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Regd. Address:

C-11 Jangpura Extension
New Delhi – 110 014

Tel: (91-11) 49989230, +91-9810317972

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S T U B B L E

The Historic Seven Cities of Delhi

Adil Rasheed*

Abstract: Delhi has been witness to momentous history that has shaped the nature of politics of the sub-continent across centuries and acted as an important node of fusion of cultures and civilizations that define the core of the Indian nation. In its present shape it is a city of the cities that dot its current territorial space, lying mostly in ruins, begging to be recognised and told about, as precursors to the national capital of India. In this article, an attempt has been made to acquaint readers with snapshots about the seven cities of Delhi telescoping both time and space in which the narrative is embedded.

*Dilli ke na they kooche, aaraq-e-musavvir they
Jo shakl nazar aayi, tasveer nazar aayi
[Delhi did not have streets, but art galleries
Every facet on view was a painting on view]*

-
Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810)



In a romantic vein, Delhi has often been called the 'dil' (heart) of India. Being at the centre of the nation's body politic and socio-cultural ethos, the city has shaped India's destiny for ages and continues to chart its future. Razed and rebuilt many times over, this quintessential capital has

been frequently compared to Rome, given their *embarras de richesses* in historic architecture.

While Old Delhi brims with its heritage of busy bazaars, forts, temples and mosques, Lutyen's New Delhi exudes majesty with its broad and green avenues, imposing government buildings, stately

Adil Rasheed is Research Fellow at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP- IDSA), New Delhi, India.

He is also a life member of ICPS

bungalows and landscaped gardens. Often, the timelines warp and the past jostles with the present. With the sands of history brimming the hour glass, the city chokes and wallows in self-pity:

Chehre pe saare shahr ke gard-e-malâ hai

Jo dil kâi haal hai vahî Dillî kaâ haal hai

(The city's face is covered with the dust of despair
The state of my heart is the very state of Delhi)

- Malikzada Manzoor Ahmad

Delhi: The origins

The jury is still out over the etymology of the capital's name for there has been a remarkable consistency in the various derivatives of the root word used down the ages, ranging from Dhillika, Dillipur, Dhilli and Delhi.

However, the city was first founded and named Indraprastha (City of Lord Indra) by Yudhishtira (the eldest of the Pandava brothers as recorded in the epic *Mahabharata*) upon the banks of Yamuna, with historians placing the date at around 9th to 8th century BC. The location of the Indraprastha, states the old Delhi Gazetteer, was between the "more modern Kotila of Firoz Shah and

Humayun's Tomb, about two miles south of the present site of Delhi."

According to Delhi's classic chronicler RV Smith, Yudhishtira was succeeded by 30 generations of his brother Arjun's descendants. They were ousted by Gotamavanas, who ruled Delhi for centuries until they were removed by the Mauryas in the 1st century AD.

It was only in the reign of the later Mauryas that the name Delhi is first mentioned. Gen Cunningham states **that the city was named after its Mauryan King Raja Dilu**, who has been identified by Ptolemy as Daidalar. According to another legend, Delhi was founded by Raja Dillipa, who was a descendant of the Pandava brothers.

There is yet another myth related to the naming of Delhi, which is linked to one of its oldest kings Raja Dhava, who built the famous rustproof Iron Pillar (3rd or 4th century AD), now adjacent to the Qutub Minar.

"The Pillar is a solid shaft of wrought iron, 23 ft-8 inches long, of which 18 and a half feet is above the ground". In the reign of BilanDeo or Anang Pal, founded the Tomar dynasty around 1000 AD, a Brahman claimed that Dhava's Iron Pillar was so deep that it rested on the head of Vasuki (Shesh Nag), the



Iron Pillar of Raja Dhava

underground king of serpents. To verify the claim, Anang Pal tried to dig out the pillar and finding it wet with blood started to reinstate it. However, the pillar was said to be left loose ('dheela' in Hindi), which was prognosticated as a sign of the future weakness of the kingdom. This is said to have given the name 'Dheeli' (loose, shaky) to his capital city, which later gave the name to the city Dhilli.

Pasanaha Chariu, the poetic work of Vibudh Sridhar (1189-1230), is said to provide one of the earliest references

to the origin of the name Dhilli for Delhi. One of its quatrains read: There are countless villages in Haryana country. The villagers there work hard. They don't accept domination of others, and are experts in making the blood of their enemies flow. Indra himself praises this country. The capital of this country is 'Dhilli'.

