

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Dilli's
RED FORT
by the Yamuna

N.L. Batra



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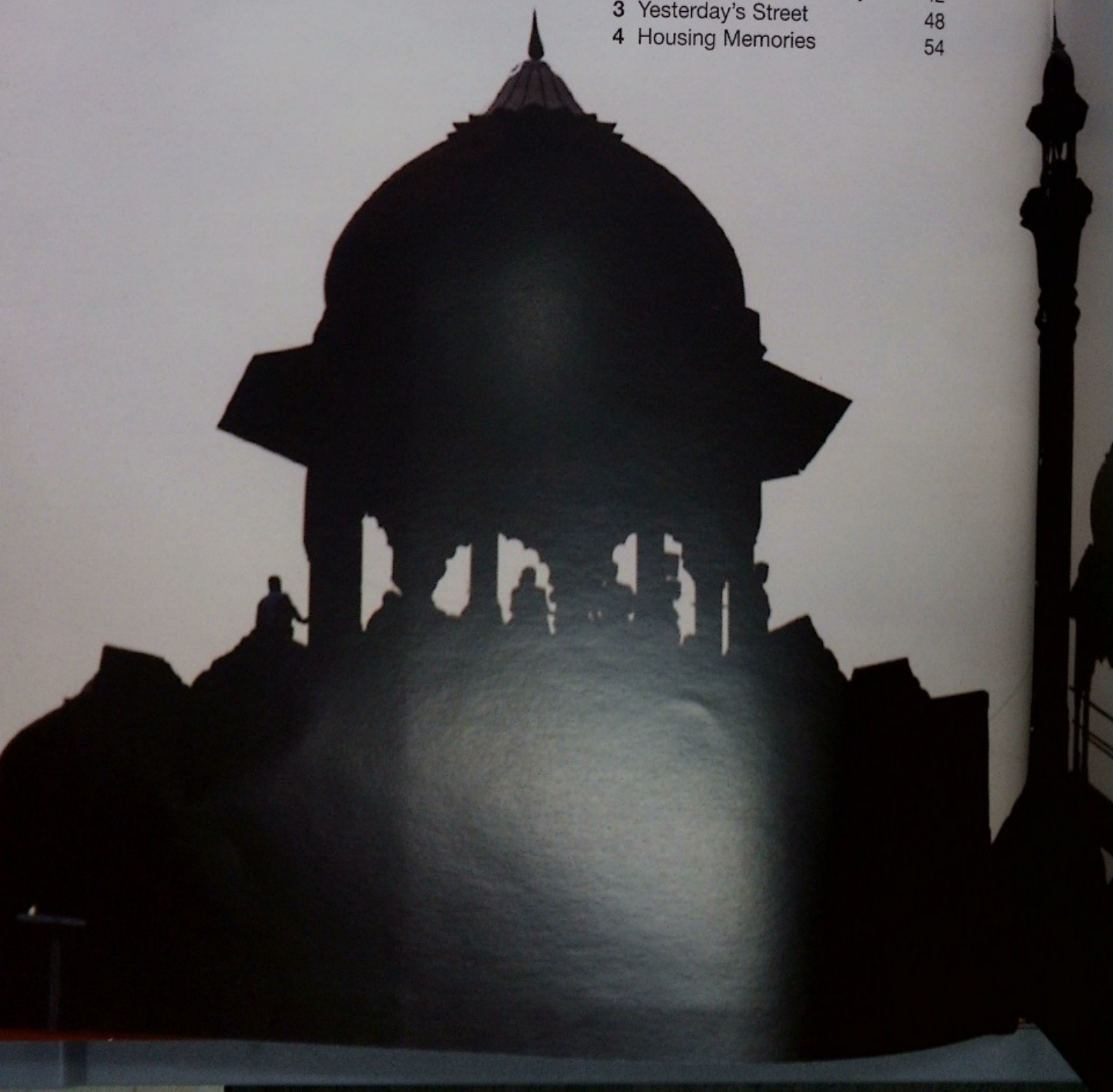
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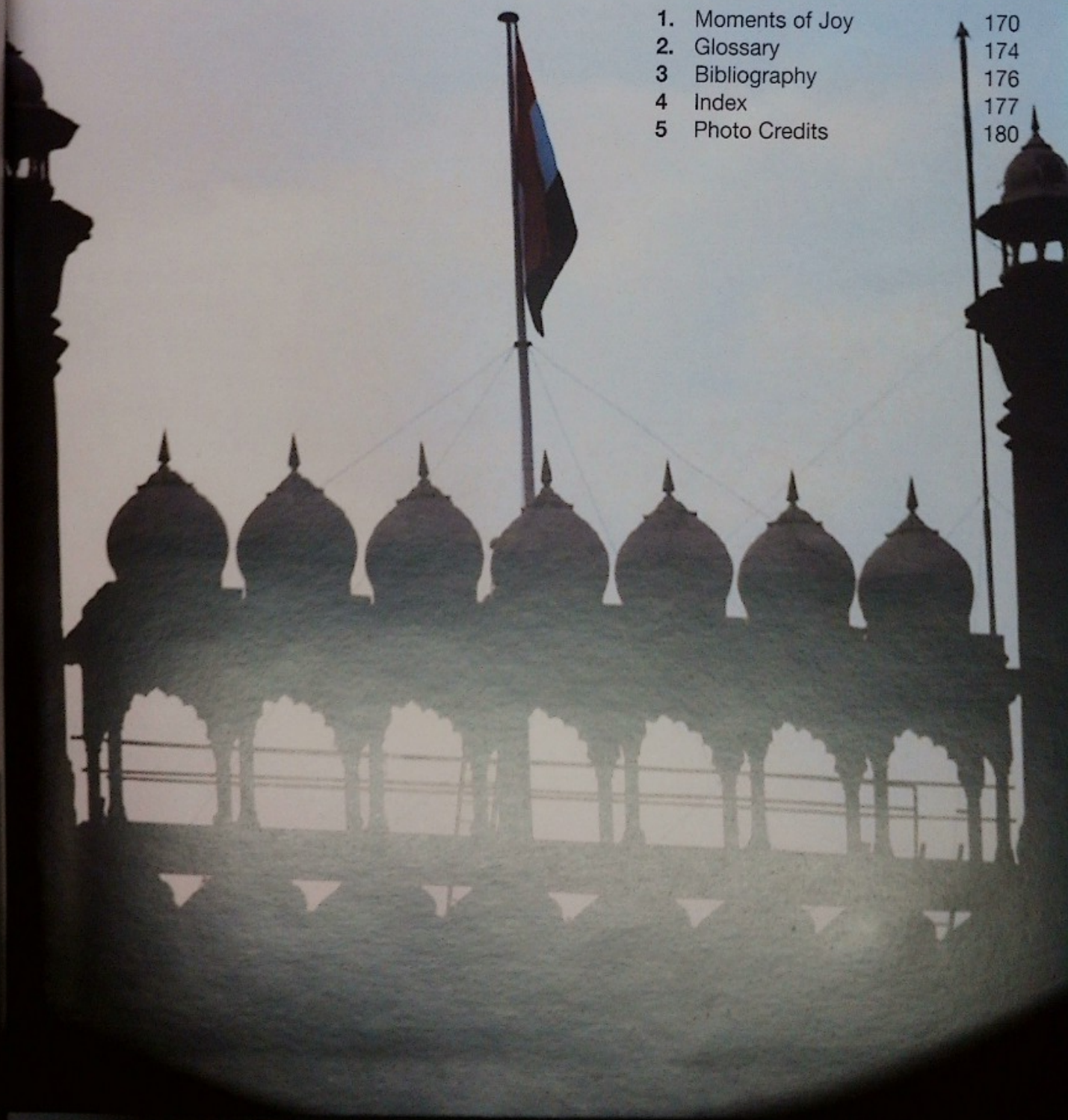
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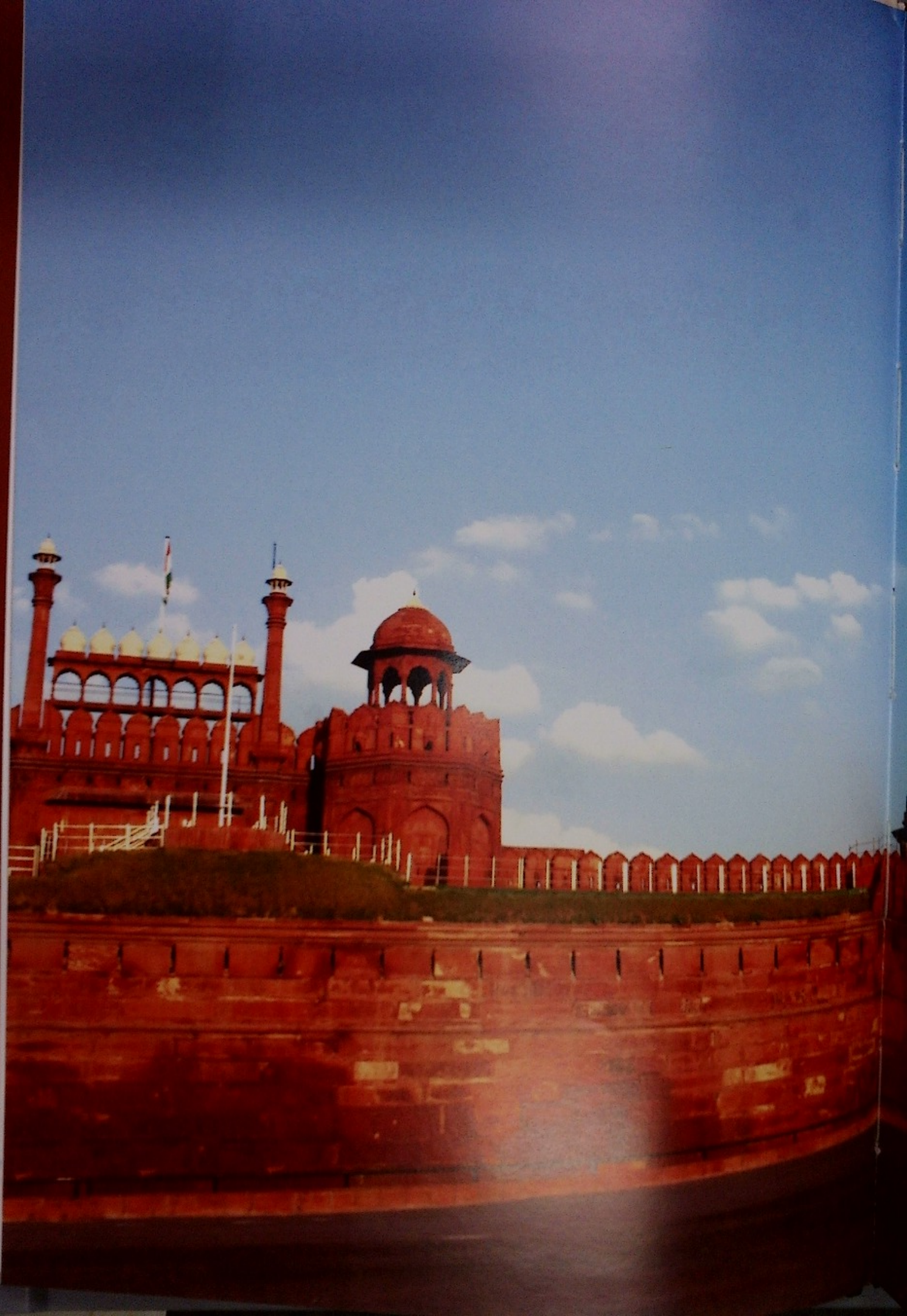
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PART I

