be requisitioned from Gurgaon and Karnal.⁴⁹

In Mughal times, these festivities afforded the villagers near the city a sight of their ruler, something their successors sought to emulate when they arranged the Durbar ceremonies not only in the palace (as heirs of the Mughals) but also in the Durbar area, near their township, the Civil Lines. But there was a great divide between the town-dweller and the villagers, a barrier created by the city wall and the city language. The lack of family or clan links between the city and its hinterland meant that on many occasions a calamity for one was an opportunity for the other. The term 'criminal tribe' under which the British officials subsumed the Gujars and Mewatis echoed the Delhiwala's sense of unease when confronted with these neighbouring inhabitants. (In 1869 a drummer in Chandni Chawk warned

the citizens that 350 Gujars and Mewatis were at large—an obvious reference to the labourers working on the railways.)⁵⁰

Shahjahanabad had been built on land which belonged to the emperor—*Mulk-e-Delhi*, south of Salimgarh. After the British conquest, when a settlement law was enacted for the districts of western North-Western Provinces, this did not cover Delhi and the rest of the conquered territory which lay west of the Yamuna, all of which was exempted because their revenue was required for the support of the Mughal emperor.⁵¹ When the first survey of the Delhi District was done in 1844, 346 of the 412 villages were recorded as belonging to the government, twenty-four the personal property of the Emperor, five the personal property of the King of Awadh, and twenty-seven given as life *jagirs* and ten as perpetual *jagirs*.⁵² In other words, the crisis of the eighteenth century had not led to an indiscriminate donating of *khalisa* land near the city in the form of *jagirs*. But it is significant that a high proportion (124 of 346) of government villages were owned by *zamindars*—the explanation being that rich men from the city had appropriated these villages because of their proximity to the city or because they were deserted. The destruction of all the pre-1857 records of the Delhi Collectorate means that we are not able to specify the owners. The pattern of tenancy was of tenants-at-will, occupancy tenants and tenants with *sardarakhti* rights (a system by which a tenant could not be ejected as long as he kept the land afforested). The trees on roads and canals, however, were the property of the government. The rights of *sardarakhti* continued to be respected by the British.

Before Delhi District was assessed for revenue at the end of the 1830s, four large estates were carved out by individual Englishmen, encircling the city in a wide arc from the Yamuna to the Lahore Gate, and stretching to the Ridge. These were the properties of David Ochterlony, William Fraser, Thomas Metcalfe and Charles Trevelyan. The estate of Colonel Skinner, who owned houses in Delhi, was further north, near Karnal.

Ochterlony's estate, four miles north of the city, was called Mubarak Bagh, after one of his *begums*. William Fraser bought an estate of 1692 *bighas*, extending from Kabul Gate to the spine of the northern Ridge. Here he built a large house. He bought up the area in piecemeal fashion from local *zamindars* in 1823–4. The estate, with

an additional 323 *bighas*, was bought by Raja Hindu Rao Ghatke, a relative of Madhavrao Scindia, who decided to settle in Delhi. Although the estate was assessed for revenue, he was allowed to retain it free of rent, when he appealed to the magistrate to act according to 'those English principles . . . by which that nation is so highly characterised.' We shall probably never be enlightened about his mysterious reference to 'the means and motives under which [he] resigned the comforts of [his] home and country, and came and sojourned among the European community of Delhi.'⁵³

Metcalf's estate, like that of Ochterlony, was bought from the villagers of Chandrawal, a *mauza* which obviously was of considerable extent at this time, stretching from the Ridge to the Yamuna. Metcalf's acquisition of the 187 acres which formed his estate appears to have been somewhat arbitrary. Here he built the beautiful house which was to be described as the most expensive in the North-Western Provinces.⁵⁴ The Gujar villagers nursed their resentment in helpless silence till 1857 afforded them an opportunity to get their own back. The sack of Metcalf House was tragic but understandable—not a random shot by members of a 'criminal tribe' but the avenging of a wrong. For this they paid heavily when in 1858 their village was confiscated and let out as grazing lands, and subsequently sold as plots for bungalows. When the Civil Station houses were built in the 1860s, no specific area was acquired, but most of the official bungalows were in Chandrawal. The Gujars consoled themselves by levying their own brand of tax—the right to be employed as *chowkidars* by the Civil Station inhabitants with the clear understanding that the houses would be robbed if they were dismissed. The villagers had to move on again when it was decided in the 1860s that the waterworks would be located in Chandrawal, and they were given territory further north. They carried their name with them, as did the dwellers of Karaulbagh when they were made to move west across the Dehlia Nalla in 1914 (thus bearing out the truth of Kosambi's saying that in India the village name referred not to a site, but to a community).⁵⁵

