Chapter- V
Utilitarian Structures: *Sarais*
CHAPTER 5

UTILITARIAN STRUCTURES: SARAI S

Works of public utility would include the digging of wells, digging canals, building roads and establishing sarais or rest houses on the routes connecting one town with the other and opening ‘guest-houses’ within the city for servicing the visitor.

When Babur came to Agra, apart from laying gardens which not only acted as residences but helped in changing the urban landscape, he also reported took up the work of constructing step-wells which would not only water his gardens, supply ‘running water’ to his fountains but also act as refuge against the scorching heat of the newly conquered country. He also advocated the profits of constructing hammams or bath houses which were equipped within provisions of both hot and cold water. When he reached Agra in 1526 and was contemplating to build his new city there, he wrote:

“Three things oppressed in his Hindustan, its heat, its violent winds, its dust. Against all three the Bath (hammam) is a protection, for in it, what is known of dust and wind? And in the heats it is so chilly that one is almost cold.”

Thus amongst the first constructions of Babur at Agra included a large well, hot bath and tanks along with his residential building and the garden:

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“The beginning was made with the large well from which water came for the hot bath, and also with the piece of ground where the tamarind trees and the octagonal tanks now are. After that came the large tank with its enclosure; after that tanks and *tash imarat* (outer residence); after that the private house (*Khilwat Khana*) and its garden and various dwelling; after that the hot bath”.\(^2\)

Babur then went on the describe in detail the ’10 by 10 gaz’ step-well (*baoli* or ‘*wain*’) which he ordered to be constructed in the Lodi fort at Agra soon after his victory over Rana Sanga:

“it is a comple *wain*, a having a three-storeyed house in it. The lowest storey consists of three rooms, each of which opens on the descending steps, at interval of three steps from one another. When the water is at its lowest, it is one step below the bottom chamber; when it rises in the rains. It some times goes into the top storey. In the middle storey an inner chamber has been excavated which connects with the domed building in which the bullock turns the well-wheel. The top storey is a single room, reached from two sides by 5or 6 steps which lead down to it from the enclosure over looked from the well-head. Facing the right-hand way down, in the stone inscribed with the date of completion. At the side of this well is another the bottom of which may be at half the depth of the first, and into which water comes from that first one when the bullock turns the wheel in the domed building afore-mentioned. This second well is also is fitted with a wheel, by means of which water is carried along the ramparts to the high-garden.”\(^3\)

This is one of the best description of a *baoli* or step-well and the application of the Persian-wheels to draw water from it and left it to a higher ground.

Probably it was the deeply dissected terrain of Agra which restricted canal development both upstream and downstream of the city: a fact hinted at by Babur

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 531-32  
\(^3\) Ibid, p. 533
when he complained of lack of running waters in North India. Thus it comes as
no surprise that we do not find any canals or other such water works dug by Babur
at Agra. The presence of the Yamuna on the other hand ensured a good yield of
water for the various wells, step wells and tanks constructed around the city.

Unfortunately no step wells survive at Agra outside the fort complex. Some of
them which are still extant are affiliated to the various gardens; thus we
have them at the tomb of Itmadud Daulah, Bagh-i Nurafshan and the Jahanara
Bagh. However except for the wells nothing else survives of the. Two large water
tanks, one belonging to Akbars period, and the other to Jahangirs reign are extant.
The first is located in a village- now a suburb of modern Agra- known at
Itimadpur on the main Agra- Kolkata national Highway. Located around 13 or 14
kilometers from the main city is a large rectangular tank in the middle of which is
constructed a double storeyed octagonal pavilion surmounted with a cupola.
Anther tomb-like structure is constructed on the banks of the large tank. Although
presently no grave stone is found in this later structure but probably, it was the
tomb of Itimad Khan himself which he had built in his own life-time. The large
water tank with the octagonal pavilion not only to give a sense of paradisiacal
setting to his tomb but was also a public work: the wall of the pavilion provide us
a large number of graffiti; testifying to the public nature of the structure (Plate

4 Ibid., p. 531; See also James L. Wescoat Jr., “Early Water Systems in Mughal India”, op. cit.,
pp. 50-57
The tank with its buildings acted as a convenient halting place for the people traveling between Agra and towns like Allahabad and Awadh in the east.\(^5\)

