Delhi’s Journey Part 2

Dr. Sangeeta Mittal
Associate Professor
Department of English
Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi, India.

Abstract— Journey of any city is a very fascinating one to scholars of urban studies as well as dwellers, visitors, policy makers and managers of cities. Delhi has an extremely rich past dating back to pre-historic times and charting epochs like the Gupta period, Rajput phase, the Sultanate, Lodhis, Mughals, British and finally, capital of Independent India. This paper presents a birds’ eye view of the urban character of Delhi from the founding of Shahjahanabad in 1638 to British occupation of Delhi in 1803. The objective of the paper is to contextualize many monuments, travel writings, novels, memoirs, films, myths, stories, stereotypes present in/ on Delhi to a continuity as well as complexity of urban and cultural tradition. As thinkers and users of cities, it is imperative that we appreciate the ethos we inherit, consume, represent and create. Using a variety of sources from history, sociology, cultural and urban studies, the paper puts together diverse dimensions of this ancient city and imperial capital from the perspective of underscoring that urbanity has always been a matter of intersecting spaces, lives, powers and intentions. This electronic document from a source is a “live” template. The various components of your paper [title, text, heads, etc.] are already defined on the style sheet, as illustrated by the portions given in this document.

Index Terms— Delhi history, Delhi Culture, Shahjahanabad, Mughal Delhi, Urban Development

I. SHAHJAHANABAD: URBAN CHARACTER

The immediate reason for Shah Jahan’s desire to return to Delhi is said to be the inability to build a royal ceremonial processional pathway in the crowded and haphazard Agra. Often called the engineer king, Shah Jahan was a passionate and knowledgeable builder. It is said that where Akbar built in sand stone, Shah Jahan built in marble. After the death of Mumtaz Mahal, emotionally distraught and spatially thwarted in Agra, he ordered a fresh site to be located for Shahjahanabad. Delhi proved to be ideally suited for the purpose with a more hospitable climate, abundance of water and availability of building material from the ruins nearby. The imprint of his sophisticated personal taste as well as the display of evidence by an empire at the height of its power constituted the allied objectives which determined the scope and scope of this new capital. On 29 April, 1639, at an auspicious time pronounced by the astrologers, Ghairat Khan, the ‘Subahadar of Delhi, entrusted Ustad Hamid and Ustad Ahmad, the two most renowned builders, the work of constructing the capital. As Samual V Noe surmises, the desire and design of Shah Jahan’s capital was most likely inspired by reports of Shah Abbas’s excellent capital at Isfahan: “With the Persian orientation of the Mughal court in general and Shah Jahan in particular, Isfahan must have provided a provocative challenge” (Noe, 1986, p. 237). Despite pre-existing impediments like two rocky hillocks on the otherwise flat plains, the meandering river, the rains of two previous cities, Salimgarh fortress in the vicinity and network of much used long-distance highways, the architects were able to achieve a near perfect symmetry in keeping with Persian formalism. Stephen P Blake highlights another influence which could have been in play in the drawing up of Shahjahanabad’s plan.

The plan of Shahjahanabad appears to have been based on a design from the ancient Hindu texts on architecture. These texts, the vasta sastras (rules for architecture), were part of a larger body of Sanskrit texts called the silpa sastras (rules for manual arts) ….. The Manasara, a vasta satsra dating c. A.D. 400-600 listed a semi-elliptical design called karmuka (bow) as one of the shapes a settlement might take. Such a plan was especially appropriate for a site fronting a river or sea-shore.” (Blake, 1986, 2002, p. 71).

In Hindu towns based on Karmuka plan, the most sacred spot was the juncture where two perpendicular streets intersected and there stood a temple dedicated to Shiva or Vishnu, but in Islamic Shahjahanabad this spot was occupied by the Palace Fortress, the Qila Mubarak as it was then called, or the Red Fort, as it is now called. Islamic city, as expounded in some detail by Thomas Kraelf in a formal stereotype with a centrally located Friday mosque, the bazaar around it, distinct socio-economic differentiations from centre to periphery, irregular street pattern a city wall and citadel, intra urban quarters, blind alleyways as its typical components. Writes Kraelf, “Unlike other cities of the Islamic world, the bazaars of the Islamic Indian cities do not have any differentiations. On the contrary, retailing, manufacturing and living forms a close symbiosis….Bazaars are by no means spatially extended complexes, but are characterised by linear patterns, thus excluding and preventing the development of central-peripheral gradients (Ehlers-Kraelf, 1993, p. 22).”

Shedding light on another quintessential feature of the city, Jamal Malik writes that, “The builders of Shahjahanabad created the architectonic expression of what has often been called the “patrimonial system” in its climax” (Malik, 1993). However, as Narayani Gupta explains, Shahjahanabad can be seen pre-eminently a Mughal city in form “but its lifestyle was delineated largely by its inhabitants. The immigration, by individuals from outside, and through the駐 of the ruling class, over many centuries gave it its unique feel and flavor.” (Gupta, 1993, p. 31).