Some chroniclers have also claimed that the name of Delhi, pronounced as Dehali by its Urdu-speaking residents, is derived from the Persian word 'Dehleez' (meaning threshold),

which is symbolic of the city as a gateway to the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

Delhi's Seven Historic Cities

Although the capital of ancient dynasties, Delhi steps into the full light of history, with fully recorded facts of its past only available towards the end of the first millennium (circa 1000 AD), with the establishment of seven historic cities until Lutyen built the now administrative capital, New Delhi. The names of these seven medieval cities of Delhi in chronological order are Lal Kot (Qila Rai Pithora), Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozabad, Dinpanah and Shahjahanabad (Purani Dilli).

1. Lal Kot (Qila Rai Pithora) or Mehrauli: Largest City of its Time

The Tomar Rajputs are credited with the founding the first historic city of Delhi, which has today few monuments and relics remaining. These include the **Surajkund reservoir** built by Surajpal Tomar (an amphitheatre-styled lake designed to worship the sun god) and the **Anangpur Dam** of King Anangpal Tomar in the 10th century. The Tomars are also known for building the first regular defence fort, later known as the fort Lal Kot, which

the famous warrior king Prithvi Raj Chauhan (also known as Rai Pithora) took over and extended to cover his much wider kingdom in around 1160 AD. Prithvi Raj Chauhan's city was named by Muslim historians as **Qila Rai Pithora** and the ruins of the fort ramparts are still visible today in Saket, Qutub complex in Mehrauli, Kishangarh and Vasant Kunj areas.

However, Prithviraj Chauhan's reign came to an abrupt end after Afghan invader Muhammad Ghauri, whose forces were led by his slave general Qutbuddin Aibaq, defeated him in the Second Battle of Tarain (1192). Following Ghauri's death in 1206, whose capital was in Ghur in Afghanistan, Aibaq became the first Sultan of Delhi and built the capital on the site of the Rai Pithora fort, called Lal Kot and later Mehrauli. Here, Aibaq laid the foundation of the **Quwwatul Islam Mosque** and started building the famous **Qutub Minar** (which can be translated as 'Axis Tower'), India's tallest single tower even after over 800 years of its construction. It is higher than the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Grand Pagoda in Beijing. There is some evidence to suggest that work on the Qutub Minar was initially begun by Pritviraj Chauhan, or probably earlier by his uncle Vighraharaja, but there is no consensus among historians on this matter.



Surajkund reservoir built by Surajpal Tomar in 10th century

The tower was completed by his successors Iltutmish and others. At 234 feet high, Qutub Minar tapers from a base of 15 metre diameter to a mere 2.5 metre on the top.

With five distinct storeys, each distinguished by an intricately decorated projecting balcony, the first three storeys are made of red sandstone while the fourth and fifth

storeys are of marble and sandstone. The tower was twice damaged in 1326 and 1368.

Surprisingly, the Qutub Minar was not named after its builder and the founder of the Delhi Sultanate Qutbuddin Aibaq, but after Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. His title 'kaki' is derived from the small cakes ('kaki') that he was fed on in the



Qutub Minar: The highest single tower in India till date

evenings, during his 40 days' chihal of fast. According to legends, Iltutmish once visited Kaki and found him in a dishevelled state and found the fakir had no place to take bath. He immediately order the construction of a well, and in record time the five-storey deep **Gandhak ki Baoli** was dug. The well got its name because of the smell of sulfur in its water and was believed to have medicinal properties. Until recently, divers used to jump from its top stories to retrieve coins which devotees threw into the water for wish fulfilment. Today the water is not usable and has mostly dried out. Near this well, the Rajon ki Baoli and Anangtal Baoli are also tourist attractions. Iltutmish also built a palace **Jahaz Mahal** 1230. It is the venue of annual festival of fans (**Pankha Mela**) as well as festival of flowers, **Phool Walon Ki Sair**,

with the latter being organized to this day.

Kaki had migrated from Iran and died in Mehrauli in 1235. Many rulers and eminent people got themselves buried near the holy man to seek salvation, Kings like Aurangzeb's son Bahadur Shah I (popular as 'Be-khabar' or 'The Heedless' who ruled from 1707-12), Shah Alam (reigned Delhi from 1759-1806) and Akbar Shah II (reigned Delhi from 1806-37).

