

# DELHI: TWO CITIES, 8 CAPITALS, 20 MILLION RESIDENTS AND NOWHERE TO GO

SOHAIL HASHMI

Freelance writer, filmmaker and heritage activist

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Delhi has been described in many ways -celebratory, poetic, envious and jealous. It has been called the eternal city, the forever bride, the graveyard of empires and there are others, some laudatory and others not so generous.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most remarkable things about Delhi is the fact that only one of the 8 capitals that were built here over the last 1000 years or so, was named Delhi and that is New Delhi. The seven historical capitals that came up in Delhi, in chronological order, were Lal Kot, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozeabad, Deenpanah, Shahjahanabad and then came the 8<sup>th</sup> capital New Delhi.

The name New Delhi happened by default, the British could not decide between the two names that they had narrowed down the choice to, Georgeabad (City of George) and Georgetown, the latter did not have too many backers because one Georgetown already existed in South Africa and it didn't sound right, the former proposal had a lot of support because it went well with Tughlaqabad, Ferozeabad and Shahjahanabad and tied in with the British desire to present themselves as the rightful inheritors of the great Mughals.

That is why even as they ruled from Calcutta the formal installation of their monarchs as emperors of India did not occur at Calcutta but in Delhi, in 1877 for Victoria, in 1903 for Edward the VII<sup>th</sup>. and in 1911 for George V<sup>th</sup>. It was at his coronation that George announced that the capital will return to Delhi in 1912.

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<sup>1</sup> On the history of Delhi, see Historic Delhi, Ed.H.K.Kaul, OUP 1985, fifth Impression 2004, The Delhi Omnibus, OUP 2002, second impression 2004, Shahjahanabad/Old Delhi, Tradition and Colonial Change, Ed. Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft Manohar 2003.

Though the British had removed the capital to Calcutta in 1859, to punish Delhi for being the centre of the revolt of 1857, they knew that their being recognised as rulers of India, by the people at large, depended greatly on their presence in Delhi.

Meanwhile their attempt to divide Bengal, along religious lines in 1905 to weaken the anti-colonial struggle, back-fired and in order to turn a bad situation into an advantage they decided to move the capital to Delhi. Temporary structures were thrown up at great speed and the basic offices were shifted, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker were chosen as the architects to design the new capital for “British India”. The Construction began in fits and starts, slowed down during the Second World War and also got caught in cost over runs.

The new capital was finally inaugurated in 1931. The issue of naming the city was never resolved, the workers involved in the construction began calling it Nai Dilli and the English translation as New Delhi became the popularly accepted name that stuck for good and thus Shahjahanabad, by default, became Old Delhi.

Naming the Capital New Delhi wasn't a very bright idea, because historically each new capital had had a unique name -Lalkot, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozeabad, Deenpanah or Shahjahanabad, while the region where all these capitals came up had always been Delhi. The Capital was never Delhi, it was always a part, a small part, of Delhi, and that is what it is even today New Delhi is spread over an area of 47.2 km<sup>2</sup> while Delhi is spread over an area of 1484 km<sup>2</sup> that is more than 31 times larger than the area of New Delhi.

The kind of development and growth that New Delhi now represents is an architect-

tural and planning hotchpotch of illusions of colonial grandeur, historical inevitability, political expediency, bureaucratic incompetence and judicial insensitivity. All this has spawned a kind of urban growth that militates against all historical characteristics of an organic urban growth. This paper would seek to touch upon some of these and also to try to understand the reasons for these anomalies.

Before we come to these issues, we would like to talk a little more about the capitals that rose and fell in Delhi, and through this short narration we would like to outline the kinds of things that we think are necessary in a city.

Of the 7 capitals that were built in Delhi in the mediaeval times, only the first, that is Lal Kot, also known as Quila Rai Pithora or more popularly referred to as Mehrauli and the seventh capital, that is Shahjahnabad, had time and resources to grow into cities.

The other five were mere capitals, built and occupied by a king, at times by a successor or two and then deserted. None of the five remaining capitals developed into a city, the successors to the founders built their own capitals, the population moved to the new location, the earlier buildings were stripped of everything that could be carried away, what remained were the bare walls that fell in course of time.

