

# DELHI

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Dear Friends,

For over thirty years I have driven around Delhi, subconsciously registering the many monuments that dot the city. Often I said to myself that I should make the effort to examine them. After all, they are part of my heritage, my culture, my history. Someday I would definitely visit all these places.

But you know how it is. You are always on the way to somewhere else, and usually running late.

As the years went by, these magnificent structures became part of the scenery. The main gate of the Red Fort was a familiar sight. The Old Fort was hidden behind its crumbling walls, the Qutub was not on the way to anywhere and Hazrat Nizamuddin's dargah was buried deep inside the area that bore his name.

'Someday' never happened.

This year's calendar may inspire some of my friends to make the pilgrimage down the road I never trod, to feel the surge of pride in our ancient lineage, appreciating the builders, amazement at the beauty they created and admiration of their ingenuity and technology. And maybe someday.....

Pradip Burman

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Gautam Partho Roy graduated from the Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata with a degree in Fine Arts. For over 30 years he has been gaining renown and his exhibitions are great successes.

For several years he has been the only artist for our calendars, because of his versatility and enthusiasm for new challenges. He has used oils for the "Warriors of Light" and "The Nine Durgas", charcoal for the "Great Indians", poster paint for the "Dances of India".



This time, he used pen and ink!

One needs to stare at the sketches to see the incredible detailing of the scenes he has produced and wonder at the life he has infused into these dead monuments.

You may want to go and look at the originals, in order to appreciate the accuracy of the proportions and the reality of the carvings he has faithfully reproduced.

I guess we will be using him next year too, just to see what new medium he is going to try!

Contact: e mail: [artgautamroy@yahoo.co.in](mailto:artgautamroy@yahoo.co.in)



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**D**elhi has been built, abandoned, destroyed and re-built. Many believe that our current Delhi is the 11th or 12th city. Indraprastha, the capital of the Pandavs of Mahabharat fame, may have been the actual first Delhi, but there is no historical or archaeological proof. Not surprising, considering that the fabled city was built 3000 years ago.

However, we have archeological proof of only seven cities. These are the cities and their builders in chronological order:

- (I) 12th Century: **Qila Rai Prithora** : Prithviraj Chauhan
- (II) 12th Century: **Mehrauli and Qutub Minar** : Qutub-ud-din Aibak
- (III) 13th Century: **Siri** : Allah-ud-din Khilji
- (IV) 14th Century: **Ferozabad** : Feroz Shah Tughlaq
- (V) 14th century: **Tughlaqabad** : Ghyas-ud-din Tughlaq
- (VI) 16th Century: **Shergarh** : Humayun/Sher Shah Suri/Humayun
- (VII) 17th Century: **Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi)** : Shah Jehan
- (VIII) 20th Century: **New Delhi** : British/Luydens

We are a very old civilisation, so two or three thousand year old monuments are just part of our daily lives. We drive past the Humayun's Purana Qila without a glance. We take visitors to the Qutub, but seldom wonder how the tallest brick tower in the world was constructed with such primitive tools. Few go to look at Feroz Shah Tughlaq's city, now known as Feroz Shah Kotla, where one of the few remaining Ashoka pillars is sited. Most people think it is a cricket ground. We are reluctant to brave traffic on the way to Tughlaqabad. The exquisite tomb of Princess Jahannam, sister of Aurangzeb, is lost in the byways of Chandni Chowk, with clothes drying on the marble lattice screens.

Despite the ravages of time, parts of these structures still survive and are lovingly maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. This calendar is a salute to our history, our culture and our art.