A Silent Witness

1

Making History

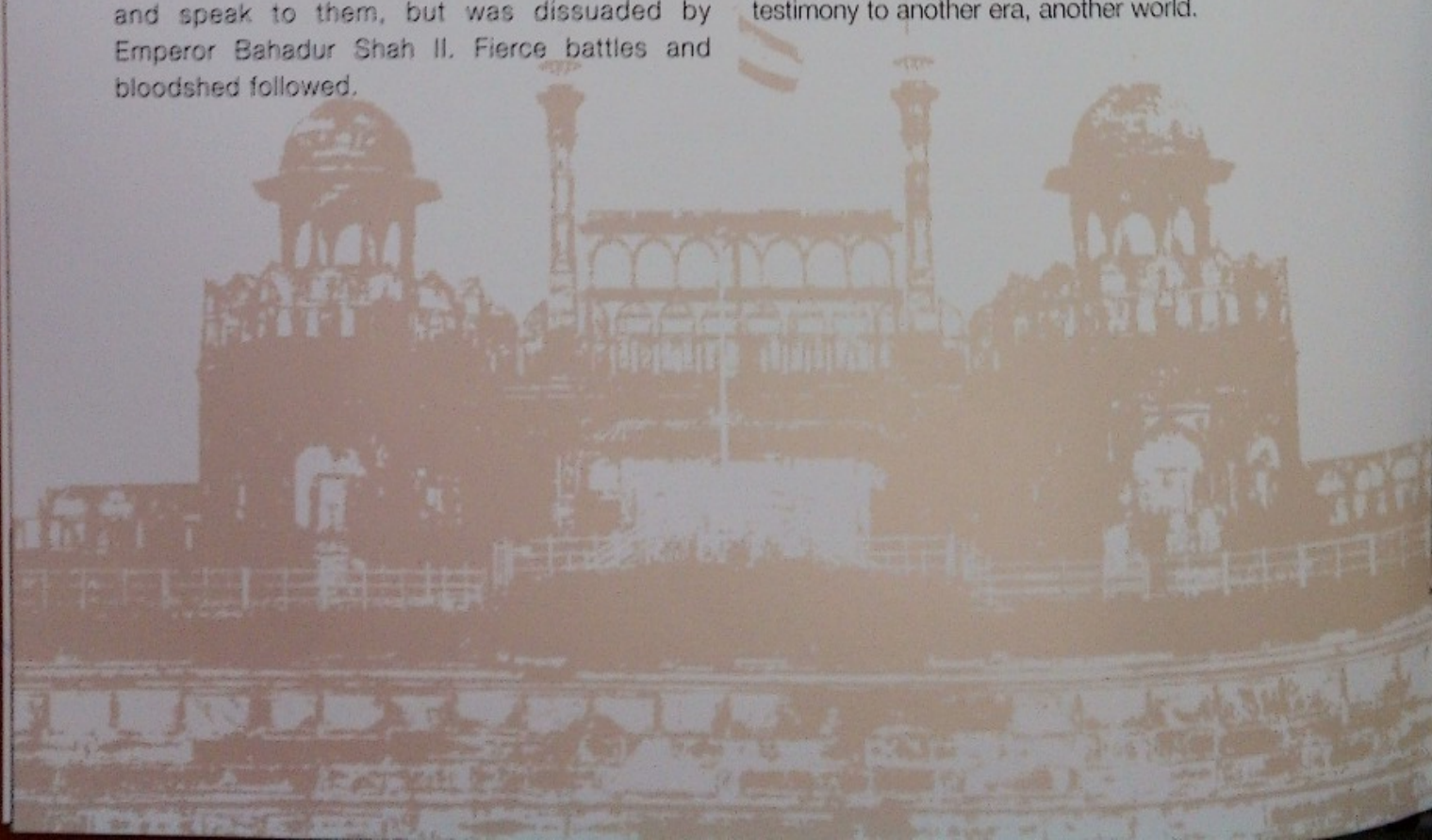
The day was special, as was the occasion. It was the 24th Rabi II of A.H. 1058 (A.D.1648)—the inauguration of the majestic Red Fort, a citadel that to this day stands proud in the city of Delhi. There was much fanfare as Emperor Shah Jahan, along with a grand retinue, entered through the Khizri Gate facing the River Yamuna. Prince Dara Shikoh scattered gold and silver coins over his father's head as he walked up to the gates. The palaces were decorated; the courtyards covered with rich carpets and colourful hangings while deep red Kashmir shawls covered each seat. There was opulence everywhere.

Over 200 years later, in 1857, when India's First War of Independence broke out, the sepoys from the mutinying regiments at Meerut arrived in Delhi and clamoured for admittance to the Red Fort. Captain Douglas of the Palace Guard wished to go down and speak to them, but was dissuaded by Emperor Bahadur Shah II. Fierce battles and bloodshed followed.

The famous Indian National Army trial in 1945; independent India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's dramatic speech and the hoisting of the national flag—they all took place at the Red Fort.

This citadel symbolised the seat of power for the Mughal rulers as well as the British Empire in India. The British occupied the Red Fort till August 1947, after which the Indian Army took it over as a military garrison. In December 2003, the Army handed it over to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to facilitate work to restore the Fort to its former glory. For, it is here that the kings lived and the knights fought valiantly. Here is where history was made, time and again.

Indeed, this magnificent monument in red sandstone, a symbol of free India, where the nation's signature song, *Vande Mataram*, has been invoked several times, bears testimony to another era, another world.



Delhi Beckons

Shah Jahan, earlier known as Prince Khurram, son of Emperor Jahangir, ascended the throne on 24 January 1628. He assumed the title of Abu-i-Muzzafar Shihabu-d-Din Muhammad Shibqiran-i-Sani (the Second Lord of Happy Conjunction) Shah Jahan Badshah Ghazi (the King and Champion of Faith). After a reign of eleven years in Agra, his seat of government, Shah Jahan decided to shift his capital to Delhi. In 1635, just before setting out on a Deccan expedition, Shah Jahan is said to have summoned Makramat Khan, the *Meri-i-Imarat* (Supervisor of Buildings), and ordered the construction of an entire new city to his taste. The intent was to immortalise his name to the north of Agra.

The reasons for shifting the capital were many. Agra became distasteful to the emperor after the burial of the

beloved wife of his youth, Mumtaz Mahal (Elect of the Palace), took place there (even though she died in Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, in June 1631, during the long and painful birth of her youngest daughter). Other reasons included a desire to spend money on the gratification of a passion for exceptional splendour and to escape the excessive heat which held in its grip Agra or Akbarabad during summer. The rugged ravines throughout the city, a shortage of space in Agra Fort and the narrow streets for troops, elephants and the retinue of the emperor and his *umara*hs (lords) to pass through also propelled the emperor to take this decision.

Delhi beckoned and the emperor responded. Shah Jahan arrived here to build some more magnificent edifices, including the mighty Red Fort.



The city of Delhi before 1857.



A portrait of Emperor Shah Jahan.

3

The Citadel is Born

After intense consultations and lengthy deliberations with astrologers, ministers, nobles and others, a site on the mainland, on the western bank of the River Yamuna was selected for the citadel, popularly known as the Red Fort. Having initiated the construction of the city wall of Shahjahanabad, Shah Jahan laid its foundation on the 12th Dhilhijjah or Dhul-Hijja A.H. 1048 (A.D. 1638). Sir Sayyaid Ahmad Khan, the author of *Asar-us-Sanadid* states that some old papers—a virtual horoscope of the Fort—fell into his hands, according to

which the date of the foundation of the Fort was recorded as Friday night, the ninth Muharram of the year A.H. 1049 (12 May, A.D. 1639).

It took nine years, three months and a few days to complete this historic fort. It cost 100 lakhs of rupees. The Red Fort was built under the able supervision of Makramat Khan. Others associated with the building of the Fort were Ghairat Khan, the then Governor of Delhi; Izzat Khan, who later became the Governor of Sind;



Ali Vardi Khan, also appointed to a governorship, and two master builders, Hamid (whose name is still commemorated by the Kucha Ustad Hamid near the Jama Masjid) and Ahmad. Makramat Khan asked the emperor, who was then in Kabul, to come and see it and on the 24th Rabi II of A.H. 1058 (A.D. 1648), Shah Jahan entered the Fort through the gate facing the River Yamuna. This first entry of Emperor Shah Jahan to the Fort was marked with great fanfare. He held his first court in the Diwan-e-Am. The roofs, walls and *aiwans* (colonnades) of the Diwan-e-Am were hung with velvet and silk from China and Khata (Chinese Turkistan). It is said that the buildings became the envy of the art galleries of China.

