Department of Distance and Continuing Education
University of Delhi

दूरस्थ एवं सतत् शिक्षा विभाग
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

B.A.(Hons.) English/Political Science/Economics/B.Com.(Hons.)

Semester-I

Course Credits-4

Generic Elective (GE) - History

# DELHI THROUGH THE AGES: THE MAKING OF ITS EARLY MODERN HISTORY

As per the UGCF – 2022 and National Education Policy 2020

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**ISBN: 978-93-95774-42-0**

**Ist edition:** 2022

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**Published by:**

Department of Distance and Continuing Education under
the aegis of Campus of Open Learning/School of Open Learning,
University of Delhi, Delhi-110007

**Printed by:**
School of Open Learning, University of Delhi

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**Credit distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course**

| Course title & Code | Credits | Credit distribution of the course | | | Eligibility criteria | Pre-requisite of the course | Department offering the course |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Lecture | Tutorial | Practical/ Practice | | | |
| **Delhi Through the Ages: The making of its early Modern History** | **4** | **3** | **1** | **0** | | | |

## Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives of this course are as follows:

The objective of the paper is to explore the city of Delhi from its early history to the eighteenth century. The city grew into one of the largest cities in the world and was the capital of some of the great empires. As capital, Delhi profited from continuous immigration, state patronage and vibrant cultural life. The city was not merely dependent upon its rulers for cultural and political sustenance. The course also focuses on Sufis, litterateurs and merchants who also gave the city its unique character and resilience in the face of political turbulence.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

- Get acquainted with the history of Delhi till the early modern period.
- Analyse the processes of urbanization as shaped by political, economic and social changes

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**Unit-I**

# ANCIENT DELHI AND ADJOINING SITES: INDRAPRASTHA, ASHOKAN EDICTS, MEHRAULI IRON PILLAR, LALKOT

**Dr. Ritika Joshi**

## STRUCTURE

1.0 Learning Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Sources for the Study of Delhi's Past
1.3 The Earliest Settlement under the name of Indraprastha-Hastinapur, Panipat, Tilpat
1.4 Political History in Brief
1.5 Delhi as an Historical City
1.5.1 Ashokan Edicts
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1.5.3 Mehrauli Iron Pillar (4th Century)
1.6 Conclusion
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1.8 Answers to In-Text Questions
1.9 Self- Assessment Questions
1.10 Suggested Readings

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## 1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit students should be able to understand:

- The basic geographical features of ancient Delhi
- The elements that went into making of Early Delhi
- The role of myth and history in examining the importance of Indraprastha
- The basic features of Ashokan Edicts and Lal Kot
- The significance of the Iron pillar at Mehrauli



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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Delhi, as we all know, is one of the longest-serving capitals and perhaps one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. Although there is little record of Delhi's ancient history, there is no denying the fact that it was an important political centre, a conglomeration of many cities, which was built, destroyed and rebuilt several times. Besides, the city's immense importance stems from the fact that it has been an important urban centre for so long. Ancient pilgrimage places, abandoned cities, a huge medieval metropolis, a colonial capital, and urban settlements are therefore contained within a quickly expanding and changing modern city.

An attempt will be made to understand the significance of Delhi's geographical terrain and Delhi's political history which would help in comprehending the evolution that this city has undergone over the ages. In short, the present unit will deal with the early history of Delhi with special focus on Indraprastha and the Tomara and Chauhan constructions.

## 1.2 SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF DELHI'S PAST

Delhi has been the site of human settlement from prehistoric times. Although stone tools belonging to these times have been found at several places in Delhi, particularly in the rocky stretches of the Delhi ridge and from Anangpur in Faridabad, no skeletal remains of the prehistoric people have been unearthed so far. Unfortunately, not much can be known about the prehistoric times in Delhi from the available archaeological evidence.

Similarly, the Late Harappan remains found at Bhorgarh (near Narela in North Delhi), Mandoli (near Nand Nagari in east Delhi), etc. tell us little about early proto-historic settlements in the Delhi region. Besides, the archaeological evidence of Delhi's past suffers from another major limitation i.e., the detailed and complete reports of most of the excavated sites have not been published. For example, we all know that the Purana Qila is the only site in Delhi where we get evidence of a continuous history of over 2500 years. Excavations were carried out here in 1955, 1970s and subsequently in 2013-14. Yet the complete Purana Qila report is still unpublished.

In the absence of ample archaeological data, we tend to rely on the ancient literature for information regarding Delhi's early history. However, "as dates of many of the texts are uncertain and the information, they give is often a complex synthesis of mythology and historical fact", not much reliable evidence can be gleaned from them either.

Piecing together the evidence from stone tools, ancient mounds, pottery, monuments,



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sculpture, literature and local traditions, historian Upinder Singh in her work "Ancient Delhi" has ably traced the history of Delhi from the Stone Age to the times of the Rajputs. According to the scholar, the "history of Delhi includes the story of orally transmitted local legends and traditions which are recorded not in written texts but in collective memory".

The physical geography of Delhi region in ancient times is still obscure but we do know that the settlements in the Delhi area were well connected with other ancient settlements of north India such as those of Mathura, Taxila, Varanasi, Shravasti and Kausambi, with the help of the two trade routes of the early historical period namely the Uttarapatha and the Dakshinapatha. The easy access to water, in the form of the river Yamuna, and the city's strategic location on the old trade route helped the settlements of Delhi to flourish.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -1**

1. Delhi has been the site of human settlement from 16th century. (True/False)
2. No skeletal remains of the prehistoric people have been unearthed so far. (True/ False)

## 1.3 THE EARLIEST SETTLEMENT UNDER THE NAME OF INDRAPRASTHA-HASTINAPUR, PANIPAT, TILPAT

Delhi is strategically placed on the Yamuna River, in a broad corridor between the mountains and the desert, through which traffic between Central Asia and peninsular India traversed. The rocky outcrops of Aravalli range were the sites of some of the city's earliest villages. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Delhi region has been populated since prehistoric times; for example, stone age artefacts have been discovered at multiple sites. There is also evidence in the region of the settlements belonging to the late Harappan (Indus Civilization) period that dates to the middle of the second millennium BCE.

The river Yamuna is of the utmost importance to the study of Delhi's ancient past. Extensive excavations done by the Archaeological Survey of India revealed six paleochannels of the river Yamuna. The river Yamuna is further known as a migrating river or temperamental river. It is believed that the river once flowed into Saraswati. Later, as a result of tectonic movements, it left Saraswati and began to flow east, eventually joining Ganga. Approximately 4,000 years ago, Yamuna began moving eastward as it flowed through the hillocks to the south of Delhi.



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Many ancient mounds located in the vicinity of the old and new channels of the river Yamuna mark the ancient settlements located there. Explorations on the IV and V paleochannels of the river Yamuna revealed thousands of stone tools. Further excavations also yielded finished artefacts, waste materials and some materials at various stages of production dating to the Harappan era.

Not only river Yamuna, but Delhi Ridge also has rich ecological history. Thomas Crawley in his book *Fractured Forest, Quartzite City: A History of Delhi and its Ridge,* enunciates the significance of Delhi Ridge. He states, "For the Paleolithic inhabitants of Delhi, one stone would have held particular importance: quartzite. This is the stone from which so many tools were crafted. Quartzite can be found in abundance throughout the Aravalli range, which begins in Gujarat, traverses all of Rajasthan, and ends with the low hills of the Delhi Ridge...quartzite is resistant to erosion, and so it remains important in many parts of the range, including the Ridge. It would have been a beacon to early tribes."

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -2**

1. Delhi is located along the banks of river Ganga. (True/False)
2. Apart from river Yamuna which other geological features are prominent in Delhi?
3. Aravalli range traverses through which places in India?

The origin of Delhi is lost in remote antiquity. Also, Delhi is not the oldest name of the town that first came into existence. The first city of Delhi is believed to be Indraprat or Indraprastha, a city fit for gods. According to legend, the town of Indraprastha was established by Yudhishtara. It was so called, as it looked like Amaravati, the capital of Indra. It is referred to in the Epic [Mahabharata] as Purottamam (chief of towns). It was also known during this period under the alternative names of Sakraprastha, Sakrapuri, and Khandavaprastha; the last owing its origin to the forest in which it came to be established. It was there too that Vajra, the son of Aniruddha, was installed as the king of Yadavas. The later history of the city is obscure though its name Indrapat survived.

Indraprastha is also mentioned as "Indapatta" or "Indapattana" in Pali-language Buddhist texts, where it is described as the capital of the Kuru Kingdom. The Purana Qila is widely believed to be on the site of old Indraprastha. However, there is lack of any conclusive historical evidence in this regard. The "Purana Qila is an important site", says Upinder Singh. She finds it plausible that "Indabara", (possibly derived from the Prakrit form "Indabatta") which finds mention in Ptolemy's *Geography* and is said to be probably in the



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vicinity of Delhi, was the same as Indraprastha. However, despite the finds of some odd pieces of the pottery representing the PGW culture at the Purana Qila, it cannot be conclusively proved to be the site of Mahabharata's Indraprastha. Thus, the remains of the fabled city are yet to be found.

Archaeological surveys were carried out at the Purana Qila in 1954-1955, between 1969 and 1973 and 2013-14. Archaeological digs have uncovered structures from the earliest historical period (about the 3rd century BC onwards). Archaeology reveals that people lived in both mudbrick and fired brick houses and had reasonably complex drainage, with terracotta ring wells that may have served as soak-pits. There are numerous levels of human habitation, with dwellings being constructed in a similar fashion and bricks frequently reused. The site was inhabited, perhaps until Humayun's Dinpanah was built there.

Archaeologist B.B. Lal conducted a trial excavation at Purana Qila, the contested site of Indraprastha, in order to determine the age of the site and determine whether it was associated with the Mahabharata. The 1954-1955 sessions revealed pottery of the Painted Grey Ware (before c.600 BCE), Northern Black Polished Ware (c.600-200 BCE), Shunga, and Kushan Empire periods. The oldest artefact unearthed was a Painted Grey Ware vessel dating back to around 1,000 BCE. The excavations in 1969 and 1970 uncovered Northern Black Polished Ware from the fourth/third century BCE. In contrast to the description of Mahabharata, no structural remains from the Indraprastha have been discovered.

As stated above, the 1954-1955 sessions revealed pottery of the Painted Grey Ware (before c.600 BCE), Northern Black Polished Ware (c.600-200 BCE), Shunga and Kushan Empire periods. Interestingly, the 1969-1973 sessions and the subsequent excavations at the site in 2013-14 by V.K. Swarnkar failed to reach the PGW levels. Evidence of continuous occupation from the NBPW period to the 19th century has been found. The Maurya-period settlement yielded mud-brick and wattle-and-daubhouses, brick drains, wells, figurines of terracotta, a stone carving, a stamp seal impression, and a copper coin. Simple grey ware and simple red ware belonging to a pre-Mauryan era settlement were also found suggesting that there were human settlements in Delhi in the time of the 16 Mahajanapadas.

D. C. Sircar, on the basis of an analysis of a stone carving found in the Delhi area at Sriniwaspuri which records the reign of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, believed Indraprastha was a significant city in the Mauryan period.

There are a number of literary references to the existence of this mythical city and in the literary source its first mention is found in the sixteenth century, early modern source, Ain-i-Akbari written by Abul Fazl indicated that Delhi was originally known as "Indrapat." He also



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suggests that Humayun reconstructed the Indrapat citadel and renamed it "Din Panah." Shams-i Siraj Afif suggests in Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi that Indraprastha was the main controlling centre of a Pargana. Thirdly, a 14th-century medieval inscription discovered in the West Delhi village of Naraina, mentions that the village is located to the west of Indraprastha. After performing the Asvamedha, Yudhishtira poured the oblations into the sacrifice fire at Nigambodh, a site located on the banks of the Yamuna. Fifthly, it is known that Yudhishtira was responsible for the construction of the Nili Chattri Temple in Delhi. In Buddhist Jataka tales, Indraprastha is described as belonging to Yudhishtira Gotra, the clan or Gotra of Yudhishtira. Small scale excavations conducted by the archaeologist B.B. Lal in Tilpat, one of the five villages demanded by the Pandavas, uncovered PGW and NBPW levels proving the site's antiquity. The founder of Archaeological Survey of India, Alexander Cunningham linked Indraprastha to the 'Indrapat' in Ptolemy's Geography.

Two claims made between 1847 and 1950 regarding the origin of Delhi transformed the myth of Indraprastha into history. Experts, historians, and archaeologists as well as non-experts, authors, and tour guides made the initial claim. Both of these groups suggested that Indraprastha was the origin of Delhi. The second claim was that the Purana Qila fort, constructed in the 16th century, was built on top of the ancient but invisible city of Indraprastha. Late 18th and early 19th century biographies of Humayun's contemporaries asserted that he built his fort over the ruins of Indraprastha. This theory gained considerable momentum. Abul Fazl's magnum opus, Ain-i-Akbari, provides the earliest evidence of the phenomenon. Indologists including William Jones supported their arguments. William Jones' 18th-century presentation to the Asiatic Society of Bengal implied that Iran's powerful Hindu monarchy migrated to India and founded the ancient cities of Ayodhya and Indraprastha. It is noteworthy that he just mentioned the cities without identifying their locations.

Asar-us-Sanadid (The Legacy of Heroes, 1854) by Syed Ahmed Khan substantiates the existence of Indraprastha within the present-day Delhi borders. According to him, Yudhishtira founded Indraprastha in 1450 BCE, but he ruled from Hastinapura. Dushyavana moved the capital of the Kurus from Hastinapur to Indraprastha in 1212 BCE due to the rising water level in the Ganges, he adds. In addition, he identifies Anangpala Tomara's Lalkot as the location of Indraprastha. Syed Ahmed Khan asserts that his conclusions are supported by scraps of evidence from the Mahabharata, Shahjahanama, Ain-i-Akbari, and the Old Testament, among others. In addition, he claims to have discovered a Pandava-era brick in Hastinapura and remarked that similar bricks were discovered in various locations around Delhi. The most unbelievable and unexpected fact is that he dated the recovered block to 2,607 BCE, even though the technology available at the time did not allow for such precise

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dating. In the days that followed, it was determined that 2607 BCE falls within the Harappan civilization's timeframe and not the epic period. Therefore, Syed Ahmed Khan's claims can be interpreted as an attempt to impress Europeans with his scholarship and knowledge of Indian texts. In addition, he must have desired a position in the archaeological society and public recognition. However, Syed Ahmed Khan's claims were the first step in bringing Indraprastha's rhetoric into a quasi-historical and quasi-scientific realm. Syed Ahmed Khan provided additional support for the division of Indian history into Hindu and Buddhist eras for the ancient past, the age of Muslim intervention for the Medieval past, and the arrival of the British as the start of modernity thereby heralding the periodization of Indian history on the basis of religion that is no longer tenable.

A series of textual repetitions introduces the urban clamour of Indraprastha, ancient Delhi, to the historical arena. Indraprastha's existence was lent a certain gravitas by its mention in administrative spaces such as history books, archaeological reports, and museums. Indraprastha's status as Ancient Delhi is supported by a variety of literary and inscriptional evidence and brought up by renowned historians, authors, tour guides, bloggers, and even commoners, despite the lack of archaeological evidence. A series of repetitions enabled the relocation of this myth and chain of affective longings into the arena of history and archival truths. The Indraprastha myth might be the most plausible illustration of the illusion of truth.

**Tilpat**

For the sake of peace and to avert a disastrous war, Krishna proposed that if Hastinapur agrees to give the Pandavas only five villages named *Indraprastha* (Delhi), *Swarnprastha* (Sonipat), *Panprastha* (Panipat), *Vyaghrprastha* (Baghpat), and *Tilprastha* (Tilpat), they would be satisfied and make no further demands. Duryodhana vehemently refused, remarking that he would not part with even the tip of a needle's worth of land. In this way, the stage was set for the great war for which the Mahabharata is best known.

According to the Ain-i-Akbari, Tilpat was a pargana under Delhi sarkar that contributed 3,077,913 dams to the imperial treasury and supplied 400 infantry and 40 cavalry troopers. In addition, a brick fort was mentioned at the time.

In the year 1658, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Tilpat was known as Tilpat Garhi. In 1669, Tilpat became the epicentre of a Jat rebellion led by Tilpat's zamindar, Gokula.

**Panipat**

Panipat was one of the five cities (prasthas) constructed by the Pandava brothers during the



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time of the Mahabharata; its historical name was Panduprastha.

The First Battle of Panipat was fought on April 21, 1526, between the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodhi, and the Timurid warlord, Zaheeruddin Babur. This First Battle of Panipat ended the 'Lodi Rule' established by Bahlul Lodhi in India. Babur's force destroyed Ibrahim's far bigger force of over one lakh (one hundred thousand) warriors.

On 5 November 1556, the Second Battle of Panipat was fought between the forces of Akbar and Samrat Hemu Chandra Vikramaditya, a King of North India from Rewari in Haryana who had captured the vast states of Agra and Delhi.

In 1761, the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Marathas led by Sadashivrao Bhau Peshwa of Pune engaged in the Third Battle of Panipat. Ahmad Shah was victorious, but at a high cost of life on both sides. It culminated in the worst loss in the history of the Marathas. The power vacuum caused by the conflict eventually led to the British invasion of India.

**Hastinapur**

Hastinapura translates to "the City of Elephants" in Sanskrit, from Hastina (elephant) and pura (city). Its history dates back to the time of the Mahabharata. According to legend, the city was named after King Hasti.