**Agrasen Ki Baoli**  
*Legend 2000 BCE. Recorded 1400 CE*

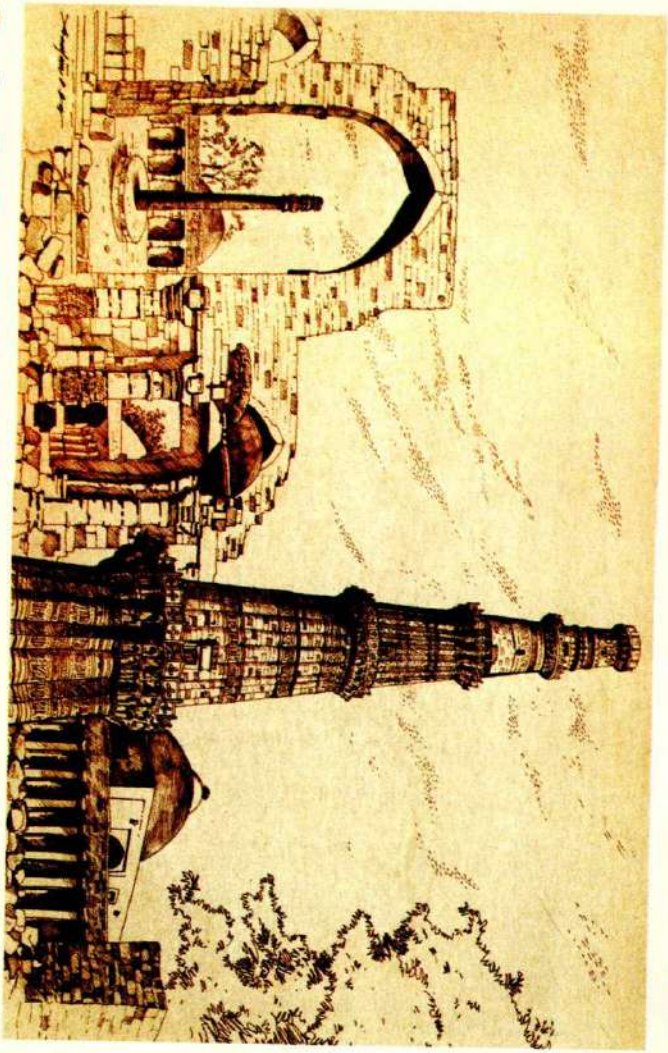
A protected monument, **Agrasen ki Baoli** is one of the few surviving step wells in Delhi. The well was said to have been built by Maharaja Agrasen, supposedly in the Mahabharat era. It was probably built between the 9th 12 th Century and was later **rebuilt** by the Agrawal community in the 14th century, during the Tughlaq period.

During the day, urchins would leap into the water for a swim in the summer, people would fill water buckets and carry them home, and in the evenings, young couples with no where else to go, would sit on the steps and hold hands.

In the 1990's, a multi-storey apartment block was built very close to the Baoli. The water subsequently dried up. 363 steps take you to the base, which is now visible. The interior walls, from top to bottom, are formed of line upon line of beautifully carved red stone arches. A very beautiful and impressive construction, it has been the site of many film shoots.

This monument has an evil reputation. Bats and pigeons now make their homes there.

Its black waters were said to hypnotize people and convince them to give their lives to the well. The ghosts of these suicides are said to haunt the Baoli. Whether this was true or not, it has actually been the scene of many suicides.



**Qutub Minar**  
*Constructed 1200CE*

**Q**utub-ud-din Aibak (1150 – 1210) was a slave of Mohammed Ghori. Starting as a stable boy, he rose to General and was instrumental in defeating the last Hindu King of Delhi, Prithviraj Chauhan. After the death of Ghori, Qutub-ud-din Aibak made himself King. He started the building of the **Qutub Minar** in 1200 CE. When the Qutub Minar was only one storey high, Aibak died from an injury while playing polo. The tower was completed by his son in 1212. It was started as a victory tower, but was later used for the muezzin to call people to prayer.

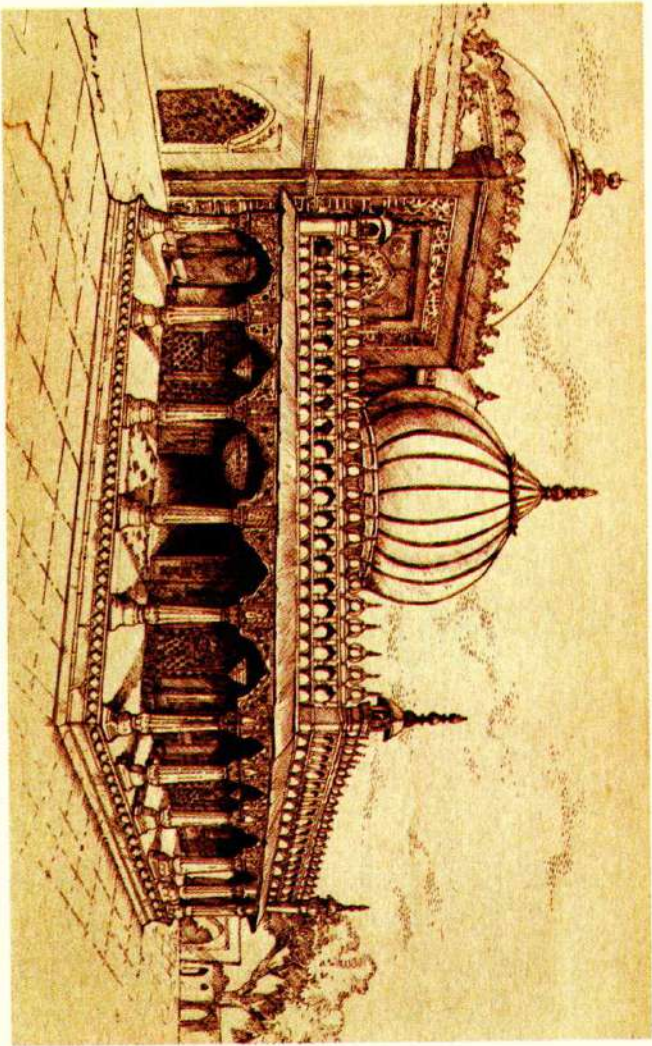
His son-in-law, Iltutmish, built two more storeys and added the first mosque in India, the Quwwat al Islam, next to it. It was damaged twice by lightning and repaired, first, in 1230 by Feroz Shah Tughlaq, who added two more storeys, and again by Sikander Lodhi in 1503.

