

DELHI'S JOURNEY PART 1

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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 prehistoric times to 1638: the founding of Shahjahanabad. 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.

Index Terms: Delhi history, Delhi Culture, Indraprastha, Medieval Delhi, Urban Development

I. EMERGENCE OF A CITY: THE URBAN PHENOMENON

The rise of the city has always been an interesting phenomenon. Over time, definitions about the nature and origin of city have come into existence. As J S Grewal summarises,

The town has emerged in history with two characteristics: first, a high density population concentrated within a limited space and secondly, a predominantly non-agricultural, particularly non-cultivating nature of its population. This men-space ratio and occupational heterogeneity, with their consequential relationships, have formed the primary basis for differentiation between the city and the village. (Grewal, 1991, p.1)

As Lewis Mumford elaborates in his *Culture of Cities*:

The city is the form and symbol of an integrated social relationship; it is the seat of the temple, the market, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here in the city, the goods of civilization are multiplied and manifolded; here is where the human experience is transformed into visible signs, symbols, patterns of conduct, systems of order. (Mumford, 1938, p.3)

Thus, the city has served as an "index value, indicating, measuring and summarizing the civilization" (Meadows, 1976, p. 16). In the Indian context, R S Sharma establishes that "early historic urbanism reached its peak in this country between 200 B.C. and about 300 A.D. Whether in North India, the Deccan, parts of South India, or in Western India, we have the same phenomenon" (Sharma, 1991, p. 13). He accounts for this spurt in urbanism to flourishing trade and commerce owing to sophisticated monetization. However, the graph declined 300 A.D. onwards which can be attributed to decline in overseas trade and also rising anarchy in social orders. The upside of this abatement was that the urban material got relocated in neighbouring areas resulting in a spreading out of urban structures in the form of *qasbas* (township of the smallest size). In the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the next urban revolution occurred, this time under Turkish rulers, which not only changed the face of the city with Islamic architecture and infrastructure but also the space of the city which now was no longer the exclusive preserve of the higher castes and classes but were open to craftsmen and labourers from all classes who possessed the skills for satisfying the tastes and needs of the ruling classes (Mohammad Habib, 1974). Whether the urban revival can be squarely pinned down to the arrival of the Turks in India or predates them from the eleventh century onwards is a moot question but Satish Chandra warns us to not equate urban revival with just political happenings and trade and industry but also with agriculture and culture (Chandra, 2012). Hence, if agricultural yields were adequate, the towns were able to survive on their own steam irrespective of upheavals in politics or commerce. Following the Eurocentric trajectory in charting the course of an Indian city is ineffective in the Indian context. Explains Grewal,

The study of Urban History becomes the study of the expansion and contraction of urban centres in dialectical relationship with the economic system, the political apparatus and the societal network. Discarding all Eurocentric definitions of the city, we may grasp the role of cities in our civilization by concentrating on the functions of urban centres as products of the prevailing forms of technology and social institutions. (Grewal, 1991, p. 77-78)

II. THE SAGA OF DELHI

The saga of Delhi contains great names, monumental architecture, conquests and displacements to encapsulate a fascinating tale of urban development, political and strategic manoeuvres, migrations leading to multi-cultural ethos culminating into its emergence today as a capital not only of the largest democracy of the world but also of an economically ascendant global power. As R E Frykenberg, the editor of the exhaustive anthology on Delhi- *Delhi through the Ages*-writes,

The symbol which Delhi has represented down through the ages is the symbol of empire; and therewith, it remains today the symbol of pan-Indian nationalization and unification. (Frykenberg, 1986, p. xii) H.K.Kaul, in his introduction to *Historic Delhi* writes that

The story of Delhi is not only one of massacres and memorials: it is also the story of its kings, its inhabitants, their manners, ideas, creations and lives. Above all, it is the story of city of cities. (Kaul, 1985, p. xvii)

The story of Delhi goes back in time to the Indus Valley civilization. Traces of post-urban stage of Harappan culture dating between 1900 B.C. to 1200 B.C, largely chalcolithic in nature, have been discovered on the banks of the Yamuna stretching from present day Mandoli and Sambhaoli villages and from Gharonda Nimka to Narela (Babu, 2006). Around 1500 B.C, Aryans entered the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia (Early or Rigvedic phase from 1500 B.C-1000 B.C.). The later Vedic period from 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C. is documented in texts like Samveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda and the use of painted grey ware (PWG) is common to the peoples of this period residing in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab (Sharma, 2001, p. 8, 9). The Bharatas and the Purus combined to form the Kuru clan who, alongwith the

Paanchaals of Middle Doab, are known to have established control in the Upper and the Middle Doab including Delhi later heading east by 600 B.C. The Purana Qila in Delhi is thought to hold many secrets of these centuries. Finely made Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and large baked bricks, dug up at the Purana Qila, link it to other sites of the later Vedic age. As A K Narain summarises in his essay 'Proto-History of Delhi and its Environs':

...its protohistoric beginnings are found in the first millennium B.C.; and it covers a much larger area than what now forms only the southern part of older Delhi. Memories of this earlier time and space context are preserved not only in the epics and the Puranas and in the tales of the Buddhist Jatakas, but also in oral traditions about the place names surviving to this day- although the facts in detail may still lie buried underground and traditions yet remain to be substantiated. (Narain, 1986, p. 5)

Based on oral traditions and written compilations, the following apocryphal chart of dynasties having ruled in and around Delhi has been drawn up:

Kurus	1500- 345 B C
Nands	345- 323 B C
Mauryas	323- 185 B C
Indo-Greeks	185- 100 B C
Saks and Kushanas	50 B C- 320 A D
Guptas	320 A D- 500 A D
Huns	500 A D – 600 A D
Pushya Bhuti	606 A D- 647 A D
Gurjar- Pratiharas	836- 1018 A D
Tomars	1051- 1151 A D
Chauhans	1151- 1192 A D

(Bashir-ud-din Ahmad, 1990)