A beautiful canopy—a huge covering especially prepared for the occasion in the royal factory at Ahmedabad, measuring around 64 by 41 metres and costing about a lakh of rupees, was supported by

silver columns and surrounded by a silver railing. The Diwan-e-Am was enclosed by a golden railing, while the throne was provided with a special canopy, fringed with pearls and supported by golden pillars, wreathed with bands of studded gems. In keeping with the grandeur of the occasion, the emperor distributed lavish gifts to commemorate the day that saw the birth of the Red Fort. The Begum Sahiba received one lakh rupees and Prince Dara was presented a special robe of honour, jewelled weapons, an increase from the rank of 10,000 to 20,000 horses, a caparisoned elephant and two lakh rupees.

The princes, Sulaiman Shikoh and Sipahr Shikoh, received daily allowances of 500 rupees and 300 rupees respectively in addition to their original pay. The Prime Minister (*Wazir*), Sa'dullah Khan, got a robe of honour and a *nadri* with the rank of 7,000 horses. Makramat Khan received the rank of *Panj Hazari*.



A sketch of the Red Fort by the River Yamuna showing the bridge connecting it to the city (from an engraving by John Luard).

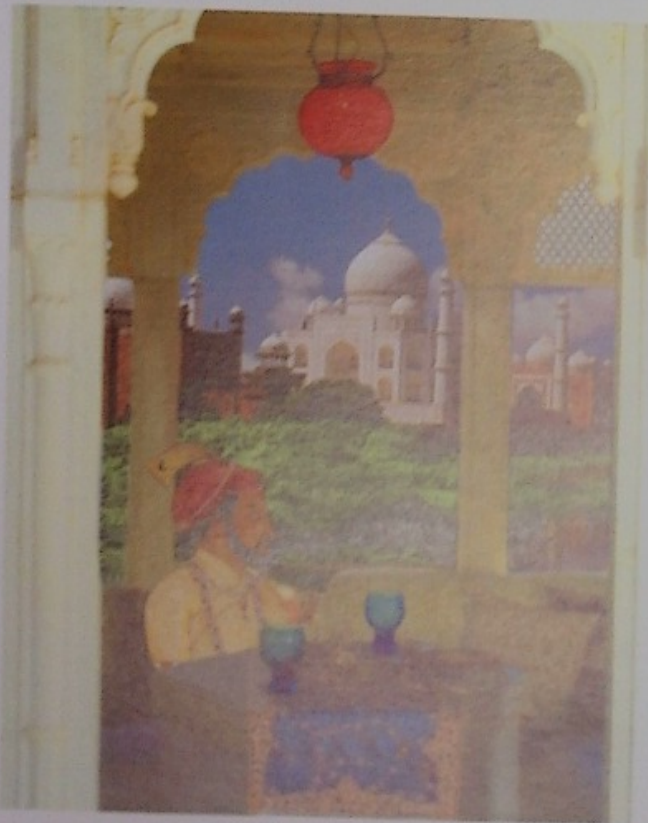
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Troubled Times

Emperor Shah Jahan, the grand Mughal architect of many splendid monuments, was not destined to enjoy his creations for long. His last days were dotted with intrigues and mishaps, sorrow and tragedy. Confined to a room in a tower facing the Taj Mahal, he died a broken man in January 1666. Sadly, the art that had developed under him found no encouragement from his son and successor, Aurangzeb, who was an iconoclast. With his zeal for religion and thirst for limitless dominion, he dealt a fatal blow to his empire. Aurangzeb's insistence on keeping all the reins in his own hands resulted in his never having the time to do justice to them. The finances of the empire were in utter disorder. In 1705, Aurangzeb was so ill as to inspire the

worst misgivings among his retinue. His eldest son was held captive while his third son was in exile. He had imprisoned another son for seven years. Only the youngest, Kam-Baksh, was given some regard by the emperor.

It was on Friday, 4 March 1707, after a reign of almost five decades that Emperor Aurangzeb breathed his last. The empire started to disintegrate. An inevitable struggle for the throne followed his death. Bahadur Shah I overpowered his brothers and took over what was left of the empire. After Bahadur Shah I died in Lahore, his sons had to go through a civil war in order to establish succession. Other races ravaged the empire; the Marathas advanced to the very gate of the Red Fort and the Afghans seized Kandahar. Of such little importance were the successors of Aurangzeb, in death as in life, that not one has a mausoleum to mark his grave and it is not known for certain where some of them are buried. Shah Alam, who was blinded by Ghulam Qadir, remained a prisoner in the Red Fort in the hands of Ghulam's conquerors, the Marathas, until rescued by Lord Lake in 1803. Two kings, who were not yet adults, were set up by the Sayyids but they died of consumption, and then came Mohammad Shah, the last Mughal to sit on the exquisite Peacock Throne in the Red Fort. Early in 1738, Persian King Nadir Shah crossed the River Indus and was on his way to Lahore. The emperor was not strong enough to face the army of Nadir Shah; so he decided to meet Nadir Shah in his camp, accompanied by a scanty retinue to settle the terms of peace. It was decided that the Persian army would rest in Delhi, while Nadir Shah would collect an indemnity for the trouble and expense incurred in coming this far. The two emperors, the Persian on a horse, the Mughal on an elephant, entered Delhi and were lodged in the Red Fort; Nadir Shah making his



An artist's impression of Shah Jahan looking at the Taj Mahal.



Chandni Chowk—the principal street of Delhi before 1857.

headquarters in the Diwan-e-Khas. A false rumour originated that Nadir Shah had been murdered on the command of the Mughal emperor. The citizens of Delhi rose in sheer blind terror and fell upon the Persians. At midnight the officers of Nadir Shah, frightened and trembling, told their master that 3,000 of his men had been murdered. In retaliation, Nadir Shah seized his sword and issued the order for slaughter.

Chandni Chowk, Dariba Bazaar and the buildings round the Jama Masjid were set on fire through nine fearful hours of destruction. Nadir Shah watched the carnage from the Golden Mosque in Chandni Chowk. Mohammad Shah and the nobles of Delhi approached him with a plea for mercy. The massacre ceased the instant Nadir Shah gave the order. Many thousands (some say 20, some a 100,000) lay dead amid their burning homes. Nadir Shah seized all the royal jewels and started out for Persia with the most skilful workmen and artisans of Delhi. He also took back with him the magnificent Peacock Throne. On his way to Persia, however, Nadir Shah was assassinated in his tent by his own followers in 1747. His empire fell into the hands of an Afghan chief, Ahmad Shah Daurani, who marched to Delhi the next year. There, he met the army of Emperor Mohammad Shah. He killed the Wazir of Delhi. This broke the heart of the emperor and he died soon after. Titular and feeble emperors succeeded him; each

reigned for barely a few years. Ahmad Shah Daurani returned once more to India in 1756. His troops repeated the horrors of Nadir Shah's invasion. In 1759 he returned to India again, and his approach was the signal for the murder of Emperor Alamgir II. Delhi was then attacked by the Rohillas and the Pathans. It is said that the aged Emperor Shah Alam was blinded in the Diwan-e-Khas in August 1788 and imprisoned by the brigand Rohilla chief Ghulam Qadir. Some months later the emperor escaped through Salimgarh with his followers, crossing the five-arched bridge that connected it with the Red Fort. The Rohillas stripped many of the rooms of the Red Fort of their marble ornaments and picked out the stones from the borders of many floors. In November 1806, Mohammad Akbar Shah II succeeded his father, Shah Alam. He was a mild and benevolent prince, more suitable to reign under the protection of the British Government than in the troubled times of his unfortunate father and his immediate predecessors. Akbar Shah died in September 1837 at the age of 81 and his eldest son Bahadur Shah II succeeded him. However, by then Delhi was under the charge of the British Army and Bahadur Shah was only a puppet king.

This heralded the beginning of the end of a great empire, witnessed by the Red Fort. The citadel was to become the centre again of many of the dramatic events that would shape Indian history.

5

An Empire is Lost

The Red Fort is an important testimony of Mughal grandeur and a magnificent era that ended with the exile of its last emperor, Bahadur Shah II. The uprising that broke out in northern and central India during 1857, known as the Sepoy Mutiny or India's First War of Independence, was bound to have its tremors felt at the Red Fort where Bahadur Shah lived and held court. Though an ineffectual leader, the people turned to him during this stage of rebellion and unrest.

Actually, the history of this revolt can be traced right back to the days of Robert Clive and the East India Company. It was Clive who laid the foundation of the British rule in India in 1765. By 1856 most of India was under the control of the East India Company. During this period Lord Dalhousie, an imperialist, initiated the policy of Doctrine of Lapse.

According to this policy, if the ruler of a dependent state died without a natural heir, the state would be annexed by the British and not inherited by the adopted son. Bahadur Shah was also told that his successors would not be regarded as kings and would have to abandon the Red Fort. Thus, by 1856, the British Empire was at its zenith but, ironically, discontentment against the British rule was also brewing.

The immediate reason for revolt, however, was the rumour that the cartridges used for battle were greased with the fat of cows and pigs, offensive to both the Hindus and the Muslims respectively who refused to use the new Enfield rifles. Beginning at Barrackpore, the rebellion soon spread. The soldiers at Meerut got together and marched to Delhi where they were joined by soldiers from Delhi. The forces captured Delhi and they proclaimed Bahadur Shah II, later known as Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Emperor of India.

Bahadur Shah is believed to have held daily *durbars* at the Red Fort during the occupation of Delhi by the freedom fighters. Questions regarding payment of these troops and reports on the progress of the fighting were discussed here and letters were written to induce others to join the revolt. Suspected traitors were also dealt with and *nazars* (presents) given to those who were loyal.

The emperor, however, was treated with scant ceremony, his orders generally disregarded. When the occupation of the city by the British was just a matter of days, the Red Fort became a site of pandemonium. The freedom fighters, cavalry and infantry, occupied the beautiful gardens, damaging them considerably. Magazine stores were kept by them in the Diwan-e-Khas, where they also spread their beddings. The emperor gave orders to the rebel troops not to occupy the royal premises and the cavalry was told to evacuate the gardens. These places had never been entered on horseback even at the time of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Daurani or by any of the British governor generals.