The tank belonging to the Jahangir period is constructed in front of the Tomb of Firoz Khan Khwaja Sara a Jahangir noble who died during the reign of Shahjahan in 1647.\(^6\) Like in the earlier case, the hauz (tank) provides a paradisiacal setting to the tomb, as well as provides a source of water to the neighbourhood. Like the tomb a tank of Itimad Khan, [now popularly known as Budhiya ka Taal (Plate 5.1A)], the tomb and tank of Firuz Khan is located outside the city limits: it is situated on the Mughal highway connecting Agra with Gwalior. Today the whole neighbourhood is known as “Tal Firuz Khan”. The tank when noted by H. G. Keenes in the late 19\(^{th}\) century was ‘about 10 feet deep at its lowest part’. It was surrounded by steps on all its sides and towers in the corners, traced of which were still visible.\(^7\) Presently it has been reduced to a mass of dirty water infested with mosquitoes and other insects.


The most interesting water work at Agra however is a large masonry tank at a short distance from Sikandara. It is situated on the route which connected the Lodi Sikandara with the Mughal Agra (see Map VII). Now known as ‘Guru ka Tal’ this water tank was situated close to a tomb popularly known as Tomb of Itibar Khan.\(^8\) The tomb was later during the twentieth century was replaced by a Gurudwara dedicated to Guru Arjan Singh (Plate 5.2). Traditionally the site is believed to be the place where the Sikh Guru stayed when he visited Agra during the first Regnal year of Jahangir’s reign. Thus the name given to the tank: Guru ka Tal (Plate 5.3).

According to Iqtidar Alam Khan, who surveyed the structural remains of this tank, it was constructed in the tradition of band-tals, the irrigation tanks created by harnessing the water courses in different ways.

This tank was rectangular in shape (see Plan 5.1) and comprised of six stepped ghats, two each on the Northern and southern sides and one each on the eastern and western sides (Plate 5.4). Three arched sluices are provided in the southern side to lead water from the sitting tank into the main one. The silting

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chamber itself in octagonal surrounded by walls on seven sides, the eighth being given to sluices.\(^9\)

The other edifice in Mughal city of Agra was the *Karavansarai*, which played an important role in the civic life. They were structures constructed for the facility of general travelers and the merchants. Not only the Mughal emperors, but also the nobles and other built *Sarais*. The *Karavansara* was generally in the form of a large square with arcades and small square chambers at their inner extremities. Above the arcades runs a gallery all round the building, into which open the same number of chambers as there are below.

According to F. Bernier, sarais provide the shelter to travelers:

“This place is the rendezvous of the rich Persian, Usbek and other foreign merchants, who in general may be accommodated with empty chambers, in which they remain with perfect security, the gate being closed at night. If in Paris we had a score of similar structures, distributed in different part of the city, strangers on their first arrival would be less embarrassed than at present to find a safe and reasonable lodging. They might remain in them a few days until they had seen their acquaintance, and looked out at leisure for more convenient apartments. Such place would become warehouses for all kinds of merchandise, and the general resort of foreign merchants”.\(^10\)

Agra was connected with other important commercial and administrative centres through road and river. Two different routes led from Agra to Surat, p. 281.


through which a very large part of India’s oversea trade was conducted. One of these routes passed through central India, while another went through Rajasthan. The important places situated on the former route were Dholpur, Gwalior, Narwar, Shivpuri, and on the latter, Fatehpur Sikri, Bayana, Hindaun, Chatsu. The central Indian route was intersected by several rivers, most of which were without bridges. During the rainy season therefore this route became unserviceable. In certain sections it was also rough and stony. The alternative route through Rajasthan was open throughout the year, though it passed through semi-independent principalities whose rulers claimed certain custom duties.

Towards the north-west Agra was connected with Delhi and Lahore. The route passed through well-cultivated plains. On both sides of the road there ran a continuous avenue of trees.


14 Tavernier, op. cit, I, p. 37; *English Factories in India (1646-50)*, pp. 144, 218, 335.

15 *English Factories in India (1646-50)*, p. 144; William Finch, op. cit., I, p. 144.

16 Tavernier, op. cit., I, p. 37.


Towards the east Agra was connected with Allahabad and Patna. The route passed through Ferozabad, and Etawah. On this route too there were rows of trees on both sides.

These were the major trade-routes connecting Agra to the other major towns of the city of the Mughal Empire. There were other routes, such as the Agra-Kannauj-Luchnow route described by Finch or the Agra-Kol route travelled by Peter Mundy; but these appear to have been less important.

