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CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF RURAL – URBAN FRINGE OF DELHI: A PROCEDURAL ENQUIRY OF ALIPUR BLOCK

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BACKGROUND

The strategic geographical advantages of Delhi offered to evolve it as a nodal habitation base location with plethora of economic activities for human survival. The vast fertile croplands with perennial supply of water by river Yamuna and the location on the margins of Aravali hills in the midst of sub-continent provided the genesis to flourish Delhi as an administrative city. Historically, Britishers developed a planned administrative New Delhi outside the walled Shahjahanbad of Mughal city. After independence, being the national capital, Delhi city expanded horizontally in all its four directions and engulfed large number of villages (rural settlement) located in its immediate periphery.

The series of welfare policies under the five year development plans segregated the under privileged section of the society in rural India. Simultaneously, the sectoral infrastructural developments have taken place in the large cities where industries and trade related economic activities generated mass employment. The under privileged section of rural society mainly the landless labourers and traditional artisans started out-migrating from the agrarian's feudal caste bases society to the big urban centre's. The first generation rural poor migrant provided cheap labour by boosting the every sphere of urban economy.

The city like Delhi attracted the cheap labour mainly from middle and lower Ganga plains where poor immigrants acted as economic safety-valve of the city. The labour wages of these rural poor immigrants were not increased in ratio to monetary inflation. Therefore, even after employment round the year in the city, this labour providing section in the city could not afford residential accommodation and started living in slums on urban vacant land earmarked for different purposes as parks, railways land or the green land along roads etc.

With the course of time, the rural poor immigrants in-flow continued in the city where pressure on land and its resources keep increases and the city started expanding in its immediate vicinal periphery. The frequency and number of unskilled and skilled rural labourers inflow in city surpassed the projections of urban development authorities resulting the acute scarcity in the supply of houses, water, sanitation, electricity and road facilities in Delhi.



To overcome the urban pressure on its limited resources, the rural farmlands in the periphery of urban limit altered into various non-farming activities by two agencies:

1. Urban Development Agency as DDA.
2. Individual or private developers in the form of laissez-faire.

TYPES OF LAND-USES

Gradually, the peripheral rural agricultural and all other common land was altered into various non-agricultural proposed to accommodate the continuous inflow of immigrants and other urban requirements. In the periphery of city, rural villages have four major types of land-uses as follows:

1. Land used for settlement is called Laldora land and the outer road encircling the settlement is called Phirni. Therefore, the land within the Phirni is earmarked for residential and farm products storage purpose. Further, to accommodate the increasing population in villages, the Laldora land is also expanded generally once in a half century along with consolidation process. Generally, 5% to 8% of the total land of the village is used as Laldora land.
2. The land available for cropland or farmlands and owned by the farmers of the village. The cropland is divided in a standard plot size of acres where one acre is 198 ft. east-west and 220 ft. north-south extent or 4840 yards². The cropland may be irrigated or dry-land which determines the cropping intensity along with metalled and un-metalled roads. These farmlands are owned and managed by the persons of one caste or community in a village. All the residents of a village are not owning the farmlands, though economically these landless villages are dependent on farming through supplying the labour inputs. Average 70 to 75% of the total land of a village is utilized as cropland.
3. Village common land which is generally used as pasture land for domestic cattle. Village common land is also known as Gram-sabha land which is found in the form of rangeland and patches of forest land. This common land also provides fuel wood, green fodder and earthen material for building construction to the residents of the village. Generally, 20 to 25% of the total land of village is utilized for common land. The fertility of the soil also determines its extent as fertile plain areas with regular water supply have more croplands and less common land while undulated hilly areas without proper water supply (like Aravali region) have less crop lands and more common land earmarked.
4. Water bodies in the form of tanks, ponds, reservoirs, canals, distributaries and rivers are also earmarked depending on the geographical conditions. Almost all the villages in Delhi had two to three or more number of tanks or traditional ponds. The location of these water bodies is concentrated near or within the residential Laldora land of the village. With the introduction of pumping machines to extract ground water and individual piped water supply, these common water bodies of the villages lose their significance. The shrinkage of area for water catchment and little need of common water bodies resulting in drying up

most of reservoirs in the periphery of Delhi. Generally, one to five percent of the total land of a village is utilized for water bodies.

