

RANJAN KUMAR SINGH

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monuments
of DELHI



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Ranjan Kumar Singh

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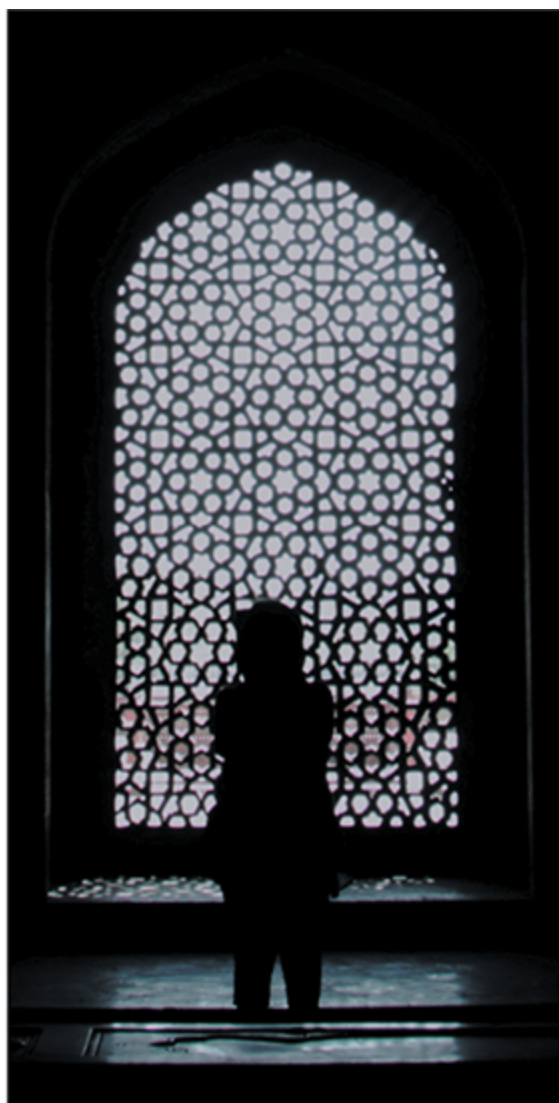
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THE STORY OF DELHI

In 1192, after conquering Delhi, the Turks razed to the ground twenty-seven temples to establish the 'Might of Islam' in India. This not only marked the end of the Hindu regime at Delhi, but also saw the advent of an alien culture manifested by architectural grandeur that is now a part of our common heritage.

If the history of ancient India revolved around Patliputra, the history of modern India has been more or less Delhi-centric. There is another similarity between the two. Both these cities have had several rebirths and adopted different names in every subsequent incarnation. So, if the history of Patna goes back to Kusumpur of the epic era, the history of Delhi also dates back to Indraprastha of the same era. As and when the city of Patliputra lost its authority and grandeur, Indraprastha established itself as a new centre of authority. Thus, the loss of Patna has been gainful for Delhi.

Ever since it took over the reins, Delhi has been the seat of power. This led to a belief that whoever held Delhi, ruled India. But for a period when the Mogul Emperor Akbar ruled from Agra, this seems to have held true. In the course of history spanning over 900 years, Delhi has encountered all kinds of adversities and catastrophes, but has held on to its position nevertheless.

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[The First City of Delhi](#)

When Tomar Rajput king Anang Pal raised the citadel of Lal Kot by the Aravali Hills in about 1024 AD, little did he know that he was laying the foundation of a city that would be the citadel of power for years to come. Considered to be the first ever effort towards the reinforcement of Delhi, the Lal Kot is now survived only by thick stone ramparts. The rubble-built walls of the ramparts are 2.5 to 3 meters thick with a stone footing on the exterior. A thick brick revetment was raised over it. The stone-wall is intercepted by massive towers and several gates namely Ghazni Gate, Sohan Gate and Ranjit Gate. Outside this rampart ran a moat which is now traceable only in some places.

Recent excavation has shown that the original citadel of Lal Kot was oblong in plan and covered a circumference of 3.6 kilometres. Later, a high stonewall to the west of the ramparts was constructed. An elegant and impressive veneer of dressed local quartzite blocks was also raised in front of the brick wall. This too now exists only over some stretches. It is believed that a Vishnu temple graced the Lal Kot at a place now occupied by the Qutub Minar and other allied monuments.

Vigraha Raj IV, also known as Bisal Deo, of the Chauhan kinship captured Delhi from the Tomars in the later half of the 12th century. His grandson Prithvi Raj Chauhan, popularly known as Rai Pithora, extended the Lal Kot in about 1180 AD by constructing massive ramparts around it.

This enlarged city with Lal Kot at its south western base came to be known as Quila Rai Pithora or the Fort of Rai Pithora; and is hailed as the first of the so-called seven cities of Delhi. Today, its rubble built ramparts - 5 to 6 meters in thickness and 18 meters in height - are largely covered by debris. According to Timor, who invaded Delhi in 1398 AD, the ramparts of Quila Rai Pithora had thirteen gates, of which only a few exist today. Among these are the Hauz Rani, Barka and Budayun Gates. Budayun Gate has also

been mentioned in Ibn-Battuta's travel accounts. It was probably the main entrance to the city.



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Conquest of Delhi

Quila Rai Pithora lost its glory after Mohammed bin-Sam of Ghour, widely known as Mohammed Ghouri, defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan in 1192 AD. With this, the Hindu regime in Delhi also came to an end.

After conquering Delhi, Mohammed Ghouri left for his land of birth, leaving the state of affairs to his slave and confidant Qutub-uddin Aibak. Even Aibak chose not to be in Delhi, and went back to Lahore instead, from where he continued to administer the land conquered by his master.

As a mark of his sovereignty, he commissioned the Quwwat-ul-Islam and got the Qutub Minar erected in Delhi. The Qutub Minar was meant to be the Tower of Victory and the Quwwat-ul-Islam or the Might of Islam, as the name translates, was to establish the domination of Islam in a region alien to the religion.

On the death of Mohammed Ghouri in 1206 AD, Qutub-uddin enthroned himself the “Sultan of Delhi” at Lahore. Interestingly, even at the time of his accession to the throne, Qutub-uddin was a slave and could obtain his free status only in 1208 AD.

The Slave dynasty founded by Qutub-uddin Aibak continued to rule Delhi till 1290 AD with illustrious figures like Shams-uddin Illutmish, Razia Sultan and Ghiyas-uddin Balban following suite. Of these, both Illutmish and Balban were slaves who rose to become the Sultan. Razia, on the other hand, was the daughter of Sultan Illutmish and the most able of all his descendants. In fact Illutmish had appointed her his heir apparent, but after his death in 1236 AD, Illutmish’s lieutenants enthroned his son Rukun-uddin Firoz Shah instead.

Rukun-uddin could not prove his merit and was killed. This paved the way for the first woman ruler of Delhi to take over. Wearing red garments to proclaim her as one aggrieved, Razia addressed the people of Delhi who

had assembled for Friday prayers. The army and the nobility sensing the mood of the common man, placed her on the throne of Delhi.

The Turkish nobles also had to eat humble pie as they were compelled to take a soft stand. Although Razia was an able administrator, unfortunately her reign is more remembered for her love-lore, than her administrative capabilities. It is said that she fell in love with her slave Yakoot. Her courtesans did not approve of him. Her tenure of three and a half years was marred by conspiracies which ultimately resulted in her being killed.

Feroz Shah of the Khalji tribe captured the throne of Delhi in 1290 AD from Shams-uddin Kaimurth, the last Sultan in Balban's line. He assumed the title of Jalal -uddin. The Khaljis, like the Slaves, were also Turks, but were settled in Afghanistan. Among the six rulers of the Khalji dynasty, Ala-uddin was the most illustrious. He is not only known for his political exploits, but also for his architectural accomplishments.



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First Muslim City in India

In 1303 AD Ala-uddin laid the foundation of Siri, supposedly the second city of Delhi, but undoubtedly the first to be founded by any Muslim ruler in India. Its rubble-built high city wall is roughly oval in plan. It has survived only in stretches, with remains of some bastions, loopholes for arrows and flame-shaped battlements, which appear to have been introduced here for the first time.

Siri is said to have possessed seven gates, one of which- towards the south – east- may be seen even now. Ala-uddin even built a palace for himself that was particularly known for its Qasri-Hazar Sulton or Hall of Thousand Pillars. No remains of the palace have come to light though. There are, however, some derelict structures in the village of Shahpur-Jat situated inside it on the west. Within or outside the city are, however, the remains of several mosques and tombs, of which Tohfewala-Gumbad of the Khilji period and Muhammadwali and Makhdum Sahib's mosques, both belonging to the Lodi period, are well known.

The last of the Khaljis, Qutub-uddin Mubarak Shah indulged himself totally in merriment. He is said to have dressed in female garb and had a marked fondness for boys. His relationship with a Hindu lad became quite a sensation at the time. He had the Gujrati boy convert to Islam and named him Khusraw Khan. Even during the reign of Mubarak Shah the power actually lay in the hands of Khusraw Khan.

However, not content with this, Khusraw had his mentor killed and acceded the thrown under the assumed name of Nasir-uddin. During his rule he put a ban on cow-slaughter and, as if to avenge his conversion, had the Muslim nobles replaced by Hindu nobles. By doing so, he invited the wrath of the Muslim chieftains. They gathered around a Tughluq noble popularly known as Ghazi Malik, who defeated and killed Khusraw Khan.

Ghazi Malik ascended the throne of Delhi on September 8, 1320, and assumed the title of Ghiyas-uddin Tughluq Shah, thus becoming the founder of the Tughluq dynasty.

Among the eleven rulers from the Tughluq dynasty only the first three are noteworthy. Interestingly, each of them founded a new capital city for himself. Ghiyas-uddin Tughluq Shah founded the third city of Delhi and named it Tughluqabad.



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The Dream of a Slave

The story behind the foundation of this new city is an interesting one. Ghazi Malik was a slave of Mubarak Khalji. One day, while walking by the area where the Tughlaqabad Fort is now located, Ghazi Malik suggested to his master that the rocky landscape would be an ideal site for building a fort. The Sultan laughed at this and suggested that he build a fort there when he became a sultan. Ghazi Malik indeed became the Sultan and had a fort built at the same site. Tughlaqabad is Delhi's most colossal and awesome fort, even in its present ruined state.

However, the decline of Tughluqabad was not brought about by its enemy's invasion, but by the curse of a Sufi Saint Nizam-uddin. While the Sultan was building the fort for himself, the Saint was constructing a baoli or a stepped well for the people. The legendary quarrel between the two started when Ghiyas-uddin forbade his men from working for the saint. This angered the Aulia (Saint) and he prophesized, "Ya rahe ujjar, ya base gujjar" (Either it would remain deserted or be habited only by the nomads). The Sultan was on his pursuit to Bengal when he was told about this. He vowed to punish the Aulia on his return to Delhi. This offended the Aulia further and led to his famous prophecy "Hunuz Dilli dur ast" (Delhi is yet far away). True to the words of Nizam-uddin Aulia, the Sultan never saw the face of his city again. When Ghiyas-uddin came back after his successful Bengal expedition, his son Joona Khan gave him a very warm welcome. While the Sultan was taking the guard-of-honour, the special stage that had been erected for the occasion fell down, killing him and six others. Joona Khan succeeded him under the assumed name of Mohammed bin-Tughluq.



