



The beginnings of Modern Lahore

Lahore
Nation
11-8-02

Photo

SAJID ABBAS visits one of the oldest buildings of Lahore and moves around the green patches and colourful bazaars close by to see is going on there



certain quarter of Lahore is getting a dapper look these days. Old Anarkali is in for a change and plans are afoot to convert that place into a second 'food street' of Lahore, which, by the way, it already was. It was the first before the status went to Gowalmandi. Efforts seem to be on for some time to give the city a smart and prim look. Some quarters seem to have regained their lost glory, some seem to have changed and give a different appearance. One finds that the ambience of certain quarters to be affected, too.

The easy going and friendly atmosphere of the not so distant days seem to have been replaced by an environment more businesslike and impersonal. The attitude of the people

now appears to be detached and they seem to be indifferent and unconcerned in their behaviour. In any case the result of the change has brought both praise by visitors from other parts of the city or out stations for the enterprise and complaints and criticism by the old locals for disturbing their customs and peace.

Old Anarkali which is undergoing a face-lift these days and is being dolled up seems to be the oldest part of modern Lahore. The beginnings of modern Lahore can be traced back to the first week of July seventeen ninety-nine when Ranjeet Singh along with His troops and those of his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, arrived outside the walls of Lahore to wrest the City from the Triumvirs. on the fourth of July. After the capture of Lahore his troops were encamped in the



gardens the mausoleum of Anarkali and that of the baradari of Wazir Khan, the Nakhli. They remained there for the next half a century till the place went under the control of the English. During this period Ranjeet Singh introduced modern methods and techniques in his army.

During his rule, Ranjeet Singh obtained the services of French and European Officers, for training his army on modern lines. All that he found necessary to do in view of the threat, he perceived, looming in the east of his dominion, where the English were in domination.

When the place went under the direct Rule of the English East India Company a century and a half or so ago, it seems that Lahore had already seen the dawn of the present modern age.

The first steps that were taken by the new rulers to bring modernity to Lahore, was the introduction of their type of building construction for everybody to see. Nevertheless, the first example of any notable public work or construction, was the building of the road linking two important parts of Lahore, the Cantonments of Anarkali and Mian Mir. That was in 1854. Gradually, the cantonment at the western end of this road lost its status to the Civil Station that came up there over the years.

The Civil Station became the hub of social activity. There were the Anarkali Gardens, the present Nasir Bagh, one of the earliest 'English' public gardens of modern Lahore. The place is said to be a lively spot in the early days of English Rule. One hears about the garden being

frequented by the Sahib Loag for recreation. For a time it was known as the Bandstand Gardens, for, a band is said to have played there regularly, hence the name.

The old Tollinton Market, located west of the crossing where the old and new Anarkali Bazaars meet the Mall is one of the first and oldest buildings of modern Lahore that was built in 1863. The building was made for the specific purpose of housing exhibits of the Punjab Exhibition, 1864, the first ever show of its kind, known to be held in this part of the world.

Few people realise that the Punjab Exhibition of 1864 was not just an organised fair. It was, more or less, a statement made indirectly, that this part of the world was and is quite apart from the rest of the territory known as the South Asian Sub-Continent. It affirmed, in a way, the natural boundaries of our very own and separate civilisation, the Indus Valley Civilisation. It was a proclamation of the fact that the future Pakistan was natural and culturally apart and independent of the place known as Hindustan. It demonstrated the confines of the natural boundaries of the Indus Valley Civilisation a name not known as yet, but recognised as clearly separate from the rest of the countries of the South Asian Subcontinent.



*Entrance to Old Anarkali
being repaired*



frequented by the Sahib Loag for recreation. For a time it was known as the Bandstand Gardens, for, a band is said to have played there regularly, hence the name.

The old Tollinton Market, located west of the crossing where the old and new Anarkali Bazaars meet the Mall is one of the first and oldest buildings of modern Lahore that was built in 1863. The building was made for the specific purpose of housing exhibits of the Punjab Exhibition, 1864, the first ever show of its kind, known to be held in this part of the world.

Few people realise that the Punjab Exhibition of 1864 was not just an organised fair. It was, more or less, a statement made indirectly, that this part of the world was and is quite apart from the rest of the territory known as the South Asian Sub-Continent. It affirmed, in a way, the natural boundaries of our very own and separate civilisation, the Indus Valley Civilisation. It was a proclamation of the fact that the future Pakistan was natural and culturally apart and independent of the place known as Hindustan. It demonstrated the confines of the natural boundaries of the Indus Valley Civilisation a name not known as yet, but recognised as clearly separate from the rest of the countries of the South Asian Subcontinent.

One was glad to hear that, in a meeting presided over by the Governor not long ago, it was resolved to repair and restore the old Tollinton Market, one of the first and oldest public buildings of modern Lahore to its original glory and that funds have been especially provided for that purpose. It was encouraging news that work on renovation of the historic building has commenced, for, it was really sad for many to find the first and oldest monument of modern Lahore to be neglected for such a long time.

Modernity started moving out of this spot. Close to it were built the first College, the University, the Town Hall the Museum, the Arts School. Then over the years, modern shopping areas sprouted close by which became the most convenient for the shoppers of practically the whole of Lahore.

A little beyond came the Banks. Between the General Post Office and the Charing Cross appeared the real Mall, the high class shops and business houses. The best showrooms were found in this stretch. The best tailors and outfitters in town were there, so were the best photographers of Lahore. The topmost restaurants of the City, too were to be found there. The place was extremely popular with Lahorites and the stretch became the loveliest too, with flower beds next to footpaths. ■