In Mughal India the caravansarais were found at regular intervals along major highways such as those discussed above, as well as in various towns and cities. Like gardens and mansions, sarāī were also walled, and travellers entered through one of several large gateways. The walls were serrated with battlements and at each of the four corners were bastions. Rows of identical arched compartments separated by thin partitions lined the sides of the buildings. A pool of water, a well, a mosque, stables, trees, flowers, and a katra (walled enclosure) for storing travellers’ goods were found in most sarāīs. Constructed by the elite and powerful for reasons of charity, religious duty or fame, they were open to

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19 Peter Mundy, op. cit, II, pp. 78-79; Tavernier, op. cit., I, pp. 113-116.

20 Peter Mundy, op. cit., II, pp. 83, 86.

21 William Finch, op. cit., p. 175.
merchants, scholars, religious specialists, and other travellers but not to soldiers.²²

An average sarāī had room for eight hundred to a thousand travellers and housed barbers, tailors, washer man, blacksmiths, sellers of grass and straw, physicians, dancing girls, and musicians. To establish order and security the Mughals posted an official with a contingent of soldiers to each sarāī.²³

Built generally along the Mughal trade routes at a regular interval, these structures provided shelter to the traders as well as the foreign travellers, who moved from place to pace sell and purchase their goods and commodities. Both side of the Mughal trade routes the shaddy trees and well were also planted and dug at a regular interval for the caravans (traders who moved in a group). This is testified William Finch, who remarked:

‘From Agra to Lahor sixe hundred miles.²⁴ The way is set on both sides with mulbery-trees.’²⁵

Apart from the Emperor a numbers of Sarais were also built by the nobles and royal ladies. Thus we have the example of Nur Jahan Begum who built the Sarai Nur Mahal at Agra near the Bagh-i Nur Afshan on the left bank of the river.

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²⁴ An overstatement. The distance is about 440 miles by road. See for example William Finch, op. cit., p. 186, foot note-1.
²⁵ Ibid, pp. 185-186.
Mentioning the state run Sarais during the reign of Akbar, ‘Arif Qandahari in Tārīkh-i- Akbarī, refers to these rest-houses as ‘chaukis’ located on roads at an interval of five kurohs’. It is, however, not stated clearly that the travellers allowed into the state-run sarāis were given food and other facilities free of charge. Now also non-official poor travellers were given access into the rest-houses run by the Mughal state, which, as one gathers from ‘Arif Qandahari’s description for an earlier date, originally were nothing more than postal chaukīs. Perhaps, the travellers allowed into the state-run rest-houses were also given free food but this is nowhere stated explicitly.

The kārwānsarāyās set up by the state as well as private individuals or corporate bodies catered primarily to a civilian clientele who were charged, though moderately, for food and lodging. Most of these kārwānsarāyās were supported

28 For the agencies establishing sarāis (that is, kārwānsarāyās) in Mughal India, see Ravindra Kumar, “Sarais in Mughal India”, (p. 20), M. Phil. Dissertation submitted to the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, in 1978. He has shown in a tabular from that out of the total 106 sarāis (he unfortunately does not clearly demarcate the kārwānsarāyās from dāk chaukīs-cum-inns of the Sur and the Mughal periods) listed by him 36 were established by the kings, 23 by the nobles, 9 by the zamīndārs, 16 by the petty officials, 8 by the merchants, 4 by the mashāikh, 1 by commercial establishment, 3 by the religious institutions and 6 by the caste groups. In
by endowments created by the founding individuals or collective bodies. The income from endowments was used to meet expenses on the general maintenance of the kārwānsarāy, while payments made by the visiting travellers provided sustenance to the varied service groups, particularly to the Bhatiyaras who worked as attendants-cum-cooks.29

During the 17th century, the care of the travellers was usually taken by bhatiyarins and other house-hold works in the sarāis were also done by them; while the male members did other jobs or worked in the fields. Nicholas Withington (1612-16) recorded in his Travels, which followed as:

‘Between Adgemere (Ajmere) and Agra, at everye ten courses (which is an ordinarie dayes journeye) there is a serralia or place of lodging bothe for man and horse, and hostesses30 to dresse our victuals if we please, paying a matter of 3d. both for horse and meate dressinge.’31


Manrique gives a vivid description of the service staff in the *sarāis*:

“They are usually built in a square, like cloisters in a Monastery, and are divided up into dwelling rooms and chambers, with a male or female Regent: for women can also carry on this occupation. These attendants are called respectively *Metres* and *Meteranis*. Their business is to keep these rooms (of the *sarāi*) free from rubbish and clean and provided with cots… Those servants are also entrusted with the preparation of the food for guests, as well as doing all the other duties essential to comfort within the house, even to providing hot water for washing feet. Hence on reaching a *Caramossora* all that one has to do is to send out and purchase food in the Bazar or market and leave other matters to these attentive servants. Besides these duties, if the Guests have horses, they are required also to cook *mung* or chick-pea, which is given instead of the barley we feed such animals on in Europe…… To return to the *Metres* and *Meteranis*, who, as I have remarked, are the stewards of these inns or *Caramossoras*. They are so obliging that they are content with one *debua*, or at the most two, which is so small a coin that a half real of eight contains fifty-six *debuas*, or *paisas*.32

The earliest reference to the endowment covering *sarāis* built by private individuals dates back to the first quarter of Akbar’s reign. Rafiuddin Ibrahim Shirazi recording in A.D. 1611-12 his observation of the situation obtaining in the Mughal empire during his visit to Agra about half a century earlier says: ‘that on thoroughfares after every one *farsakh* or every half *farsakh* a *sarāi* is established and given away as endowments (*waqf*) by prominent people (*namwaran*) of this country.’33

Regarding the *Sarais* at Agra, we are informed that:

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‘But that which makes the Beauty of Agra besides the Palaces I have mentioned, are the Quervansarais which are above three-score in number; and some of them have six large courts with their portico’s, that give entry to very commodious apartments, where stranger merchants have their lodging…’.

A look at the map of Agra shows that around fourteen (see Map VIII) of these ‘above three-score’ Sarais survive, albeit in a dilapidated condition, in and around Agra today. Three of them, viz, Sarais Nur Mahal, Sarais Itibar Khan and Sarais Chhipitola belong to the reign of Jahangir, six to the reign of Shahjahan and one to the reign of Farukh Siyar. Three cannot be properly dated today.

1. Sarai Nur Mahal or (Raja Ki Sarai)

This sarai, (Plan 5.2) is in a dilapidated condition now. Situated between the Battis-Khambha and the Bagh-i Nur Afshan or (now popularly known as Aram Bagh). This sarai was allegedly built on the jagir of Nur Jahan (c. 1612 A.D.). It could accommodate about 500 horses and 3000 people at once. A small entrance once situated on the Battis-Khambha side is now no more to be seen. The single-storeyed rooms were plastered from inside and comprised a vaulted ceiling and a verandah in the front covered by a chhajja. The entrance is to the east facing the present Aghhar-Agra road. The stepped ghat has disappeared but one can still see the riverside tower and chhatri here.

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34 Thevenot, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, op. cit., p. 48
The Bagh-i Nurafshan built, as Pelsaert noted, by her officers to collect duties on goods transported by the river. This area belonged to the jagir of Nur Jahan who was entitled to collect duties at this point and, obviously, it was for the use of the traders that this sarai was built just on the river-bank. It was seen by Peter Mundy in the working order soon after the reign of Jahangir. He noted that the Nur Mahal sarai at Agra as:

“is a very fair one built by the old Queen Nur Mahal for the accommodation of travellers, in which may stand 500 horse, and there may conveniently lie two or three thousand peoples; all of stone, not one piece of timber in it, the rooms all arched, each with a several (separate) cupola (chhatri).”

This account shows that the sarai was single-storeyed and each room had a separate chhatri of its own, crowning it on the façade. Brick masonry structure was originally stone-faced; it has now been exposed because almost all stone facings have been plundered. Chhatris too have been pillaged. Fortunately, its boundaries are intact and confirm Mundy’s observation that it was indeed a very spacious sarai which could accommodate 500 horse and 2,000-3,000 travellers.

Jahangir married Nur Jahan in 1611 and largesses were conferred upon her soon thereafter. This jagir was, presumably, granted to her in c. 1612, and it was

35 Francisco Pelsaert, Jahangir’s India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert, tr. by W.H. Moreland & P. Geyl, I. A. D., Delhi, 1972, pp. 4-5.
36 Jahangir, Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, ed. Saiyid Ahmad, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64, p. 327.
37 Nur Jahan was deposed and retired by Shah Jahan on his accession to the throne in 1628 A.D., hence the expression.
38 Peter Mundy, op. cit., II, p. 78.
about the same time that the wise lady, realizing its extremely important need, commissioned this sarai to be built. This is fully in consonance with her character which no less a contemporary than Pelsaert has portrayed in unmistakable words that Nur Jahan Begum; the Queen-Consort, erected “very expensive buildings in all directions-sarais, or halting places for travelers and merchants, and pleasure-gardens and palaces, such as no one has ever made before-intending thereby to establish an enduring reputation.”