The 8<sup>th</sup> capital, New Delhi, built by the British was never visualised as a city, it was imagined merely as a show piece and it continues to be that. The present government, with their proposed plans of rebuilding, might actually succeed in destroying even this USP of New Delhi.

Mehrauli and Shahjahanabad followed two different trajectories of growth, the for-

mer following a more gradual growth, turning slowly from the site of a capital into a pilgrimage centre, because of the presence of some major Sufi Saints who took up residence in this area. The development of Shahjahanabad happened in two phases. In phase one, an entire city culture was shifted from Agra to the new capital that Shahjahan had built in Delhi, the next couple of hundred years constituted the second phase during which Shahjahanabad acquired the wherewithal of a city. The city was sought to be destroyed by the British after the great rebellion of the Sepoys and the peasantry in 1857, an attempt that Shahjaanabad resisted bravely and continues to do so. It will be of some interest to take a look at these two trajectories, but before we come to that we would like to lay down our understanding of how cities develop.

You cannot construct an administrative area, palatial accommodations for the rulers; build market spaces, streets and avenues, circulation areas, open spaces etc. and call the space a city, a city needs time to grow organically. A city is not merely an extended market or a place of work where people come to labour, to trade, to buy and sell. A city needs workers, professionals, artisans, painters, musicians; it needs to develop its own traditions of workmanship, of scholarship and of intellectual discourse. It needs its centres of learning and dissemination of knowledge; it needs people with skills, its own crafts and its own residential, commercial and public spaces. A city needs its own style of construction that takes from many traditions and evolves its own. A city needs its own wholesale markets. It needs to produce things to trade with its own residents its hinterland, with other cities and countries. A city also needs to develop its own cuisine, its own taste for music,

its own rhythm that makes it tick with life; it needs to develop a special lilt in its language, a lilt and flow that is unique to the city.

A place needs all these and a thousand other things, drawn from a diverse range of influences, to grow into a city. And it needs time for all these things to gradually evolve and to fall in place. A city has to be inclusive and cosmopolitan. A place where only natives –sons of the soil– live, is a village; it becomes a city when migrants come, in little trickles and in waves and settle down over a period a time, a couple of hundred years or more. That is how a city comes into existence.

Mehrauli and the area around it began to grow from a village from the moment the Tomars arrived and built their capital here, they were replaced by the Chauhans, followed by the Mamluks, the Khalijis, the Tughlaqs, the Lodis and the Mughals in that order, Mehrauli ceased to be capital form the time of the Khaljis, but the settlement continued to grow into a city.

What kept the place ticking was the vibrant presence of the Sufis. Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtyaar Kaaki, the second of the Chishti Sufis in India, took up residence in Mehrauli in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and when he died, he was, in keeping with Sufi traditions, buried in his hospice. Because of his popularity, people continued to flock to Mehrauli in large numbers, even after his death and so the place was neither deserted nor did it fall back to becoming a village because, new sets of arrivals continued to add to its diversity.

The land where a Sufi is buried is considered holy and people willed that they be buried in the neighbourhood of the shrine. Over the next seven centuries mausoleums and graves continued to be built in the vicinity. Those

with means commissioned wells, water tanks, step-wells, gardens, and caravanserais for the devotees who came to visit the shrine.

Many other Sufis came and started to live in the area and the place became a pilgrimage centre with its attendant paraphernalia. Food stalls, catering to the pilgrims, came up, all manner of small businesses sprouted, soothsayers and sellers of holy trinkets, rings and amulets, set up pavement stalls on the path leading to the shrine. Shops selling flowers, incense sticks and sugar-coated horse-grams sprang up – a small portion of these were offered at the shrine and the rest taken away as *Tabarruk*<sup>2</sup>.

