CONCLUDING REMARKS
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The general survey of public buildings and public works attempted in the introductory part of this thesis and the detailed study of sarais and bridges as two important categories of public buildings of Mughal India in its main body enables one to make a few general observations which I give below:

One interesting feature that emerges from this study relates to the numerical incidence of public works. Apparently in the post-Turkish conquest period, there was a large increase in the number as well as the variety of public works all over the Indian subcontinent. This impression is clearly suggested by the surviving structures of the public buildings. The phenomenon of growing number of public works from the thirteenth century onwards may largely be attributed to the peculiar nature of the state that emerged in the subcontinent in the wake of the Turkish conquest. This state on the one hand tended to negate the process of the decentralisation of the authority and the economic resources by subjugating the indigenous semi-rural groups of the local chiefs and placing them in a subordinate position to a narrow and town-based class of king's officers of diverse cultural
and ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, this state also facilitated the growth of money economy through the operation of its assignment system. The assignment system in its various forms in which it existed in the Delhi Sultanate and in the Mughal empire became instrumental in transferring a very large proportion of agricultural surplus to the urban centres where it formed the basis for the growth of handicrafts and trade. It was apparently to facilitate this limited growth of trade and commerce which benefited the new ruling class in a variety of ways that the need for the establishment of transport and communication structures, specially of sarais and bridges on a large scale was actually felt in medieval India. This economic factor seems to have combined with the administrative needs of a largely centralised state seeking to extend firm control over the farflung regions of the empire from one centre to urge the medieval rulers and their officers to divert the state resources on a considerable scale to the laying of the highways, building bridges, and establishing sarais and dak chowkis.

One might suspect that a similar set of circumstances must have been responsible for the proliferation
of other kind of public works. This would be particularly true of the irrigation works such as the earthen embankments, masonry dams, irrigation tanks and canals that were apparently built on a fairly wide scale at the state expense as well as by the individual nobles or zamindars in the Mughal empire.

From this it further flows that the medieval Indian state's coming into existence was not necessitated by any compelling economic need of organising public works for the sustenance of the basic social and economic structure. On the contrary it actually came into existence through the centralisation of the existing economic surplus which was quite considerable even before the establishment of extensive public works by the state. In other words the medieval Indian state participated in the establishment of public works not because it was primarily meant to perform this particular function, but that it did so actually to improve its functioning and to ensure that the available surplus sustaining it continued to expand. In this perhaps the need for improving the efficiency of the administration was the more important factor. This is borne by the fact that among the public works undertaken by the state,
as compared to irrigation works those like sarais and bridges needed for improving communication, apparently received greater attention from the state authorities.

In this connection it is also worth noting that although in medieval India the state was the most important agency establishing public works, it was not the only source from where investments came for this purpose. While it is true that unlike Europe, there did not exist, on an extensive scale, private bodies or organisations capable of mobilising resources through corporate effort for establishing different kinds of public works for the good of the people. But there does exist some evidence indicating occasional participation by private individuals in this endeavour in medieval India.

Lastly it may be suggested that the proliferation of public buildings from the thirteenth century onwards was also largely due to the introduction of some new building techniques. Hitherto the principal form of architecture was trabeate which used the lintel and pier constructions predominantly. This form had an obvious technical limitation in that the area which could possibly be covered was determined by the size of the beam;
and this size could not be increased beyond a certain limit without providing additional pier support in between. Even if at some places corbelling was used for covering spaces the areas did not increase much. By contrast the technique of making true arches with the help of a good binding material like the lime or the gypsum mortar vastly increased the potential of architectural creations. As aptly remarked by Irfan Habib the new building techniques brought about a revolution in the middle class housing which were now mostly built of bricks. A similar effect was evident in the construction of masonry bridges in the medieval period. The use of arch made it possible to bridge rivers of medium spans with comparative ease. The larger rivers, it is true, still remained unbridged, but the smaller rivers and streams did get bridges in a considerably large number. It may be of interest to note that quite a few of these masonry bridges are still intact and are catering to the traffic several times larger in volume than the one for which these were originally designed. This should perhaps be enough proof of the superior building technology which was introduced at the beginning of the thirteenth century in India.