

While commuting between the walled city and its immediate suburbs and the later colonies, such as, Gulberg, Muslim Town, Garden Town and so on, one usually has to pass by a very busy crossing, perhaps one of the busiest in Lahore, where half a dozen roads meet from different directions. The crossing is the Chowk Qurtaba but is popularly known as the Mozang Chungi, a name that has stuck to it since ages. For many decades ago the spot was the limit of the municipal area of Lahore and there used to be chungis or an octroi house, in that place, to collect tax on goods entering the Municipal limits of Lahore.

The octroi house was removed decades ago, when the boundary of the city was expanded and is now miles away on the Ferozepur Road and another one on the Canal Bank Road. In the meantime the crossing was named as Chowk Qurtaba in honour of Cordoba in Spain which was declared a sister city of Lahore some years ago. The connection with Cordoba has been highlighted by Allama Iqbal in his poetical works when he visited the place during one of his sojourns.

To mark the event a simple but presentable monument was constructed in the middle of the crossing announcing in different languages, including the Spanish. There used to be an inscription too, which said that the monument was unveiled by the Ambassador of Spain in Pakistan, at that time. There was a lot of lettering on the monument of what looked like brass. Gradually the lettering vanished, letter by letter. Then after-

wards when the roads joining and leaving the crossing were widened and remodelled, one noticed one fine morning, that the monument, too, was consigned to oblivion.

There is a newly built fountain, now, in the vicinity but more towards a place where the old Jail Road or Ghaus-ul-Azam Road meets the Ferozepur Road. Nevertheless, one does not know if this is a sort of replacement of the monument or some thing else, for, no notice of any kind can be found there.

Chowk Qurtaba is not the only place, where a monument or some structure has been demolished without being replaced. There used to be a hall on the Circular Road near Mori Darwaaza and Ganpat Road, the S.P.S.K. Hall, which was demolished while the Circular Road was widened. One feels that it could have been rebuilt close by in order to continue its utility. Replacing it by something at a distance may not be the real answer. Then what about the school near the Data Darbar, the Islamia High School, which was demolished to make room for the additions to the mausoleum.

One gets the impression that no one body is liable for looking after public buildings and common property. In civilised societies, it is the municipal authorities who are responsible for such functions. In our case, it seems that it was only in 1862 that the people of Lahore were given an opportunity to manage some of their own affairs. That

was when the Lahore Municipal Committee came into existence.

It seems to be ironical that while one of the first things that the English did after the occupation of Lahore in 1849, was to put their own men in control of practically every thing, so much so, that even the Austrian Superintendent of the mental hospital of the Sikh days, Dr. Honigberger, was replaced by an Englishman on the very first day of the change of Administration. The natives were put to clean the City and collect garbage as their first 'independent' charge. It shows that there seemed to be a high degree of a lack of trust in the natives, for, even the introduction of

modern education was entrusted to foreign missionaries, Reverend Newton and Reverend Foreman. The natives were thought to be hardly fit for such duties.

Nevertheless, the beginnings of municipal activity in Lahore seemed to be good. The Municipal Committee was formed in April 1862 and began business on May 1, following. Thirteen members, mostly belonging to the elite of the city,