II. SHAHJAHANABAD: URBAN GEOGRAPHY

Shahjahanabad-the walled city- was enclosed within a stone wall 27 feet high, 12 feet thick and 3.8 miles long. Built between 1651-8, it had 27 towers and numerous gates. Major entryways in the city comprised of the Kashmiring Gate, Mori Gate, Kabuli Gate, Lahori Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Turkamani Gate and Akbarabadi Gate. The River front side presented access to the river through Raj Ghat, Gita Ghat and Nigambodh Ghat. Along with these major inlets, there were many smaller ones too located near important mansions, markets or mosques. The most important public thoroughfare, road or boulevard of the city, the Chandni Chowk, extended from Lahori Gate to Fatehpuri Masjid with a central canal (Nahar-i-bisht), tree lined roads and similarly built shops in Urdu bazaar, Ashrafi bazaar and Fatehpuri bazaar. Coffee houses, gardens, hamams and serais also dotted this street. Another bazaar sprawled out from the Akbarabadi gate which over time became famous as Faiz Bazaar while Khas Bazaar was located on the street connecting the Palace Fort to the Jama Masjid. Along long secondary roads, special bazaars in association with the mohallas had local bazaars. The Palace Fort and the Jama Masjid, in fact, formed the twin foci of the city. The Fort, built in sandstone largely obtained from the neighbourhood of Fatehpur Sikri, was octagonal in shape with a perimeter of nearly two miles with dimensions of 3,100 feet X 1,650 feet. Its axes were aligned with cardinal points of the compass. A moat, 75 feet wide and 30 feet deep, protected the Fort on the landward side. The Fort was divided into two rectangles- the river facing one was the hub of much of the domestic and official activity. The southern half of this rectangle housed the harim (women’s mansions) to which access was limited to sons and husbands. The Intizam or Mumtaz Mahal, later called the Rang Mahal, was the largest building which was the venue for routine and recreational activity of residents of the Fort and to which Shah Jahan retired after his daily schedule in the Diwan-i-aam. Adjoining this space were the Arangah of Khwabaq (place for sleeping) and the emperor’s jharoka (balcony) in the Mussamman Burj (Octagonal Tower) facing the riverside underneath which petitioners and subjects would gather for the daily darshan. The northern half contained the more public buildings of the court. The Diwan-i-aam (Hall of Public Audience) was a large open pavilion of forty pillars divided into two parts, one for princes, distinguished amirs, ambassadors and dignitaries.
and the other for lesser amirs, nobles and officers. The emperor himself sat in a balcony in the eastern wall six feet above the ground. The officers involved in the day’s business stood below on a marble platform. The emperor transacted routine financial, military and administrative affairs in the Diwan-i-aam. The three sides of Diwan-i-aam were surrounded by a courtyard with rooms appointed for seating the amirs of the standing guard. Beyond was a naqqarkhana (Place of Drums) which had musicians for playing martial music. The riverfront side of the Diwan-i-aam held the most elegant and extravagant building of the Fort - the Diwan-i-khas (Hall of Private Audience) or the Shah Mahal (Emperor’s Palace). The jewelled marble décor with generous use of bullion and glass made it a glittering chamber which also boasted of the most expensive throne in the world - the Peacock throne. The Royal Humum or Ghusul Khana (Bath) was adjacent to it and was as lavishly furnished with three storeys, one for dressing, hot water and cold water each. The Shah Burj (King’s Tower) was another densely populated area in contiguity with the Naqqarkhana, called the Jilau Khana, where members of the royal family, amirs, officers, petitioners etc. wished to gain entry assembled and waited. A covered bazaar called Bazaar-i-mussaqaf, not found in India till then but common in West Asia, was another peculiarity of the Fort. A lot of palace space was dedicated to gardens, prominent among which were the Hayat Bakhsh and Mahtab Gardens. Outside the Fort, the moat, separating the Fort from the rest of the city, extended beautiful gardens like the Bulul, Gulabi and Anguri gardens. As Shah Jahan attended the Jama Masjid built by him, there was no mosque inside the Fort. The Moti Masjid in the Fort was built by his son, Aurangzeb. The road linking Akbarabadi Gate to Salimgarh Gate in the Fort was lined with offices, residences, workshops, stables etc. to serve the needs of the royal household. The quarters of young and fledging princes were located inside the fort but the more established ones lived outside the Fort in mansions allotted to them. Area just outside the Fort was earmarked for the residence of members of royalty and nobility. Area around Chandni Chowk was also subsequently used for the purpose. This concentrated the rich and powerful within this territory. Though the Fort was visualized and laid out with planning and precision to ward off the urban jumble of Agra and Lahore, yet the town planning went on becoming amorphous and arbitrary as one traversed away from the Fort. This was primarily because the urban planning was not expeditious in developing the axis mundi of the emperor’s glory. Roads were kept abreast to follow the social and economic dynamics of the relationships in the city. The most important one among them was the location of the mansions of royalty and nobility which served as microcosms of the Fort. Their size and population entitled them to be called qsars (fortresses) and these duplicated, not only in design but also political and economic impact, the patterns of the Fort. Havelis or Nasimhans (large mansions) contained all the architectural graces of the Fort like massive walls, jilau khana, naqqarkhana, karkhana (workshops), tekhhana (underground chamber), sardkhana (cool chamber for summer retreat), divawankhana (hall for audience), mehal sarai (family area), hamam, idgah and khana in Mehul (garden). The dependents and the workforce of these mansions started living outside them in thatched huts giving rise to the mohalla system of population distribution. As Stephen Blake points out that later other principles of organization like caste, origin, trade etc. also came to govern the mohalla formations. (Blake, 1986, 2002) According to Sharia laws, city was to be divided into (thoroughfares, secondary roads, bazaars), semi-private (alleys in mohallas which were sealed, homogenous units entry to which was through city gates) and private (havelis) spaces. This accounts for the hierarchical urban organization in which heterogeneous population lived together. The internal hierarchy was part of the concept of the city, a fact evident from allocation of land to the shiajada (elite) and construction of mosques from east to west following the geographical pattern of changing wind direction in the region. The original order existing in Shahjahanabad led to its segregation in three rough categories. North of Chandni Chowk lived the gentry with its mansions, gardens and palaces. Further in the direction of Chandni Chowk, traders in fabrics, fish, meats, luxury