THE DYNAMICS OF RURAL URBAN FRINGES

The rural habitat located in the immediate outer limit of urban area and partially started altering its croplands for non-farming activities where human economic activities are synchronized according to urban need is called the rural-urban fringe. The outer limit of the fringe zone cannot be demarcated precisely and depends on the nature of economic activities of the rural area.

Rural urban fringe supplies perishable form products as milk and vegetables to city area which on the other hand provides space for solid and liquid sanitary waste of the city. The bulky buildings as earthen materials sand and bricks are supplied from the fringe to urban areas. Both the skilled and unskilled labour force as daily commuters comes from the fringes zone and controls the labour price of the urban area. The increasing non-farming activities in the fringe zone destroy the supply chain of energy flow in the ecosystem by encroaching the water-bodies, depleting the forest cover and dumping the solid and liquid waste and construction the building structure for various purposes on cropland etc.

All the four types of land uses of rural area, as specified above are transformed mainly into following non-farming land uses explaining the procedure in sequence:

A. Settlement Purpose:

To meet the increasing needs of houses in urban area, the development agencies as DDA acquires the farmland and construct the residential infrastructure on it. This process alters the fringe landscape to the expanding urbanization by merging the fringe habitat into urban area. Since, the agricultural farmland procurement compensation amount given by government agencies in very low which ranges from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ market price, therefore, farmers of the fringe area prefers to sell out their farmlands to private developers. The private builders purchased the agricultural land on competitive market price from the farmers and in the tune of laissezfaire, they altered the farmland into different sized plots and developed the residential colonies on it. The residential colonies developed by private builders and developers provides only a plotted area without the provision of civic amenities as electricity, water, sewerage, parks, community ground and other common activities. The urban development agencies played insignificant role in the explanation of these illegal, unplanned and haphazard residential colonies with narrow zigzag and dead and streets. The first generation rural in migrants purchased the plots of 20 sqm. to 200 sqm. size in these colonies on very low price in comparison to planned colonies in adjacent region. Gradually, these small sized plotted colonies with multi-storey constructions accumulated very high population density in order to snow-balling effect and horizontal expansion of these colonies remain continued.



Forces behind the Development of Illegal Colonies in Delhi:

- i. The laissez-faire policy of government with their little or no administration interference in economic activities of private developers where series of residential colonies were developed without obeying the Master Plan of the city.
- ii. The unethical land acquisition policy of urban development agencies where farmers preferred to sell out their agricultural land to private developers on almost five to six times higher prices on more than government agencies.
- iii. The village Panchayat ruling system in Delhi was scrapped in mid 1980s by the Delhi Government but the control of village common land was not taken over. Subsequently, the village common land (Gram-sabha land) was encroached by the villagers and private developers for the residential and other purposes without any hindrance.
- iv. After the evolution of unplanned and illegal residential colony on agricultural land, the local body of municipality started extending the provision of water, electricity and road construction etc.

Table of five villages where survey work has been done, showing the alteration of agricultural land into various non-agricultural purposes.

S.No.	Name of the Village	Total land of the village	Percentage of farmland to total land	Percentage of farmland used for non-farming activities
1.	Nangli Poona	670 Acre	82%	76%
2.	Budhpur	498 Acre	91%	98%
3.	Zindpur	480 Acre	74%	65%
4.	Ibrahimpur	810 Acre	81%	73%
5.	Bakauli	390 Acre	76%	82%

(Based on the field visit survey)

