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Shashank Yadav
Research Scholar, Department
of Medieval and Modern
History, University of
Lucknow, India

Pawan Kumar Yadav
Professor, Department of
History, (RMPPG College),
Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Mughal city planning in Allahabad a Historical and architectural perspective

Shashank Yadav and Pawan Kumar Yadav

Abstract

This research paper explores the transformation of urban planning in Allahabad, charting its evolution from Mughal camp cities to scattered monuments in the city. It examines the intricacies of Mughal city planning in Allahabad, offering historical and architectural insights into the urban design principles that shaped this important Mughal city.

The study highlights the strategic planning and architectural marvels that exemplify the sophistication of the Mughal era. Key features include the Allahabad Fort, built by Emperor Akbar in 1583, which served as a military stronghold and showcased the integration of aesthetics and functionality. Within the fort, the Jahangir Mahal stands as a testament to Mughal architectural elegance, featuring intricate carvings and a harmonious blend of Hindu and Islamic styles.

The paper also explores Khusro Bagh, a prime example of the Mughal charbagh layout, highlighting the importance of symmetry and water features in urban planning. Additionally, the study examines the social and religious aspects of Mughal city planning through sites like Moti Ghat and Hanuman Mandir. By analyzing these architectural and urban planning elements, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Mughals envisioned and executed city planning in Allahabad, reflecting their broader cultural and political ambitions.

Keywords: Urban planning, Allahabad, Mughal camp cities, Jahangir mahal, Hindu and Islamic styles, Khusro Bagh, Charbagh layout, Moti Ghat, Hanuman Mandir

Introduction

Allahabad, also known as Prayagraj, is a city steeped in history, with its urban landscape profoundly influenced by Mughal architecture and city planning. The Mughal era, particularly under the reign of Emperor Akbar, marked a significant period in the city's development, where strategic military fortifications were combined with aesthetic and functional urban designs. This research paper, entitled "Mughal City Planning in Allahabad: A Historical and Architectural Perspective," aims to explore the various facets of Mughal city planning and its lasting impact on Allahabad's urban structure. Central to this exploration is the Allahabad Fort, constructed by Akbar in 1583.

Three historians from Akbar's time provide detailed accounts of the founding of Ilahabas (Allahabad). According to Abdul Qadir Badauni in his *Muntakhab ut Tawarikh*, Akbar established Ilahabas in 982 Hijri, which corresponds to 1574 CE. Badauni mentions that in the same year, Akbar visited the sacred site of the Hindus, which was already known as Ilahabas, and began the construction of a large fort near the confluence, or Sangam. On the other hand, Nizamuddin Ahmed, in his *Tabaqat-e-Akbari*, attributes the foundation of Ilahabas to Akbar during his twenty-ninth year of reign, which would be 1584 CE.

Abul Fazl, one of Akbar's most renowned court historians, outlines the foundation of Ilahabas in his *Akbarnama*, attributing it to the twenty-eighth year of Akbar's reign, which corresponds to 1583. According to Fazl, Akbar reorganized his empire into twelve Subahs (provinces), with Ilahabas being the first. It bordered the subah of Awadh to the north, the Rewah region of the Baghela Dynasty to the south, Agra to the west, and Bihar to the east. The subah was divided into three *dastooors* (regions) and ten *sarkars* (districts). The fort of Ilahabas was designated as the capital of the subah, with a *subedar* appointed by the Emperor to oversee its administration. The *subedar* of Ilahabas was considered one of the most powerful officials in Akbar's empire. British historians Sir Alexander Cunningham notes that the fort's construction began in 1572, while Vincent A. Smith, however, regarded Abul Fazl's account as the most reliable, confirming 1583 as the year Akbar reorganized the subah in November.

Corresponding Author:
Shashank Yadav
Research Scholar, Department
of Medieval and Modern
History, University of
Lucknow, India

Objective

1. To identify Architectural development of Mughal ruler in Allahabad city.
2. To describe about salient feature of Mughal Architecture in Allahabad.
3. Historical relevance of these monuments and Mughal manifestation of authority.
4. How far evolution of camp city to planned structure in Allahabad.

Methodology

This research employs a historical-comparative methodology, combining archival analysis, field surveys, and secondary literature review. Archival resources include maps, planning documents, and photographs from Mughal Period. Field surveys focus on key architectural and urban sites in Allahabad, while a critical review of contemporary scholarship provides contextual insights. Data is analyzed thematically to trace continuities and shifts in planning paradigms. 1st-century urban challenges.

Mughal Architecture in Allahabad

Akbar, the Mughal emperor, examined the region in 1575 and was so pleased by its strategic location that he ordered the construction of a fort. The fort was completed in 1584 and was named Illahabas meaning the Abode of Allah. According to William Pinch, Akbar's purpose in creating Allahabad was to quell the region's multiple uprisings while simultaneously creating an impression on the many pilgrims who visited the city.