goods, huqqa makers were found in proximity with imperial quarters. Along Chandni Chowk, luxury shops selling the best of readymade goods were lined. In Mohallas around Khari Baoli, one could find specialists in products like tobacco, flowers, perfumes, butter oil, pomegranates. This was the economically well-to-do region. North of this was the Punjabi Katra of ambitious traders and workers. From the outskirts of the city towards the centre, a specialisation pointing to the hierarchical character was noticeable in accordance with the pattern of consumption and availability of raw materials and labour. Christian missionaries and Europeans settled in Daryaganj to the southeast. The majority of the working class population lived south of Chandh Chawk e.g., in Gali Rodguran (gun-workers), for the poor strata, such as the kumhar (potter), qasai (butcher), dhobi (washerman), chamar (cobbler) and teli (oil extractors), predominantly lived close to the city gates (with the exception of the Lahori Gate, the Kabul Gate and the Kashmiri Gate) as well as the eastern entrances of the city, or even outside the city walls. Dancing girls lived in this neighbourhood (Gali Kanche ki), Professions like tanners and barbers neither had a mohalla of their own as they were located at the outskirts of various mohallas. The city could also be roughly subdivided along religious lines. While Hindus predominantly lived in Chhipiwarai (abode of cloth printers) (west of Jamidargan, south of Darya Gate), Muslims from the eastern entrance of the Fort, the southern part of the city i.e. from Bada and Chota Marjanwala, the majority of the Muslims were settled in South Ballamarin, Lal Quan, Haweli Haider Quli Khan and close to the large mosques. Shahjahanabad had one Kotwali in Chandni Chowk, 12 thanas under thanadars who collected taxes and duties, maintained population registers, police, and controlled markets. The thanas were further subdivided into mohallas. The mohallas got named either after affuent, dominating residents or the vocation of the people living there. Mohallas followed a pattern of differentiated quarters. “The quarters are embedded in a complex texture with their norms relating not only to economic necessities but also to manifold social interweaving” (Malik, 1993). They were socially cohesive with “no separation of the spheres of production and recreation” (Malik, 1993). The mohalla mostly bore the stamp of the chief service sector situated there, i.e. artisans, traders, religious sectors etc., other representatives of economic or social life as is evident from names like mohallah-e dhobiyan (washermen), sawdagar (traders), mufiyan (religious scholars), telvan (oil extractors), rikak (stirrup holders/cupbearers), suwalian (needle makers), gadariyan (shepherds), punjabi, kathra-e Marwari, jatwara etc. The different social and ethnic groups shared a symbiotic relationship aligning their buildings and adjoining streets in a profitable manner. Inside mohallas were kathras (emporia also offering lodging) at the centre and small alleys (gali or kuchas) radiating outside which could be categorised as primary, secondary or tertiary streets depending on their distance from the katra. The katra and the kuchas were once again known by the name of corresponding professions or ethnic groups. The greater the distance from the katra, diversity increased but so did social anonymity. Narayan Gupta forwards a teminable thesis as to why a large number of people could live together in this compact area and also accommodate more without social tension being generated. “The reason was that this urban society was a highly regulated one ... it was a hierarchy of Chinese boxes, ranging from the city wall to the curtained private quarters of the house” (Gupta, 1993).
Six years to be completed. Standing atop one of the cliffs, the Bhujalal Pahari, in the plains of Shahjahanabad’s site, its magnificence was elevated further by a steep flight of steps leading to its huge doorways on its three sides. The Masjid presented the religious and vertical counterpart to the political and horizontal eminence of the Fort in the iconography of Shahjahanabad. Bazaars with all types of wares on display spread out on the steps flanking the Masjid on its three sides. On the western side where the flight of steps was not there, a madrasa and a dawakhana financed by the emperor were located. Shah Jahan used the eastern side for his own entry. Royal procession enroute to Jama Masjid passed through Khass Bazzar populated by healers, story tellers, astrologers and dancing girls. The Masjid itself was on the second floor as was the common practice in multistoried mosques. The prayer hall was a large square over which stood three large domes. Mihrabs (recess or alcove in the direction of Mecca), minarets and a central fountain brought out its simple splendor. The Masjid was also surrounded by large numbers of the mosques and madrasas. It was, as the name suggests, a mosque built by members of imp. To date, while a considerable number of Shah Jahan’s mosques were destroyed by the British after 1857. A student of Shah Wali Ullah, Shah Ahmad Shahid (1786-1838) from Bijnor by emperor Muhammad Shah. In addition, Wali Ullah was rewarded with 51 bighas land outside Delhi by Alamgir II in 1754 for his own madarsa. Shah Wali Ullah’s sons - Shah Abd al-Aziz and Shah Abd al-Qadir - operated against the odds of colonial interference and Sunni influence. Wali Ullah’s lands had been confiscated in 1774 but his sons managed to recover them on account of cultivating good relations with the British administrators. Shah Abd al-Aziz established Madrasa Shah Abd al-Aziz on a site near Chitli Qabar and Tiraham Bairam Khan. Abd al-Qadir acted at the Akbarabadi Masjid. Both the Madarsa and the Masjid were destroyed by the British, nobleman and a soldier by profession, went on to become a founder of the Mujahidin militant movement whose theological epicentre were the Madrasa of Shah Jahan. Shah Ghulam Ali residing all over other towns, carpenters, dye makers, shoemakers, potters, money changers, bangle makers, spinners, basket weavers, and hair dressers. Each had its own little mosque. Building mosques was considered to be a virtuous act and the mahalla mosques were constructed, maintained and popularized by amiri patronage. The upkeep of the mosques was done through income from waqf (dedication for management of the mosques by the builder), donations or rent from rooms in mosques used as musafirkhanahs (lodges). Substantiating his point that within the city, each Islamic tradition could be traced to specific areas of origin and development, Jamal Malik writes. By establishing a closed unit with its variety of social groups, combining each with others, with schools, for essential goods, etc., each mahalla gave an incentive for a life in seclusion and devotion to God, thereby forming a moral community. Trans-mohalla movement was thus not necessary in this strictly demarcated cultural framework. ... The identity of the quarter was thus marked out by its economic and social contacts as well as religious affiliations and therefore often served as a first port of call for new arrivals to the city. (p. 87)