The counterpart of sarai Nur Jahan of Agra and the second riverine sarai of the Mughal period, built about the same time, is situated at Delhi, just adjacent to the compound wall of Humayun’s Tomb, on its south side. At present, it is known by such popular misnomers as Arab-Sarai and Mandi. Essentially, it is a riverine sarai, planned on east-west axis, like the Sarai Nur Jahan of Agra.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of Tavernear i.e. as account that of his stay at Agra in the famous Nur-Mahal Ki Sarai. The eastern and western gateways of the Sarais still survived in a ruinous stage. Probably this Sarai contain 53 rooms in the southern sides (Plate 5.5) and 52 rooms in the northern side (Plate 5.6) of the enclosure wall. In the eastern and western side may be also contain the rooms, but today not any evidence of the rooms found in the form of remains. This sarai may be containing around 120 rooms within the enclosure wall.

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40 See Tavernier, op. cit., I, pp. 92-93; Peter Mundy, op. cit., II, pp. 78-79, 82-83, 143.
It is rectangular in plan laid out on an east-west, with the main gate (Plate 5.7) being on eastern side, on the highway. It is an arched gateway built of brick masonry faced by red sandstone and is standing free amidst garbage and drains. There is another similar though smaller gateway on the western or the river-side, stepped quay (ghat) which facilitated loading and unloading of boats having been almost entirely destroyed. A chhatri overlooking the sarai on either side made up, along with the central archway and stepped quay, a very beautiful river-front, typical of the Mughal period. All this has now been altered. There was also a small door in the middle of the northern wall, to give access from the Battis-Khambha side but this too has been destroyed.

Series of single-storeyed rooms were disposed on the two oblong, northern and southern, sides leaving the middle space wide open for traffic and animals. Each room had a vaulted ceiling and the entire interior was pleasantly plastered over. It had its own dalan on its front which was further protected by a chhajja or eves. All openings were arched. While chhajja slabs have all been pillaged, their brackets, deeply embedded in strong brick masonry as they are, have remained. Except for these stone brackets and bare brick masonry skeleton, everything of this once beautiful sarai of Nur Jahan has been completely destroyed and it has been reduced, owing to the total neglect by the conservation agencies.

The total area covered by the rectangular enclosure of this sarai is 225 x 52 square meters (see Plan 5.1). All the rooms inside the sarai are equal in size, and each one is a square covering an area of 3.20 x 3.20 square meters with a porch of
2.00 x 3.20 square meters in the front. The porches are interconnected through openings in the side walls, thus forming a long colonnade. In the center of northern side is a pavilion of 3.20 x 3.20 square meters opening toward the east. Unlike the rectangular or square Sarais, the length of this Sarai is much greater than its breadth which makes it rather disproportionate. An important feature is interconnected porches forming a colonnade in the front of the rooms which provides sheltered access to each room. This arrangement has not been noticed in any one of the sarais in our survey\textsuperscript{41}.

**2. Sarai of I’tibar Khan Khawja**

Four miles from Agra, on the Sikandra road, is the Sarai of I’tibar Khan Khawja situated. It was once an open summer house, but the doors have now been closed with masonry.\textsuperscript{42} Today now this locality called as Bega Sarai. Only huge gateway (Plate 5.8) facing north still survived in a dilapidated condition. This gateway occupied by local people. Beside this gateway nothing remains of this Sarai survived.

**3. Sarai Chipitola**

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\textsuperscript{41} Interestingly, this arrangement is not seen in the following Sarais: Sarai Nawal Ganj, Sarai Chipitola, Pukhta Sarai & Sarai Taj Ganj.