The Metcalf estate itself suffered from neglect and absentee ownership, and Lala Chunna Mal (Delhi's Rothschild) and Mr Curl and Mr Piggott, English officials, acquired land there by private arrangement with an Indian contractor.⁵⁶ Both Chandrawal and the Metcalf estate were included in the lands acquired for the Temporary Capital in 1912, and the villagers were offered land on easy terms by the Raja of Bharatpur. There were also offers from the Nawab of

Rampur, Captain Skinner of Karnal and the Syeds of Sonapat. The reasons for their generosity are not known. The villagers opted for Karnal.⁵⁷

The case of Trevelyanpur/Trevelyananj was different. If Thomas Metcalfe was a robber baron, Charles Trevelyan was a Victorian visionary. The residual *mauza* of Jahan-numa, government property managed by the British Resident, was farmed out in the 1820s for a mere 241 rupees, since the rocky land there was so unproductive. Trevelyan, a young Assistant Commissioner in Delhi, gave the first indication of his interest in planned urban development which was to be seen thirty years later when he was briefly governor of Madras.⁵⁸ In 1830 he bought 200 *bighas* in the rocky Pahari Dhiraj area, north of Paharganj, for a nominal sum. He prepared a ground plan for Trevelyanpur, a suburb 'to supply habitations for the increasing population of the city'; it was on a grid pattern, with streets ninety feet wide and with names such as Blake Street and Babar Street (shades of New Delhi!) There was a public garden and a central colonnaded market called Bentinckganj. He sold plots (for cash or in exchange for land elsewhere) using documents with his own signature. Because the land was unproductive and, therefore, not in demand, he was able to work the curious miracle of buying only 200 *bighas* but selling 574! Of these, 200 were sold to Diwan Kishen Lal (the same individual who had been interested in the Jheel) who built a gateway fronting Lahori Gate and who was commemorated by Kishengunj. He paid 30 rupees per *bigha*, while the rest of the land was sold at 15 rupees per *bigha* to individuals who helped Trevelyan. The profits, together with some money of his own, were ploughed back into 'improvements' of which the permanent ones were the central market, a bridge and a road. Fourteen of the individuals who bought plots constructed buildings and eighty-four planted gardens (still in evidence in maps of 1912).⁵⁹ This had become possible by the permanent conditioning of the canal in the 1830s which made irrigation of the Ridge possible. In 1834 it was remarked that 'the new suburb . . . is sufficiently interesting to attract a visit from strangers.'⁶⁰ Most of the inhabitants of Trevelyanpur (it is not clear whether they were the original purchasers or their tenants) were the retainers of Raja Hindu Rao; others were Marwaris.

In 1858 the British government inherited the crown properties of the Mughals, and the private estates of the Emperor, the Rajas of Ballabgarh and Awadh, of Raja Hindu Rao, and of the *maafidars*.

Those of the latter who could prove their innocence recovered their property. Other loyalists were rewarded with *zamindari* rights over villages at a distance from the city (Palam, Malcha, Badli, Timarpur, Malikpur, Dhaka, Azadpur and Wazirpur).⁶¹ Most of *maafi* plots were formed into gardens and thus appreciated in value.⁶² When in the 1860s land had to be given to compensate those who had suffered by the acquisitions in the walled city, the government auctioned plots from their property in Jahan-numa and Sadhaura Kalan. They retained control of Firozabad, Jatwara and Khandrat Kalan to the south, Andhauri and Kaithwara east of the palace, Jahan-numa and Banksauli on the west, Sadhaura Kalan, Sadhaura Khurd, Wazirabad and Chandrawal to the north. These estates were managed by the Deputy Commissioner, with tenants paying him land-revenue, cesses and *malikana*.