The earliest archaeological remains of the region date to the Bronze Age Ochre-Colored Pottery culture of the Ganga Yamuna doab. The region transitioned to an Iron Age culture around 1200 BCE. The region was inhabited by the Painted Grey Ware culture during the Vedic Period.

Hastinapur is depicted as the capital of the Kauravas' Kuru kingdom in the Mahabharata. Numerous Mahabharata events occurred in the city of Hastinapur. According to the Mahabharata, their mother, Queen Gandhari, the wife of King Dhritarashtra, gave birth to 100 Kaurava brothers in this city. On the Budhi Ganga near Hastinapur, two locations- Draupadi Ghat and Karna Ghat refer to Mahabharata figures.

The first mention of Hastinapur in the Puranas describes the city as the capital of the empire of Emperor Bharata. During his reign, King Samprati (also known as Samrat Samprati), grandson of the Mauryan Empire's Asoka the Great, constructed numerous temples here. Archaeologist B.B. Lal commenced excavations at Hastinapur in the early 1950s. Although the primary objective of this excavation, according to B. B. Lal himself, was to determine the stratigraphic position of Painted Grey Ware in relation to other known ceramic industries of the early historical period, Lal discovered correlations between the Mahabharata and the material remains he unearthed at Hastinapur. This prompted him to historicize some of the



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Mahabharata's traditions and link the appearance of Painted Grey Ware with Aryans in the upper Ganges basin regions.

According to information gleaned from Ain-i-Akbari, Hastinapur was a pargana under Delhi sarkar that contributed 4,466,904 dams to the imperial treasury and 300 infantry and 10 cavalry troopers and the place was “an ancient Hindu settlement”.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -3**

1. The first city of Delhi is believed to be ....., a city fit for gods.
2. According to the ....., Hastinapur was a pargana under Delhi sarkar.
3. This First Battle of Panipat terminated the 'Lodi Rule' established by ..... in India.

## 1.4 POLITICAL HISTORY IN BRIEF

If the written texts and fragmentary archaeological evidence is to be believed, Delhi was under the name of Indraprastha or Indrapat- one of the earliest Hindu capitals. Delhi has a fabulous antiquity of no less than 3000 years before the Christian era. Prior to the third century B.C., India was ruled by several rival chiefs and monarchs, and it was during this time that Pataliputra and other large urban centers flourished. This city served as the capital of the mighty Mauryan empire. Ashoka (272-232 B.C.) governed from Pataliputra but exercised influence throughout most of the Indian subcontinent. The presence of Northern Black Polished Ware at various sites in the area, particularly the Purana Qila, suggests the existence of Mauryan-era settlements. The most intriguing Mauryan discovery occurred in 1966, when an Ashokan rock edict was discovered at Kalkaji (east of Kailash) in South Delhi, indicating that a significant settlement may have been nearby.

The Delhi-Meerut pillar, was shifted from Meerut, in Uttar Pradesh to Delhi by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq and erected at a location in the northern ridge of Delhi, close to his hunting palace, between the Chauburji-Masjid and Hindu Rao Hospital.

After the decline of the Mauryan Empire, India re-splintered into a collection of powerful provincial rulers. Archaeological excavations at Purana Qila indicate continued habitation during this time period. From 320 to 540 CE, the Ganga Valley-based Guptas dominated all



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of India north of the Narmada through a coalition of tribute-paying states. The literature of the period, which spanned from the plays of Kalidasa to intricate mathematical treatises, provides insight into the sophistication of their court, while the iron pillar, now located in the Qutb Minar complex, testifies their technological achievements.

In the post-Gupta period, the nation dissolved into warring states once more. From 606 to 647 CE, the great ruler Harsha established a tiny Gupta-like empire in Kanauj, roughly 80 kilometers upstream from Kanpur. He was able to solidify control and repel Hun and Arab raids into the northwest for a time. These raids were primarily motivated by a desire for plunder and were comparable to the warfare between neighbouring Rajput states. Three hundred years later, Kanauj became the site of ceaseless conflict between the three principal royal dynasties (Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and the Palas). The Pratiharas ruled a vast territory that included Delhi. The Tomars ruled under them and were likely situated in the Suraj Kund region. Anangpur, a village near Suraj Kund, is believed to have been named after Anang Pal Tomar, most likely the same Anang Pal who flourished in the eighth century.

By the eleventh century, the Tomars had attained autonomy from a greater authority. They had also relocated their capital from Suraj Kund to a new citadel at Lal Kot (where the Qutb Minar was afterwards constructed), where the remnants indicate that there were several beautiful temples and a big tank within the walls. When the defenses were later extended to the east, it is estimated that the city's population increased to between five and six thousand individuals. In 1160, the Tomars fell under the control of their Ajmer-based neighbours, the Chauhans. Under the Chauhans, the Tomar city walls were significantly extended by the construction of the relatively lower Qila Rai Pithora walls, giving the city a total perimeter of approximately 8 kilometres.

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**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -4**

1. ....., the form of pottery most strongly associated with the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages during the first millennium BCE, has been unearthed across a significant portion of northern India.
2. From 606 to 647, the great ruler..... established a tiny Gupta-like empire in Kanauj.
3. ..... became the site of ceaseless conflict between the three principal royal dynasties -Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and the Palas.



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## 1.5 DELHI AS AN HISTORICAL CITY

### 1.5.1 Ashokan Edicts

It was discovered in 1966 and is a significant element of Delhi's history and legacy, as it suggests that a nearby 3rd-century BC community was significant enough to warrant an edict. Among the cluster of religious institutions on the neighbouring hilltops, the Kalkaji Temple is rumoured to be quite old and may have been surrounded by a settlement.

The edict does little more than emphasize the significance of the Buddhist lifestyle: "Two and a half years have passed since I became a Buddhist layman. Initially, I exerted little effort, but over the past year I have grown closer to the Buddhist order, exerted myself with zeal, and enticed others to mingle with the gods. This objective is not exclusive to the powerful; a lowly man who exerts himself can also reach heaven."

The objective of this declaration is to inspire both the humble and the great to exert themselves and to inform those who dwell beyond the borders of the kingdom. Effort in the cause must persist forever, and it will spread among the populace.

Other Ashokan edicts, engraved on pillars, have been discovered at Delhi. The Delhi– Meerut pillar (oposite Bara Hindu Rao Hospital, on the ridge near Delhi University) famously known as Topra Ashokan pillar has already been briefly discussed above. Another one was the Delhi– Topra Pillar found in the Feroz Shah Kotla Grounds. These pillars were shifted from their orginal places (namely Meerut and Ambala respectively) by Feroz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388). The original inscription on the Delhi-Topra Ashokan obelisk is primarily in Brahmi script, but the language was Prakrit, with some Pali and Sanskrit added later. The inscription was successfully translated in 1837 by James Prinsep.

### 1.5.2 Lal Kot

Development of Delhi as an historical city cannot be said to date earlier than the middle of the eleventh century when a Rajput king Anangpala of the Tomar dynasty founded a town, in the area of present Suraj Kund. The Tomars later shifted their capital ten kilometers west where Ananagpal raised the citadel of Lal Kot in AD 1060. It was around the place where the Qutb Mosque now stands.

However, the name Dhilli, or any other 'phonetically' similar version of the city is not traceable in this period. The earliest epigraphic reference to Dhillika, from which the Delhi derived its name, is found in the Bijolia rock inscription in district Udaipur (Rajasthan) issued by the Chahaman Someshwara in Vikrama Samvat 1226 (AD 1169- 70). It mentions about



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the capture of Dhillika by the Chahman ruler Vigraharaj IV.

It suggests that the Tomar capital was originally named Dhillika which gradually became Dhilli.

The oldest city of Delhi, of which traces remain to this day, is enveloped in the city of Rai Pithora. The Chauhan ruler of Ajmer Vigraharaj IV captured Dhillika of the Tomars. His grandson Prithviraj, the famous Rai Pithora extended the ramparts of the Lal Kot, which is known in the Persian sources as Qila-i Rai Pithora. The walls of his city can be traced round the Qutb Mosque. This fort was occupied by Qutbuddin Aibak in 1192. It is here the foundation of Medieval Delhi was laid.

Remains of Lal Kot and Qila Rai Pithora bear testimony to Delhi's past glory. According to Rana Safvi, an author of *Where Stones Speak: Historical Trails in Mehrauli*: "If there is one place in Delhi which gives one a sense of experiencing a thousand years of history at once, it is Lal Kot". She goes on to add that "Lal Kot was Delhi's original 'red fort'. What we call Red Fort or Lal Qila today was called Qila-i-Mubarak".

Lal Kot, literally 'red fort', is a walled bastion or military garrison erected by Anangpal II, the Tomar ruler in the middle of the eleventh century. Excavations were carried out at Lal Kot between 1957 and 1961 and subsequently between 1991 and 1995. While the earlier ones concentrated mainly on the fortification walls, the latter under the direction of Archaeologist B.R. Mani yielded a number of antiquities including pottery, sculptures, copper coins, beads made of terracotta, semi-precious stones, etc. According to historian Upinder Singh, "two cultural phases were identified- Period I belonging to the Rajput phase (the mid-11$^{th}$ century to the end of the 12$^{th}$ century), and Period II to the Sultanate phase (the end of the 12$^{th}$ century to the mid-14$^{th}$ century)", each one further divided into three and four structural phases respectively. All that remains of it are a few mounds and ruins which lie in present-day Sanjay Van, Mehrauli. Most parts of the fortification walls have completely collapsed.

Prithviraj Chauhan extended and fortified Lal Kot as a defence against the Turks; the city then came to be known as Qila Rai Pithora. **Qila Rai Pithora** literally means "Rai Pithora's Fort". The term was first used by the 16th century historian *Abu'l-Fazl* in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, who presents Delhi as the Chahamana capital. In the mid-19th century, archaeologist *Alexander Cunningham* made a distinction between the ruins at the site, classifying them into older "Lal Kot" fortification built by the Tomaras and the newer "Qila Rai Pithora" built by the Chahamans. This classification was however, challenged by certain historians notable among them being Catherine B. Asher. She describes Qila Rai Pithora as Lal Kot enlarged



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with rubble walls and ramparts. According to her, Qila Rai Pithora served as a city, while Lal Kot remained the citadel. Qila Rai Pithora, which was twice as large as the older citadel, had more massive and higher walls, and the combined fort extended to six and a half km.

Catherine Asher states that Prithviraj lost the Chahamana kingdom in 1192 CE to the Turks. It is at this time that the Ghurid governor *Qutb al-Din Aibak* occupied Qila Rai Pithora, and renamed it "Dhilli" (modern Delhi), reviving the site's older name.

Upinder Singh, too, is of the view that Qila Rai Pithora is much larger than Lal Kot (which forms its south-western part). According to her, "the walls, 5-6 metres thick and 18 metres high at places, were interrupted by several gates, only a few of which survive". Excavations carried out in 1956-58 revealed well laid structures, including an oven and floors of houses.

### 1.5.3 Mehrauli Iron Pillar (4th Century)

It is 23ft. 8 inches high and is in the Qutb complex. The diameter of the column at Mehrauli is 40 cm at the base and 30 cm at the top. At the top of the column is an inverted lotus capital, which was probably crowned with a Garuda, Vishnu's vehicle, or another Vaishnavite symbol.

There are several inscriptions on this column, each referring to different kings. The longest inscription found on the west face of the iron pillar talks of a king named Chandra who is said to have originally erected the pillar on the Vishnupada Hill. This king has come to be identified with the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II (375-413 AD). From the inscription (a translation of which is on the wall of the northern colonnade), it is amply clear that the pillar was not built under the patronage of the Delhi Tomars. However, the name of the location remains unidentified. While the difficulty of transferring such a heavy load suggests that Vishnupada was nearby, we would expect an artefact of this calibre to have been created at a major power centre, and we know of none nearby. Therefore, it is likely that the column was shifted from a considerable geographical distance. It may have been an important political, aesthetic, or religious symbol of a prior ruler's domain that was captured by a Tomar to bolster his own authority. The Tomars certainly viewed it as a significant artefact, as did the Turks, who placed it in the middle of their mosque's courtyard.

We can be even more awestruck by the pillar than the Tomars or Turks were, given that the craftsmanship required to purify the iron and cast it could not have been accomplished in the West before the 19th century. It has been established that the column is made of unusually pure wrought iron. Recently, it was discovered that the early iron-making process resulted in a high phosphorus content, which allowed the iron to react with oxygen and hydrogen to form a protective film of misawite, which has been slowly accumulating since its creation.



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A legend claims that an early Tomar king, Anangpala dug up the pillar to test the veracity of a story claiming that the pillar rested on the head of Vasuki, the king of serpents and was immovable. Also, it was prophesied that Anangpala's reign would last if the pillar would stand. When it was drawn up covered in blood, the story was authenticated. The king attempted to re-fix the pillar, but it remained unstable (dhilli) – thus originated the name of the city of Delhi.

Alexander Cunningham, the British colonial archaeologist of the nineteenth century and first director of what is now India's Archaeological Survey (ASI), was told a second, more credible-appearing myth. He was reassured that the pillar's depth had been investigated. It had been found continuous at 35 feet. The base was discovered to be bulbous after a check was ordered, extending only twenty inches beneath the surface.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -5**

1. ..... was the first director general of ASI
2. Mehrauli Iron pillar is in the ..... complex
3. At the top of the column is an inverted lotus capital, which was probably crowned with a Garuda, Vishnu's vehicle, or another ..... symbol.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

Summing up, it is evident that the area in and around present-day Delhi was a site of many ancient settlements, Indraprastha and Lal Kot being the better-known ones. Though it is generally accepted that Tomar Rajput established the first known city of Delhi more than a thousand years ago, one must bear in mind that the story of Delhi goes beyond the Rajputs, both in history and legend. If mythology is to be believed, "Delhi was built on what was once a forest and was home to Pandavas from the epic Mahabharata". The historicity of Indraprastha still remains to be corroborated by the archaeological evidence.

## 1.7 GLOSSARY/KEYWORDS

- Paleochannel– Remnants of once active rivers or streams
- Uttarapatha– Northern high road, the main trade route that followed along the river Ganges



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- Dakshinapatha– Ancient south of the Indian subcontinent
- Rock edict–History/ announcement carved onto cliff rock.

## 1.8 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

**In-Text Questions-1**

1. False
2. True

**In-Text Questions -2**

1. False
2. Aravalli ranges and Delhi Ridge
3. Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana

**In-Text Questions -3**

1. Indraprastha
2. Ain-i-Akbari
3. Bahlul Lodhi

**In-Text Questions -4**

1. NBPW
2. Harsha
3. Kanauj

**In-Text Questions -5**

1. Alexander Cunningham
2. Qutb
3. Vaishnavite

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## 1.9 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Describe the literary and archaeological evidence for Indraprastha. (Section 1.3)
2. Discuss the significance of Mehrauli Iron pillar. (Section 1.5.3)
3. How do you assess the significance of mythology while studying ancient Delhi.



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(Section 1.1,1.2)

4. Throw light on the political history of early Delhi. (Section 1.3)
5. Elaborate the various structures constructed under the Tomara and Chauhan dynasty. (Section 1.5)
6. Short notes: Ashokan edict, Suraj Kund Dam, Stone age sites (Section 1.3, 1.5, 1.2)
7. What are the literary references regarding mythical city of Indraprastha? (1.3)
8. What does archaeology reveal about Indraprastha? (1.3)
9. Short notes– a) Panipat b) Indraprastha (1.3)

## 1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS


- Richard J. Cohen, "An Early Attestation of the Toponym Ḍhillī", Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 109 (1989), pp. 513-519.
- Singh, Upinder. (2006). Ancient Delhi, Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Mani, B.R. (1997). Delhi: Threshold of the Orient; (Studies in Archaeological Investigations), Aryan Books International


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**Unit-II**

# FROM SETTLEMENTS TO CITYSCAPE – UNDERSTANDING THE 10TH TO 14TH CENTURY CITIES OF DELHI

**Dr. Madhu Trivedi**

## STRUCTURE

2.0 Learning Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Development of Cities in Delhi:
  2.2.1 Anangpur Fort
  2.2.2 Dehli-i Kuhna's Masjid-i Jami
  2.2.3 Ghiyaspur - Kilukhari
  2.2.4 Siri
  2.2.5 Tughlaqabad
  2.2.6 Firuzabad
2.3 Factors Responsible for the Growth of Delhi as a commercial Metropolis
2.4 Delhi as Imperial Camp during the Reign of Khalji and Tughlaq Sultans
  2.4.1 Siri – The Imperial Camp under Alauddin Khalji
2.5 The Qutb Complex
  2.5.1 The Qutb Mosque as the Focal Point in the Social Life of Delhi
  2.5.2 Various Interpretations regarding the Qutb Complex
  2.5.3 The Sacred Aura of the Qutb Mosque
2.6 Conclusion
2.7 Answers to In-Text Questions
2.8 Self-Assessment Questions
2.9 Suggested Reading

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## 2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit familiarizes the students with:

- The cities of Sultanate Delhi in the 10th to 14th centuries
- The various reasons for the shift of capitals
- The changing character of the city of Delhi

This unit will study the cities of Sultanate Delhi in the 10th to 14th centuries. It will discuss the various reasons for the shift of capitals and the changing character of the city. Case studies of any two of these cities will be undertaken. Students will be encouraged to plan field trips related to the themes and readings.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As has been stated in the earlier unit, Delhi is not just one urban settlement, but a conglomeration of many urban settlements belonging to different periods. This trait of Delhi was noticed well by an Arab traveler Shihab-al Din al-Umari who visited India during the fourteenth century. He says: Delhi is composed of many towns (integrated into one). Everyone is known by its own name. Delhi, being one of them, has given its name to all of them. It is extensive in length and breadth and covers an area of forty miles…At present, Delhi consists of twenty-one towns.[1] We will briefly discuss the 10th to 14th century cities of Delhi.