On 11 May 1857, the sepoys from the mutinying regiments at Meerut arrived in Delhi and clamoured for admittance to the Red Fort, declaring that they had killed the British at Meerut. Captain Douglas of the Palace Guard wished to go down and speak to them, but was dissuaded by Bahadur Shah. He, therefore, contented himself by addressing them from the balcony of the Musamman Burj. The sepoys of the Palace Guard, belonging to the 38th Native Infantry, admitted the freedom fighters. Captain Douglas proceeded to the Calcutta Gate in order to speak to the rebels. But the party was attacked by the sepoys and forced to retreat to the Lahore Gate of the Fort. The Native Infantry on guard refused to fire on the freedom fighters and Simon



Zinat Mahal. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.



Bahadur Shah Zafar. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.

Fraser, Commissioner, Delhi, rebuked them for their behaviour. He then turned to mount the steps leading to the rooms in the upper part of the Lahore Gate. As he placed his foot on the first step, two men rushed forward and cut him down. Captain Douglas, already wounded in the ankle, was carried upstairs. He gave orders for all doors and windows to be closed. The news of the death of some more officers reached the Fort, followed by the arrival of a regiment of cavalry who took up their positions at the Diwan-e-Khas. Many of the men forced their way into the Fort that had by now become a scene of the wildest confusion.

Formerly, a silver throne had been kept in the Diwan-e-Khas, where the emperor sat on special occasions, but since 1842 this practice had been discontinued. The throne was placed in a recess, in a passage behind the emperor's sitting room and had been in disuse till 12 May 1857, when it was brought out again for him.

The emperor left the Red Fort and proceeded through the city on an elephant to allay the fears of the inhabitants. On his return, he found the Diwan-e-Khas full of soldiers and pointed out that the enclosure was only meant for royalty. But the emperor's words were disregarded. On 14 May, he was so distracted by the turmoil around him that he refused to meet anyone.

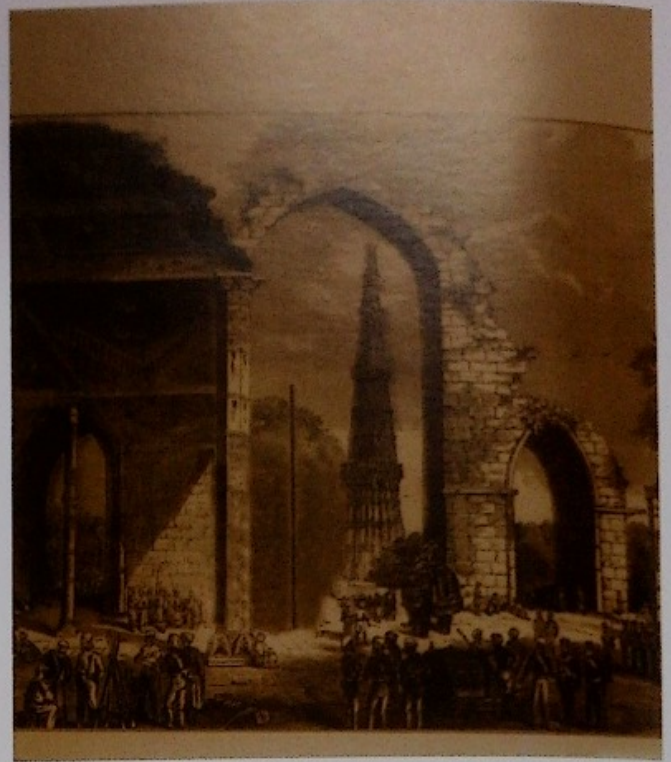
Bahadur Shah ordered a search for the bodies of Simon Fraser and Captain Douglas so that they could be given a Christian burial. A couple of days later, a large number of freedom fighters assembled before the palace and threatened the emperor, accusing him of concealing about 40 Europeans. They also threatened to abduct Zinat Mahal, the Queen, and hold her hostage for the emperor's loyalty. On this day, at about ten in the morning, all the Europeans in the palace, principally women and children, were murdered in cold blood near a tank in the centre of the square, before the Naubat



Capture and death of the princes of Delhi at Khooni Darwaza.

Khana. On 12 May, the palace was crowded with a howling mob of men demanding their pay. Bahadur Shah left the Red Fort a few days later and proceeded to the Jama Masjid for prayers. The next day it was discovered that someone had filled the guns in Salimgarh with stones. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan was suspected and narrowly escaped with his life. The killings continued. An unnamed European, dressed as a Hindu fortune-teller carrying an almanac, was brought to the Red Fort and murdered. News poured in that the freedom fighters had been defeated by the British at Hindon. Subsequently, many wounded men appeared in the city. The emperor was perplexed at the turn of events.

News of the massacre of the British at Bareilly reached the Red Fort on May 31 and, on the same day, the emperor issued orders that he would no longer receive any petitions in person. All petitions would have to come through Mahbub Ali Khan and Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. Some soldiers came forward and asked permission to raise the flag of *jihad* (religious war). On June 10, the emperor issued a proclamation for the forcible opening of all shops in the city. The freedom fighters lost heavily in duel on the same day, while some hundred Englishmen were also killed. Their heads were cut off and paraded through the city. The next day, the emperor ordered 100 mounds of gunpowder to



Capture of two princes Mirza Buktawar and Mirza Mendhoo at the Qutb Minar.

be prepared. A confidential report was received that the Queen of England, on news of the First War of Independence, had ordered the dispatch of 24,000 troops. Bahadur Shah expressed displeasure at the failure of the freedom fighters to drive away the British. On June 17, seven carts with lime were dispatched for the repair of Salimgarh, while a cannon that had been lying at the door of the palace, since the time of Shah Jahan, was mounted at the Lahore Gate.

At a large *darbar* held a few days later, Bahadur Shah received reports about the state of affairs. He addressed the *sardars* (leaders) of the sepoys and pointed out that they were destroying a kingdom that had lasted 500 years. He expressed the wish that they should all leave the city and the following day issued a general order to this effect.

On 2 July Muhammad Bakht Khan, a Bareilly mutineer, was appointed Commander-in-Chief and given full control, not only of the army but of the civil administration as well. The days of bloodshed at the Red Fort and its surrounding areas seemed to be endless. Bahadur Shah visited the battery at Salimgarh and also held *darbars* at the Red Fort. These were days of turmoil and despair when hope was negligible. Finally, on 14 September 1857, the British with their allies took the city, sacking, looting and plunging in

massacre in cold blood great swathes of the population. In one *mohalla* (locality), Kucha Chelan, some 1,400 people were cut down. The emperor, therefore, remained in his private apartments. The British assault proved successful and Bakht Khan told the emperor that his only safety lay in flight and begged him to accompany him. Bahadur Shah, however, allowed the army to depart without him and took refuge in Delhi's Humayun's Tomb. On the same day, the Lahore Gate at the Red Fort, which appeared to be totally deserted except for an occasional gunshot fired at the troops at the end of Chandni Chowk, was blown up. The Punjab Infantry broke the chain of the inner gate by firing muskets close to it and they charged down the vaulted passage (Chhatta Chowk) into the palace. A single sentry remained in the passage and he fired directly at Lieutenant McQueen, but the bullet went right through the officer's helmet.

Lieutenant Hodson captured the emperor a few miles south of the city, and on the following day the princes, Mirza Mughal, Mirza Khizr Sultan and Mirza Abu Bakr, were taken into custody at Humayun's Tomb. They were placed in a bullock cart and brought to the city. When they reached near the Delhi Gate, Lieutenant Hodson shot the princes at the place that is known as the Khooni Darwaza. On that day a royal salute was fired in honour of the capture of the city and a thanksgiving service was held in the Diwan-e-Khas. The following January, the emperor was brought to the Diwan-e-Khas and kept in a cell, where he stayed for 40 days of trial in gloom. Not a word did he speak. In silence he sat with his eyes cast on the ground. Some heard him quoting verses of his own composition:



Bahadur Shah surrenders. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.



Bahadur Shah was confined to his bed during the days of his trial. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.

*Lagta nahin hai jii mera, ujjay dayar mein
Kis ki banii hai aalam-e-na-payedar mein*

*Kah do in hasarataun se kahiin awr jaa basen
Itanii jagah kahan hai dil-i daaghdhaar mein*

*Umr-i daraaz maang ke laaye the chaar din
Do aarazu mein kat gaye do intizaar mein*

*Hai kitana badanasiiib Zafar dafn ke liye
Do gaz zamiin bhii na milii ku-i yaar mein*

The English translation reads:

My heart is not happy in this despoiled land
Who has ever felt fulfilled in this transient world

Tell these emotions to go dwell elsewhere
Where is there space for them in this besmirched
(bloodied) heart

I had requested for a long life a life of four days
Two passed by in pining, and two in waiting

How unlucky is Zafar! For burial
Even two yards of land were not to be had, in the
land (of the) beloved

After an investigation that lasted for 40 days, Bahadur Shah Zafar was convicted for having made war against the British, the reigning sovereign of India, and with causing, or being accessory to, the death of many Europeans. He was exiled and sent to Rangoon where he died on 7 November 1862.

History reveals that the sacrifices that took place at the Red Fort during these eventful days in 1857 did not go in vain. The revolt shook the British. The misrule of the East India Company came to an end and was replaced with direct rule of the British Crown and Parliament.