New concepts of spirituality, '*Wahdat-ul-Wujuood*' ('Unity of Being') and '*Wahdat-ul-Shahood*' ('Unity of the Observed') arrived with the Sufis and found common ground with the ideas of '*Adwait*' ('Non-duality') and of '*Maya*' ('Illusion of Being'), in such a way that the syncretic began to take root. *Qwwali*, in its initial form as the *Qaul*, probably had its beginning at the hospice of Bakhtyar Kaaki. His successor Fareed-ud-Din Ganjshakar settled down at Ajo-dhan (now in Pakistan and known as Pak Patan) but sent his disciple and successor -Nizam-ud-Din Auliya back to Delhi. Nizam-ud-Din and his favourite disciple, the poet musician, historian, chronicler Yamin-ud-Din Khusrau, were to contribute greatly to the development of the syncretic tradition that was to become the defining element of the tradition of inclusion and syncretism that evolved in the fertile soil of Delhi and at a hundred other places.

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<sup>2</sup> A ritual offering, akin to Oblation, the idea was to make an offering at the shrine, a small part was kept by the caretakers and the rest returned to the devotee, the part returned was seen to be blessed by the saint and was shared with others in the belief that the blessings of the saint will thus reach the recipients.

The Sufi presence was the key to the continuation of Mehrauli as a flourishing and growing settlement, despite the shifting of the capital. All the other capitals, barring Shahjahanabad, that came into existence after Mehrauli perished with their founders.

Running parallel to the growing influence of the Sufi tradition was the project of empire building. With the Mamluks and Khaljis, and the others who followed them, came new construction techniques and a whole range of new crafts, trades and skills.

Those who came and settled down in this region from the 12<sup>th</sup> century brought with them the art of building with rubble, held together with a plaster that was a mix of slaked lime and crushed bricks. They also brought the true Arch and the Dome that had travelled to them through the Romans and the Byzantines. With this new construction technique came brick-kilns and the kilns that heated limestone to turn it into quicklime, later soaked in water to make slaked lime. New techniques of construction led to the development of new skill-sets and to a diverse range of interactions among masons, stone carvers, stucco workers and others.

The new arrivals also brought with them Zari, Ikat, Adras, Atlas, Velvet and Brocade (different varieties of fabrics introduced to India during this period). With them arrived the technique of weaving fine silver or gold wires with cotton or silk, they brought the spinning wheel, the pit-loom and the Persian wheel, the former two revolutionised weaving and the latter had the same impact on agriculture. The new comers also brought with them the art of carpet-weaving, paper-making and of ceramic-glazing, the last two acquired from the Chinese through the Silk route.

With new crafts came workshops – *Karkhaanaas*. Earlier because of the caste based social organisation based on segregation, each craft was the preserve of one caste and each one worked independently, the new kings introduced new court etiquettes and new production practices.

One of them, Al'auddin Khalji, institutionalised the practice of rewarding his soldiers, officers, nobles and others on a regular basis with Jubba-o-Dastaar - robes, head-gear and ceremonial weapons. He gave away more than a 100,000 every year and large workshops were set up to prepare the robes and the accessories that went with them. Weavers, cutters, tailors, embroiderers, iron, brass, silver and gold smiths, metal-inlay workers, ivory workers, sword-smiths, embossers and masters of other skills began to work together and to learn from each other. Skills were transferred and began to transform and evolve through these exchanges.

The list of changes that were happening in this period with constant introduction of new techniques and new ideas is endless, the purpose of mentioning some of these is to put across the idea that the languages, cultures, life styles, cuisines, musics, architecture and new crafts brought in by the migrants mingled with their local counter-parts and contributed to the development of a cosmopolitan, city culture. That is how Lal Kot, Qutub Saheb, Mehrauli, call it what you will, gradually evolved into a mediaeval city.

Shahjahanabad, followed an entirely different trajectory of development, in fact the construction of the new capital imagined by Shahjahan, began from scratch in 1639 and the capital was shifted from Agra in 1648 with the Emperor relocating to the Quila-e-Mu'alla

(the exalted fort) that later came to be known as Laal Quila or the Red Fort.

The construction of other parts of the capital continued for many years. Ja'ama Masjid – the central congregational mosque for example, was to be completed only in 1656. Each subsequent ruler and later nobles kept on adding palaces, gardens and other structures, private and public, for religious or secular use. While all this took time, a fully developed city culture was virtually imported into Shahjahanabad from Agra or Akbarabad as the city was then known.