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES IN DELHI

### 2.2.1 Anangpur Fort

Anangpur, also known as Anekpur or Arangpur, was founded by one of the two rulers of the Tomar dynasty, who went by the same name– Anang Pal. While Syed Ahmed opines that it was founded by Anang Pal-I, Cunningham subscribes to the view that Anangpur was founded by Anang Pal-II in the eleventh century. However, on the basis of the fragmentary remains (which included a few palaeolithic tools, a circular copper coin, Redware potsherds, etc.) found during the exploration of the site in 1992, it is difficult to assign an exact date to the

[1] Shaikh Shihab al-Din al-Umari, *Masalik al absar fi-mamalik al-Amsar* ,English transl. I. H.Siddiqi and Q. M. Ahmad,"*A Fourteenth century Arab Account of India under Sultan Mmuhammad bin Tughlaq*," pp. 14-15, 35-36.



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construction of the fort.

The topic has been discussed in the earlier unit. In brief, in the middle of the eleventh century a Rajput king Anangpala of the Tomar dynasty founded a town, in the area of present Suraj Kund. The Tomars later shifted their capital ten kilometers west where Anang Pal raised the citadel of Lal Kot in AD 1060. It was around the place where the Qutb Mosque now stands. Prithviraj Chauhan extended and fortified Lal Kot as a defence against the Turks; the city then came to be known as Qila Rai Pithora. **Qila Rai Pithora** literally means "Rai Pithora's Fort".

Thus, the oldest city of Delhi, of which traces remain to this day, is enveloped in the city of Rai Pithora. The Chauhan ruler of Ajmer Vigraharaj IV captured Dhillika of the Tomars. His grandson Prithviraj, the famous Rai Pithora extended the ramparts of the Lal Kot, which is known in the Persian sources as Qila-i Rai Pithora. The walls of the city can be traced round the Qutb Mosque. This fort was occupied by Qutbuddin Aibak in 1192. It is here the foundation of Medieval Delhi was laid.

Inscriptions of the Sultanate period dated 1276, 1316, and 1328 mention the city of Dhilli as part of the country known as Hariyanaka, Haritana and Hariyana. Similarly, a Sufi poet Mull Daud also mentions Firoz Shah as the Sultan of Dhilli, which suggests that the name Dhilli continued in the inscriptions as well as in the vernacular literature for a very long period during the Sultanate period. Dhilli became Dilli/ Dehli because in Arabic and Persian languages there is no provision for compound words like *dh*, *th*, etc.

### 2.2.2 Dehli-i Kuhna's Masjid-i Jami

The settlement-history of Delhi during the Sultanate period dates from 12$^{th}$ century, when it was occupied by Qutbuddin Aibak on behalf of Shahabuddin of Ghor in AD 1192. The oldest city of Delhi, of which traces remain to this day, was enveloped in the Lal kot which is known in the Persian sources as Qila-i Rai Pithora. The walls of this city can be traced around the Qutb Mosque. After the Turkish conquest the city underwent a complete transformation. The Ghorian-Turkish conquerors started building their city around the fortress they had captured. The ramparts of the Qila-i Rai Pithora were pierced with thirteen gates. The principal entrance was known as Badaun Gate. An inscription under the arch of the eastern entrance to the Masjid-i Jami records:

"This fortress (hisar) was conquered (fateh kard) and this mosque was built during the months of AH 587 by the great and mighty commander-in-chief Qutb-ul-Dawlat-wa-ul- Din, (the pivot of the kingdom and the faith), the commander of commanders, Aibek Sultan. May



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God exalt his helpers.

Material from 27 idol temples (but-khana), each of which cost twice thousand into thousand Diliwals (do bar hazar bar hazar diliwaal), have been used (sarf shuda bud) in this Masjid. May Almighty God send mercy on him, who prays for the rest of the builder (baani)."

With the foundation of the "Masjid-i-Jami" (popularly known as Qutb Mosque and Quwwat ul Islam), the Qutb Minar and a new fort (hisar-i Nau) close to the north of the mosque, Delhi gained its "central" or "imperial" status. It was this fort, remarks M. Athar Ali, "which became the nucleus of the Delhi of his successor Iltutmish – the Delhi known Dihli-i Kuhna or Old Delhi in the fourteenth century."[2] It was also known as Qutb Delhi or simply as Shahr. It was at about eighteen kilometers from the river Yamuna.

In his *Tarikh-i 'Alai* Amir Khausrau says that Sultan Ala-ud Din Khalji resolved to make a pair of the lofty Minar of the Jami Masjid, and to raise it so high that it could not be exceeded. He first directed that the area of the square before the Masjid should be increased that there might be ample room for the followers of Islam. "He ordered the circumference of the Minar to be made double that of the height of the old one, and to make it higher in the same proportion, and directed that a new casing and cupola should be added to the old one"[3]

As the population in the city grew, the city faced the problem of water-supply. As a result, suburbs became to grow closer to the bank of the Yamuna. A suburb first developed at Ghayaspur probably during the reign of Sultan Ghayasuddin Balban. Shaikh Nizamuddin Chishti established his Jamaat Khana in this suburb.

### 2.2.3 Ghayaspur and Kilokhari

The new city of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban (ce 1266-1287) known as Ghayaspur where Sufi Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya established his Jammat Khana became Kubba-i Islam. Sultan Balban built many check posts (thanas) and posted Afghans there. But in the succeeding decades when Delhi cities began to shift, the layout pattern began to change. The new cities were divided into mohallas, through the system of kuchahs or lanes and by lanes and each mohalla named after individuals also had state granaries and storehouses that kept war weapons and other machines used during the time of war.

Successor of Balban, Sultan Muizzuddin Kaiqubad (1287-1290) built a new fortified palace city where there is mention of use of marble to break the monotony of stones. From historical

[2] M. Athar Ali, "Capital of the Sultans Delhi during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries", in *Delhi through the Ages, Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, edited by R. E. Frykenberg, p 34.
[3] Shaikh Shihab al-Din al-Umari**,** Vol. III, p. 353**.**



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point of view this marks the growth of 'New City' the Shahr-i Nau while the earlier cities that had developed in the thirteenth century came to be referred to as Dihli-i kuhna or 'Old Delhi' in the fourteenth century.

Sultan Jalau-d-din Firoz Khilji (CE 1290-1296) ascended the throne in the palace city of Kilokhari that eventually came to be known as Shahr-i Nau or the 'New City' and he introduced paintings in his palace city and landscaped gardens and various types of bazaars along with a walled enclosure to protect the city.

### 2.2.4 Siri

In order to protect Delhi from the ravages of Mongols, Sultan Alauddin Khalji fortified a camp at Siri in 1299. As the sources point out, Siri was a plain waste ground (sahra) almost adjoining the old city of Delhi to its north-east; One may point out here that the local memory about the location of such an important military encampment was lost. Cunningham has, however, identified this place with a vast area enclosed by raised mounds of earth and containing the village of Shahpur Jat.

Initially, the settlement of Siri was called Lashkar or Lashkargah (army encampment), while the Qutb Delhi was known as Shahr (city). Later, however, the Lashkargah situated in Siri was named Darul-Khilafa. Yazdi, a fourteenth century historian, has described the location of Siri in his *Zafarnama* to the north-west of Jahanpanah, while Qutb Delhi or Dehli-i Kuhna was located to its south-west. According to him the walled enclosure (Sura) of Siri is roughly "circular". Timur also writes in his memoirs: "Siri is a round city. Its buildings are lofty. They are surrounded by fortifications built of stone and bricks, and they are very strong." This fact is broadly correct to the extent, remarks Athar Ali that it was not rectangular in contrast to the other settlements of Delhi.

That Alauddin Khalji and his successor Qutbuddin Mubarak lived in the palace of Hazar Sutun which had been built by Alauddin Khalji outside the Siri fortress is clear from the account of Ibn Battuta. However, Siri always remained "an isolated extension of Qutb Delhi".

### 2.2.5 Tughlaqabad

The increase in the population of Delhi and Siri was probably the primary cause that led Sultan Ghayasuddin Tughlaq to lay out another city – Tughlaqabad between the year 1321 and 1323 AD. It is situated about nine miles almost due south of Delhi. Its stupendous size, solidarity, and massive strength give it an air of impressive dignity. Unfortunately, the fort is now in such a dilapidated condition that it is difficult to reconstruct the plan of Tughlaqabad.



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Only the fortress wall and a huge entrance have survived the vicissitudes of the time. An idea of its former grandeur may be formed from Fanshawe's account about the Fort. He writes:

"The great size of the stones used in the wall, the triple storied towers, the high parapet, backed inside by terraces with rooms and the lofty gates, are all very imposing. Perhaps the most impressive bit of all is the south-east bastion of the citadel and the east wall above it. The path through the above-mentioned leads past a large reservoir hewn in the rock; beyond it are the ruins of the palace and stables and of a fine mosque. On the west was a very deep (baoli) tank for the use of the defenders of the citadel, and all around are underground passages, off which the servants and the slaves had quarters…The red sandstone gateway, with its sloping face and jambs and head in the earlier Pathan style contrasts finely with the dark walls and rounded towers in which it stands…"

Although Tughlaqabad was planned in a way that it sheltered the palace, the office complexes as well as the city, it only remained a "detached complex to house the Sultan, his retinue and personal troops". The urban activities were concentrated in "Old Delhi" which still retained its status as a commercial as well as an administrative Centre. Tughlaqabad ceased to be the seat of the ruler after the accession of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and it was finally abandoned after the city of Firuzabad was founded by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-88).

### 2.2.6 Firuzabad

A shift may be witnessed in the location of the capital from the rocky zone along the river during the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq, who fixed his capital Firuzabad on the banks of the Yamuna in 1358 AD. Firuzabad was thus a large city which probably spread two miles north and south and appears to have occupied all the ground between Indrapat (Indraprastha, Purana Qila) and the Ridge. It may, however, be pointed out here that "the population extended along the Yamuna River in a fairly narrow belt".[4] Shams-i Siraj Afif, the chronicler of the reign of Firuz Shah tells us:

By the grace of God, the population of Delhi increased so much that the entire space between Indrapat and the Kaushak-i Shikar had been inhabited, the distance between the limits of Indpat [Indrapat] and the Kaushak-i Shikar is five *kurohs*.[5]

[4] M. Athar Ali, "Capital of the Sultans Delhi during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries", in *Delhi through the Ages*, p. 42

[5] A *kuroh* indicates the distance of roughly two and a half mile.



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The Kotla or fortress (Kotla Firuz Shah) was built about 1350-70 on the bank of the Yamuna, the lofty ruins of which are seen adjoining the Ashokan pillar popularly known as Lat. It is one of the two stone pillars of Ashoka which were removed from Topra seven miles south-west of Jagadhari (Umballa district) and planted by Firuz Shah on this spot; the other pillar is planted on the Ridge in the Kaushak-i Shikar. The palace is also known as Jahannuma or the World displayer.

The most notable building in Firuzabad is the picturesque mosque known as the Chausath-khamba (sixty-four pillared), and Kalan Masjid, situated in a part of Firuzabad where the city is overlapped by the present Shahjahanabad; the mosque is now within the walls of this city to the south-west of the Jama Masjid of Shah Jahan. It was built by Khan Jahan, the Wazir of Firuz Shah and was the chief mosque of Firoz Shah's time.

As M. Athar Ali remarks: "Firuz Shah shifted Delhi to a more suitable terrain; henceforth its settlements were to adjoin the Yamuna rather than the Aravalli ridge. Sher Shah's Delhi and Salim Garh, Humayun's tomb and Shahjahanabad, even New Delhi are situated within the alluvial zone. In a geographical sense, as much as historical, Firuzabad set the seal on the decline of Delhi of the Sultanate with its site upon and around the rocky wastes and shifted it compellingly to the lower lands to the north and north-east."[6]

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that Delhi became to grow enormously after it became the capital of the Turkish Empire, popularly known as Delhi Sultanate, under Sultan Iltutmish (1211 –1236). By the third quarter of the thirteenth century, Delhi emerged as a mega city. It was a conglomerate of many settlements, and 'the term 'Delhi' was equally applied to the old city conquered from its Hindu rulers in the twelfth century and to the entire complex towns that had grown up since."[7]

## 2.3 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF DELHI AS A COMMERCIAL METROPOLIS

Many factors contributed to the growth of Delhi. Before we move on to the case study two of the many cities of Delhi in the 13th and 14th century, it would be in order to briefly outline the

[6] M. Athar Ali, "Capital of the Sultans, Delhi during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries", in *Delhi through the Ages*, p. 42.

[7] *Masalik ul Absar*. edited and translated by Otto Spies, text, pp. 11-12, transl, p. 36; The Arab traveller Shihab-al Din al-Umari, who visited India during the fourteenth century, remarks: Delhi is composed of many towns (integrated into one). Everyone is known by its own name. Delhi, being one of them, has given its name to all of them. It is extensive in length and breadth and covers an area of forty miles…At present, Delhi consists of twenty-one towns.



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several advantages that Delhi had to its credit, which facilitated its growth as a commercial metropolis, as well as an imperial camp. As Athar Ali puts it: "The outspurs of the Aravalli range reaching deep into the great alluvial plains of north India have their terminal point in the Delhi Ridge. The Yamuna River is thereby diverted from its seemingly natural south-westerly course (parallel to the Indus tributaries) to an easterly one (parallel to the Ganga) by the interposition of the Ridge under which it flows. Thus, heights for commanding positions, rocks for stone-quarries, and the river for water supply, navigation and defense from the east, all should have combined to attract the attention of rulers and merchants alike."[8] There was an added advantage too, that the Yamuna was navigable the year around as far as Delhi which facilitated the growth of a flourishing riverine trade.

However, it was the Mongol pressure which "contributed in a more positive fashion to Delhi's primacy as the largest city of Islamic East". Sultan Iltutmish extended patronage to men of learning and skills who arrived here from all directions and from all renowned centres of Islamic culture. Through the large number of grants and his unbounded munificence Sultan Iltutmish "gathered together in Delhi", writes Minhaj, "people from various parts of the world…and it became the retreat and resting place for the learned, the virtuous and the excellent [people] of the various parts of the world". The distress caused by Chingiz Khan, who overran in 1220–21 all the major cities of Khurasan: Balkh, Nishapur, Ray, Hirat, Marv, Isfahan, Shiraz, Hamadan, and Tirmiz precipitated this exodus and drove many renowned princes and other men of excellence to the court of Iltutmish from these distinguished centres of art and culture because Delhi had emerged as the safest place in the Islamic East. Isami says that the celebrities from Arabia, Khurasan, China, Bukhara, and other places made a bee-line to the newly founded city of Delhi "as moths cluster round a candle". Juzjani, the author of Tabaqat-i Nasiri, records that Delhi "fast became the refuge of those in Khurasan and Central Asia – bureaucrats, soldiers, scholars, craftsmen, and performing artists – who fled from the Mongol terror; and Iltutmish followed the policy of actively encouraging them to settle in his capital".[9] Delhi's growth during the thirteenth century is largely attributed to this influx.

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[8] M. Athar Ali, "Capital of the Sultans, Delhi during the thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries", in *Delhi Through the Ages, Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, p. 34.
[9] *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, 2nd edition, edited, Abd al-Hayy Habibi, Kabul, 1342-3/1963-4, Vol. I, pp. 417, 444.



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**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -1**

**State whether True or False:**

1. The "Masjid-i-Jami" is popularly known as Qutb Mosque and Quwwat ul Islam.
2. In order to protect Delhi from the ravages of Mongols, Sultan Alauddin Khalji built a walled palace (qasr) which was named Kilokhari.
3. Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq shifted his capital to Firuzabad on the banks of the Yamuna in 1358 AD.
4. Muhammad Tughlaq linked together Old Delhi, Siri and Jahanpanah.
5. The Mongol pressure contributed to Delhi's primacy as the largest city of Islamic East.

## 2.4 DELHI AS IMPERIAL CAMP DURING THE REIGN OF KHALJI AND TUGHLAQ SULTANS

We find that Delhi not only developed as an administrative centre and a commercial metropolis, but a vast military camp, especially during the fourteenth century. The settlement of Siri and Tughlaqabad, were primarily the imperial camps created under Alauddin Khalji and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq respectively. Of the two, we will now case study Siri.