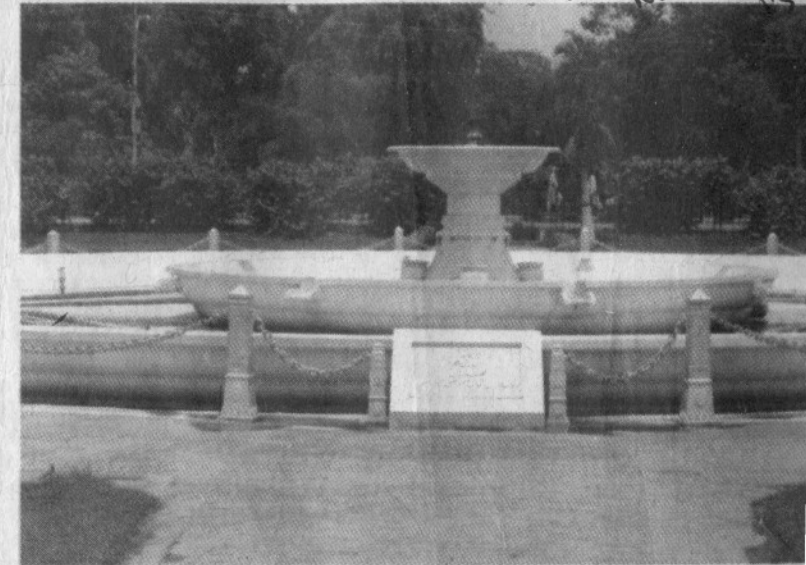
were elected to it, seven Hindus, five Muslims and one Sikh. Amongst the Muslims, one was Nawab Ali Raza Khan Qizilbash and another belonged to the famous Fakir family of Bazaar-e-Hakeeman inside Bhaati Darwaaza. The president of the committee was, however, an official – an Englishman.

Records show that the committee met for forty-eight times in the first year,



A study in apathy

SAJID ABBAS laments the indifference of our city fathers in looking after the public buildings, common property, hygiene and sanitation of Lahore



The Fountain today

almost once a week, to conduct business. Special attention was paid to hygiene and sanitation. More than four thousand rupees were spent on filling a ditch around the city and making a garden out of a part of it. A drain was made from Lohari Darwaaza to Taxaali Darwaaza and onwards to the Budha Ravi. The old Lohari and Dilli Darwaazaas were pulled down and rebuilt.

Those were some of the achievements of the early days unlike the present when one finds choked drains and flooded streets after a little rain. The activity

then seemed to be visible. The Municipality worked out of a small place outside Bhaati Darwaaza. It was quarter century later that the fountain was laid of a home of its own, the Hall. The occasion was the Gold Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1888. The main feature of the building was twenty-five by twelve and a half hall meant for 'wise and quiet debate' as His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales said in his inaugural address on February 3, 1890. Little did they know that the debates of a century would be charged with language

the roads joining and crossing were widened and one noticed one fine at the monument, too, was in oblivion.

A newly built fountain, now, is in place but more towards a place on the old Jail Road or Ghaus-ul-Jamia which meets the Ferozepur Road. However, one does not know if this is the replacement of the monument or something else, for, no notice of any kind was found there.

Qurtaba is not the only place, where some monument or some structure has been demolished without being replaced. It is said to be a hall on the Circular Road.

Mori and the old Jail Road, the Hall, is in place while the old Jail Road is in place.

That it has been replaced by its old structure.

Replacing something once may be real. Then, but the fear the barbar, the High which demolished the room for the mosque.

gets the impression that no one is liable for looking after public places and common property. In our societies, it is the municipal authorities who are responsible for such things. In our case, it seems that it was in 1862 that the people of Lahore were given an opportunity to look after some of their own affairs. That

was when the Lahore Municipal Committee came into existence.

It seems to be ironical that while one of the first things that the English did after the occupation of Lahore in 1849, was to put their own men in control of practically every thing, so much so, that even the Austrian Superintendent of the mental hospital of the Sikh days, Dr. Honigberger, was replaced by an Englishman on the very first day of the change of Administration. The natives were put to clean the City and collect garbage as their first 'independent' charge. It shows that there seemed to be a high degree of a lack of trust in the natives, for, even the introduction of

modern education was entrusted to foreign missionaries, Reverend Newton and Reverend Foreman. The natives were thought to be hardly fit for such duties.