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Abandoned and Relocated

Mohammed Tughluq is remembered as a crazy genius in the annals of history. He is accredited with the foundation of the fourth city of Delhi, namely Jahanpanah, by enclosing the then inhabited areas between Quila Rai Pithora and Siri, the first two cities of Delhi.

Perhaps in apprehension of Nizam-uddin Aulia's curse, he chose not to encompass Tughlaqabad, the city founded by his father. Soon he abandoned this new-found city to take his capital to Daulatabad, in Deccan. Given to impulsive and maniac decision taking, Mohammed bin-Tughluq ordered the entire population to follow suite. Thus, all men and women, including the old and the young had to move with him way down south to Daultabad. To add to their woes and miseries, he reversed his orders on realizing the impracticality of his decision to shift the capital. Thus the people were once again forced to undergo an onerous journey, this time back to Delhi. He indeed was a man of ideas, but almost all his plans and schemes failed and he became quite unpopular amongst the masses. He died without an heir and so his cousin, Firoz Shah was raised to the status of Sultan in 1351 AD.



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From Rocks to River

If Mohammed bin-Tughluq was a crazy genius, Feroz Shah Tughluq was a creative genius. He too laid out a city -the fifth city of Delhi, and named it after himself, Ferozabad. The citadel of Ferozabad is now known as Feroz Shah Kotla. The new city came up on the western bank of River Yamuna. It contained palaces, pillared halls, mosques, a pigeon-tower and a baoli, some of which are still standing.

Among these the tall pyramidal structure supporting the Asokan pillar and the Jami Masjid were famed far and wide at the time. The fact that the capital was moved to the riverside suggests that the Turkish power was now strongly established and enjoyed a considerable measure of prosperity which necessitated the use of the river for transport and communication. Fond of hunting that he was, Firoz Shah built several hunting-lodges in and around Delhi, some of these, such as Malcha-Mahal, Bhuli-Bhatiyari-ka-Mahal and Pir Ghaib, still lie on the ridge, whereas Kushak Mahal is now embraced within the Teen Murti House compound. Construction and restoration of monuments was his other interest.

Hauz-i-Alai, a large reservoir which was built earlier by Ala-uddin Khalji and which now lay in ruins, was restored by him, and so was the Qutub Minar, to which he also added two more storeys.

After the death of Feroz Shah Tughluq in 1388, the Sultanate became politically unstable. The reigns of power were transferred from one incompetent person to another, till Khizr Khan, the then governor of Punjab, ascended the throne in 1414 AD and founded the Sayyid dynasty. The four rulers of this dynasty reigned in succession till 1444 AD, but the country knew no prosperity. There was no patronization of art and architecture either. Only the tombs were raised to shelter the dead, whereas there was no reprise for those alive. The reign of the Lodis was no different. Buhlul Lodi, the founder of the Lodi dynasty, captured the throne in 1451,

but he as well as his successors Sikander and Ibrahim remained occupied in quelling the insurrection from the provincial governors and chieftains.



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A Burial Ground

Sikander Lodi took his capital to Agra. To the Lodis, Delhi was just a burial ground, where they would bring their dead for cremation. The result being that the part now developed as New Delhi is splattered with burial tombs, mostly of the unknown. Barring two odd mosques, all that the Lodis have left in Delhi are some tombs, fashioned in the style that had come into vogue during the Sayyid period.

Meanwhile Zahiruddin Babar, the Mogul Badshah of Kabul, had raided India twice. He was allured to attack Delhi for the third time by an invitation from Daulat Khan Lodi, the discontented governor of Lahore. In 1526 Babar met Ibrahim Lodi in the now-famous battle of Panipat. Ibrahim Lodi was killed in the battle and Babur occupied the throne of Delhi. This marked the end of the Sultanate in Delhi and with it came into force the era of Badshahi.

Babar made no secret of his dislike for India and left it to his son and heir apparent, Humayun, to consolidate the Mogul dynasty in the country. Babar died in Agra on December 26, 1530. He was buried in Kabul in accordance with his wishes. Humayun inherited a freshly won empire with a host of troubles; the Afghan nobles, the Rajputs and worst of all, his three treacherous brothers Kamran, Askari and Hindal.





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Short-lived like its Creators

In 1533 AD, Humayun laid the foundation of Dinpanah, on the banks of the river Yamuna, a few kilometers north of Feroz Shah Kotla. It is said that he took considerable pain in selecting the site and laid its foundation in the august presence of his nobles and elders. It can only be guessed, that he knew that the same site was the focal point of the legendary Indraprastha - capital city of the Pandava's.

In spite of all this, Humayun was not to enjoy the fruits of his labour, as he almost lost the empire his father had fought so hard to bequeath him. The Afghan General Sher Shah Sur defeated Humayun in the battles of Chausa and Kanauj in 1540.

These defeats were the first setbacks to the infant Mughal Empire. Humayun had to flee and seek refuge in Persia, where he spent the next 15 years of his life - from 1540 to 1555 - in self-exile. With the demise of Ibrahim Lodi, Delhi seemed to have seen the last of Afghan rule, but Sher Shah Sur revised this situation by laying the foundation of the Sur dynasty in Delhi.

Coincidentally, he also chose the same site, which Humayun had so painstakingly chosen, as his capital. What Humayun had called Dinpanah was now Shergarh. Dinpanah and Shergarh together constitute the sixth city of Delhi.

Humayun had completed Dinpanah with its walls, bastions and gates within a short span of ten months. The building material for its construction had been taken from Siri, the city founded by Ala-uddin Khalji. After Sher Shah took over the reigns from Humayun, he added a few structures to the erstwhile Dinpanah. The Quila-i-Kuhna Masjid, also known as the Sher Shah Mosque and the Sher Mandal are two such buildings. Unfortunately, Sher Shah died in 1545 AD from a gun-powder explosion. His descendants could not prove themselves. Meanwhile, Humayun had reorganized his forces with the help of the King of Persia, and captured Kabul and Kandhar.

Keeping up his pursuit, he was finally able to re-ascend the throne at Delhi after defeating Sikandar Sur, Sher Shah's nephew.

It was as if the site of Dinpanah or Shergarh had a curse on it. Both its habitants could not occupy it for long. Even though Humayun regained his throne and set himself to complete the citadel left unfinished by him prior to Sher Shah's conquest, he did not live long enough to enjoy its grandeur. It is said that while descending from the stairs of Sher Mandal, which he had transformed as his library, he slipped and succumbed to injuries a few days later. At the time of his death, his elder son Akbar was just a teen-ager.

Under the patronage of Bairam Khan, a family confidant, Akbar grew up to become one of the most powerful Emperors of Medieval India. His capital was, however, not Delhi but Agra, where he built his famous Red Fort and near to it, raised the new town of Fatehpur Sikri .

It was for his son Shah Jahan to reinstate Delhi as the capital. Shah Jahan was a prolific builder and architecture was his passion.

His most outstanding contribution in the realm of architecture is undoubtedly the Taj Mahal at Agra, which remains unsurpassed even today. Because of his preference for marble stones he demolished some of the structures in the Agra Fort that were made from sandstone and replaced these with marble ones.

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The Glory Reinstated

Soon he found the city of Agra too cramped and inadequate for his lavish life-style and his grand ceremonial processions. There was no room for expansion either. So, in 1638 AD, he laid the foundation of Shahjahanabad.

The new city was situated to the north of Feroz Shah Kotla on the same bank of the river Yamuna as its predecessors Ferozabad and Dinpanah. Known today as 'the walled city' or 'Old Delhi', it is enclosed by a rubble wall with bastions, gates and wickets. It is said that Shahjahanabad had fourteen gates, of which only four, namely Delhi Gate, Kashmere Gate, Ajmeri Gate and Turkman Gate have survived.

He built a citadel on the model of the Red Fort of Agra, though much bigger in size. This fort stood at the eastern end of the city close to Salimgarh, built by Sher Shah Sur's son and successor Salim Shah Sur. Outside this palatial fort was planned Chandni Chawk, then considered to be the biggest commercial hub of the East. He completed his "Golden Triangle" by constructing the great mosque, now known as Jama Masjid, to the south of Chandni Chawk.

Shahjahan was succeeded by his ambitious son Aurangzeb, who imprisoned his father in order to gain access to the throne. However, by now, the Mogul Empire had started showing distinct signs of disintegration. The British, who had come to India as traders were fast establishing themselves as a major political power. The seat of power shifted from Delhi to Calcutta (now Kolkatta), a port city on the eastern coast, which well suited their trading motives.

Meanwhile, the Indian Monarchs united themselves under Bahadur Shah 'Zafar', the last of the Mogul luminaries, and together with the mutinied forces put up the Struggle for Independence in 1857.

Perhaps for the first time, the Emperor of India was nominated with the consent of the majority of monarchs and Delhi was able to regain some of its lost glory. Unfortunately, this did not last long and the First War of Independence was quelled. Most of its leaders were killed in the war or hanged to death. Bahadur Shah was deported to Rangoon, where he was condemned to death. With his death, the last trace of the Mogul rule at Delhi, disappeared.

By 1903, the British had made it quite clear that they intended to shift the citadel of power back to Delhi. A Darbar was held that year in Delhi on the occasion of the accession of Edward VII to the throne as the King-Emperor. Earlier in 1877, celebrations on the assumption of the title of Kaisar-i-Hind by Queen Victoria had also been held at Delhi.

Once they made their intention of ruling over India, known, there was no point in carrying on the affairs of the state from Calcutta. In 1911, the then Viceroy Lord Hardinge put this intention in writing when he sent a secret note to the Secretary of State, arguing that moving the capital from Calcutta to Delhi will “strike the imagination of the people as nothing else could, and would send a wave of enthusiasm throughout the country and would be accepted by all as an unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India.”



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Colonial Grandeur

Finally, at the Coronation Durbar for George V held on 12th December 1911 at Delhi, the King-Emperor announced that “on the advice of our ministers, tendered after consultation with our Governor-General-in-Council we have decided upon (the) transfer of the Seat of Government of India from Calcutta to the ancient city of Delhi”. He also made it known that “It is my desire that the planning and designing of the public buildings to be erected will be considered with the greatest deliberation and care, so that the new creation may be in every way worthy of this ancient and beautiful city.”

Thus came up New Delhi, a city designed and master minded by Sir Edwin Lutyens and his assistant Herbert Baker. When completed in 1931, it presented an outstanding example of an international city with a system of diagonal avenues and giant hexagons. Its focal point was, and still is, the Vice-regal Palace (now the Rashtrapati Bhawan), built on the Raisina Hill and flanked by the two massive secretariat buildings with a circular colonnade - the Parliament House - to its north. A sweeping avenue descends from the Raisina Hills through the War Memorial (now the India Gate) and continues up to Purana Quila, the site of Indraprastha.

It is interesting to note that just as the Purana Quila had resigned to pave the way for the Red Fort, Shahjahanabad, of which Red Fort is a part, had to give way to New Delhi.