### 2.4.1 Siri – The Imperial Camp under Alauddin Khalji

The Imperial camp – Siri – is the creation of the reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296 –1316). The combination of the Ogetai and Chaghatai hordes in Central Asia under the leadership of Qaidu, gave a new intensity to the Mongol raids into India. There was a sudden increase in the Mongol striking power from Alauddin's reign and the entire Doab, and even territories beyond Ganga, lay within the range of Mongol attacks. Delhi itself became the target of the Mongol attack and was subjected to siege twice. It became necessary to keep the population within fortified walls and for it the vicinity of some rocky zone where the supply of stone was easier would have been an ideal option. Siri had served Alauddin Khalji as headquarters at the time of recent Mongol attacks. Hence, he decided to build here a new fortress which was, however, completed by his successor Qutbuddin Mubarak. Ziauddin Barani mentions in his *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, about it in the following words:



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The terror of the Mongols became all pervasive. Mughal horsemen began to come up to the platform (chabutara) of Subhani, and the villages of Mori and Hadhi, and the banks of the Hauz-i Sultani (Hauz-i Shamsi) – after the disaster of Targhi's invasion – which was a great disaster – Sultan Alauddin woke up from his sleep of negligence and gave up the projects of taking away the army on campaigns and reducing forts (in India). He now built his palace (Kaushak) in Siri and began to reside at Siri; he designated Siri his capital (Darul Khalifa) and made it well populated. He also built up the fort of Old Delhi.[10]

As the sources point out, Siri was a plain waste ground (sahra) almost adjoining the old city of Delhi to its north-east; Alauddin had stationed his army here before entering the walled capital in 1296. He had also come out of the walled capital (Old Delhi), and pitched his tent on this plain at the time when the Mughal commander Qutlugh Khwaja came to make an attempt on the capital.[11] One may point out here that the local memory about the location of such an important military encampment was lost. Cunningham has, however, identified this place with a vast area enclosed by raised mounds of earth and containing the village of Shahpur Jat. His "description meets all the indications of the position of Siri in our sources: an expanse of level ground between Qutb Delhi and Kilokhari. This enclosed area amounts to some 1.7 square kilometers."[12]

Initially, the settlement of Siri was called Lashkar or Lashkargah (army encampment), while the Qutb Delhi was known as Shahr (city). This is borne out by two facts: Shaikh Nzamuddin made a comment regarding the distance between Shahr and Lashkar and is recorded by his disciple Amir Hasan Sijzi in the collection of the Saint's sayings in *Fawaid ul Fuad.* Secondly, Amir Hasan Sijzi, himself an army officer, had built a house in Lashkar, and this enabled him to offer his Friday prayers at the Jami" Mosque in Kilokhari. Later, however, the Lashkargah situated in Siri was named Darul-Khilafa. This fact is recorded by The Arab traveller Ibn Battuta in his *Rehla*, and Ziauddin Barani in *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*. Yazdi, a fourteenth century historian, has described the location of Siri in his *Zafarnama* to the north-west of Jahanpanah, while Qutb Delhi or Dehli-i Kuhna was located to its south-west. According to him the walled enclosure (Sura) of Siri is roughly "circular". This fact is broadly correct to the extent that it was not rectangular in the fashion of other settlements of Delhi.

[10] Barani, pp. 301-2.
[11] Ibid, pp. 246, 254.
[12] For details see Athar Ali, op. cit. pp. 37-38.



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A tank, the Hauz-i Alai or Hauz-i Khas was excavated by Alauddin Khalji to meet the water requirements of Siri and Qutb Delhi. It was located two miles south of Qutb Delhi and was "at some distance from the more closely inhabited parts of the city". Yazdi calls it a "small sea" (daryacha), and he also mentions that it was filled during the rainy season and served to supply the needs of the inhabitants of Delhi for the whole year.[13] An idea of the vast dimensions of the tank may be gathered from the size of its banks which are still traceable in the present day Hauz Khas village. It is square in shape, each side some sixty metre in length, and the total space enclosed by its banks amounted to over seventy acres.[14]

Even though Siri was proclaimed the Darul-Khilafa by Aluddin Khalji, it always remained "an isolated extension of Qutb Delhi". This is supported by the vast extensions made by him in the Jami" Mosque as there was enormous increase in the population of Qutb Delhi since the time of Iltutmish, and the space in the Jami" mosque was no longer sufficient. It is significant to note that he decided to extend the Jami" mosque at Qutb instead of building a new mosque in Siri, which shows that his attention remained focused on Qutb Delhi, where the major part of the population resided. It also shows that Siri mainly remained in the capacity of an Imperial camp, the rest of the activities were stilled centered in the old city. Qutb Delhi was still the "Shahr *par excellence* in contrast to the Darul-Khilafa that was Siri and Shahr-i Nau (the new city) that was Kilokhari". Contemporary sources reveal this fact very well. Qutb Delhi i.e. Shahr was the major commercial centre. The grain market (mandi) was situated here.

However, Alauddin Khalji and his successor Qutbuddin Mubarak lived in the palace of Hazar Sutun which had been built by Alauddin Khalji outside the Siri fortress is clear from the account of a fourteenth century traveller Ibn Battuta. The same traveller also tells us that later Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325 –1351) linked the old Delhi to Siri in 1327 by means of walls which enclosed an area known as Jahan-panah.[15]

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[13] *Zafarnama*, vol. II, pp. 108-9.
[14] Carr Stephan, p. 83
[15] *Rehela*, transl by Gibb, Vol. III, pp.220, 399.



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**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -2**

**Fill in the Blanks:**

1. ..... and ....., were primarily the imperial camps created under Alauddin Khalji and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq respectively.
2. A tank, ..... was excavated by Alauddin Khalji to meet the water requirements of Siri and Qutb Delhi.
3. ..... was the successor of Alauddin Khalji.
4. ....., a fourteenth century historian, has described the location of Siri in his Zafarnama to the north-west of Jahanpanah.

## 2.5 THE QUTB COMPLEX

Qutb Complex has a host of structures that enjoy eminence not only for initiating a building style presenting a blend of Indian and Turko-Persian art traditions and for producing a magical effect on the viewers by the beauty and delicacy of their workmanship, but they also embody the cultural ambience of a period wherein these were created. Amongst the Qutb monuments the Masjid-i jami (Delhi's first congregational mosque), the Qutb Minar, and the Alai Darwaza are particularly significant in the context of the socio-political history of the Sultanate period. The Qutb complex is one of those historical sites that have stimulated scholars to come forward with numerous interpretations regarding its significance as the symbol of the might of Islam, as the evidence of the plunder and proof of the Muslim iconoclasm, and as proclaiming the establishment of new political order. Although new important settlements, Kilokhari and Shahr-i Nau, and Siri came into existence, the city around the Qutb complex retained its importance as the center of urban activities, and as the focal point of the socio-religious life of Delhi. It continued to remain associated with the authority of the rulers of Delhi Sultanate till the early years of the fourteenth century.

### 2.5.1 The Qutb Mosque as the Focal Point in the Social Life of Delhi

The Masjid-i jami, popularly known as Masjid-i Qutb al-Islam or Qutb Mosque, was the

"focal point in the social life of the city's Muslim inhabitants. Apart from its importance as a place of Friday prayer, it was also the place where protests were voiced, teaching and adjudication heard, and festivals celebrated". The main commercial areas, the bazar-i bazzazan or the market of the cloth merchants, was in the south of the Masjid-i Jami, and the



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grain market (mandi) was also in its vicinity. As a result, it was frequented by the Delhi residents in large number in one way or the other in the daily course of their lives. It was a "site of community socialization".[16]

The Qutb Mosque underwent constructions on three different stages. The first mosque was a relatively small rectangular, with a small courtyard, surrounded by colonnaded arcades and it was built of the material derived from plundered temples. Qutbuddin Aibek commenced the construction of the mosque immediately after the capture of Delhi in 1191 –92 and it was completed around 1196. Sometimes later, perhaps in 1199, the huge arched screen was built in front of the west wall of the mosque. The east face of the screen was decorated with Arabic calligraphy in the Kufi and Naskh scripts and verses from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet were interspersed with floral and geometric patterns. This work was evidence of the artistic skill of the native craftsmen who used indigenous tradition for fulfilling the artistic requirements of their masters.

It was about this time that work on the ground floor of the minaret – the Qutb Minar – was also completed. The inspiration of the Minar came from the Ghoride minaret of Khwaja Siyah Posh in Sistan. It was built of red sandstone and inscribed with Quranic inscriptions and eulogies of conquest, and was built to cast the shadow of Islam in the east and the west. It served as a memorial of victory and a vantage point (mazinah) to call the faithful to prayer. Since the tower was singular, and a detached construction rather than being a part of the main edifice of the mosque, Saiyid Ahmad Khan a nineteenth century educationist, does not consider it a mazinah. Saiyid Ahmad Khan is an advocate of the Hindu origin of the tower. Cunningham, however, opines that it was built as a mazinah. In support of his view, he says that Muslims built singular towers in the early phases of the history of Islam, and this practice continued till the early part of the eleventh century.

The second phase of construction within the Masjid-i Jami commenced during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish and was completed around 1229–30, which doubled the width of the mosque. New cloistered courtyards were added to the north, south and the east, in a form, which maintained the overall stylistic symmetry of the mosque. Hence the arches and the additions to the minaret harmonized with the existing architecture. Iltutmish also made his tomb in its close vicinity that goes well with the whole architectural scheme. These additions, however, are largely in ruins today. Only the extended minaret towering over the environs with three additional stories provides an idea of the huge transformation introduced by

[16] Sunil Kumar, "Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi,", in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture*: *Indian and French Studies*, eds. Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau, pp. 41-44.



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Iltutmish in the architectural landscape of the Masjid-i Jami. There is a great debate amongst the scholars whether Iltutmish built the Qutb Minar or "completed" it.

The third phase of building began during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. The additions and alterations introduced in the architectural scheme are also nearly lost today. However, an entrance hall (today called the "Alai Darwaza"), and an unfinished minaret survive providing an idea of the ambitious building plans of Alauddin Khalji. Archaeological evidence also clarify that he extended the mosque until it was twice the size of Iltutmish's, and that the arches on its west wall towered over the older constructions. The girth (belt) of the unfinished minaret also indicates that it would also have been twice the size of the old. The Alai Darwaza stands as a testimony to the quality of construction during the period, and as a superb specimen of the Indo-Islamic style of architecture that developed in Delhi about the beginning of the fourteenth century. It was constructed under the supervision of the immigrant Muslim architects, but it also carried well the indigenous working techniques and motifs which were by then integrated into the vocabulary of the building art. It is built of red sandstone and has a square shape pierced with evenly spaced rectangular windows and doors, which are outlined with marble trimmings and epigraphs carrying Quranic verses and statements commemorating the achievements of the Khalji Sultan Alauddin Khalji.

For Alauddin Khalji the congregational mosque was a symbol of the power and unity of Muslim community. The inscriptions contain Alauddin's most focused ideological statements, "his dramatic public claims to the right to lead and command his subjects most clearly articulated in his monumental architecture and inscriptions."[17] As people in large number frequented this mosque, it was an extremely judicious site for such an endeavour. Three separate inscriptions on the entrance "informed visitors that God has chosen Alauddin as Sultan because he possessed the attributes of the Moses and Solomon, the great keepers of the law in the past."[18] They emphasize on his role as the "reviver" and the "protector of the Sharia", and that God has specially blessed him with his favour.

### 2.5.2 Various Interpretations regarding the Qutb Complex

As has been mentioned earlier, the monuments of the Qutb complex are significant in many ways in the context of Delhi Sultanate. The temple columns, the Hindu and Jain iconic motifs used in the Masjid-i jami appear to be the spoils of war and they provide evidence of pillage and victory in a conflict by people from diverse cultural background and religion. The Masjid opines Sunil Kumar, "conveys the act of destruction. It confirms images of Islamic

[17] *Ibid*., p. 40.
[18] Yazdani, p. 26



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iconoclasm, and fanaticism, and resurrects memories of communal distinctions and strife which became a part of the social history from the period of the Turkish conquest."[19] The deployment of Hindu and Jain temple material within the "Muslim" mosque was the focal point in the writings of the scholars such as Saiyid Ahmad Khan It was also highlighted in the reports of the Archeological Survey of India written in the 1860s, and some years later in the *Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica*, a journal devoted to the study of Persian and Arabic inscriptions, and also in the excavations and conservation efforts of the Archaeological survey of India narrated by J.L. Page in 1920s.

Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Cunningham and Page's analysis suggested that in the usage of the plundered material, which was defaced, inverted, or plastered over, the military commander Qutbuddin Aibek made a statement of conquest and hegemony over an infidel population in north India. The presence of the temple material in their opinion was evidence of a swift transposition of "Muslim Rule" in India; it did not merely proclaim Qutbuddin's conquest of Delhi in 1192, it also served as a statement of Islam's victory over idolaters. As a proof of this assertion Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Horowitz, Page, and other scholars have recorded in their scholarly publications that this congregational mosque was known in the past as Quwwat al-Islam, or the "Might of Islam". It may, however, be added here that medieval Indian sources and inscriptions do not mention this mosque by the name of Quwwat al-Islam.

A shift may be noticed in the methodology regarding the study of the Qutb monuments in the writings of historians like Michael W. Meister, Mohammad Mujeeb, and A. B. M. Husain in the 1060s. They focused upon the architectural characteristics of the monuments and emphasized on the fact that "Islamic inspiration" was dependent upon "indigenous craftsmanship". They thus tried to sideline the effect of plunder and image reflected in these structures. The adaptation of Indian techniques for executing Islamic motifs, arch and dome were taken as examples of "inter-community cooperation and amity". They awarded utmost significance to the presence of Hindu hand in designing and constructing the mosque. However, they continued to accept the interpretation of the mosque as the "Might of Islam".

Scholars like Anthony Welch and Robert Hillenbrand though did not disagree with the "secular" interpretations of the mosque, but they also emphasized on the fact that Muslim patrons never compromised with the indigenous practices and Hindu craftsmen in their service had to conform to a "Muslim aesthetic". According to Welch, who studied the monuments "from the native's point of view", the Qutb Minar performed the "symbolic function of marking the *Dar-al-Islam* (the land of Islam)" that was newly conquered from the

[19] Sunil Kumar, "*The Present in Delhi's Pasts*," p. 4.



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infidels. This towering structure, "most visible to believers and non-believers outside the city walls", carried Qur'anic statements of conquest and warning to the heathen population. It is significant to note that the Qur'anic and hadis inscriptions within the mosque stressed upon the "importance of worship, of adherence to the principles of Islam, and of recognition of the obligations performed by the believers. However, Welch's analysis of the congregational mosque and its epigraphs makes it clear that his approach was not much different from that of Saiyid Ahmad, Cunningham or Page who "emphasized the theme of Muslim conquest and victory symbolized by the Qutb monuments". Welch developed the hypothesis further and argued that the congregational mosque also related the political context in which it was created. The monument was an uncompromising Muslim celebration of conquest, and the building material, architectural forms and epigraphic texts of the congregational mosque asserted the unity and cultural uniqueness of the "Muslims". It distanced the Hindu subjects while creating familiar, reassuring landmarks of Islam's superiority for Muslim resident in a foreign land. From a different methodological track, Welch confirmed that the Qutb complex needed to be understood as the "Might of Islam".[20] The nature of early Sultanate society and polity, to a certain extent, supports this view.

The Qutb monuments are important in yet another way that they symbolically establish the superiority of Qutbuddin's over other military commanders in India. The Persian chronicler Fakhr-i Mudabbir, whose work is dedicated to Qutbuddin, clearly states that Qutbuddin, the favourite competent military slave of Muizzuddin Ghuri was appointed as the sole authority, the viceroy of his master's dominion, in north India. Further, that he was made "the *wali ahd*, to Hindustan, and the lands from the gates of Peshawar to the limits of Hind were given to him… Muizzuddin Ghuri left [him] as his deputy and heir in the capital of Hindustan and sent him back to Delhi."[21] Another chronicler Minhaj Siraj also supported Qutbuddin's claims to be the Amir al-Umara, the chief of the military commanders, in north India. It should be added here that all the commanders of Muizzuddin Ghuri were brave and ambitious, yet there was considerable rivalry and conflict amongst them. Hence Qutbuddin made it a point that his claim as supreme commander should be proclaimed in various ways. Chronicler Fakhr-i Mudabbir recorded this fact clearly. The inscriptions on the main entrance to the congregational mosque, which eulogized his unique prowess and piety as a military commander destroying infidel temples, were aimed at displacing the claims of his rivals. Thus, the Masjid-i Jami served as effective statement of the Turkish conquest.

[20] Ibid, p. 12.
[21] *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*, ed. E.D.Ross, pp. 28-29.



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### 2.5.3 The Sacred Aura of the Qutb Mosque

By the second quarter of the thirteenth century Delhi had emerged as a mega-city, a refuge for various professional groups from all over the centres of Islamic culture of West Asia especially Khurasan, which were overrun by Chingiz Khan in 1220-21. Urban life came to a standstill here forcing scholars, artisans and performing artists to seek refuge at places less badly affected. Delhi had emerged as the safest places for them to go. Sultan Iltutmish extended lavish patronage to them, and as Minhaj writes he "gathered together in Delhi, people from various parts of the world which became the retreat and resting place for the learned, the virtuous and the excellent of the various parts of the world." It became the dais of Muslim community, the sanctuary of Islam in the eastern world.[22]

In the new scenario, when Muslim community expanded in Delhi enormously, there was a need to extend the dimensions of the masjid-i jami. Iltutmish improvised it in a way that its size was doubled. Later, Alauddin Khalji invested huge sums of money in its construction and extension added to and reconstructed it. Their epigraphs show that both took their role as the "preservers of the *Sharia* very seriously". That Alauddin Khalji tried to develop the sacred aura of the mosque may be witnessed in his inscription on the left pier of the south door to the mosque:

He (Alauddin) built this mosque, which is the mosque of the paradise, for saints…and men of piety and a place of assembly of the eminent angels, and an edifice inhabited by the souls of the chief prophets.[23]

Shaikh Nizamuddin Chishti also acknowledged the fact that "Delhi Masjid-i Jami had so much tranquility", though he attributes its credit not to Alauddin Khalji but to the fact that "the feet of so many saints and pious [people] have trod there…"[24] His comment, however, depicts well that Delhi Masjid-i Jami remained a great center of attraction and a revered place for people. During the fourteenth century, however, the tomb of Nizamuddin Chishti emerged as the most venerated shrine in Delhi which overshadowed the importance of Masjid-i Jami. The dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, an important Sufi saint, near the old Masjid-i Jami also emerged as a pilgrimage site during the late fourteenth century.