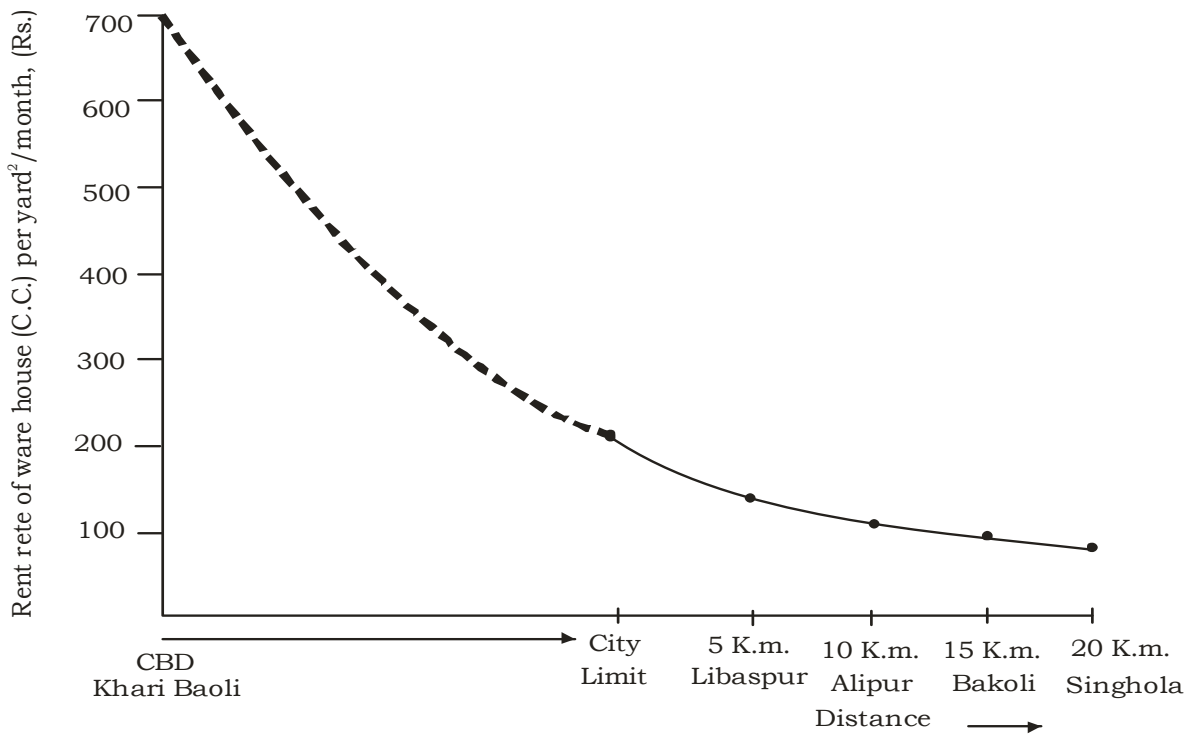
B. Ware-House and Processing Industries:

The continuously increasing population pressure on urban resources mainly land resources resulted into scarcity of land in urban centres for storage and refrigeration of industrial and agricultural products. The cost of land become very high in urban areas whereas in the rural- urban fringe area, just outside the city limit land-cost is very low with abundant availability and supply. Subsequently, the rent of vacant and built-up infrastructure in the fringe is convincingly lower than urban region.

Therefore, to overcome the need of land for different sized ware-houses, godowns and refrigeration houses, the traders of city centre either purchased the land in fringe region outside the city limit or hired the built up structures. The process of altering the fringe land into ware houses started in Laldora residential areas located on the metalled roads with the feasibility of movement of goods vehicles. Gradually to meet the increasing demand of godowns, agricultural farmlands also altered by purchasing the farmland from the farmers. A few number of farmers also developed built-up infrastructure to rent it out as warehouse when concerned farmland in encircled by the complex of warehouses.

The Master Plan of Delhi, 2002, does not provide sufficient space for the ware-houses, therefore, traders developed series of complexes of ware houses along all the national highways radiating from Delhi without any legal sanctity by authorities.

Distance decay sector of Ware-house rent in Delhi alongNH1.



C. Farm-House and Recreational Grounds:

In the rural-urban fringe the urban suitcase farmers purchased the fertile-cultivable croplands directly from the famers and altered the farmlands into farm-houses. These farm-houses are varying in size from one acre to 10 acre plot size and not used to cultivate the crops but developed as ornamental carpet grasslands and trees, which are enclosed by high boundary wall. Most of the farm-houses are located on main roads with easy approach and accessibility. The construction of boundary walls for farm-houses in agricultural croplands further obstructed the accessibility and mobility of farmers in the backyard of farms-houses and which stumbled the farming activities

of the native farmers. The farm owners of the backyard farmlands with closed accessibility gradually forced to sell out their agricultural plots to the farm-houses.