In 1906, Gordon Risley Hearn, in his book ‘The Seven Cities of Delhi’, had classified the Qutub area as the Old Delhi - the name now given to the ‘Modern Delhi’ of yore. All of the so-called cities of Delhi, including Indraprastha - a city said to have been built for the legendary Pandavas by the master craftsman Vishvakarma - perished and yet Delhi survives.

Remarkably, none of the cities of Delhi was called Delhi. It is only after their decline, that they all become a part of Delhi. Equally interesting is the

fact that the phrase 'The Seven Cities of Delhi' had been coined by Hearn way back in 1906 when New Delhi had not been conceptualized and it still continues to be in application. Later excavations prove the existence of Indraprastha at the site of Purana Quila, a fact unknown to Hearn, but this too has not deterred the present historians from persisting with the phrase 'The Seven Cities of Delhi'.

Nevertheless, Delhi is amongst the richest cities of the world in terms of monuments. It has over 60,000 recognized monuments, depicting architecture from the Mauryan era upto the period of British rule, with the Mogul monuments comprising the major part of its rich archaeological heritage. These monuments constitute an inspiring saga of our past; where history speaks through bricks and broken stones. The story of Delhi is in fact the tale of 'nine' cities, each rising above the ruins of its predecessor. In its long and chequered history, it has been the subject of defeat, plunder and defacement- but each time it has resurfaced to hold the reigns of power again.



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THE ISLAMIC MONUMENTS OF DELHI





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South Delhi

The monuments in South Delhi are spread from Tughlaqabad to Hauz Khas and encompass the cities of Quila Rai Pithora, Siri, Tuglaqabad and Jahanpanah. The most popular tourist attraction in this area is obviously the Qutub Minar. The Qutub Complex houses eight monuments that include the 1600 years old Iron Pillar as well as the Imam Zamin's Tomb belonging to the 1536 AD. Some other attractions can be found in the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and around Hauz-i-Shamsi.

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Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque

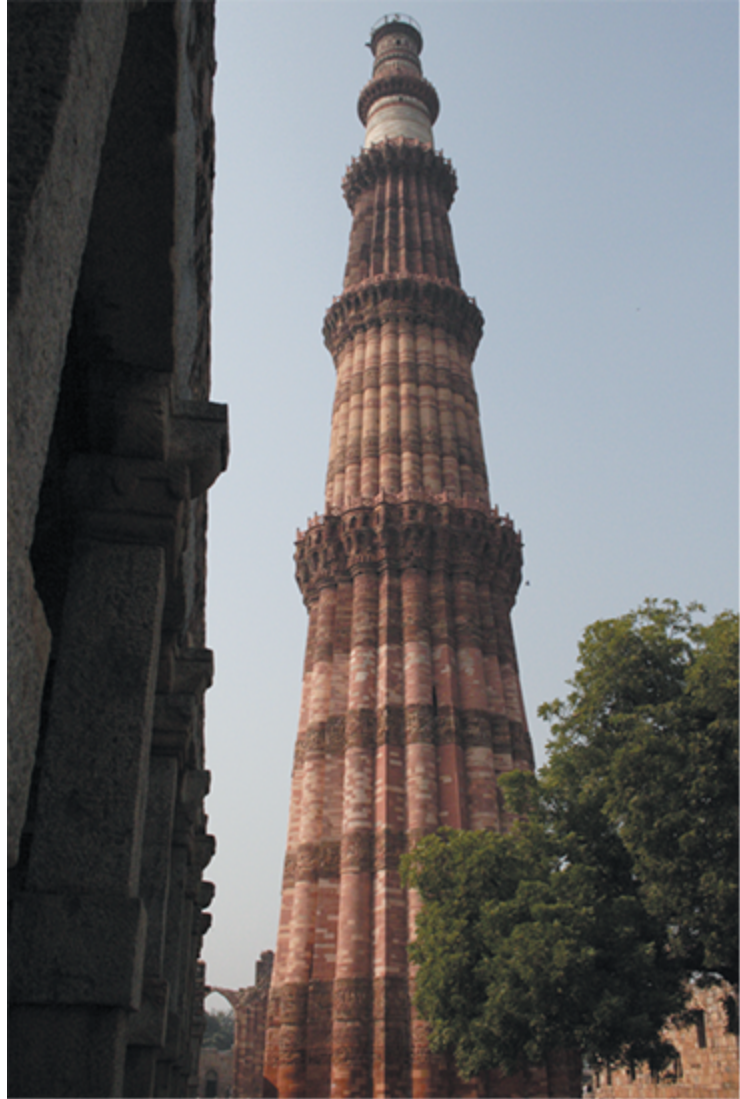
After taking over Delhi, Qutub-ud-din Aibak set to establish his faith in the land that had little familiarity with Islam. He is said to have demolished 27 Jain and Hindu temples to construct a mosque that he aptly called the Quwwat-ul-Islam or the Might of Islam. The Mosque lying adjacent to the world famous Qutub Minar, is not only one of the earliest mosques in India, but also the best surviving example of the Ghurids architecture. Qutub-ud-din was a slave of Mohammed Ghouri, to whom his master had left the conquered land. Built on the site of a Hindu temple in about 1193 AD, the mosque comprises a rectangular court enclosed by cloisters, erected with the carved columns and other architectural objects from demolished temples. Since the available columns were not tall enough to create a lofty space, two or even three such columns were set on top of each other to gain the necessary height. In an inscription on the eastern entrance, Qutub-ud-din states that on the original erection of each of the demolished temples, a sum of Two Millions of coins had been spent. The mosque is set on an elevated platform approached by staircases from three sides. At the two ends of its eastern pergola, an intermediate storey was raised to provide compartments for the ladies. Later, a massive stone screen was erected in front of the prayer-hall. The screen, consisting of a central arch with two smaller arches on either side, is beautifully carved with borders of inscriptions and geometrical designs. The mosque was enlarged by two later rulers Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, son-in-law and successor of Qutub-ud-din and again by Ala-ud-din Khilji.



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Qutub Minar

If Quwwat-ul-Islam was built to demonstrate the 'Might of Islam', Qutub Minar was conceptualized as the 'Tower of Victory'. It is undoubtedly an Indo-Islamic architectural wonder of ancient India and the highest stone tower in the country. Said to have been built in 1199 AD for the use of the Muadhdhin or crier to call the people for prayer, it complements the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. Though, considering its height, it is hard to believe that it might ever have been used by the Muadhdhin. The other contention that proclaims it as the 'Tower of Victory' appears more realistic. Qutub Minar stands 72.5 meters over the ground, tapering from 14.32 meters in diameter at its base to 2.75 meters at its peak. Its first three storeys are made of red sandstone and are heavily indented. The first storey is 95 feet high and has alternate semi-circular and angular flutings. The second storey is 51 feet high and has semi-circular flutings, while the third is 41 feet in height and has angular flutings. The top two storeys are 25 and 22 feet high respectively and have no flutings. A staircase of 379 flights spirals its way to the top of the structure. Qutub-ud-din lived to see only the first storey finished, and it was his successor Iltutmish who completed the next two floors. According to some inscriptions on the tower, the Qutub Minar was damaged twice by lightning. In 1368 AD, a bolt knocked off the top floor and the then sultan, Firoz Shah Tughlaq, restored it, adding two floors and introducing white marble to an otherwise red and buff sandstone structure. An earthquake in the early 19th century again destroyed its top, which was replaced by an English engineer Major Robert Smith. This was later removed by the Governor-General Lord Harding and now stands at one corner of the Qutub complex.



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Iltutmish's Tomb

The Tomb of Shams-ud-din Iltutmish is remarkable on two counts – it has no dome and its decorative interior and entrances present a contrast to its otherwise mundane exterior. It is said to be built by Iltutmish himself in about 1235 AD. The tomb marks a phase in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture when the builder had ceased to depend for material obtained from the demolition of temples. Its square chamber has a cenotaph in its center, though the actual grave lies in the basement. The same technique had been applied earlier in the Tomb of Nasir-ud-din, Iltutmish's son and was followed by the latter Mogul rulers. It is believed that the Tomb of Iltutmish did have a dome, which fell down. It was replaced by Firoz Shah Tughlaq, but even that did not survive. There are three mehrabs to the west of the cenotaph; the one in the center is higher and decorated with marble. The inscriptions in Kufi and Naksh characters and geometrical arabesque patterns in Saracen tradition were carved on the entrances and in the interior. The ornate Arabic inscriptions on the western wall can still be seen. Several motifs among its carvings, like the wheel, bell and chain, tassel, lotus and diamond, are reminiscent of Hindu decoration, which has been described by Fergusson as 'one of the richest examples of Hindu art applied to Mohammedan purposes'.



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Ala-i-Darwaza

Ala-i-Darwaza, the first building in India to have fully employed the Islamic principals of accurate construction and geometric designs, is 'one of the most treasured gems' of Islamic architecture. It also reveals certain Saljuquin characteristics, like wide and bulging dome with a central knob, pointed horseshoe-shaped arches and lotus-bud fringes that can be traced in the Khilji Architecture. While extending the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in about 1311 AD, Ala-ud-din Khilji provided two gateways on its eastern side and one each on the north and south of the mosque. The last of these came to be known as the Ala-i-Darwaza. It is built of red sandstone and is square in shape (17.2 x 17.2 m) with arched openings on all sides. It is surmounted by a wide but shallow dome on an octagonal base. The northern arch is semicircular, while others are horseshoe-shaped. The underside of the arches is fringed with 'lotus bud' decorative that can be seen in the openings, as well as in the perforated side windows. Its excellent proportions, profuse geometrical carvings on the interior, inscriptional bands of the white marble in Nash characters and other decorative details in red stone make it a treat for the eye.