It is in fact an interesting phenomenon that the term Qubbat al-Islam (sanctuary of Islam) which is figuratively used by Minhaj Siraj in *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* for Delhi during Iltutmish"s

[22] *Tabaqat- i Nasiri*, Vol., I, pp. 441-42; also see Muhammad Habib & K. A. Nizami *The Comprehensive History of India*, vol. V, p. 224.
[23] J. A. Page, *An Historical Memoir on the Qutb*, p. 37.
[24] Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawa'id ul Fu'ad*, pp. 18-19.



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time and afterwards to define the spiritual domain of Bakhtiyar Kaki, was somehow "transformed" into Quwwat al-Islam or the Might of Islam.[25] While describing the congregational mosques of Delhi Saiyid Ahmad Khan mentions that one of the names of the minaret was "Qutb Sahib ki Lath", and among other names Masjid was also called Quwwat al-Islam. These names, as has been pointed out earlier, are nowhere mentioned in the medieval Persian sources, and apparently "belonged to the realm of popular culture".[26] However, this interpretation of the mosque persisted in the popular memory.

We may sum up by saying that Qutb monuments represent their age in many ways. They were associated with the might and power of the Delhi Sultans and represent their ideologies in an effective manner. These also reflect two distinct trends – change and assimilation arising out of coming together of two highly developed cultural traditions.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -3**

1. Which of the following emerged as the most venerated shrine in Delhi in the fourteenth century?
   a) the tomb of Nizamuddin Chishti; b) Masjid-i Jami; c) the dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki.
2. Which of the following terms denotes the "Might of Islam"?
   a) Qubbat al-Islam; b) Quwwat al-Islam

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

One important feature may be witnessed in the lay-out of the cities of the Sultanate period that the sultans of Delhi avoided going further north towards ridge since they wanted to be in the close vicinity of the river. They also took notice of the fact that the Ridge, the northernmost spur of the Aravalli Mountains, affords natural protection to the city from erosion by the river Yamuna. These factors were also considered in the lay-out of the Mughal capital Shahjahanabad which was founded in 1638 AD by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The area of Shahjahanabad was much larger than any of the earlier cities of the Sultans of Delhi or any other rulers on the sub- continent. Shahjahanabad extended for two and a quarter mile along the right bank of Yamuna, the material being procured from the deserted cites of Firuzabad and the Sher Shah's new city. According to Tevernier while the king and

[25] Sunil Kumar, *'The Present in Delhi's Past,'* p. 47.
[26] Ibid., p. 46.



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merchants lived here, the poor and most of the nobles lived in the old city – called in those days as Dehli.

The establishment of the Turkish rule in India while gave rise to a new socio-political system, it also marked the beginning of a new expression in art. The monuments of Delhi depict an uninterrupted development of architectural styles for almost three hundred years under the patronage of the Delhi Sultans.

The style of architecture that evolved during the thirteenth century is called the Indo- Islamic style which was a fusion of two distinct Hindu and Islamic tradition of arts. The Turkish patrons put into effect their own concept and beliefs with the help of the artistry of Indian masons who for centuries were seen in the erection of stone temples of spectacular designs. They had their own ideas about the methods of construction. With the help of their artistic genius, they were able to introduce into the Islamic buildings their own expertise.

The Indian building technique was based on the trabeated system where main openings are made by beams supported on pillars. Stone was used for building purposes. Sculpture of human and animal figures played an important role in the ornamentation of the buildings. On the contrary the Islamic architecture was based on the arcuate system with an emphasis on the use of arches, domes, vaults, and squinches etc. Islam prohibited the depiction of living beings in any form. Hence it gave rise to the art of mural calligraphy, and it also employed arabesque patterns for decorating the buildings.

Under the arcuate system arch and dome were conspicuous. For building a true arch stones or bricks were to be laid as voussoirs in the shape of a curve and bound together firmly by a good building material. This was possible due to the use of lime mortar as the basic cementing material. The arcuate system was introduced in Delhi as early as the close of the twelfth century. However, it also employed the trabeated system. And this is what contributed to the emergence of the new style, the Indo-Islamic style.

The monuments of the Qutb complex provide an excellent study in this regard. The Quwwatul Islam mosque, the first Islamic building constructed in north India, stands here. It represents the first stage of the evolution of the Indo-Islamic style wherein the materials from pre-existing twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples was used. It is considered by a renowned art historian Percy Brown a "rearranged temple" and a "miscellany of art". The arched façade inside the courtyard of the mosque displays the Islamic calligraphic ornamentation at its best. The Qutb Minar is the most spectacular building of its kind and reflects the grandeur of mural calligraphy and the majesty of building art as it developed under the patronage of the Delhi Sultans. The unfinished tomb of Iltutmish is another impressive example of building art of



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the early thirteenth century which represents the second stage in the evolution of the Indo-Islamic architecture. This style was perfected after the arrival of the artisans from West Asia. Buildings of this phase represent the third and the last stage of the evolution of the Indo-Islamic style. Alai Darwaza, constructed by Alauddin Khalji (12-13) is a perfect example of it. As has been pointed out earlier, the Hindu art traditions did not disappear. They were incorporated in the vocabulary of Indian art. Tombs, mosques, dargahs, and forts were constructed in large numbers during the Sultanate period.

## 2.7 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

**In-Text-Questions-1**

1. True 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. True

**In-Text-Questions -2**

1. Siri; Tughlaqabad
2. The Hauz-i Alai or Hauz-i Khas
3. Qutbuddin Mubarak
4. Yazdi

**In-Text-Questions -3**

1(a) the tomb of Nizamuddin Chishti; 2(b) Quwwat al-Islam

## 2.8 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

**Write Short Notes on the following.**

1. Siri (City of Siri)
2. Qubbat-al Islam mosque

**Long Questions**

1. Discuss the changing urban landscape of Delhi during the 10th to the 14th centuries.
2. Examine medieval Delhi's role as a vast military encampment.
3. The meaning of the Qutb complex changed over time. Elucidate.
4. Examine the gradual growth of Anangpur fort based on the information gleaned from the textual and archaeological sources.



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5. Give a brief account of Ghiyaspur and Kilokhari cities of the 13th century
6. Explain the development of Tughlaqabad as an unique urban city of the 14th century
7. Is it appropriate to call Firuz Shah Tughlaq the restorer of the Delhi city? Evaluate from the perspective of development of Firuzabad

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**Unit-III**

# 16TH TO 17TH CENTURY DELHI

**Dr. Madhu Trivedi**

## STRUCTURE

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## 3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, student will be able to know about:

- The structure and meaning of Humanyun's Garden Tomb
- The morphology of Shahjahanabad in the 16th and 17th centuries.



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This unit will explore the structure and meanings of Humayun's Garden Tomb and morphology of the imperial city of Shahjahanabad, in the 16th and 17th centuries.

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Amongst the Mughal rulers it was Humayun who founded his own city in Delhi and named it Din Panah. The construction of Purana Qila, on the site of historical Indrapat was also commenced by Humayun which was, however, later completed by Sher Shah. The mosque of his time within the fort is architecturally important as it represents a style which forms a connecting link between the styles which developed under the Delhi Sultans and the Mughal rulers. Another building of note was his tomb, constructed by his queen.

In the short period, commencing from 1539 to 1545 Sher Shah built his own city between Din Panah, the city founded by Humayun and Firuzabad encircling it with a stone and mortar city wall. The most striking structure was the north gate of the city, known as the Lal Darwaza, which is a testimony of the ambitious layout of the city. There is a corresponding gate (jawab) on the south side, opposite the southwest corner of the Purana Qila. It was probably the entrance to some royal bazaar under the citadel called Purana Qila or the old Fort.

As stated earlier, the Purana Qila is constructed on the site of historical Indrapat. Its construction was commenced by Humayun, and it was completed by Sher Shah. There are two significant buildings within the fort, the mosque and the Sher Mandal. The mosque is architecturally important as it represents a style which forms a connecting link between the styles which developed under the Delhi Sultans and the Mughal rulers. Instead of the sloping buttressed walls and very flat domes and the stern gloomy looks that characterized the structures of the late fourteenth century, the mosques during this period are "generally distinguished by a profusion of decoration and richness of colour, vying in their splendour with some of the masterpieces of the Mughal art…".[27] His son and successor Islam Shah built the fortress of Salimgarh on the bank of Yamuna.

The imperial capital Shahjahanabad was built by Mughal Emperor Shahjahan (1628-58) between 1639 and 1648 and it spread out over a large area along the banks of river Yamuna in the southeastern parts of the Delhi triangle. The out spurs of the Aravalli range reaching deep into the great alluvial plains of north India have their terminal point in the Delhi Ridge which afforded natural protection to the city from erosion by the river Jamuna. Thus, heights

[27] *Delhi the Capital of India*, p. 77.



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for commanding positions, rocks for stone-quarries, and the river for water supply were the factors which should have combined to attract Shah Jahan for the creation of his capital city that virtually overlapped the cities of Sher Shah and Firuz Shah. Other reasons for selecting Delhi were that it enjoyed a reputation as the imperial city and served as the capital of the Muslim rulers for about three hundred years. It also acquired an aura of sanctity as a religious centre.

## 3.2 HUMAYUN'S GARDEN TOMB

The Indo-Islamic architectural style that developed in north India under the sultans of Delhi received fresh inspiration during the sixteenth century from Persian as well as Central Asian centres of art and culture, especially Bukhara and Herat under the Mughal rulers. The Central Asian influence is more pronounced in Humayun's tomb, the first of the grand dynastic mausoleums of the Mughals which was constructed in the early years of Akbar's reign and located on the flat plain of Delhi near the banks of the Jamuna. It is an outstanding landmark in the development of the Mughal style and one of the most beautiful Mughal monuments that stands second only to the Taj mahal in merit. It may be noted here that the formal concept of Taj mahal goes back to that of Humayun's tomb.

The architect of the Humayun's tomb, Mirak Sayyid Ghiyas, also known as Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, was of Iranian descent who worked extensively in Herat and the last bastion of the Timurid art tradition Bukhara, as well as India, before undertaking this project. There is an emphasis in this structure on symmetry in motifs as well as well-proportioned geometrical combinations in accordance with the Persian and Central Asian architectural styles. It set the style of the earlier buildings of Agra, which were constructed during Akbar's reign.

The architectural style of this monument represents 'an interpretation of a Persian conception' which were positively incorporated in the architecture of the Mughals. While the dome and the great arched alcoves in the façade are of Persian origin, the fanciful kiosks with their elegant cupolas depicting excellent stone masonry combined artistically with the finer marble are indigenous in style. According to Percy Brown, 'In spirit and in structure Humayun's tomb stands as an example of the synthesis of two of the great building tradition of Asia- the Persian and the Indian.'

According to Percy Brown the construction of this tomb, appears to have been begun in 1564, eight years after the emperor's death. The selection of this site was no doubt because the city of Dinpanah, or 'World Refuge' founded by Humayun lay in its vicinity.



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The tomb is surrounded by an immense square enclosed garden, which provided seclusion and secured an appropriate setting to the structure. In the middle of the each of the four sides of the enclosure an imposing gateway was introduced, that on the west side being the main entrance, and consisting of a large structure presenting a pleasing view of the tomb structure. Passing through this entrance gateway into the garden its larger area is seen to be laid out in a formal arrangement of square and rectangular compartments with flowered parterres, canals and pathways dividing it into a *chahâr-bâgh* or four-part garden. These are carefully designed and proportioned to form an integral part of the architectural composition. This elaborate garden setting is one of the most remarkable features of this tomb.

The central building stands on a wide and lofty sandstone terrace. The plinth is 6.5 m. tall and 99 m. wide, and the elongated drum and double domes of the monument tower 42.5 m. above the ground. In the middle of the upper surface of the ample platform stands the tomb structure. The interior of this tomb building is not comprised of a single cell, rather it has several compartments; the largest in the centre has the cenotaph of the emperor. The many cells of the monument's plinth and the large corner rooms, however, indicate that the building was designed to accommodate not one but several graves, thus establishing it as a dynastic centre. Light is conveyed in all parts of it by windows fitted with perforated screens. The red sandstone and the white marble are blended well in this monument. The perfection of its proportions, the graceful and bold curves of the arches and above all the grand volume of its double dome make it 'a great work of art'. It synthesized well the Timurid traditions with those developed under the Delhi Sultans.

It may be added here that the use of red sandstone and white marble was not 'an isolated incident' witnessed in Humayun's tomb; its use started long back during the period of Sultan Alauddin Khalji during the fourteenth century, and that it was used liberally in the buildings, which were constructed during the Tughlaq period especially those of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq. Its use may also be seen in the buildings of Sultan Shershah. The fact, however, remains that it was adopted in Humayun's tomb in a more judicious and artistic manner, and gradually it became a distinguishing feature of the Mughal style of architecture that developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another curious aspect of the tomb is its extremely conservative decoration. Stucco and inlaid stone, the principal techniques used to ornament the buildings in the earlier period, are used here sparingly. Compared to the elaborate designs that characterize the decoration of both Sultanate and Timurid monuments, the work at Humayun's tomb is rather austere.

Symbolic associations may also be found in the structure. The most noteworthy of these are the six-pointed stars that mark the spandrels of all the major gates and arches of the tomb.



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The large size and prominence of the stars suggest that they are more than purely decorative. Some have argued that they are tantric symbols of the union of Sakti and Siva. It may be pointed out that its auspicious symbolism in Islamic astrology as a sign reflecting the union of opposing elements was greatly appealing to the Mughals. Even though six-pointed stars appear on many of fifteenth and sixteenth century monuments both in India and elsewhere in the Muslim world, it is only under the Mughals that they are consistently used as isolated motifs invariably placed on entrances to buildings.

The status and the significance of Humayun's tomb is borne by the fact that it was treated ceremonially like the tomb of a Muslim saint. The visit to it was termed as *ziyarat.* From 1568 onwards, even before the completion of the tomb Akbar's historian Nizamuddin Ahmad in *Tabaqat-i Akbari* refers to it as 'the site of the holiest of the tombs.' According to Glenn D. Lorry 'the impressive dimensions of Humayun's tomb can be seen both as a direct response to the vision of kingship expressed by these monuments and as an affirmation of the Mughals power and permanent presence in India.'

To sum up it may be said that Humayun's tomb is a sophisticated and extremely well-executed structure. The combination of boldness and refinement as well as strength, are its distinguishing features.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -1**

**State whether True or False:**

1. Mirak Sayyid Ghiyas, also known as Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, was the architect of the Humayun's tomb.
2. The architectural style of the Humayun's tomb represents 'an interpretation of a Persian conception' which were positively incorporated in the architecture of the Mughals.
3. The garden setting is one of the most remarkable features of the Humayun's tomb.
4. The use of red sandstone and white marble was 'an isolated incident' witnessed only in the Humayun's tomb.
5. Compared to the austere decoration of both Sultanate and Timurid monuments, the work at Humayun's tomb is rather elaborate.



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## 3.3 MORPHOLOGY OF SHAHJAHANABAD

The second phase of building activities in Delhi by the Mughal rulers started under Shahjahan. He had most intense interest in architecture. He replaced many of the structures of Akbar's period in sandstone in the palace fortress of Agra with those of his own design in marble. As Muhammad Salih Kamboh, a contemporary historian tells us, during his daily darbar nobles and princes exhibited their plans for buildings and gardens, and he also used to see in the evening the designs of buildings which were under construction.[28] In 1639, he decided to found a new capital and his choice fell on Delhi.

Shahjahan imposed his own vision on the new capital. Its cityscape centered on the structures of the ruler and his nobles. In this way it resembled Isfahan, the capital of the Safavids which was designed by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas at the close of the sixteenth century. The area of Shahjahanabad was much larger than any of the earlier cities of the Sultans of Delhi or any other rulers on the sub-continent.

The Palace-fortress of Shahjahan, called the Qila-i Mubarak (auspicious Fort, popularly known as Lal Qila) was an overpowering structure which took nine years to complete. It was built on a larger and much comprehensive scale than any other of its kind. It was the residence of the emperor, and the seat of the governmental as well as cultural activities, and contained a variety of buildings, thus forming a city within city. In all there were 32 buildings in the palace-fortress.

The next important structure in Shahjahanabad is the Jami Masjid, which is the largest of its kind in the sub-continent, and one of the finest monuments of Shahjahan's reign.

Shahjahanabad is a gallery of architectural grandeur. Mughal architecture attained its highest degree of perfection and impressiveness during Shahjahan's reign. The ornamentation becomes judicious in his buildings. The buildings of Shahjahanabad also denote a change in the form of arch and dome. The arch is engrailed, the curves of which are foliated by means of nine cusps. This arch later came to be denoted as the Shahjahani Mehrab. The full developed form of dome became a common sight in the buildings of Shahjahanabad. It is bulbous in its outlines and constricted at its neck. Other important architectural developments of the period are the introduction of pillars with tapering or baluster shafts, vaulted brackets, capitals with foliated basis.

According to Stephen P. Blake like many other capital cities such as Istambul, Isfahan,

[28] *Amal-i Salih*, ed. G. Yazdani, Vol. I, p. 248.