The religious scholars exemplified the tradition of spiritual and vocational purity by never stepping out of their respective mahallas. Thus, they formed the spiritual centre of the mohalla where “the inhabitants of the mahalla would meet for ever repeated rites and festivities in a centre that provided the mahalla with its essential identity and integrated them with a common social and ritual world” (Jamal Malik, p. 73).

IV. THE SUFI INFLUENCE

While the mosques were the material expressions of exclusive Islamic culture, Sufi dargahs and khangas, exuded a “melting pot” kind of weltanschauung. They were the microcosms of popular composite culture. There were many dargahs inside Shahjahanabad like the dargah of Sayyid Bhure Shah (Chishti Sayyid Sabir Agha), the dargah of Shah Turkman of the suhrawardy order (d.1249) and the Shiite dargah, Panjana Sharif. Other Islamic cults also had a presence in Shahjahanabad. The naqshbandiya order was represented in Delhi by Shah Wali Ullah(d.1763), Mir Dard(d.1785) and Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Jahan (d.1781). Madarsa Rahimiyah was founded by the father of Waliullah, Abd ar-Rahim in Mahandiyani outside city walls. On account of its repute in disseminating knowledge of traditional sciences (manqulat), he was allotted Haveli Kalan Mahall in Daryaganj by emperor Muhammad Shah. In addition, Wali Ullah was rewarded with 51 bighas land outside Delhi by Alamgir II in 1754 for his own madarsa. Shah Wali Ullah’s sons - Shah Abd al-Aziz and Shah Abd al-Qadir - operated against the odds of colonial interference and Sunni influence. Wali Ullah’s lands had been confiscated in 1774 but his sons managed to recover them on account of cultivating good relations with the British administrators. Shah Abd al-Aziz established Madrasa Shah Abd al-Aziz on a site near Chitli Qabar and Tiraham Bairam Khan. Abd al-Qadir acted at the Akbarabadi Masjid. Both the Madarsa and the Masjid were destroyed by the British, noblemen and a soldier by profession, went on to become a founder of the Mujahidin militant movement whose theological epicentre were the Madrasa of Shah Jahan. Shah Ghulam Ali residing all over other towns, carpenters, dye makers, shoemakers, potters, money changers, bangle makers, spinners, basket weavers, and hair dressers. Each had its own little mosque. Building mosques was considered to be a virtuous act and the mahalla mosques were constructed, maintained and popularized by amiri patronage. The upkeep of the mosques was done through income from waqf (dedication for management of the mosques by the builder), donations or rent from rooms in mosques used as musafirkhanahs (lodges). Substantiating his point that within the city, each Islamic tradition could be traced to specific areas of origin and development, Jamal Malik writes. By establishing a closed unit with its variety of social groups, combining each with others, with schools, for essential goods, etc., each mahalla gave an incentive for a life in seclusion and devotion to God, thereby forming a moral community. Trans-mohalla movement was thus not necessary in this strictly demarcated cultural framework. ... The identity of the quarter was thus marked out by its economic and social contacts as well as religious affiliations and therefore often served as a first port of call for new arrivals to the city. (p. 87)