It is important to note that Lal Kot or Mehrauli was the capital of the Indian empire for 200 years and according to Percival Spear was one of the largest cities of the world, during its time. The Qutub Minar complex also houses the aforementioned Raja Dhava's Iron Pillar, Alauddin Khiljis half-built Alai Minar (a tower the Khilji ruler wanted



Gandhak Ki Baoli

to outtop Qutub Minar but was left unfinished due to his death), Iltutmish's tomb, Alai Darwaza, Quawwatul Islam mosque, etc. Although Shahjahanabad is now called Old Delhi, Mehrauli was called Purani Dilli when Shahjahanabad was built.

2) Siri (The Fort of Decapitated Heads)

For some inexplicable reason, Genghis Khan did not invade India at the time when Delhi was ruled by Iltutmish. However, Genghis' successors continued to raid and plunder India after him. It was Alauddin Khilji, who decided to put an end to this situation, when he built the second of the seven cities of Delhi in 1303.

According to a popular legend, the name of this city fort was called Siri, which is derived from the word 'Sir' (which means head). Legend has it that Alauddin beheaded 8,000 Mongols, who had raided and lived in a nearby settlement now called Mongolpuri and built the foundations of his new city on their heads.

When Mongol general Targhi later besieged the fort, his forces were crushed by Alauddin's armies and they were chased back to Kabul, never to return to Delhi until Timur's invasion almost a century later.

In this city, Alauddin built Qasr-i-Hazar Sutoon (the palace of a thousand pillars). The beautifully painted walls, juttied with rubies and precious gems, and the exquisitely carved pillars of the wooden palace could not withstand the vagaries of time. In 1398 AD, the Mongol ruler Timur who invaded Delhi, wrote in his memoirs, "The Siri is a round city. Its buildings are lofty. They are surrounded by fortifications built of stone and brick, and they are very strong – from the fort of Siri to that of Old Delhi, which is a considerable distance – there runs a strong wall built of stone and cement". Alauddin Khilji is also credited with the construction of '**Hauz Khas**' for the Siri fort. An affluent locality on South Delhi today, the name is derived from 'Hauz' which means lake or reservoir and 'Khas' that implies 'special' and even "royal", giving it the meaning — the "Royal reservoir".

3) Tughlaqabad (The City Cursed by a Saint)

It was Alauddin Khilji's general Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, who became the founder of the Tughlaq dynasty and also of the third medieval city of Delhi called Tughlaqabad. However, his cherished city unfortunately did not survive for long.

'Ya base gujjar, ya rahe ujjar.'



Remnants of the Siri Fort

(May herdsman dwell here or may it be deserted)

- Nizamuddin Auliya

These are the prophetic words of the great Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya who had cursed the city Tughlaqabad. Ghiyasuddin had summoned the Sufi saint to his

court to show cause, why volunteers building a well near the dwelling were not sent to build the king's new fort. When Nizamuddin arranged for the builders' to work for him as well at night, Ghiyasuddin forbade the sale of oil (for lamps) for him. At this, it is said Nizamuddin miraculously turned the water of the tank to oil and



The Hauz Khas Lake Garden

had uttered the prophetic curse. Surprisingly, Tughalaqabad fell into the hands of the Gujjar tribes after Ghiyasuddin's death and has remained uninhabited ever since, as fulfilment of the curse. In contrast, Nizamuddin complex, the area around the dargah, remains an upmarket bustling locality of Delhi.

The King had planned to get rid of the Sufi saint on his return from an expedition in Bengal. Nizamuddin Auliya's followers were anxious that the King would punish the saint on his return. The Sufi saint remained unperturbed and famously said: **"Dilli hunoz dur ast" (Delhi is still far off)**. Surprisingly, the wooden pavilion built to celebrate the victory of Ghiyasuddin at the outskirts of Delhi (in Afghanpura) collapsed and killed the king as soon as the latter entered it.