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Tokyo, and Peking, Shahjahanabad was also the "exemplar" of the sovereign city model. The sovereign city, Blake opines, was the "capital of the patrimonial – bureaucratic empire, a type of state which characterized the Asian empires from about 1400 to 1750…The patrimonial – bureaucratic emperor dominated the social, economic, and cultural life of the city, and he dominated its built form as well."[29]

Blake further explains that from the micro-perspective the sovereign city was an enormously extended patriarchal household, and the centre of power lay in the imperial palace-fortress. The city was an extension of the imperial mansion as the layout of the buildings and gardens, and the shops in the city copied the layout of the buildings within the palace complex. Similarly, the organization of production and exchange in the city, by and large, followed the same system as was prevalent in the palace-fortress. In respect of social interaction of the inhabitants of the city also the imperial palace set the model. From the macro-perspective the sovereign city was the kingdom in miniature. The emperor intended that his command of the city in respect of power, obedience, resources, and influence should be "symbolic" of the influence that he and his subordinates exercised over empire.[30]

The structure of society in the sovereign cities, states Blake, also followed the pattern prevalent in the imperial palace. There was a pattern-client relationship between the emperor and his nobles, then between the nobles and the members of their household bound the city in a kind of vast extended family. These ties were reviewed and strengthened in the daily rituals of the palace fortress. The cultural life also revolved round the households of the emperors, princes, and great nobles who were well versed in the various arts and crafts, and they provided patronage to arts and crafts, literature, painting, music, and architecture.

Whether these characteristics were present in Shahjahanabad, and the city reflected the power of the Mughal emperor, or how much influence the ruler exercised on the inhabitants of the city is a subject of discussion amongst the scholars. One may point it out here that the great cities in Mughal India were not merely princely camps as Max Waber has visualized based on the account of the French traveller Bernier. Instead, they had a logic and structure of their own. There were certain principles that guided their construction that manifested the power of the ruler in various ways. The capital stood as a symbol of his power and wealth. The planning of Shahjahanabad, undoubtedly, reflected the power of the ruler as many other cities of medieval India, but it also had certain distinguishing features denoting an independent

[29] Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639- 1739.*Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. XII.
[30] *Ibid*., pp. XII-XIII.



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urban growth in many respects.

### 3.3.1 Dominating Ideas in the Founding of Shahjahanabad

Shahjahan had most intense interest in architecture. He replaced many of the structures of Akbar's period in sandstone in the palace fortress of Agra with those of his own design in marble. As Muhammad Salih Kamboh, a contemporary historian tells us, during his daily darbar nobles and princes exhibited their plans for buildings and gardens, and he also used to see in the evening the designs of buildings which were under construction.[31] In 1639, he decided to found a new capital not only for the reason that he wanted to distinguish himself from his predecessors, it was also because due to erosion the scope for the expansion of the imperial capital Agra became difficult, and on festive occasions it was difficult to manage the crowd in the palace-fortress and so on. Shahjahan instructed the architect-planners and astrologers to select a site for his new capital and his choice fell on a spot in the Delhi triangle where the spurs of Aravalli controlled the course of the river Yamuna in such a way that it would not change.

In order to understand the founding of Shahjahanabad one must consider the fact that Mughal rulers conceived the city as the meeting place of the heaven and earth. Their belief originated in accordance with the traditional theories of Islamic architecture, which held that the city lay between the two major poles of man and the cosmos and incorporated the principles of both. The city was therefore a sacred centre that was considered "to encompass the empire and the universe". It was "an organic analogy that controlled the plan and functioning of the urban system". Accordingly, the emperor also had a hallowed significance; he was the "symbolic centre of a nested hierarchy: city, empire and universe."[32] This view is reflected in contemporary historian Muhammad Salih's comment that the four walls of Shahjahanabad "enclosed the centre of the earth".[33]

These ideas were not merely confined to the Islamic architecture only, Hindu architects and builders also nurtured the belief that the capital city was located at the centre of the kingdom, the palace-fortress at the centre of the city, and the throne of the king at the centre of the universe. Many of them were associated with the construction activities of Shahjahanabad.

### 3.3.2 Town planning

Shahjahan imposed his own vision on the new capital. Its cityscape centered on the structures of the ruler and his nobles. In this way it resembled Isfahan, the capital of the Safavids which

[31] *Amal-i Salih*, ed. G. Yazdani, Vol. I, p. 248.
[32] Blake, Preface, p. XIV.
[33] Muhammad Salih, *Bahar-i Sukhan*, Persian Manuscript Collection, Or. 178, British Museum, fol. 203b.



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was designed by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas at the close of the sixteenth century. The area of Shahjahanabad was much larger than any of the earlier cities of the Sultans of Delhi or any other rulers on the sub-continent.

The construction work on the site commenced under the supervision of two renowned architects Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid. However, Shahjahan kept a close watch on the entire project including the locations and building plans of the mansions of the empire. After two weeks, when initial spate work was completed, princes and high-ranking nobles also received plots of land so that work may also start on their mansions. Work on the imperial structures was carried under the supervision of three subadars – Ghairat Khan, Allah Vardi Khan and Makramat Khan. When finally completed the city was magnificent and it was regarded as one of the largest and most populous city in the world. Muhammad Salih is all praise for the city and opines that neither Constantinople nor Baghdad could compare with Shahjahanabad which lacked none of the amenities of life.[34]

The Mughal emperors were consummate masters of town planning especially Shahjahan who had a very highly cultivated aesthetic sense. He planned everything on a large and noble scale. Long before Paris set the fashion (1670 AD) of having the principal streets of the city flanked with avenues, and *boulewards* became the attractive features of the modern towns in modern Europe, Shahjahan had planned in 1638 a beautiful *bouleward* in the Chandni Chowk of Delhi. It had a marked similarity with *Unter-den-Linden* in Berlin founded by Fredrick the Great about 1740, the "grandest example of a *bouleward* in Europe".[35]

The plan of Shahjahanabad reflects both Hindu and Islamic influences. It seems to have followed a design from *Manasara*, an ancient treatise on architecture which contains a semi-elliptical design called karmuka or bow for a site fronting a river or seashore. There was, however, a variation devised in it that on the most auspicious spot i.e. the juncture of the two main streets, the place was occupied by the palace-fortress. In the original karmuka plan the most auspicious place in a settlement was to be occupied by a temple. The selection of karmuk plan symbolically suggests the power of the king.

The planning of Shahjahanabad also reflects the traditional Islamic city plan. According to it the concept of the city lies between the two poles – man and universe – and that incorporates the symbolic principles of both. The city drew on the images of men and universe in a symbolic form. The plan of the city was also seen to emulate the anatomy of men which

[34] *Amal-i Salih*, ed. G. Yazdani, Vol. III, pp. 49-50.
[35] For details see Anonymous author, *Delhi the capital of India*, Revised and enlarged edition of All about Delhi; first published in 1918, reprint, New Delhi, 1997, p. 212.



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"contained all the possibilities of the universe within himself".[36] Elements of cosmological concept of the city found vogue in the working of the Iranian architects of Shahjahan's court. As Blake opines the walled city "symbolized the cosmos and the eight gates the four cardinal directions plus the four gates of heaven."[37]

### 3.3.3 The City Walls and Gates

The city was fortified on three sides by a strong wall and the fourth – on the eastern side – partly by the Fort and partly by the wall. The northern wall of the city extended just three quarters of a mile from the Water Bastion in the east to the Mori Bastion in the west. It was encircled by a massive wall more than 8 metre high and 3.5 metres wide. The total length of the walls exceeded 9 kilometres. The wall was surmounted by twenty-seven towers and interspersed with a number of big gates and entryways at regular intervals. The major gateways pointed to the direction of the important places and regions of the empire, such as Lahori Gate, Kashmiri Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Akbarabadi Gate, etc. Towards the river, where Rajghat and Nigambodh ghat are located, smaller gates were provided for the Hindu inhabitants of the city to visit their places of worship and perform ceremonial functions. Overlooking these gates were chaukis (posts) and quarters for the security personnel. There were two hillocks within the area enclosed by the citadel. On one of these, known as Bhujalal pahari, was constructed the Jami Masjid. It is about 500 metres south-west of the fortress.

### 3.3.4 The Palace-Fortress

The Palace-fortress of Shahjahan, called the Qila-i Mubarak (auspicious Fort, popularly known as Lal Qila) was an overpowering structure which took nine years to complete. According to the French traveller Bernier it was "the most magnificent palace in the East-perhaps in the world". It is built on a larger and much comprehensive scale than any other of its kind. It was the residence of the emperor, and also the seat of the governmental as well as cultural activities, and contained a variety of buildings, thus forming a city within city. In all there were 32 buildings in the palace-fortress.

The extent of the wall of the palace-fortress comes to about 3 kilometres, and it encloses an area of about 124 acres, which is twice the size of the fort at Agra. It is nearly a regular parallelogram with the angles slightly canted off. The high walls are relieved at intervals with towers surmounted by shapely kiosks.

Thousands of stone-cutters, masons, stone carvers, carpenters, gardener-designers, and others

[36] For details see Blake, pp. 33-36.
[37] Ibid., p. 36.



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craftsmen worked on it. The craftsmanship was of such an order that, as Muhammad Salih remarks, "a sharp nail could not be pushed between the stones of the buildings".[38] A large moat, 23 metres wide and 9 metres deep surrounded the fort. It was faced with rough stone and filled with water. And as Bernier tells us, it served to further isolate and protect the imperial household. The palace fortress was separated from the city proper by three gardens namely Buland Bagh, Gulabi Bagh, and Anguri Bagh. None of these can be seen any more.

The palace fortress had four massive gateways: Lahori Gate facing Chandini Chowk was the principal entrance. Behind its deep recessed portal was a massive, vaulted hall which opened into a courtyard. The hall was connected with a square-shaped structure, called naubat-khana through a covered corridor. Shops were constructed on both sides of the corridor and expensive luxury items were available here. It accommodated the entire royal apartments, palace, and pavilions. Outside it were located the quarters, for the armed retainers and edifices for miscellaneous purposes. An important building was *Diwan-i Am*, a large pavilion measuring about 61 metres by 24 metres. It was divided into two parts with a marble baldachin (canopy) set into niche in the eastern wall facing the window. The niche was originally adorned with precious stones. The entire surface of the building was covered with fine shell plaster and ivory polish which gave it the semblance of marble structure.

### 3.3.5 The Principal Buildings in the Palace Fortress

Interior of the fortress was divided into two rectangles. The harem and private apartments occupied the whole area eastward of the bazaar. There used to be at least six marble structures rising above the ramparts and imparting it a picturesque appearance to the front through their balconies, oriel windows, and turrets. The largest structure in this group was Rang Mahal. To its north was located the Aramgah (sleeping quarters). The quarters for the widows and dependents of the former rulers within the fortress were located in a place called Khawaspura.

Adjacent to Rang Mahal was Diwan-i Khas. It was certainly the most ornamented building of Shahjahanabad. It was decorated with inlay of precious stones. Only selected grandees were allowed admission in this building. The imperial fortress contained thousands of persons that included, apart from the household troops of the emperor, merchants, artisans, servants, painters, musicians, and secretarial staff and many more. It also contained workshops, stables, stores, treasury, mint, and weapons. The palace fortress was, thus, a city in miniature as it contained all the elements of a town or city, and it served as the model for the city. The layout of the streets in the city was also in the similar fashion as it was within the fortress.

[38] *Amal- i Salih*, Vol. III, p. 82.



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### 3.3.6 The Jharokha

On the eastern wall of the fort on the riverfront a delicately carved structure (jharokha) was devised where the emperor showed himself every day in the early morning to the people who gathered there in large numbers. Later in the day the contingents of nobles and the rajas passed in review.

The early morning ritual of appearing on the balcony, jharokh-darshan as it is called, had great significance as it brought the emperor in direct contact with his subjects especially the Hindus, "enfolding them into the great household that was empire". Any person, even the meanest or the poorest, could participate in this ritual. This ceremony inspired tremendous awe and respect in the heart of his audience. The Mughal rulers understood the value of the ritual and this custom was followed. The ceremonial in the audience halls strengthened the ties of patron-client relationship.

### 3.3.7 The Important Places and Bazaars in the City

The most important road was one connecting the Lahori Gate of the city wall and the Lahori Gate of the palace-fortress with a minor diversion near the Fatehpuri mosque. The Nahr-i Faiz[39] flowed through the centre of the road between the Fatehpuri mosque and the palace-fortress, and a square was constructed around the central part of the canal. The beautiful reflections on the moonlit nights soon gave it the popular name Chandni Chowk. It is apparent that Chandni Chowk was laid, though on a large scale, on the same plan on which chamans or flower gardens are arranged in front of the Mughal palaces.[40] Both sides of the road were lined with the trees and more than 1500 shops on it, which were either owned by Princess Jahan Ara or Nawab Fatehpuri Begum (one of the queens of Shahjahan). Starting from the side of the palace-fortress the markets were called Urdu Bazar, Jauhri/ Asharfi Bazar and then Fatehpuri Bazar. Another straight road connected the Akbarabadi Gate of the palace-fortress with the Akbarabadi Gate (now called the Delhi Gate) of the city wall, and the market here was called the Faiz Bazar. The road to the Nahr-i Faiz flowed through the centre and both sides of the road were strewn with shops. It is now known Darya Ganj. This road was joined, near the fortress by the road coming from the Kashmiri Gate, on which the main sections of the havelis and mansions of the nobility located. Yet another straight road came

[39] In order to ensure adequate supply of water for the palace and city Shahjahan re- excavated, deepened and extended the canal which was originally constructed by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq during 1355-58, and later on cleaned and extended during Akbar"s time. It was now called Nahr-i Faiz which entered Shahjahanabad near the Kabuli Gate in the north-west. Inside the city this canal measured approximately 8 metres wide and 8 metres deep. It was divided into 2 main channels and 8 sub- channels to provide waters to residences and a number of gardens which were in the city and the suburbs.

[40] For details see, *Delhi the capital of India*, Revised and enlarged edition of All about Delhi, p.113.



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from the Kabuli Gate, running parallel in the north to the Chandni Chowk, it joined the Kashmiri Gate road.[41]

### 3.3.8 The Palaces and Mansions of the Nobility

In the social hierarchy the position of the members the ruling class was next to the emperor. They tried to imitate the imperial establishments in all its departments, though at a much lower scale. Thus, the common features that could be located in these palaces and mansions include naqqar-khana (drummer's chamber), provision of the token-force of armed retainers, gardens, and the harem or the residential apartments for the family of the nobles. These mansions were, however, not the private property of the nobles and could be acquired by the state any time. The residences of the rich merchants and hakims, most of these were havelis or multi-storied structures, were their private properties.

The palaces and mansions of the princes and great nobles dominated the cityscape of Shahjahanabad. The residential complexes were surrounded by high walls and they contained gardens, and beautiful apartments. The account of William Franklin of the mansion of a great noble Khan-i Dauran, the wazir of Muhammad Shah during the eighteenth century, provides an idea of the "size and the complexities" of the residences of these nobles. Generally, a lofty gateway (also called the naqqar khana) housed the soldiers of the daily guard and the household musicians. A large forecourt surrounded by a row of rooms under an arcade lay immediately inside. It contained places for the soldiers and servants of the household and for the horses, elephants, and attendants of visitors. They also contained apartments for servants, clerks, artisans, soldiers, store rooms for different commodities, record offices, treasuries, workshops and so on. The living quarters of the princes and amirs used to be in the inner quadrangle, which was separated from the public area by a high wall.

These mansions were quite large and some of these have space for thousands of people. They were so vast that as Muhammad Salih figuratively says "in the courtyard of each one the area of a city is empty".[42] As Blake remarks, "By virtue of their size and population, these mansions dominated the sectors of the city just as the palace-fortress dominated the urban area as a whole."[43] These households also dominated the urban economy and the process of consumption as well.

[41] For details see, Madhu Trivedi, "Shahjahanabad" in *Historic Delhi*, published by Indian History Congress, 52 Session, 1992.
[42] *Ibid*, p. 45.
[43] *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City…*", p. 49.



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### 3.3.9 The Gardens

Besides the walled area the urban complex extended several miles into the countryside. As Bernier tells us these suburbs were interspersed with extensive gardens and open space.[44] The gardens occupied an important place in the plan and build of the city in Islamic tradition which was introduced here more markedly by the Mughal rulers. Mughal gardens were rectangular, surrounded by high walls broken by gateways, and topped with towers. These were cut by four swiftly flowing canals which divided them into four sections and this devise endowed them the name chahar-bagh. On three sides Shahjahanabad was surrounded by several gardens and mansions of the Mughal princes and nobles. Mention may be made here of Shalimar Bagh, Mubarak Bagh, Roshanara Begum's Bagh, Talkatora Bagh, and Kudsia Bagh.

## 3.4 CONCLUSION

The plan of Shahjahanabad followed that of the palace-fortress. Like it the city was divided into two parts. The palace was the exclusive area and the seat of power. The rest of the urban area was the centre of widespread activities. The streets and markets also followed the pattern of the palace-fortress.[45]

The planning of the city of Shahjahanabad was done in a manner that it symbolizes the hold of the ruler in many ways. However, Shahjahanabad was not solely dependent on the emperor for its growth or sustenance. The urban communities retained "their own distinctive style and character". This is the reason that despite the decline in the power of the Mughal emperor from the middle of the eighteenth century Shahjahanabad continued to flourish as a busy commercial centre. The culture it had evolved continued to thrive. One can see strong traces of this even today in the walled city.

## 3.5 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

**In-Text Questions-1**

1. True 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. False

[44] Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, Delhi, 1972, p. 242.
[45] For details see Stephen P. Blake, "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739", in *Delhi Through the Ages*, edited by R. E. Frykenberg, p. 185.