The religious scholars exemplified the tradition of spiritual and vocational purity by never stepping out of their respective mahallas. Thus, they formed the spiritual centre of the mohalla where “the inhabitants of the mahalla would meet for ever repeated rites and festivities in a centre that provided the mahalla with its essential identity and integrated them with a common social and ritual world” (Jamal Malik, p. 73).

V. MUGHAL FASCINATION FOR GARDENS

The gardens of Shahjahanabad wove sensuous as well as symbolic patterns in the urban design. On the one hand, a garden served as a summer retreat in the arid climate while on the other, it was the earthly counterpart of its idyllic version in the Quran. In Mughal India, the gardens embraced in Shahjahanabad as part of a long standing tradition but the hitherto intellectual and cordial tenor of these assum...
Akbar chose the colour dyed with perfume, using ayun was given more to women. Pigeon flying was also common. People subsisted on grants and donations. There was a possibility of specialization as some schools imparting more refined skills were opened. Kabir and Rauza u women wore the angiya and for the useful for sharpening skills of men, while Hindu men wore ear and nose rings and playing cards were the most popular indoor pastimes. The Mughal aristocrats considered it to be a game of wits which the rich as well as poor tried their hand at. The Mughal aristocrats also indulged in drinking. Babur and Jahangir were heavy drinkers while Akbar and Shah Jahan indulged more in social drinking. Humayun was a heavy drinker during summers. Wine or akh was a regular item on the menu.

There was no dearth of entertainments available to the royal and noble ranks as well as the middle and lower classes. Chess, chaupar (a game of dice) and playing cards were the most popular indoor pastimes. The account which follows amply demonstrates that there was a well-documented tradition of gambling and card-playing, even though there were laws against it. There were lots of cheating and corruption in the game of dice, which was called ‘chaukand’ in India. The Mughals also enjoyed hunting, animal fights and chess. Hunting, animal fights and chess were popular with all ranks of society, from the aristocracy to the peasant class. Hunting was a popular pastime for the Mughal court, and it was a common activity among the nobility. Animal fighting was also enjoyed by all ranks of society, from the nobility to the common people. However, gambling was a serious offense and was punished severely.

There was a lot of variety in the types of entertainment available during the Mughal period. The court was also known for its love of poetry and music. Many famous poets and musicians were associated with the court, and their works remain popular today. The Mughal court was also renowned for its love of architecture and art. Many famous buildings and gardens were built during the Mughal period, and they remain important landmarks of Indian history. The Mughal court was also known for its love of animals. The Mughal rulers often kept a large collection of domesticated animals, and they were often depicted in the art and literature of the period. This love of animals can still be seen in the legacy of Mughal art and architecture, which often features animal motifs and symbols.

The Mughal court was also known for its love of architecture and art. Many famous buildings and gardens were built during the Mughal period, and they remain important landmarks of Indian history. The Mughal court was also known for its love of animals. The Mughal rulers often kept a large collection of domesticated animals, and they were often depicted in the art and literature of the period. This love of animals can still be seen in the legacy of Mughal art and architecture, which often features animal motifs and symbols.

VII. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Education began at the age of 4 or 5 for both Hindus and Muslims with the Upayana sansakara and the Maktab respectively. The Hindu children went to pathshalas (schools) which were nothing but thatched huts in which Brahmin teachers taught 5 to 15 students without charging fees as teaching for money was considered a sin for the Brahmin community. The pathshalas were private establishments animated by familial relationship between the teacher and the student. Parents, then, were also called teachers. As institutions, these subsisted on grants and donations. There was a possibility of specialization as some schools concentrated on poetry, Puranas and Smritis, while others taught the law and the Puranas while yet others focused on the Nyaya Darshan and logic. Sanskrit