Kafir-e-ishqam musalmani mara darkaar neest

Har rag-e mun taar gashta hajat-e zunnaar neest

(I am an infidel of love: the creed of Muslims I do not need;
Every love vein in my body is high-strung like a chord)

- Amir Khusrau (1253-1325)

The closest disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya was the mystic poet Amir Khusrau. A poet of Persian and

Hindavi, he is regarded the father of the Urdu qawwali and ghazal. He is credited with using 11 metrical schemes with 35 distinct divisions. He wrote in many verse forms including masnavi, qata, rubai, do-baiti and tarkib-band. The invention of the musical instrument 'tabla' (made by dividing the ancient Indian instrument pakhawaj) and the 'sitar' is also attributed to Amir Khusrau. Buried next to the grave of his beloved patron Nizamuddin Auliya, the contribution of this cultural doyen to India's composite culture is immense. His poetry is still sung throughout the subcontinent with great passion and fervour, such as this memorable verses:

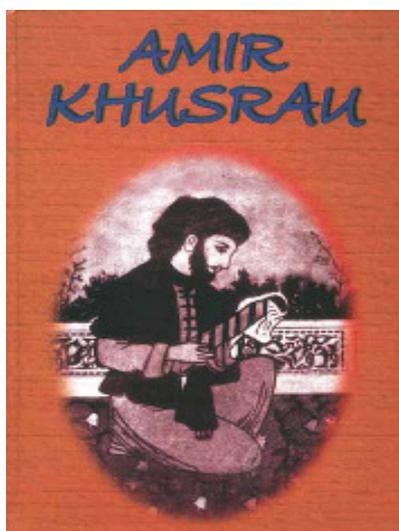
Chaap tilak sab chheeni re mose nainâ milâike

Bât agam keh dînî re mose nainâ milâike

(You've taken away my vermilion (identity) by just a glance.

You've said the unsaid, just by a glance)

However, Khusrau is not the only luminary to be buried near the saintly Nizamuddin's grave. Much like Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli, many of Delhi's brightest ensured their final resting place near him, such as the famous daughter of Shahjahan by the name Jahanara, the greatest Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib, Atgah Khan



(foster father of Akbar), and Mirza Aziz Kokaltash's beautiful marble tomb called Chausath Khamba. Other beautiful mausoleum's near Nizamuddin complex include Subz Burj (the Blue Dome at the Nizamuddin roundabout), Barakhamba and Lal Mahal.

4) Jahanpanah (The City Abandoned by its Builder)

It is ironic that Tughlaqabad never prospered allegedly because of a saint's curse, and the city that succeeded after him called Jahanpanah (built by Muhammad Tughlaq, 1321-51) was abandoned within a year (1326-27) by the king himself. To meet the threat of the Mongols, Muhammad Tughlaq built the fort of Jahanpanah (meaning in Persian "The Refuge of the World"),

subsuming all the establishments between Qila Rai Pithora and the Siri Fort, but then inexplicably abandoned the city by shifting his capital to Daulatabad in the Deccan. However, Tughlaq eventually returned to Delhi as Daulatabad seemed too isolated and infertile a site. Muhammad Tughlaq's palace is now called the Bijay Mandal, which had a Hazar Sutoon wooden palace, just like Alauddin Khilji. Other architectural remains of the fort include Lal Gumbad and Satpula.

5) Ferozabad or Firoz Shah Kotla (The Palace of Spirits)

Situated between the famous cricket stadium by the same name and Ring Road, lies the ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla or Ferozabad - the city built by the so-called dervish King Feroz Shah Tughlaq (1309-1388). It is said that when Muhammad Bin Tughlaq died, his noblemen had to coax his unwilling cousin Firoz Shah Tughlaq to ascend the throne, as he was planning to become a Sufi saint.

Yet, Firuz ruled for 37 years is recorded as one of the most prosperous years full of abundance, happy subjects, cheap goods and flourishing villages. However, historians have raised questions over his so-called moderate policies in

view of his temple-desecrating campaigns against several Hindu rulers.

It is believed that at Feroz Shah Kotla (kotla means a fort), beneficent spirits (called the jinn in Arabic) continue to descend every Thursday evening. To this day many devotees visit the fort place their written wishes in the crevices of the fort walls.

The fort also has a **gold-coloured Asokan pillar** (250 BC), which Firoz Shah brought from Ambala to Delhi on a carriage having 42 wheels. Hundreds of men were employed to drag lot. However, none could read the inscriptions on it because they were written in Brahmi, which was deciphered only in the 19th century. Another palace, **Bhuli Bhatiyaran**

ka Mahal, which is today known as a haunted place, was also built on the order of Feroz Shah.

