PART-III

CONCLUSION AND PROGNOSIS
CHAPTER X

PLANNING OFETHAL TOWN
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PLANNING OF IMPHAL TOWN

The modern urbanologists are of the opinion that "the most important factors for making cities most livable to their residents are aesthetic appeal, attractive business areas, good government, rational and ethnic harmony, easy commuting, pleasant suburb and access to cultural and recreational activities."¹ Such qualities of a town demand proper planning and sustained maintenance. "As the cities are the creations of man for the benefit of man, it is, therefore, the responsibility of man to administer his creations in such a manner as to optimise the benefits of them to the people who live and for those who are dependent on them."² Administration for optimisation of the benefits must be guided by rational principles and planning. Planning aims at the organised development and in the context of a town the touchstone of planning is the accommodation of several units to make a complete but harmonious whole."³

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10.1. IMPHAL AND PLANNING

10.1.1. Meaning of Planning

There are many definitions of town planning depending upon the nature of the plan and the class of the town. Planning always involves the socio-economic and allied elements, such as, geographical basis, historical development, transportation, etc. One definition, while pointing out such factors, states that "town and city planning is the theory and practice of planning and construction of cities, towns and other populated places providing comprehensive solutions to socio-economic, sanitation-hygiene, civil engineering, transportation and architectural problems connected with the design and construction". Another definition stresses rather on the actual planning of layout, design, and location of an urban agglomeration on a large land area removed from the existing urban centres. Still another states that 'city and urban planning is a science, an art and a monument of policy concerned with shaping and guiding the physical growth and arrangement of towns in harmony with their social and economic needs'.

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common in most of the definitions is the stress on organised and harmonious arrangement of the parts of the town.

10.1.2. Planning and Geography

"Planning has inescapable geographical basis". Though the work of a planner is somewhat more than that of the geographer, both have a common basis, that is, work on the surface. "The urban geographer is concerned with problems of gaining urban growth and development in such forms and patterns as will further the attainment of better urban way of life." In addition to this, the planner concerns himself with the engineering and technical aspects. Thus, town planning becomes an interdisciplinary work of the urban geographers, sociologists, engineers, financiers, etc. The historical, geographical, socio-economic and cultural analyses made in the previous chapters may help us indicate the guidelines of planning and development of Imphal town for its healthy growth and prosperous existence.

10.1.3. Planning and Imphal Town

In the past the plans for the growth of Imphal were executed under the patronage of the kings who were the

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master of the land. With British occupation and growth of commercial activities in Imphal, privately owned land increased in proportion, and this lowered the influence of the reigning princes especially under the influence of the British administrators. This democratisation is now a universal phenomenon in the western world. It is, therefore, necessary that before the planning of an existing town is taken up, the policies and guidelines be formulated in such a way as would mete out only minimum difficulty to the citizens in the course of execution of the plan. The planning for Imphal has recently been undertaken by the Town and Country Planning Department of the Government of Manipur. It is noticed that political interference often hinders the planning processes here.

Imphal is an old capital site and the present town has enlarged itself with the outgrowth of the old settlements by accretion of buildings around the original nucleus. The present layout, therefore, is the result of accretion in the course of development. The traces of past planning in the layout of the roads within and outside Kangla are still clearly found. The planning programme of Imphal, therefore, has largely to be a moulding of operational, developmental, remedial, preventive and restorative measures. Planning is partly operational because better operations between the parts of the town is sought, partly
developmental for the newly acquired areas in the suburb are required to be developed, partly remedial as the past mistakes are to be overcome, partly preventive so that the past mistakes are not repeated and lastly, partly restorative in the sense that some of the parts like Kangla are required to be restored to activities. While doing this the aesthetic value must be given due attention for 'nothing is easier than to be impassioned about the ugliness of many cities or ruination of scenic amenities in the countryside.'