A fort, an irregular octagon, was built to the east, facing the river on the east and north-east and surrounded on the other 6 sides by the city. The city was enclosed within a high wall, outside the wall ran a moat; the wall was pierced by 12 well-guarded gates, opened at sunrise and closed at sunset. Inside, the capital was divided in two parts, the dividing line was the main street of the city starting from the Lahore Gate of the fort and running straight for almost a mile to end at the Fatehpuri Mosque. To the South of the main street, that later came to be known as the Chandni Chowk, was two thirds of the city and this was the area that was more heavily built up. To the north of the main street spread the remaining one third of the city, it is in this area that the railway station, the railway line, the residences of the railway staff, etc. were to come up some 200 years later. This is also the area where many of the major buildings built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and all the major churches, barring one, were to come up during colonial times.

The area that gave identity to Shahjahanabad was the area to the South of the main street, the markets and residential areas

were organised along professional lines like mediaeval cities all over the world, Gold and Silver Smiths, those working with diamonds, pearls and engaged in Jewellery making, making and selling fine laces of silk, or silver and gold thread embroidery were all in one locality. Wholesale trade of grains, pulses, spices, nuts and dry-fruits occupied another locality. Shoe makers, bangle makers, makers of thatched roofs, lock smiths, sellers of brass and copper cooking vessels, stone carvers, those engaged in embroidery and the business of sewing, the makers and sellers of perfumes and natural extracts used in medicines, hair oils and such like, whole-sale traders of betel leaves, betel nuts, tobacco and hundreds of other trades had their own localities within the capital. In most markets, traders lived above their shops.

But this was only trade and trade alone does not create a city, the other elements that turn a mart, a busy market place into a city is its culture and the practitioners of the arts: the Scholars, the Poets, Writers, Compilers of *Tazkirahs* (literary records), Singers, Musicians, Hakims (Physicians), Calligraphers, Book-makers, Book-binders, Miniaturists, *Dastaangos* (the tellers of tales), Makers of musical instruments and many others lived scattered through the city. The street running to the west of the central Mosque was the street of the courtesans, some of the most sought after dancers and vocalists lived here on the first floor, while the trade in paper and goods of daily use continued on the ground floor shops, some of the richest traders of the city also had their mansions in the same locality.

Near the central Mosque of the city, to its North was the imperial dispensary and to the south was a college. Arithmetic, Algebra and

Geometry were taught here as well as logic, the art of debate, calligraphy, Islamic philosophy and the traditions of Islamic Jurisprudence. Inside the mosque ran a *madrassa* where education in matters of religion was imparted. To the east of the Mosque was an open ground where the army camped. To the north and south of the camp were bazars that catered to the needs of the soldiers.

With the decline of the Empire, the market located to the South of the Mosque was gradually taken over by calligraphers, book makers, book binders, publishers and book sellers. It was here that writers and poets gathered as did their fans and followers and this tradition continued till about 40 years ago. The market to the North gradually disappeared, replaced by flowers sellers leaving just two shops that dealt in army seconds till as recently as 1970s.

The British wrested control of Shahjahanabad from the Marathas in 1803 and their presence in the city started to become more pronounced as several structures that were typically British in their appearance began to dot the city - The Residency of Ochterlony 1803, Central Baptist Church 1814, St James Church 1836, St Stephen's Church 1862, Railway Station 1864, General Post Office 1885 and others. Post 1857 the British moved the capital to Calcutta - the head-quarter of the East India Company, in 1859 in order to punish Delhi for being the centre of the rebellion. Why it was brought back in 1912 has been referred to in the opening part of this piece.

When the British decided to build a new capital for their largest colony, they had two clear models before them, models that had worked for centuries and one of them, Shahja-

hanabad, had been, at the time of its foundation and for many decades subsequently, the capital of the most powerful and richest empire in the world, contributing as much as over 25% of world GDP in the 17th century and yet they put together a strange concoction that came to be called New Delhi.

New Delhi was envisioned as the capital of the largest colony of the empire and was always referred to as the Imperial capital. This was to be a built-up area to showcase the might and grandeur of empire and therefore it was designed on a gigantic scale, except that the planners and builders did not think that a capital has to have people that inhabit it and so houses for the common ordinary folks were not part of the plan.