Nevertheless, the beginnings of municipal activity in Lahore seemed to be good. The Municipal Committee was formed in April 1862 and began business on May 1, following. Thirteen members, mostly belonging to the elite of the city,

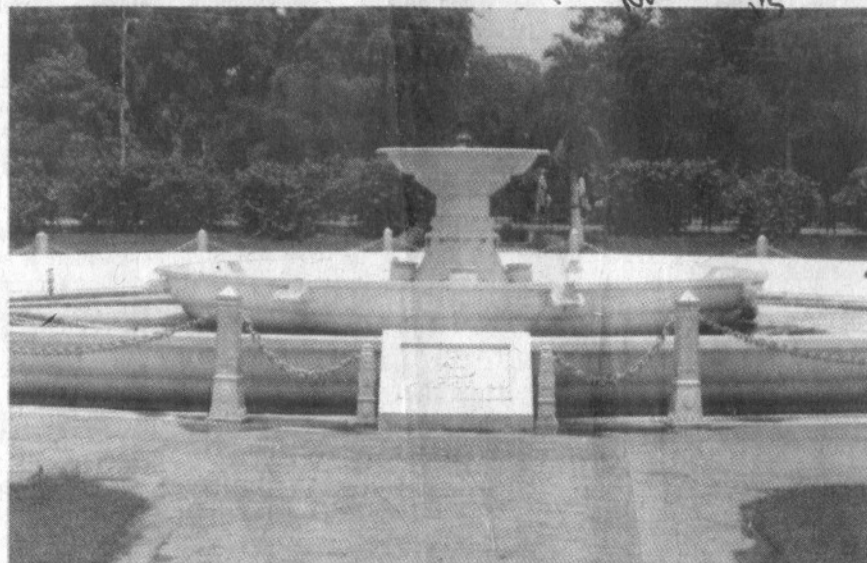
were elected to it, seven Hindus, five Muslims and one Sikh. Amongst the Muslims, one was Nawab Ali Raza Khan Qizilbash and another belonged to the famous Fakir family of Bazaar-e-Hakeeman inside Bhaati Darwaaza. The president of the committee was, however, an official – an Englishman.

Records show that the committee met for forty-eight times in the first year,

A study in apathy

SAJID ABBAS laments the indifference of our city fathers in looking after the public buildings, common property, hygiene and sanitation of Lahore

The Nation 13.8.02



The Fountain today

almost once a week, to conduct business. Special attention was paid to hygiene and sanitation. More than four thousand rupees were spent on filling a ditch around the city and making a garden out of a part of it. A drain was made from Lohari Darwaaza to Taxaali Darwaaza and onwards to the Budha Ravi. The old Lohari and Dilli Darwaazaas were pulled down and rebuilt.

Those were some of the achievements of the early days unlike the present when one finds choked drains and flooded streets after a little rain. The activity

then seemed to be visible. The Municipality worked out of a small place outside Bhaati Darwaaza. It was a quarter century later that the foundation was laid of a home of its own, the Town Hall. The occasion was the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887. The main feature of the building was the twenty-five by twelve and a half metre hall meant for 'wise and quiet debates' as His Royal Highness the Prince Albert Victor said in his inaugural address on February 3, 1890. Little did the prince know that the debates of a century later would be charged with language that,



"Jinnah Hall Fountain"

today – no nymphs

regretfully, can not be reproduced here.

Around 1941 or 42, an extensive underground sewerage system was built. The sewers were oval in shape, built in brick and mortar, some were large enough to accommodate a standing man. These sewers, flowing below various roads of the city, ended in a pumping station where the sewage was pumped across the protective bund.

Over the years, some sort of change has been noticed in activity. The cleaning staff has been taking things easy, resulting in increase in insanitation. On the other hand, the Committee (now the Corporation) has been attending to 'lighter matters' such as renaming of roads and places. Incidentally, there is a fountain outside the Town Hall which is called the Jinnah Hall Fowaara as the marble plaque says but it reminds one of the Victoria Jubilee Fountain that was presented to the public of Lahore by Raja Harbans Singh of Sheikhpura, more than a century ago. The nymphs of the original fountain seem to have flown away in this interval. ■