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Ala-i-Minar

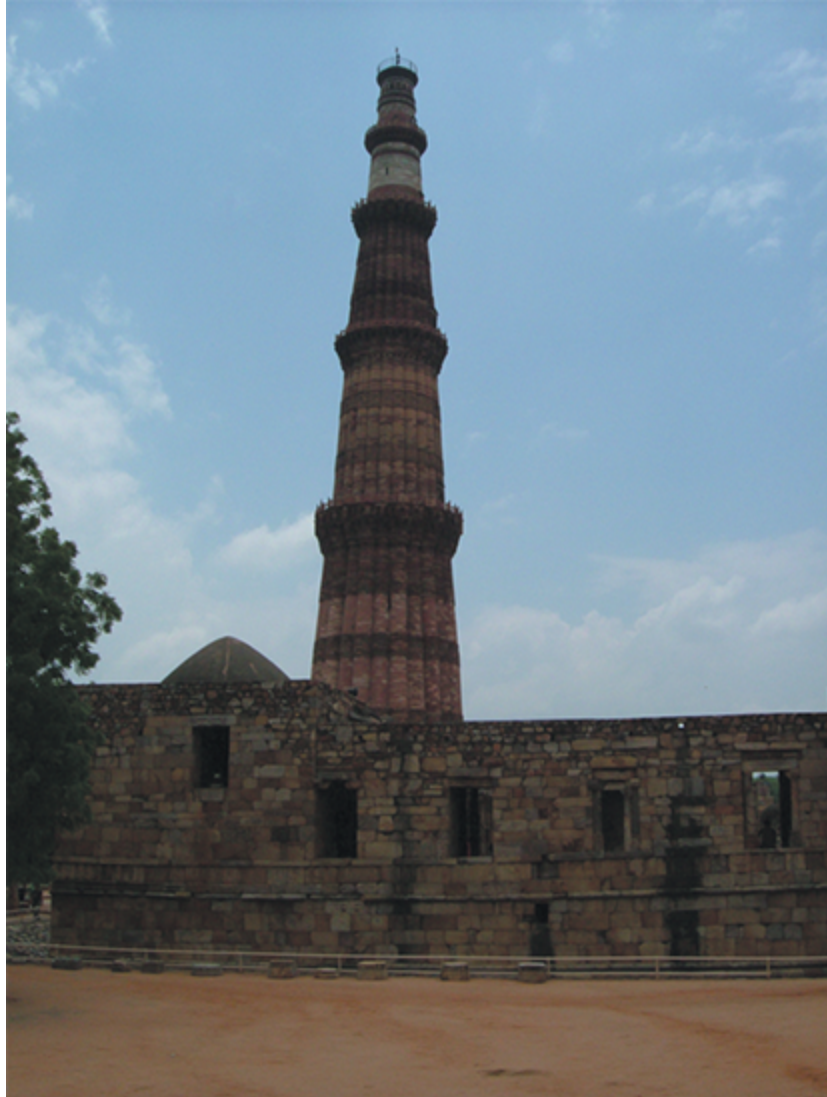
Inspired by the now world famed Qutub Minar, Ala-ud-din Khilji conceived a minar which was to be double the height. Ala-ud-din had extended the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and he wanted the new minar to complement it. Since he had doubled the size of the mosque, it is assumed that this new minar was also to be double the size of the Qutub Minar that complemented the earlier mosque. Amir Khusrou, an eminent poet of the times, singing its praise in anticipation said, 'The minar of stone, lustrous as glass, is made to support the roof of heaven that has become old and has worn out'. But hardly did the minar reach its first storey, when Ala-ud-din died leaving the structure as incomplete as his numerous other plans. Unfortunately, Ala-i-Minar found none like Iltutmish or Firoz Shah Tughlaq, who would complete it. In its unfinished state, it can best be remembered for its massiveness. With its extant height of 24.5 m, the Ala-i-Minar stands incomplete by the north of the Qutub Minar, its inspiration.



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Ala-ud-din's Tomb & Madarsa

Supposedly a Madarsa (School) to impart teaching in Islamic theology and scriptures, the L-shaped structure now stands in ruins. The building is built around a simple quadrangular court with a triple gateway to its north. The central room in the southern wing is said to be the tomb of Ala-ud-din Khilji, who is attributed with the establishment of this madarsa. The conception of a madarsa and tomb combined into one may have been inspired by the Suljuqian traditions, but the grave or even the funerary stone is conspicuously missing in this tomb. The so-called tomb is separated from the other rooms by narrow galleries on both its sides. Out of the seven rooms towards west, two have dome. If this indeed is a combined madarsa and tomb, it would be the first of its kind in India.



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Imam Zamin's Tomb

The tomb of Imam Zamin was constructed at least two hundred years after the Ala-i-Darwaza, by which it stands. Thus, it is the most recent addition to the Qutub complex. It is the only other tomb, besides that of Iltutmish, in this complex but it has no integral connection to the Qutub group of monuments. It was Mohammed Ali, a descendent in the line of Hassan and Hussain, who came to be known as Imam Zamin. He is said to have come from Turkestan at the time of Sikandar Lodi and occupied a place of importance in the Qwwat-ul-Islam mosque. According to an inscription on the entrance, he built the tomb in 1537-38 for himself and died a year after. The tomb is a square, formed by twelve pillars, and measures 7.3 meters in length and breadth. A sandstone dome surmounts the structure. It has red sandstone jali on its sides, other than the west and the south, which have a mehrab and the entrance respectively. The mehrab as well as the entrance are wrought in marble, which has also been used as a decorative relief in its interior. The tomb presents an example of a simple Lodi-style structure.



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Balban's Tomb

The tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban forms a part of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, an INTACH – Delhi Tourism initiative. The park lies to the west of Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road and the tomb is located just right of its entrance. The tomb occupies an important place in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture, as true arch and dome were constructed here for the first time. The 700 years of withering has left this structure in an extremely dilapidated state and one can see only the arches, whereas the dome has supposedly collapsed. What remains is a rubble-built square chamber with arched openings on all its four sides. The north façade of the building has an elegantly-shaped red stone, which gives relief to this otherwise rugged structure of stones from the local quarry. The tomb is divided into three sections, but surprisingly, the cenotaph of the Sultan does not occupy the central part of the structure, raising doubts about the occupant of the tomb; though the gateway leading to the tomb strongly suggests that this occupant must be a person of regal linkage. Since Balban died in 1287 and this structure belongs to the same period, the relationship between the two can not be ruled out. The cenotaph has Arabic verses inscribed on its upper end, whereas intricate Persian motifs adorn its base.



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Jamali Kamali's Tomb

Jamali alias Sheikh Fazal-ullah alias Hamid bin Fazl-ud-din, also known as Jalal Khan, was a saint and poet who lived from Sikandar Lodi's reign to that of Humayun. His tomb lies about 300 meters south of Balban's Tomb. There are two graves in the tomb. One of these is believed to be that of Jamali, whereas the other is said to be that of Kamali; though no one knows who this Kamali is. Some also believe that Jamali Kamali is the name of one single person and that Sheikh Fazal-ullah might have added a rhyming name to his popular nom-de-plume Jamali. It is apparent that the tomb was originally built to accommodate just one cenotaph. The other cenotaph could be a latter addition as it seems to have been sneaked besides the main cenotaph that occupies the central position. Its small chamber is flat-roofed, and its ceiling and walls are highly ornamented with colored tiles and patterns in incised and painted plaster. It also has inscribed verses composed by the Sheikh. The central and northern niches in the Western wall are decorated with Quranic inscriptions. There are several other graves besides the tomb. The farthest is that of a female and has a canopy over it. Interestingly, the tomb does not occupy the central position within the walled enclosure, suggesting thereby that the wall might have been raised latter to accommodate the other graves.



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Jamali Kamali's Mosque

A mosque associated with the name of Jamali-Kamali lies adjacent to the Jamali-Kamali tomb. It is believed that Saint Fazal-ullah lived and prayed here until his death in 1536. The mosque stands in an enclosed court that also houses a pond for ablution. Its prayer hall is intercepted by five arches, inclining towards a four-centered form and ornamented with carved bands and medallions in the spandrels. The central arch, higher than the others, is more profusely decorated. There are embellished niches in its western wall indicating the Qibla or the direction of Kaaba. The central and the northern niches have Quranic inscriptions. Two staircases at either end of the prayer-hall lead to the second storey. On the upper floor, there are three bay windows at the rear, one on the south and one just above the central arch. As in any oriel window, these too are projected and supported from below with a corbel. Above the main entrance, some original blue tiles still survive. Architecturally this elegant mosque marks the transition from the Moth-Masjid (1517) to the Sher Shah's Mosque (1541).



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Dilkhusha

The tomb of Muhammad Quli Khan, the brother of Adham Khan, a minister in the Mogul Emperor Akbar's court, is better known as Dilkhusha. Had it not been for Sir Thomas Metcalfe, the British Resident at the Delhi court during the last Moguls, the structure would have been one of the countless tombs scattered in the area. Sir Metcalfe bought it from the descendants of Quli Khan and converted this octagonal, large domed tomb into his country residence. He is said to have acquired the whole area, including the nearby Qutub complex and the Adham Khan's tomb to embrace it into his exquisite estate. He remodeled the Quli Khan's tomb and used its central portion as his dining room. The verandahs became his living room and bedrooms. It was Metcalfe who named the structure Dilkhusha or the one that pleases the heart. This could be reached by grand staircase with cascading water.

Around his country home, he laid out a garden with a lake for boating. He had a lovely driveway starting from the Jamali-Kamali Mosque and leading up to a Lodi period structure that he refashioned as his guest house.

Besides, he built a few stone pavilions with sloping roofs that were used as gatehouses. These gatehouses are among the first of the British architecture in Delhi.



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Adham Khan's Tomb

More popularly known as the Bhool-Bhulaiyan because of its labyrinth-like design, Adham Khan's Tomb consists of a domed octagonal chamber built in Lodi style. Adham Khan was a general in the Emperor Akbar's army and son of Maham Anga, a wet nurse of the Emperor. In 1562 he fell out with Ataga Khan, a noble in Akbar's court and husband of Ji Ji Anga, another wet nurse of the Emperor. Adham Khan murdered Ataga, whereupon Akbar ordered that the culprit be flung down from the ramparts of Agra Fort. He survived the fall and was flung down again. Although he died this time, but the furious Emperor, just to be sure, ordered that he be thrown a third time. His distress mother also soon passed away out of grief. This softened Akbar's attitude and he got a tomb built for both of them. The tomb is enclosed by an octagonal wall that has low bastions at each corner. A visitor to this place often loses his way amidst the several passages in the thickness of its walls. There is a verandah on each side of the chamber. Each of these verandahs is marked by three openings. The English representative in the Mogul court had bought this tomb together with that of his brother Quli Khan's to include the two in his estate.



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Hauz-i-Shamsi

Situated on the southern outskirts of Mehrauli, by the side of the main market, Hauz-i-Shamsi is a sacred tank around which lie several graves of Muslim saints. According to a popular belief the Prophet came to Sultan Shams-ud-din Iltutmish in a dream and asked him to excavate a tank at this place. The following morning Iltutmish visited this location and noticed an impression of one of the hoofs of the Prophet's horse here. He excavated the tank around the sacred mark and built a red sandstone domed pavilion near it in about 1230 AD. The pavilion rests on twelve pillars. Famous traveler Ibn Batua was struck by the vastness of this tank. According to him, a red sandstone pavilion was at the centre of the tank and could be reached only by boat when the tank was full. It is assumed that this is the same structure that now rests at the south-west corner of the tank. How it moved to its present position is not known. The tank was fed by rainwater. A jharna or a spring takes care of the overflow from the tank. Phool Walon Ki Sair, a festival of the flower vendors, begins from this jharna.



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Jahaz Mahal

The Jahaz Mahal, as the name suggests, is a ship-shaped structure on the north-east corner of Hauz-i-Shamsi. It consists of a rectangular courtyard in the center and arched chambers on its sides. It was perhaps built as a retreat for the emperor during the summer months. Though now in ruins, it must have its period of glory once, as a beautiful garden with cascades and fountains built next to it suggest. According to some, it served as a resort for pilgrims. Pilgrims from as far as Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Arabia and Afghanistan would stay here on their visit to the numerous Muslim shrines in and around Delhi. A mehrab in the western wall of the building suggests that part of it was intended as a mosque. There are several designs of squelches in its chambers. Its corners are surmounted by square chhatris, and the gateway by a domed pavilion ornamented with blue tiles. At present, the main function of Phulwalon-ki-Sair is held here. Jahaz Mahal is located near the dargah of Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, better known as Qutub Sahib, and indeed appears like a Jahaz (ship) by the side of a vast lake.