10.2. PLAN STRUCTURE OF IMPHAL TOWN

'The plan structure of a town is a harmonious system of interrelated parts and elements of an urban territory within the limits of a town'. The urban territory in Imphal falls under two major groups, residential and non-residential. Their ratio is 62.66 : 37.34 in the I.M.A. and 21.64 : 78.36 in the G.I.A. in 1975. In the proposed plan structure (Fig. 63) harmonious arrangements of the parts are suggested. As planned, the proportion of the parts and recreational spaces shall increase, for it is

8 Freeman, T.W., loc.cit.

9 Rimsha, A., op. cit., p. 61.
1. GOVERNMENTAL OFFICE; 2. MULTI STOREYED HOUSING AREA; 3. LOW COST HOUSING AREA; 4. COMMERCIAL AREA; 5. FOREST; 6. AGRICULTURAL AREA; 7. SECONDARY SHOPPING CENTRES; 8. ROAD SIDE SHOPS; 9. HISTORIC CORE; 10. LOW LYING VACANT PLACE; 11. BUS PARKING
proposed to develop a self contained neighbourhood units in the housing colonies. The plan of Imphal as suggested is a closed layout of cobweb pattern which is different from the open layout like linear pattern. While framing the plan structure the physical and economic profiles of the town have been taken into account.

Two plans, both of which are of closed layout, are found to have been used in Imphal in the course of its development. One is the gridiron plan used by the Romans who planned their colonial towns and the second one is the circular pattern as used in ancient Palestine. Although gridiron plan is said to have been modelled by the Romans, it is widely used for the administrative cities of China and thence imported into Japan where Kyoto exemplified its regular system. Thus, the gridiron plan of Kangla of Imphal might have been borrowed by the kings of Maniour in those days from the east.

The circle appeared to be the image of perfection to the ancient religious people of Jerusalem and they planned their towns in this fashion. In Imphal, such a

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plan was initiated by the British after the annexation of Manipur and the development around Kangla was aimed at such a pattern of planning with radial roads emerging from the four corners of the central square of Kangla and also from the middle of the four sides in the eight cardinal directions. However, due to the physiographic influence the first circle was slightly disturbed along the north-south axis.

However, neither gridiron pattern nor circular pattern could make any substantial headway in the absence of sustained efforts, imagination and financial backing. With the rapid increase in population after World War II, settlements and activities came to be located haphazardly, obliterating whatever little planned pattern the town inherited from the past. It was only in the late sixties that serious thought was given for a planned development of the town. But by then Imphal was on the crescendo of growth sprawling along the arterial roads. Thus, the roads have come to be an important factor in Imphal for developmental planning, for only such a scheme would mete out minimum difficulty to the residents and shall, therefore, encounter least resistance. It is, therefore, suggested that if a sector of this town is considered for development, it must be along the road with open layout structure of the
linear plan. Very narrow rectangular blocks can, however, be lined along either side of the roads. Development of the present markets along the roads must be taken up with priority to transform them to modern shopping centres. In this connection it is suggested that the road sides from the main centres of the town upto the secondary market centres on the boundary of the I.M.A. be developed for shops, while the roads thence be devoted to the housing colonies with provision for development of shops only at regular intervals. An advantage of linear development is that it will provide room for outward extension in future. Such a development also guarantees every inhabitant the proximity to green space. In this context it may be pointed out that the eminent French town planners have suggested that Paris be replaced by buildings stretching along the length of Seine as far as Rouen.12

10.3. RECONSTRUCTION OF IMPHAL TOWN

In an old town like Imphal reconstruction involves demolition of features like slums and replacing them by scientific neighbourhoods, but in the plans of Imphal as envisaged by the Department of Town and Country Planning Garnier, J.B., and Chabot, G., op. cit., p. 217.
there is little scope more than remodelling the old pattern. Even in this, the Department is confronted with many problems wrought with political interferences.

For sake of a better future, present impediments must be overcome and rationality rather than selfish political gains must be given priority. It is with this pious hope that the following developmental schemes are suggested:

10.3.1. Planning Machinery

A broad based planning body including experts representing engineers, geographers, sociologists, experienced administrators, town planners and citizens' representatives be constituted.

10.3.2. Housing Improvement

New residential areas as per plan be set up and the old residential areas be improved with the help of the housing co-operatives.

The rapid growth of population has led to increasing housing congestion and the town could offer that this space will have to accommodate about 4 persons by the end of the present century. The town now sprawls horizontally at the cost of the agricultural areas. To check this, vertical extension should be given due importance in the future.
development. It may be noted that Imphal suffers from two impediments so far the development of housing schemes are concerned: firstly, there are few industries producing building materials and secondly, there is the transport bottleneck with the industrialised parts of India. Steel, cement and concrete which are the primary requirements of modern R.C.C. structures are always in short supply in Manipur. Distribution of these materials should always be taken over by a government owned agency or the Civil Supply Department. At present one has to wait for months to receive the quota of cement or steel allotted to him by the government and by that time of arrival the price of other materials increase beyond one's estimated budget. Moreover, while low income group cannot afford to expend on R.C.C. houses, the rich ones avoid such constructions for fear of probe and harassment by the Income Tax Department. These are some of the causes as to why the town has a limping stride towards better urban housing.