© 2018 JETIR February 2018, Volume 5, Issue 2 www.jetir.org (ISSN-2349-5162)
teaching and Vedic commentaries declined during the Mughal Period and old authoritative texts like Panini’s grammar were replaced by more contemporary adaptations. Mathematics was definitely the forte of Hindus. So were astronomy and astrology. These disciplines, however, elicited equal interest in the Muslim world as well. Jotika Rai, Kanjar Beg, Nuruddin Muhammad Tarkhan, Imam Abul Muhammad of Ghazni and Mulla Farid Munjajam were some veterans of this field. Ayurvedic as well as Unani systems flourished in Mughal India and medicine was generally a hereditary profession. Hindus were also masters in Metrology. Hindus continued to perfect their ancient heritage of philosophy and Abul Fazl notes that there were 9 schools of Hindu philosophy. When several schools offering different specializations sprang up in a given place, it came to resemble a University as in the case of Banaras where there were schools teaching Vedas, grammar, poetry, logic, law and astronomy. These Hindu centres of Higher Learning sprang up in holy cities like Nodia or Nizamuddin, and that of Khuld Manzil, to the south of Delhi. Even if they were established by the king, the management was generally in the hands of scholars and reputed families like Dhradhadhaki, Sesa, Bhatta and Mouni took up the cause of education. The city nurtured Kabir and Tulsiadas. Next in line after Banaras was Nodia, which reinvigorated Brahmanical learning during Mughal times specializing in Na’aya and Smritis. The average duration spent in graduation was ten to twelve years and a few more if the student was keen on a doctorate under a reputed teacher. There were no formal examinations as the teacher was the sole judge of the students’ progress and when he deemed the education completed, he issued certificates, appreciation letters or titles or in a convocation like ceremony (chhuriya bandhanam), a dagger was tied dress of the pupil to declare him a graduate. The Hindu families were more keen on education than their Muslim counterparts. This was perhaps because the career and future of Hindus was in trade and service sectors whereas the Muslims as a ruling class saw greater promise in army and governance. In the maktab (Islamic school), the alphabet was followed by rote learning and understanding of Quran, calligraphy and literature like Gulistan, Bustan and poetry of Firdausi. For Higher Learning, generally in the field of theology, the Muslims students graduated to the madarsa, most often attached to a mosque. Places like Agra, Lahore, Jaipur, Gujarat, Sialkot, Ahmedabad were chosen by Islamic men of letters as these abounded in Muslim population and ambitious disciples were easily found here.

Dehli, being the Imperial city, was of course the greatest centre of Muslim learning for past many dynasties and it kept up its tradition in the Mughal times as well. Humayun built a school on honour of Zain-ud-Din Khafi on the banks of the Yamuna. Maham Anga built a residential madarsa, Kha’ir-ul-Manzil, opposite the western gate of Purana Qila. Sheikh Abdullah of Talna was another celebrated teacher. There was a madarsa in Humayan’s Tomb. Shahjahan built an imposing royal madarsa, Dar-ul-Baqa, on the southern side of Jama Masjid. Madarsa-i-Rahimyya, named after Abdur Rahim, Shah Waliullah’s father, came up during Aurangzeb’s times. For further studies, dedicated scholars went to places like Mecca, Medina, Basra, Damascus, Cairo, Kifa, Yemen, Iran, Baghdad, Hijaz, Khurasan etc. Where the curriculum of study is concerned, Abul Fazl categorizes it into Ilahi or divine sciences, Riyazi or quantitative sciences and Tabii or rest of physical sciences. So, overall, the main subjects in Islamic institutions were grammar, rhetoric, logic, theology, metaphysics, literature and jurisprudence. Astronomy, mathematics and medicine gradually made inroads into the curriculum but here Hindu influence and authority was unavoidable. Muslims made better surgeons (jarrahs) than Hindus as they did not have any abhorrence in cutting the flesh. Muslims had a greater interest in history producing historians par excellence like Abul Fazl, Badaoni, Nizamuddin Ahmad, Abdul Hamid Lahori and Kha’fi Khan. Geography, however, was an area which remained neglected in the Hindu as well as Islamic schools and Aurangzeb vouches his work on this for his scholarly curiosity.

Writing was done on paper which used to be sourced from places like Sialkot and Shuhzdupur famous for their fine varieties like Man Singh and silk paper. In primary schools and by the poor, wooden tablets or palm leaves were used. Official correspondence was recorded on metal plates. Printing technology was virtually unknown and writing materials like the Persian Qalam (reed quill) and Qalam-i-sarab (lead pen) were available. Inks, the finest varieties of which were made in Kashmir, were stocked in metallic or china inkpots. Calligraphy was a paying and respected art, eight schools of which were practiced with the Naskh and Nastaliq being the most popular. Books were priced possessions both on account of cost of production as well as being rare commodities. As reported by Manrique and De Laet, the Mughal Imperial Library boasted of 24,000 books costing approximately 65 lakh rupees. However, apart from the expensive ornate and illustrated versions, ordinary editions of popular books were also available on the streets of the Imperial Capital. Most people accessed books in Libraries which were in large number in Mughal cities. Every madarsa had a library attached to it. Similarly, Hindu centres of learning maintained huge libraries full of ancient manuscripts zealously guarded and protected. Learned scholars also kept private libraries employing people like librarians, khasnavis (copyists), painters, book binders, scribes and warrughof (proof readers) on a permanent basis. The Imperial Library was the most magnificient of all. Stocks were added to it under each emperor and Akbar introduced a sophisticated system of classification of books. The Librarian was called the nizam (chief minister); under him along with several assistants and a muhatim (proof reader) there was a reading room. The imperial library was not altogether self-sustaining and along with several assistants for cataloguing and accession. Translators and Jadwals (artists to make fancy pages on borders) were also retained by the Library.