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Sultan Garhi's Tomb

Sultan Ghari's Tomb is unusual in the sense that it looks more like a fortress, than a tomb. This uniqueness has given the structure its name 'Sultan Garhi' or the 'Fortress of the Sultan'. Built in 1231 AD, it is one of the first examples of a monumental Muslim tomb in India. Sultan Iltutmish built it over the remains of his eldest son and heir-apparent prince Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. The prince had waged several wars on his father's behalf and had died in 1229 at Lakhnauti. The monument exemplifies the same phase in tomb-architecture, as we find in the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. Colonnades on the east and west and plain walls on the other two sides, with domed bastions on the corners, give the monument the appearance of a small fortress. The corridors probably served as a prayer-chamber. A marble yoni-patta (base slab for a linga) has been re-used in the floor of this prayer-chamber. The exterior of the tomb-chamber is faced with marble stones over an earlier grey sandstone veneer, and appears to have been the work of Firoz Shah (1351-88), who mentions having carried out certain repairs here. Recently some sculptured lintels and an upright stone of a railing from some temple have been discovered embedded in the thickness of the roof concrete, suggesting that a temple existed here in the seventh or eighth century.



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Tughlaqabad Fort

The colossal Tughlaqabad Fort, though in an advanced state of ruin, represents the might of the Tughlaq dynasty. The massive ramparts, the hulking battlements and the mammoth stonework of this fort speak highly of the engineering skills of the times. The fort was a part of the dream project of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq as he built his capital at Tughlaqabad, the third city of Delhi. The fort stands on a rocky hill, about 8 kms from the Qutub-Minar on the Qutub-Badarpur Road. It is roughly octagonal on plan with a perimeter of 6.5 kms. Its 10 to 15 meters high rubble-built walls are provided with bastions and gates at intervals. On its south was a waste reservoir created by cresting bunds between hills to its east. A causeway connected the fort with the tomb that Ghias-ud-din had built for himself. A wide embankment near its south-eastern corner gave access to the fortress of Adilabad. Tughluqabad was divided mainly into three portions. A rectangular area with high walls and bastions served as the citadel. An area immediately to its west, similarly bounded by rubble walls and bastions, housed the palaces. Beyond this to the north lay the city, now marked by ruins of houses. Streets in the city, some of which can be traced even now, ran in a grid-pattern from gates on one side to those on the opposite side.



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Ghiyas-ud-din's Tomb

Ghiyas-ud-din's Tomb looks like a small fortress. It was built by Ghiyas-ud-din himself and had a mausoleum enclosed within its high battered pentagonal stonewalls, strengthened with bastions. The style of the tomb conforms to the Indo-Islamic style of architecture, which was in vogue at that time and was the hallmark of the buildings belonging to the period of the Delhi Sultanate. Originally it stood within a vast reservoir and was connected with the Tughluqabad Fort by a causeway. The entrance to the tomb enclosure is through a high and massive gateway of red sandstone, approached by flight of steps. The mausoleum is about 8 sq meters, with sloping walls of red sandstone crowned with battlements and is surmounted by a white marble dome raised on an octagonal drum. A string-course, inscribed panels, arch borders and perforated screens in tympana, together with its 'lotus-bud' fringes break the monotony of the red sandstone and lend it a decorative effect. There are three graves inside, the central one is of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq and the other two are believed to be those of his wife and his son and successor, Muhammad bin Tughluq.



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[Khirki Masjid](#)

The Khirki Mosque would beat any Mogul monument in its symmetry. It has a unique design for a mosque. Located on the southern periphery of the Khirki village, this double-storied mosque is built of rubble stone and is thickly plastered. It has a series of basement cells on the lower storey. Above it, the pillared courtyard is divided into twenty-five squares, five on each side. Each such square is further divided into nine smaller squares. This arrangement constitutes a regular grid of 15 bays on each side. The outside and central sets of three bays in each direction are covered with roof, whereas the remaining are left uncovered to admit light. Additionally, it is provided with windows (khirki) for the same purpose. This is only the second instance of a covered mosque in Northern India, the other being the Kali Mosque in Nizam-ud-din. From outside, the mosque seems to be a fortress with projecting entrances on three sides, except on the west and battered bastions on all its four corners. The mosque was built by Khan-e-Jahan Juman Shah, the Prime Minister of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, who also built six other mosques including the Kali Mosque.



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Hauz Khas

Ala-ud-din Khilji had excavated a large tank for the use of the inhabitants of Siri, a city founded by him. He called the tank Hauz-i-Alai. He even built a two-storied pavilion in its midst that was perhaps meant as a pleasure spot. This pavilion, known as the Munda Gumbad, now stands on one side of the tank, suggesting that the tank has perhaps shrunk in size. In fact, Feroz Shah Tughlaq is said to have desilted the tank and repaired its embankments. The tank must have fascinated Firoz Shah Tughluq, as he gave special attention to it and built several buildings, including a tomb for himself, along its banks. Due to the special focus it got during the reign of Firoz Shah, it came to be known as the Hauz Khas or the Special Tank. When Timur attacked India in 1398, he had camped here with his army.



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Firoz Shah Tughluq's Tomb and Madarsa

The tomb of Firoz Shah is a square chamber with high but slightly battered walls capped by a lofty dome. The otherwise monotonous austere look of its exterior is broken by a string-course of red sandstone and marble. It has carved battlements along the dome. The tomb has a door on the south, with a courtyard enclosed within stone railings outside it. The ceiling of the dome and squelches pedantries are decorated with plaster work, including incised Quranic inscriptions in Naksh characters and paintings. The inscription over the southern doorway was incised in 1507 AD during Sikandar Lodi reign, when he undertook some repairs to the tomb. The doorway spanned by a lintel and the stone-railings outside it are features of early Indian construction, which have been pleasantly mingled with characteristics of Islamic architecture. Among the four graves inside the chamber, the central one is believed to be that of Firoz Shah and other two of his son and grandson. Rising from the banks of the Hauz Khas is an L-shaped building with the Tomb of Feroz Shah as its center piece. Firoz Shah had built it in about 1352 as a Madarsa or an institution for religious training. At the northern extremity of this L-shaped building is a mosque.





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Central Delhi

The Central Delhi covers the cities of Firozabad and Deenpanah or the Shergarh while encompassing the Nizamuddin area. The area houses one of the most spectacular monuments in the National Capital, namely the Humayun's Tomb. The Dargah of Nizamuddin Aulia, one of the most reverend places, is also a part of Central Delhi. There are about a dozen remarkable monuments spread in between Humayun's Tomb and the Dargah. One of the most well-groomed parks in Delhi, the Lodhi Garden is also located here and has four tombs of the Lodhi Sultans.

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Humayun Tomb

Humayun's Tomb can rightly be termed as the 'Taj Mahal of Red Sandstones'. It is a lofty mausoleum rising amidst a typical Mogul garden. Though predominantly built with red sandstone, white and black marble have also been used in its construction. It is the first significant model of the Mogul architecture, with high arches and double dome. It is also the first mature example of a tomb-within-a-garden, an idea, which blossomed in the form of the Taj-Mahal at Agra. The Taj Mahal was built by Badshah Shah Jahan for his beloved wife Mumtaz, whereas the Humayun Tomb was built for Badshah Humayun by his devoted wife Bega Begum. So, if the Taj Mahal is 'the fruit of love', then the Humayun Tomb is certainly 'the fruit of devotion'. Several rulers of the Mogul dynasty lie buried in the mausoleum, although it is not possible to identify their graves. Among those lying buried here are Bega Begam, Hamida Banu Begam (Humayun's junior wife), Dara Shikoh (Shah Jahan's eldest son) and the later Moguls Jahandar Shah, Farrukhsiyar, Rafi-ud-Darajat, Rafi-uddaula and Alamgir II. Bahadur Shah II, the last Mogul emperor of Delhi, had taken shelter in this tomb with the three princes during the First War of Independence and was captured from here by Lieutenant Hudson.



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Arab Ki Sarai

The Arab Ki Sarai consists of a large enclosure adjoining the south-western corner of Humayun's tomb. It is divided into two quadrangles by series of cells provided with a gateway in the centre. The western enclosure has now been occupied by the Industrial Training Institute. Immediately outside its lofty eastern entrance approached by a gateway from the east, with traces of paintings on its underside, is the second quadrangle, originally bounded by arched cells, which is known as the mandi (market) and was added by Mihr Banu Agha, chief eunuch of Jahangir. The northern gate of the Arab-Sarai lies immediately to the right of the eastern gate of Bu-Halima's Garden. It is said that the Arab-Sarai was built by Bega Begam for three hundred Arab mullas, or priests, whom she had brought from Mecca. It is, however, suspected by some that the Arab-Sarai might possibly be a misnomer, and the enclosure probably housed Persian, and not Arab, workers and craftsmen who were engaged in building the Humayun's tomb.



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Afsarwala Tomb & Mosque

Within the eastern enclosure of the Arab-Sarai lies a mosque on a raised platform. Its prayer-chamber is faced by three arched openings, the central bay being surmounted by a dome. In alignment with the mosque to its north is a long dilapidated hall with arched openings. At the southeastern corner of the mosque on the same raised platform stands an octagonal tomb with double dome. The tomb and the mosque go under the name of Afsarwala. Translated in English, Afsarwala means 'of an Officer'. Yet, it is doubtful that the name would have come from English as the first trait of the English in India can be traced not earlier than 1583, when Queen Elizabeth I dispatched the ship Tyger to the Indian sub-continent to exploit opportunities for trade; whereas, both the mosque and the tomb have been built much earlier. One of the graves inside the tomb bears the figures 974, which may refer to Hijra year corresponding to 1566-67. Moreover, the identity of 'the officer' who raised these buildings is not known.



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Isa Khan's Tomb

Isa Khan's Tomb stands immediately to the south of Bu-Halima's Garden. Isa Khan was a nobleman at the courts of Sher Shah Sur and his son Islam Shah. The tomb consists of an octagonal garden enclosure, with entrance on the north in the centre of which lies the mausoleum, as in Mubarak Shah Tomb. With a central octagonal chamber surrounded by verandahs, each side pierced by three arches, the mausoleum rises from a low plinth and is surrounded by a dwarf wall. Above the arches runs a Chhajja and each of the side is surmounted on the roof by a domed chhatra, with the central dome rising above a thirty-two-sided drum. The sides of the chamber are closed by perforated stone slabs except on the west and south. The western side contains a mehrab on the interior while the southern side forms the main entrance. It follows thus the typical pattern of the octagonal tombs of the Lodi times. There is an inscription over the mehrab mentioning the date of 954 A.H (1547-48).



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Hazrat Nizam-ud-din's Dargah

Hazrat Nizam-ud-din's Dargah is supposedly the second most sacred shrine in India. Situated in the midst of Nizam-ud-din village, it consists of a square chamber surrounded by verandahs, which are pierced by arched openings, while its roof is surmounted by a dome springing from an octagonal drum. The dome is ornamented by vertical stripes of black marble and is crowned by a lotus cresting. Sheikh Nizam-ud-din was born at Budaun in 1236. He lost his father at the age of five and came to Delhi with his mother. Later he became the disciple of the famous saint Sheikh Farid Shakarganj, who appointed him as his successor. Although he never flinched in the face of authority, many rulers including Ala-ud-din Khilji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq were devoted to him. He prophesied that Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, who was then in Bengal, would never see Delhi again and his prophecy came true, as the Sultan died in an accident some 6 kilometers south of Delhi. Hazrat Nizam-ud-din died in 1325. His original tomb does not exist any longer. It was repaired and decorated by Firoz Shah Tughlaq, but even the repaired building has disappeared. The present structure was built in 1562-63 by Faridun Khan, a noble in Akbar's court. The area around the tomb is regarded as sacred, with the result that a large number of persons, including those from the royalty, lie buried here.