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History on Trial

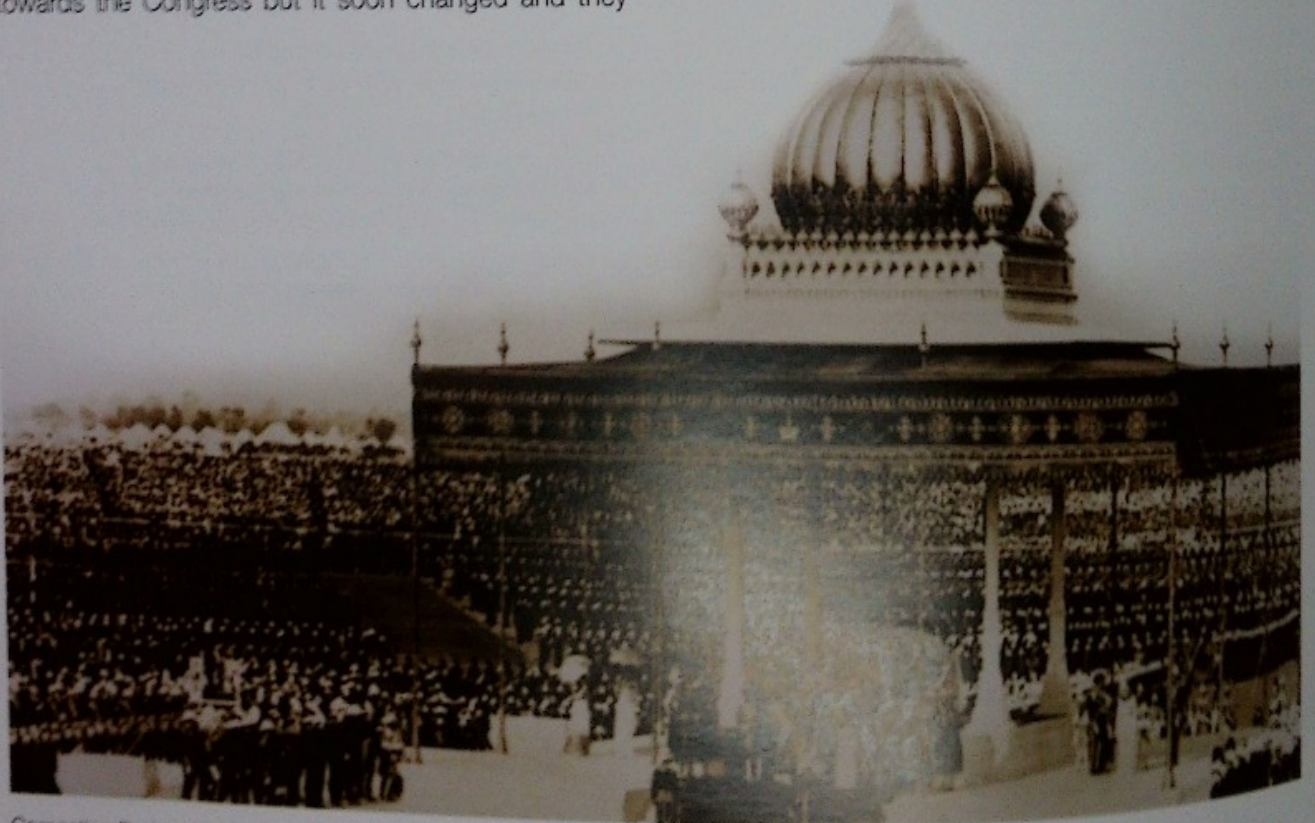
The First War of Independence, coupled with the socio-religious reforms introduced at the time, spread consciousness among the people and a different kind of movement began to take shape. This soon took the form of a countrywide struggle for freedom and ultimately led to the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885.

Feelings of patriotism found expression in immortal songs and poetry, works of literature. At the convention of the INC in 1896, Rabindranath Tagore sang the immortal song, *Vande Mataram*, composed by the novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

In the beginning, the British had a sympathetic attitude towards the Congress but it soon changed and they

adopted a policy of divide and rule. Some of the new Indian leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal had by then emerged on the scene. Fiery speeches of Tilak shook both, his countrymen and the British. He declared in unambiguous terms, 'Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it.'

The partition of Bengal in October 1905 saw the INC enter its second phase—which was dominated by the Extremists. Through the different stages of the national movement, the Congress merged more and more with the people and encouraged them to fight together as a nation. In 1906, the Muslim League was formed under the leadership of Salimullah Khan, with the support of the British Government. Two important declarations



Coronation Durbar, Delhi.



The Red Fort trial of Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.

were made at the Delhi Durbar of 1911, when King George V and Queen Mary visited India. One was that the capital of British India would be shifted from Calcutta (Kolkata) to Delhi and the other was the annulment of the partition of Bengal. Far away in Europe, North America and some Asian countries, many Indians set up revolutionary centres. These included Shyam Krishna Verma, V.D. Savarkar, Madan Lal Dhingra, Madame Bhikaji Cama, S. Dutt, Barkatulla and Champakarmann Pillai. Madame Cama designed a flag for free India and unfurled it at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart, Germany, in August 1907. At this stage Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) entered the national movement and founded the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad where he preached the ideals of truth and non-violence. He soon became the leader of the masses across the country.

In the morning hours of 10 April 1919, a crowd had been proceeding towards the residence of the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar to demand the release of two popular leaders—Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew—against whom deportation orders had been issued. The crowd was fired on by a military picket. Later in the day, violence erupted and spread throughout the city.

In Amritsar, the police provoked violence by firing on unarmed demonstrators. The city was handed over to

Brigadier-General Dyer on 13 April 1919. Thousands of people, unaware of the curfew imposed gathered at Jallianwala Bagh where Dyer ordered firing without any warning. Hundreds of innocent people were killed. In protest, Tagore renounced his knighthood and Gandhi returned the Victoria Cross.

The Lahore session of the INC in 1929 was presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in which the Congress demanded complete independence. In 1929, the Hindustan Socialistic Republic Association was formed. Two of its active members, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, threw a bomb in the Central Legislative Council and shouted '*Inquilab zindabad*' to protest the introduction of a public safety bill. While Jatin Das died after a hunger strike, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged in 1931.

In August 1942, the Congress intensified the Quit India Movement. There were countrywide strikes and processions in open defiance. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose resigned from the Congress and formed the Forward Bloc but was soon arrested for his inflammatory speeches. However, he escaped in 1941 to Afghanistan, and from there to Russia and then to Germany and finally to Japan. With the help of the revolutionary Rash Bihari Bose, he formed the Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj. The INA fought many battles and openly defied the British.



Heroes of the Swadeshi Movement—(anti-clockwise) Krishna Kumar Mitra, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subramaniam Bharti, Rabindranath Tagore and Brahm Bandhu Upadhyay.



A bonfire of Western clothes by Khadi-clad freedom-fighters.



The supreme sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. Courtesy: Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya, Red Fort.

However, following the collapse of the Japanese in the Second World War, the INA was defeated and forced to surrender. The British imprisoned the INA officers, transported them to India and lodged them at the Red Fort. About 17,000 men of the INA are believed to have been held as prisoners of war. Ironically, the very men who ought to have marched to Delhi as victors, hoisted the national flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort and held a victory parade there, were now declared prisoners. Inside the Red Fort, they awaited a trial for waging war against the British.

It was only after the Second World War ended, in mid-August 1945, that rumours were heard in India that some INA men were confined in the Red Fort and that six of them had already been shot. The subject was too dangerous for public comment with the war still on. But on 20 August, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his first statement to the press said: 'It would be a very grave mistake, leading to far-reaching consequences, if they were treated just as ordinary rebels. The punishment given to them would in effect be a punishment to all of India and all Indians and a deep wound would be created in millions of hearts ...'

This set the tone for the whole country and the INA became a burning topic. The public demanded the immediate release of the INA prisoners. Mahatma Gandhi, who was then staying at Harijan Colony in Delhi, met the INA officers at the Red Fort.

In a Foreword to Moti Ram's classic documentary record of the historic Red Fort trial of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain Prem Kumar Sehgal and Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote on 17 January 1946: 'The trial dramatised and gave visible form to the old contest "England versus India". It became a trial of strength between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who held power in India. And it was that will of the people that triumphed in the end.' Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon were tried by a military court presided over by Major General Blaxland. The trial took place on the second floor of a dormitory inside the Red Fort. It was open to the press and the public. The country was literally flooded with columns of newspaper reports of the proceedings. A headline in the *Hindustan Times*, 4 November 1945, stated: 'INA trial opens in Red Fort, charges of murder and waging war against the King,



A portrait of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose being carried to the Red Fort during the Independence Day celebration on 15 August 1947.
Courtesy: Photo Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.



Defence asks for three weeks adjournment.' British and American news agencies and newspapers also sent their men to Delhi to report the trial. The court martial began on 5 November and ended on 31 December 1945. The three accused were in their uniforms minus their badges of rank. The court described them by their original ranks in the British Army and referred to them as Captain Shah Nawaz, Captain Sehgal and Colonel Dhillon. To the rest of India, they were known by their INA ranks, namely, Major General Shah Nawaz, Colonel P.K. Sehgal and Colonel G.S. Dhillon. The chargesheet was read out to them. There were many charges against each of them individually but the one common charge against all three was that they had waged war against the King. They pleaded not guilty. Donning his barrister's robe after a lapse of some thirty years, Jawaharlal Nehru was the cynosure of all eyes in the courtroom.

In view of Sir Tej Behadur Sapru's indifferent health, Bhulabhai Desai was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the defence in close consultation with his other colleagues of the defence committee. Day after day, Desai went to the Red Fort and there, in a tented enclosure, he met Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon and a number of other INA officers detained in the Red Fort, to prepare the case of the defence. The Red Fort reverberated with shouts of '*Jai Hind*'. An outstanding and romantic figure in the Red Fort those days was General Mohan Singh, the creator of the first INA Trial in 1942, who defied the Japanese. Mohan Singh and other INA leaders ordered the INA to disband after severe disagreements with the Japanese. Mohan Singh was subsequently arrested by the Japanese and exiled to Pulau Ubin. He preferred to remain in detention till the war was over.

On 3 January 1946, the court martial found the three accused officers guilty of waging war against the King and sentenced them to transportation for life, cashiering and the forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances. The Commander-in-Chief remitted the sentence of transportation for life against them but confirmed the sentence of cashiering and the forfeiture of arrears. The three officers were released on the same day. The country went delirious with joy and the heroes of the Red Fort trial were overwhelmed by the uproarious welcome they received wherever they went. History had once more been made in the Red Fort and the mighty monument stood a silent witness to these significant happenings.

Tryst with Destiny

Barely had the curtain fallen on the INA drama that it rose again on the final act of the British regime in India that came to an end eighteen months after the historic INA trial. Lord Louis Mountbatten succeeded Lord Wavell as the last British Viceroy of India and he delineated a schedule for the withdrawal of the British from India. Mountbatten stayed for some time as independent India's first Governor General and was succeeded by C. Rajagopalachari.