III. INDRAPRASTHA

The earliest reference to 'Indraprastha' is recorded in *Mahabharata's Bhishmaparv, Sabhaparv and Adiparv*. Bhagvad Puran sings the rule of thirty generations of Arjuna's descendants in Indraprastha. In the epic *Mahabharata*, the capital of the Pandavas was Indraprastha. There is little evidence apart from conjectural possibility of Indraprastha being Delhi. This deduction is based on the facts that the war between Pandavas and Kauravas was fought on five 'pats' - four of which have been established to be Panipat, Sonapat, Baghpat and Tilpat. There is solid ground for indrapat or indraprastha to be the fifth 'pat'. As Narain states, a village by the name of indrapat existed within the Purana Qila until the beginning of the twentieth century which was later demolished. Archeological excavations confirm the existence of city life around the first millennia before Christ, and the area between Firoz Shah Kotla and Humayun's tomb is the probable site of the city. The ancient Buddhist and Jain literature also corroborates the existence of this settlement. Dated between sixth and fifth centuries before Christ or the post-Vedic period, these texts proclaim Indraprastha to be an important political domain. *Pali Tipitika* mentions Indraprastha in several contexts (Sharma & Tewari, 2012). The existence of Indraprastha has been confirmed by later writers, including Abul Fazl, but there are no confirmatory records about its rise and fall (1949, 1996 reprint). The Mahabharata legend has it that when compelled to divide the kingdom between Kauravas and Pandavas, Dhrutrashtra gave Khandavaprastha (a forest area to the right of river Yamuna, for about 80 kms. from Delhi) to Yudhishtara, the eldest Pandava brother, to establish independent reign over which the descendants of Arjuna, Yudhishtara's younger brother ruled for many years. The pandavas built their capital, Indraprastha, in this area. The city of Indraprastha is a glorious presence in legends, folklore and epics. It has also inspired other later date literary explorations and expressions. Indraprastha was built where there was a forest Khandavaprastha. Dhrutrashtra divided the kingdom into two parts and gave this thorny forest to the Pandavas. They were faced with the daunting task of setting up their kingdom on this barren and arid land. They had to raze the forest by fire to create space for their new capital. As described in Sabhaparv, Maya- an *asura* who managed to escape from the forest fire, offered to build a magnificent edifice for the Pandavas as a token of his gratitude being a "great artist, a Visvakarman". (Buitenen, 2006, p. 62-67) The description of the 'city' of Indraprastha in Mahabharata gets implicated of necessity in the same debates which surround the epic itself today (Mittal, 2017). Since Indraprastha exists in an indeterminate space between myth and reality, little wonder then that, it has been recreated time and again in the imaginative space.

IV. RAJPUT DELHI

For some centuries after this, the knowledge of Delhi is a shadow. Remains of the Gupta period have been excavated on the Purana Qila site of 4 A.D, and to the same century belongs the Iron Pillar, now at the Qutub, which sings the victories of 'Chandra' or the Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II also known as Vikramaditya (Sharma, 1983). Delhi emerges into the tangible realm of history only after 10 A.D. Remains of the Gupta period have been excavated on the Purana Qila site of 4 A.D, and to the same century belongs the Iron Pillar, now at the Qutub, which sings the victories of 'Chandra' or the Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II also known as Vikramaditya (Sharma, 2001). The name Delhi is derived from Dhilli or Dhillika. The name occurs in the Bijolia (Bijhli) inscription dated 1170 A.D as part of the country known as Hariyanka (alternatively, Haritana or Hariyana). It is believed that Prince Dhelu, the King of Kannauj, founded the city of Dhilli in 57 B.C (Firishta, 1812, p. 8) which Ptolemy, the geographer of Alexandria (first or second century A.D.) indicates as Daidala close to Indraprastha (Kaul, 1985, p. xix). The city once again comes to light when the Rajput Tomars commenced their activities in this area. Anangpala I, is supposed to have established himself in this area around 676 B.C. Tomar ruler, Surajpala, is associated with construction of Surajkund (a circular water reservoir dated 686 B.C.) - the next definitive trace of Delhi on a different site, about three miles off Tughlakabad (Spear, 1937, p. 5). Whether one takes cognizance of the Tomar bardic traditions or adheres to the more historically accepted fact of the Tomar-Anangpal II- as the founder of the city in 1020 A.D, the city was no more than a provincial city during the times of Mauryas, Guptas, Harsha and Rajputs till 10 A.D. The reason for its founding in this area is attributed to be a search for safety in the ever-clashing Rajputana domain and also from invaders like Mahmud of Ghazni (Spear, 1937, p. 5).

The location of the city was shifted to the Qutub area where the citadel was known as the Lal Kot in 1052 A.D (or Qila Rai Pithora later, when Prithvi Raj III encircled it with stone ramparts in order to defend it from the Turks), the remnants of which are visible even today. In 1150 A.D, the Chauhans of Ajmer overpowered the Tomars. Vigraharaja IV, the grandfather of the legendary hero Prithvi Raj III (or Rai

Pithora), was the conquerer and Delhi now became an extension of the Chauhan kingdom. The glories of Prithvi Raj III are copiously sung in epic poems as well as folklore but the death of this warrior at Thanesar in 1191 A.D. fighting Mohammad of Ghor from the Shamsabani dynasty of Ghur in Afghanistan paved the way for Delhi now becoming the doorway as well as the capital of Muslim India. With the arrival of Mohammad Ghori and subsequent developments, Delhi transcended its provincial and state or clan headquarter character and went on to assume the status of Imperial capital. To begin with, it became the seat of Turkish and Muslim power when Mohammad Ghori departed leaving behind his viceroy- Qutub-ud-din Aibak- who declared himself independent in 1206 to become the first Sultan of Delhi.