Allahabad Fort

Built in 1583 by Emperor Akbar, it showcases typical Mughal military architecture and was strategically located on the banks of the Ganges River. The fort symbolizes the strength of Mughal rule and serves as a notable landmark.

Raja Todarmal was the principal architect of the fort. It includes a 4-kilometer-long and 33-meter-wide embankment to protect the region from flooding. Akbar's idea for Allahabad Fort was centered upon splendor and majesty. The Fort complex included 25 gates, 23 bastions, 3 khwaabgahs (sleeping quarters), 33 residences, 277 homes, and a canal that connected the fort to the Yamuna River. The fort blends Persian, Mughal, and Hindu architectural influences.

It has three entryways that include Islamic and Hindu artwork. Another gem within the fort is the Jodhabai Palace, which features magnificent Hindu architecture. The "chhatra," circular dome constructions, and glazed tiles represent the merger of the Mughals and Rajputs. Other wives of the king also had palaces erected inside the fort with elaborate Persian and Islamic architectural styles

Built in 1583 by Emperor Akbar, the fort represents a classic example of Mughal military architecture. Its strategic location along the banks of the Ganges River emphasizes its importance for defense and governance (Khan, 2010) [4].

This fort was divided into four quarters and the first quarter included the Emperor's palaces. In the second quarter were the palaces of the royal family and the third had houses for other nobles of the empire. The last quarter had space for the royal servants and other khidmatgār.

Originally, there were twenty-five gateways and twenty-three bastions all around the fort complex. There were twenty-three mahals, two hundred and seventy seven

residences, one hundred and seventy-six chambers, two Khās-au-Ām or halls of public and private audience, seventy-seven cellars, one corridor, and five wells inside the fort complex. (Srivastavashaligram, 1937) [2].

There were many palaces inside the fort. The names of few of them have been identified which include, Aimanābād, Dīn Mahal, Hans Mahal, Umaid Mahal, Sukhnām Mahal. (Lal, n.d.) [1].

Jahangir Mahal

Part of the Allahabad Fort, this palace was built by Akbar in honor of his son Jahangir. It reflects the elaborate Mughal aesthetic with intricate carvings, a blend of Hindu and Islamic styles, and beautiful gardens.

This palace, within the fort, was constructed by Akbar in honor of his son Jahangir. It embodies the Mughal aesthetic with intricate carvings and a blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles (Ali, 2015) [10].

Khusro Bagh

Originally established as Prince Salim's pleasure gardens, this Charbagh was eventually converted into the tomb complex of Prince Khusro Mirza, Shah Begum, and Nithar Begum, Emperor Jahangir's oldest son, wife, and daughter, respectively. The three mausoleums have massive domes, frescoes, and Islamic calligraphy, highlighting a fitting reminder of Mughal magnificence.

A garden and tomb complex that is the resting place of Jahangir's son, Khusro. The Mughal charbagh (fourfold garden) style is evident here, featuring symmetrical layout and the use of water as a central feature.

A stunning example of Mughal charbagh (fourfold garden) layout, this garden complex houses the tomb of Khusro, Jahangir's son. The use of water and symmetry reflects the sophisticated landscaping typical of Mughal architecture (Verma, 2018) [11].

Moti Ghat and Hanuman Mandir

These sites exemplify the everyday life in the Mughal era, including religious and recreational spaces that were accessible to the public.

These sites provide insights into the religious and social life during the Mughal era. They highlight the blend of recreational and religious spaces accessible to the community (Raza, 2016) [12].

Influence of Mughal City Planning

Urban Layout: The layout of the Mughal city typically included a central bazaar, residential quarters, gardens, and religious structures, often designed along the banks of rivers for strategic and aesthetic purposes.

The Mughal city structure often consisted of a central bazaar, residential areas, and gardens, typically situated near rivers, highlighting the importance of both aesthetics and functionality in urban design (Khan, 2010) [4].

Public Work Mughal rulers invested in infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and public baths, which were vital for the urban fabric and contributed to the city's development.

Significant investments in infrastructure by Mughal rulers, including roads, bridges, and public baths, facilitated urban life and commerce (Ali, 2015) [10].

Planning Characteristics of Mughal in Allahabad

Mughal architecture in Allahabad is characterized by its

grand structures, intricate ornamentation, and harmonious designs. Key features include:

Symmetry and Proportionality: Mughal buildings often exhibit a strong sense of symmetry, focusing on balanced proportions. This is evident in structures like the Allahabad Fort, built by Emperor Akbar in 1583. Its massive walls and turrets convey a sense of power and grandeur (Asher, 1992) [7].

Use of Red Sandstone and Marble: The Mughal style prominently features red sandstone and white marble. The Jhusi Fort, constructed during the same period, showcases these materials' aesthetic appeal and durability (Michell, 2005) [8].