The farm-houses developed mainly along the national highways radiating in all the directions from Delhi (as NH 1, 2, 8, 10, 24) and its main approach roads in the form of groups or complexes. Once the agricultural land is transferred to the suitcase farmer for constructing the farm-house, the price of same agricultural land increased four to five times.

After the alteration of farmland into farm-house, it is used for following main non-farming purposes as:

1. Marriage and other functions on exorbitantly high rent.
2. Recreation ground as water parks and amusement ground etc.
3. Personal-family weekend recreation park land.
4. Religious congregation enclaves as Radha Swami Satsang etc.

Number of farm-houses and their respective size in different villages:

S.No.	Village	Number of Farm-house of varying sizes in acre			
		1-2 Acre	3-5 Acre	6-10 Acre	Total
1.	Nangli Poona	15	5	4	24
2.	Budhpur	13	2	2	17
3.	Zindpur	10	8	2	20
4.	Ibrahimpur	12	6	2	20
5.	Bakauli	21	3	2	26

D. Commercial and Repairing Workshops:

With increasing pressures on limited urban land resources, the peripheral land in fringe area located along roadside for easy accessibility are altered to overcome the urban pressure through series of commercial activities and repairing workshops, such as:

- i. Building material storage and markets as marble, steel, sand and cement etc. which require large area with rapid vehicle movements of bulky material.

- ii. Vehicle repairing servicing and sales related commercial use of land in linear pattern long the main roads.
- iii. Vehicle transit activities, where heavy vehicles load or unload the goods and small vehicles further shift the goods down to the city. These heavy vehicles require large area for transit and parking the vehicles as urban development authorities failed to accommodate these activities in urban areas as per increased requirement.
- iv. The educational infrastructure as schools, colleges, training institute and other academic activities also altered the vast agricultural farmlands for commercial purposes. With growing population the demand of educational institutes are increasing continuously and urban development authorities have not allotted even a single piece of land for educational services since decades. Subsequently, series of educational institute of various levels mushroomed around the city in rural urban fringe in all four direction of Delhi on cropland.

E. Vacant Walled Plots:

In the rural urban fringe, once the single plot of farmland is altered for non-agricultural activities to meet the urban need that single plot farmland alteration resulted into long lasting implications. It breaks the irrigation net work, restricts the mobility of farmers and tractor, started releasing variety of solid, liquid or gaseous wastes which ultimately forced the farmers to give up the farming as occupation as it become non-profitable in the area. Gradually, farmers started selling out the farmland to urban dwellers as native farmers of the fringe villagers can't afford to purchase the farmland for farming as its prices are highly exorbitant beyond their purchase capacity.

With the course of time, in the sequence, first, farmlands along main roads are diversified, secondly, farmlands along the approach roads are altered and thirdly, the farmlands in the backyard with least accessibility are surrendered for variety of non-agricultural activities.

The vast agricultural land in the fringe is enclosed by walls of different sized plots varying from 1 bigha to 10 bigha. These walled plots are owned by urban dwellers as an investment for future as the price of land are increasing at the faster rate than any other investment in metropolitan of India. As the land price follow the distance-decay factor therefore, near the city margin, the number of vacant walled plots are more but the size is small, while in the outer margin of fringe, the number of walled plots are less but the size of plots are bigger. These walled plots are generally lying vacant since decades or sometime planted by eucalyptus or other trees, not for income but to maintain the ownership and occupancy. The walled plots are hardly leased out to native farmers for farming due to potential disputes of ownerships and with the course of time these vacant plots are also amalgamated into unorganized urban expansions.

CONCLUSION

The three consecutive master plans of 20 years span each of Delhi are concentrated only on the land use planning within the urban limit and are not dovetailed with the increasing demand of urban infrastructure. To meet the urban demand of land for plethora of economic activities on cheaper cost, the rural urban fringe mainly along the modes of transportation such as highways, state roads and railways diversified the farmland and other village land with less interference (laissez faire) policy of administration. Though, this form of urban expansion becomes able to meet the urban requirements of land partially but at the cost of illegal, unplanned, haphazard and non-sustainable urban system.

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