VIII. AURANGZEB AND THE TWILIGHT OF THE MUGHALS

The zenith of Mughal court and authority as embodied in Shahjahanabad could not sustain itself over the eighteenth century. Towards the end of Shah I, despite attempting to undo some of the damages done by his father’s devout nature, he had to contend with intractable factions during his brief rule of five years and he too did not set foot in Delhi during all this time. He commissioned a mosque- the Moti Masjid in Mehrauli- to be built in 1709. Thirty three years of imperial vacuum ended only when Bahadur Shah’s successor, Jahandar Shah, entered Delhi in 1712 although the empty coffers, dissipating administrative machinery and mounting internal as well as external threats made Delhi less a bed of roses and more the proverbial crown of thorns. Jahandar Shah was given to a life of hedonism and degeneracy and it was the kingmaker, Zulfikar Khan, who ruled the roost in the kingdom. The next infamous king makers were the Sayyid brothers who catapulted Farrukh Siyar, Jahandar Shah’s nephew, to the throne in 1713. After Farrukh Siyar’s death in 1719, Sayyid brothers raised Muhammad Shah to power. Despite considerable erosion, Mughal prestige was not altogether lost and its army was...
also a force to reckon with. Administrative machinery, although skeletal, was operative. The Maratha menace was confined to the South while the Rajputs were not too troublesome either. Hence, Muhammad Shah had curtailed but requisite infrastructure at his disposal to heal the ailing dynasty. The emperor, however, did not seize the moment and speeded the death of the dynasty by remaining engrossed in the courtly pleasures. Known popularly Muhammad Shah Rangila, he remained oblivious to the impending doom by insulating himself in the comfort zone of ease and luxury. From 1719 to 1739, the year Nadir Shah sacked Delhi, a period of relative stability ensued during Muhammad Shah’s reign which ended with his death in 1748. Muhammad Shah built walls outside the dargah of Chiragh Dilli. While a queen of his, Udham Bai, built the shrine of Shah Marudan, another of his wife, Nawab Qasdea Begum, laid out a blooming garden on the banks of River Yamuna north of Kashmire Gate. Frustrated by the indolence, frivolity and intrigues of the emperor, nobles like Rukn ud-daula, Saadat Khan, and others formed states for themselves. The physical splintering of the kingdom was commenced when large parts of Bengal, Hyderabad, and Awadh emerged as what are called the succession states where Mughal care takers staked independent claim. Others such as Marathas in Central India and Malwa, Afghans in Rohilkhand, Jats in Bharatpur, Sikhs in Punjab and Rajputs in Rajasthan and Gujarat formed states by spurning the mantle of Mughal authority donated by them till now. Similarly, Mewati Meos and Gujars, bands of Sikhs who later formed the Phulkian states, all rampaged without a firm hand of authority. Maratha sardars began heading northwards and Afghans directed their attention to North India to benefit from the power deficit of this region. And then Nadir Shah’s scourge descended over North India in 1738. The Mughal Empire was reduced to the ‘Kingdom of Delhi’ by the time Shah Alam II came to the throne in 1759.

Shah Alam II fled from Delhi in 1759 to proclaim himself emperor in Ghatoli in Bihar. Living under the protection of Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh, he lived like a refugee first in Bengal fighting East India Company till the defeat of Buxar, then in Allahabad as a pensioner of East India Company, finally entering Delhi in 1772 with the Marathas. A treaty was signed between Shah Alam and the Marathas in February, 1771 and Shah Alam entered Delhi escorted by the Marathas in January, 1772. From 1785 onwards, Delhi became an appenage to Sindia’s domain. The simmering tension between the Marathas and the British Company resulted eventually in the much anticipated war of 1803. The battle of Delhi (or the Battle of Patparganj) took place on September 11, 1803. The Company under Lord Lake defeated the army of Scindia on the left bank of the Yamuna, just opposite Humayan’s tomb. Shah Alam II replaced the Marathas with the Company for protection and pension. The Company occupied Delhi in 1803 and from that year till 1857, when the flickering Mughal flame was finally snuffed out, the Mughal emperors merely served as a political front for the British. Shah Alam’s long and turbulent reign came to an end with his death in 1806 followed by what is called the Pax Britanica (British Peace) for 50 years which once again dissolved in violence and destruction in the ‘mutiny’ of 1857.