Water Features: Mughal gardens emphasize water as a central aesthetic element. The Naini Lake, near Allahabad, was designed to reflect the Mughal love for gardens integrated with water bodies, a hallmark of their architectural vision (Khan, 2010) [4].

Decorative Elements: Mughal architecture is distinguished by intricate carvings, inlay work, and jali (lattice) screens. The Allahabad Fort and the tomb of Emperor Akbar at Sikandra display these features prominently, presenting a blend of Islamic and Persian influences (Khan, 2008) [13].

Centrality: Notable structures like the fort and gardens served as focal points, defining the layout of the surrounding areas (Verma, 2018) [11].

Water Management: Effective management practices improved access to water, crucial for agriculture and daily living, with numerous wells and tanks constructed throughout the city (Raza, 2016) [12].

Spaces: The integration of residential, commercial, and religious spaces promoted a diverse community life within the urban environment (Khan, 2010) [4].

Analysing city planning of mughul and problem in modern context

The Old City includes areas such as Chowk, Ghantaghar, Bans Mandi, Katghar, Kotwali, and Gaughat. Additionally, it encompasses some non-contiguous regions with similar characteristics, like Daraganj, Bairhana, and Katra.

The historic part of the city serves as its economic hub. While the primary roads are broad and indicate some level of urban planning in earlier times, the secondary roads and the development along them have evolved more naturally. The key characteristics of the old city are as follows; (The Regional Center for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), 2013) [3].

1. High population density
2. Primary roads serve as both transportation routes and bustling market streets
3. Crowded conditions, extremely slow traffic, and general disorder characterize the area
4. Insufficient parking facilities, disorderly parking on roads, and traffic bottlenecks are common
5. Concentration of commerce - approximately seventy percentage of retail and wholesale activities occur in this district

6. Requires significant intervention in services and parking to prevent further congestion
7. Entertainment hubs (with 8-10 cinemas) are in poor condition
8. Encroachment, through both temporary and permanent structures, is a significant issue
9. The key trading area, Muththiganj, is located here (planned to be moved to Transport Nagar)
10. Absence of modern commercial buildings, with many structures being old and dilapidated
11. The skyline is cluttered with various wires, including those for electricity, satellite TV, and telecom, all poorly arranged with little concern for safety
12. Small industries such as furniture, textiles, sweets, and food production are concentrated here
13. The markets for hardware, timber, and furniture are improperly situated
14. The Zero Road bus station causes traffic congestion and significant delays

As the population grew and major roads were built, Allahabad's commercial structure struggled to retain its unity around the historic city center. Instead, the city expanded in a scattered manner, stretching towards the north-east, where the University became the central attraction (Katra); the north-west, where the British set up a commercial hub (Civil Lines); across the Ganga to the north (Phaphamau); and to the south, across the Yamuna (Naini). Although the Naini area was initially planned to serve as an industrial center, it failed to fulfill its role in contributing to the city's industrial base and has instead become a local shopping district. (The Regional Center for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), 2013) [3].

While the Master Plan 1991 categorised the commercial centres of the city into three broad types

- The Central Business District (CBD) includes areas such as Chowk, Khuldabad, Muththiganj, Kydganj, Bansmandi, Johnstonganj, and Gaughat
- Secondary Business Districts encompass Civil Lines, Katra, Colonelganj, and Daraganj;
- Local markets are found in areas like Bairana, Rajapur, Sulaim Sarai, Bamhrauli, Phaphamau, and Naini.

The following classification may define the business areas of the city at large -

- Central Business District (CBD) hosting the highest tier of commerce
- Sub-CBDs catering to medium-level businesses;
- Local neighborhood business centers; and
- Open-air weekly markets.

Conclusion

The principles and methods utilized in the planning of Mughal cities created an influential framework that shaped future urban developments during the colonial era. British colonial urban planners, appreciating the efficacy of the Mughal strategy in combining defense and civic facilities, incorporated these principles into their urban designs in India. Key elements such as the strategic siting of forts and administrative centers, the importance placed on garden spaces, and the fusion of indigenous architectural styles with European influences can be traced back to Mughal urban planning.

The lessons learned from Mughal city planning remain highly relevant for modern urban development, particularly

in the context of India's Smart City Mission. The Mughals' comprehensive and integrated approach can provide a valuable model for contemporary city planning. Key elements such as the incorporation of green spaces, efficient water management, and the seamless integration of cultural heritage into urban design are crucial for creating sustainable and livable smart cities. The inclusion of green spaces and water bodies, reflecting the charbagh layout, can enhance environmental sustainability and improve residents' quality of life. Furthermore, preserving and blending historical and cultural landmarks into modern urban landscapes can foster a sense of continuity and identity.

Modern urbanization can benefit greatly from the Mughal architectural and urban planning legacy, adapting its invaluable teachings to build future cities that are both technologically advanced and rich in historical and cultural significance.

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