The city was expected to grow over time and so the agricultural land of all the villages was notified, the villagers were put on notice that their lands can be acquired against compensation as and when needed, all that was spared was the residential area of the village proper and the villagers were told that no municipal laws of construction would apply on their ancestral residential property. The boundary of the residential area of each village was marked, in red, on a map of Delhi Region. This red line, that came to be known as the Lal Dora or the Red Tape was to play a crucial role in shaping the life of the city in the post-independence years.

Placed on either side of the Vice-regal Lodge, now known as the Rashtrapati Bhawan—the official residence of the President of India—, there were huge impressive buildings, housing the offices of the secretariat to the viceroy, rather imaginatively called the North and South blocks. The Lodge and the two secretariats were together placed atop a hill, to

either side of the buildings of the secretariat, down the slopes were other offices and official accommodations of senior bureaucrats.

Straight down the hill to the east was a broad avenue more than 2 km long, pierced by a gate commemorating the Indian soldiers who died protecting British interests in Turkey, Africa and elsewhere. Beyond the gate was a canopy, erected atop a statue of king George V<sup>th</sup>. Surrounding the canopy at a respectable distance and placed around the largest traffic island in New Delhi were the residences of the most important among the rulers of the princely states. The princely residences were placed in a way that suggested devotion and supplication to the Monarch. The minor princes were arrayed along roads that radiated from the large traffic island. Those who occupied these large estates came to stay in them only when the viceroy wanted to meet them; rest of the time royal retainers looked after these structures.

This then was the imperial capital that the British built. Aside from the structures described above, there was the building of the National Assembly, now known as the Parliament House, the main market known as Connaught place with Bakeries, Cinema Halls, Tailors, Haberdashers, Outfitters, Watch smiths, Gun smiths and Restaurants. There was an area known as the *gole* (circular) market to three sides of which there were single storey houses, two or three room sets arranged in blocks and inhabited by junior bureaucrats, clerks, superintendents and the like.

There were no factories, no wholesale markets, no educational institutions, no public libraries, no auditoriums. In short, there were no provisions that could be seen as an attempt to build a place that gave you a sense of belong-

ging. The idea was to create a space from where the minions of the empire would rule the colony. A majority of those who came to work in the new capital lived in the scattered villages or in Shahjahanabad, the city that the British had looted and nearly destroyed in 1857. New Delhi was never meant to be a city, it was meant only to be an administrative area and that is what it continues to be till this date.

An overwhelming majority of those who live in the 43.7 sq. kilometres of land administered by the New Delhi Municipal Council are migratory creatures, senior bureaucrats, senior army brass, members of parliament. Each one of them spends some time in Delhi and then goes back.

The only quasi permanent residents are the gardeners, cooks, drivers, guards and other household helps employed by these temporary residents. There are a few very rich industrial families who had bought huge properties in New Delhi and some of these now house high-end flats for the super-rich, while some of those properties continue to be in the possession of the descendants of the original buyers. Families of some of those who had acquired flats on the first floor of Connaught place can also be counted among the few thousand permanent residents of New Delhi.

When India became independent it was also divided into two countries, more than 330,000 Muslims left Delhi for Pakistan and the population of the city –Shahjahanabad and all the scattered villages– fell to about 570,000, before rising, within 4 years –by 1951 to 1744,042, an increase of more than 1.1 million or close to 250,000 per year (see my piece, Hashmi (2017).

This tectonic shift in the population changed the character of the city. Muslims were almost 33% of the population of the city before 1947; their share fell to about 4%. The large influx of refugees from the newly created Pakistan changed the landscape, culture, language and lifestyle of Delhi forever.

Those that had presided over the partition, the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League and the British, had no idea of what the partition would unleash, just as the current rulers of India had no inkling that hundreds of thousands would begin the long trek home from the metropolitan centres the moment the unplanned lock-down was imposed.

The millions that began to stream into the city, from what is now Pakistan, were initially placed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century forts at Tughlaqabad and Kotla Ferozeshah and in the Kingsway camp. The refugee camp at Kingsway grounds at one time housed almost 300,000 refugees. This was the site where the foundation stone of the new Capital was initially laid. The site of the capital was shifted later to Raisina Hill, where the Vice-regal Lodge and the secretariat complex came up in the 1920s. Aside from the initial deluge, the refugees kept trickling in over the next few years, stopping on the way, hoping to find sustenance and then moving on in search of more welcoming environs.