This fort was sacked a decade after Firoz Shah Tughlaq's death by the dreaded Timurlane, the infamous 'scourge of God' in December 1398. According to Sharaf-ud-Din and Mir Khud, **about one lakh people were put to death in Delhi by Timur**. The three towns of Delhi namely Sri, Old Delhi and Jahan Panah were laid desolute by Timur. There was pestilence in Delhi for three years because of the human corpse left in the open. It is said the city struggled to recover fully for a century.

In the 15th century, the Lodis and the Sayyids built beautiful mausoleums and landscaped



Asoka Pillar at Feroz Shah Kotla

gardens, particularly the **Shish Gumbad, the Bara Gumbad, tomb of Sikander Lodhi**, the tomb of Mohammad Mubarak Sayyid and the Kos Minar.

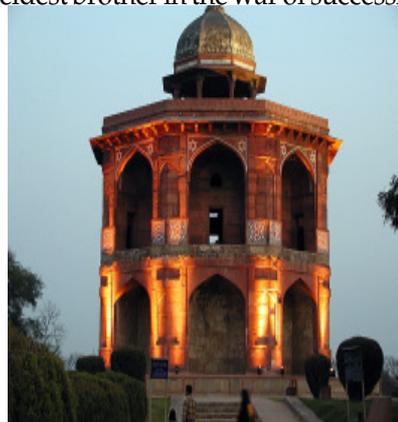
6) Purana Qila-Dinpanah-Shergarh

The Purana Qila is said to be the site of the ancient Indraprastha, the earliest present remains of the fort began with the Mughal emperor Humayun (1508-56). Built on the banks of the Yamuna, Humayun called the city Dinpanah but could not finish it. In 1540, Sher Shah defeated Humayun on the Ganges and forced him to flee to Persia. After becoming the Emperor of Hinustan, Sher Shah completed both the Purana Qila and the city (calling it Sher Garh). However, Sher Shah died in 1545 and Humayun returned and won back Delhi from Sher Shah's successors in 1555.

A few buildings deserve special mention when it comes to Humayun's city. Let's start with **Sher Mandal**, the library and astrological observatory of the Mughal King. This is an octagonal (eight-sided building), with very deep steps leading to the roof. Although built by Sher Shah, Humayun converted it into a veritable astrological palace, "with radiating halls of various colours each with the name of a different

planet. In each hall audience was to be given, on the correct days of the week, to the professions appropriate to each planet. One day, Humayun was sitting on the roof and heard the call to prayer and hurried down the steep stone steps. On one of these he slipped and tumbled down and met his death. Thus, only after seven months of regaining his throne, Humayun died on 24 January 1556.

The other important building is the **Khuni Darwaza** (also known as the Kabuli Darwaza and even Lal Darwaza). Literally meaning the Killer or the Bloody Gate, it got its name when three princes of the last Mughal king — Bahahdur Shah Zafar — named Mirza Bahadur, Mirza Khizr Sultan and grandson Mirza Abu Bakht were shot by William Hodson on 22 September 1857. It is also said that the gate got its name much earlier when Mughal emperor Aurangzeb defeated his eldest brother in the war of succession



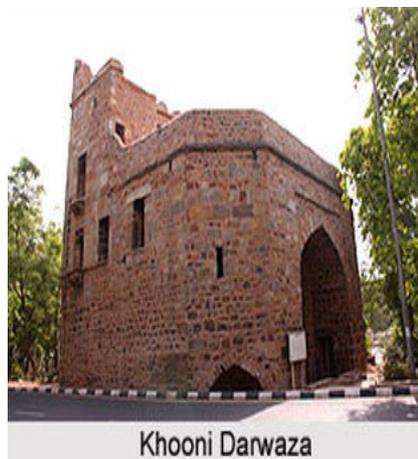
Sher Mandal

and displayed his head at the gate. The ill-fated place is also the site of the rape of a medical student by three youths in 2002, after which the monument was sealed to the general public.

Humayun's tomb is one of the most beautiful Mughal monuments and one of the major attractions of Delhi. Built by the widow of Humayun and mother of Akbar, Hamida Banu Begum in 1565, it is set in a Persian 'charbagh' or square four-garden plan. Several smaller monuments dot the pathway, including the tomb complex of Isa Khan Niyazi and Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shikoh. It is close to both the palace of Dinpanah and Nizamuddin's tomb.