Till the 1870s, the policy of exchanging land for land was quite common. From then, as the prices of land started to soar, it was not done quite so frequently. The price of land in Delhi District increased 160 percent between the 1870s and 1910, and a remarkable feature of the District was that only 8 percent of the land was under mortgage between 1874 and 1910, and only 9 percent was sold in the same period.⁶³ Those who bought land from farmers or from the government were well-to-do merchants and lawyers of Delhi city, who treated land as an investment.⁶⁴

In the 1860s (as had happened in the late eighteenth century and was to happen in the New Delhi area in the 1950s, after another upheaval) the state of official disorganization and low land values led to appropriations of land and encroachments by land-owners in areas which were agriculturally unproductive (in Jahan-numa and Sadhaura Kalan). 'Squatters'—people displaced by the reorganization within the walled city, and camp followers of the army of occupation for whom the Sadar Bazar was put up in Jahan-numa—entrenched themselves in the area. That this occurred at a given time and was not a continuous process is shown by the figures—there were twenty-nine Hindu and twenty-one Muslim 'squatters' in the Sadar Bazar in 1880. In 1903 there was a change of ownership but no overall increase. In fact, the number had been reduced to sixteen and thirty-one respectively by 1903.⁶⁵ The increase in the number of Muslim holdings was explained by settlements of Punjabi Sheikh merchants in this area as the volume of wholesale trade increased, following the railway line. For the government properties as a whole, the haziness of official

records is indicated by the fact that in the 1870s they assumed that most of the titles to the land had been acquired after 1857, i.e. conferred as *maafis* by the British government. When a detailed investigation was carried out in 1907, however, 1,698 of the 2,125 claims in *nazul* properties were shown as being anterior to 1857 (and hence rent-free!) When rent was belatedly levied on the remaining 427, the owners sued the government and forced it to withdraw its claim.⁶⁶

The pattern of the late eighteenth century, a period of crisis, was therefore being repeated in the late nineteenth century, though this was a period of stable government. Both the wealthy and the poor managed to engross or occupy land, without the government being able to derive any benefit from it. This had two serious consequences. By the time the officials started to think of town-planning in the 1890s, irreparable damage had been done by way of unplanned settlement without the infrastructure of drainage or water supply, and was continuing unabated—the populated area of the suburbs doubled from 360 to 700 acres between 1896 and 1908. Between 1903 and 1908, the value of land in eastern Sadar Bazar rose 700 percent and was much higher than elsewhere in Delhi.⁶⁷ The second harmful result was that the ecological balance of the city and its suburbs got distorted, particularly in Mughalpura, which also became very densely populated. The old settlement became 'covered with buildings' owned by older inhabitants and by immigrant merchants.⁶⁸ From the 1870s the green areas started to be taken over in sections, for factories.

The picture in the north after 1857 was quite different. There was a marked contrast between the crowded Sadar Bazar and Paharganj, and the Civil Lines with the open spaces between houses. The estates here were either auctioned in the form of large plots in the 1860s, or retained by the government as *ghair mumkin* ('prohibited'), a colloquialism used as a technical term for acquired land which could not be built upon. The plots in Sadhaura Kalan were retained as gardens, following traditional use, and those in Chandrawal were formed into bungalows (in 1908 fifty acres were occupied by bungalows). In Chandrawal 613 acres (a little under half the whole estate) was *ghair mumkin*, as was 364 acres (a quarter of the estate) of Jahan-numa. Of the proprietors in Chandrawal, seven were *maafi* holders of 1858, and nineteen were later purchasers. All of them paid a nominal 'peppercorn' ground-rent to the Municipality.⁶⁹

The Civil Lines was open and green by contrast with the Sadar

Bazar, and one of the attractive qualities was that it had not been built on a grid plan. 'Although several miles of roads have in the past been constructed in the Civil Lines and large amounts of money expended, there has been no preconceived scheme of layout.'⁷⁰ The irregular alignments of roads indicate the boundaries of plots and villages. The value of land was low and the construction of dwellings in the Civil Lines occurred at a lethargic pace by contrast to the Sadar Bazar. However, after the Durbars of 1903 and 1911 there was a building boom and in the five years after 1903 the value of land in the Civil Lines increased by 50 percent, and the rents of bungalows increased by 50 percent between 1903 and 1912. By 1912 there were 111 bungalows, of which thirteen had been specially built for the Durbars of 1903 and 1911. Taking advantage of the rise in prices, owners of small plots, particularly Europeans, sold out at high profit to city merchants.⁷¹

Another low-density area was that appropriated for the army. In 1834 the cantonment was under the outcrop of rocks north-east of the city, Majnun ka Tila ('like an army in ambush').⁷² After 1858, when the superior British staff were moved into the Palace and the infantry to Daryaganj, some areas outside the walls (Silampur, Kaithwara and Jatwara Kalan) were declared *ghair mumkin* in the interests of the army. When in 1908 the Cantonment was moved out from Daryaganj back to the Ridge, it was located in an area west of the original settlement in the area, earlier declared *ghair mumkin* as constituting the 'Durbār area'—Timarpur, Malikpur, Dhaka and Hindu Rao's estate. Within a few years, this area was to be made part of the Temporary Capital, and the army moved again—to its new quarters in Naraina.