Jawaharlal Nehru became independent India's first Prime Minister on 15 August 1947. The very next day, he hoisted the national flag of free India over the turreted battlements of the historic Red Fort. The old guards of the INA rallied to redeem an unfulfilled pledge and held a victory parade inside the Red Fort. The words of India's first Prime Minister, spoken at the Red Fort, are part of our history. 'We are a free and sovereign people today and we have rid ourselves of the burden of the past. We look at the world with clear and friendly eyes and at the future with faith and confidence,' said Nehru triumphantly. 'The burden of foreign domination is done away with, but freedom brings its own responsibility and burden, and they can only be shouldered in the spirit of free people, self-disciplined and determined to preserve and enlarge that freedom.' Over the years, the Red Fort has become synonymous in India with our Independence Day, 15 August, when the Prime Minister of the country delivers an address to a vast gathering from the ramparts of the Lahore Gate.

The citadel, the witness of many historic events, is certainly the most appropriate venue to commemorate India's freedom struggle and the Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya museum was thus set up in its premises. The museum provides a glimpse into the major phases

of India's struggle for freedom, including the INA trial at the Red Fort.

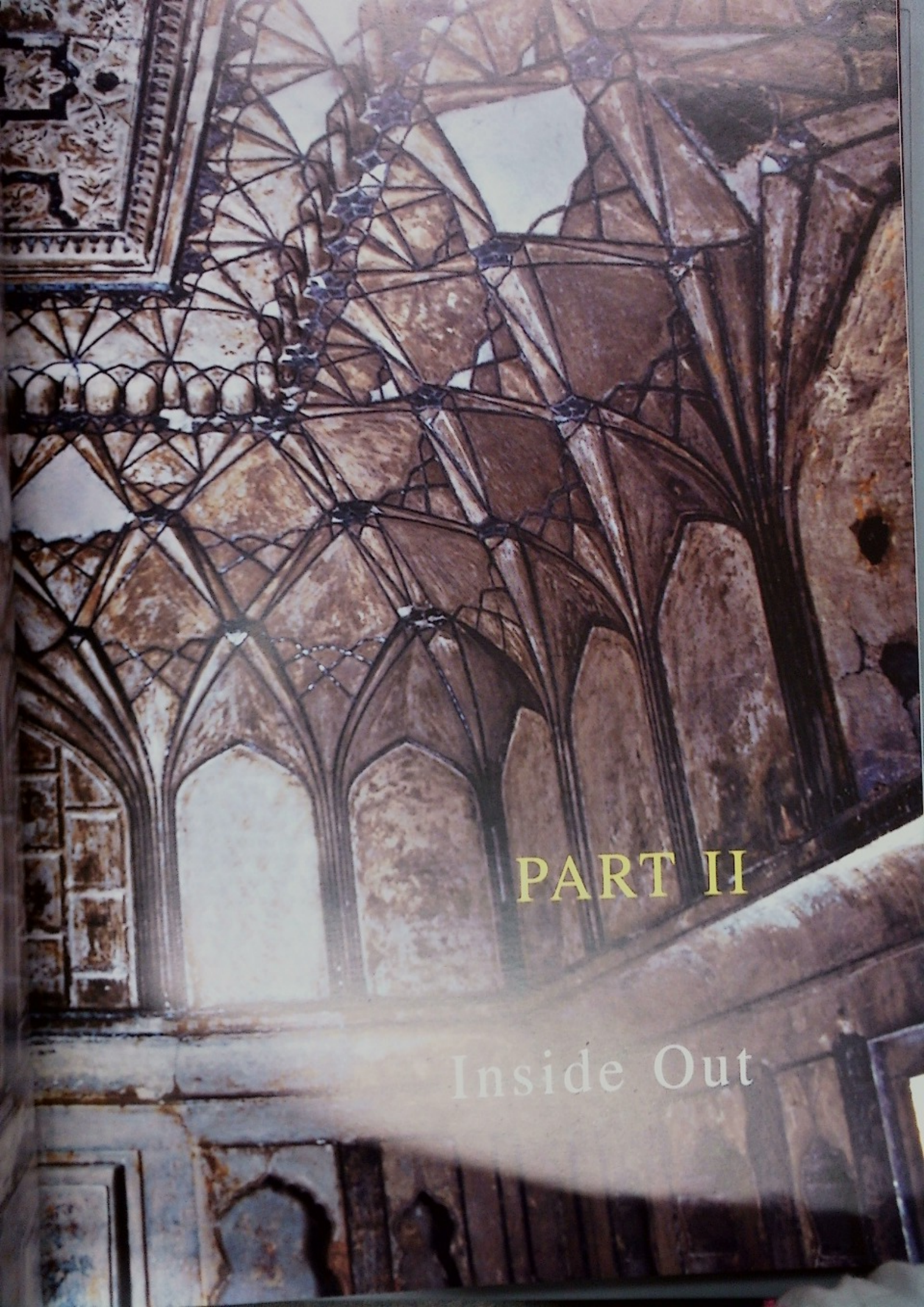
Here, history is depicted through photographs, documents, posters, paintings, lithographs; objects such as guns, pistols, swords, shields, rank badges, medals, dioramas, panels in relief, busts, sculptures and more. India's then Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, said on 27 September 1995, while dedicating the museum to the nation and to the memory of the heroic men and women, peasants and workers, students and professionals who participated in the attainment of *swaraj*: 'The establishment of the Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya has come not a day too soon. The museum will be a tribute to those great sons and daughters of India who participated in the freedom struggle and who have left a lasting legacy for generations of Indians to admire and emulate. The museum will capture the events of those momentous times. Every individual who walks into the museum will be able to experience the spirit of the freedom struggle and the trials and tribulations of those known and unknown leaders and men and women across the length and breadth of India to whom we owe our freedom today.'

He commented that millions of people from India and abroad visit the historic Red Fort to get a glimpse of India's heritage. So it was only fitting that the museum should be located in the Red Fort for it saw the beginning of the First War of Independence in 1857 and it was also in the barracks of the Fort that the freedom fighters were tried. The Red Fort is a symbol of free India. Each brick here reverberates with anecdotes from India's rich past. A walk through the Red Fort, amid the ruins and the remains, is like turning the pages of history.



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru being administered the oath of office as the first Prime Minister of independent India on 15 August 1947 by Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General. Also seen are Lady Edwina Mountbatten, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.





PART II

Inside Out

The Fortunate Citadel

*Praise be to God! How beautiful
are these painted mansions and
how charming are these residences:
a part of the high heaven. When I say the
high-minded angels are desirous of
looking at them, if people from different
parts and directions [of the world] should
come [here] to walk round them as [they walk]
round the old house [Ka'ba], it would be
right; and if the beholders of the two worlds
should run to kiss their highly glorious threshold
as [they kiss] the black stone [of Ka'ba],
it would be proper. The Lord of the World,
the founder of these heavenly, pleasant mansions,
Shihabu-d-Din Muhammad, the second
Lord of Felicity, Shah Jahan, the King, Champion
of Faith, opened the door of favour to the
people of the world.*

[English translation of the inscription on the southern and northern arches at the Khas Mahal, said to be the work of Sa'dulla Khan, the Wazir (Prime Minister) of Shah Jahan.]

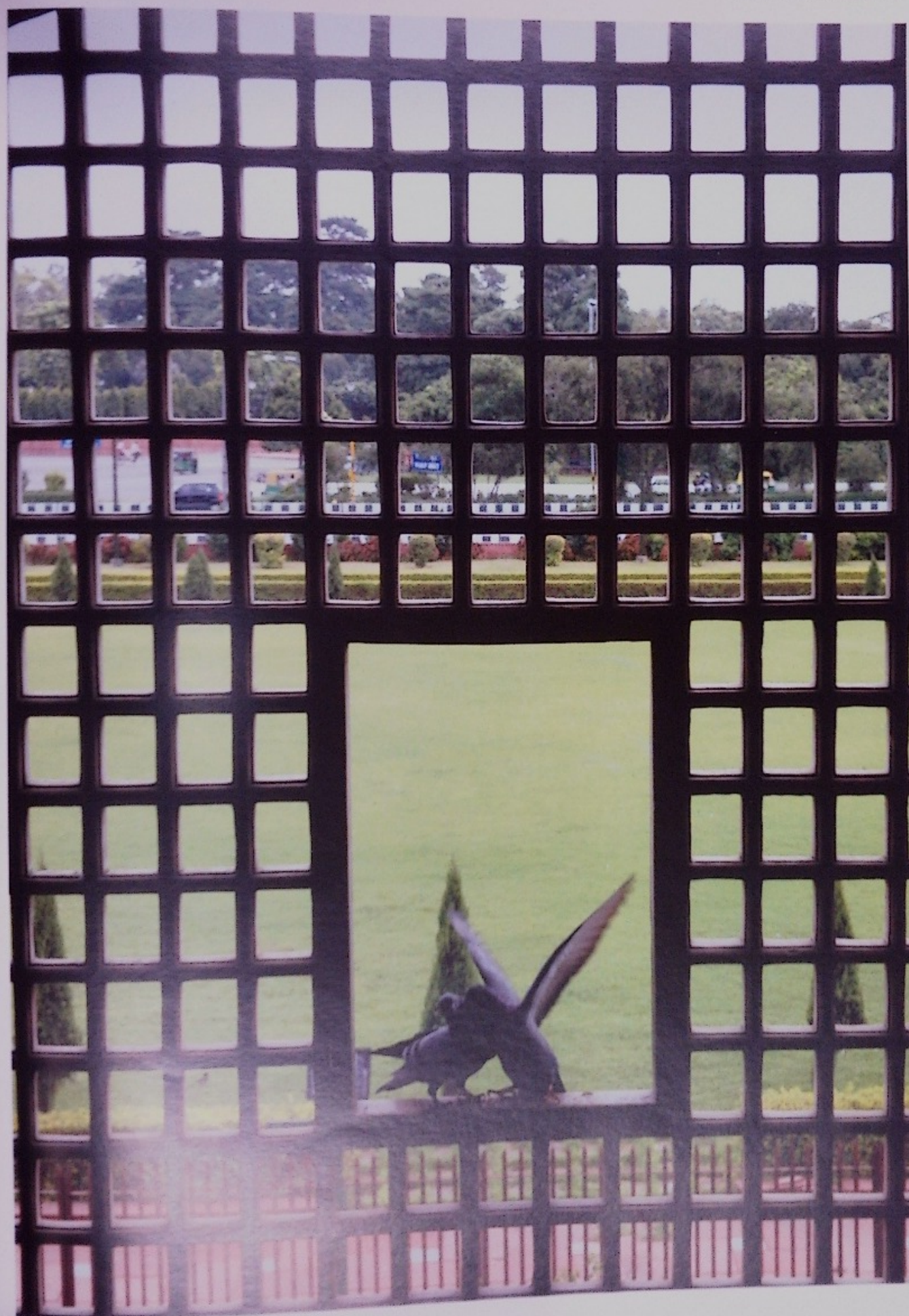
The Red Fort has inspired many to write about its splendour and glory. Its imposing exteriors and overwhelming interiors combine to create a structure that is simply incomparable. Though both time and man have not been kind to this edifice, it is still considered an important part of any tourist's itinerary for it is the largest of Delhi's medieval monuments. Even today, the walls of the Red Fort, its palaces and pavilions, tell a tale of the dramatic incidents that took place here. Open on all days of the week, except Mondays, the Red Fort attracts the curious and the eager from different parts of the world. They gather here to enter the Lahore Gate and walk down the lanes of yesterday.