IX. CONCLUSION

Though there is a tendency to dub the entire eighteenth century as the twilight zone, period of decadence, effete glory or inevitable decline, but there are also voices of caution against such simplistic connotations in the history of Delhi. Percival Spear is wary of such “facile terms”. (Spear, 1949, 2002: 1) Satish Chandra also warns that it would be “wrong to dub the entire eighteen century a period of ‘unchecked decline’ for Delhi”. (Chandra, 1986, 2002: 114) He calls, as several others have also called, the early eighteenth century crisis, the jagirdari crisis. As Percival Spear underlines,

\[ \text{The degeneracy of Hindustan during the second half of the eighteenth century was social and financial rather than individual. Individual quality was often high, but men lacked a guiding star of conduct, a motive for ambition other than naked power. (Spear, 1949, 2002: 1)} \]

Satish Chandra avers by emphasizing that this period “spelt not so much an absolute decline, as a prolonged period of stagnation.” (Chandra, 1986, 2002: 115) The upside of this period was the cultural accomplishments of the city with architecture taking a backseat and painting, music, poetry stepping into its place. Secular and broad-based, the arts found patrons in the imperial family, the nobility, and the affluent settlers who cherished the cultural ethos of the city. Christopher Bayly, economic historian, expounds that demographic redistribution took place in the eighteenth century not because of “decay of large cities” but because of emergence of new metropolitan centres (shahrs) like Lucknow, Pune and Nagpur, market towns (qasbas) and fixed bazaars (ganjis) (Bayly, 1986, 2002, p. 121). The entrepot trade of Delhi was less affected as trade to the North-West stretching as far into Central Asia as Astrakhan in low bulk goods like dry fruits, shawls and drugs was carried out by Muslim and Khattri traders. Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century, the bazaars of Chandni Chowk, were still brimming with fancy stuff thanks to the North-Western trade. Although Delhi suffered economic decline as it stopped receiving revenue from neighbouring or far away areas, yet politically it saw unabated activity. The Marathas and the East India Company were the main protagonist in Delhi’s last phase of imperial vacillations till it first emerged the capital of the British Raj and later, the capital of the independent nation. The Delhi Subah of the Mughals extended from Haryana in the West and went up to the Upper Doab and Rohilkhand in the east. In 1638, its area was 601,42,375 bighas with 45,088 villages. By 1803, Delhi district had shrunk to include only 600 villages. Narayanji Gupta writes that in the decades between Bernier’s visit (around 1638) and the British conquest in 1803, Shahjahanabad withstood the ravages of civil war and invasion. The basic map of the city remained unchanged, though there was some building activity as well as cases of some areas becoming gradually or suddenly deserted. (Gupta, 1998, 2002: 3) The Mughal aristocracy and the service classes survived the anarchy of the late eighteenth century by shifting to Lucknow or Hyderabad or seeking employment with the Marathas or the British. As has been noted by Bayly, the displacement of the traders was not as evident because Delhi retained remnants of the Mughal aristocratic class and those who stepped in their shoes like the Jats and the Marathas, even the British, assumed Mughal lifestyles. (Bayly, 1986, 2002: 133) Post 1806, with the end of hostilities and emergence of ‘British Delhi’, survivors returned and were able to partly recover their possessions. By 1847, there had developed thirteen clusters of population outside the walled city with a majority of non-cultivating population. These included Mughalpura, Sabzi Mandi, Jaisingpura, Khishenganj, Trevlyenganj, Telwara, Shidipura, Pahari Diraj, Sarai Idgha, Kadam Sharif, Banskauli, Paharganj and Rakabganj. The castles in the county were the Shaiks and the Banias. Apart from the River and wells, the main source of water was the Yamuna Canal which extended from Firoze Shah Tughlaq’s time branching from Karnal towards Delhi. It was repaired during Akbar’s reign and modernized by Ali Mardan Khan for Shahjahanabad. It fell into disuse after 1770 A.D. only to be revived by the British almost half a century later. The River itself was navigable round the year up to Delhi, hence it supported human and cargo transportation in and out of Delhi. There were also important highways connecting Delhi to other major centers like Agra, Lahore, Ajmer or Patna. Delhi’s hinterland produced corn, millet, pulses rice and indigo. Gupta writes that by virtue of being located at the closing arms of the Yamuna-Sutlej and just next to the north-west turning of the Ganga-Yamuna doab, Delhi lay within easy reach of major sources of agricultural production. It was fed from the Doab and the grain emporia east of the river in Shahadara, Ghazibad and Patparganj. “These were linked to the intramural market near the Fatehpuri mosque; vegetable and fruit came from the north-west and were sold in the wholesale market of Sabzi Mandi in Mughalpura, outside the city wall, on the Grand Trunk Road to Lahore”. (Gupta, 1998, 2002: 2) Wheat and Tobacco thrived in the Khandar. Khosa for sweets, leaves for disposable plates, tamarisk for baskets, firewood and crowding for fuel were also supplied by the countryside. All this was consumed by the city leaving hardly any surplus. The neighbouring qasbas transmitting their produce to Delhi were Ballabagarh, Faridabad, Mehrauli, Najafgarh, Narela and Sonepat. Maps of 1760s and 1790s indicate dense cultivation eight to twelve kilometers around Delhi. De
REFERENCES