It is, therefore, suggested that construction of houses be taken up by the Government sponsored co-operatives and the Imphal municipality (which will be the sui juris authority of land policy and transactions). The construction will be carried out as per specification of the Town Planning Department in respect of design and
layout. The housing scheme in Imphal may include the construction of multi-storeyed apartments and low cost residences. The first category is chiefly meant for residential areas of the I.M.A. but it may expand along the roads (as indicated above) and cover the government's open land in G.I.A. The second category is meant for G.I.A. suburbs. The application of such a scheme may involve huge expenditure in the initial stage for procuring land and construction materials. But the housing co-operatives may collect a part of the fund from the promising customers and take loan from the banks. After the completion of the building the ownership of the flats can be transferred to the individual buyers. Selling of the contiguous flats may be guided by such considerations as similarity in profession and income and proximity to the service areas. It will indirectly remedy the traffic congestion and help develop neighbourhood relations. Such a scheme will further encourage the residents to construct their houses with the specification of the Town Planning Department.

In the urban fringe, especially in the G.I.A., the construction of houses must be of low cost variety. Construction of low cost houses demands introduction of certain industries to produce pre-fabricated parts. The low and middle income families can be allowed to construct
houses made of bricks plastered with mortar or mud and roofed with tiles or C.I. Sheets under the guidance of the Town Planning Department.

10.3.3. Expansion of Commercial Areas

The present C.B.D. is too small to accommodate the shops and the variety of goods and it needs immediate expansion. There are four ways of expanding the C.B.D. They are as follows:

1. Extension of the present C.B.D. towards east to the areas now occupied by the Assembly Secretariat, women's Hospital and Fire Brigade following the shifting of these establishments to the urban fringe. The areas thus acquired may be devoted to wholesaling activities for supplying commodities to other areas of Manipur.

2. Introduction of a row of shops around the Central Kangla Square so that a walk along this path is enough to complete visit to all the shops. It will be a part of the beautification programme as the paths will surround the moats of Kangla with their clean water reflecting bright lights and signs of the shopping centre.

3. Development of secondary shopping centres in different parts of the town to relieve the congestion of the people and vehicles in the C.B.D. For this, seven markets in the order of importance are suggested. They are
Singjamei, Kwakeithel, Lamlong, Kongba, Tera, Naoromthong and Chingmeirong, distributed within the I.M.A. boundary. It is expected that these would cater for about 20,000 to 40,000 people of the surrounding.

4. Introduction of lines of shops along the main streets from the secondary markets to the Khwairamband market.

10.3.4. Improvement of Roads

Imphal, being the most important commercial and administrative centre in Manipur, attracts many people and traffic from all over the state. The proliferation of vehicles of all sorts and the resultant congestion of traffic in the town demand an increase in the number of roads and the expansion of the existing ones. Again, with the introduction of more sophisticated modes of transport like Electric Trolley Buses (ETBs) in future, it will need further expansion.

Imphal has a peculiar characteristics of C.B.D. oriented traffic which terminates at its fringe. The passengers therefrom are served mostly by cycle rickshaws. Most of the commuters use bicycles together with scooters, motorcycles, jeeps and cars. The volume of traffic is the greatest from 9.30 a.m. to 11 a.m. when the incoming
passengers and commuters are joined by the local office goers and academic population. The traffic then has to be controlled by a big team of police in the C.B.D. area.

Despite well organised transport services the rush of passengers is great. Besides, the want of parking space is a pressing problem of the town. All the ad hoc road side parkings are subjected to constant shifting. They are crowded with the local vehicles and can hardly provide any room for the passenger buses. Four parkings can be constructed in the core of the town. Out of them three small ones can be constructed at Cheirap, Keisampat (near Electricity Colony) and Wangkhei (near Open Air Theatre). The fourth and the biggest one can be constructed at Khuman Lampak, beside Minuthong area with an accommodation for more than 1000 buses. The other parkings must have a capacity of 200 buses each as these will be mere stations of picking and dropping of passengers. These can also be used at the time of mergency when the central parking at Khuman Lampak is not available for use.