Some of the carvings indicate that a Hindu temple was looted to decorate the minar and the mosque. The ruins of a temple are visible close by.

The Qutub Minar is the **tallest brick tower in the world**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a must for every tourist, from India or abroad.

Next to the Minar is a mysterious iron pillar – 23 feet tall and weighing 6 tons. No one knows its origin, but it is said that it was shifted, by the Tomars, from the Udaygiri cave complex to its present location. For years scientists have been trying to work out why it is impervious to rust. There is a superstition attached to the pillar, which says if you can stand with your back to it and can touch your hands together around the pillar, your wish will be granted. According to the guides, there has never been a successful attempt.

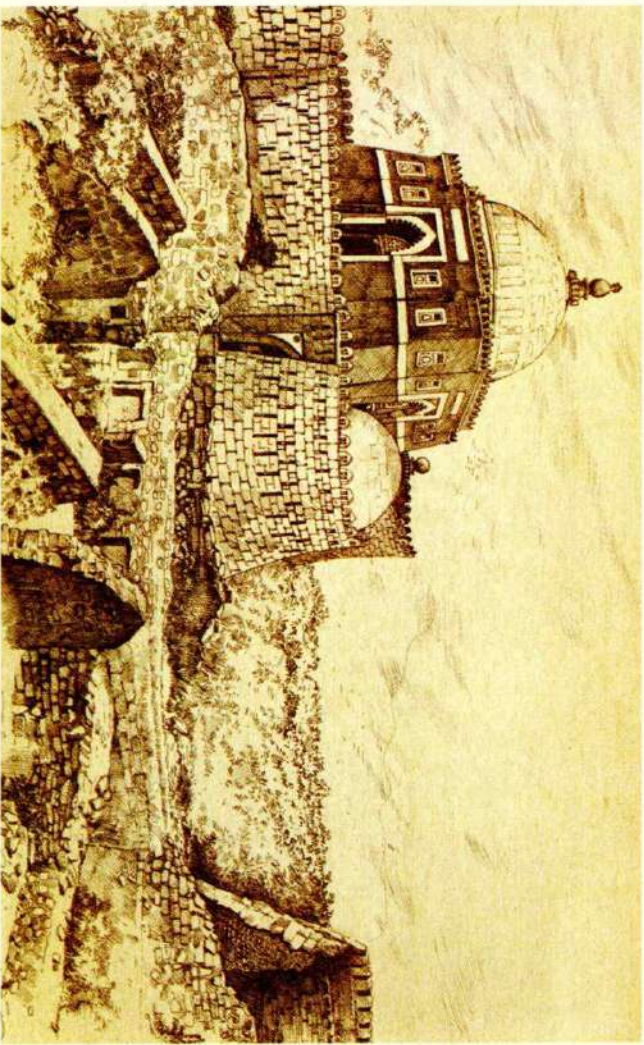
**Tomb of Hazrat Nizamuddin**  
*Constructed 1325CE*





**H**azrat Shaikh Khwaja Syed Mohammed **Nizamuddin Auliya**, (1238 – 1325), is one of the great saints of Sufi-ism. He taught that love of God includes love of all humanity. Visitors of all religions, from all over the world visit his **Dargah**. His little house in Nizamuddin still stands. His tomb is an imposing edifice of red sandstone and marble. A delicately beautiful marble mosque, completely open on all sides, is right outside the door of the tomb. It is not big enough to hold the crowds that throng there, especially when there are concerts of Sufi songs of praise to Allah.