V. MEDIEVAL DELHI

Delhi became the military hub of an army of occupation as the first few Sultans had to fight battle on two fronts- against the Hindus on the one hand, and the Mongol invaders on the other. Despite pursuing the agenda of expansion and consolidation, the Sultans developed the city according to their individual style, temperament and requirement. Qutub-ud-din Aibak retained the site of Lal Kot but extended it further. He built the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and commenced the construction of Qutub Minar. Bazar-i-bazzazan lay in the neighbourhood of the Mosque. The style, however, was raw and bereft of ornamentations, primarily because the artisans were Hindus and Muslim legacy was yet unknown in India (Spear, 1937). Il-tut-mish, his successor, built further on the south side of Lal Kot and tripled the size of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. He built his own tomb in one corner of the extended mosque and also that of his son, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah, some two miles west of Qutub (known as the Sultan Ghari), thus becoming the first person to have constructed a Muslim tomb in India. The style now incorporated Persian style elaborate geometric designs. He established the Madrasa-i-muizi and his daughter, Sultana Razia, established Nasirya College, which was headed by Al-Minhaj Bin Siraj, a native of Georgia. In order to solve the water problem in the city, which was 18 kilometers away from the Yamuna, he constructed Hauz-i-Sultani or Hauz-i-Shamsi from which the citizens could fetch water (Ali, 1986, p. 35). As availability of water was a big consideration for settlement, hence it guided the direction of the growth of the city and a suburb- Ghayaspur (during the reign of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban) developed near the present day Nizamuddin as at that time the river Yamuna took a turn towards the East from this point. (Ali, 1986, p. 36). The Saint Nizam-ud-din established his Jamat Khana in this suburb and his dargah is also located here. After a four year brief rule, Sultana Razia was killed. Her grave lies near Turkman Gate. After successors like Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, Ghiyas-ud-din Balban and Kaiqubad, the Slave Kings, were replaced by the Khiljis in 1290. Balban is credited to have built Kushak-i-Lal (Crimson Palace) which has been recently excavated and Kaiqubad built the Fort Kilughari, about seven kilometers east of the existing city and less than a mile from Ghayaspur. Jalal-ud-din Khilji named his new city Shahr-i-nau. The population seemed to have extended till the Purana Qila. A number of Mongols are also known to have settled in Ghayaspur and Kiloghuri, and their settlement was called Mughalpur. (Ali, 1986, p. 36)

The reign of Ala-ud-din Khilji (1296-1316), the son of the founder, Jalal-ud-din Khilji, is considered to be epochal in the history of the city as first he curbed the Mongols and then in a trail of conquests passing through the Rajputana, he reached as far as Madurai. It is now that Delhi reaches its true status of an Imperial capital. It goes on to become the "metropolis of India, a vast and magnificent city, uniting beauty with strength" as described by Ibn-Batuta almost a century later (Gibb, 1929, p. 194). This is the age of the great poet Amir Khusrau and the Sufi saint Nizam-ud-din Awliya. The glow of the dawn of an empire was also visible in its buildings- the suburb city of Siri built on a plane near the village of Shahpur to fortify the King's new palace- the Hall of a Thousand Pillars or Kasr-Hazar-Suthun- against Mongol threats (Cunningham, 1871). The Mongol threats were indeed responsible for halting the expansion of the city towards the river Yamuna and compelling the Sultan to follow a more self-defense oriented urban policy. Delhi was besieged twice and thus to retain proximity to the rocky zone for building enclosing structures was imperative. Siri was initially called Lashkargarh (or Army Encampment) and later rechristened Darul Khilafa (Ali, 1986: 37). He commissioned the construction of the great tank of Hauz Khas to meet the ever-increasing water needs of the populace, about two miles to the north of Qutub. Another reservoir, Hauz-i-Rani, built by an unknown *Rani* (Queen) was constructed at sometime in the twelfth century. It is mentioned in the chronicle of Minhaj-i-Siraj and the main entrance to the Qutub Complex, the Badaun Gate, faced Hauz-i-Rani.

As compared to Ghayaspur or Kilughari or Siri, Qutub Delhi was *Shahr* or city par excellence and a major commercial center, and it was here that Ala-ud-din created his masterpieces. He enlarged further the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque adding arches and doorways like the Alai Darwaza, the magnificent South Gate of the Mosque, and aspired to erect a new Minar (Alai Minar), double the height of the existing one. It was hardly fifty feet high when his ambitions were cut short by death. He was succeeded by weaklings like Khusrau Shah who was divested of undeserved power by the revolt of his governor, Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1321. The Tughlaqs were essentially soldiers and this is reflected in their political, military as well as architectural pursuits. Ghiyas-ud-din laid the foundations of a new city called Tughlaqabad completed in 1323 on a rocky stretch of hills east of the old city. The site was chosen because of its defensibility, nearness to stone quarries and scarps. To cater to the water needs, the emperor ordered the building of a dam under the fort. Dynastic pride combined with the rise of the Mongol threat prompted this project to be built in a sturdy, practical and 'grim Tughlaq' style (Spear, 1937, p. 10). The city was never a success and had to be abandoned within fifteen years due to, in popular belief, the curse of Nizam-ud-din, and in more realistic analysis, due to water problem and oppressive heat. As Ibn Batuta travelling through Delhi between 1334- 42, reports, "The city of Delhi is made up now of four neighbouring and contiguous towns" (Batuta, 1971). Effectively, now the city sprawled from Tughlaqabad to Siri. There are no records to exactly substantiate the population of Delhi at that time but it must have been sizeable. In 1334, Mohammad Tughlaq, Ghiyas-ud-din's successor, had to fill in the space between Qutub and Siri with a walled city called Jahanpanah as the settlements continued to proliferate in all directions. In 1327, he abandoned Tughlaqabad to shift the capital to Daulatabad in the Deccan. Mohammad Tughlaq forced an exodus of the inmates of the city to Daulatabad as a penal measure for resentful population who hated the loss of its habitation and occupation (Batuta, 1971). He had to shift back in 1334 as managing the northern region of the empire and the external threats on the northern frontiers were difficult from Daulatabad. He had to shift out again due to famine in 1336 to Svargduari on the banks of the Ganges. He built a mosque and a new Royal Palace, now called the Bijaya Mandal, within its precincts. During his residence in Delhi, he built the tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq near Tughlaqabad fort, dargah of Hazrat Nizam-ud-din and a double-storeyed bridge, Satpulah (a water reservoir with seven arches near the Khirki Mosque, now situated near Malviya Nagar) and a small fort near Tughlaqabad called Adilabad. Though Jahanpanah and other structures are a living testimony to the reign of this impulsive and misdirected monarch, yet Delhi could never really recover from the abandonment. Apart from demographic displacement and resource crisis, the political decline of the Sultanate in what is called its Twilight period, the City started going slowly but surely to ruins. (Ali, 1986, p. 41)