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Kalan Masjid

Kalan or Kali Masjid is one of the seven mosques said to have been built by Khan-i-Jahan Junan Shah, the Prime Minister of Firoz Shah Tughluq. Kalan, in Arabic, means large. Kalan Masjid is a double-storeyed mosque built of common quartzite sandstone. With a basement faced by series of double apartments, the courtyard of the mosque is enclosed within domed arcaded cloisters and is reached by a high flight of steps, thirty in all. Its prayer-chamber is three-aisle deep, and pierced by five openings. Each bay is surmounted by low dome. There are fifteen such domes. Among the four graves in its courtyard, two are said to be those of the builder and his father. An inscription over its eastern entrance states that the mosque was built in 1387 by Junan Shah Maqbul, entitled Khan-i-Jahan, son of Khan-i-Jahan.



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Ataga Khan's Tomb

Ataga Khan's Tomb is the funerary monument of Ataga Khan, father of Mirza Aziz Kokaltash and a noble in the court of Emperor Akbar. He had been rewarded for his loyalty towards the royalty as he had helped Akbar's father Humayun flee Delhi after his loss at the hands of Afghan chief Sher Shah. This small tomb is built of red sandstone and beautifully decorated with colored tiles and marble inlays. It measures merely 6 square meters. On all its four sides are deeply recessed arches containing openings, whereas its interior is ornamented with painted plaster that has now largely peeled off. Colored tiles are also fixed on the western wall of its enclosure. Its striking beauty is now marred by years of neglect, but looking at it even today, one can easily assess that it must be one of the most beautiful mausoleums of its times. Ataga Khan was the husband of Ji Ji Anga, a wet nurse of Akbar. Jealous of the importance that Ataga Khan begot from the Badshah, in 1562, he was killed by Adham Khan, son of Maham Anga, another wet nurse of Akbar. The tomb was built by Ataga's son Mirza Aziz Kokaltash. An inscription on the southern door of the tomb mentions that it was finished in 1566-67 AD.



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Chausath Khambha

Chaunsath-Khamba or 'Sixty Four Pillars' is one amongst Delhi's several unusual tombs. As its very name suggests, here sixty-four pillars stand magnificently atop a raised platform, supporting the roof. The monument is housed inside a large yard that is now used as assemblies. Although the premises contains several graves, yet this large square marble tomb is better known as the resting place of Mirza Aziz Kokaltash, son of emperor Akbar's wet nurse Ji Ji Anga and Ataga Khan, a noble in the emperor's court. The main grave is inscribed and bears the date 1033 A.H. (1623-24), during the reigns of Badshah Jahangir. It is believed to have been originally built as a hall that was later converted into a tomb. This belief originates from the fact that unlike most funerary monuments of its age, it does not have a dome. It is surrounded by an enclosure wall, but is sited within the raised western half of the enclosure.



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Khan-i-Khanan Tomb

The tomb of Abdur-Rahim, who was conferred the title of Khan-i-Khanan, lies on the east of Mathura Road opposite Nizam-ud-din Railway Station. Abdur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan was a blessed poet and one of the nine gems in the court of Badshah Akbar. The tomb is a massive square edifice rising from a high platform faced by arched cells. It is a double-storied monument, with a high deeply recessed central arch on each side and several shallow arches on the flanks in each storey. Though it stands depleted today, it may once have been a magnificent structure on the pattern of Humayun's tomb. It even had its own garden. The interior of the tomb is decorated with incised and painted plaster with beautiful designs. Especially on the ceiling, around the central double dome are disposed chhatris at the corners and dalans, or open halls, in the middle of the sides. Some of the red sandstone, marble and other stones, which faced it originally, are said to have been removed and used in Safdar Jang's Tomb.



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Purana-Quila

The Purana Quila is an excellent example of medieval military architecture. It is a monument of bold design, which is strong, straight-forward and a fortress in its true sense. It is irregularly oblong on plan with its ramparts covering a perimeter of nearly two kilometers. It has bastions at the corners and along the western wall. It is very different from the well planned, carefully decorated and palatial forts of the later Mogul rulers as it does not consist of a complex of palaces, administrative and recreational buildings. All it houses are some banal buildings, a mosque, a hammam or bath and an unusual structure by the name of Sher Mandal. Humayun had founded his city Dinpanah at this site. Sher Shah Sur demolished it after he conquered Delhi and on the same site raised this citadel, which he called the Shergarh. Unfortunately, he too could not finish it and Humayun came back to power. Now it was left on him to complete it. The fort once stood on the bank of the river Yamuna, which has since changed its path. The general depression on the northern and western sides of the fortress suggests that a wide moat connected with the river may have existed on these sides. Later when Shah Jahan built his famous Red Fort, this fort went into oblivion and came to be referred to as the Purana Quila or the Old Fort.



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Quila-i-Kuhna Masjid

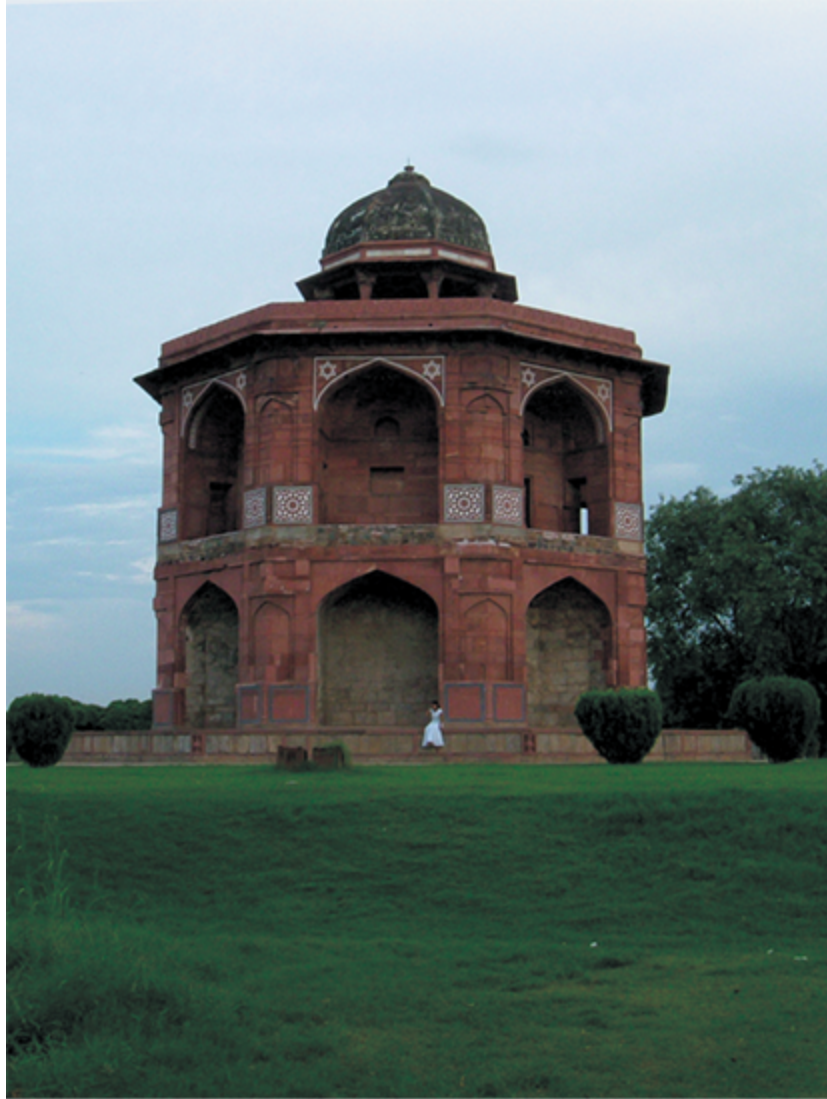
Among the few buildings still extant within the Purana Quila is the Quila-i-Kuhna Masjid or the 'Mosque in a corner of the Fort'. It was built by Sher Shah in 1541 and hence is also known as the Sher Shah Masjid. Its prayer-hall measures 51.20 meters in length and 14.90 meters in breadth. It has five openings with horseshoe-shaped arches with the central arch being higher than the others. The recessed surface of the arch is beautifully decorated with inlay of marble and other stones and contains a small oriel window at its top. The two arches on either side are similarly treated but with less of ornamentation. In the arches at the ends, plain gray stone has been used instead of the red stone. The mehrabs inside the hall are richly decorated with concentric arches. The central bay of the hall is surmounted by a beautiful dome. This mosque occupies an important position in the development of the mosque architecture in India, as it exemplifies the transition from the Lodi to the Mogul style.



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Sher Mandal

To the south of the Quila-i-Kuhna Masjid is a double-storied octagonal tower of red sandstone. It is one of the most unusual buildings and even its purpose is not very certain. It is said to have been built by Sher Shah as a pleasure resort; but once Humayun came back to power, he used it as his library or perhaps as an observatory. The structure has an octagonal pavilion or chhatri on its top. There is a recessed arch on each of its sides. The central chamber is cross-shaped with recesses on the four sides. The dados of its interior are decorated with glazed tiles, while the upper portion contains incised and painted plaster-work. It is believed that Humayun fell down from its steps and fractured his skull, which resulted in his untimely death.



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Khair-ul Manzil Masjid

In front of the Purana-Quila on the other side of the Mathura Road stands an imposing gateway of red sandstone that unfailingly draws attention of the passers-by. Veiled behind it is a rubble-built structure, called the Khair-ul Manzil (meaning, the most auspicious of houses). It is a mosque with five arched openings in its prayer-hall. The central bay of the prayer-hall has a dome over it. Originally the facade of the prayer-hall is said to have been profusely decorated with enameled tiles. The double-storied corridors were probably used as a madrasa. According to an inscription over the central arch of the prayer-hall, it was built by Maham Anga, with the assistance of Shihab-ud-din Ahmad Khan in 1561. Maham Anga was one of the wet nurses of Akbar, who held considerable influence over him, whereas Shihab-ud-din Ahmad Khan was her relation and a powerful courtier, who held the position of the Governor of Delhi at one time.



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Kotla Firoz Shah

Firoz Shah built a new capital city on the banks of the Yamuna and called it Kotla Firoz Shah. He thereby abandoned Jahapanah, the capital city founded by his predecessor Mohammed bin Tughlaq. Apart from the desire of the new Sultan to make his mark, this decision could also have been prompted by an increasingly irregular water supply at the former capital. Moving the capital city away from the Aravali also meant that security of the city was not a major concern any more and the Sultan could devote himself to developmental activities. The fort itself was fairly straight forward in which common-sense building principles had been used. The king's quarters, as well as those of his wives and mistresses, were situated along the river-front. Within the perimeter walls of the fort were structures serving as barracks, armories, rooms for servants, halls for audience, an imposing mosque, as well as public and private baths, a stepped well or baoli, and an Ashokan Pillar mounted on top of a pyramidal three-tiered construction. Perhaps this served as an icon of the Sultan's supremacy in North India, very much like the Gupta Iron Pillar in the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque at the Qutub Complex.