A step well on the premises, still full of water, may actually be older than the Dargah. He had a great impact on the Muslims of Delhi and three Mughal Emperors, Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan, were followers of his teachings. Amir Khusrao was buried in the premises of the Dargah. Khusrao is still one of the most famous poets of India. He was court poet to King Allah-ud-din Khilji and King Ghyas-ud-din Tughlaq. His immortal verses are still sung to this day. He was an ardent follower of Hazrat Nizamuddin and died six months after Nizamuddin. The grave of Emperor Shah Jehan's daughter, Princess Jehanara, is also within the Dargah walls.



**Tughlaqabad**  
*Constructed 1320 - 1325CE*

**T**he Khiljis were descendants of one of the slaves of Qutub-ud-din Aibak. They rose to prominence in the Mamluk army. Jalal-ud-din Khilji revolted against the Mamluks and seized the throne of Delhi.

The third to rule, Allah-ud-din Khilji, died without an heir. Thereafter, the sultanate witnessed chaos, coups and assassinations. The nobles refused to accept his incompetent relatives as rulers. They elected **Ghyas-ud-din Tughlaq**, the commander of the army and thus founded the Tughlaq dynasty.

He was known for his fairness and dislike of corruption. During his reign, he reformed the judiciary and the land tax systems. He also organized an effective postal system and removed corrupt officials. He built the third medieval city of Delhi, **Tughlaqabad**, east of the Qutub Minar. The city was divided into three sections - the citadel, the palace and the city. All that remains of the city are a few arches. The fortress stands on a high outcrop of rock with rubble built walls, surviving intact all along the 7 km perimeter, with a vast water reservoir. On his return from a successful campaign, a triumphal arch was built for his entry into the city. His son, **Mohammad bin Tughlaq**, contrived that as soon as the King, on his elephant, passed under the arch, it would collapse and bury him. The plotters delayed the rescue attempt so that Ghyas-ud-din suffocated to death.

The structure of his tomb is simply planned, as befits a warrior King. Only the arches are beautifully decorated with marble and lattice work. Although the exterior walls are rubble stone-work, the interior is of marble and red sandstone. The white marble of the dome is striking, with borders carved with lotus buds, impressive ceilings and carved screens. The tomb also houses the graves of his wife and son. Just outside the tomb, there is a small corridor housing a small grave. Believed to be the grave of the Sultan's favourite dog, it is most unusual as Islam considers dogs unclean.



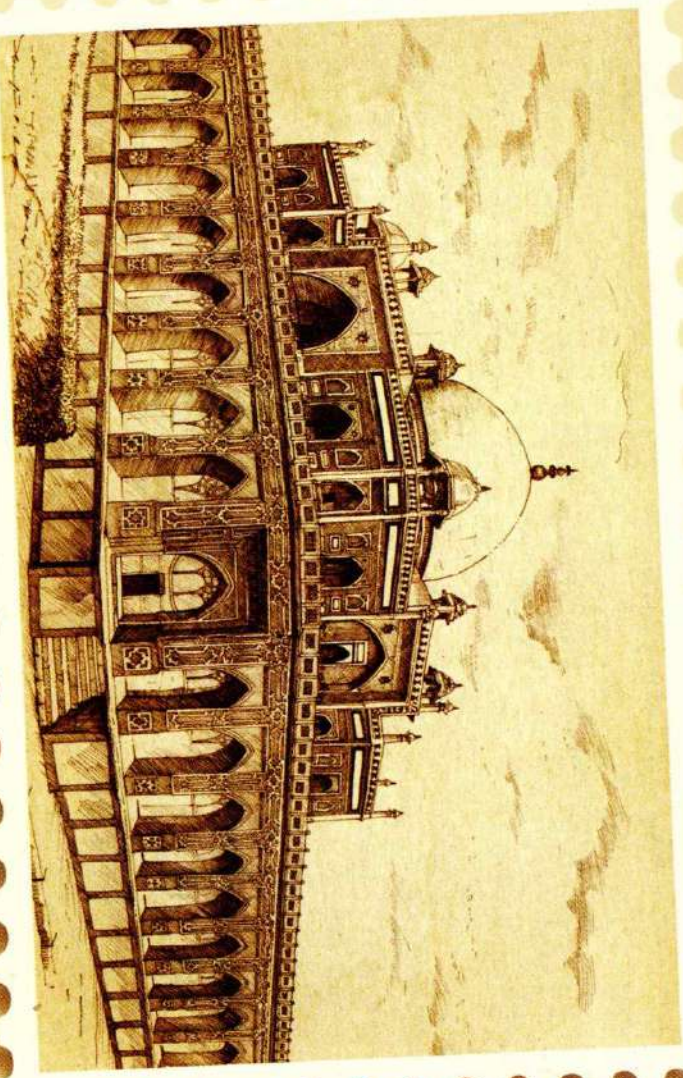
**Feroz Shah Kotla**  
*Constructed 1351 - 1388CE*