The intermingling of the Hindus and the Muslims transformed the Indian subcontinent in a number of ways. Politically, the multi-state polity gave way to a centrally administered political organisation operating through a task force of bureaucracy. A string of military successes especially in the last eight years of the reign of Taj al-Din Ilduz or Sultan Il-tut-mish from 1228 integrating Sindh and Ikhnavati

with Delhi brought the paramountcy of Delhi in the Sultanate within sight (Kumar, 2007, p. 188-191). This was consolidated by measures like firm control on subordinates and preventing formation of alternative sources of power by selectively granting positions ignoring hereditary claims. This was made all the more possible by the large scale immigration of Muslims, displaced from Central Asia, on account of Chingiz Khanid Mongolian invasions, who hardly had any native loyalties. Il-tut-mish did not patronise the Sufis lest their spiritual charisma overshadow the royal one. He, however, befriended the *ulema* as their hold on the minds of the Islamic faithful could be used to legitimise and consolidate his claims to power. The *ulema* were equally keen to reciprocate the honour as the Mongol holocaust in Central Asia had ruined the Islamic havens and Delhi promised to emerge as an alternative sanctuary or *Qubbat al-Islam* (axis of power as well as centre of Islam). In Medieval India, the fundamentally Islamic character of the state and superiority of Islam over other religions were accepted as part of the political practice but as Ziyauddin Barani observed that for practical reasons where Muslims got outnumbered by the Hindus and converted Muslims stuck to their original customs, a state based on *dindari*, or absolute adherence to the *shari'a*, was not possible. Instead, state based on moderate application of *shari'a*, or *jahandari*, was the order of the day in Medieval India (Chandra, 2012, p. 22). From the earliest period of Arab presence in India, the Hindus were treated as *zimmis* or the protected lot on payment of the religious tax of *jizyah*. However, there was a general consensus that the *zimmis* should dress, live and rise in life differently when compared to the Arab counterparts. The theologians perhaps would have liked to see Hindus humiliated and humbled but the rulers realised that such a policy was not pragmatic. As Barani observes in *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Hindus continued to maintain religious and economic autonomy (Siddiqui, 2009, p. 39-55).

VI. URBAN ETHOS IN MEDIEVAL DELHI

The advent of the Muslim populace resulted not only in demographic shifts in old caste centric cities but it also resulted in development of new cities and towns. The Muslim emigrants hailed from highly urbanised environments and diverse cultural traditions. They brought along with them new scientific and technological know-how. As Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui states,

They had an urban ethos, and their mingling with the local people enriched the urban culture on one hand, and paved the way for the establishment of a symbiotic relationship between the followers of anthropocentric and cosmocentric traditions. (Siddiqui, 2009, p. 27)

The 'urban ethos' mentioned by Siddiqui manifested itself in the emergence of several institutions which were instrumental in accelerating the urbanisation process on the Indian subcontinent. Foremost among these institutions were the *Khanqah*, *serai*, *thana* and the practice of slavery (slaves were purchased from countries like Turkestan, China, Africa, East European and Balkan countries). The continuities created by centralised administration and pan-Islamic economy were reinforced by these institutions which attracted peasants, artisans, traders and household workers. These locations became the foci of urbanisation by attaching mosques, madarsas, hospitals, roads and markets to themselves. This became the basis for the *qasbah* culture as satellite settlements prospered along trade and strategic routes (Chandra, 2012, p. 32). Delhi in northern India and Daulatabad in the south performed the role of disseminating urban culture and ethos. As Siddiqui illustrates:

The area around Delhi became the confluence of different cultures as it received settlers from different countries with different cultural traditions. (Siddiqui, 2009, p. 34)

The royal court, the nobility, *madarsas* (colleges), *darul-shifa* (hospitals), bazaars (markets) and *Jama'at khavas* (hospices) located here provided impetus and direction to social change. The towns around Delhi which freely imparted and received this newly developing composite culture were Panipat, Hansi, Thanesar, and Sunam in present day Haryana and Baran, Kol, Qanauj, Meerut, Badayun and Amroha in present day Western UP. Demographic shifts were naturally tied to the tide of urbanisation for with the construction of new power and trade centres, opportunity seekers arrived in large hordes creating thereby integrative and disseminating nuclei of composite culture which was neither religion specific nor community specific but was simply urban culture. The towns, where there was an expansion of the middle stratum of the society due to the processes of urbanisation, became the touchstone of socio-cultural attitudes. This stratum included traders and retailers along with administrative, judicial, religious and cultural professionals. The armed forces, domestic servants, industry workers and the like also joined the rank and files of this stratum. In the eyes of the rulers there was no distinction between Hindu or Muslim members of this stratum as both were to be kept under iron control.

The most significant reason for the newfound diversity in Delhi society was the settling of immigrants from all parts of Central Asia like Eastern Iran, Khwarazm and Afghanistan, driven primarily away by the Mongol invasions. By the middle of 1220s, Mongols had also arrived on the sub-continent. While these immigrants were attracted by economic opportunities present in the new dynasty, the Shansabanid founders of the dynasty found these new entrants valuable for administrative services. From Juzjani's chronicles, it is evident that during the twenty eight years of Muizz-al-Din's campaigns in India from 1178 A.D. to 1206 A.D, tajik, khalaj and Turkish soldiers joined him in the hope of earning a quick buck (Kumar, 2007, p. 114). Muizz al-Din preferred free military commanders from Ghur on more senior positions as commanders. These Ghurid elites were from noble ancestry with their own retinue and clout. They did not have an enduring interest in Hindustan and eventually retreated to their Ghurid appanages. In addition to the Ghurid elite, people of humbler origin were also taken in military service as they tended to have a more serious and long lasting interest in the fortunes available on the sub-continent. The Khalaj military personnel hailed from Garmer-Zamindawar region in Afghanistan and were primitive pastoralists in that region. Despite displaying valour and loyalty, they were discriminated against the Ghurid counterparts. With the attrition of the Ghurid compatriots to their homelands, Muizz al-Din began bestowing free command to slaves and slave-borns. 1192 A.D. onwards, Muizzi expeditions were largely in the hands of *bandagans* (singular, *banda*) or military slaves largely of Turkish ethnicity. Turkish slaves from the central Asian steppes were highly fancied for their combative skills. Those with a religious and courtly preliminary acculturation fetched enormously high prices. In any case, there was a carefully graded system of the slave's training and promotion through which the umbilical cord of native ties was snapped and they started treating slavery as an avenue for upliftment and upgradation. Writes Siddiqui,

...the social stratification that had resulted from the political domination by Muslim immigrant families, which monopolized key positions both in the civil and military administration, could not last long. The progress of learning, expansion and consolidation of the central authority, cultural influences such as the Sufis and the employment of skilled craftsmen in the royal karkhanas, paved the way for the rise of people from unprivileged families in society. (Siddiqui, 2009, p. 99)

The expansion of occupational and opportunity structure, requirement of educated professionals for carrying out the responsibilities of an expanding empire and patronage extended by Sultans and educated professionals to talented people were the main reasons for vigorous reshuffling in the strata of society. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq's reign is especially noted for its merit based approach. The political and economic salience of Delhi also contributed to the ferment in the society. Merchants, scholars and saints alike flocked to this new capital. Habshis, Kalals, Khummars, Araqians, Jains, Khatris, Banyas, Dhusars and Kambos also rose to prominence and affluence.