In 1911–12, when it was decided to transfer the capital to Delhi, a massive land-acquisition project was launched. The allocation of this in 1915 is remarkable for its lack of realism. Allocation for low-density occupation was, for the temporary capital to the north, 1338 acres; for the new city to the south, 20,856 acres; the cantonment, 10 acres, and the new railway station, 120 acres. The total area allotted was 22,324 acres.

As against this, allocation for resettlement from 'acquired' Jaisinghpura and for the spillover from the high-density walled city and Sadar Bazar was a total of 946 acres. Of this, 4 acres were allotted to improving Faiz Bazar; 364 acres for the western extension area, west of the Ridge, and 578 acres for city extensions.⁷³ The area provided for

natural expansion, therefore, was less than that for the Temporary Capital. Thus was begun the extraordinary project of building *two* capital cities on both sides of an older one. The few loyalists who had been able to buy large plots of land in the north and the west in the 1860s were now the beneficiaries of this policy of building not only a capital south of Shahjahanabad but another, to serve twenty years in that capacity, in the Civil Lines area. The agriculturists to the south moved to Rohtak, Gurgaon and Bulandshahr. Only a political constraint like this (as in 1857–8, the policy of discriminating against the Muslims of Delhi) led to a movement of population away from the Delhi area to neighbouring towns. As for the hope expressed in 1921, that 'the development of the New City and the City extensions will entice migration from the old limits,'⁷⁴ this was to prove fatuous. Not till the 1950s, in circumstances not dreamed of by the planners of New Delhi, did this occur. Even then, only a few individuals moved to New Delhi—those who could afford to move to a suburban home while retaining their property in Shahjahanabad. The 'growth' of Delhi was not by the 'urbanization', culturally and in terms of land-use, of neighbouring rural areas but by the steady acquisition of tracts of village land. The growth in its population in the present century was due to immigration of professional and labouring classes, not from the immediate hinterland but from other provinces. The dichotomy between town and rural hinterland, therefore, persisted.

This essay began with a pungent comment by Patrick Geddes on the plight of Indian towns. It would be fitting to close with a platitude uttered at the same time by Geddes' *bêtes noires*, Lutyens, Baker and Swinton, members of the Town Planning Committee entrusted with the task of planning New Delhi.

The governing principle of the town planning movement is foresight.⁷⁵

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ARTISTS AND PATRONS IN 'RESIDENCY' DELHI, 1803-1858

MILDRED ARCHER

Between 1803, when Delhi fell to the British in the Third Maratha War, and 1858 when government passed from the East India Company to the Crown, a distinctive type of painting by Indian artists flourished in the old Mughal capital. Generous patronage from the 'Emperor' and his court had by now dwindled away, but the British Resident and various officers who now controlled the administration provided a new market for Indian painters. Delhi and the 'Grand Mogul' had for long held a romantic fascination for the British. From the late sixteenth century onwards the wealth of the Mughal Emperors, the spectacular grandeur of their palaces and the richness of their culture had dazzled British travellers and merchants. By the second half of the eighteenth century much of that grandeur had vanished. In 1739 the Persian invader, Nadir Shah, had carried off the Peacock Throne; in 1764 the Jats had removed the silver roof from the Rang Mahal and gouged out precious stones from the masonry; in 1787 the Rohilla chief, Ghulam Qadir Khan, had blinded the Emperor and dug up the palace floors in search of buried wealth. During the last years of the century, the Marathas under Sindhia had dominated the city and its surroundings and held the Emperor in their power.

In view of these conditions it was difficult for the British to visit Delhi without a strong escort or official backing. Yet the mystique of the 'Grand Mogul' and his capital continued to fascinate. As soon, therefore, as the city passed to the East India Company in 1803, British residents were quick to indulge their curiosity. The Emperor, or 'King' as he was now called, was left with only his palace and a small area around it for his maintenance. A British colony rapidly developed with civil officers at first living within the city walls, while a military cantonment was established beyond the Ridge. The admin-