**F**eroz Shah Tughlaq, (Ruled 1351 to 1388), cousin of Mohammed bin Tughlaq, was Sultan of Delhi from 1351 to 1388. He was the son of a Hindu princess of Dipalpur. He founded several cities, including Jaunpur, Ferozpur and Hissar-Feroza. In the mid 1350s he shifted his capital to a new city he called Ferozabad, which stretched from the northern Ridge to the edge of the Jamuna, where the Red Fort now stands. This was the 4th of the 7 ancient cities of Delhi, now known as **Feroz Shah Kotla**.

He was a renowned builder who built hunting lodges, mosques and reservoirs in and around Delhi. He constructed roads, dug wells, built rest houses and hospitals. Other structures can be seen in the Hauz Khas Village area, along with his tomb. He repaired Suraj Kund and the top two floors of the Qutub Minar after lightning damaged it. An Ashoka pillar, which was brought all the way from Ambala, was erected on a three tiered mound. No one could read the script carried on the pillar until an English antiquarian, James Princep, deciphered it in the late 18th Century.

10 years after the death of Feroz Shah, Taimur e Lang, commonly known as Timur the Lame, pillaged the city and subsequent rulers used the remains to construct other forts and palaces.

Some of the walls still stand, but inside, all that remain amid the ruins are a mosque, a step well and the mound supporting the Ashoka pillar.



**Humayun's Tomb**  
*Constructed 1556 - 1564CE*

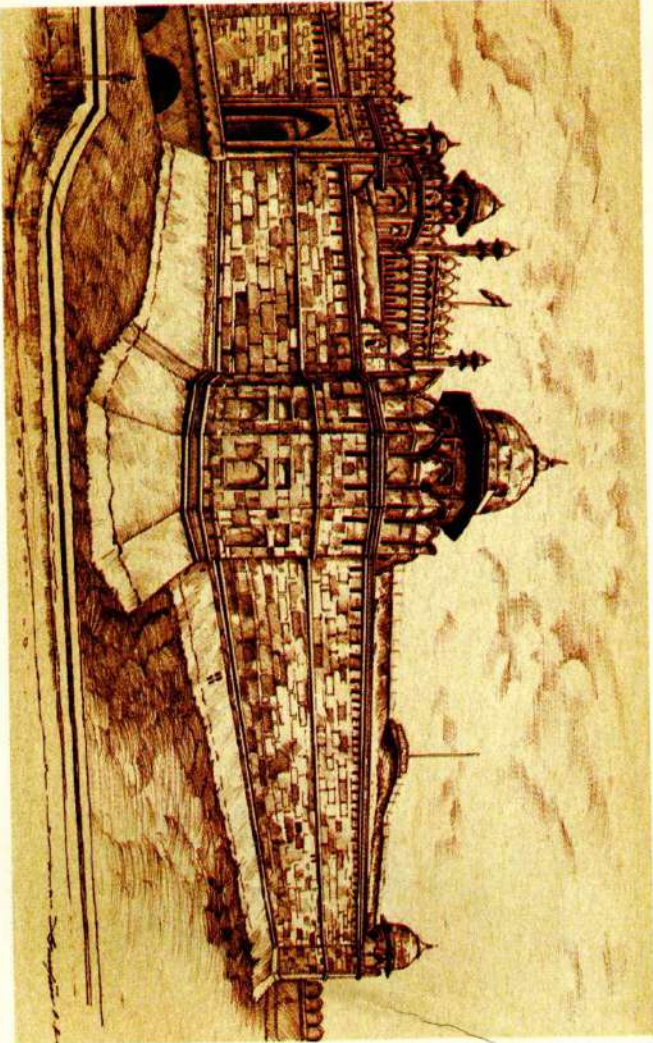
**H**umayyun (Ruled 1531-1556) was the son of Babar, the first Mughal who invaded India. He had a chequered career; he won and lost battles alternately, celebrating each victory with a bout of carousing, and each defeat with a resurgence of martial power. He was driven back to Kabul several times, from where he returned with determination. His enemies were usually his own brothers, whom he regularly forgave. He built the Purana Qila. Humayyun's son was Jalal-ud-din Akbar, regarded as the most famous and best of the Mughal Emperors.

His first wife, Bega Begum, commissioned **Humayyun's Tomb** in 1556. Humayyun's remains were moved to his final resting place after nine years. The central chamber containing his grave is double height while the surrounding building is two-storied. Humayyun's wives and his grandson, Dara Shikoh, are also buried there.