VII. FLOURISHING ECONOMY

Economically, the internationalist attitude of the Sultans was amenable to the flourishing of a foreign trade under which new crafts developed and indigenous crafts improved. Delhi received an influx of slaves and masons to cater to the spree of constructions. Architects began to arrive from Iran and Central Asia. Apart from these, Delhi emerged as the largest city of the entire Islamic World, thus attracting merchants from India and overseas once peace was established from Sind and Makran in the west to Lakhnauti (Bengal) in the east. 1210 AD onwards it became an emporium of goods from Muslim as well as non-Muslim countries. Minhaj-bin-Siraj describes bazaar-i-bazazan as a market dealing exclusively in cloth leading us to believe that product specific markets thrived in the city. There was a great demand for costly items like silk, slaves, weapons, warhorses etc. (Barani, 1869). The large scale trade transactions between the Delhi Sultanat and foreign countries encouraged monetization and development of livelihood opportunities for people from neighbouring areas. The Sultans and his deputies adopted the policy of promoting foreign trade by offering favourable conditions of commerce and hospitality. The traders were seen not only as the bearers of wealth and treasure in terms of goods but also in terms of information about their home country. Many merchants settled down in India and lived a lavish lifestyle. While Barani shrugs off the merchants as bazaar people not worthy of attention by the aristocrats, Ibn Battuta, however, records that whenever any foreign merchant visited the Sultan's capital, he was accorded the status of a state guest. Along the trade routes, villages prospered into towns and cities by supplying fodder, drinking water and other things of utility to the travelling caravans of merchants on the one hand and by supplying money on interest and farm produce to the consumerist court on the other hand. Villages like Hansi, Sirsuti (modern Sirsa), Kara and Manikpur benefitted immensely from the court generated trade on the Multan-Delhi axis as merchants from Iran, Khurasan and Transoxiana mainly travelled by road. Ports like Lahri Bandar (ruins of which are now located around 28 miles from Karachi) and Cambay in Gujarat attracted trade from Central Asia to Egypt. On the route from Delhi to Deogiri in the Deccan, the city of Chanderi owed its growing size and wealth to transit trade. Within the capital, the Sultan, nobles and traders established *karkhanas* for manufacturing the commodities required for their opulent lifestyles. Skilled weavers and embroiderers were employed in the Sultan's *karkhanas* for creating robes of honour distributed twice a year by the Sultan to his loyal subjects and also clothes for the royal family. Describing the *Sara-i-Adl* bazaar selling items like cloth and fruit, Amir Khusrau says,

As to the commodities of the *Sara-i-adl* and the cloth which is required by the rich and the poor, there are all varieties of cloth from *kirpas* to *harir* which hide the body; from *behari* to *Gul-i-baqli*, which are used both in summer and winter, from *Shi'r* to *galim*, which differ greatly in their fibres; from *juz* to *Khuz* (Chinese Silk), which are similar in their structure; and from *Deogiri* to *Mahadeonagri*, which are an allurement both for the body and the mind. (Khusraw, 1931, p. 13, 14)

With reference to *Sara-i-Adl*, Barani says that it was constructed inside the Badaon Gate near *Kushak-i-Sabz* and stocked silks like *juz*, *khuz*, *Mashru*, *zarbaft*, *Kamkhwab*, *Harir-i-Chini*, besides *Deogiri* and other varieties of cloth. Barani also mentions the *Mandi* which was a mart for grains and the *bazaar-i-aam* which was perhaps the *nakhas* constructed outside the walls of the city where slaves, horses and other animals were sold. (Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, p. 304-6, 309-11) People thronged to the *nakhas* when a new consignment of slave girls, Tartary and Arab horses and *diba-i-Chin* (Chinese Silk) arrived (Isami, 1948, 2009, p. 114-15). Slaves from China, Africa and Europe were available in the *nakhas*. The Sultan purchased Turk and non-Turk slaves and had then trained them in different arts including martial arts. Foreign horses were a priced possession and gift by the nobility. The Afghans developed horse breeding centers in Punjab and also smuggled Tartary horses to meet the endless demand for war horses. The *Khokkars*, *Jats* and *Mandahars* of Punjab also followed suit and were regular suppliers to the *nakhas* in Delhi (Siddiqui, 2009, p. 48). The Tughlaq Sultans started building bazaars on the pattern of bazaars in Khurasan called *Khass bazaars* or *Bazaar-i-Chaharsu* in which a central square radiated shop lined avenues in all four directions. The shops stood on raised platforms and had arched fronts and vaulted ceilings. The name '*Chowk*' later seems to replace the name '*Bazaar-i-Chaharsu*' for this type of construction. Foreign traders brought in other coveted goods as well like musk, silks, fur, bows of poplar root, horns of rhinoceros, *Yashm* (a precious green colored stone), hawks, falcons, camels, Chinese mirror, *Badakshan* rubies, Morocco leather, Syrian glass cups and Rumi brocade. They carried away export items from India like cotton textiles, spices, rice, indigo, honey, ivory and slaves. Through foreign ports like Jerun in the Persian Gulf and Aden in Yemen, countries as far as Mozambique and Egypt in Africa received Indian goods. By the end of the sixteenth century, European novelties were available through Portuguese, Dutch and English trade. European drinking glasses, platters, mirrors and paintings came into great demand. European mechanical inventions, clocks or time or labour saving devices did not elicit much interest but there was an attempt by *Bhimji Parik*, a broker with East India Company, to import a printing press in 1671.