The refugees could not be contained in these camps alone and they spilled out all over, occupying houses left by those who had gone to Pakistan, leading to uncertainties and fear among the few Muslims that had stayed back, still the number of such houses was not enough so they began living in the grounds outside the red fort in shanties constructed with discarded card board sheets and gunny sacks, they hudd-



led under the arches of the bits of the old city boundary wall that still survived and they camped under the open skies wherever they could.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, some semblance of order began to emerge, areas to the south of New Delhi –South of Lodi Colony, to the west of Karol Bagh, North and West of the Kingsway Camp– Scrub lands, degraded forest lands, grazing lands village commons and Agricultural Lands began to be acquired. A ministry of rehabilitation was set up and gradually people began to be accommodated. By end of 1950 the number that had been accommodated was close to 300,000 out of these 190,000 had been settled into properties left behind by those migrating to Pakistan and the rest were provided newly built accommodations (Dutta 2002: 290). Those among the refugees that were better off and had brought papers to show that they had left property in Pakistan, were given compensatory plots and they built on those plots.

There were many other interventions to help people stand on their feet, like assistance in setting up small industries (p. 301), building of markets with flats above the shop to provide both a roof above the head and a shop to start a business, many kiosks and tin shed shops and markets were built or people were given assistance to build their own and that is how Khan Market, Ghaffar Market, Yusufzai Market, Meherchand Market, Khanna Market, Amar Colony, B.K. Dutt Colony and a whole lot of other markets came up in different parts of Delhi.

This sprouting of Bazars coincided with the emergence of new residential localities, almost totally consisting of refugees, mostly Punjabi speaking, with smatterings of Multanis, Sindhi and Pashtun Hindus and Sikhs.

There were many Bengalis as well, but in the almost single-minded engagement with the largest contingent –the Punjabis, the rest just became a foot note. The new residential areas that came up included Kingsway Camp, Vijaynagar and Azadpur in North Delhi, Jangpura, Bhogal, Lajpat Nagar, Malviya Nagar, East Nizamuddin in South Delhi, and Tilak Nagar, Patel Nagar, Rajendra Nagar, Rehgar Pura etc in West Delhi.

The growth of Delhi in the post 1947 period can broadly be understood in terms of four major movements, i) constructions related to the rehabilitation of refugees that has been briefly touched upon above, ii) extensive building activity undertaken by the government for building offices, other infrastructure like schools hospital, parks, water supply network, power distribution and housing for government employees, iii) the building of plush residential localities by consortium of builders and iv) interventions of the Delhi Development Authority to ensure what the organisation describes as planned development.

The New Government set about putting its house in order, the frame work that the British had left behind and the bureaucracy they had trained could only operate in the manner born and so among the first set of housing that came up for the government employees was broadly divided in three categories, Senior officers residential locality –there were two and not surprisingly they were named Maan Nagar (City of Honour) and Shaan Nagar (City of Grandeur), the large locality where the lower bureaucracy would reside was named Vinay Nagar (City of Supplication) and the locality which had houses for the drivers, office boys, sanitation staff was called Sewa Nagar (City that Serves). This city plan fitted perfectly with the

design philosophy of Sirs Lutyens and Baker- The viceroy atop the Hills, surrounded by the various secretaries at one end of Kingsway, the current Raj Path, and the subservient princes around the grand statue of the Monarch at the other end.

This was in the capital of a newly freed colony and the ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were still alive, there were loud protests at this nomenclature, the Ministry of housing and the officers of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) were compelled to make amends, Maan Nagar and Shaan Nagar became Rabindra Nagar and Bharti Nagar, named after two Iconic poets, Rabindranath Tagore and Subramanian Bharti, Vinay Nagar was parcelled out and renamed, Netaji Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Lakshmi Bai Nagar, Kidwai Nagar and Nauroji Nagar, named after major leaders of the freedom struggle respectively Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Dabhai Nauroji. The ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity did not, however, extend to the service class and Sewa Nagar continued with its name till the 1990s when someone woke up to the anomaly and the area was renamed after Kasturba Gandhi to become Kasturba Nagar.