There are over a hundred other graves in the mausoleum, none of which have names. Interestingly, Humayyun's favorite barber has his own tomb in the complex. The garden and the tomb are the first example of typical Mughal architecture.

The Mughal capital shifted to Agra and the tomb was neglected. People settled within the walls and grew vegetables in the beautiful Charbagh gardens. The carpets and lamps disappeared, as did Humayyun's sword, turban and shoes.

It was Lord Curzon, Governor General of India, who ordered that the tomb and its environments be restored to its former glory. Concerts of Sufi music are often held in the gardens.



**Red Fort**  
*Constructed 1630 - 1640CE*



**S**hab Jehan, (Ruled 1628 – 1658) the son of Emperor Jehangir and grandson of Akbar, was one of the most prolific builders in the history of India. His love for his queen, Mumtaz Mahal, created the world's most beautiful building, the Taj Mahal.

He moved the Mughal capital to Delhi and called his new city Shahjahanabad, now known as Old Delhi.

He built the **Lal Qila** or the **Red Fort** on the bank of the Jamuna River. The Red Fort is named for the Agra red stone that Shah Jehan used for his buildings.

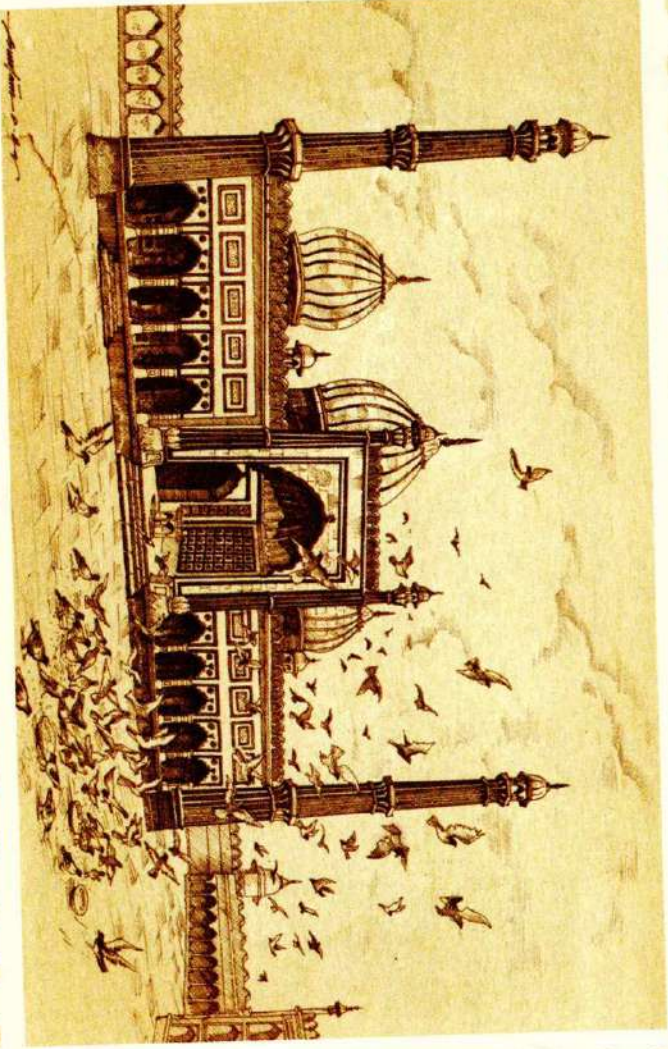
It was a palace/fort, where the imperial court functioned and the royal family lived. The Emperor appeared to his people on a fretwork marble balcony. There were bathing pools, fountains and streams, marble carved into delicate lace, plaster walls were painted to look like gardens and marble walls were covered with delicate inlay work. The famous Peacock Throne rested upon a marble dais in the Hall of Public Audience.

Over the centuries, the river has changed its course. The water gate, from where the ladies of the palace would sail on the river, is now blocked.

Shah Jehan's son, Aurangzeb, was the last great Mughal. He constructed the Moti Masjid in the garden for his private prayers. Within the walls of the Red Fort, the British built barracks for their soldiers. Ironically, they now house the Freedom Movement Museum.

On the 15th August 1947, the tricolour flag of India was unfurled for the first time on the mound in front of the Labori Gate by Jawarlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

The tradition continues to this day. Every 15th August, the Prime Minister addresses the nation from the Red Fort.