As the above account suggests, the bazaars, overseas trade and foreign merchants played a crucial role in the development of material culture. Artists and artisans especially gained good repute and remuneration in this economy. Barani writes that Delhi craftsmen were peerless and deserved a mention in history (Barani, 1869, p. 365). The weavers and tailors enjoyed admiration and patronage and sometimes misused it to escalate their prices. Apart from the craftsmen, Delhi community was full of other type of helpers like the *kahars* (palanquin bearers), *karawaniyas* (tent bearers), *farash* (for erecting the tents and furnishing carpets) and *dawadawiya* (torch bearers). The catering profession flourished in the cities and towns because of the refined tastes in food blossoming in the court and permeating downwards to aristocracy and the general public. Preparation, serving and partaking of food became an important part of culture. Composite culture was displayed nowhere better than in the kitchen for the cuisines mixed freely to give birth to a unique taste and style which came to be referred as the 'Hindustani style'. Ingredients, techniques, recipes, etiquettes underwent indigenization and cosmopolitanization in a way that the sum could not be identified with the parts. From the reign of Sultan *II-tut-mish* itself, there is evidence that royal magnificence was exhibited through the institution of royal banquets. (Siddiqui, 2009) By the reign of Sultan *Balban*, the tradition was firmly entrenched in the cultural matrix and the extravagant decor, the menu and the entertainment were all accepted as part of the package. The tradition continued uninterrupted right up to the *Lodis* and *Surs* and Sultans of regional kingdoms and affluent nobles everywhere emulated this tradition. Sultan *Balban* introduced the practice of enjoying his daily meals in the company of *ulemas* (religious scholars) and *danishmands* (Muslim jurists).

VIII. CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL HUB

The rulers of *Khwarazm*, *Ghazna* and *Qarakhanids* of *Samarqand* served as role models for the *Shamsabani* rulers to cultivate knowledge of natural and applied sciences which they did by sponsoring research in their own kingdoms as well as assimilating knowledge available in other parts of the world. Scientific pursuits included debating astronomical concepts like geocentric or heliocentric system and delving into astrological mysteries even though forbidden by the Islamic orthodoxy. The educational institutions set up in the Sultanate were theocentric in keeping with the philosophy of Islam. Gradual acquaintance with secular sciences developing in conquered countries urged these institutions to make room for these as well. *Madarsas* sprang up in large numbers under the generous patronage of the Sultan, as Delhi gained a metropolitan character and with the consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate, scholars, patrons, learners all thronged to its madarsas. Sultan *Iltutmish* founded the largest madrasa in Delhi by the name of *Madarsa-i-Nasiria*. He also funded the madrasas being run by

individuals. Some scholars who were well known for their pedagogy and erudition were Maulana al-Saghani, Maulana Burhanuddin Balkhi, Maulana Kamaluddin Zahid, Khwaja Shams ul-Mulk and Sayid Sharafuddin. The education was available to all including low born Muslims as well as Hindus. Along with the Madarsas, the Sufi *Jama'at Khanas* (hospices) also contributed to the advancement of learning. Many of the Sufi saints of the Suhrawardi, Chishti and Firdausi *Sisilahs* conjugated the roles of *ulama* and *pir*. They tutored their *murid* (disciples) in wide ranging subjects like tafsir, hadis and fiqh; syntax, logic and polemics; poetics, empiricism and metaphysics. With the increase in the population of Delhi, the number of Madarsas increased to one thousand. Scholars from neighbouring provinces also visited Delhi. The Islamic base of education was broadened to include Iilm-i-Ma'qul (rational sciences) from the reign of Khaljis including mathematics, *tibb* (medicine), physics and astronomy among others. Barani emphasises the value of history in his Muqadima (Prologue) to *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* for the ruler to update his policies and for the common man for its didactic worth. The Sufi saints also adopted the argumentative technique of the rationalist sciences. Accountants and Secretaries were supposed to undergo special training which included gaining knowledge of the history of Islam, Persian ethico-political works, Persian poetry and *Siyaq* (accountancy).

The processes of dissemination and attainment of knowledge created a need for books which encouraged professions like that of the *katib* (scribe), *jildsaz* (book binder), *kaghazian* (paper maker) and the bookseller. A large number of educated people entered into the remunerative profession of the scribe. Though initially, book culture met with resistance from local population who scratched writings on leaves or slate, but slowly with the spread of Islamic power and influence, this culture gained ground and libraries were available in regional centres as well. Lexicons in Tazi (Arabic), Turki, Mughli (Mongolian), Pehlavi (Old Persian), Afghani, Jahud (Hebrew), and Modern Persian were widely available. The Persian language emerged as the language of the court and the commoners as the Ghurs as well as the Ghaznis spoke Persian. The Sultans commissioned the work of translation of important treatises on statecraft and religion from Arabic to Persian and, over time, works from Indian languages like Sanskrit were also translated. The Persian language also produced original works in fiction, grammar, Sufi sayings (*Mal'ufuzat*) and history. The translations from Arabic and Sanskrit are significant to the evolving syncretic culture in the Sultanate as part of which the language became a felicitous vehicle for carrying religious, intellectual and philosophical ideas. While much is known or seen about Islamic architecture, knowledge about painting and music is limited because of a paucity of extant pieces. Orthodox Muslim belief saw art as heresy and hence, it depended on the court for existence. Mongolian invasion of Iran in the thirteenth century imparted a strong Chinese influence to Iranian art and their landscapes and illustrations remained flat, imitative Chinese stereotypes. Many painters from Shiraz in Iran migrated to Muslim courts in India which resulted in a considerable give and take between Indian styles and Shirazi or Perso-Islamic forms. The Bihzad school, named after its iconic propounder from the Timurid court of Sultan Husayn Mirza of Hirat who introduced a naturalistic style, exerted strong influence in Humayun's time through exponents like Sayyid 'Ali, Mulla Abdu's-Samad and Mulla Dust Muhammad. Abdu's Samad was Akbar's teacher and he, along with Sayyid Ali, were entrusted the task of leading a band of 100 painters for preparing the illustrated translation of Persian classic, *Hamza-nama*. The 1004 page epic so prepared was fifteen years in the making and proved to be an extended and intensive workshop for establishing the Mughal school of painting. Now, the Indian stiffness got conjoined to Bihzad proportion, Mughal-Rajput colour scheme got conjoined to Iranian-Arab backdrop. Elements of faces, bodies, dress, settings, flora and fauna- all were redefined in the Indian context. Later, works like *Tuti-nama*, *Babur-nama*, *Akbar-nama*, *Razm-nama* (all extant) were also illustrated. Akbar patronised indigenous artists and Mughal miniature painting derives its characteristic appeal from the mingling of Iranian and Indian sensibilities. The court painters became acquainted with the European miniature painting when Father Jerome gifted Emperor Jahangir *Dastan-i Ahwal-i Hawariyan*- a miniature painted in Italian style depicting the lives of the apostles. Under Jahangir's patronage, European skills like line shading, chiaroscuro, portrait art, depiction of animal and plant life, real life and emotional moments became extremely popular. Owing to the frequent visits of the Royal Mughal entourage to places like Kashmir, Rajasthan, Bundelkhand and Himalyan foothills on military or hunting expeditions, interesting regional versions of the Mughal style developed in these locations. Different Rajput principalities like Kishangarh, Bundi, Mewar, Jodhpur and Jaipur contributed in their own way to miniature paintings by adapting them to their own skills and tastes.