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Jami Masjid

Among the few surviving buildings inside the citadel is the Jami Masjid, ascended by a gateway on the north. It is perched on a series of cells on the ground floor. The cloisters on the sides on its courtyard and its prayer-hall have all disappeared. Only a rear wall has confronted the withering to some extent. The Jami Masjid was one of the largest mosques in the Tughluq times. Timur the Lame mentions having visited it to say his prayers. He was so impressed by its architecture that he took artisans all the way to Samarkand with him to build a mosque similar to this.



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Mohammed Shah's Tomb

Set within the Lodi Gardens is the tomb of Mohammed Shah, the third ruler of the Sayyid dynasty. In fact the garden is a much later development. Had it not been for the landscape designer-duo of JA Stein and Garrett Eckbo, the tombs of the Lodi and the Sayyid Sultans would have been a picture of neglect. The Lodis had shifted their capital city to Agra, but were using Delhi as their burial place. As a result, the city is strewn with tombs and chhatris all around. So, the Tomb of Mohammed Shah was not set within the garden, but the garden was set around it and numerous other monuments of the same era. It is an octagonal tomb with a central chamber and verandahs surrounding it. Each of its side is intercepted by three arched openings, whereas a sloping buttress occupies each angle of the structure. A large dome rises above the 16-sided drum. There are eight graves inside. The one at the centre is believed to be that of Sultan Mohammed Shah, whereas there is no clue about the rest.



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Sikandar Lodi's Tomb

The tomb of Sikandar Lodi, located on the north-western corner of the Lodi Gardens, is again an octagonal tomb with a central chamber surrounded by a verandah. Each of its sides is pierced by three arches and the angles are occupied by sloping buttresses. What differentiates it from the Mohammed Shah Sayyid's Tomb is the surrounding garden enclosed within high walls. It also has a wall-mosque on the west and an imposing gateway on its south, which give it a dignified setting.



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Bara Gumbad

There is a group of three buildings in the midst of Lodi Gardens with a square building taking the centre stage. The structure has an imposing full dome that gives it the name of Bara Gumbad or the building with a large dome. It has turrets on corners and facades possessing a semblance of being double-storied. On the interior, it is ornamented with stucco work and painting, while on the outside the monotony of grey stone is relieved by the use of red and black stones. It is supposedly a tomb, but identity of the person buried in it is not known. The tomb is flanked by a mosque on the west and a 'Mehman-Khana' or guesthouse on its east. The mosque is profusely ornamented with colored tiles and with foliage and Quranic inscriptions wrought in incised and painted plaster.



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Sheesh Gumbad

Close to the Bara Gumbad lies the Shish-Gumbad. Originally, the tomb is said to have been richly decorated with blue tiles giving it its name Sheesh Gumbad or the 'Glazed Dome'. Its western wall contains a mihrab, which perhaps served as a mosque, but the other sides have a central entrance set in a projecting frame. The mihrab-projection at the rear and the portion of walls below the stringcourse are built with alternating narrow and wide courses of stones.



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Safdarjung Tomb

What had begun with the Humayun Tomb saw its end with the Safdar Jung Tomb. The Tomb of Mirza Muquim Abul Mansoor Khan, entitled Safdar Jung, is the last example of the tomb-within-a-garden layout in Delhi, a landscaped architectural plan initiated and perfected by the Moguls. Safdar Jung was the viceroy of Oudh under Mohammed Shah, who later became his Prime Minister. After his death in 1754, his son Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah got the tomb erected. The landscape follows the Char-bagh pattern of the Mogul Gardens. The garden-tomb is approached through the double-storied gateway on the east. This gateway consists of several apartments, a courtyard and a mosque, while the Moti Mahal, Badshah Pasand and Jangli Mahal constitute its other sides. The double-storied mausoleum is set at the center of the garden on a raised platform. It is built of red and buff stones, relieved by marble. The central chamber of the mausoleum is square, while the apartments around it are either octagonal or rectangular. Only one cenotaph occupies the central chamber, whereas the underneath chamber has two graves. One of these is of course the grave of Safdar Jung and the other presumably of his wife. The structure is capped by a fairly large dome rising from a 16-sided drum. Polygonal towers with marble inlay and covered by chhatris dot on the four corners.





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[North Delhi](#)

The North Delhi is basically the Shahjahanabad of yore. It houses the famous Lal Quila or the Red Fort. If the modern Parliament building is the seat of power, the medieval Red Fort is the mascot of that power. Come Independence Day and the Prime Minister unfurls the national Tricolor from the rampart of Red Fort. Though a part of the Red Fort complex is turned into an army cantonment, the various palatial buildings contained within the area accessible to the general tourists remains the centre of attraction.

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Lal Quila

If Qutub Minar is the icon of Delhi, the Lal Quila or the Red Fort is its face. It truly represents the grandeur that the seat of power should hold. What if it has lost its authority to the empirical Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House), it still commands the same honour as the nation watches the Prime Minister unfurl the Tri-color from its ramparts. The Lal Quila is called so because of red sandstone that constitutes its building material. It once stood on the banks of the river Yamuna, which has since drifted away. The fort is an irregular octagon and is surrounded by a wall of about 2.4 kilometers in circumference. Typically, the height of its wall is 18 meters on the side of the river and almost double towards the city. Badshah Shah Jahan, after shifting his capital from Agra to Shahjahanabad, started the construction of this massive fort in the north-east corner of the new city. The work continued for almost nine years and was completed in 1648. The fort has all the obvious fixtures, befitting the citadel of Mogul Government: courts for the general public and the distinguished guests, domed and arched marble palaces, plush private apartments, bath and a mosque. It is laid out in elaborately designed gardens, for which the Moguls are so well known.



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Naqqar Khana

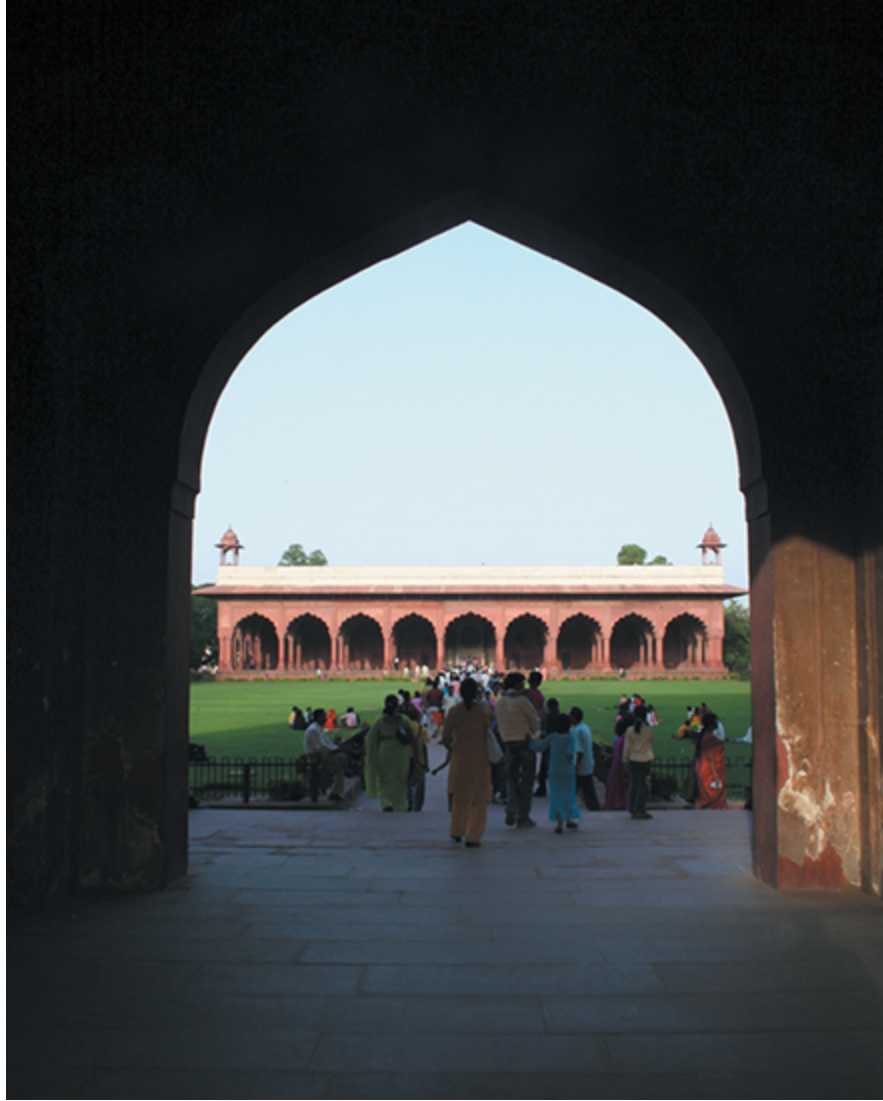
The Naqqar-Khana, or the Drum House, stands at the entrance of the palace area. As the name suggests, it was used for playing music. Musicians played from here five or six times a day at propitious hours. The drums were also played to mark the entrance of the Badshah. The visitors were expected to dismount from their elephants here in respect of the Badshah. The visitors were supposed to leave their elephants or any other carriage here and hence it also was called the Hathipole. Naqqar Khana is a three-storied building, and is rectangular on plan. Carved designs on its red stone walls appear to have been originally painted with gold, while the interior was painted in other colors. Several layers of these paintings can be traced even now in the entrance chamber. The later Mogul kings Jahandar Shah and Farrukhsiyar are said to have been murdered in the Naubat Khana. The first floor houses the Office of the Archaeological Survey of India, whereas the War Memorial Museum is housed in its upper most storey.



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Diwan-e-Am

The Diwan-e-Am or the Hall of Public Audience was the place where the Badshah held his court for the general public, listened to their woes and disposed off the cases then and there. The hall is raised on a platform and is three-bays in depth. It has an impressive facade of nine openings of engrailed arches. At its back stands a marble canopy that is covered by 'Bengal roof', under which was kept the Badshah's throne. He would enter from the door just behind. At the back of the canopy the wall is faced with beautiful panels inlaid with multicolored stones, representing flowers and birds. These panels are said to have been executed by Austin be Bordeaux, a Florentine Jeweler. In the central panel on the top is shown the Greek god Orpheus with his flute. The panels were much damaged and at one time removed to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, but were restored in 1903 at the instance of Lord Curzon. Remarkably, Diwan-e-Am is open from three sides and closed on the back, signifying that although the general public could walk in freely up to this point, they could not go farther, which was the exclusive domain of the royalty.