In the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, the Fort was known as Qila-i-Mubarak (Fortunate Citadel) or Qila-i-Shah Jahanabad and during the reign of Bahadur Shah II, it was called Qila-i-Mualla (the Exalted Fort). Today it is recognised the world over by its red sandstone as the Lal Qila or the Red Fort.

Facts and figures, dimensions and other data combine to underline the marvel of this monument. The citadel lies on the western bank of the River Yamuna, the course of which has since changed and receded towards the east. It is an irregular octagon in plan, with its longer sides on the east and west. It measures approximately 900 metres from north to south and 550 metres from east to west. It has a parameter of 2.41 kilometres along the fortification wall with a height of 33.50 metres on the town side and 18.00 metres on the riverside.

The wall has been constructed in brick masonry, veneered with fine red sandstone. The fortification, along with the ramparts, has been strengthened with broad massive circular bastions at regular intervals and octagonal bastions at corners, with kiosks or *chhatris* crowned with domical cupolas. Such architecture has rarely been seen in Delhi.

The Red Fort has an aesthetic character that has been skilfully blended with its military requirements. It is surrounded by a moat about 22.86 metres wide and 9.14 metres in depth. On the roadside is a drain with holes for rainwater. It was earlier filled with water and, as recorded by the historian Bernier, the moat was stocked with fish. Adjoining it were large gardens, full of flowers and green shrubs at all times, which, contrasted with the stupendous red wall was a beautiful sight indeed.



Exquisite jali work in the Red Fort.

SALIMGARH

SHAH
BURJ

NAHR-E-
BAHISHT

MOTI MAHARAJ

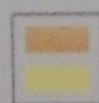
HAYAT EAKHER

SAWAN

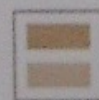
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ZAFAR KHAN

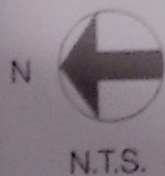
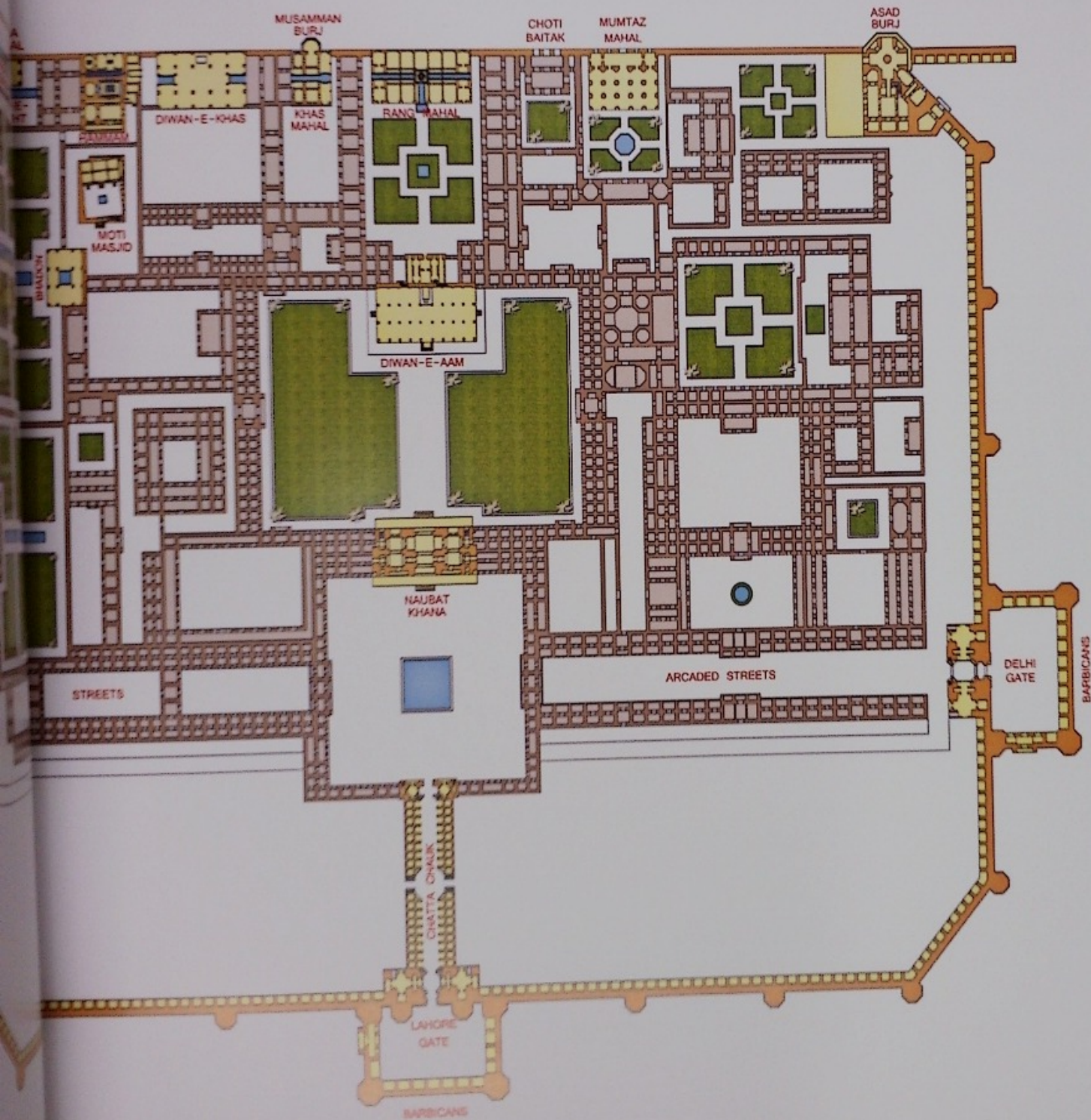
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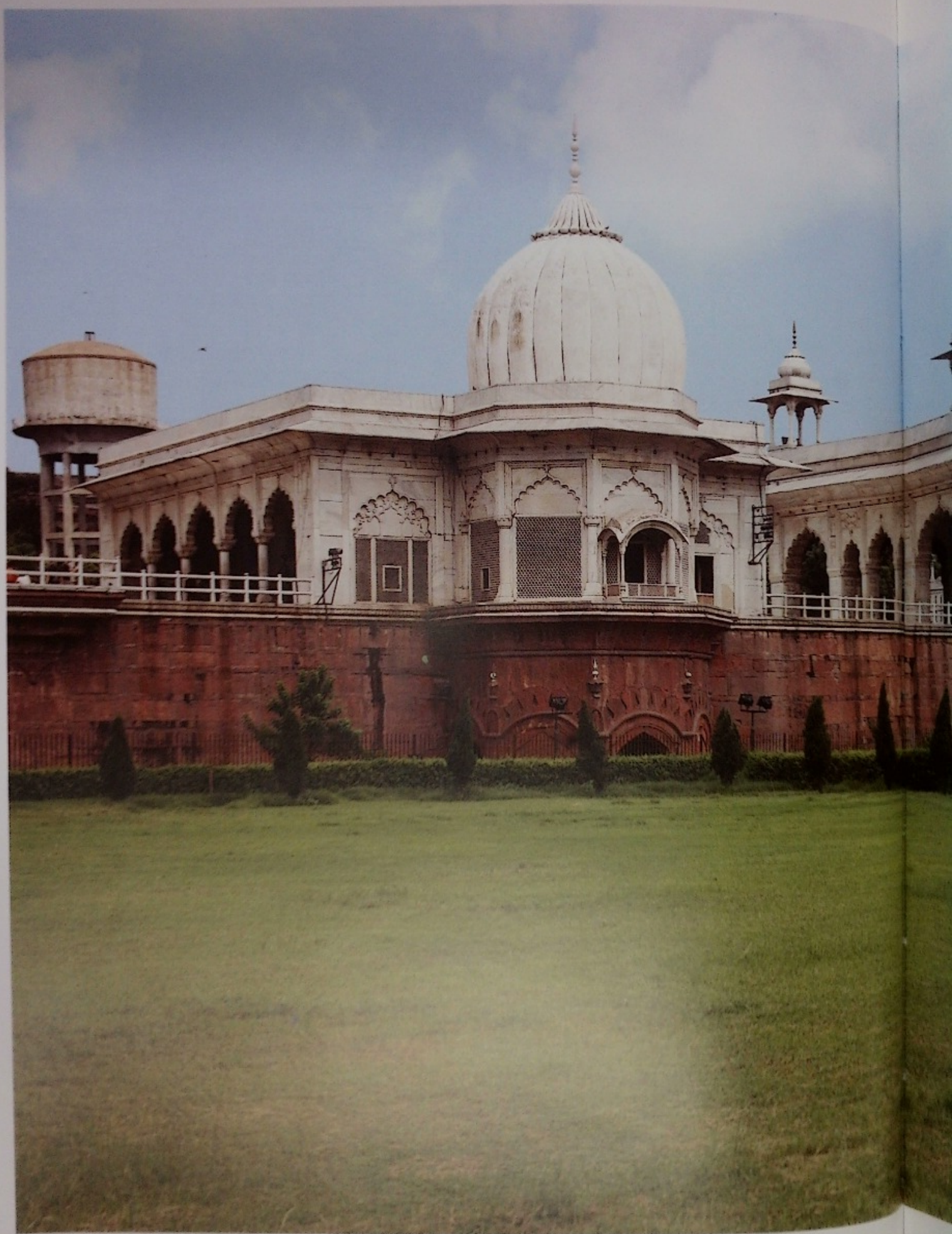
Present Buildings