The *Sarai* is situated near the south-western corner of the Agra fort. It is entered through a monumental gateway from the eastern side (*Plate 5.9*). This sarai also contain the Palace and Hammām of Alahwardī Khān (Ilāhwardī Khān) situated in *Chhipī-Tolā* is an example. Originally, it had a large monumental gateway, garden, palace with hammām and an adjoining *sarai* (*Plan 5.3*). All this arrangement has now been changed. The gateway has remained in a very dilapidated condition. A vegetable market (mandī) is held in the *sarai*. Houses have been built on the sides of the gateway and other parts of the complex. The palace proper has also been destroyed. Its hammām has, however, survived and, in fact, the complex is now famous as the Hammām. It has four large square rooms, each of which had a reservoir, and around them are small vaulted chambers, some of which had clay pipes running through the walls. Large monolithic perforated ventilators, viz., cowls, shaped like hollow hemispheres in the roofs of these chambers are a unique feature of this building. On the red stone gateway is an inscription eulogizing the Emperor Jahāngīr and the hammām, containing the chronogram which gives the date A.H.  

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43 There are no other gateways besides this gateway.  
It must be noted that hammâm architecture was popular only during the age of Akbar and only very few examples of Jahângîr’s reign have come down to us. In any case, hammâm was not a public establishment like that of the Romans, but a private building, mostly annexed too a palace.

This monumental gateway is in good condition compared to the gateways of the other Sarais in Agra. The gateway is a large domed structure, which once also contain the inscription. The plan of the Sarai consists of large rooms in the four corners. The total area covered by the each larger room is about 5.20 x 5.20 square meters. All the rooms run all along the three sides with few on the eastern side owing to the space covered by the gateway. It may be contains total 33 identical rooms. And it size is also 3.35 x 3.35 square meters similar to other sarai rooms found in the vicinity of Agra city. The length from east to west is 64 meters and breadth from north to south is 58 meters. Hence the total area of this sarai is approximately 64 x 58 square meters.

4. Sarai Nawal Ganj

Situated nearly five hundred meters north-east of Itmad-ud Daula’s tomb, there is no inscription or any other evidence to establish the identity of the

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building. Writing a few years before the mutiny Raja Ram identified this place as a *Katra* built by Shaista Khan during Shahjahan’s reign for his own residence\(^{46}\).

However, Carlleyle in 1871-72 attributed the construction of the building to Salat Khan, a noble of Shahjahan, as a *Katra*\(^{47}\). He also adds that the name of the place Nawalganj is a corruption of a longer designation *Katra Nawab Ganj*. He said, “It will therefore be better to call the great walled enclosure either *Nawal Ganj*, or the *katra of Nawab Salat Khan*”\(^{48}\). Carlleyle argued that it was used as a market place. But, going by the plan of the building (Plan 5.4) we can safely assume that it is a *Sarai* building\(^{49}\). Comprising of a square enclosure (Plate 5.10), this building covers an area of 115.25 x 115.25 square meters with high battlemented walls and four octagonal bastions at the corners. There are two lofty gateways in the central portion of the eastern (Plate 5.11) and western walls of the enclosure. Rooms run all along the four sides inside the compound. There are two larger rooms in the center of the northern and southern sides falling in proportion to the two lofty gateways in the other two directions with projected outer walls (Plate 5.12). These rooms measure 11.66 x 4.14 square meters. The rooms in the corner open into the bastions, which are hollow structures. There are 86 rooms in

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\(^{49}\) It is most likely that the structure was planned as a *Sarai* but it gradually came to be used entirely as a market place which led it to be as *Katra or Ganj*. 
the structure. Identical in shape and size with an arched opening of 3.35 x 3.35 square meters forming the porch, the ordinary rooms are 3.35 x 3.35 square meters in size.