7) *Shahjahanabad*

The walled city, also known as Purani Dilli these days, was named Shahjahanabad in 1639. Built by the emperor Shah Jahan, it remained the capital of the Mughal empire until its fall in 1857. **According to renowned British economist Angus Maddison, Mughal India in 1700 was the largest economy in the world, producing about a quarter of the global GDP, before the country's economy rapidly declined under British rule in the late 18th century.**



Khooni Darwaza

Therefore, the extremely crowded and dilapidated Shahjahanabad today was once a beautifully planned and bustling market, the seventh medieval city of Delhi that continues to be the symbolic heart of the capital. One of its scions, the poet Mirza Ghalib wrote in Delhi's praise:

*Ik roz apni rooh se poocha, ke dilli
kya hai.*

*To yun Jawab me keh gayi
Ye duniya maano jism hai aur dilli
uski jaan hai*

(One day I asked my soul, what was the city of Delhi
To which it replied,
If the world were a body, then Delhi is its life.)

- *Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869)*

Shahjahanabad is home to the grand architecture of the **Lal Qila (Red Fort)**. This fort was the main place of residence for emperors and

their households, and the ceremonial and political centre for the Mughal state for 200 years.

Even today, the Prime Minister of India delivers the Independence Day speech on 15th of August from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort. Constructed in 1639 by Shah Jahan, it houses the Hall of Public Audience or *Diwan-i-Aam* and the Hall for Elite Audience *Diwan-i-Khas* (meant for counsellors of state and special visitors). Inside, the palace imperial apartments consisted several pavilions, connected by a water channel known as the Stream of Paradise (*Nahr-i-Bihisht*).

These famous Persian verses by Amir Khusrau are inscribed in the Diwan-i-Khas.

*Agar fardos ba rue Zamin ast
Hamin ast a hamin ast a hamin ast.*

(If paradise be somewhere on earth, it's here! It's here! It's here!)

The fort was plundered of its artwork and jewels during Nadir Shah's invasion of Delhi in 1747. **Nadir Shah looted the famous Peacock throne, priceless diamonds and gems such as Koh-i-Nur and Darya-i-Nur**, fine pieces of art, thousands of horses, camels, and elephants, and

numerous books and manuscripts as booty. Later, the Red Fort's precious marble structures were destroyed by the British during the Revolt of 1857. The last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar bemoaned the loss of his capital in the following verse.

*Ai vaaye inqilaab zamaane ke jaur se
Dilli Zafar ke haath se pal mein nikal
gayi*

(Alas! What a revolution, due to cruelty of the age
Delhi slipped out of Zafar's hands in a moment)

Bahadur Shah 'Zafar', last
Mughal emperor

In fact, till the time the British took control of Delhi, the city continued to be plundered by invading armies of either the Marathas, then Ahmad Shah Abdali (the Afghan invader and then Nadirshah. This was in addition to the bitter rivalries and intrigue within the royal court of that time.

Shahjahanabad is also known for Masjid Jahan Numa (world-reflecting mosque), commonly known as **Jama Masjid of Delhi**, was built by Shahjahan at a cost of Rupee 1 million of that time between 1644 to 1656. Shahjahanabad is also known for its famous Ghalib's haveli in Gali Qasim Jan (Ballimaran), Razia

Sultan's tomb (1205-40, Delhi's only woman ruler before Indira Gandhi) and the famous **Chandni Chowk (Moonlight Square)** market. Established by Shah Jahan's favourite daughter Jahan Ara in 1650s, it was given elegance by the presence of a pool in the centre of the market, which shimmered in the moonlight (which was perhaps responsible for its name). Shops were also lined up in a half-moon semi-circle shape, now lost. Most of the shops sold silver-ware, which also contributed to the name as silver is referred to as *Chandi* in Hindi, a slight variation of which forms Chandni (moonlight which is silvery in its sheen). The lake was later replaced by a clock tower (Ghantaghar), which existed in the 1950s, although the place is still called the Ghantaghar.