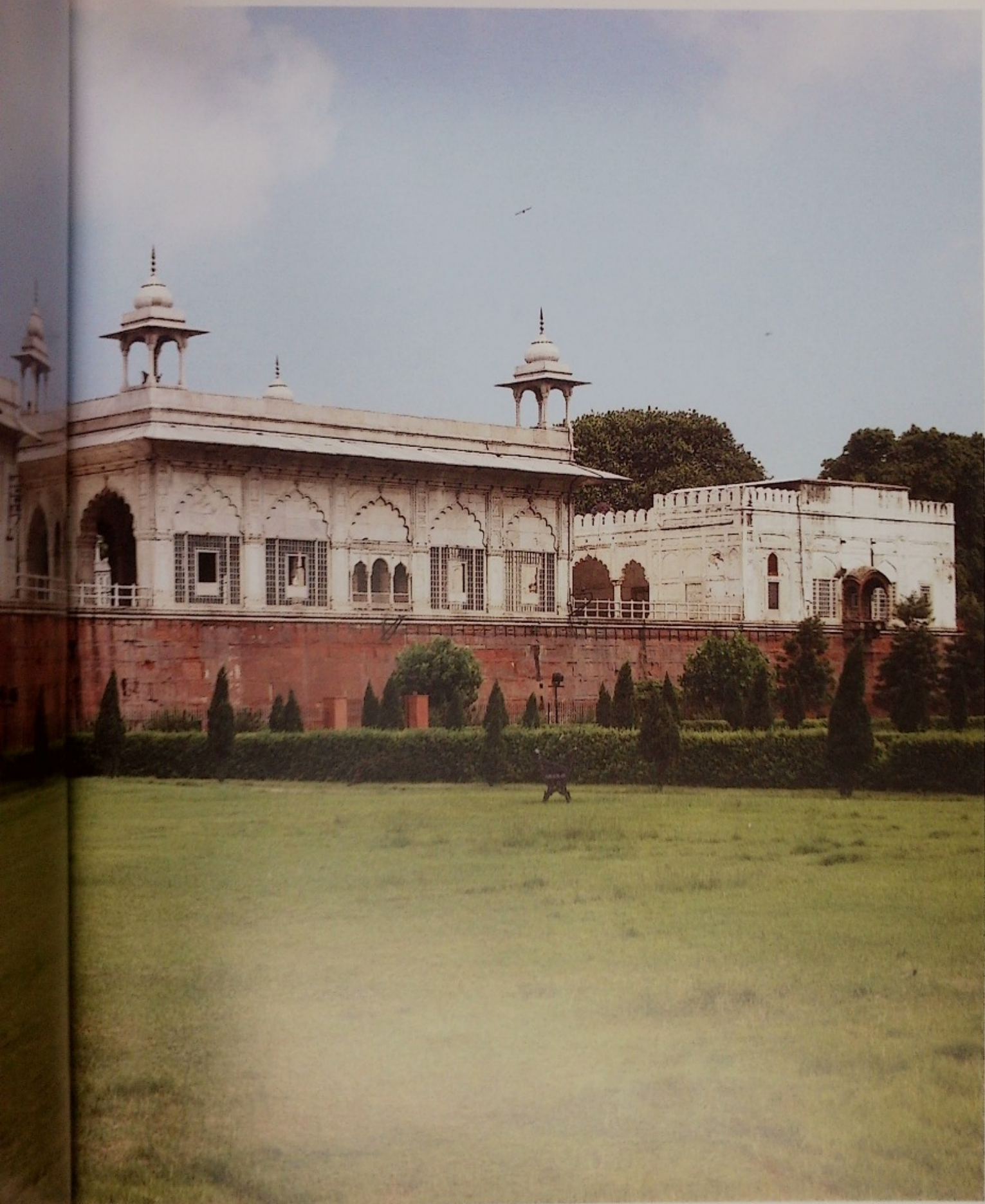
Past Buildings



Conjectural plan of the Red Fort showing Mughal buildings demolished after 1857, and the existing Mughal buildings.



The eastern façade comprising the Mussaman Burj, the Diwan-e-Khas and the Hammam.



दिल्ली रेलवे स्टेशन, कृष्णा नगर
Delhi R.S., Krishna Nagar
↓

आई.एस.टी.
I.S.B.T.
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The bridge connecting Salimgarh and the Red Fort over the Ring Road that now faces the eastern façade.

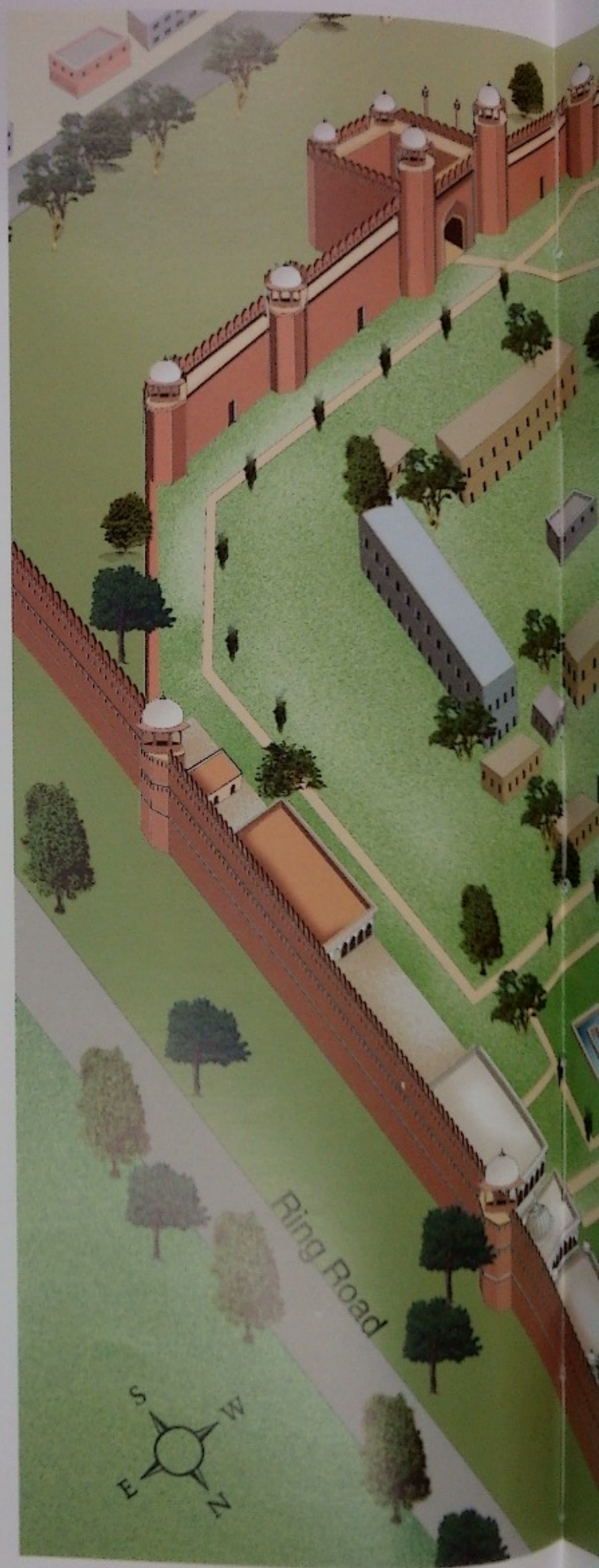


It appears that the Red Fort met the requirements of the forts mentioned in old treatises such as *Devi Puran* and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as it is partly surrounded by water bodies and moats. Its walls are on the city side and the river surrounded the other sides. It is devoid of any natural protection. Its height also meets the requirements of the categories of forts mentioned in the old treatises. The Red Fort protects the inhabitants from the flow of wind through the city.

Apart from the emperor, his family and servants, the Red Fort housed hordes of courtiers, ministers, scribes, musicians, dancing girls and hangers-on of the oriental court, in addition to the emperor's personal bodyguard, the permanent garrison and a few shopkeepers. It was intended as a fortress, with the palace built inside it for greater safety. Of the 100 lakh rupees spent on the building of the Red Fort, half was spent on the wall and the other half on the buildings within.

The historian Bakhtawar Khan, writing during the reign of Aurangzeb, differs in his detailed break-up of the expenditure. According to him, 60 lakh rupees were spent on the Fort and the buildings within it; 28 lakh rupees on the royal mansions; 14 lakh rupees on the Diwan-e-Khas (including the silver ceiling and fittings); 5.5 lakh rupees on the Imtiaz Mahal (Rang Mahal) with its bed chamber and surroundings; 2 lakh rupees on the Diwan-e-Am; 6 lakh rupees on the Hayat Baksh garden with the Hammam; 7 lakh rupees on the palace of Jahanara Begum and other royal ladies; 4 lakh rupees on the bazaars and squares and 21 lakh rupees on the walls and moat. The workmen's wages amounted to 10 million rupees. The red sandstone and marble was provided by the governors and the kings of the locality. Red sandstone was also brought in large quantities from Fatehpur Sikri by boat.

It took a lot of money, time and effort and the end result was the spectacular citadel that is considered one of Delhi's most beautiful sights. The Red Fort is more than Emperor Shah Jahan's vision translated in sandstone; it is a doorway to a world of architectural splendour. The entire complex of the citadel—fortification walls, gateways, bazaars, palaces, gardens, canals, fountains and so much more—have, sadly, been subject to the vagaries of time and fate. The uprising of 1857 and the events that followed have caused considerable portions of the Red Fort to be either dismantled or shorn of much of its glory. Enough still remains, however, to give some idea of the original plan in all its magnificence.

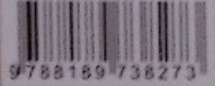


An isometric conceptual view of the Red Fort.





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