

The Bureaucratic Crusade

Akshardham Temple much in news for its robust Beauty and visits by celebrities like Amitabh Bachan and Bill Clinton has other reasons of fame (read defame). The construction of Akshardham is not a religious landmark in history of temple architecture but is a crusade of bureaucrats defiant to prove their diplomatic prowess against the other wings of crumbling democracy. It is another outcome of rigid bureaucratic mindsets which is backed by power of money, religious fundamentalism or political irrationality.

Against the rationale wishes of scientists and judiciary, bureaucracy granted the sanction for constructing of a marvel at a site that will naturally collapse someday. Akshardham is a reflection of a stinking democratic structure which is largely governed by an arrogant bureaucracy. It's a standing power symbol of a nexus between money, politics and their interrelations with religion. In all this, bureaucracy stands mocking on the technical specialists and custodian of justice behind the camouflage of religion and politics.

Delhi falls in seismic zone IV category. On scale of I-V, this zone is second highest in earthquake classification meaning Delhi can expect a tremor upto 8.5 on the Richter scale. Just to understand the gravity of tremor, the Gujarat earthquake and Kashmir earthquake were 7.2 & 6.8 on the Richter scale respectively. Nature does not discriminate and so we can expect similar, if not more, loss of property and human lives in national capital. The worst area in terms of susceptibility in any seismic zones is the soft beds of rivers. Similarly the expanding bank of our shrinking Yamuna is the most vulnerable. The river bank land is seen as an opportunity in the escalating land demand in Delhi, however how correct we are on that will always remain a question.

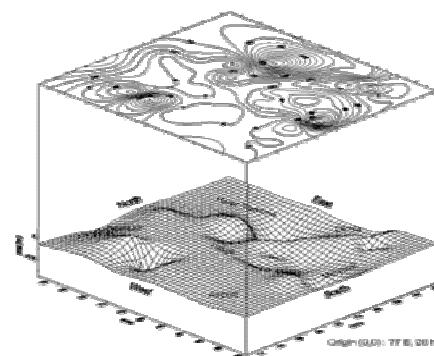


Image Source: GISdevelopment.net

Like any other river beds the topographical structure of Yamuna is undulating with several humps and depressions. During earthquakes land undergoes vertical as well as horizontal motions, similar to shaking. Even few seconds of tremor impact can convert the Yamuna Basin into marshy land. The water in the soil converts it into slush. Solid soil gets converted into a semi-solid base with an inherent nature to swallow; this is technically known as 'Liquefaction'. Akshardham Temple is said to sink similarly in case of earthquake in Delhi. This has been clearly stated by Center for Geo-Resources, Delhi University. The other premier scientific institutions like GSI, RITES and CGWB have also marked the marshy lands in Delhi in their geotechnical investigations, prone to liquefaction.

More than lakh families living in slums like Yamuna Pusta, on the bank of Yamuna were evicted and people left homeless on judicial directives. Yamuna basin adjudged as a prohibited zone for human living for reasons of pollution control and its earthquake nature has been cleared of its substantial poor slum population. However, bureaucracy continues the development of commercial, religious and sports complexes for the rich and famous, defying such directives. Delhi secretariat and Akshardham are such example of bureaucratic irrationality and rigid mindset.

The differential role of the state and its functionaries towards poor and rich is visible in many areas of governance. However the gamble with public money on construction of Akshardham temple on a wrong site is blatant misuse of public trust. Such is the continued misadventure when government plans even bigger projects like developing the 2010 Commonwealth Games again on Yamuna bed. There are larger questions related to the hosting of Commonwealth Games in Delhi which is already overloaded with people and developmental projects. A country which has a history of lopsided development could have utilized such opportunities for developing another satellite town like NOIDA or Gurgaon, provided *our Babu's (Bureaucrats) permit*.