A. C. L. Carleyle mentioned detailed description about this sarai in his Report. He wrote that: ‘this building, or rather great walled enclosure, is situated on the other side of the river Jamna from Agra, about a couple of hundred yards to the right hand or east side of the Nunihai road, beyond the Moti Bagh and the modern railway station. It is at the present day commonly called Nawal Ganj, which I taken to be corruption of Nawab Ganj, as it is said to have been built by a Nawab Salat Khan in the time of Shah Jahan. It was, at any rate, most certainly built in the time of Shah Jahan. It is also sometimes called, rightly or wrongly, “Wazir Khan’s Katra”. Now the question is whether “Nawab Salat Khan” and “Wazir Khān” were one and the same person or not. Raja Ram, in his “Tamirat Agrah”, calls this place “Katra Nawab Salat Khan” and “Nawal Ganj”; where as Seal Chand, in his “Tafrih ul Imarat”, notices no place by the above name, but he mentions a “Bagh mai Katrah Wazir Khan” (a garden and Katra of Wazir Khan), and he gives the full name of Wazir Khan, as “Alim-ud-dīn” called Wazir Khan”……. I have combined the two names, and called it the “Ganj or Katra of Nawab Wazir Salat Khan”. Across the road, or on the opposite side of the road from the great building or great walled enclosure in question, there is a sort of enclosed village called a “Katra”; and immediately behind this, and between it and the river, and reaching to the bank of the river, there is a garden, containing a
small garden palace, called “Wazir Khan ka Bagh”. Besides the small garden palace which faces the river, there is in the centre of this garden a high octagonal raised platform of masonry, surrounded by a stone railing, and ascended to by steps, and underneath this, below the surface of the ground, there is a great vaulted chamber, into which one descends by another series of steps. The enclosed village and garden last mentioned, I believe, must be the true Wazir Khan’s Bagh and Katra. But in Seal Chand mentioned in his account which followed as: ‘in the ground there are several towers with domes reaching to the skies!’.

There is no such thing either in the Nawal Ganj, alias Katra of Nawab Salat Khan, nor in the garden of Wazir Khan. At each of the four corners of the Nawal Ganj, alias Katra of Nawab Salat Khan, there is an octagonal tower, but neither “towers under ground”, nor “domes reaching to the skies”; while, again, in the garden of Wazir Khan there is, as I before said, a high raised octagonal platform of masonry, with a sunken vaulted chamber underneath it, and there are also two corner towers of moderate height, surmounted by cupolas, facing the river.

It will therefore be better to call the great walled enclosure either “Nawal Ganj”, or the “Katra of Nawab Salat Khan”.

The dimensions of this great walled enclosure are 374 feet 10 inches by 372 feet 7 inches, exterior measurement, exclusive of the outward projections of the towers and gateways. In the centre of the western and eastern sides there are grand gateways, each 40 feet 10 inches in breadth by 35 feet 8 inches in depth, through. Each of these gateways projects 10 feet, outwardly, beyond the line of the wall.
These gateways are faced with red sandstone outwardly and inwardly. The walls and four corner towers are of brick. The walls are lofty, and are surmounted by crenelated battlements—the usual finish to the tops of all old walls in India. The towers are octagonal, of which five and two half sides project beyond the walls, and one and two half sides are included in the thickness of the walls. These towers are 17 feet in diameter, and each of the exterior sides measures 7 feet. At the centre of the northern and southern sides of the great walled enclosure there is a high building (one on each side) 38 feet 3 inches in breadth by 30 feet in depth, and these buildings also project 4 feet 6 inches outwardly beyond the line of the walls. The thickness of the outer walls of the great enclosure is 3 feet 9 inches, and of the walls of the towers 3 feet 3 inches. Along the whole of the inside of the four walls, in the interior of the enclosure, a double series of chambers runs their whole length, only interrupted by the two gateways, the two side buildings, and the entrances to the towers. These double series of chambers give an occupied width of 21 feet 9 inches on all sides, leaving an interior unoccupied area in the midst of the inclosure of 323 feet 10 inches by 321 feet 7 inches. These are eleven parallel double series of chambers (or twenty-two chambers in all) on the left hand, inner side, of each gateway, and ten parallel double series of chambers (or twenty chambers in all) on the right hand, inner side, of each gateway; and these are eleven parallel double series of chambers (or twenty-two in all) to the right hand side interiorly, and ten parallel double series of chambers (twenty in all) to the left hand side of each “side building”. Thus there are 168 chambers in all which line...
the sides in double series in the interior of this great walled enclosure. There are
stairs ascending to the top of the roof near each tower, two pairs of stairs in each
gateway, one pair of which ascends to the top of each gateway, and the other pair
ascends to the roofs of the side chambers on either side of the gateway; and there
is a pair of stairs in each side building ascending to the roof.

The gateways of this great walled enclosure are very fine, and altogether the
whole constitutes a very grand and imposing mass of building.

Opposite to the western gateway of this great walled enclosure, and about
half-way between it and the public road, there is an ancient Masjid in a very
ruinous state, which I should say was more ancient than the “Ganj or Katra”.