**Jama Masjid**  
*Constructed 1630 - 1640CE*

**S**hab Jehan (Ruled 1628–1658) also constructed the **Jama Masjid**, the most famous mosque in India. 6000 men laboured for six years to complete it. It is sited at the beginning of Chauri Bazar Road, opposite the Red Fort. The courtyard of the mosque can hold up to twenty-five thousand worshippers. The mosque also houses several relics in a closet in the north gate, including an antique copy of the Qur'an written on deer skin.

40 meter-high minarets, inlaid with strips of Agra red sandstone and white marble, flank three domes with their tops covered in gold. The western chamber is a big hall supported by 260 carved pillars. The courtyard of the mosque can be reached from the east, north and south by wide steps of red sandstone.

The floor of the mosque is covered with white marble divided into segments by black marble borders, 3 feet long and 18 inches wide and ornamented to look like a prayer mat. The borders mark the space that one man should occupy. The mosque can hold 25,000 devotees. Until the 1930's, it was the largest mosque in the world.



**Digamber Lal Mandir**  
*Constructed 1658 - Rebuilt 1947CE*

**N**ow known as the **Digambar Lal Mandir**, was the first Jain temple in Delhi. A large section of the temple grounds is given over to a hospital for birds, which is supported by donations from Jains all over the country.

Emperor Shah Jehan invited Jain merchants to settle in the city. He granted them land, south of Chandni Chowk, opposite the Red Fort, and permitted them to build only a temporary structure as a temple (1658). The temple was not allowed to have a 'shikharā' or steeple.

It is said that their three marble idols were first housed in a tent belonging to a Jain officer in the Mughal army. After Independence, it was extensively **re-built**. Now it has three red sandstone steeples and two marble domes as well.

In Jainism, a Tirthankara is a person who has conquered samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth, and can provide a tirtha or ford from samsara to moksha, (liberation). The person who fills that role is a tirthankara or ford-maker. Mahavira (599 BCE–527 BCE), the twenty-fourth tirthankara, was the torch-bearer of ahimsa (non-violence). He introduced the word to the world and applied the word to cover all living things. The concept governed his own life.

Including migrants to other countries, the population of the Jain community across the world is around 6 million.



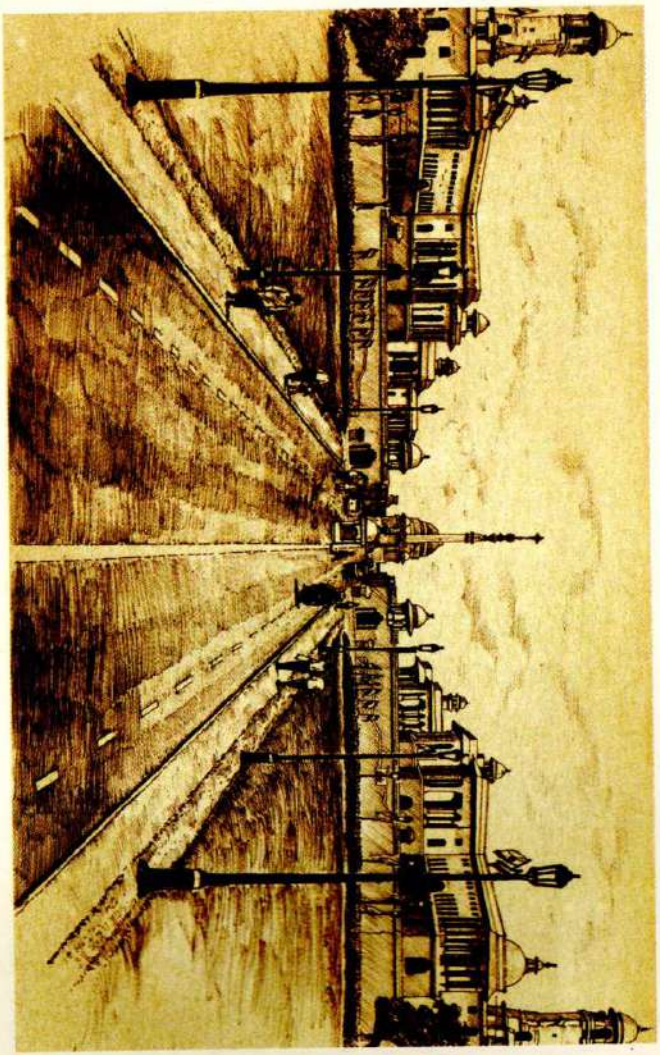
**Sis Gani Gurudwara**  
*Constructed 1783 and re-built 1930CE*

**G**urudwara Sis Ganj Sahib in Chandni Chowk was built on the site where the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, (Guru from 1664 to 1675) was martyred.