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## 3.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

**Write Short Notes on the following.**

1. Humayun's Garden Tomb
2. Town planning of Shahjahanabad

**Long Questions**

1. The planning of Shahjahanabad reflected the might of the Mughal emperor. Comment.
2. Examine the significance of Qila-i Mubarak and its relation with Jama Masji
3. Evaluate the role of mosques, bazaars and gardens in the planning and development of Shahjahanabad
4. Discuss the importance of Humayun's tomb as the beginning of new style of tomb architecture with elements borrowed from Timurid traditions
5. Explain how Humayun's tomb represents the dynastic and spiritual powers of the Mughal Emperor

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**Unit-IV**

# 18TH CENTURY DELHI: UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

**Dr. Madhu Trivedi**

## STRUCTURE

4.0 Learning Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Development of Art and Culture in Delhi under the Mughals
  4.2.1 Painting
  4.2.2 Music
  4.2.3 The Literary Culture
4.3 Delhi as a Flourishing Commercial Centre (Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century)
  4.3.1 The Bazaars of Delhi
  4.3.2 Faiz Bazaar and Chandni Chowk
  4.3.3 Craft Production
  4.3.4 Chhattas
4.4 Development of Musical Arts in Shahjahanabad
  4.4.1 Change in Patronage Pattern
  4.4.2 Decline in the Popularity of Dhrupad
  4.4.3 The Khayal-gayaki
  4.4.4 Kabitt (Kavitt)
  4.4.5 Tarana
  4.4.6 Jangla
  4.4.7 Qawwali
  4.4.8 Marsiya-khwani

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4.5 Instrumental Music

4.6 Dance Forms

4.7 Bhandeti

4.8 Conclusion

4.9 Answers to In-text Questions

4.10 Self-Assessment Questions

4.11 Suggested Readings

## 4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit the students will be able to understand:

- The developments in Shahjahanabad in the 18th Century.
- The changes that took place in the society as a result of the changing political scenario.

This unit will discuss the developments in Shahjahanabad in the 18th century. The 'decline' in the authority meant turbulence in the city, but it also empowered new groups of people and created a cultural and social dynamism that was embraced by some and seen as a challenge by others.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

There was a temporary setback to Delhi's glory as an Imperial city after the shift of capital to Agra by Sultan Sikandar Lodi, which assumed significance as the cultural node under the great Mughals. However, from about the middle of the seventeenth century, artistic and cultural activities again shifted from Agra to Shahjahanabad, the new capital city founded by Shahjahan (1628 –1658) in the year 1638. The shift of the capital paved the way for the confluence of the rich classical traditions of the Mughal court with the cultural traditions of Delhi region. The Mughal rulers inherited Persian and Timurid sense of artistic appreciation and valued Indian legacies as well, which were synthesized to produce a distinct Mughal identity. These traditions were transmitted in Delhi during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719 –1748).



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## 4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ART AND CULTURE IN DELHI UNDER THE MUGHALS

During Muhammad Shah's reign the Qila-i Mubarak (Lal Qila) had become the centre of cultural activities, and Shahjahanabad, popularly known as Dehli, emerged as the leading centre of Mughal culture in north India during the early eighteenth century. The percolation of court culture and elevation of popular culture were the important factors which contributed to the cultural setting of the period. While some of the arts, and music also, lost their sophistication and elitism to a certain extent, the exclusive court techniques and performance traditions became accessible to a wider group.

There was, undoubtedly, a crucial diminution in court patronage after the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739) who deprived the Mughal ruler of his immense riches. The emperor consequently abstained from musical soirees and cultural gatherings and suspended them at court. However, there was no dearth of cultural activities and festivities in the city.

### 4.2.1 Painting

The reign of Muhammad Shah is also noted for the revival of Mughal painting and the development of a style known as *Dehli qalam*. The paintings of this phase show that Mughal painting got a second life in the post-Aurangzeb period. The finest and most original examples of *qalam* are the official portraits and court scenes in which the emperor appears to be the focus of attention. Churaman is the leading painter of his reign. The artists of the eighteenth century concentrated mainly in preparing the copies of the paintings of the earlier period in an excellent manner. Preparation of albums and illustrated manuscripts was a profitable trade. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century many Mughal painters shifted to provincial kingdoms such as Murshidabad, Faizabad. The Mughal tradition during its decay gave way to the emergence of a new style which represented the influence of the west and it catered mainly to the demands of the Europeans.

### 4.2.2 Music

Music played its own role in enlivening the cultural atmosphere. The musical arts received patronage of an exceptional nature not only from the court and the elite circles but also from a large section of the local populace. Dancing and singing became a favourite pastime as well as an integral part of all the festivities. No occasion of mirth or festivity was ever wanting in these two arts. Sufi Assemblies (mehfil-i sama) were regularly arranged at the tombs and shrines of saints on Urs and certain dates of the month, especially the nauchandi. Even for



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ceremonies of sorrow such as Muharram there had developed a special kind of music recitation called marsiya-khwani. As a result, the number of professional artistes burgeoned. Many outstanding singers flourished during this period. The number of popular artistes was beyond count.

During this period dhrupad declined considerably in popularity, while khayal singing gained in vogue. Other popular musical forms were kavitt, jangla, tarana and many more. Qawwali was integral to Sufi assemblies (mehfil-i sama), Urs and other festivities. This period witnessed a full fruition of the skill of qawwals. Marsiya khwani attained the status of a musical and literary form during the eighteenth century.[46]

This period witnessed a great rise in the status of performing women. They were no longer supportive artistes to the male performers of their communities. Instead, they began to perform independently, and their talents were recognized. The courtesans were highly sophisticated and most of them commanded enormous respect in high society. These courtesans lived in great style and most of them were well versed in the manners and courtesies to be observed in the mehfils. Many of the courtesans were learned and subtle orators, eloquent in speech and they began to dominate social life in the manner of the courtesans of the early medieval period.

### 4.2.3 The Literary Culture

The reign of Muhammad Shah also witnessed the emergence of Urdu as a literary language which is an example of cultural synthesis. Amongst the early promoters of Urdu poetry, the name of Sirajuddin Ali Khan Arzu (popularly known as Khan-i Arzu) is worth mentioning. He was a great Persian scholar of the early eighteenth century. Although he himself did not compile any divan in Urdu, but he encouraged his numerous pupils like Abru, mazmun, Yakrang, and Tek Chand Bahar etc. to shift from Persian to Urdu. The popularity of Urdu as a literary language arose to such an extent that it undermined the status of Braj Bhasha and Persian as a medium of poetry. Persian, however, continued to be used for scholarly and other serious compositions in prose wherein sophistication and elitism was maintained. Even the biographical accounts (tazkiras) of poets were written by the accomplished poets in Persian.

Urdu poetry bloomed in Delhi during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The institution of mushaira (literary gathering) greatly facilitated the growth of Urdu poetry. These were held in the residences of the poets, in the fairs, and in the *qahva-khanas*. The Urdu poetry was

[46] Marsiya was the funeral eulogium or oration sung during Mahurram in commemoration of Imam Hasan and Husain. The tuneful recitation of marsiya is called marsiya-khwani.



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nurtured by poets like Mir Taqi Mir, Mirza Rafi Sauda, and Khwaja Mir Dard. They took great pain in refining the language. Urdu ghazal attained a status of its own in their hands. Other popular literary during the eighteenth century were qasida, and masnavi. During the nineteenth century, however, ghazal was taken to unprecedented heights in terms of expression as well as the grandeur of language by Ghalib, Dagh, and Momin and many more poets of the Delhi school.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS -1**

**Fill in the Blanks:**

1. The reign of ..... is also noted for the revival of Mughal painting and the development of a style known as Dehli qalam.
2. The institution of literary gathering known as ..... greatly facilitated the growth of Urdu poetry.
3. The Urdu poet Sirajuddin Ali Khan Arzu was popularly known as .....
4. Sufi Assemblies regularly arranged at the tombs and shrines of saints on Urs and certain dates of the month, especially the nauchandi were called .....
5. ....., popularly known as Dehli, emerged as the leading centre of Mughal culture in north India during the early eighteenth century.

## 4.3 Delhi as a Flourishing Commercial Centre (Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century)

Delhi was not merely the cultural hub of north India; it was also a busy commercial centre. The elements of a "highly charged economy", which include capital accumulation, long distance trade, and a large money market with a highly developed mechanism of bill of exchange, may be witnessed at its best in the Mughal capital Shahjahanabad, popularly known as Purani Dehli.

The reasons for this prosperity were numerous. The city became the administrative centre after Shahjahan (1628-1658) transferred his capital here from Agra which meant that the trading community, artistes, and artisans also shifted from Agra to the new capital which provided them sustenance. Next emperor Aurangzeb too had his court and camp here till 1679. This half a century of peace "coupled with imperial care and attention" proved a boon



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to the capital city for its growth as a flourishing commercial centre.[47] Another reason for the prosperity of Shahjahanabad was that its hinterland was rich with alluvial soil and "the city lay within easy reach of major sources of agricultural production. From such granaries, during normal years *banjaras* could carry harvests to supply the needs of urban population."[48] Besides, the city was also connected to important places through major highways, which commenced from here through its city gates named after their respective point of destination. Thus, all the important urban centres commanding the produce and markets of adjoining areas as well as their own were well- connected with the capital by road. There was an added advantage too, that the Yamuna was navigable the year around as far as Delhi which facilitated the growth of a flourishing riverine trade.

Hamida Khatoon Naqvi observes: "The dazzling display of splendour and wealth at Shahjahanabad, together with legacies of the urban settlement left by earlier Sultans of Delhi, attracted multitudes of newcomers to the city. Lakhs of enterprising people, many of them artisans and traders eager for profit converged upon the city. Descendants of the Sahans of the old Sultanate were still in the vicinity. Prior to 1785, at least one important Nagarseth, or ceremonial head of a house of merchant-bankers, flourished within the city proper."[49] Apart from the Banyas, the local shopkeepers and merchants, the Armenians, Central Asians, Persians, and Kashmiris also frequented the city which provided all sort of merchandise to them. Arab ki Sarai, an inn in the vicinity of Humayun's tomb, was often full of these transient visitors. Money changers, writers, transporters, and other skilled and unskilled labourers were found in abundance in the city.

### 4.3.1 The Bazaars of Delhi

Delhi had numerous bazaars; some were general markets, while some dealt in specific commodities, and some were wholesale markets. Nakhas was a daily market where people from the neighbouring areas came to sell their produce. These Nakhas were held in several places in the city. Then, there were the bazaars, which catered to people of different areas of the city for some or the other specialized commodity. Besides these there were two other bazaars, which provided "the most unique things to the entire population of the city". Apart from these there were many retail shops. These shops were situated in various place providing

[47] Hamida Khatoon Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India11556 –1803*, Asia Publishing House, Delhi, 1968, p. 12.
[48] Hamida Khatoon Naqvi, "Shahjahnabad, the Mughal Delhi, (1638-1803) An Introduction" in *Delhi Through the Ages*, p. 143.
[49] *Ibid*.



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both luxuries and necessities of life.[50]

These markets which were intelligently laid out in the time of Emperor Shahjahan gradually expanded out of their premises due to a rise in population as well as the expansion of the city, especially towards the middle of the eighteenth century. Dargah Quli Khan's travelogue, *Muraqqa-i-Dehli*, provides the glimpses of this development. Some of these bazaars existed on the pavements where vendors sold goods more attractive than found in the shops.[51] There was a proliferation of shops in the residential areas also.

Katra was a kind of market centre, which functioned as a wholesale market. These trading centres were located on the farther side of the Lal Qila mainly due to heavy traffic associated with them. In other words, the working place and the residential quarters of the artisan classes were located within the city, though some of them came from the suburbs of the city

Four bazaars emanated from the four sides of Jama Masjid. Mention may be made here of the famous bazaar which emanated towards the west side. Intoxicating liquors and drugs like opium were marketed here. The cloth merchants had their kothis in this area. This bazaar led to a famous bazaar Chaura. Copper and brass utensils were sold here. It was also the trading centre of handicrafts and paper. This bazaar was punctuated with several streets leading to localities and other bazaars known as kuchas. The Chaura Bazaar terminated at the crossing known as Qazi-ka-hauz and from this point several roads diverged to different parts of the city.

On the southern steps of Jama Masjid was the market known as Chitli Qabr where the shops of vendors of small wares, shoemakers, and famous handicraftsmen were located. Adjacent to it were the habitations and establishments of the artisans, such as chhatta-i momgaran. The locality of the butchers or Qassabpura was located at the end of this bazaar; it was close to Dehli Darwaza.

Close to the northern steps of Jama Masjid were the shops of jewelers, shops of enamellers of the ornaments, and similar other industrial arts which included pachchikari, an art of polishing on precious stones, engraving and setting pieces of various colours into other stones such as marble; khurdakari or inlay work on boxes or mirrors with ivory, and khattamkari, an art of engraving or inlay work done on ebony wood by means of ivory or some other material. Bazar Dariba kalan had the outlets of various kinds of crafts such as seal engraving.

[50] For details see Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Shahjahanabad A city of Delhi, 1638-1857*, New Delhi, 1998, Chapter VII, pp. 118-138.
[51] See *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, pp. 21-25.



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On both sides of the kucha were shops of sarrafs.[52]

The eastern steps of Jama Masjid led to the Khas Bazar which had the shops of the handicraftsmen and sellers of other goods. The greatest attraction in this part was Chawk Sa'adullah Khan. Dargah Ali Khan mentions in his travelogue that "the variety of goods that are available would easily make a man lose himself here and the poor eyes would smart at the constant exercise of looking at the abundant display of novelties…Arm sellers display a variety of uncovered weapons to attract the customers who can gauge their sharpness. The cloth merchants display their wares on their arms making the entire atmosphere colourful and outbidding each other in attracting the customers… Thus, the goods of human needs and conspicuence are available in this melee of people."[53]

### 4.3.2 Faiz Bazaar and Chandni Chowk

One of the two main markets in Shahjahanabad was the Faiz bazaar. It was located on the road which connected the Akbarabadi Gate (now called Delhi Gate) of the city wall. It was planned in the time of Shahjahan and described by the contemporaries as a place of great charm and beauty. Nahr-i Faiz flowed through the centre of it and its both sides were strewn with shops. The other bazaar was located on the road which connected the Lahori Darwaza of the city with the Lahori Darwaza of the Lal Qila. The Nahr-i Faiz flowed through the centre of this road between the Fatehpuri mosque, and a square was connected around the central part of the canal. Both sides of the roads were lined with trees and more than 1500 shops were constructed. These were either owned by Princess Jahanara or Nawab Fathpuri Begam (one of the queens of Shahjahan). Starting from the side of Lal Qila the markets on this side were called Urdu Bazaar, Jauhri/Ashrafi Bazaar, Chandni Chawk, Fathpuri Bazaar and Khari Baoli.

Dargah Quli Khan is all praise for Chandni Chowk which was famous for unique articles and artifacts available in Delhi. He describes it in the following words:

Chandni Chowk is the most beautiful and profusely decorated passage in the city. It is a centre of recreation for the pleasure seekers and a gallery of rarities for the interested buyers. Displayed in the shops….Rubies and gems from Badakhshan adorn the shops [of the jewelers] and their counters abound with pearls and precious stones…On the other side are cloth merchants beckoning loudly in their sing-song voices to attract the customers…The

[52] Madhu Trivedi, "Shahjahanabad" in *Historic Delhi*, Indian History Congress Felicitation Volume, pp 28-29.
[53] Dargah Quli Khan, Muraqqa-e- Dehli, (Persian) English transl. Chander Shekharn & Shama Mitra Chenoy as *Muraqqa-e- Dehli, The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 21-23.



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*attars* selling varieties of perfumes and essence carry out a brisk trade with the help of their agents and smooth talks….All the self-control one imposes here on oneself melts away at the sight of the China crockery and a variety of colourful and gilded *huqqas* of glass. Bowls, jugs and exquisite wine cups are displayed in the shops which are displayed in the shops which attract even the aged pious to savour a drink…The assortment of rare and unique goods available in this market cannot be bought at one time even if the treasury of Qarun was at one's disposal.[54]

Near Chandni Chowk was the Kucha natawan. This place was perhaps originally devised for the natawas, the trainers of the dancing girls for the royal courts and the nobles, and other performing artistes. During the early nineteenth century, however, it has been described as occupied by the Hindus and Muslim artisans such as fashioners, painters, and sculptors and other handicraftsmen.

The fruit market contained many shops which during the summer were well supplied with dry fruit from Persia, Balkh, Bukhara, and Samarqand, and in winter with excellent fresh grapes, black and white brought from the countries mentioned above. As Bernier tells us fruits were very dear and formed the chief expense of the Nobles.[55] Bakers were numerous according to his description. He also tells us about the shops where meat is sold roasted and dressed in a variety of ways.[56]

The bazaars of Delhi had all the hustle-bustles of a busy urban centre where one could procure the best available articles of all kinds.

### 4.3.3 Craft Production

Shahjahanabad was highly renowned for its craft production especially for cotton textiles. According to a foreign traveler Manrique, Shahjahanabad craftsmen were renowned for the excellence of their chintzes, quilts, and tie-dyed stuffs. Its chintzes were reported to have been inferior only to those of Masulipattam and it was a major object of export. The Arminian and Persian traders were chiefly interested in this commodity. Carpet weaving was also one of the flourishing industries of Delhi. The carpet weavers of Delhi were extremely prosperous as they catered to a large market at home. These carpets were used for various purposes as bedding or as a cover of seats, and it was also used for its normal purpose of covering the floor, and occasionally as screen in some of the tents.[57] The carpet weavers of

[54] *Muraqqa-e-Dehli*, pp. 24-25.
[55] Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, reprint, Delhi, 1972, p. 249.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 250.
[57] Bernier saw the interior "of a good house whose floor was covered with a cotton mattresses four inches thick



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Delhi produced rich silken, woolen, and cotton carpets in accordance with the demand. Shamyanahs and qanats were also manufactured here in large numbers. The indigo manufactures of Delhi occupied a full ward which was also a hot item of trade. The Delhi craftsmen also produced fine copper utensils, weapons, paper, leather goods, sugars and indigo. Book binding was also a flourishing craft of Delhi.