Some offset parkings for the smaller vehicles can be constructed at suitable places. At least five such parkings can be suggested one each at the four corners of the central square and the fifth at the site of the present women's Hospital. These will require small spaces but their
occupancy and utility will be very high.

The town has no intra-city public transport connection. Introduction of it is urgently necessary. With a further increase in the passenger rush Electric Trolley Buses (ETBs) can be introduced between Imphal and its surroundings like Nambol and Lilong. These measures will help strike the balance between the demand and supply of the thousands with the optimal limits of traffic.

10.3.5. The Central Square of Kangla

The central square of Kangla should be developed into a historic kernel surrounded by its moats and courts and administrative buildings and a row of modern shops. This will add to the beautification and tourist attraction of the town.

10.3.6. Drainage

The ancient waterways should be developed for low-cost intracity transportation and as an add to beautify the city. Under this scheme a barrage with sluice gates can be constructed across the Imphal river in the down stream to store sufficient water in the river. The ancient moats around Kangla can be reopened to the river. If properly arranged and maintained, this will also attract tourists as the Dal lake in Srinagar does. It will also help fish
production in the town itself.

The rivers of Imphal cause frequent flood and solution of this is difficult. The sudden break of the slope along the margin of the valley couples with reckless deforestation is the main reason for recurrence of flood. The construction of culverts, bridges, embankment now may cause a devastating flood taking a huge toll of life and property.

The scheme for the revival of canals, and storin of water for water communication stated above may help remove the hazards if the scheme undertakes to divert the water of the Imphal river to the Iril river in the eastern half of the town and that of the Nambul river to the main canal of Loktak Lift Irrigation. In the lean season the water can be directed to both the rivers to regulate the flow.

So far internal drainage is concerned, a grid pattern is suggested so that water from one can be diverted to another. The road side drains should be stone walled and covered.

10.3.7. Land Management Policy

The land management policy of the government should be modified to enable the Imphal Municipality to hold sui
juris authority in selling and transacting land so that it can effectively take up the co-operative housing schemes.

10.3.8 Garbage Disposal

The process of garbage disposal involves three stages of collection, transportation and disposal. So far collection is concerned the sweepers sweep the streets and the market places of Khwairamthand bazar every morning. Then, the streets sweepings and market wastes are collected in the trailer of tractors with manual labour.

Collection from the residential areas has not been started as yet. Considering the size of the town, trailer containers of about 6,000 litres capacity can be kept at the road sides in the residential areas so that the refuge can be collected and emptied every morning. A specially designed truck with hydraulically operated pooler plates, rear end doors and ejector plates inside the body, as used in some cities, may be operated in Imohal. This will help transport two or three times the conventional tonnage of garbage in a single trip. It will not only reduce the transportation cost but also ensure a hygienic standard.

The maladministration in the system of disposal of sewage and municipal waste cause health hazards. Choking of a drain with sludge causes spilling of polluted and
filthy water and consequent widespread water borne diseases. The solution of such problems is related to the concept of environmental control. The answer must be a method which will neither pollute nor desecrate the land. A large amount of municipal solid waste and sludge may be of great value if converted into compost. For an agricultural state like Manipur it will be of great value to the villages for intensive cultivation around the town. Thus, compost pits for disposal of refuses of Imphal may be located in the neighbouring villages like Kongmapal, Lilong, Heingang, Lamsang, Toubungkhok, Hiyangthang, etc. Composting can be done by anaerobic method (in absence of air) or aerobic method (in presence of air). The anaerobic method of composting is unhygienic as it may pollute the seeping water and cause health hazards for those using underground water. The aerobic method, on the other hand, pollutes the atmosphere.

The best method of composting is the combination of both the processes. By this method the municipal refuses and wastes can be converted to a stable product which has the potentiality of being recycled into ecological sphere without destroying the high latent energy. It is, therefore, suggested that composting be carried out with the refuses of Imphal in the places mentioned.
Over and above these there is the deficiency of filtered water which needs immediate attention. Some filtration units can be constructed along the Imohal and Iril rivers. Laying of concrete pavements, covering of drains and clearing of pavements of unauthorised shops should be taken up.

10.3.9. Recreational Space

With proper planning there will be enough space in the town for development of recreational grounds and green belts. Once the spaces are earmarked, these should be developed through the schemes like social forestry.

The above are only suggestions and subject to further examination but these indicate a broad outline for all-round development of Imphal.