IX. COMPOSITE CULTURE

Amir Khusrau called India his *watan* (homeland) (Chandra, 2012, p. 19). Nizam-ud-din Auliya welcomed people of all faiths into his fold. Fourteenth century not only embraced the Sufi philosophy, but the other secular traditions of the Bhakti movement also arose. The Sikh religion propounded by Guru Nanak and based on similar tenets of equality, dignity and spiritual nature of human faith, originated near this time and Saints like Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar of Pak Patan and Muiniddin Chishti of Ajmer also found new meaning as messengers of peace and harmony. These mystics began to assimilate local languages, Indian classical ragas, and imagery, drawing synergies across plural traditions. In a society fraught with divides, terror and uncertainty, unorthodox traditions provided a leap of faith through which the precariousness of existence could be somewhat alleviated. In other words, new spiritual movements provided the basic building block and premise for the development of the composite culture mentioned by Satish Chandra. The narrative provided by them underlines the first phase of composite culture, defined by Satish Chandra thus:

Whereas cultures were based on received values and structures, the concept of composite culture was part of a process which evolved in different phases over time and space. It was not a unilinear process, since it was susceptible to flux and to regression. Also, growth of a composite culture did not imply obliteration of separate cultural identities, but enlargement of a common sphere which, in course of time, becomes the crucial or the dominant element. (Chandra, 2012, p. 27)

This common sphere developed largely in the towns. The rural populace (except west Punjab and East Bengal) continued to be Hindu. In the towns, the middle strata comprising of shopkeepers and administrative, professional, cultural, judicial and religious personnel leaned towards a "religion based on love and inner contemplation, as opposed to book learning emphasized by clerical elements". (Chandra, 2012, p. 31) Belonging by birth to either Hindu or Islam religion, they preferred to overcome religious bigotry and cultural apartheid by choosing a middle path in religion.

X. TUGHLAQ TWILIGHT

Mohammad Tughlaq was succeeded by his nephew, Firoz Shah Tughlaq. His interest in administration, archeology and architecture, prompted him to restore the City in many ways. He established his own capital at a site closer to the river. He built the fortress palace of Firozabad in 1354. This resulted in the development of two-cities structure of Delhi with the old one clustered around the Qutub (Dihli-i-Kuhna or the Old City) and the newer one springing around Firozabad (or Firoz Shah Kotla, as it is today called). From there on, it started expanding northwards covering the area between modern-day Firoz Shah Kotla through Civil Lines to Sabzi Mandi. Firozabad was certainly successful in partly compensating for the decay of Qutub Delhi but much more in giving the city of Delhi a more resources and climate

friendly location. All subsequent settlements developed closer to the Yamuna alluvial planes rather than the rocky arid Aravallis (Ali, 1986, p. 42). Firoze Shah is also credited with the building of the first canal in Northern India from the Yamuna near Karnal till Hansi with a branch to Delhi. He transported two Asokan edicts from Meerut and Ambala to Delhi and restored them in a Hunting Lodge (Kaushak-i-shikar near Hindu Rao hospital) on the Ridge and his new city Firozabad (or Firoz Shah Kotla) respectively. He got the upper two storey of the Qutub Minar repaired which had been damaged in an earthquake and also added a cupola on top. He enhanced the already spectacular Hauz Khas pleasure water hole with the building of a sophisticatedly structured Madarsa at one corner. In 1373 and 1374, he built two important shrines- Dargah Roshan Chirag Dilli and Qadam-i-sharif. He also built in 1387, the spectacular and intricately crafted Begampur and Khirki mosques. His tomb is also uniquely designed with sloping walls revealing the grave positioned inside. Although Timur Lame occupied the Qutub area in 1398 and that was the epicenter of much of his activity but Firozabad was the new urban development with intermittent exchange of intrigue and warfare between rival Tughlaq chiefs occupying the old and the new centers in the Twilight period of the Tughlaqid dynasty and the aspirants to power attempting to capture both for establishing control in and around Delhi. Firoz Shah died in 1388. The city, in the hands of warring Sultans and nobles, was left open to despoilment by Timurlane in 1399. With the Tughlaq dynasty coming to an end, the 15th century served as a prelude to the next epochal moment- the arrival of the Mughals in India. The century imprinted Lodhi architecture on the landscape of the city as the Lodhis, or the Pathan or Afghan Kings, combined the Hindu and Islamic features in their architecture. Conjugating Muslim pointed arch with Hindu transom arch, Hindu bell and bracket work with Persian style ornamentation, Hindu lotus with calligraphic script, the proportions were impressive and colours of white stone, red sandstone, black and white marble, came together (Spear, 1937, p. 21). The Sher Shah mosque in the Purana Qila is the crowning example of this architecture as are the Lodhi Gardens and Moth-ki-Masjid located near them.