The immense building activities in Shahjahanabad provided employment to thousands of masons and stonecutters; the number of unskilled workers employed in the building industry was beyond count. The quarries of red, yellow stones were worked and extensively employed in the magnificent edifices of Delhi. The workmanship of the masons, stonecutters, and carpenters was of such a high order that Nadir Shah, who invaded Delhi in 1739, took along with him 300 masons, 100 stone cutters, and 200 carpenters to Iran.

The rulers required a large supply of luxury articles to meet the demand of the royal establishment and to maintain the splendour of the court. The bulk of these articles especially the silk and other textiles were produced in these royal workshops (karkhanas), which were best equipped and most efficiently organized. As a modern scholar remarks: In Mughal India the state was the largest manufacturer or rather the only manufacturer on a large scale in respect of several commodities."[58]

### 4.3.4 Chhattas

Many manufactories and production centres were spread in almost all parts of the city of Shahjahanabad which have been termed as craft muhallas by some historians. Smaller in size and, perhaps, restricted to one craft, and located under covered space, were some production units which were known as chhatta (cover) such as Chatta Lala Tansukh Rai and Chatta Jan Nisar Khan. These were perhaps private commodity production units where hired labour was employed. The city had provision for quarters for different craft communities, for instance chamar ka hata. Sometimes, members of a particular profession or craft occupied an entire lane which were named after them such as kucha naiwalan (barber's lane), and kucha Charkhewalan and many more.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the fortunes of Delhi began to eclipse due to a variety of reasons. Delhi became feeble owing to Nadir Shah's invasion, the occasional attacks of Marathas, and Ahmad Shah Abdali's repeated incursions. The emergence of successor states

over which a fine cotton cloth is spread during the summer and a silk carpet in the winter" (see his *Travels* pp. 247-8).

[58] Tripta Verma, *Karkhanas Under the Mughals from Akbar to Aurangzeb*, Pragati Publications, Delhi, 1994, p. 17.



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established by powerful nobles in northern India further weakened the Mughal empire. The city became too insecure which led the merchants of substance to migrate to other cities such as Agra. The artisans also shifted to less troubled areas like Murshidabad, Patna, Faizabad and Lucknow and other capital cities and commercial centres. As a result, many industries declined owing to the strained condition of the imperial treasury, while some retained their vitality. Despite these adverse circumstances Delhi remained known for many crafts and industries. It offered a variety of merchandise that attracted merchants from far and wide. Even as late as 1793, the once-a-year visiting caravans from the north brought Kabul Kashmir horses, shawls, and fruits; the last two commodities could be procured at Delhi at reasonable rates. Delhi enjoyed the reputation of being a rich emporium of trade during the eighteenth century.

## 4.4 DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL ARTS IN SHAHJAHANABAD

From about the middle of the seventeenth century, artistic and cultural activities shifted from Agra to Shahjahanabad, the new capital city founded by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658). The capital city remained without the head of the state for a considerable period, from 1679 to 1707, due to Mughal involvement in the Deccan, and the political situation diverted the resources and activities elsewhere. The rhythm of cultural activities was, however, not hampered for want of patronage during this period.

During the reign of Muhammad Shah (1729-1748), the Qila-i Mubarak (the palace-fortress, popularly known as Lal Qila) had become the centre of cultural activities. A modern scholar remarks: "The brilliance of Mughal culture, as described in non-political sources of information, stands out sharply against the background of political turmoil and the gloom and the depression caused by it."[59] In this perspective music played its own role in enlivening the cultural atmosphere. The musical arts received patronage of an exceptional nature not only from the court and the elite circles but also from a large section of the local populace. Dancing and singing became a favourite pastime as well as an integral part of all the festivities. No occasion of mirth or festivity was ever wanting in these two arts. Sufi Assemblies (mehfil-i sama) were regularly arranged at the tombs and shrines of saints on Urs and certain dates of the month, especially the nauchandi. Even for ceremonies of sorrow such as Muharram there had developed a special kind of music recitation called marsiya-khwani. As a result, the number of professional artistes burgeoned. Many outstanding singers flourished during this period. The number of popular artistes was beyond count.

[59] Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1729-1748*, Delhi, 1977, p. 345.



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It is often maintained that music began to lose its grandeur and refinement during the eighteenth century, and pure classical music declined considerably. General debasement is said to have set in during the period. A closer examination of the available literature, however, makes it clear that the expression 'decline' implies a decrease in the popularity of some of the elite styles such as dhrupad and the growing vogue for khayal, tarana, tappa, and other dhun based musical forms. This departure was not due to lack of any skill as outstanding singers from the family of Tansen, and nayaks (super musicians) flourished in large numbers during this period. Instead, it was due to the emergence of new patrons who came to prominence in the changed social and political conditions and demanded such forms which had the backing of the popular musical traditions of Delhi. They insisted on their own distinct tastes and traditions. Thus, the period was not one of decline but rather one of transition with some important changes and modifications.

### 4.4.1 Change in Patronage Pattern

The growth of fine arts and literature was associated with patronage during the medieval period which motivated the artistes to produce what the patrons wanted. The taste and munificence of the patrons influenced the standard of creativity. In fact, there was a crucial reduction in court patronage after the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739), who deprived the Mughal ruler of the immense treasures and riches. Dargah Quli Khan, the author of a contemporary Persian travelogue Muraqqa-i-Dehli, pointedly remarks that "since the invasion of Nadir Shah, His Majesty Din Panah abstains himself from the musical soirees and has suspended them at court". As Mughal emperor and his nobility were losing fortune, the elite artistes were obliged to seek patronage from the patrons who had leisure but no refinements.

A significant feature of the period was that music, by and large, had come under the domain of the dancing girls and courtesans. Most of them were well-versed in this art and were trained by accomplished musicians of the time. Dargah Quli Khan has mentioned several dancers and singers of the royal court who were as authentic and acclaimed as many master musicians of the time with whom they used to compete. For instance, in the singing of tarana the skill of Chamni was recognized by her contemporaries as well as the court circle. Rahman Bai of the Dhadhi community was versatile in her art and well known for it. Through constant practice Kamal Bai mastered the art of singing and dancing to perfection. These courtesans were highly respected and most of them commanded respect in high society.[60] These courtesans used to live in great style and most of them were well versed in the manners

[60] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, English Trans. Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Muraqqa`-e- Dehli: The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 104, 109, 110.



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and courtesies to be observed in the mehfils (tehzib-i akhlaq). The professional artistes were numerous and prosperous is asserted by contemporary literature.

Musical assemblies attracted large audience. As Dargah Ali Khan tells us, people started arriving at these gatherings since morning. The Festival of Basant, celebrated at the onset of Spring, was a great occasion for the performing artists of Delhi. The qawwals and the groups of singers used to exhibit their art in the Qadam Sharif of the Holy Prophet as a kind of worship on the first day. On the second and the third day they used to visit the dargah of Hazrat Bakhtiyar Kaki and the mausoleum of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya respectively and pay their tribute in the form of vocal and instrumental renderings. On the sixth day they used to pay a customary visit to the Badshah and the nobles. On the night of the seventh day, all the dancers of the city used to assemble at the grave of a person named Azizi in Ahadipura, wash it with wine and take it in turn to dance. Gradually the qawwals also joined in and enlivened the atmosphere

### 4.4.2 Decline in the Popularity of Dhrupad

As we have noticed earlier, dhrupad declined considerably in popularity during the period under review. This was for a variety of reasons. The style of dhrupad was difficult in technique and its high pitched and vigorous tonal expressions had no appeal to the untrained. This form, as compared to other musical forms could not be adapted well to dance. One also comes across observations that a tendency of concealment was growing among the drupadiyas (dhrupad singers) for the protection of their skill and knowledge. They were jealous as well as afraid of the new artistes outside their families. All these factors restricted the audience of dhrupad. It did not disappear, it only lost adequate patronage. The techniques of dhrupad-gayaki were adopted in other musical forms.

### 4.4.3 The Khayal-gayaki

This period is especially important for the development of the khayal-gayaki. In the initial stages, khayal existed as regional musical genre and rose to classical status at the Sharqi court during the late fifteenth century. Khayal was further developed during the reign of Shahjahan. It was brought to perfection and popularized by Niyamat Khan Sadarang who was a master musician attached to the court of Muhammad Shah and was considered at par with the nayaks of old days. Nayak was the highest title during the medieval period given to a musician, one who performed all musical forms. Niyamat Khan renovated the khayal and modulated it in different rag-raginis. Due to his efforts, Khayal-gayaki became a distinctly recognized form of music. The slow moving (vilambit) khayal, which has strong bearing of dhrupad, owes its origin to him. It, however, gained currency towards the later years of the eighteenth century.



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Firuz Khan Adarang, a nephew of Sadarang, also enriched this musical form. He composed several khayals and modulated them in new ragas. It is believed that Muhammad Shah also composed khayals under his pen name "Rangila piya".

The popularity of khayal increased due to a number of factors mainly because it showed greater adaptability for rhythmic variations. It was open to every rhythmic variation and could be sung in a variety of tals. It could be sung in slow tempo like dhrupad and brisk tempo like tarana, so that it went well along with dance. The khayal-gayaki gained respectability to the extent that even the most sophisticated musicians, began to perform it.

### 4.4.4 Kabitt (Kavitt)

Kabitt was next to khayal in popularity. Rahim Sen and Tansen, descendents of legendry singer Miyan Tansen and attached to the Mughal court, were unsurpassed in the art of rendering kabitt. Some of the courtesans, too, had command over it: for instance, Uma Bai whose singing was recognized as flawless. It seems that two styles flourished in the rendering of kabitt: the traditional or the classical style and the improvised one. We are told that Uma Bai and Asapura Ramjani had mastery over the traditional kalawant style which was probably similar to dhrupad. The other style probably incorporated some changes in accordance with the tastes of the patterns and imbibed some features of the other musical forms current during this period. Later on, this form was also used as one of the song accompaniments in the kathak form of dance.

### 4.4.5 Tarana

Another popular musical style was tarana. It was similar to git in its rhythmic structure. It gained currency along with khayal and had the same raga pattern and rhythmic variations as that of khayal, with the exception that it was sung in brisk tempo and included bols (rhythmic syllables) from other instruments.

### 4.4.6 Jangla

Jangla was another musical style current among the musicians of Delhi during the eighteenth century. According to some scholars Jangla was an Indian version of the Persian mode zangulah which was developed as a musical genre by Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi (r. 1458-1505). Others opine that jangla was a folk music genre of the doab region and flourished as a courtesan dance-song from the sixteenth century onwards. It was the precursor of thumri which emerged out of zangula's blending with khayal.[61] Nur Bai Domni and Jani Hajjam excelled in this style.

[61] See Peter Manuel, *Thumri in historical and stylistic perspective*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 50, 61.



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### 4.4.7 Qawwali

Qawwali was integral to Sufi assemblies (mehfil-i sama), urs and other festivities. The music of sama originally belonged to the khanqahs where it was performed for the attainment of spiritual ecstasy. Gradually it began to be influenced by Indian classical music for which credit goes to Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria Multani. He is said to have modulated it to some classical ragas, especially Multani and Kafi. The process of Indianisation of sama' music, initiated by Shaikh Zakaria, culminated in the musical innovations of Amir Khusrau in the forms of qaul, tarana, tillana, sohla, and other allied variants. These song forms were integrated into a composite performance tradition in Shahjahanabad during the eighteenth century and came to be known as qawwali after the qawwals, with whom qaul-tarana and other allied variants were associated. Qawwali incorporated the stylistic features of khayal in many ways.

### 4.4.8 Marsiya-khwani

The art of marsiya-khwani was developed during the period under study. Marsiya was the funeral eulogium or oration sung during Mahurram in commemoration of Imam Hasan and Husain. The tuneful recitation of marsiya is called marsiya-khwani. It developed as an established art during the eighteenth century.

## 4.5 INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Several changes appeared in instrumental music, too. There was a decrease in the number of binkars (vina players), while the popularity of sitar increased day by day. Sarangi became the standard accompanying instrument for courtesan's dance songs. Some new instrumental styles were also evolved.

One explanation for the popularity of the new instruments was that like dhrupad singers, the binkars were also becoming increasingly sensitive and protective of their family music. Training was imparted to a selected few and that too to the direct descendants. Besides, playing the bin was a difficult art. As a result, it was known to a very limited number of artists. Under these circumstances the sitar, which was relatively a new instrument, gained popularity.

Sitar, most probably, developed out of sehtar (a Persian three-stringed instrument) and tambur (a lute). In the beginning, the technique employed in sitar was similar to those employed in dhrupad and bin, and it had emphasis on rhythmic complexities. It retained some of these techniques even after the introduction of the new khayal style during the nineteenth century, known as Masit-khani Baj. Adarang, the renowned sitar player, made some



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innovations in the playing technique by using the notations of other instruments on it. Due to this capacity that techniques of other stringed instruments could be easily applied on it, sitar gradually overshadowed the popularity of bin and rubab.

It is interesting that not a single tabla player is mentioned in our sources of this period, although we are told about those who played on pakhawaj, dholak and dhamdhami (a folk percussive instrument). In fact, the use of tabla as a dance accompaniment is associated with the evolution of kathak at the Awadh court during the nineteenth century.

Dargah Ali Khan had mentioned about a number of noted and talented instrumentalists of Shahjahanabad: Baqir Tamburchi, whose performance could move "even the animals and inanimate objects"; Hasan Khan Rababi and Ghulam Muhammad Saranginawaz, who were incomparable in playing their instruments; Husain Khan Dholaknawaz, who had taken "the art to its peak and that a better player of dholak is yet to make its mark on Delhi." An instrument was fashioned by an instrumentalist Shahnawaz from which "the sound of dholak, pakhawaj and tambura could be pronounced.

## 4.6 DANCE FORMS

The information about the dance forms of this time is scanty. However, some inferences could be drawn based on the accounts of the individual dancers furnished by the sources. There were some who showed exceptional skill in the techniques of nritya and in the execution of rhythm as well as swift and forceful footwork. Some specialized in quick tempo and exercised perfect control over the dance steps, body movement and postures howsoever quick and brisk the tempo may be. One Durgahi was the master of rattling, and could produce the sound of one, two or all rattles (ghunghru) as he wished.

The term kathak does not appear in the context of the dances. The techniques of classical dance forms such as tandava, lasya, chindu and sudhang (shuddh-ang) also have not found mention the sources. Instead, a term thai naach in a Urdu literary work, *Bagh u Bahar,* by Mir Amman Dehalwi to denote a classical performance by male dancers.

## 4.7 BHANDETI

Besides being comedians and mimic artistes, the bhands (also known naqqals) used to be good dancers and musicians. Their performance bhandeti was as integral to a gathering as dance and music. Bhandeti was a composite item of dance, music and mimicry. Their dance style was based on the depiction of various chorographical compositions characterized by



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brisk movements. The participants were males. Usually the mujra (show) consisted of eight persons but the number could be less. One young performer in a female attire used to dance and the others contributed to the climax by means of clapping and encouraging the dancer. This style of encouragement in the professional parlance is called chugga dena. In between they used to show their witticism and mimicry. The music was provided by sitar and small drums, and sarangi. Khawasi and Anuthad bhands at the royal court were highly accomplished in singing and dancing.

Above description reflects it well that Shahjahanabad was a leading centre of musical arts in north India. The trends set here were perfected further in other places especially at Lucknow which emerged as the cultural hub of northern India during the late eighteenth century.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

Summing up, it may be said that the growth of fine arts and literature during the medieval period was intimately connected with patronage, and there was considerable change in the patronage pattern during the eighteenth century. The Mughal ruler was stripped of his riches due to the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in A D 1739. The Mughal court had become a stage for the intrigues of various factions of nobles who were busy protecting their interests. There were new claimants for power and resources. In the changed social and political conditions, the court and the established nobility were impoverished, and new patrons became important.

In other words, the early eighteenth century was a period of transition. The fortunes of the aristocracy and the established nobility was on decline due to a variety of reasons, especially the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah, and the rise of diverse groups as claimants in the resources of the Mughal Empire which virtually led to its decline. There was, however, a boom in the trading activities at Delhi and the surrounding area. It led to the emergence of a new and effluent section in society which aped the way of the nobility. The description of a contemporary author Dargah Quli Khan reveals the prosperity of these people. They are described as razil (upstart) by these poets who appear to be deeply moved with these developments. A few lines from Hatim's poem are worth mentioning here:

Those who once rode elephants now go barefooted.

(While) those who yearned for parched grain once are today owners of prosperity, palaces, and elephants as mark of rank. The Jackals have usurped the place of lions.[62]

[62] As cited by Muhammad Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature*, p. 104.



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Muhammad Husain Azad refers to one of the mukhammas (a five-line verse) of Shakir Nazi where he describes the indolence and debauchery of the nobility, the decline of the great, and the rise of the upstarts.[63]

## 4.9 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

**In-Text Questions-1**

1. Muhammad Shah
2. mushaira
3. Khan-i Arzu
4. mahfil-i sama
5. Shahjahanabad

## 4.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

**Write Short Notes on the following.**

1. Jama Masjid (Masjid-I Jami)
2. Development of Musical Arts in Shahjahanabad
3. Bazaars of Shahjahanabad

**Long Questions**

1. Evaluate the 18th century from the perspective of social and cultural changes taking place in the city of Delhi.
2. Critically examine the 18th century city of Delhi not as the city in decline but witnessing a new era of political and social changes.

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978-93-95774-42-0




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