Shahjahanabad also houses famous shrines of various religions, namely the Shri Digambar Jain Lal Mandir (built 1656), the Gauri Shankar Temple (1761), the Shri Shiv Navgarh Mandir Dham, the Central Baptist Church (1814), Gurudwara Sis Ganj (1783), the Arya Samaj Mandir, Sunehri Masjid (1721), Fatehpur Masjid (1650). It also houses historic mansions like Begum Samru Palace (1806), now called Bhagirath Palace, Chunnamal

Haveli, Haveli of Zeenat Mahal, Haksar Havel (where Jawaharlal Nehru married Kamla Nehru), Haveli Naharwali (where former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf was born).

Old Delhi is also world famous for its Mughalai cuisine, although the vegetarian version is also available at its Gali Parathe Wali. Dishes associated with Mughalai food include Murgh Musallam, Haleem, Pasanda, Nihari, Biryani, Roghan Josh, Qeema Matar, Malai Kofta, Mutton Qorma, Seekh Kabab, Shaami Kabab etc. The desserts include Falooda Gulab Jamun, Jalebi, Kesari Firni, Shahi Tukra, Sheer Korma etc. No wonder, Delhi is also called the food capital of India. Urdu poetry reached its acme in Shahjahanabad and produced world famous poets like Mir Taqi Mir, Zauq, Momin (1800-51) and Mirza Ghalib.

Another architectural and scientific marvel of pre-British Delhi is equinoctial sundial called **Jantar Mantar**, built by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur in Delhi most probably in 1735. The word *Jantra* is derived from *Yantra* (which means an instrument), while the suffix *Mantar* is derived from 'mantrana' (meaning consult or calculate). Constructed in five cities, Delhi's Jantar Mantar consists of a

gigantic triangular gnomon with the hypotenuse parallel to the Earth's axis. On either side of the gnomon is a quadrant of a circle, parallel to the plane of the equator. The instrument measures the time of day and is accurate to half a second and calculates the declination of the Sun and the other celestial bodies.

Delhi turned heartless?

Post-independence, Delhi has fast turned into a bloated, dingy and insensate megalopolis. The outgrowth of its slum suburbs and rich exurbia has encroached upon its carefully cultivated traditions and pristine values. The quest for wealth has outpaced its age-old pursuit of civilized conduct (tahzeeb), propriety and decorum (tamadun).

*Dilli kahaan gaii
teri koochon ki raunaqe
Galiyo se sar jhuka ke guzarne laga
hun main*

(Delhi, where are the glories of your famous streets
I have to lower my head while passing your lanes now)

- Jaan Nisaar Akhtar

Delhi was also a cultural capital once, a capital that had forged a syncretic harmony in its eclectic diversity. Perhaps, it is time to revive



JANTAR MANTAR

it. Although historically unpopular for being a narcissistic and self-indulgent city, its people are now increasingly seen as having turned rude, callous and heartless. How can Delhi, which is the heart of India, be allowed to turn heartless? Perhaps, its denizens need to read the beautiful poem on the front page of the official Delhi tourism website:

*Dilli kisi jagah ya Shehr ka naam
nahin*

*Dilli ek ehsaas hai waqt ki ravani ka
Ek ravayat hai tehzeeb ki
Ek gavahi hai tareekh ki
Dilli dehleez hai*

*Sarzameene Hindustan ki
Jaan-e-Vatan hai Dilli
Shaan-e-Chaman hai Dilli*

STUBBLE

(Delhi is not the name of a place or
a city,
It is the sensibility of time's
passage
It's a heritage of high culture

It's a witness to history
Delhi is the threshold
Of the glorious land of India
The life of our nation is Delhi
The pride of our Garden is Delhi)

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Note for readers and subscribers

We are happy to inform you that from January 2009 we have introduced the system of peer review of articles to ensure quality of publications and improve the scholarly value of our journal. We have a renowned group of scholars and academicians associated with our Centre and they are helping us in this process. We are grateful to them for their kind support and cooperation.

We would request our readers and subscribers to take note of these changes and we would, as ever, encourage them to send in research articles for publication to us. The manuscripts of research papers submitted for publication should be neatly typed in double space and the length of the papers should be ideally between 3,000-5000 words including the footnotes. They should contain an abstract and a short introduction of the author. The authors should use Harvard style for their references. The articles can be sent to us in an electronic format, (Ms Word 2003 format) also. For detailed guidelines they may send their queries to us in the following address.

**Journal of Peace Studies
Research Section
C-11 Jangpura Extension
New Delhi -110 014
India
Email: cpsndjps@gmail.com**