In and around the core of New Delhi came up the offices of the different ministries, Railways, Agriculture, Industry, Housing, while home, external affairs, the Prime Minister's office etc. moved into the Secretariat Buildings, designed by Herbert Baker, as part of the Imperial Delhi, in fact modified copies of the Union Buildings he had built in Pretoria.

Other structures that came up during this period were the academies of Literature, Music, Theatre and fine arts, World Health

Organisation, the head-quarters of the Post and Telegraph Department and many other buildings. All designed by Habib Rahman, the favourite architect of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the First Prime Minister of India. Habib's architecture represented the modernist in the newly independent Country.

Fairly early in the post-independence times, the sentiment to be self-reliant in the field of food and basic needs of the people combined with the assistance being given to the refugees to start small scale industries. The initial production activity started at Malviya Nagar and Kalkaji area evolved into the Okhla industrial Area starting in 1953 (Dutta 2002: 301). Gradually, industrial estates developed in different parts of the city; as many as seventeen were created in different parts of the city.

Around the industrial estates grew shanti-towns of hovels put together by sons of peasants who kept drifting into the city from far and near, to become workers in the small industries located in the industrial estates. The new arrivals contacted people from their village who had preceded them into the city and small pockets of people, speaking the same language and eating the same food began to cluster together. The same thing had been happening with the Punjabi refugees who tended to stick together and so small and big pockets that were linguistically and culturally cohesive began to emerge.

Residents of nearby villages that had lost all their land to government acquisition but had control of their sprawling ancestral houses inside the Lal Dora Lands, began to build single room tenements for the workers and the villages took on the appearance of slums while the women from these working class families

became part time maids and cooks in the houses of the better offs. Gradually Delhi became a strange city, it was cosmopolitan in its places of work but behaved parochially in its residential areas and so it became a collection of many villages. The only residential areas that continued to be somewhat mixed were localities that had government housing.

Running parallel to this development of industrial estates, initiated by the government and its feeding of the growth of slum colonies there was the work of the builder lobby that has been active from the early days of independence. Most of the large sprawling residential localities for the well-heeled owe their existence to these builders who bought agricultural land at throw away prices in the late 1940s and early 1950, cut out plots and sold them initially to the well to do among the refugees and later to the new rising class of Urban rich, industrialists, Bankers, Builders, Architects, Chartered accountants, senior executives and others. Those Army Personnel who had opted to come to India were one such lot and that is how Defence colony came into existence. Many residential localities populated by the well to do including Kailash Colony, Greater Kailash Parts I and II, Mount Kailash, East of Kailash, Mansarovar, West End, Hauz Khas, Green Park, Safdarjung Enclave, Safdarjung Development Area, Maharani Bagh, Friends Colony, New Friends Colony and others that came up in the 1950s, 60s and 70s were all built similarly. The neighbourhood of the Posh localities turned into slums populated by those who served the well off, Newspaper boys, milk delivery boys, vegetable hawkers, men and women who cooked, washed and swept for the leisure class.

Amidst all this was the emergence of the Delhi Development Authority –created in 1957 and asked “to secure the development of Delhi according to plan”<sup>3</sup>. In a city with a population touching 20 million it had till 2007 built and handed over for possession, a total of 367,724 flats, half of them to those belonging to the lower income category (Mitra 2019), this works out to about 7823 flats per year across 47 years. In 2019 it allotted 8000 flats to applicants through a draw of lots, 4000 allottees refused to take possession after inspecting the properties (Ghosh 2019), Clearly the DDA had other priorities.

The two things that DDA did within a short time of coming into existence was i) to declare that all of Shahjahanabad was a slum and ii) to acquire all the agricultural land that had not been acquired till then.

The first act ensured that Shahjahanabad could be ignored. The moment it was declared a slum, it did not need upgrading of its amenities, which was the beginning of the systematic and wilful neglect of one of the finest mediaeval cities in the world.

The second decision was aimed at enriching the coffers of the DDA at the cost of the peasants who happened to be in the path of the growing megalopolis. The scheme was to pay the peasants the prices prevailing at the time of acquiring the land and charge the allottees land prices prevailing at the time of allotment of these houses.