On 11 November 1675 he was beheaded, by order of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, for refusing to convert to Islam. Before his body could be quartered and exposed to public view, it was stolen at night by one of his disciples. Aurangzeb had banned cremation, so the disciple burnt down his own house in order to cremate the Guru's body. The original Gurudwara was built in 1783 and was re-built 1930. The trunk of the tree under which the Guru was beheaded is also preserved, as is the well from which he bathed while imprisoned. Adjoining the Gurudwara is the original police station, where the Guru was imprisoned and his disciples were tortured. His son was the 10th and last Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh.

The central teaching in Sikhism is the belief in the concept of the oneness of God. Sikhism considers spiritual life and secular life to be intertwined. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, or teacher, established the system of the Langar, or communal kitchen, in order to demonstrate the need to share and have equality between all people. Sikhs also believe that all religious traditions are equally valid and capable of enlightening their followers. In addition to sharing with others, Guru Nanak inspired people to earn an honest living without exploitation. Guru Nanak described living an active, creative, and practical life of truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity as being higher than a purely contemplative life. The Sikhs acknowledge eleven Gurus, the last being the Holy Granth Sahib, the book of the teachings of the Gurus. Thus the book is treated with the respect due to a Guru.

**Rashtrapati Bhavan**  
*Constructed 1912 - 1927CE*





**R**ashtropati Bhawan was originally known as the Viceroy's Palace, home of the Viceroy of the English monarch. It was personally designed by **Lutyens**, the architect of colonial New Delhi. Cleverly concealed behind Raisina Hill, it cannot be seen until you reach the top. The approach road is between the administrative buildings, North and South Block.

The Bhawan stands on a 330-acre estate. The building alone covers five acres. It took over 17 years to complete and was completed in 1929. It contains one and a half miles of corridors, 340 rooms, 227 columns, 35 lobbies and 37 fountains including the roof fountains. 29,000 people worked on the site. Three million cubic feet of stone and 700 million bricks went into the construction. It is bigger than Buckingham Palace and the White House, together.

Under the large dome is the Durbar Hall. At the back of the Durbar Hall is a 4th century statue of the Buddha. If you follow the aisle running down the middle of the Hall you will find yourself walking down the magnificent Raj Path towards India Gate, the route of the annual Republic Day parade. The Banquet Hall can seat 104 guests, has secret galleries for musicians and a system of lights, placed above portraits of former Presidents, that signal to the waiters when to serve, when to stop and when to clear the table.

Several galleries are actually museums. They display gifts received by the Presidents, and one holds the 640 kg silver throne used by King George V at the 1911 Delhi Durbar. One of these is the Children's Gallery; one part is called "By the Children", which houses paintings by children. The other part - "For the Children" - features a variety of items of interest for children, such as musical instruments, optical illusion devices, planetary system, time zones, notable quotes and a model newspaper for 2020.

More important and carefully preserved, is a dried flower that once covered the mortal remains of Gandhiji.



**Lotus Temple**  
*Constructed 1968CE*

**T**he *Bahá'í House of Worship* or *Lotus Temple* is one of the most beautiful structures in the world. It is composed of 27 free-standing marble-clad "petals" arranged in clusters of three, to form nine sides. The marble came from Mount Penteli, in Greece. The nine doors of the Lotus Temple open onto a central hall, 40 metres high, capable of holding 2,500 people. The Temple grounds occupy 26 acres.

As you enter the gates you are suddenly surrounded by an aura of peace and quiet. The walk to the temple provides a breathtaking vista of the gardens, the nine ponds and the temple. Between 1986 and 2001, the temple attracted more than 70 million visitors. On Hindu holy days, it has over 150,000 visitors a day.

The *Bahá'í Faith* was founded by Bahá'u'lláh, in 19th-century Persia. Three core principles establish a basis for Bahá'í teachings and doctrine: the unity of God - that there is only one God who is the source of all creation; the unity of religion - that all major religions have the same spiritual source and come from the same God; and the unity of humanity - that all humans have been created equal and that diversity of race and culture are worthy of appreciation and acceptance.

According to the *Bahá'í Faith*, the human purpose is to learn to know and to love God through such methods as prayer, reflection and being of service to humanity. The *Bahá'í scriptures* specify a nine-sided, circular shape for its temples. No pictures, statues or images may be displayed, and no pulpits or altars may be built. The House of Worship is a place where people of all religions may worship God. The holy scriptures of the *Bahá'í Faith* and other religions can be read or chanted inside in any language. While prayers can be sung by choirs, no musical instruments can be played. No sermons can be delivered and no ritualistic ceremonies practiced.

  
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