XI. DELHI: THE STRATEGIC LOCATION

While the Ghaznavids and Ghurids were racially and culturally disparate, yet their interest in India was roused by the descriptions of its wondrous wealth. For the Ghaznavids as well as Ghurids, more than the itinerant Islamic raids, India was a source of instant wealth for the augmentation of meager resources of their kingdoms in Central Asia (Rizvi, 1987, 2005, p. 22). The Ghaznavid's successful raids in the region had strengthened the lore of the Indian Eldorado. While Ghaznavids had no plan of territorial expansion in India, the Ghurids systematically extended their control over the region by capturing the trade routes in Western Punjab progressing from Lahore through Tabarhind (Bhatinda), Meerut and Hansi to Delhi. Subsequently, Aligarh, Benaras, Kannauj, Badaun, Ajmer and Bayana were captured. Gwalior and Kalinjar were seized from the Chandellas. Raids into Gujarat and Bengal completed the dominion over the length and breadth of North India. Hence while India offered unlimited resources, yet, more than the Ghaznavids who got pushed out of the region to be confined around their capital, Lahore, the Ghurids or more precisely, the lieutenants they left behind to manage India, seemed to have arrived at the correct formula of retaining exclusive and unchallenged control over this region. The formula was of achieving an unbroken line of control from their native dominions in Central Asia to the heart of India at least up till the Deccan. Though Mohammad Ghori reverted to his native politics, yet the principle of unbroken line of control was perpetuated by his Turkish beneficiaries as well, because consolidation of political and economic resources was the only way to survive such a state of internal as well as external hostility. The Ghurid possessions in India bequeathed to Aibak and Il-tut-mish kept bouncing out of their control, eager to break free from foreigners with whom they enjoyed neither religious nor regional proximity. Aibak as well as Il-tut-mish had to curb these recalcitrant powers time and again. Not only this, they also had to ward off hydra-headed threats like competing slave officers, potentates like Yalduz in Ghazni, Qubacha in Multan and Ali Mardan in Lakhnauti, Central Asian contenders like the Khwarizmi prince, Mangbarni, and the dreaded Mongol force of Chenghiz Khan. For this, a military encampment was required in a suitable location. Delhi served the purpose especially well not only because of its strategic centrality but also because of its geographical advantages. Surrounded by the Aravalis on the one side and the river Yamuna on the other, its location was highly defensible. No rival aspirant to power in this region could penetrate into the subcontinent without touching the immediate neighbourhood of Delhi. There was abundant availability of building material from the stone quarries of Rajasthan and water resources from the Yamuna to build fortresses.

XII. ARRIVAL OF THE MUGHALS

When Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur turned his attention to India, his motives and methods in many ways duplicated the above story. Upon inflicting a crushing defeat and killing Ibrahim Lodhi on the battlefield, he went on to become the first Mughal emperor of India in 1526. Unlike the Turks, however, Babur chose to establish his capital in Agra where it had been shifted from Delhi by Sikandar Lodi. Babur did not live long to enjoy the rewards of his labour as he died in 1530 but he introduced the Persian style of architecture to India by building many structures in Agra, Bayana, Dholpur, Gwalior and Koil (Aligarh). Only a mosque in Panipat and Sambhal in Rohilkhand are, however, extant today. More than the buildings, Babur is known to have taken interest in laying out gardens and fruit orchards equipped with Persian wheels and stepped wells or baolis (Rizvi, 2005, p. 297). Persian memories were cast in Indian materials as arches, spherical domes, minarets, window screens with lattice work, imposing facades and gateways were adapted to the Indian situation. Babur's son and successor, Nasiruddin Muhammad Humayun, returned to Delhi to announce the inauguration of a dynasty by building a city called Din Panah in the neighbourhood of the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya. Humayun commenced the construction in 1533. The formidable high walls and imposing gates of the Fort or Purana Qila, as it is now called, were complete when Humayun was forced to desert it in 1540 when he was defeated by Sher Shah Suri in the Battles of Chausa and Kannauj. Humayun had also built a resthouse, Nilchhatri, near Nigambodh Ghat during this time. Sher Shah's Delhi or Dilli Sher Shahi extended the contours of Din Panah by adding a citadel called Sher Garh, an octagonal tower called Sher Mandal, and a mosque called Qila-i-Khona to it. As General Cunningham estimates, "The whole circuit of the city walls was, therefore, close upon nine miles or nearly double that of the modern Shahjahanabad." In 1541, he built the dargah of Saint Bakhtiyar Kaki near the Qutub. Along with the Purana Qila, the Lal Darwaza outside it and Kabuli Darwaza, the north gate of Sher Garh, still testify to the ephemeral but eloquent statements of personal and dynastic lineage. Sher Shah's son, Islam Shah or Salim Shah, who came to power in 1545 A.D. after Sher Shah's untimely death, reinforced the Fort walls and built another mosque inside. He also built a fortress, Salimgarh, facing the Yamuna River. Humayun eventually reestablish himself in Delhi and Agra but fell to his death in 1556 from the stairs of Sher Mandal which he used as his library to leave the responsibility of fledgeling Mughal kingdom on the shoulders of his son, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, at the age of thirteen under the tutelage of Bairam Khan. Akbar chose to rule from Agra and the reasons for this choice were personal as well as political. There had been an attempt on his life when he was touring the streets of the city. Also, the task of expanding the empire in north as well as south necessitated his presence more in Lahore and Agra than in Delhi. He built Humayun's tomb in Delhi and Nuruddin Jehangir, succeeded Akbar in 1605, consolidating the Mughal empire and policy. Credited with introducing the

technique of *petre dura*, Jehangir, kept the buildings in Delhi in good repair as it was the birthplace and resting place of many kings and saints.

Delhi remained without imperial presence for around 80 years and as Percival Spear notes, was reduced to a provincial town once again. (Spear, 1937) Economic historians, however, foreground the fact that despite imperial absence, Delhi continued to grow as a centre of trade and manufacture. It might have been eclipsed by the rise of Agra and Lahore but it continued to be regarded as a Shahr (metropolis), Dar-ul-mulk (seat of the empire) and Dar-ul-Khilafat (seat of the King). As Satish Chandra remarks, "many of the towns which had originally been chosen as capitals on account of their strategic importance, became in course of time centers of trade and manufacture, and played a definite role in the economy of the country or the region. Towns of this type showed a considerable capacity to survive or even grow in adverse political circumstances. Delhi, Agra and Lahore may be considered typical cases of this type" (Chandra, 2002, p.106). While Lahore rose to prominence because the north-western outposts of the Mughal empire (Afghanistan, Khurasan) could be effectively from this location, Agra made the Deccan and East-West corridors more manageable. Hence, the new strategic axis at this time was comprised by Lahore-Delhi-Agra together. Delhi-Agra was like twin capitals sharing a connection via the Yamuna. Delhi also figured prominently in the Islamic context and was regarded as *Markaz-i-daira-Islam* (circle of Islam) and *Hazrat Dilli* because of the presence of much revered and frequented pilgrimage mosques and Sufi shrines. When the next Mughal scion, Shah Jahan, thought of building a capital grander than even the capital of Akbar, it were all these factors which made him locate it at Delhi.

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