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Hayat Baksh Bagh

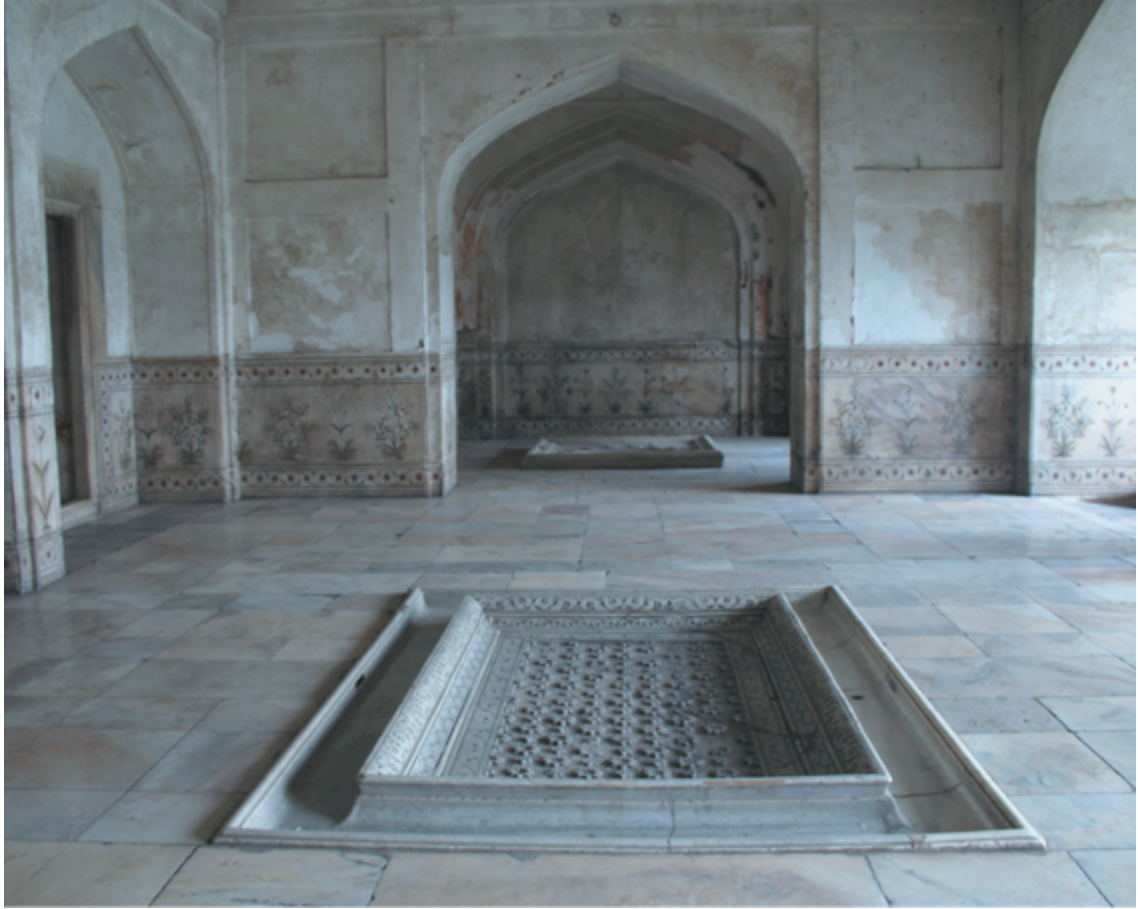
Hayat Baksh Bagh, or the Garden that bequeaths Life, is a typical Mogul Garden. Divided into squares, it has causeways and the channels running between them as in any other Mogul Garden. It also has towers on its north-eastern and the south-eastern corners that are known by the names of Shah-Burj and Asad Burj respectively. The Shah Burz had lost its dome during the War of Independence in 1857. The water for feeding the Nahar-i-Bihist, or the Stream of Paradise, was lifted up to the Shah-Burj from the river and then carried by channels to the various palaces. In the center of the garden is large tank with a red sand-stone pavilion built in its middle. This pavilion was built by Bahadur Shah II and is thus known as the Zafar Mahal. It is flanked by two marble pavilions, known as Sawan and Bhadon, the two monsoon months of the Hindu calendar. The one on the north is provided with a tank with niches for candles in its sides, so that the water cascading over them would create a picturesque effect. On the elevated strip of land along the eastern wall once stood two small marble pavilions built by Bahadur Shah Zafar. The northern, known as Moti Mahal was removed after the War of Independence in 1857; the southern one called Hira Mahal still stands there.



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Hamмам

On the south of the Hira Mahal lies the Hammam or the bath of the royalty. It consists of three apartments separated by corridors. The floors and dados of this apartment are built with marble, inlaid with floral patterns of multicolored stones. The two rooms on the either side of the present entrance were supposedly used by the royal children for their bath. The eastern apartment, with three fountain basins, one of which is reputed to have emitted rose water, is said to be used mainly as the dressing room. There is a basin in the middle of the central room. The western apartment is said to be used for hot or vapor bath. It is rather unusual that the bath be built farther from the living quarters and by the side of the hall where the Badshah met his distinguished guests. Perhaps it was located thus to get the fresh water from the Nahar-e-Bhisht; but then why would the unsanitary water from this bath be allowed to pass through a series of palatial buildings raises doubts about the usage of this so-called bath.



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Diwan-e-Khas

Immediately to the south of the Hammam lies the Diwan-e-Khas or the 'Hall of the Distinguished'. The hall was used by the emperor for giving private audience to the selected courtiers and visitors. It has openings of engrailed arches on its sides consists of rectangular central chamber surrounded by aisles of arches rising from piers. The lower parts of these piers are inlaid with floral designs, while the upper portion are glazed and painted. The present wooden ceiling of the hall was painted much later, in 1911. The four corners of its roof are surmounted by pillared Chhatris. Over the marble pedestal in its center stood the famous Peacock Throne, which was removed in 1739 by Nadir Shah. Through the center of the hall flowed the Nahar-e-Bihisht. It is here that the famous verse of Amir Khusraw is inscribed,

Agar firdaus bar ru-e zamin ast Hami ast o-hami ast o-hami ast.

This means,

'A paradise on earth is ever if,

Here it is, here it is, here it is'

With the water of river Yamuna lapping at its base, cool breeze rising from the water-bed taking the palaces in its embrace, with prosperity all round and luxury abound, could the paradise be far away? Originally there existed on the west of the Diwan-e-Khas two enclosures, one for the nobles and the other for the lowly ranked officers. These enclosures were removed after the War of Independence in 1857. After the War had been crushed, Bahadur Shah II was tried in this very Diwan-e-Khas, the venue where he used to hold his court once.



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Khas Mahal

The Khas Mahal was the private portion of the royalty. It consists of three parts. The set of three rooms facing the Diwan-e-Khas is called Tasbih-Khana and was used for worship by the Badshah. The three rooms behind it are known as Khwabgah (sleeping chamber). To its south is the Tosh Khana (robe chamber). It is a long hall with its painted walls and ceiling and a perforated screen on the west. There is a beautiful marble screen at northern end of these rooms carved with a 'Scale of Justice' suspended over a crescent surrounded with stars and clouds. There is an inscription over the southern arch of the Khwabgah, from which we learn that the building was begun in 1048 A.H. (1639) and completed in 1058 A.H (1648) at a cost of 50 lacs of rupees. This could be a reference to the total expenditure incurred on all the palaces.



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Muthamman Burz

Adjoining the eastern wall of the Khwabgah is a semi-octagonal tower, called Muthamman-Burj. Here the Badshah appeared every morning before his subjects to give them 'darshan'. A balcony projecting from the central side of the burj was constructed in 1223 A.H. (1808-09) by Akbar II, as stated by him in an inscription over its arches. It was from this balcony that King George V and Queen Mary appeared before the public in 1911 AD.



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Rang Mahal

Rang Mahal has wrongly been translated as 'Palace of Colors'. In this context, the word 'Rang' does not mean 'color', but refers to 'joy'. Thus the 'Rang Mahal' is the 'Palace of Joy' used exclusively for the entertainment of the Badshah, his family and guests. It is set on a basement and is divided into six apartments by engrailed arches. The two apartments on its northern and southern ends contain marble dados. Over the walls and ceilings of these apartments are embedded tiny pieces of the mirror, because of which these are known as Shish Mahal or the House of Mirrors. The building was part of the imperial seraglio through which flowed the Nahar-e-Bihisht. A marble basin, which is said to have been provided originally with an ivory fountain, also stands at the centre. There is a large fountain in front of the Rang Mahal, behind which is the Diwan-e-Am. The back of the Diwan-e-Am also serves as a curtain to the out-side world populated by the common and the ordinary.



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Moti Masjid

To the west of the Hammam lies the small mosque called the Moti-Masjid or the Pearl Mosque. It was built by Aurangzeb for his exclusive use. The prayer hall of the mosque is inlaid within outlines of musallas (small carpets for prayers) in black marble, and it stands at a higher level than the courtyard. The hall is surmounted by three bulbous domes, originally copper-plated, which appear to be too constricted at the neck. The eastern door is provided with copper plates leaves. The ladies of seraglio also used the mosque. This Masjid is quite in contrast to the Juma Masjid, built by Badshah Shah Jahan, in its structure. The contrast can also be seen in the approach of the two. Whereas Shah Jahan would go to the Juma Masjid, to be with the masses, with much fanfare; Aurangzeb chose to be away from any such display and preferred solitude.



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Mumtaz Mahal

The Mumtaz Mahal is at the southern end of the extant row of palaces. It is one amongst the series of six palaces built along the river front and formed a part of the royal seraglio. The Nahar-e-Bihisht also flowed through it as in any other palace. Though now it stands isolated, and has undergone much alteration. Originally it consisted of six apartments divided by arched piers, which were painted on the interior. It now houses the Delhi Museum of Archeology.



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Juma Masjid

Juma Masjid is the largest mosque in India with a courtyard measuring 100 square meters. It was built by Badshah Shah Jahan at a cost of about ten lakhs of rupees in 1644-50 and about five thousand labors were employed in its construction. It has been built on a raised platform that can be reached by flights of step on the East, North and South. The courtyard is enclosed by colonnade with domed pavilions at the ends. The rectangular prayer hall lies on the west and is 61 meters in length and 27.5 meters in breadth. It has a magnificent façade of eleven arches and is flanked by four-storied minarets at either ends. Three large domes ornamented with alternating stripes of black and white marble surmount the prayer hall.



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Sunahri Masjid

There are in fact two Sunahri Masjids in the area. One is in Chadini Chawk, by the side of Gurudwara Sisganj and another in the Netaji Subhash Park adjoining the Red Fort. The one by the side of the Gurudwara was built by Raushan-ud-Daulah, the Prime Minister in the court of Mohammed Shah. It has three gilded domes. It was from its raised courtyard that the plunderer of Delhi, Nadir Shah, watched the massacre of citizens on 22 March 1739.



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Fatehpuri Masjid

Fatehpuri Masjid stands at the western end of Chandini Chowk. It is a large mosque built of sandstone. It has single and double-storied apartments on the sides and the prayer-hall at the western end, which is broken by seven arched openings. Of these the central one is the highest. It is surmounted by a single dome and flanked by tall minarets. It was built in 1650 by Fatehpuri Begam, one of the wives of Shah Jahan. Perhaps aggrieved by the Muslim community because of the Revolt of 1857 in the leadership of Bahadur Shah II, the British in scant disregard to the reverend mosque sold it to a money lender Chunna Lal in 1877 for Rs 39,000. The mosque has now been restored to the community to which it belonged.



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