5. Sarai Pukhta

This Sarai is situated in the southern direction of Taj Ganj area near Sayed
Nagar. It is believed that the Sarai was built during Shahjaha’s reign. There is no
inscriptional evidence as well as written record found to ascertain the date of the
construction of this Sarai. It may be constructed, when the Taj Mahal was built. It
is said that materials for the Taj Mahal were stored in this sarai. This sarai also
provided accommodation for the labours, who were engaged in the building the
Taj Mahal. One thing very important is this sarai is that, it is infront of the Taj
Mahal about ½ mile just south direction.

50 See for A. Cunningham, Archaeological Survey of India, Report (1871-72), Vol. IV, pp. 159-
162; also see E. T. Atkinson & F. H. Fisher. (ed.), Statistical Descriptive and Historical
688; S. M. Latif, Agra: Historical and Descriptive, Calcutta, 1896, p. 190.
The Sarai has a square plan and each side consists of 36 rooms (Plan 5.5). The corner rooms are circular in shape and dilapidated in condition. The huge gateways which once stood in the center of the eastern and western side of the enclosure do not exist. Some of the rooms still survived in this sarai. Probably all the rooms were identical in size measured 3.35 x 3.35 square meters. This sarai had once contained two huge monumental gateways in the middle of eastern and western side wall enclosure, today nothing is survived. The total area of the enclosure wall may be around 170 x 170 square meters.

6. The four sarais of Mumtazabad

The description of the plan of Taj Ganj\(^51\) (Plan 5.6) complex has been provided by the official historian of Shahjahan, Abdul Hamid Lahori in Badshahnama. Writing about the Taj Ganj he mentioned that:

“To the south of the area of the Jalukhana (Front of the Taj) is a four-laned bazaar. The width of the (lanes of the) eastern and western bazaar is 90 yards\(^52\) and of the northern and southern 30 yards. On all the four sides of this four-laned bazaar are four Sarai. These two Sarais have been built with pucca bricks and lime out of (funds of) the royal exchequer. Each is 160 yards long and broad. Each has an octagonal courtyard of the Baghadai shape with 136 cells lining it, each cell fronted by a verandah with a three-angled arch (dar). Each of these two Sarais contains at three


\(^{52}\) The length of the Mughal yard or gaz has been estimated as 31.464 inches. See, Col. A.Hodgson, “Memoire on the length of the Illahee Guz or Imperial Land Measure of Hindostan”, JRAS, 1843. pp.45-53.
corners three *chauks* (markets). Each of those courtyards is 14 yards by 14 yards. On the fourth corner of each *sarai*, there is the gate used for entry and exit of the people and opens into the octagon of a market (*chauk*) 150 yards long, 100 yards broad, set in the middle the four-laned bazaar. The other two *sarais* are on the same pattern. In these *sarais* valuable goods from different countries of the world are brought for sale. Behind these royal *sarais* merchants have built a large number of *pucca* houses and established *sarais*. And this place which became a large town came to be known as *Mumtazabad*.”

7. **Sarai Badar-ud-Din at Agra**

Many *sarai* erected in the Mughal City of Agra, one of them is *sarai* Badar-ud-Din also situated in the Agra city. Only the monumental huge gateway (Plate 5.13) still survive, which also contain with the inscription (Plate 5.14) on the facade. This inscription suggested that, this *sarai* built by one of the famous noble Badar-ud-Din Khan during the Mughal period. Today this monumental gateway survives as a main gate of the District Jail of Agra. There were nothing remains found of the rooms and outer wall enclosure of this *sarai* found. Now the outer enclosure of this District Jail is newly constructed.

8. **Sarā‘ī of Rōzbihānī**

Shah Nawaz Khan mentioned about another *sarā‘ī* Rōzbihānī, which is situated four *kos* from Āgra. He wrote that: ‘It now advanced to near Akbarābād (Āgra). Muhammad Mu‘izz-ud-Dīn also left the capital (Delhī), and came to Āgra. He was meditating the crossing of Jumnā, when Hasan ‘Alī Khān anticipated him by crossing the Jumnā near the *sarā‘ī* of Rōzbihānī four *kos* from Āgra.

Muhammad Farrukh Siyar also crossed after him, but most of his followers through distress.....

Map VII

Guru ka Tal and its Environs
Map VIII
Plan 5.1: Guru ka Tal

Plan 5.2: Sarai Nurmahal
Plan 5.3: Sarai Chipitola

Plan 5.4: Sarai Nawalganj
Plan 5.5: Sarai Pukhta

Plan 5.6 Plans of Bazars and Sarais at Mumtazabad, Tajganj