<sup>3</sup> As it can be read in chapter II “The Delhi Development Authority and its objects”, The Gazette of India EXTRAORDINARY PART II—Section 1 PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY No. 48] NEW DELHI, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1957/PAUSA 7, 1879 MINISTRY OF LAW New Delhi, the 28th December, 1957. You can have online access at <http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/1957/E-2142-1957-0048-97085.pdf>.

To cite one instance Agricultural land in Bodella (Budhela), now Vikas Puri in west Delhi, was acquired by DDA in 1969. Four brothers who jointly owned 40 Acres, roughly equivalent to 200,000 sq. yds, were awarded Rupees 200,000 that is Rs.1 per sq. yard as compensation, they challenged the amount as too little. In 1983 the courts granted them an additional compensation of Rs 2,000,000. Fourteen years to settle a simple civil suit.

Around the same time DDA auctioned plots to builders in Bhikaji Cama District Commercial Centre in South Delhi from land acquired in the 1960s; one of the plots went for a record price of around Rs 70,000 per sq yard. Property in the locality right now is at around Rs, 250,000 per square yard. You can try to imagine the stash that DDA made. A 1918 survey conducted by National productivity council and Geo Spatial Limited revealed that DDA was holding as much as 5,484 acres of land.

Within a couple of decades of coming into existence DDA realised that it wasn't able to cope with the demand for housing in the city and so it came up with a scheme to allot land to co-operative group housing societies and virtually washed its hands off the project of providing affordable housing to those who lived in the metropolis.

Co-operative societies were first required to get registered, apply for land, run around to get it in their preferred location, pay to DDA the asking price, always way above the price at which DDA had acquired the land, and then get it built, the co-operative also had to pay land development charges, including the costs of building roads, getting connected to the sewer system and getting power and water lines etc.

DDA meanwhile moved into building shopping complexes, district shopping cum commercial centres etc. but soon this too they abandoned and began auctioning plots to builders to set-up office cum commercial complexes. The scope of this has now been expanded to auction land to private builders to build residential complexes. The losers are the villagers and those looking for affordable accommodation. The DDA is the officially created middleman who bought all the available land in Delhi dirt cheap to sell it to the highest bidder.

The DDA came up with the scheme of relocating slums, an exercise that picked up steam during the period of the internal emergency, declared by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, that lasted from June 1975 to March 1977. These 21 months saw DDA forcibly evict 200,000 people to dump them miles away from their places of work. A total of 44 resettlement colonies were created between 1960 and 1985 and the life and livelihood of 1.2 million citizens was badly disrupted. They live in conditions worse than their earlier slums with poor sanitation, transport and lighting and are compelled to travel long distances to the heart of the city where they either work or hope to find work as daily wagers. Another 11 resettlement colonies have come up since 1985, but no figures are available for the numbers involved (Jeelani 2018).

Add to this the 1797 unauthorised colonies, involving a population of more than 5 million, with promises of regularisation made recently. The cumbersome process of registering 2,000,000 odd properties (see Sultan 2019) providing them basic facilities is a task that the DDA is ill-equipped to handle. DDA has up to now built 28,344 flats for the urban

poor, 26,861 of these remain unoccupied, primarily because they are located in places far away from the places of work of the allottees.

So this is a very brief and a very limited view of the patently pro-builder and anti-poor strategy of planning that has shaped this city that has grown 21 times from 900,000 in 1947 to 19000000 now. The two mediaeval cities that existed were not considered worth the land they were built upon, the Imperial model, a mere place of work, bereft of soul, spirit and residents will now become the model for much touted smart city that is going to be a working and living place for hermetically sealed communities of the elite. The workers and

peasants will toil outside, their products will be delivered and the waste taken out of the city to be dumped in places where the overwhelming numbers of the citizens live. New Delhi has always been like this. The city serves the elite that rules the country from their palatial Bungalows, sealed off and protected from the living throbbing, struggling, working, producing and somehow surviving multitude outside the charmed 43.7 sq.kms of New Delhi.

*Writer, Film Maker Sohail Hashmi also conducts Heritage walks in Delhi.*

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